

First Minister launches new app for teen readers

Bookzilla to inspire S1-S3 pupils to read for pleasure

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon today joined Portobello High School students from S1-S3 to launch a new app, Bookzilla, at Portobello Library. Developed by Scottish Book Trust, the national charity transforming lives through reading and writing, and digital agency Dubit, Bookzilla is aimed at early secondary school students in Scotland. The app encourages pupils to read for pleasure, whether they are already regular readers or just embarking on their reading journey.

Bookzilla is free to download and use, and will benefit young people and schools across Scotland, helping them to build reading cultures within their schools and communities. The app was co-designed with young people, and throughout the development process Scottish Book Trust worked with over 750 pupils from 16 secondary schools across Scotland. The name, Bookzilla, was also chosen by students, conducted through a survey.

Through the app, users will be able to receive tailored book recommendations and discover books that have been enjoyed by their peers. Pupils will also learn about new releases and books across a range of genres, take on 'reading dares' and set challenges for themselves to motivate them on their reading journey.

The development process has involved young people from the outset, beginning in November 2018, with design summits with over 100 pupils at three secondary schools. Scottish Book Trust also surveyed over 500 pupils from 14 schools to gather feedback on user habits. Ten S1–3 students from five schools tested and gave feedback on an early version of the app in a Youth Advisory Panel.

Feedback from the First Minister's Reading Challenge Advisory Group stated that teachers and librarians thought that the app would be a useful tool to introduce pupils to more books, and to challenge themselves to read more widely. Teachers and librarians can also use Bookzilla as a guide to find out what titles are popular amongst their students, and inform them on what books students would like available in their library.

Scottish Book Trust has partnered with [Browns Books for Students](#), who have recommended age-appropriate titles for S1-S3 pupils. 1,200 books will initially be listed on Bookzilla, with more regular updates to be added. The app will also have different featured collections every month, and as well as English titles, Gaelic and Scots books will also be available to browse.

Bookzilla Functions include:

- Personalised book recommendations so pupils can track what fiction, non-fiction or graphic novels they want to read next, as well as recording what book they are currently reading
- Reading Dares, to challenge young people to read out with their comfort zone or to try something new
- Book collections, which showcase books from certain genres and encourage pupils to explore different titles

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said:

“We know that reading for pleasure brings not just enjoyment but also benefits for attainment and young people’s mental health, which is why I launched the First Minister’s Reading Challenge. But whether you’re an avid reader or new to reading for pleasure, one of the greatest challenges is deciding what to read next.

“It’s been great seeing Portobello High School pupils, who helped develop the Bookzilla app, talk about how it will help them find suggestions for new books to try in the future. I’m excited that all S1-3 pupils in Scotland will have the opportunity to try Bookzilla.”

Deena Wren, librarian at Beeslack Community High School and winner of the Learning Professional Award 2019, said:

"I loved the bright, colourful look of the Bookzilla app, especially the little book animations! My pupils engaged really quickly with it: they particularly liked looking at the personalised book suggestions, which started lots of conversations about what they had and had not read. The reading dares and challenges are fun and will entertain some of the more reluctant readers. One of the pupils later told one of her other teachers that 'she couldn't wait to download the app and get started!'

"I intend to encourage the use of Bookzilla next year with the Junior years as another motivational tool to help them to keep on with their personal reading."

Marc Lambert, CEO of Scottish Book Trust, said:

"Following the success of our Bookbug app, Scottish Book Trust is delighted to launch Bookzilla for S1-S3 pupils. Our thanks to Dubit, who helped us to develop a digital product that inspires young people’s reading, manages and shares their own reading journeys, and builds reading cultures in their peer groups, schools and communities. Thank you also to the pupils, teachers and librarians who contributed to the development of Bookzilla: we hope they all enjoy using the app in the new school term."

Ends

Notes to editors

For all press and media enquiries, please contact PR and Marketing Manager Keara Donnachie: keara.donnachie@scottishbooktrust.com or 0131 524 0184, or Media Officer Daisy Bartlett: daisy.bartlett@scottishbooktrust.com or 0131 524 0160

Full list of Bookzilla functions:

- Personalised book recommendations
- Reading Dares
- Reading challenges
- Book Randomiser
- Virtual ‘to read’ pile
- Book counter
- Featured book collections

About First Minister's Reading Challenge

The First Minister's Reading Challenge was launched in March 2016 and in its first year was open from August 2016 to March 2017 to all Primary 4 to Primary 7 children in local authority and independent schools across Scotland. In its second year the Challenge was expanded to include primaries 1 to 3, and in its third year, the Challenge was expanded to include Secondary Schools, Libraries and Community Groups.

Scottish Book Trust administers the Challenge, working closely with Education Scotland. It includes book suggestions, learning resources, prizes, case studies and ideas to help young people develop a love of reading, as well as the opportunity to apply for author visits.

readingchallenge.scot @FMReadChallenge

About Scottish Book Trust

Scottish Book Trust is a national charity changing lives through reading and writing. We believe books and reading have the power to transform lives, and we inspire and support the people of Scotland to read and write for pleasure.

- We give free books to every child in Scotland to ensure families of all backgrounds can share the joy of books at home.
- We work with teachers to inspire children to develop a love of reading, creating innovative classroom activities, book awards and author events.
- We support Scotland's diverse writing community with our training, awards and writing opportunities.
- We fund a range of author events for the public to enjoy and promote Scottish writing to people worldwide.
- We work for a Scotland where everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive through literacy.

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Creative Scotland

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