



Using books and reading to support Primary to Secondary transition

Age 11-12

CFE Second Level

Resource created by
Scottish Book Trust

scottishbooktrust.com



Scottish Book Trust
inspiring readers and writers

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About this resource

For pupil and staff across Scotland, transition this year will look very different to previous years. The aim of this resource is to offer ideas and book recommendations to help you use books as part of the transition to secondary, and use books to support pupil Health and Wellbeing during this challenging time. These activities can be used over the summer, but they can also be used in August and September to foster positive relationships within your new S1 cohort and kick start your autumn term in an accessible and engaging way.

Education Scotland also has a number of resources that support [Transition in 2020](#).

Books to support transition

Using books to support transition is a great way to encourage reading for pleasure across your school, and show pupils straight away that you are a school that values and prioritises reading. Sharing the same book across a year group creates a shared experience for all entrant pupils and generates common ground for conversation. In this challenging time, reading the same book can also offer great opportunities to support Health and Wellbeing as pupils adjust to unusual school patterns and new styles of learning.

Financing or supplying books to pupils can be challenging. To find out more about how one school did it, read our [case study](#) from St Andrews and St Bride's High School. They managed to fund books across a year group using PEF funding.

Preparing for transition

Many upper primary pupils may be apprehensive about starting secondary school, as they have not experienced the usual visits or tour days. The list below offers suggestions of books that explore the experience of starting a new school:

- *Everything all at Once* by Steven Camden
- *Hurricane in my Head* by Matt Abbott
- *In the Key of Code* by Aimee Lucido
- *The Unforgotten Coat* by Frank Cottrell-Boyce
- *The Gifted and Talented and Me* by William Sutcliffe
- *New Kid* by Jerry Craft
- *A Kid in my Class* by Rachel Rooney and Chris Riddell
- *Being Miss Nobody* by Tamsin Winter
- *The Book Case* by Dave Shelton
- *The Boy at the Back of the Class* by Onjali Q Rauf
- *Running on Empty* by S.E. Durrant

For books to share with your pupils that explore change or managing emotions during change, you could explore:

- *Bloom* by Nicola Skinner
- *The Arrival* by Shaun Tann
- *The Day I was Erased* by Lisa Thompson
- *Guts* by Raina Telgemeier

Digital or online books

Getting physical copies of books into the hands of pupils will be hard right now. Here are some free online books you could share with pupils:

- [*John Muir: Earth Planet Universe Graphic novel*](#)
- [*Stay at Home: Poems and Prose for Children in Lockdown* edited by Joan Haig](#)
- A number of children's classics, including *Harry Potter*, are available to listen for free from [Audible](#)
- [*The Book of Hopes* edited by Katherine Rundell](#)
- [*Once Upon a Time in Zombieville*, a podcast series by BBC Scotland Learning](#)

For pupils who do not have access to digital resources, we would recommend sharing physical copies where possible, or focusing on activities that do not require equipment, such as storytelling. You can explore our [storytelling resource](#) for ideas.

Books that are good for transition projects

A question Scottish Book Trust is often asked is "what is a good book for a transition project?" Here are some top tips for book selection:

- Books that are accessible to all pupils, including less confident readers
- Books which have interesting themes to generate discussion and debate
- Books which are gripping or hold suspense well, and keep pupils guessing
- Books which create a buzz of excitement in the classroom
- Books which are lesser-known, and therefore new to most pupils

One book will not cover all these areas, so focus on which of these areas might suit your setting and project best. Here are a few suggestions of books that might generate excitement or discussion amongst pupils:

- *A House without Walls* by Elizabeth Laird. This book allows space for discussion around feminism, girls' access to education and the refugee crisis.
- *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai. This non-fiction book allows for discussion around activism and how to enact change.
- *Evernight* by Ross Mackenzie. This fantasy is gripping and cinematic, and is good for reading in short sections to maintain suspense.
- *Crossover* by Kwame Alexander. A great book for discussions around sport and staying true to yourself. Also available as a graphic novel.

- *The Wild Book* by Juan Villoro, translated by Lawrence Schimel. An unusual book about the quest for a “wild” book in a rambling library, sure to create discussion around books and reading.
- *Ghost* by Illustratus. A collection of scary short stories, perfect for projects leading up to Halloween.
- *A Change is Gonna Come*. A collection of short stories, poems and essays perfect for conversations around enacting change in society.

Creative ways to use books

First lines activity

To find out more about your entrant students and their reading preferences or habits, you could run a first line activity. Ask pupils to rate a number first lines from books of different genres from 1-5. 1 is “I would love to read this”, 5 being “I would never read this”. You could run this on a digital session, or send worksheets out to pupils.

Encourage discussion around the first lines. Ask pupils (if they are able) to discuss with peers what they did or didn’t like about the first line, what they think happens next, and why would they read on?

As an extension activity, you could ask pupils to read the first chapters from the books from which you selected the first lines. There are lots of extracts and chapters available from [LoveReading4Kids](#). You could ask new pupils to vote for their favourite and purchase these for your school library.

Create a virtual book tour

Many schools have started to create digital or virtual tours of their school environment. Aberdeen Council has produced this tour of [Hazelhead Academy](#). As a way to introduce school staff to pupils (from all departments, not just English), you could ask staff to record a short clip introducing themselves, what they teach and what their favourite book is and why. Pupils could get a virtual-book tour of all the staff they will be meeting at their new school, as well as hearing about books that could be used to start conversations in the classroom.

Start conversations around books

If you are emailing students or using Microsoft Teams and are able to, add “I am currently reading” and/or “I am currently watching” to your email signature and encourage pupils to do the same, so that you can share what you are all currently enjoying reading or watching.

You could also use online platforms such as [Padlet](#) or [Wakelet](#) to create a safe online space for pupils to contribute reviews or creative responses to books. Pupils could share their favourite part of a book so far, or find images relating to the book or chapter they are currently reading.

Create a class story or class book

You could work with pupils to create a class or year-group book, it could include stories, poems or artwork from new pupils. You could workshop ideas for a book theme in the first few weeks of term, taking a vote across the group to select the theme, and then work on pieces to contribute to the book over the rest of term. Pupils could work on setting and formatting the book, and (if appropriate) plan a release event or celebration. For guidelines on creating anthologies, read our [anthology guidelines](#). To support pupils in personal writing, explore our [guide to personal writing](#).

Start storytelling

Storytelling is a great way to share memories and experience, and could be used with new pupils to help them learn about their peers and encourage empathy. You could ask pupils to collect stories from their community or family to share, or use storytelling to tell their own story (real or imaginary). Everyone has a story to tell. Pupils could collect the stories over the phone, via email, FaceTime, letter or in person, (following appropriate social distancing measures). The project could explore any theme, such as friendship, the future, a favourite time or place. You could read short story collections to support this class project, for example using the [Book of Hopes](#) to support a project on the theme of hope, or [Stay at Home: Poems and Prose for Children in Lockdown](#) to collect stories of lockdown experiences.

The stories could be shared with the class or in small groups and could be shared verbally or through digital storytelling. If you are able, you could hold an event to celebrate all the stories that have been collected and invite members of the community to attend (this could be done digitally). You can find resources to support [storytelling](#) on our website.

[Some museums](#) are encouraging communities to share stories of lockdown. As an extension of this project, you could partner with a local museum to see what your pupils could collect and contribute.

Creative responses to books

If you are able to support all entrant pupils to read the same book across the year group, this could be an opportunity to ask them to respond creatively in any manner to the book. Rather than asking for a review or set task, ask all pupils to create

something inspired by the book. It could be fan fiction, an alternative ending; a piece of art, a cake or other food item, a poem - their minds will come up with much more! These creative responses could be displayed around the school or shared digitally, depending on your teaching model.

Read aloud to pupils

Rather than giving pupils a copy of your chosen book, the chosen book could be read aloud to them during registration or English class. As part of home learning, a recording could be shared digitally with pupils. This means that only a small number of copies might be needed. Most S1 pupils will be familiar with being read aloud to during book projects in primary school. For guidance on reading aloud, check our legal guidance for sharing books digitally.

Use Bookzilla

Bookzilla is the app developed by Scottish Book Trust with teens from across Scotland. Ask pupils to download the app and explore the different genres and collections. They can add books that they would like to read later or borrow from the school library to their virtual shelf. The app also allows pupils to create their own “reading dare”. Pupils could set a reading dare to complete over the summer, such as reading a book from a new genre, or reading an old favourite, and share this with peers during discussions facilitated in their new school. For more fun ideas to use Bookzilla to create a buzz around reading, explore our [Bookzilla resource](#).

Use the First Ministers Reading Challenge

Primary and Secondary schools can register to take part in the First Minister’s Reading Challenge, and many S1 pupils will be familiar with the format of the challenge from Primary School. The challenge can be used to create continuity between primary and secondary. You could use the virtual group passports (or individual passports) for pupils to track and share what they are reading. You could display group passports prominently, perhaps outside classroom, so pupils can see what other classes and pupils are reading.

Examples of transition projects

Using remote workshops

Holyrood Secondary School in Glasgow applied and received remote Live Literature funding to run a graphic novel workshop with pupils from feeder primary schools. The workshop will be ran before term starts with a graphic illustrator, to help and support pupils to create their own comic strip. Pupils then have time to complete their

work, with all student artwork being displayed around the school in the autumn. Entrant students will be able to see their work around the school, making it a more welcoming and a familiar environment.

Using comic illustration

One school in East Ayrshire used comic books to explore health and wellbeing with students, and this project can easily be adapted to support the worries and concerns of entrant students. Loudoun Academy partnered with comic book artist Neil Slorance. Pupils created small comic strips answering the question "what is it like to be a young person today" and the strips were bound together to create a book.

Teachers at the school talked about how the strips powerfully showed the concerns, worries and lives of the young people who took part. They felt that schools could use something similar as a great tool for prompting discussion around transition, listening to young people's voices and understanding their perspectives. The comics strips were incredibly honest, and explored topics including bullying, body image, social media, making friends, being trans, parental separation, suicidal thoughts and crime. However, many strips also talked about how good friends and supportive family can help you through tough moments. Running a similar project on the theme of "what it is like to be a young person today" would allow a great deal of discussion around the current situation, but also would allow young people's genuine concerns and anxieties to be voiced and heard. Following this, staff could explore topics including emotional resilience and emotionally managing change and challenging situations.

Split the book

This project book place in North Ayrshire. Feeder primary schools read the first half of the book *Abomination* by Robert Swindells in primary 7, and then the second half when they arrived at secondary. This book was chosen because it has a more 'grown up' theme, but is still an easy read making it accessible to all pupils. It also has midway cliff-hanger, which provides the excitement of finding out what happens when you get to S1 and continue reading. Using the same book in this way also provided a small 'staff bridge' between the two settings, meaning the teachers in primary had some contact with the secondary English class teachers and were able to discuss pupil progress in a more personal way.

Write a letter

This project is from St Ninian's High School in East Dunbartonshire. An author or other creative practitioner could be invited to lead a session (physically or digitally) to share tips on letter writing with pupils. You could choose someone who has written an epistolary novel, and read their book (or extracts from it) alongside the session. You could invite your new S1 pupils and current S2 pupils to attend. The S2 pupils

can then write letters on themes such as “my first year in high school” or “what I wish I had known a year ago” for the new S1 pupils. Letters could be shared on or offline- letters could be shared with pupils when they are in school, or could be shared digitally. This activity could support a buddy system you already have in place, or could be used with other years to create connects and conversations between different year groups.