



10 things to do with any transition book

Activities to support the primary to secondary transition

Suitable for: P7–S1
Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

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About this resource

This resource offers ideas and recommendations for incorporating books as part of the transition for pupils from primary to secondary school and helping to support pupil health and wellbeing during this time of change.

The activities are split into two sections for primary and secondary settings. If you can, partner up with local schools to introduce the activities and create positive links between primary and secondary through books and developing a reading culture. However if that connection is yet to be established you can also use the activities independently in your setting.

Education Scotland also has several resources that support [transition during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Planning a transition project

Using books to support transition is a great way to encourage reading for pleasure, and shows 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. Books can also offer excellent opportunities to support health and wellbeing outcomes as pupils adjust to unusual school patterns and new styles of learning.

The best transition projects work when feeder primary and secondary schools work together. Ideally, plan which book to read together with input from all schools and select a suitable title (or range of titles) for your pupils. You can then use the activities in this resource to make your project exciting and engaging as part of your next steps.

If you are looking for ideas on choosing a book to support transition, read our [article about book transition projects](#) or explore our book list full of [great reads for children starting secondary school](#).

Examples of how to work together

One cluster in North Ayrshire read the first half of the book *Abomination* by Robert Swindells in Primary 7, and then the second half when they started in S1. The cluster chose the book because it has a more 'grown up' theme but is still an easy read, making it accessible to all pupils. It also has a midway cliff-hanger, which provides a good stopping point to leave pupils excited to learn what happens when they join their new secondary school 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. Other schools have used titles such as *The Explorer* by Katherine Rundell, *The Nowhere Emporium* by Ross Mackenzie and *A Kind of Spark* by Elle McNicoll, creating displays and conducting follow-up activities.

Some primary school pupils have been unable to have their traditional transition activities due to the pandemic, but there are ways to connect remotely between feeder schools. For example, the school librarian at Arbroath High School in Angus held Microsoft Teams meetings with Primary 7 classes to introduce them to the secondary school. The librarian gave pupils a survey to choose their first book to hear as part of their school-wide Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time. Alternatively, in East Lothian, Preston Lodge High School conducted book personality quizzes with their new S1s as part of their induction to the school library. Elgin Academy in Moray has a long running and successful paired reading project. Each year, S1s are paired with senior pupils to choose and read books together and share recommendations.

Primary activities

Activity 1: Create a dream board

After reading a few chapters of your chosen transition book, ask pupils to create a dream board for one of the characters. They could do this individually or in small groups. Ask them to imagine the character's aspirations and where they would like to be in 10 years.

After they have done this for a character, ask them to create their own dream board and think about where they would like to be in the future. What would they like to be doing? What are their future dreams and aspirations? Reassure pupils that they don't need to share this with anyone. It's their own board for them to create and keep.

Activity 2: Write a character postcard

If you are reading a book together in primary ahead of secondary transition, ask pupils to write a character postcard and send it to the English Department at their new secondary school. It could be written from the character's perspective about their thoughts and feelings, or it could just tell the new teachers what pupils like about the book. Encourage the English Department to display these in the first week, so there is something familiar on display for pupils.

Activity 3: Write an alternative ending

This activity is great if you are working with a secondary school that will be finishing your transition books, so pupils will only hear half of the story in Primary 7. But it also works for any transition book! Read the first half of the book, and when you reach a dramatic moment, stop reading. Ask pupils to write their own ending to the story. What do they think will happen? How will it end? Encourage pupils to be as creative and inventive as they like! You could read these aloud to each other in class and talk about the various ideas created (everyone will see the story in a different direction). Pupils could share their alternative endings with each other in S1 or create a display. The alternative endings can be used to start conversations about the book before the end of the story is finally shared with them. You could ask pupils:

- Did it end how they expected?
- Did it end how they or anyone predicted?
- Which ending did they prefer?

Activity 4: Create a reading wall

A reading wall is a great way to show reading progression, and is a brilliant visual reminder of a book. Ask pupils to write their thoughts and feelings on their transition book on a brick-shaped piece of paper (ideally red in colour and oblong). They could write a short review, or give it a star rating. The brick could be written in Primary 7 and displayed in the classroom until the end of term, and then passed to the secondary school to create an even larger wall with bricks from all the feeder primaries. Pupils can hunt for their brick on the display once they start secondary and see all the contributions from other pupils.

Activity 5: Hold an outdoor read

Outdoor learning is important for pupils and offers an enjoyable, shared experience. Holding an outdoor reading event can be a great way of combining a transition book with outdoor learning activities. For example, if you run an adventure or outdoor learning week for your Primary 7 pupils, integrate this event into that week. After completing the task, pupils could hear a chapter read as a reward. Or challenge them to create a shelter fit for some storytelling!

If you have an outdoor reading hut or space, make the most of it with your Primary 7s by heading outside to read your transition title! Why not invite secondary school staff members to join, or S1 or S2 pupils if you have a good relationship with your local secondary? Then, Primary 7 pupils can have their questions answered, and the secondary staff or secondary pupils could read aloud to their primary peers.

Why not hold an after-school campfire read if you have time and the space? Have a small fire (or a TV fire display in the school), invite secondary staff and pupils to join,

as well as parents and carers, and hand out bonfire treats like marshmallows and hot chocolate. Get pupils and staff into small mixed groups to read the book together, or be read to. Make sure the groups are mixed with S1 and P7 pupils to get conversations started. Ensure there are staff on hand to answer any questions parents might have about transition too. A campfire-read is a great, cosy way to get pupils and families involved in reading.

Secondary activities

Activity 1: Ask for a creative response

If you can support all entrant pupils to read the same book across the year group, ask them to respond creatively to the book in any manner they choose. 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, a dance video – their minds will come up with much more! These creative responses could be displayed around the school or shared in class. Varied and creative responses to the same task will encourage pupil discussion and enable them to learn about their peers' interests in the first few weeks. These can be displayed throughout the school, making great displays, but could also be shared with parents at the first parent's evening to showcase the variety of work pupils have produced.

Activity 2: Write a letter

You could invite an author or other creative practitioner to lead a session (physically or digitally) and share letter writing tips with pupils. For example, 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, physically or digitally. This activity could support a buddy system you already have in place or could be used with other years to create connections and conversations between different year groups.

Activity 3: Use Bookzilla

Bookzilla is an 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 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 on using Bookzilla to create a buzz around reading, explore our [Bookzilla resource](#).

If you have pupils who are confident using Bookzilla, support them to model using the App with feeder primary schools, and have conversations about books, genres and their own reading journeys.

Activity 4: Welcome to the library

If you have a library in your secondary, work with current S1 pupils to create a 'welcome to the library' information pack and/or video that describes how to find books, what facilities are available in the library (clubs, audiobooks, games nights and so on) and the range of books available. Ask S1 pupils to give a reading recommendation, perhaps a book they came across in the library that they especially enjoyed, or maybe a new genre they have found or a club they have joined. Share this information pack or video with your feeder primaries. You could also do this for classroom libraries if you don't have a school library.

Activity 5: Create a class story or class book

Work with pupils to create a class or year-group book. It could include stories, poems or artwork from new pupils. It could be inspired by the transition book they have shared or the experience of starting at secondary. You could workshop ideas for the book's theme in the first few weeks of term, take votes across the group to make decisions, and then work on pieces to contribute to the book over the rest of term. Pupils could set and format 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](#).