



DIY Quick Reads Reading Groups

Introduction

DIY Quick Reads Reading Group resources are designed to enable groups to set up and run their own reading group with the minimum cost. These resources have been developed as part of a project, led by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), to support people running their own reading groups in places like day centres, care homes, health centres and mental health service-user groups, but could be adapted for different settings.

The resources are ideal for running a reading group with Quick Reads and other books. With lots of suggestions for getting started and activity ideas, we hope our tips will help you get up and running.

Quick Reads

Short, sharp shots of entertainment

Contents:

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1. Getting started – things to think about:

If you are setting up your group from scratch, it would be useful to think about these issues:

- Who will come to the group?
- How will you tell people about it?
- When will you meet? How often?
- Where will you meet?
- Who is going to lead the group? Or will the members take turns?
- Are you going to have refreshments?
- How will you choose the books you are going to read?
- How will you make sure everyone has access to the books?

It may be helpful to chat about these issues before starting to talk about particular books. This is also a good time to agree on what the first book you plan to talk about will be.

Books for free!

Your local library service can lend book groups sets of books for their members to use, at no cost. If you aren't already in touch with your local library, make contact and ask to speak to someone about "reader development". You could also arrange for your groups to be visited by their local library services, to find out more about the Quick Reads that are available and the variety of other books they could borrow.

Even if your group would prefer to buy their own books, libraries (and bookshops) are still a useful place to browse and try reading short sections of a range of different books, before you decide on what to read as a group.

Where to meet - at no cost

Your group may have a place to meet already, but if they don't, or if you would like a change of scenery, there are several options. Libraries can offer book groups a place to meet; or you could meet at coffee shops, in the workplace or at your local pub!

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Ground rules

It's a good idea to agree some ground rules for your group, to help things run smoothly. This is a list of topics you might want to discuss at your first meeting:

Respect

- For other members' opinions, contribution and emotions.
- For the group leader's/ facilitator's role.
- Do not talk over other people and do take turns to speak.
- Do not allow one or two members to dominate the discussion – e.g. agree a sign to indicate time is up.

Membership

- How many members?
- Does anyone require books in audio, Braille or large print?
- Who can join?

Participation

- Have a go at reading the book – it doesn't matter if you haven't finished it
- Talk to the group not the person nearest to you.
- Offer opinions without being asked.

Time

- Agree the time when you meet (when; how long; how often)
- Don't be late.
- Do you take a break?

Attendance

- Make commitment to attend.
- Notify a group leader/facilitator if you are unable to attend.
- Do you wish to follow up any absences? If so who does it?

Mobile phones

- To switch off?

Refreshments

- Do you have; when and who organises them?

2.Choosing a chairperson or organiser

It's a good idea to have an organiser (or more than one) of each meeting, to make sure things run smoothly, and to kick off discussions about the books. Here are some suggestions for selecting a chair:

Ask for a volunteer

If you have more than one, have a **Secret Ballot**

- Members write the name of the person they have chosen onto a slip of paper.
- Post the slips into a box.
- Count the votes.

Take Turns

Each member of the group has a 'turn' at being Chair.

- Alphabetically
- By availability
- Whenever a new book is discussed

Job Share

2 people take the Chair but split the tasks, or the sessions

3. Ideas for running a meeting

At your first meeting you might like to:

Welcome everyone

- Discuss ground rules
- Discuss how to choose books and make sure everyone can get a copy
- Encourage everyone to read the book but explain that it is not compulsory and attendance is welcome
- Set dates, times and venue for the next meeting
- If not all the group members know each other, you could try some icebreakers
- Discuss the group's different interests
- Choose a book for the next and following meeting - check that everyone is happy with the choice.

Hand out blank **"Review" sheets** – these are a good way of making a note of your comments on the book when you're reading, and can be used to prompt questions and discussion for the next meeting.

At later meetings you could also:

- Talk about the book that you have read
- Ask one of the group members to summarise the book, just in case one of the other members hasn't had time to finish it
- As a group decide why you would recommend this book to someone, or decide why you wouldn't recommend it
- Look at a biography of the book's author – information about authors is usually found in the book or on an author's website
- Decide what you would like to read next.

4. Suggested Icebreakers:

A: Book covers exercise

Talk about why and how we choose books.

What do you look for?

- Author, title, cover, blurb (the description on the back of the book), first page, flick through, recommendation?
- Seeking a book after reading a review or watching a film or programme on television?
- Does anything put you off reading a book?

B: What do you read? exercise

1. What format?

- Magazine, newspaper, hardback or paperback book, electronic, graphic novel, comic

2. What genre or type of book?

- Romance, modern, sci-fi, crime, fiction, non-fiction, humour, horror, fantasy, poetry, biography, travel

3. Other?

- A brand new book, something you've read before, that has been recommended or the same or new author?

When/where did you read the book?

- Whilst: eating, on the loo, waiting, travelling, on holiday, in bed, or as part of another activity?

- Do you read different types of things at different times?
- Can you read while other people are talking, or the television, or music, is on?

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C: Blind date

Put these questions onto cards and hand them out to the members. They need to ask at least one question to a person they don't know very well.

Who would be your ideal dinner companion, and why?
What's your secret ambition?
What was the first record/CD that you ever bought?
Which film have you seen the most times?
If you could live in any historical period, what would you choose and why?
What was your childhood pet?

What has been your most exciting experience?

Which skill would you most like to learn?

What has been your most frightening experience?

What would we be surprised to know about you?

What was the best dish that you ever cooked?

If you could have any super-power, what would you choose?

If your home was on fire, what item would you save, apart from pets & family?

Strictly Come Dancing or X-Factor?

5.Choosing books to read

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- Write titles on a slip of paper and draw one out each week
- Vote on titles
- Choose according to the picture on the front cover and the blurb on the back

Recommendation

Ask members for their suggestions of:

- best author read
- best book ever read
- films or television programmes that have been based on books

Library

Ask your librarian what has been the most borrowed book this year.

Ask your librarian what book they would recommend in the area that most of the group are interested in.

Take turns

Members take it in turns to recommend a book for the rest of the group to read.

Types of books

What types have members read before?

Would they like to try a new topic, one they have never read before? You could try:

- Art
- Music

- Biography
- Classics
- Comedy
- Crime
- Fantasy
- Health, mind and body
- History
- Horror
- Languages
- Philosophy
- Poetry
- Politics
- Romance
- Science Fiction
- Society
- Sport and leisure
- Stage
- Travel

6. Talking about the book you read – questions you can use for (almost) any book!

- A:**
- What do you think the book is about?
 - Was it easy to understand?
 - Could the author have written it differently?
 - Did it seem real?
 - Was it effective? What emotions did it stir?
 - Would you like to read another book about this topic?
 - Would you like to read another book by this author?
 - How does this book compare to any films or television programmes based on this book, or similar subjects?
- B:**
- What was unique about the setting of the book and how did it enhance or take away from the story?
 - What themes did the author highlight in the novel? What do you think he or she is trying to get across to the reader?
 - Do the characters seem real and believable? Can you relate to their situations?
 - How do characters change or evolve throughout the course of the story? What events trigger such changes?
 - Does anyone wish to raise any further points?
- C:**
- Did you love it, loathe it or remain indifferent to it? Why?
 - Did you lose interest in it? Why?
 - Was it too confusing?
 - Was it a real 'page turner'?
 - Have you lent or recommended this book to anyone? Why? Who?
 - Would you like to discuss anything else about this book?

7. Keeping it going

We worked with eight reading groups as part of the NIACE project. Some of our groups found that it took them a while to get started and to establish members. Most groups lost and gained new members along the way. Several groups made changes to how they ran, once they'd got a few meetings under their belt and were feeling more confident. Here is what they said about their experiences of taking part in a Quick Reads reading group:

There is not a soul in the group whose perspective on life, and whose confidence has not grown since becoming a member of "Where's me Glasses". It has been a really enjoyable experience for all involved.

Although I have not read all the books, I have made a start on all and I like it a lot. I find it exciting to come to the meetings. I got a lot of pleasure from being part of this and some of the stories have been gripping and very enjoyable.

I have not been a keen reader before joining the group but being part of the group has encouraged me to have a go. I have enjoyed it so much to be able to come to the meeting and take part in the discussion. I have enjoyed being able to give my view of the book but also to hear what other people thought as this has highlighted some different perspectives and opinions.

I have really enjoyed coming here. I have known people in this group from before but here I have learned so many new things about other members.

If your group wants to try something new think about:

- Taking a visit to a library, bookshop, gallery or museum to look at something book-connected
- Visiting a cinema or watching a DVD connected to a book you've been reading
- Change where you meet
- Invite some new members
- Choose a completely different kind of book to read – if you've read a lot of fiction, why not try something factual, poetry, a play or a graphic novel?

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- Writing your own stories, poems, plays or articles. Your local library service will be able to help you find out what's going on in your local area.

If your group members are parents, grandparents or carers, you might like to take a look at some of the books that their children or young people are interested in.

Linking up with other groups:

- Chatabout is an online network for reading groups, where you find out what other groups are doing all around the UK. Join for free, here: <http://chataboutreading.ning.com>
- You can share your reviews of Quick Reads books by posting them on the Quick Reads website: www.quickreads.org.uk/reviews
- Your local library service will know about other reading groups meeting in your local area, as well as events like author visits and festivals

Good luck and have fun!

8. Review Sheet

Name of book.....

Date of next meeting.....

Your name.....

If you've read a Quick Read submit a book review that may be published on the website:

<http://www.quickreads.org.uk/reviews/reader-reviews/>

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9. Useful Links:

Quick Reads www.quickreads.org.uk
Reading for Pleasure www.readingforpleasure.org.uk/
Reading Agency www.readingagency.org.uk
First Choice Books www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk/
BBC raw www.bbc.co.uk/raw/
Booktrust www.booktrust.org.uk
Love Reading <http://www.lovereadings.co.uk/>
Reading Group Choices <http://www.readinggroupchoices.com/>
World Book Day www.worldbookday.com
BBC Book club <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006s5sf>
Bookgroup Info <http://www.bookgroup.info/041205/index.php>
Penguin Readers' Group <http://readers.penguin.co.uk/>
Reading Group Guides
<http://www.readinggroupguides.com/roundtable/running.asp>
You Magazine Reading Group www.youreadinggroup.co.uk/

Most borrowed titles:

Top 20 most borrowed fiction titles

<http://www.plr.uk.com/mediaCentre/mostBorrowedTitles/top20Titles/2007-2008Top20Titles.pdf>

Most Borrowed Non-Fiction Titles: *Published by Public Lending Right,*

Most Borrowed Classic Titles: *Richard House, Sorbonne Close, Stockton – on – Tees, TS17 6DA*

Books about book groups:

Reading Groups by Jenny Hartley and Sarah Turvey – Oxford University Press
ISBN: 0198187785

Essential Guide to Reading Groups by Susan Osborne – Bloomsbury, ISBN:
0747560943

The Reading Group Handbook by Rachel W. Jacobsohn – Hyperion, ISBN:
0786883243

Quick Reads in alternative formats:

Audio versions of most of the Quick Reads are available in CD format from WF
Howes Ltd as part of their Clipper Emergent Reader programme -

www.wfhowes.co.uk/ceerp/
sales@wfhowes.co.uk Tel. 01664 423000

Large print versions of several of the Quick Reads titles are available from BBC
Audiobooks Ltd www.bbcaudiobooks.co.uk/libraries , library.sales@bbc.co.uk
Tel. 01225 878000

**Quick Reads are available from supermarkets, bookshops and online,
priced at just £1.99.**

New for 2010 Quick Reads are also available to download as eBooks.



Quick Reads

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[Find out where to source the books.](#)

Quick Reads are also available at your local library.

To find your nearest library visit:

<http://local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/index.jsp?LGSL=438&LGIL=0&ServiceName=Apply>

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