



Reading for pleasure

Ideas to inspire

FE college students



Ideas to inspire FE college students

'The National Year of Reading gives us a great opportunity to work together to promote reading for pleasure to adults who are improving their skills.'

*David Lammy MP, Minister for Skills,
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills*

'If you read, the world has never been more accessible and more exciting. If you don't, the door on opportunity has never been more firmly shut. By starting with what people love – be it sport, music, film, family history, magazines or adventure gaming – the National Year of Reading is a perfect opportunity to weave a rich variety of reading into all your work with learners.'

Honor Wilson-Fletcher, Project Director, National Year of Reading

'I can underestimate learners' understanding until they tell me about a book they have read.' *Adult literacy tutor*

Start with what you love. This is the message of the National Year of Reading. And this is the message for adult learners as much as for any other audience.

The Vital Link libraries and adult literacy programme, together with NIACE, have created this series of ideas packs for practitioners working with adults in a range of different settings. **This pack contains ideas to inspire students attending FE colleges. There is a full list of all the packs available on page 8.**

The aim is to support you in introducing learners to reading in all its forms – books, magazines, websites, lyrics – not just this year but every year. We need to widen people's concept of reading so that they can think of themselves as 'readers' whatever kind of reading they enjoy. We know that learners can get the reading bug if they are encouraged to choose what they read and can share their experience of reading with others. Reading needs to fit into their busy lives, be relevant to their interests and concerns but also to surprise them with new ideas and ways of looking at the world.

Research tells us that reading for pleasure 'helps to increase enjoyment, self-confidence, motivation and the acquisition of functional literacy skills.' Libraries are ideally placed to support learners as they discover an enjoyment of reading of all kinds. But other organisations also have expertise and resources to offer which can help to engage people in a love of reading. Local authorities, colleges, prisons, trade unions, businesses and voluntary organisations have all made a commitment to use the National Year of Reading to create new readers.

Please make good use of these ideas while the profile for reading is high and help us to make 2008 an exciting point in their reading journey for adult learners across the country.

Genevieve Clarke, The Vital Link and **Jenny Cobley**, NIACE

See www.yearofreading.org.uk for more information about the National Year of Reading.

Introduction

The potential audience for reading for pleasure in FE colleges ranges from fluent readers to those who already feel that they are confirmed 'non-readers'. Despite this there are ways in which the whole student body can be encouraged to engage in informal reading activities outside the classroom (see the case studies in this pack). Even within formal teaching, the move to embed literacy and numeracy in contexts relevant to particular vocational courses should help to make reading more relevant for some students.

The challenge is that many students who have to take key skills as part of their vocational courses are not keen on key skills! But the portfolio takes only weeks to complete if you really go at it, and you can't practise the tests week after week. So why not try including reading for pleasure within key skills sessions? Quick Reads and other titles from the database at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk give you a golden opportunity. Quick Read books are suitable for Entry Level 3 or Level 1 readers or above, so should fit in with the ability range of the key skills work. Just be aware that these books were written for adult audiences. Many vocational students are teenagers, and although sex and violence may be part of their diet in films and video games, you need to be comfortable about the content of the books before you introduce them.

You can either use reading aloud techniques in the group, or allow silent reading time followed by discussion. Talking about the books will give you a good basis for the speaking and listening part of key skills.

You are likely to need multiple copies of books if you want all your students to read the same title. Talk to your college or local public library about this and ensure that they are aware of the range of fiction and non-fiction on offer for less confident readers. Also talk to them about other books written for a teenage audience which, with some adaptation and care, could be introduced to FE key skills learners. College librarians are in a great position to support reading promotions for students and we've included some engagement ideas here.

Mainstream books that are accessible and focus on teenage culture, interests and dilemmas include, for example, Kevin Brooks' *Candy* (teenage prostitution), Melvyn Burgess' *Junk* (drug addiction), Keith Gray's *Warehouse* (homelessness), Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody* (teenage pregnancy), Alan Gibbons' *Caught in the Crossfire* (racism), Michael Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful* (WW1), Louis Sachar's *Holes* (young offenders), Martin Waddell's *Tango's Baby* (teenage parenthood) and Robert Westall's *The Stones of Muncaster Cathedral* (horror/ghosts).

Top ten ideas

1. Get students to think about all the ways in which they read and rank them, e.g. text messages, Facebook, graffiti, newspapers, magazines, CD covers, graphic novels, etc. You could set up a vote for a 'Top Ten favourites' in each category.
2. Encourage students to get involved in book selection for the college library and to set up their own book displays to recommend titles to their peers.
3. Try book reviewing with a twist – titles that students would like to put in Room 101 or book characters they find most irritating!
4. Read a playscript with your students. Think how it manages to tell the story only through the speech of the characters. Try to tell a simple story using stick men with speech bubbles.
5. Split your class into small groups. Ask each group to choose a short book with a good story and then to recreate it using storyboard techniques (see www.exposure.co.uk/eejit/storybd/index.html for an example of how to do this).
6. Look at biographical writing by a celebrity the learners might recognise. There are Quick Read books by John Bird (founder of the *Big Issue*), Richard Branson, singer Kerry Katona, TV journalist John Simpson, rugby player Scott Quinnell, athlete Colin Jackson and chef Gordon Ramsay. Learners could also research the life of a celebrity using the internet.
7. Pick a film/book tie-in. What are the advantages of seeing a film as opposed to reading the same story in a book? Are there any advantages to reading the book version? Look at a review (current films are always reviewed on the internet as well as the papers). Do the students agree? Try your hand at writing reviews and discuss what is fact and what is opinion.
8. Ask students to share the music and lyrics they most enjoy. Have a go at writing some rap. There are ideas at http://www.readinga-z.com/poetry/lesson_plans/rap/rap_print.html and <http://www.poetryteachers.com/poetclass/lessons/raplyrics.html> to get you started.
9. Take a look at how crime is reported. Students could compare contemporary examples in the news with historical reporting of cases such as Jack the Ripper. Are journalists doing a valuable job in keeping the public informed and upholding the freedom of information, or are they cynically manipulating public opinion in the pursuit of sales and profit?
10. Listen to the podcast of an interview with Gilda O'Neill, author of *East End Tales*, on www.niace.org.uk/quickreads. Read the section in Chapter 1 where Gilda talks to a former resident from the East End. Discuss with your students how they might obtain information about what life used to be like in your town. Discuss interviewing techniques and etiquette. Let them practise on each other, developing their listening skills and their note taking. Then either ask them to interview people they know, or invite an older person to come into the class and answer questions about their childhood in the area.

Case study 1: Manga Club

In the autumn term, a couple of students at South Downs College in Hampshire started a Manga Club in the Student Union on Friday afternoons (4.15–6.15). Both were interested in graphic novels, Anime (Japanese animation) and Manga. They brought in Anime DVDs to watch with others, and then their own books and magazines to swap with students.

Within a few weeks between 14 and 16 students were staying on after college to watch DVDs together before going home. An informal lending library of DVDs, graphic novels, Anime, magazines and games soon developed.

Many students hadn't read graphic novels or Manga before but, in an informal atmosphere and after enjoying the films, felt they could borrow one and give it a go. As they brought back books and magazines the following week they shared their views about the different genres, artwork and stories and were encouraged to try another.

The evenings developed typically into a book discussion group, book and magazine swap, DVD viewing and games playing. Some of the artistic students began to draw characters, and a small working group decided to create a Manga strip for the college student newsletter *Vibe*. For a number of weeks the group worked together on creating characters and a storyline to fit into a number of frames and based the stories on college life. They used the books for inspiration and ideas of format.

With help and recommendations from the club, the college LRC (library) set up its own graphic novel and Manga collection, and promoted it with articles in *Vibe* and the staff newsletter. A book display of graphic novels, animation/cartoon drawing books, comic and superhero books by the LRC created a lot of interest with staff and students at the college.

There is now a lot of interest across the college as the graphic novels have appealed to the 16–19 age groups. They are being incorporated into several courses (e.g. performing arts, graphic design, media, and history) and basic skills students and students with learning difficulties have discovered the collection and are borrowing them regularly.

A number of the students reading graphic novels did not view themselves as 'readers' or library users, but they are now discovering other reading material in the LRC, e.g. Quick Reads, audio books, magazines and non-fiction on subjects that interest them. The graphic novels have also brought to life Shakespeare for Performing Arts students and some English students, and they have discovered visual literacy as a new skill.

Next year the Manga Club will be promoted as part of the college Enrichment programme with meetings in the LRC to raise awareness of the varied collection of reading resources that students can discover and try for themselves. Hopefully there will be a new generation of students rediscovering reading for pleasure and broadening their reading experience.

Case study 2:

The GLOW-WORM project

As a teacher trainer at Southgate College in North London, Deborah Eagle spends a lot of her time making sure that schemes of work and vocational delivery across the college meet Skills for Life criteria. There's a danger, however, of focusing too much on the component parts – the full stop, the capital letter, etc – and neglecting the context for this literacy learning. GLOW-WORM, with its emphasis on the pleasurable and communicative aspects of reading and writing, both supports and provides an antidote to Deborah's other work of 'deconstructing the rainbow'.

To raise the profile of books and reading around the college, she asked staff to contribute their own books and magazines in order to set up an informal reading corner in the student common room. Neon green and electric pink paint transformed the shelves, and around 500 books and magazines were donated. Each book contains a review slip with a simple five-star rating for students to complete if they want to. If books disappear, that's considered positive – and stock is simply replenished from an endless supply. The atmosphere in the room has changed. From being a bleak space dominated by a TV, the books and magazines have contributed to a sense of homeliness and relaxation. It's not unusual, now, to find students huddled over reading matter – albeit *Heat* or *Hello*.

The GLOW-WORM project has since spawned other activity around the college. Deborah has devised a series of Skills for Life games to be used in classes such as dictionary hunts, texts for discussion and word games delivered as competitions through the college's tutorial systems.

The Skills for Life team have also run poetry and prose competitions, publishing all contributions and inviting guests to read student entries at a celebration event – on one occasion, Abe Gibson, poet in residence for London Transport; on another, a young hip hop band *Descendants of a Quest* to interpret lyrics about dreams to link with National Poetry Day.

So far the project has achieved its aims of 'getting books visible', of promoting fluency alongside accuracy and of encouraging students to think of reading and writing as natural, enjoyable and easily accessible activities.

Resources

Effective Teaching and Learning: Reading (*summary report*) outlines the findings of the research by the NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy) into what methods are effective. The document is available on the website www.nrdc.org.uk. For the companion volume drawing out the practical implications, see below.

Reading is part of the *Developing Adult Teaching and Learning: Practitioner Guides* series and has useful advice about organising reading with adult learners. It is published by the NRDC and distributed by www.niace.org.uk/publications

Quick Reads books are listed on www.niace.org.uk/quickreads. Audio versions are available from libraries or W F Howes Ltd as part of their Clipper Emergent Reader programme (sales@wfhows.co.uk 01664 423000). Downloadable files providing ideas for using the books can be found via www.vitallink.org.uk

Web quests linked to some of the Quick Reads titles on www.quickreadsideas.org.uk/web.php will stretch more confident learners and broaden their reading and their interests.

www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk is a unique online database of books of over 600 titles recommended for emergent readers searchable by title, author, category and readability level. It includes graphic novels, poetry, fiction and non-fiction chosen using selection criteria developed by The Vital Link programme as well as titles written especially for this audience by publishers such as New Island (www.newisland.ie), Sandstone Press (www.sandstonepress.com) and Barrington Stoke (www.barringtonstoke.co.uk).

Ransom Publishing specialise in producing easily accessible, high-interest books with a very low reading level for older teenagers and adults. www.ransom.co.uk

The **Six Book Challenge** in association with the Costa Book Awards is a national scheme for emergent readers run by The Reading Agency as part of The Vital Link programme. www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk

Full list of *Ideas to inspire* packs

New readers 1 (up to Adult Literacy Entry Level 2)

New readers 2 (Adult Literacy Entry Level 3 – Level 2)

Parents and carers of young children

Dads and male carers of young children

ESOL learners

People in prisons and young offender institutions

People in the workplace

FE college students

HE students

Readers with additional needs

These packs are available to download as individual PDF files from www.vitallink.org.uk or www.niace.org.uk

Ideas to inspire FE students

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Case studies contributed by Sarah Reed and Deborah Eagle

Photographs of braille reading and flower-seller reading novel by Sim Canetty-Clarke

We welcome all feedback on these ideas and on how you are promoting reading to your learners. Please contact genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk



The Vital Link libraries and adult literacy programme is run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust. See www.vitallink.org.uk



NIACE is a non-governmental organisation working for more and different learners. See www.niace.org.uk