



Reading for pleasure

Ideas to inspire new readers 2



Ideas to inspire new readers between Adult Literacy Entry Level 3 and Level 2

'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 the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (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 emergent readers - adults who are likely to be between Adult Literacy Entry Level 3 and Level 2 but who have yet to develop a real enjoyment of reading. There is a full list of all the packs available on page 9.**

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 mechanics of reading will still be presenting some challenges for learners at Adult Literacy Entry Level 3 and above, i.e. emergent readers. They are likely to be thrown by longer and unexpected words, such as unusual names. But wider activity around reading for pleasure now becomes a real possibility, and it is from this point onward that learners begin to appreciate how the world can open up to them through books and other reading materials. This is more likely to happen where there is guidance and opportunity from a tutor, group leader or library staff.

As with learners just starting to read, it's important to stress that reading for pleasure encompasses all kinds of materials, printed or online, and not just books. It's also liberating for new readers to realise that they're allowed to stop reading a book if they are not enjoying it without being made to feel that they have failed in some way.

A shared experience of reading can be a great encouragement at this stage – swapping recommendations with other learners and exchanging views. This can happen within formal literacy provision with tutors supporting readers through one-to-one and group work using effective techniques such as oral reading. But it can also extend beyond the classroom with learners being encouraged to make use of their local library or join the growing number of reading groups for emergent readers. Publication of the Quick Reads and other short titles especially for emergent readers, together with ideas for using these books, enables much wider use of reading for pleasure as part of the learning process.

Top ten ideas

- 1.** Introduce the learners to their local library if they don't already use it. Pre-arrange the visit with the librarian so that they get the most out of it. An unstructured visit may fall flat, so you could give the learners some specific things to find out and ask them to pool the information they have at the end of the visit.
- 2.** Buy or borrow a set of Quick Reads to display in the classroom. Ask the students to help you design a simple pro forma for reviewing the books. They can fill in this pro forma when they have read a book to help guide others in their choice of reading.
- 3.** Take a Quick Reads title such as *East End Tales* by Gilda O'Neill and, together, read and discuss sections of the book. This could develop into a project on local history in which learners share stories about the local area, perhaps collecting them from neighbours and family. This might lead to researching archive material at the library or on the internet once learners have built up more confidence about using research skills.
- 4.** Make use of local newspapers to read and discuss local issues. You can also make use of online newspapers, many of which enable you to download individual stories. The *Which?* consumer magazine has some interesting reports on topical issues using accessible language and presentation.
- 5.** Read the letters in *Chickenfeed* by Minette Walters to show how, by reading between the lines, you can follow the development of the relationship between the two correspondents. This could be part of a project in which learners look at letters in different styles for different purposes.
- 6.** Read most of a story together and leave the learners to invent their own ending. Compare their ideas. A whole book which would lend itself to this would be *One Good Turn* by Chris Ryan, or you could pick one of the short stories from the *Sun Book of Short Stories*, such as 'Henry'. (Both books are Quick Reads.)
- 7.** Take a story like 'I Wonder Why' from the *Sun Book of Short Stories* (Quick Reads). This recounts one situation from three different points of view. Read two of them and then ask the readers to tell the story from the third person's perspective. You could make up other scenarios for this activity, for example, an accident from the point of view of the victim, the driver, a witness or the police. A photograph of the scene would make a good starting point.
- 8.** Take a story and retell it using speech bubbles. 'A Flight in Italy' in *Twenty Tales from the War Zone* (Quick Reads) can be treated in this way, but many stories lend themselves to this kind of treatment. This could stimulate interest in graphic novels. The Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Project has created a graphic version of Jekyll and Hyde which you can access via www.cityofliterature.com. You can also download professional artwork with blank speech bubbles so that learners can complete the story for themselves.

Top ten ideas cont...

9. Playscripts are good for group reading. The Livewire series (Hodder and Stoughton in association with The Basic Skills Agency) has produced scripts for emergent readers. Or read a story that the group can dramatise, such as *Mad Weekend* by Roddy Doyle (New Island) about three lads visiting Liverpool.
10. Some of the Quick Reads authors have their own websites with biographical information. Encourage readers to explore these. There are podcast interviews with some of them on the NIACE website www.niace.org.uk/quickreads. Readers can think about questions they would ask if they were going to interview an author. Some authors will accept questions via their websites. There is also a set of Quick Reads web quests on <http://www.quickreadsideas.org.uk/web.php>

Case study 1:

Six Book Challenge

Spring 2008 saw the launch of the Six Book Challenge and I invited my Basic Skills English group to take part. The Six Book Challenge, in association with the Costa Book Awards, is run by the library service in partnership with colleges and the idea is to get adult learners to read six books, focused on Quick Reads and similar titles. The participants keep a simple reading diary, and at the end of the Challenge they receive a certificate.

The library decided to employ a facilitator so that there would be continuity of input from the library. A meeting was held to plan the programme with the objective of creating a less formal and less target-driven experience than the classroom.

Because the group differed in age, ability and interests, it was decided not to impose the same book on everyone and then discuss it. Instead the group took a theme each week and let readers choose any book to take home and read. Then everyone spoke about what they had read at the following meeting.

The themes were: an introduction to the easy-to-read book stock and making use of covers and blurbs to select titles; using the computers to find out more about titles and authors (and the group explored the Quick Reads site and posted a review); listening to books on audio tapes; poetry; story telling; and for the final session we had a visit from a well-known author who presented certificates.

The students were rather nervous at first. They needed help to think about different aspects of the books and ways to express their responses. The group dynamic also needed managing, to ensure everyone could make a contribution and feel valued.

Sometimes the staff also tended to take too much for granted about the group's background knowledge but at other times they surprised everyone. An Entry 3 Level learner who had never read poetry before became so enthusiastic that she asked to read Wordsworth's 'Upon Westminster Bridge' to the group.

Despite some initial reluctance, all learners completed the Challenge and had positive things to say about their experience. It helped them to see that there is more to learning English than filling in worksheets and it improved their Speaking and Listening skills as much as their reading.

One said 'I thought it was a privilege to have taken part.' Most of the group are continuing to use the public library, and it has regenerated the impetus to borrow college copies of Quick Reads, especially the new titles.

Case study 2: Using the Quick Reads

An adult literacy group meets once a week at a lifelong learning centre in Halton. The group is led by a tutor who has strong links with the reader development officer at Widnes Library, so the library lends multiple copies of Quick Read books to the class.

The group includes learners from Entry 1 to Level 2, but it was Christine (a learner at Entry 3/working towards Level 1) who got the most out of the initiative. The tutor had introduced Quick Reads titles, and read them with the class, using a mixture of reading alone, reading aloud together and listening to the tutor reading. The tutor used the opportunities to talk about aspects of the text, such as spelling and the way the story was presented. His main aim was to leave the story on a cliffhanger, to be picked up again the following week. This helped to maintain the students' interest.

The tutor also used the stories to stimulate discussion and to boost writing. For example, readers talked about or wrote what they thought of the story so far, or tried to predict what might happen next. Christine became so keen that she continued reading independently and has now read 32 titles, and has a list of eight which she hasn't been able to get hold of yet. She is also reading a lot with her granddaughter.

There is an Entry Level 1 student in the group, who was able to take part with the help of a support worker, and a Level 2 learner who was also engaged and prepared to be patient with the less confident readers.

Through NIACE, Christine and a fellow learner, Ruth, became ambassadors for Quick Reads, appearing on GMTV and meeting Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The group has gone on to take the Six Book Challenge.

Resources

Effective Teaching and Learning: Reading outlines the findings of the NRDC's research into what methods are effective. The document is available via 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 National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) and distributed by www.niace.org.uk/publications

Quick Reads books for emergent readers 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@wfhowes.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 between Entry Level 3 and Level 2 which is 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).

Avanti Books Resources Guide A useful guide to the huge variety of basic skills support materials that are available, including those produced by Avanti and by other publishers. www.avantibooks.com

RaW The website for the BBC's Read and Write campaign at www.bbc.co.uk/raw includes games, quizzes and other fun activities for new readers. The RaW Reader allows you to listen to and read the first chapters from the Quick Reads titles. BBC RaW has published three 'comics' for less confident readers – *My Story*, *Moving On* and *Tips for Storytelling*.

Graphic novels Edinburgh UNESCO city of literature project (www.cityofliterature.com) has provided activities associated with the story of Jekyll and Hyde, including downloadable pages, puzzles, audio versions and movie clips. It provides professional graphics with empty speech bubbles to help students construct their own version. <http://www.cityofliterature.com>

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

The Starter pack (The Basic Skills Agency 2007) contains a wealth of teaching ideas for new and experienced tutors. See Resources section of the archived Basic Skills Agency website at www.niace.org.uk

There are several **websites** which share ideas and resources for use with new readers. These include the UK Adult Basic Skills Resource Centre website at www.skillsworkshop.org, the talent website at www.talent.ac.uk and the Skills for Life Network at www.skillsforlifefnetwork.com

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 new readers II

Writer: Gill Moore

Case study 2 contributed by David Lambert

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