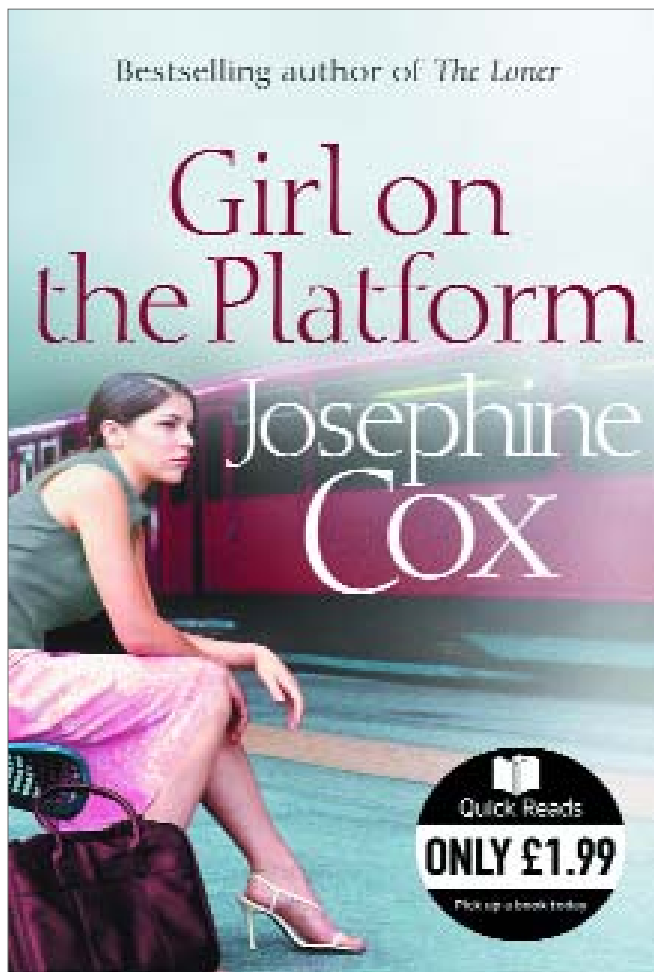




Quick Reads

The Vital Link Guide



Introduction

The launch of a fourth set of Quick Reads titles on World Book Day in March 2008 provides another great opportunity to introduce less confident adult readers to the world of books. This is particularly important during the 2008 National Year of Reading which has adult literacy learners as a priority audience.

The response to the books published since the launch of the Quick Reads initiative in March 2006 has been enormously positive. Thousands of people have discovered an enjoyment of reading for the first time. Tutors and other professionals have recorded an increase in learners' confidence, motivation and acquisition of literacy skills.

The Vital Link encourages practitioners to integrate reading for pleasure into their work with adult literacy learners through partnership with the public library service. Support from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills has enabled us to provide tools to link the Quick Reads into regular teaching practice and into more informal contact with adults who are improving their literacy skills.

As part of this work, The Vital Link has created resources to support use of the Quick Reads. These provide a 'way in' to using the books in a range of settings through ideas for discussion and extension activities. We have included suggestions for other reading materials, printed and online, and curriculum references for the main learning points.

The resources for the Quick Reads published in 2008 are available to download as individual PDF or Word files from www.vitallink.org.uk.

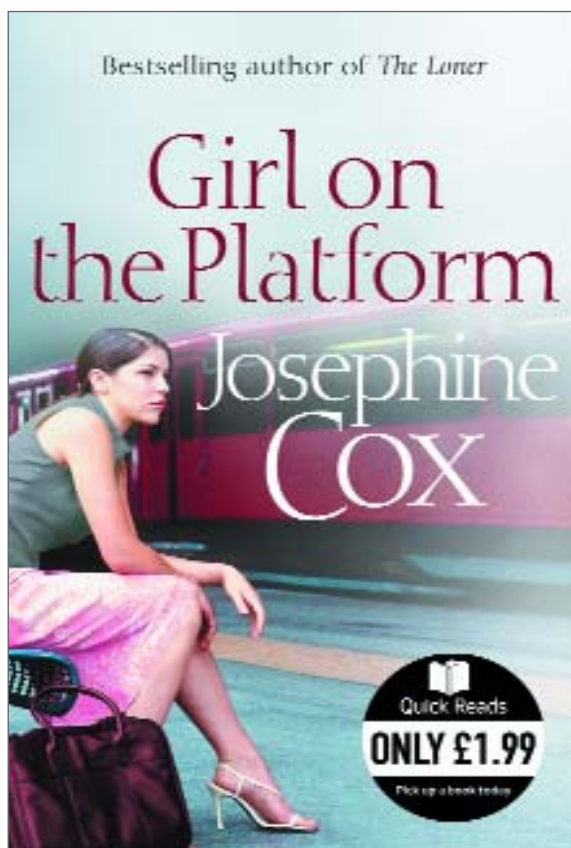
Similar materials for Quick Reads titles published in 2006 and 2007 are also available from www.vitallink.org.uk. *Starting with Quick Reads*, a 24-page guide supporting the Quick Reads titles published in 2007, is also available as a hard copy free from DIUS. Call 0845 6022260 (ref code SFLQR).

An innovative set of web-based activities for readers linked to the Quick Reads titles published in 2007 can be found at www.quickreadsideas.org.uk. A CD containing resources from 2006 and 2007 (excluding the web quests) for those without internet access is also available from DIUS. Call 0845 6022260 (ref code SFLQRCD).

**The
Vital
Link**

Our thanks go to writers Roger Adams and Gill Moore. The Vital Link is run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust.

We welcome all feedback on these ideas and on how you are using the Quick Reads. Please contact genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk



Girl on the Platform

Josephine Cox

Readability 11
Entry Level 3

The Book

This is a story about two friends, Pete and Mark, who have contrasting characters: Pete quiet and intense, Mark an extrovert with a gambling problem. From the small town of Woburn Sands, they go up to London for a night out but before the train has even left the station Pete is smitten with a girl he sees on the platform. The trip turns out less successfully than they hoped, especially their attempt to take in the club scene in Soho. However, it does result in Mark having an encounter with a woman he would like to see again but who seems just as unattainable in her way as Pete's.

The Author

Josephine Cox was brought up in poverty in a large family in Blackburn, a background which has been the inspiration for many of her books. Her first novel was not published until she was in her mid-forties but now she publishes two titles a year and sells millions of copies worldwide.

Book Talk

- How can readers best make practical use of the advice contained in the book? Do they have to start at the beginning and use the 'keys' in this order or do the headings and bullet points enable them to 'dip in' and just take what they want from it?
- The title is an example of the way John Bird uses everyday metaphors to make his points easy to understand. What other examples can readers find? (eg p2, 'the engine won't go if you don't put the right fuel into it'; p50, breaking a door with a sledgehammer)?
- John Bird tells several stories taken from his own life or observations (eg p10, moorhens on the pond near his house; p23, one of his first employees; p58, Edison and the light bulb). How does he use them to get over the points he wants to make?
- What examples can readers provide from their own experience or knowledge that could be used to illustrate the effectiveness of some of John Bird's precepts?
- There are places in the book where John Bird gives his view about aspects of life in modern Britain that he thinks are wrong (eg p42, the Health Service; p46, the need to have everything instantly; p53, intolerance of failure). What examples can readers find and how far do they agree with the views expressed? There would be an opportunity here for a more formal debate on one of these topics.
- Individually, readers could decide which 'key(s)' they consider to be most important. In small groups, they could then compare results and attempt, through discussion and persuasion, to compile a shorter list in priority order.

With a mixed group, the search for examples could be limited to particular sections of the book for some readers. The bullet points at the end of each chapter provide an accessible focus for consideration of the book as a whole.

Taking it Further

- Readers can find out more about Josephine Cox from her official website <http://www.josephinecox.co.uk/home> and her publisher's website <http://authorpages.hoddersystems.com/josephinecox/author.asp> These contain information about the author and extracts from some of her books and are accessible for less confident readers. They can also listen to an interview with the author by Jenni Murray at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2001_41_tue_04.shtml
- Readers could discuss other examples, perhaps from TV or film, of explorations of the 'buddy' theme? The closest to Josephine Cox's book is the 70s BBC comedy series *Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?*, episodes of which are available on DVD, with some extracts also available on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF6Kk28g2LM&feature=related>
- This theme is also a feature of many films, for example *Lethal Weapon* and *Thelma and Louise* (where the buddies are female). Film buffs could try the on-line quiz at: <http://www.funtrivia.com/trivia-quiz/Movies/Buddy-Movies-I-222249.html>
- Both Pete and Mark meet partners in unusual ways. Readers could tell each other about any real-life unusual meetings that have happened to themselves or friends or relations. These could be written up and compiled as a collection of short anecdotes on the theme.
- Mark has 'a weakness for gambling' which makes him 'addicted to betting on horses' (p7). As a result, he does not have much money to spend in London. Readers could find out more about this problem and discuss, for example, whether it is a particular problem with young men. More information can be found on: <http://www.channel4.com/health/microsites/F/family/problems/gambling.html>. An accessible article by David James, the Portsmouth and England goalkeeper, on the Guardian Unlimited site discusses gambling by professional footballers: http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/sport/2007/04/01/let_me_put_my_cards_on_the_tab.html

Learning Objectives

The curriculum references below are for Entry 3 or Level 1, but the suggested activities are quite open-ended to allow for the range of abilities found in many settings. Supported reading and discussion should enable readers with lower levels of literacy to be included.

Trace and understand the significance of events in a novel	Rt/E3.1; Rt/L1.1
Understand how an author depicts character in a story	Rt/L1.2
Identify the main ideas explored in a novel	Rt/E3.4; Rt/L1.3
Follow and contribute to discussion	SLd/E3.1, 2; SLd/L1.1
Give a clear short account of a meeting between two people	SLc/E3.3; SLc/L1.
Write using a style appropriate to your purpose	Wt/E3.3; Wt/L1.4
Judge what to include in a piece of writing	Wt/E3.1, Wt/L1.2

What Shall We Read Next?

Readers can find details, including short summaries, of Josephine Cox's most recent titles on the websites referred to above. They are all available in audio versions. The publisher's website also contains extracts of some of the books:

<http://authorpages.hoddersystems.com/josephinecox/author.asp>

Other Quick Reads titles about the adventures of ordinary working class characters

Woman Walks into a Bar by Rowan Coleman

Star Sullivan by Maeve Binchy

The Book Boy by Joanna Trollope

See the following pages for additional sources of support for working with emergent readers and a complete list of Quick Reads titles.

Further Information

See www.quickreads.org.uk for more about Quick Reads 2008 and the supporting campaign run by NIACE.

You can find a wider range of books suitable for Entry3/Level 1 readers at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk

Copies of the Quick Reads titles first published, re-issued or reprinted in 2008 can be purchased at all main bookshops and supermarket chains. Bulk quantities can be ordered from the following suppliers:

- Avanti – orders@avantibooks.com 01438 747000 www.avantibooks.com
- Bertrams/THE – books@bertrams.com 0871 303 6600 www.bertramsthe.com
- Browns Books for Students – schools.services@brownsbfs.co.uk 01482 384660 www.bfs.co.uk
- Gardners – custcare@gardners.com 01323 521777 www.gardners.com

Audio versions of the Quick Reads are available from W F Howes Ltd as part of their Clipper Emergent Reader programme – sales@wfhowes.co.uk 01664 423000 www.wfhowes.co.uk/cerp/

Large print versions of several of the Quick Reads titles are available from BBC Audiobooks Ltd – library.sales@bbc.com 01225 335336 www.bbcaudiobooks.com/libraries

Audio extracts from the Quick Reads can be found on the BBC RaW website at www.bbc.co.uk/raw along with a range of resources to support the BBC RaW campaign.

The Quick Reads project in Wales is a joint venture between the Welsh Arts Council and The Basic Skills Agency. Further details can be found at www.quickreads.net

Publishers producing titles specifically for emergent readers include:

- New Island Open Door series www.newisland.ie
- Sandstone Press Vista series and accompanying education packs www.sandstonepress.com
- Barrington Stoke www.barringtonstoke.co.uk (teenagers and young adults)
- Ransom Publishing www.ransom.co.uk (teenagers and young adults)

Gatehouse Media Limited publishes and distributes books and resources for use in adult basic education, including Gatehouse Books written by and for adult beginner readers www.gatehousebooks.org.uk

New Leaf Publishing publishes titles by and for adults who are new to reading and have low levels of literacy www.newleafpublishing.org.uk

Full List of Quick Reads Titles, Including Availability

New titles published March 2008

<i>Doctor Who: Revenge of the Judoon</i>	Terrance Dicks	978 1 846 07372 4
<i>East End Tales</i>	Gilda O'Neill	978 0 141 03494 2
<i>The Girl on the Platform</i>	Josephine Cox	978 0 00 727008 8
<i>Happy Families</i>	Adele Parks	978 0 141 03491 1
<i>The Hardest Test</i>	Scott Quinnell	978 1 90612595 0
<i>Humble Pie</i>	Gordon Ramsay	978 0 00727096 5
<i>Life's New Hurdles</i>	Colin Jackson	978 1 90612593 6
<i>One Good Turn</i>	Chris Ryan	978 0 099 52234 8
<i>RaW Voices: True Stories of Hardship and Hope</i>	Vanessa Feltz (ed)	978 1 846 07446 2
<i>The 10 Keys to Success</i>	John Bird	978 0 091 92360 0

Quick Reads backlist

<i>Aim High</i>	Tanni Grey Thompson	1905170890 978 1 905 17089 0
<i>Bring it Back Home</i>	Niall Griffiths	1905170912 978 1 905 17091 3
<i>Chickenfeed</i>	Minette Walters	978 0 330 44031 8
<i>Cleanskin</i>	Val McDermid	978 0 007 21672 7
<i>Danny Wallace and the Centre of the Universe</i>	Danny Wallace	978 0 091 90894 2
<i>A Day To Remember</i>	Fiona Phillips	1905170904 978 1 905 17090 6
<i>Doctor Who: I Am a Dalek</i>	Gareth Roberts	978 0 563 486480
<i>Doctor Who: Made of Steel</i>	Terrance Dicks	978 1 846 07204 8
<i>Don't Make Me Laugh</i>	Patrick Augustus	978 1 902 934464
<i>A Dream Come True</i>	Maureen Lee	978 0 7528 8239 0
<i>The Grey Man</i>	Andy McNab	978 0 552 15433 8
<i>Hell Island</i>	Matthew Reilly	978 0 330 442329
<i>How to Change Your Life in 7 Steps</i>	John Bird	978 0 091 90703 7
<i>Lily</i>	Adele Geras	978 0 752 88224 6
<i>The Name You Once Gave Me</i>	Mike Phillips	978 0 007 216710
<i>Reading My Arse!</i>	Ricky Tomlinson	978 0 7515 3953 0
<i>The Rubber Woman</i>	Lindsay Ashford	1905170882 978 1 905 17088 3
<i>Star Sullivan</i>	Maeve Binchy	978 0 75287 954 3
<i>The Sun Book of Short Stories</i>		978 0 553 181882 6
<i>Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best</i>	Kerry Katona	978 0 091 91754 8
<i>Twenty Tales from the War Zone</i>	John Simpson	978 0 330 44999 1

Other Titles (only available in libraries)

<i>Blackwater</i>	Conn Iggulden	978 0 007 22166 0
<i>The Book Boy</i>	Joanna Trollope	978 0 747 58211 3
<i>Burning Ambition</i>	Allen Carr	978 0 141 03030 2
<i>The Corpse's Tale</i>	Katherine John	1905170319
<i>Desert Claw</i>	Damien Lewis	0099493535
<i>The Dying Wish</i>	Courtia Newland	0349119635
<i>I Love Football</i>	Hunter Davies	0755314700
<i>The Poison in the Blood</i>	Tom Holland	0349119643
<i>Screw it, Let's Do It</i>	Richard Branson	0753510995
<i>Secrets</i>	Lynne Barrett-Lee	1905170300
<i>Someone Like Me</i>	Tom Holt	1841494461
<i>The Team</i>	Mick Dennis with the Premier League	0552153729
<i>The Thief</i>	Ruth Rendell	0091796865
<i>Winner Takes All</i>	John Francome	0755329481
<i>Woman Walks into a Bar</i>	Rowan Coleman	0099492288