

# Quick Reads

How do you use yours?



**Tried and tested ideas from practitioners**



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The Vital Link libraries and literacy programme is run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust. Our thanks go to all practitioners who submitted ideas and to editor Lynn Ludditt for these resources. We welcome all feedback and further ideas on how you are using the Quick Reads. Please contact [genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk)



# Introduction

We all appreciate recommendations from others – whether it be booking a holiday, employing a plumber or brainstorming a new project. It saves us time and gives us reassurance that these places, people and ideas have already been tried out successfully by others.

Through The Vital Link, we have contact with adult literacy practitioners and library staff on a daily basis. We know from them that the Quick Reads have been snapped up as an ideal way to introduce the pleasure of reading to people who are improving their skills. Many tutors and librarians have expressed an interest in sharing these experiences and in hearing how other people have used the Quick Reads.

So we invited practitioners to recommend ways of using the Quick Reads that they know have worked with their own learners. The result is this downloadable file of tried and tested ideas – *Quick Reads: How do you use yours?*

Although most of the examples here come from Skills for Life practitioners, many are easily transferable for successful use in less formal settings with readers. Most can be used with any of the titles; a few work particularly well with certain books.

We've kept to the same format for each activity, suggesting whether it might work best with individuals or a group. We've begun with ideas for choosing books and using them with different levels of ability. Subsequent ideas build on these first steps and introduce associated activities around discussion, writing and performance skills, and starting an informal reading group.

Please use these resources alongside *Quick Reads: The Vital Link Guide 2009*, also downloadable from [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk), which contains a series of ideas for using the new Quick Reads titles published on World Book Day 5 March 2009. This also includes further background information about the impact of reading for pleasure and the way in which libraries can support this activity.

Both these guides are intended as a starting-point for integrating the Quick Reads into your activities with less confident readers wherever you are working. We hope they will inspire you and that you will have fun using them.



# Choosing a Quick Read

- Best for:** Groups
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Selection of Quick Reads with sufficient copies for each student
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## Method:

- Ask each learner to select a different Quick Read from the selection available
- Ask learners to spend approximately ten minutes looking at the cover and reading the blurb. If some learners finish this quickly, ask them to start reading Chapter 1 whilst the others complete the task
- Ask learners to be prepared to feed back to the whole group about their impressions of the book
- Learners take turns to give feedback on their book, giving title, author and views on cover, genre, appeal etc
- Tutor or a learner makes brief notes on board to record main points – this could be done in table format
- Learners then cast two votes each to decide which book sounds best to read as a whole class
- After an agreed length of time the tutor/learners prepare activities suitable for a two-hour session based on their No.1 book, eg quizzes, timelines, reviews etc

## Why does it work well?

“Learners decide which book to read and are therefore more committed to the subsequent activities. This exercise is suitable for a range of literacy levels and abilities and involves speaking, listening and reading skills. Both the tutor and learners find that the voting can be quite exciting!”

**Sue Turner, Senior Tutor, Buckinghamshire Adult Learning**



# Booking in and out

- Best for:** Individuals
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Copies of Quick Reads and other relevant materials to match learner interests  
Notebook
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## Method:

- Tutor provides a notebook for 'booking in and out' purposes
- Learners select a book to take home and enter the details of it in the notebook – eg title/author, date loaned, date due for return
- On return learners are asked to leave a review – both positive or negative – as a guide for other learners

This activity prepares learners for using a local library. If joining forms are required, they could be completed as part of a session before visiting the library.

## Why does it work well?

"Learners choose their own books to take home as if from a library. Issues of trust and ownership are explored developing good role models for their family and to other learners."

**Lindsay Devine, Basic Skills Outreach Practitioner, Learning Curve, Melksham**



# Six Book Challenge

<b>Best for:</b>	Groups
<b>Level suitable for:</b>	Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
<b>Resources required:</b>	Six Book Challenge packs Copies of Quick Reads Library membership forms Review template Access to online renewal of library books (desirable)

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## Method:

- Tutor orders Six Book Challenge materials from The Reading Agency and makes Six Book Challenge display for classroom
- Class visits local library to meet with librarian, have an induction and be given diaries, bookmarks etc connected with Six Book Challenge
- Learners browse Quick Reads in the library and select a book using cover, blurb and first lines
- Return to college and share reason for choosing the book with other class members
- Tutor demonstrates how to renew books on line or via telephone
- During subsequent weeks learners share passages from their chosen books, fill in their Six Book Challenge diaries and write reviews to be included as part of the classroom display
- At the end of the Challenge period, learners receive their certificates and celebrate success

## Why does it work well?

“It is a challenge for which enthusiasm quickly grows. It encourages learners to recommend books to each other and to realise that another student might respond differently to the same book. It is a way of making reading for pleasure an integral part of classes and follows on well from sessions on the role of a library, how to use a library, how books are arranged etc.”

**Jan Wainwright, former Basic Skills Tutor, Leeds**



# First Lines

- Best for:** Groups
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Set of Quick Reads  
Tutor list of 'first lines' taken from Quick Reads  
Learner handouts of above list  
Flip chart listing 'first lines'
- 

## Method:

- Tutor reads list of 'first lines' out to group
- Learners listen until all the 'first lines' have been read out to them then try to guess which first line comes from which Quick Read
- Learners are then given a handout of the list and asked to choose their favourite 'first line' – one that interests or excites them into wanting to 'hear more' of the story. They can also choose a second and third choice – numbering them 1, 2, 3.
- Votes are collated on the flip chart by way of five-bar gates – learners can help with this task as in addition to literacy skills it incorporates numeracy
- The class 'winner' can then be used for 'whole group' reading
- Learners can read their own personal favourite Quick Read either in 'individual' reading sessions in class or at home

## Why does it work well?

"Learners enjoy being read to, making their own choices and being asked for their opinion. This task involves a number of skills – listening, speaking, writing, reading with the added bonus of some basic numeracy too. Voting brings an element of excitement to the exercise, with learners wondering which Quick Read will come out as the winner. A lively discussion amongst the group usually follows!"

**Lynn Ludditt, Skills for Life Consultant, Read On – Write Away!, Derbyshire**



# Shared Reading

- Best for:** Groups or pairs
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1
- Resources required:** Sufficient copies of Quick Reads  
– ideally one for each learner
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## Method:

- Introduce concept of shared reading
- Emphasise that no one has to read if they don't want to
- Learners encouraged to read about half a page to rest of group
- Practitioner/assistant also take part in reading aloud
- Learners can take book home to continue if they wish
- At the end of each reading session group talks about what they have read and discusses any issues raised
- Simple comprehension exercises could also be used in conjunction with what has been read

## Why does it work well?

"I tried this with my group of learners recently using Colin Jackson's book *Life's New Hurdles*. One of my more reluctant readers really identified with Colin Jackson and his story and asked to take the book home. All the learners have definitely grown in confidence and the class have become very supportive of one another. Those who are more at ease with reading can go ahead and read longer passages. At the end of term we have a 'Book Review' session when students and tutors are invited to bring in one book that they have enjoyed reading to share with the rest of the class. Shared reading has helped less able students reach the end of a book, something some may rarely do."

**Jan Dyke, Skills for Life Tutor, West Sussex Adult and Community Learning Service**



# Reading Aloud – ESOL

- Best for:** Groups, especially ESOL
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1
- Resources required:** Sufficient copies of  
*Twenty Tales from the War Zone* John Simpson  
*How to Change your Life in 7 Steps* John Bird  
World map or globe

This activity was tried and tested using the titles listed above but it could work equally well with other Quick Reads.

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## Method:

- Learners read the books together as a group, one chapter per week, discussing content and meaning as they go
- Working in pairs they are asked to write (or text) a 15-word summary to each other – these can be shared within the group
- Learners can look at the map or use the globe to see where the places are if using John Simpson's *Twenty Tales from the War Zone*
- Tutor re-caps previous session's chapter before the group move on to the next chapter

## Why does it work well?

"There is sufficient text for one session in each chapter. Learners particularly enjoyed reading about other countries in John Simpson's book and we were able to have a good discussion and look at the map to see where the countries were. One learner commented 'It's good to learn about real things and real people.'"

**Penny Grant, Reader in Residence, HMP Leeds**



# Group Read

- Best for:** Groups, pairs, individuals
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Selection of Quick Reads with sufficient copies for each student  
Underpinning information on writing book reviews  
Interactive whiteboard
- 

## Method:

- Group chose *East End Tales* by Gilda O'Neill but any Quick Reads title can be used for this activity
- Learners take turns in reading aloud and discussing the text
- Useful to have a map of the East End on interactive whiteboard in order to identify locations and proximity – Google can also be used
- Discuss book reviews and how to write them
- Copies of the book taken home to finish and review written
- Next session learners pair up and amalgamate their reviews into one – these can be used in a display or student magazine
- Higher level learners could be required to limit their reviews to 50 words
- Lower level learners could be required to produce at least five complete sentences with appropriate punctuation, grammar etc

## Why does it work well?

“Learners have said that they really enjoy group reading – even those reluctant to read aloud have overcome their fear. It is a good opportunity to break off periodically to demonstrate use of punctuation, discuss vocabulary etc. Reading aloud brings punctuation to life and effectively demonstrates its purpose. This activity can be used successfully as part of the Six Book Challenge.”

**Sandy West, Tutor Co-ordinator, Buckinghamshire Adult Learning**



# Getting into Character

- Best for:** Groups
- Level suitable for:** Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Copy of *The Sun Book of Short Stories* for each student  
Smartboard  
Whiteboard/pens  
Character checklist sheets

This activity was tried and tested using the title listed above but it could work equally well with other Quick Reads.

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## Method:

- Tutor to read the story 'I don't know why' from *The Sun Book of Short Stories*
- Learners discuss what they like and dislike about the story
- Learners to produce character profiles under a variety of headings including: family members, lifestyles and ambitions, hobbies and leisure, personal feelings and failings – these could be written or pictorial
- Learners in small groups develop the roles of the characters and through role play are interviewed by tutor/s

## Why does it work well?

"Stories are read aloud and shared, with the characters being discussed and developed. Learners can then demonstrate their understanding through role play."

**Debby Miller, Director, Essential Skills Support Unit, Hampshire**



# Describing Characters and Places

- Best for:** Groups or pairs
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Quick Reads with sufficient copies for each Student - *The Sun Book of Short Stories* works particularly well for this activity  
Paper and pens
- 

## Method:

- Learners work in pairs and read aloud one short story per pair
- Select one character or place or object from the story
- Make a list of adjectives that describe that person, place, object
- Discuss and add more adjectives to build up a fuller picture - this part of the activity could develop into a mind-mapping exercise
- Exchange lists with other members of the group and encourage them to discuss and anticipate the short story before they read it for themselves
- Using the list of adjectives Level 1 learners and above can write their own short story and then compare it with the story in the book

## Why does it work well?

"It's fun to do and often amusing to see how the same group of adjectives can produce very different interpretations!"

**Jenny Higgins, Literacy Tutor, Cambridge Women's Centre**



# Changing Tenses

- Best for:** Groups, pairs or individuals
- Level suitable for:** Entry 3\*, Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Copy of pages from a Quick Reads title  
SmartBoard (optional)

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## Method:

- Tutor explains verb tenses – past, present, future
- Select a paragraph from a page
- Ask learners to highlight the ‘present tense’ verbs
- Ask learners to re-write by changing the verbs to ‘past tense’ (or vice versa)

### Alternative activity:


- Tutor scans page and uses with a SmartBoard/Promethean asking learners to take turns to highlight the verbs
- Print off for the group – students can then re-write changing tenses as above

\* Some preparatory work on verbs and tenses may be beneficial with Entry Level learners prior to this activity

## Why does it work well?

“The text is at a suitable level to make this task work really well. There are so many books that you can allow learners to choose a title/page/paragraph for themselves.”

**Lesley Watson, Skills for Life Programme Manager, Bridgewater College**



# Punctuation and Creative Writing

**Best for:** Groups, pairs or individuals  
**Level suitable for:** Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2  
**Resources required:** Text from a Quick Reads title

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## Method:

- Tutor chooses piece of text that all the group will enjoy
- Tutor copies it out - or uses extracts from Quick Reads website - removing all punctuation (this can be adjusted according to learner ability eg remove full stops and capital letters only for Entry Level)
- Encourage learners to work in small groups or pairs reading the piece of text aloud as it stands without punctuation – this can help readers ‘hear’ punctuation
- Learners then asked to re-write the piece inserting appropriate punctuation
- Tutor and group discuss OR tutor takes in for marking

## Alternative activity:

- As above then ask learners to write their own ending to the piece (learners are keen to discover how their own ending varies from that of the Quick Read they have been reading)

## Why does it work well?

“It raises interest in Quick Reads titles. Learners enjoy hearing the text without punctuation and the challenge of punctuating it. Having the freedom to complete the story with their own ideas seems to relieve some of the pressure felt by literacy students when they need to write something.”

**Karen Polie, Literacy Tutor, West Sussex Adult and Community Learning Service**



# Record It

<b>Best for:</b>	Individuals
<b>Level suitable for:</b>	Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
<b>Resources required:</b>	Quick Reads book Section from book recorded on to cassette tape or MP3 Transcript of text <i>without</i> punctuation appropriate to learner level/ability Transcript of text <i>with</i> punctuation Equipment to record text/play back tape/MP3

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## Method:

- Tutor and learner select a Quick Reads title together
- Tutor to read selection of text on to MP3 or cassette tape
- Tutor produces handout of relevant text with and without correct punctuation
- Learner listens to reading of text to get an overview of content
- Learner is given copy of text without punctuation and, listening to the recording again, asked to insert the correct punctuation
- Learner self checks script
- Tutor works through the text with the learner
- Learner continues to read rest of chapter and discusses content where appropriate

## Why does it work well?

“One learner had tried various exercises from text books, worksheets and online materials but could still not reliably punctuate a piece of writing. This learner has good speaking and listening skills so responds well to the spoken word. He agreed to try the above activity and enjoyed it. When asked about progression he requested more tapes - his work is now definitely improving.”

**Suzanne Snowden, Skills for Life Curriculum Leader, Royal Forest of Dean College**



# Interviewing

- Best for:** Groups, pairs
- Level suitable for:** Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Quick Reads title – copy for each learner  
A recording device for each learner – MP3, dictaphone or mobile phone  
Room or areas suitable for several recordings to take place at once
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## Method:

- Tutor reads the first chapter to the group followed by, in pairs:

### Level 1/Level 2:

- One of the pair to interview the other about their predictions for the rest of the book
- Interviewee could adopt the role of one of the characters and be questioned on their actions
- The pair swap roles at an agreed point
- Reading of the book can continue in pairs or individually
- Questions and answers can be recorded and referred to once the end of the book is reached in order to check if the predictions were accurate

### Entry Level:

- Having listened to the first chapter, learners discuss what it is about, recording a couple of sentences from each person
- Learners transcribe their recordings with help if needed
- Written work is checked by the tutor/support assistant/volunteer and amendments made where necessary
- Learners then read their written work aloud followed by a replay of the recorded sentences

## Why does it work well?

“Listening to what they have said and looking at the same time at what they have written will increase confidence and reading skills.”

**Anne Betteridge, Adult Dyslexia Specialist, Cornwall**



# Making a Presentation

- Best for:** Individuals, pairs
- Level suitable for:** Level 1, Level 2
- Resources required:** Quick Reads title selected by learner  
Template for chapter by chapter synopsis  
List of review questions such as:  
‘Name and author of book’  
‘Where I enjoyed reading this and why?’
- 

## Method:

- Each learner selects a book based on the blurb on the cover  
The learner can change the book if they don't like it; the idea is to encourage reading for pleasure
- After a time (suggest three weeks) the learner will deliver a verbal presentation, taking questions from the rest of the group at the end
- Other class members feed back (and always clap) and perhaps choose to read that book for themselves

## Why does it work well?

“This activity has worked well as it encourages peer feedback and confidence within a learner’s spoken range. Usually class members are very supportive. Speaking and listening skills can be hard to achieve successfully but this activity combines these skills with reading too. It may not work for the most reluctant readers but this can be overcome by ‘grouping’ learners who can then provide a synopsis of one chapter together and give key support to each other.”

**Lucy Simpson, Tutor, South Thames College**



# Setting up a Reading Group

<b>Best for:</b>	Groups
<b>Level suitable for:</b>	Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2
<b>Resources required:</b>	Selection of Quick Reads Information on writing book reviews Paper/pens Access to library staff

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## Method:

- Ask learners to look at Quick Reads – cover, blurb, contents etc
- Ask them to suggest information to be included in a book review. If they were recommending the book to a friend, what would they say? What might encourage someone else to try that book?
- Tutor to record ideas on board
- As a group, produce a draft design for review form
- Introduce library staff to group. They should bring along information about library services and joining forms
- Discuss when/how frequently to meet?
- Learners choose one book per month to take home to read
- The following month, each learner gives their opinion of the book and produces a written review
- Repeat last two steps forever!

## Why does it work well?

“Learners take ownership of the process from the start – they are involved in designing the review form, when to meet and choosing the books. It improves all literacy skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. Learners are also encouraged to become library members and use their local library services. One learner said ‘I now feel confident to go to the library by myself. Sometimes I am looking for a book to read. At other times, I take my book and sit in a quiet corner to read it. I used to be scared of going to the library, but now I love it!’”

**Jill Harrison, Assistant Manager, Skills for Life & Family Learning,  
Tameside Council Adult Learning**