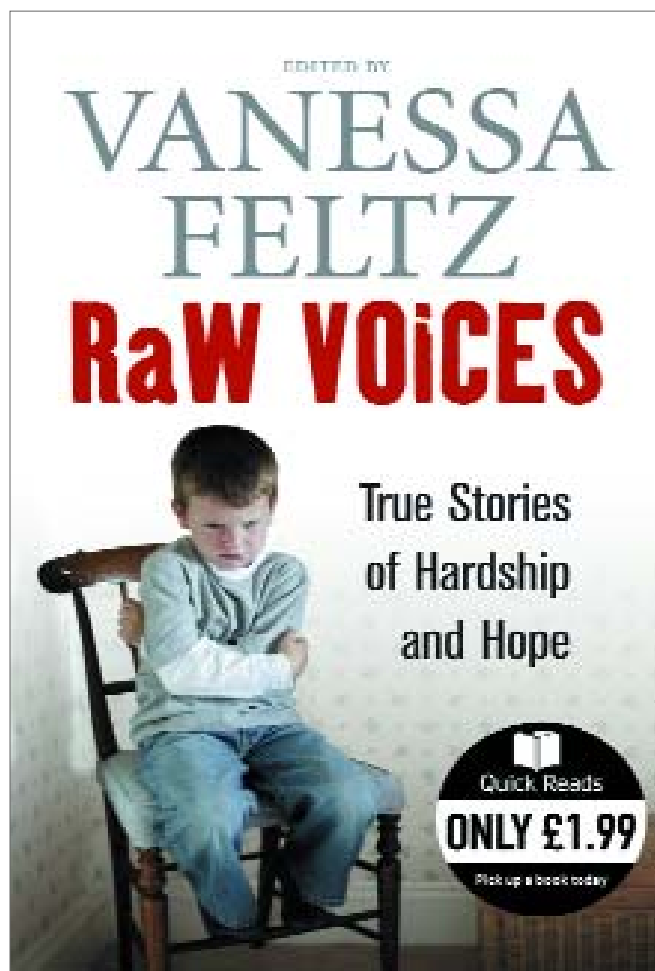




# Quick Reads

## 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](http://www.vitallink.org.uk).

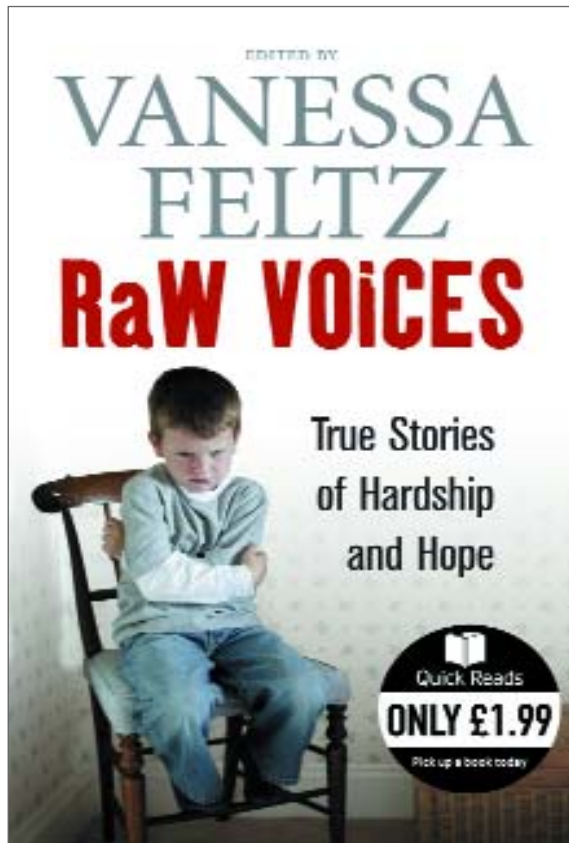
Similar materials for Quick Reads titles published in 2006 and 2007 are also available from [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk). *Starting with Quick Reads*, a 24-page guide supporting the Quick Reads titles published in 2007, is also available as a hard copy free from DIUS. Call 0845 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](http://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](mailto:genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk)



**Readability 12/13**  
**Entry Level 3/Level 1**

## **The Book**

This is a collection of personal stories written by ordinary people who have overcome hardship or disadvantage and made a positive change to their lives. A common theme is of returning to education later in life and finding success that eluded them at school, often because their problems with learning were undiagnosed or unsympathetically dealt with. Some of the writers had troubled early lives that included spells in prison, while others overcame physical disabilities such as blindness or a nervous breakdown. The stories are linked together by observations and comments from the broadcaster and columnist, Vanessa Feltz.

## **The Author**

Vanessa Feltz is a broadcaster and journalist. She currently presents a current affairs phone-in programme on BBC London for six days a week and writes regular columns for the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Star*. She is interested in real life problems and writes frankly about the much publicised setbacks she has overcome in her own career.

## Book Talk

- For all the writers, their early family and educational experiences had a crucial influence on the way their adult lives developed. What similarities and differences are there between their various experiences? (for example both Betty McAlister (p26) and Pam Hopkins (p61) were sent to boarding school because their parents could not cope; Davy Carlin's family did not value education (p37))
- Each story is given a title connected to the writer's occupation. In each case, what were the influences and causes that led them to follow this path (eg Dawn Stokes loved watching her dad making things, p80; Ray Jackson turned to sculpture because he had loved making things himself, p48)? How important is their occupation in defining who they are?
- Many of the writers describe a critical turning point in their life, often associated with an influential individual (eg for Paul Lloyd, when a prison officer encouraged him to read, p7; for Damion Maston, when a care worker told him he didn't have long left to live, p20). Readers could identify these critical points and influential individuals in other stories and discuss whether they have had similar experiences in their own lives.
- All of the writers finish their accounts by saying what they have learnt from their experiences and what their hopes and intentions are for the future. Are there any common themes in their reflections? (eg Both Tina Hewitt (p79) and Dawn Stokes (p84) write about the difficulty of taking 'the first step' back to education.)
- In her introduction, Vanessa Feltz says that 'stories really come to life' when 'a phrase or event really strikes us, and we think, 'I know how that feels!' Readers could describe where this has happened for them in this collection and discuss which person's story has made the most impact on them.

All of the activities are about tracing elements that are typically found in auto biographical writing. With a mixed group, these could be identified in a pre-reading activity and traced through a shared reading of individual stories.

## Taking it Further

- Following from the discussion on common themes, readers could collect sentences from each writer to make up a 'Keys to Success' compilation, adding sentences of their own. The compilation could be compared to John Bird's *'keys' in The 10 Keys to Success* and to those in Colin Jackson's *Life's New Hurdles*.
- Each of the themes explored above could form the basis of group discussion or more extended individual presentations. Topics can be presented in a sufficiently neutral way for readers not to have to make personal revelations where they are unwilling to do this.
- The stories in the book could provide the models for readers' own autobiographical writing. The themes outlined in the first four activities above – family and education, finding a role, influences and turning points, lessons learnt – should provide a useful framework. For less confident writers and those who do not want to reveal very personal details, this could be limited to single paragraphs on particular themes.
- Where stories have an unfamiliar setting, readers may like to find out more about their background. For example, for Davy Carlin's story, the following site provides information about the Northern Ireland 'troubles': [www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/troubles) For Pam Hopkins, the following provides a video and other information about child evacuees in WW2: [www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/launch\\_ani\\_wwtwo\\_movies\\_evacuees.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/launch_ani_wwtwo_movies_evacuees.shtml)
- Readers can find out more about Vanessa Feltz and listen to podcasts of her programme at [www.bbc.co.uk/london/radio/presenters/vanessa/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/radio/presenters/vanessa/) Her newspaper columns can be found at: [www.dailyexpress.co.uk/columnists](http://www.dailyexpress.co.uk/columnists) and [www.dailystar.co.uk/comment](http://www.dailystar.co.uk/comment)

## 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 key themes in autobiographical writing	Rt/E3.1, 4; Rt/L1.1, 3
Follow and contribute own opinions to discussion	SLd/E3.1, 2; SLd/L1.1
Use organisational features to locate information	Rt/E3.5; Rt/L1.4
Give an account of a personal incident and explain its significance	SLc/E3.3; SLc/L1.3 & Slc/L1.4.
Write a short autobiographical account	Wt/E3.2 & Wt/E3.3; Wt/L1.3, 4

## What Shall We Read Next?

The BBC RaW website at [www.bbc.co.uk/raw/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/raw/) has more information about the BBC's Reading and Writing campaign. It includes details of local activities and video interviews with people who decided to do something about improving their reading and writing skills.

### **Other Quick Reads that explore the theme of overcoming adversity**

*The 10 Keys to Success* by John Bird

*How to Change Your Life in 7 Steps* by John Bird

*The Hardest Test* by Scott Quinnell

*Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best* by Kerry Katona

*Burning Ambition* by Allen Carr

*Life's New Hurdles* by Colin Jackson

**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](http://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](http://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](mailto:orders@avantibooks.com) 01438 747000 [www.avantibooks.com](http://www.avantibooks.com)
- Bertrams/THE – [books@bertrams.com](mailto:books@bertrams.com) 0871 303 6600 [www.bertramsthe.com](http://www.bertramsthe.com)
- Browns Books for Students – [schools.services@brownsbfs.co.uk](mailto:schools.services@brownsbfs.co.uk) 01482 384660 [www.bfs.co.uk](http://www.bfs.co.uk)
- Gardners – [custcare@gardners.com](mailto:custcare@gardners.com) 01323 521777 [www.gardners.com](http://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](mailto:sales@wfhowes.co.uk) 01664 423000 [www.wfhowes.co.uk/cerp/](http://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](mailto:library.sales@bbc.com) 01225 335336 [www.bbcaudiobooks.com/libraries](http://www.bbcaudiobooks.com/libraries)

Audio extracts from the Quick Reads can be found on the BBC RaW website at [www.bbc.co.uk/raw](http://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](http://www.quickreads.net)

Publishers producing titles specifically for emergent readers include:

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