

Starting with

Quick Reads

The Vital Link Guide to engaging new readers



Contents

Background to Quick Reads	1
What is The Vital Link?	2
Why read for pleasure?	2
Why libraries?	3
Engaging new readers through libraries	4
Using Quick Reads resources	5
<i>A Dream Come True</i> : Maureen Lee	6
<i>Doctor Who: Made of Steel</i> : Terrance Dicks	8
<i>Lily</i> : Adèle Geras	10
<i>Reading My Arse!</i> : Ricky Tomlinson	12
<i>The Sun Book of Short Stories</i>	14
<i>Burning Ambition: The Inspiring Story of One Man's Quest to Cure the World of Smoking</i> : Allen Carr	16
<i>Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best</i> : Kerry Katona	18
<i>Twenty Tales from the War Zone</i> : John Simpson	20
Guidance on the ICT element of the resources	22
Full list of Quick Reads titles, including availability	23
Additional sources of support for working with emergent readers	24

Acknowledgement

The learning materials to accompany the Quick Reads publications have been produced as part of The Vital Link's Reading for Pleasure Campaign, funded by the Department for Education and Skills and in co-operation with World Book Day. Our thanks go to the writing and editorial team of Roger Adams, Jim Gardner, Nancy Gidley and Kay Jackaman.

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Background to Quick Reads

‘Quick Reads has a very ambitious aim. With the help of a wide range of authors, we want to take emergent readers and make them addicted readers – so that reading for pleasure becomes not just a skill but a habit.’

Gail Rebuck, The Random House Group

The launch of further new Quick Reads titles on World Book Day 2007 has provided another massive opportunity to introduce adult literacy learners to reading for pleasure. But for those who work with them it also presents a challenge. The Vital Link has worked to help adult literacy practitioners find ways of getting their learners into reading since its Reading for Pleasure Campaign was launched in October 2005. This guide draws together ideas for engaging new readers, using the new Quick Reads titles as its starting point. Its aim is to support the integration of an enjoyment of reading and links with libraries into everyday teaching practice.

The Reading Agency and the National Literacy Trust initiated The Vital Link programme in the belief that libraries’ creative approach to promoting reading can benefit ‘emergent readers’ – adults who have reached a certain level of competence with literacy (Entry Level 3 or Level 1) but do not feel sufficiently confident to browse in a library or bookshop. We knew that some existing fiction and non-fiction would fit the bill if it was chosen carefully to meet certain criteria and was displayed prominently but in a non-stigmatised way, but we also knew there was a dearth of material specifically written for less-confident adult readers.

Others had spotted the same gap: best-selling author Patricia Scanlan, the inspiration behind New Island’s Open Door series in Dublin; Robert Davidson, whose company Sandstone Press based in Dingwall near Inverness created the Vista series; and, of course, Patience Thomson and Lucy Jukes of Barrington Stoke in Edinburgh, who had been developing a thriving list of titles by well-known names for younger readers with low levels of literacy since 1997.

World Book Day is the biggest annual celebration of books and reading in the UK, and its decision to turn its attention to the adult literacy audience in 2006 has transformed the scene. Led energetically by Gail Rebuck, Chair and Chief Executive of The Random House Group, the Quick Reads initiative recognised the power of mass-market publishing and household names to entice less-confident readers into reading for pleasure for the first time.

Two dozen titles were published under the Quick Reads banner in 2006 – a wide range of thrillers, crime, romance and autobiography by popular authors, providing something for everyone. Around a quarter of a million copies were sold through bookshops and supermarkets, and well over 100,000 were purchased by libraries for their book collections for emergent readers. A further eight titles were published to mark World Book Day 2007 on 1 March.

The Vital Link created online resources to support practitioners working with the 2006 titles, and more than 50,000 of these had been downloaded from the Vital Link website at www.vitallink.org.uk by the end of 2006. This guide includes activities to support the 2007 titles, with additional, self-directed activities for learners available on the web at www.quickreadsideas.org.uk.

‘We’ve got the Quick Reads but where do we start? How do we talk about reading for pleasure to adults who have never read a book in their lives and don’t really want to?’

Adult literacy tutor

What is The Vital Link?

‘Enjoyment of reading is fundamental to successful learning. Libraries know how to inspire and develop a lifelong love of reading. I’m delighted that the Department for Education and Skills is working with libraries to promote reading for pleasure.’

Phil Hope MP, Minister for Skills

Should reading for pleasure be open only to fully fluent readers? How can adults who have passed the stage of struggling with every word make the leap into picking up a book for pure enjoyment or interest? Are enough appealing and appropriate books available for people who are getting into reading for the first time? These are the questions that have challenged The Vital Link programme since its pilot work with libraries and literacy providers in 2001.

The Vital Link is a national programme designed to build and promote libraries’ capacity to support the adult literacy agenda. Run by The Reading Agency, in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and the National Reading Campaign, The Vital Link encourages libraries and adult literacy providers to work together. Its main focus is on using reading for pleasure to motivate and inspire existing students and to engage potential new learners.

The Vital Link has been funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council since 2003, when it became part of the Government’s strategy for public libraries, and has:

- developed an improvement framework to help libraries meet the needs of adult literacy learners and emergent readers, which is supported by an online toolkit at www.vitallink.org.uk
- promoted book collections for emergent adult readers – a mix of titles written specifically for this audience, such as Quick Reads, and mainstream fiction and non-fiction selected according to The Vital Link’s stock selection criteria:

- First Choice – for all emergent readers
- Got kids? Get reading! – for parents and carers with children aged 0–7 years
- Five Minutes – for dads with children aged 0–10 years

- established a unique online searchable database of book titles selected for emergent adult readers at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk
- encouraged partnership working between libraries, adult literacy providers and practitioners in other settings, such as children’s centres, community groups and prisons
- supported libraries’ involvement in national initiatives such as World Book Day, Quick Reads and RaW (the BBC’s literacy campaign for adults).

Why read for pleasure?

‘Being able to read fluently is very different from wanting to read at all.’

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum,
The Basic Skills Agency, 2001

This statement from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum could be interpreted as a solely functional approach to literacy, but we know that adults who have struggled with reading are unlikely to develop fluency unless they enjoy what they are reading. Fluency takes practice, and adults tend to practise the pleasurable rather than the worthy.

Confident readers read to develop knowledge, increase understanding, satisfy curiosity and excite the imagination. Emergent readers have not yet had this opportunity and need support to widen their reading experience and develop their own preferences.

Impact research undertaken for The Vital Link confirms the beneficial outcomes of libraries' creative reading activities in partnership with adult literacy providers. In 2005, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre interviewed learners who had read and talked about books in nine focus groups. Improved confidence shone out as the key change, with participants talking about a greater capacity for self-expression, renewed self-esteem and aspirations to continue reading and learning, often in support of their children.

'Emergent readers are learning to do new things and to do things differently as a result of reading for pleasure and participating in libraries' creative reading activity. Over three-quarters of respondents reported an increase in skills.'

Confidence All Round: The Impact on Emergent Adult Readers of Reading for Pleasure through Libraries,
Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005

It is clear that reading for pleasure contributes in a very direct way to the desired outcomes for the Government's Skills for Life Strategy – helping adults to increase their skills levels and ultimately their employability and quality of life. Encouragement to make their own reading choices from a breadth of relevant reading materials should be a regular part of any learner's experience if they are to make real progress.

Why libraries?

As adult literacy learners develop a taste for reading, they need a ready supply of books specially selected for them. As the most democratic medium for bringing reading to people, libraries are in an ideal position to satisfy this need. They can offer:

- a welcoming space that reaches out to all parts of every local community (there are over 3,000 public libraries and 400 mobile libraries in England, with another 14,000 service points in hospitals, prisons, hostels and other settings)
- free books selected specifically for less-confident adult readers, magazines and newspapers, as well as a range of DVDs, CDs and audio books for hire (most libraries also provide free access to the Internet)
- friendly, knowledgeable and approachable staff who can advise on books to borrow, local courses and how to use the Internet (more than 80% of library services have staff who have had literacy awareness training)
- customised library tours and services for tutors and learners, visits to classes by library staff and special loan arrangements on request
- creative ways of engaging reluctant readers and introducing them to the world of books through book clubs, reading challenges and family reading activities, which can all be integrated into regular curriculum delivery.

'It's great to have a section in the library where you know the books are easy to read and interesting.'

Adult learner, Wiltshire

Engaging new readers through libraries

Library staff have extensive experience of encouraging reluctant readers to pick up a book. On a regular basis they introduce children, young people and, increasingly, less-confident adult readers to a love of reading using a host of successful techniques. Often termed 'reader development' in library jargon, these range from simple one-to-one book recommendations to reading groups, author events and outreach to groups in the local community.

The regular library reading group at HMP Birmingham wanted to encourage less-confident readers. Each member read one of the Quick Reads titles and did a 'one-minute review' which was displayed on the library walls.

'The Quick Reads soon disappeared from the shelves and have remained popular. It was good for the group members to step back and encourage those just beginning to explore reading.'

Sue Wilkinson, Prison Librarian, HMP Birmingham

Library-based reading activities with emergent readers might include the following:

- talking about what makes someone pick up a book – make colour copies of a range of covers, blurbs and opening pages and ask readers to match them up.
- finding a way into reading through magazines and newspapers – encourage readers to make up their own stories using headlines, cuttings and pictures.
- sharing interests and hobbies – ask people to list their favourite things and check the emergent reader database at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk to offer appropriate books.

- taking readers on a book-buying trip for the library – talk to a local bookshop about the best time to visit with a group of learners.
- starting a regular group to share views about books – the term 'reading group' may be off-putting, so suggest that readers come up with their own name.

The staff at Hull Libraries have used Quick Reads and The Vital Link's learning materials with an English as a second language (ESOL) class held in the library.

'I collected together all the Quick Reads titles and used an activity from Approaches to Reading for Pleasure from The Vital Link website. We discussed the covers and tried to think about who the publisher had in mind and what we might expect the content of the book to be. We discussed our own reactions to the images and whether the cover sold the book to us. The resources are a great source of ideas for doing something with more substance than a standard library visit. They have introduced the idea of discussing books and reading with people who may never have had that experience before.'

Jessica Leathley, Senior Librarian:
Reader and Audience Development,
Hull Libraries

Libraries' work with emergent readers has been spurred on by initiatives such as The Vital Link, BBC's RaW campaign and Quick Reads. Staff are keen to work closely with adult literacy practitioners to make sure their library buildings are welcoming and easy to navigate. They also welcome tutors' and learners' requests and suggestions for titles to add to their book collections for emergent readers.

Using Quick Reads resources

It can be daunting for literacy practitioners to introduce the concept of reading for pleasure to adults who seem to feel quite sure that it's 'not for them'. The Vital Link's materials for Quick Reads are designed to offer practitioners, and others supporting their work, a range of ways to begin 'conversations' about the books with new readers. Feedback on the 2006 resources indicated that practitioners want general inspiration from which they can construct their own activities rather than detailed delivery outlines. Time pressures in the classroom also mean that learners need to develop autonomy in following up activities for texts that have caught their interest and to explore the wealth of materials available to them on the web as well as in print. This approach encourages integration of the in-depth reading skills necessary to complete a book with the scanning and skimming skills used to surf the web.

'I found the suggestions in the resources enormously helpful. They gave me the confidence to go in there and develop my ideas for meaningful activities'.

Lulu Spink, Army basic skills tutor

Ideas to support use of the Quick Reads published in 2007 are outlined in general terms in this guide, with suggestions for resources and web links to support classroom activities and curriculum references for the main learning points. We make links to the titles published in 2006 and their support materials (which are still available at www.vitallink.org.uk) where appropriate. There is complete flexibility within these materials, and they are certainly not exhaustive. Some activities could be transferred from one title to another; you might wish to support your readers in reading a whole book by completing all the activities for that book; or you might like to dip in and out and use the activities as a catalyst for learners to begin reading or to share experiences after reading. You will certainly be able to adapt the activities and create more activities of your own for writing, as well as word- and sentence-level work, in addition to text-level approaches.

The use of a wide variety of strategies will enrich learners' experience of reading in general, as well as their experience of the books themselves.

Some approaches might include:

- pair, small group and whole group work
- use and purpose of covers and blurbs
- adopting and developing a character
- pre- and post-story development
- retelling the story orally
- visual representation of content.

The self-directed activities for learners can be found at: www.quickreadsideas.org.uk. These are designed to be meaningful – for example, offering readers purposeful choices for initial browsing linked to the texts, through quests. The quiz can be used to identify other Quick Reads titles that may be of interest, and a feedback form indicates aspects of reading that learners may like support to pursue. The quiz results and feedback form are both printable. This handbook contains brief guidance on the basic information, communication and technology (ICT) skills learners need to use the site successfully and suggestions on how to support this activity in classroom or library (page 22).

'I set up a book group to promote reading for pleasure rather than purely for function. The Quick Reads are a very welcome addition to the books we have available. The range of titles has been important. Students talk about the books and are starting to keep a reading diary. The plan is that they will post reviews on the website. This encourages a valuable combination of reading, discussion and writing.'

Ros Lane, Skills for Life tutor,
Brooksby Melton College

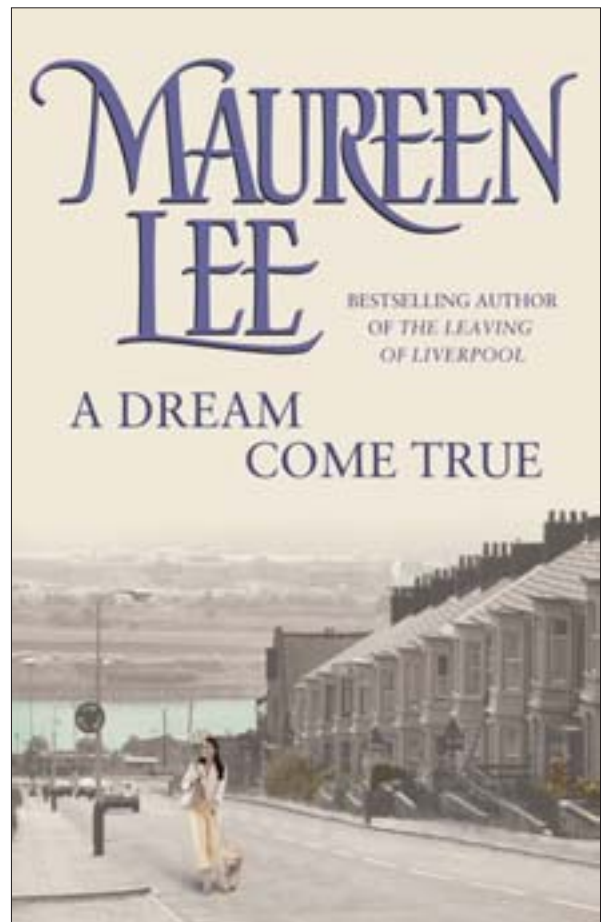
Maureen Lee

A Dream Come True

When her travel agency is taken over by a larger firm, Maggie has no idea how much her life will change – in every way.

Maggie had thought she would never be happy again... Her once-happy marriage has turned sour, leaving her tied to a husband who no longer seems to love her. So she continues to work, keeps in touch with her friends and tries not to think about the lack of love in her life. But all that changes one fateful day in Brighton, when Maggie meets someone who transforms how she feels about herself and turns her entire world upside down.

This is a novel of love and self-discovery from a much-loved author.



Activity focus: The romance of romance

These activities encourage readers to consider the appeal of escaping through reading. Do we want reality? Do we yearn for a happy ending? Do we need to identify with the hero or heroine?

- What are the elements of a good romantic story? Realism or fantasy? Happy or sad ending? Which type of ending is this? (This can be linked with activities from Maeve Binchy's Quick Reads title *Star Sullivan*).
- What are the qualities or characteristics of the ideal romantic hero or heroine? Do Connor and Maggie fit these pictures or not? Justify your views.
- Taking a chance, seizing an opportunity: Some people see an opportunity where others see a threat. All the characters in the story are given chances but not all take them. Match each of the characters with the opportunities and threats facing them. How much is it in their own power to determine which they face?
- 'They all lived happily ever after': Fairy-tale romance versus reality – what's the difference? (Compare with Maeve Binchy's Quick Reads title *Star Sullivan* and Rowan Coleman's *Woman Walks into a Bar*.)
- What is a happy ending? Revisit Maggie and Connor's stories a year on and suggest an epilogue that will bring their stories up to date. Would the events be different for a romantic story and a real story?
- Did Maggie do the right thing? A number of choices led Maggie from her first meeting with Connor to her decision to leave her husband and bring up her baby on her own. Did she make the 'right' choices? Indeed, what were the 'right' choices? In order to answer these questions, readers might need to consider a number of related issues. What was wrong with Maggie's marriage? Did the affair end it? Why didn't the affair end Connor's marriage? Why didn't Maggie tell Connor about his child? Is there really only one 'right' choice?
- Do we want to see ourselves in a story? Do we read real stories and fictional stories for the same reason?

Resources:

Other Quick Reads – *Star Sullivan* and *Woman Walks into a Bar* – with accompanying learner activity ideas available at www.vitallink.org.uk

Supporting Web links:

- Who's your ideal romantic hero? quiz:
www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/quizzes/superquiz.html?in_page_id=711&in_quiz_id=12562
- Extracts from other books by Maureen Lee and information about the author:
www.lovereadings.co.uk/author/526

Reading Development: Exploring genre/Reading for pleasure and escape

- Reading for pleasure and escape (Rt/E3.1,2,4) (Rt/L1.1,3)
- Identifying the characteristics and appeal of a specific genre (Rt/E3.2,4) (Rt/L1.1,2)
- Appreciating the suggestive power of language (Rt/E3.2) (Rt/L1.2)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

Terrance Dicks

Doctor Who: Made of Steel

Life is never dull with the Doctor, as his latest assistant, Martha Jones, finds out.

After an encounter with a tyrannosaurus that is a little too close for comfort, Martha asks the Doctor to take her somewhere peaceful.

He tries to oblige, but, as always with the Doctor, things do not turn out quite as planned and Martha finds herself caught up in a life-and-death struggle with one of his old enemies.



Activity focus: Following up some themes of science fiction

These activities aim to encourage readers to relate the book to some of Doctor Who's other adventures and to begin to explore themes that interest writers of science fiction.

- The novel includes a number of references to events in a recent 'Doctor Who' television series, during which the Doctor thwarted an attempted takeover of Earth by the Cybermen. These include some oblique references to his previous assistant, Rose Tyler, for whom he developed a close affection. Can the readers find these and other similar references? How important is it to know something of the history of Doctor Who? Is it possible to enjoy the book without having followed the TV series? Are any of the techniques used in the novel similar to those used in the TV series (for example, cliff-hanger chapter endings and rapid scene switches)?
- The possibility of time travel has always fascinated science fiction writers. Will time travel ever be possible? If readers could ask to be transported to a different time, like Martha Jones, which time would they choose and why? What would be some of the hazards of time travel? For example, would there be a danger of changing the past?
- Another common theme of much science fiction is the conflict between the human race and alien life forms. How are the Cybermen different from the humans in the story? The Cybermen in 'Doctor Who' normally lack all emotion, but is that true of the Cybermen in this story? How do they compare with the Daleks in the previous Doctor Who Quick Reads title *I am a Dalek*? What other alien life forms have appeared in 'Doctor Who'? An interesting comparison is with the film *Blade Runner*, which many readers may know, in which the 'aliens' (known as 'replicants') are like the Cybermen in their superior strength and lack of empathy but are physically indistinguishable from human beings.

Resources:

I am a Dalek, the previous 'Doctor Who' Quick Reads title

Supporting Web links:

- There are numerous 'Doctor Who' related websites. The official website is: www.bbc.co.uk/doctorwho
- There is a Wikipedia entry on the Cybermen: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybermen>
- Serious articles about time travel and other life forms can be found on the BBC's science website:
www.bbc.co.uk/science/space/exploration/timetravel/index.shtml
www.bbc.co.uk/science/space/life/index.shtml
- The 'Sci-Fi Science' website combines information on science fiction and science fact and has material on 'Doctor Who', time travel and aliens: www.scifiscience.co.uk

Reading Development: Exploring a particular genre/Reading for pleasure and to provoke thought

- Reading for pleasure and to provoke thought (Rt/E3.1,2,4) (Rt/L1.1,3)
- Identifying characteristic themes of a specific genre (Rt/E3.2,4) (Rt/L1.1,2)
- Appreciating the techniques of an exciting story (Rt/E3.2) (Rt/L1.2)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

Adèle Geras

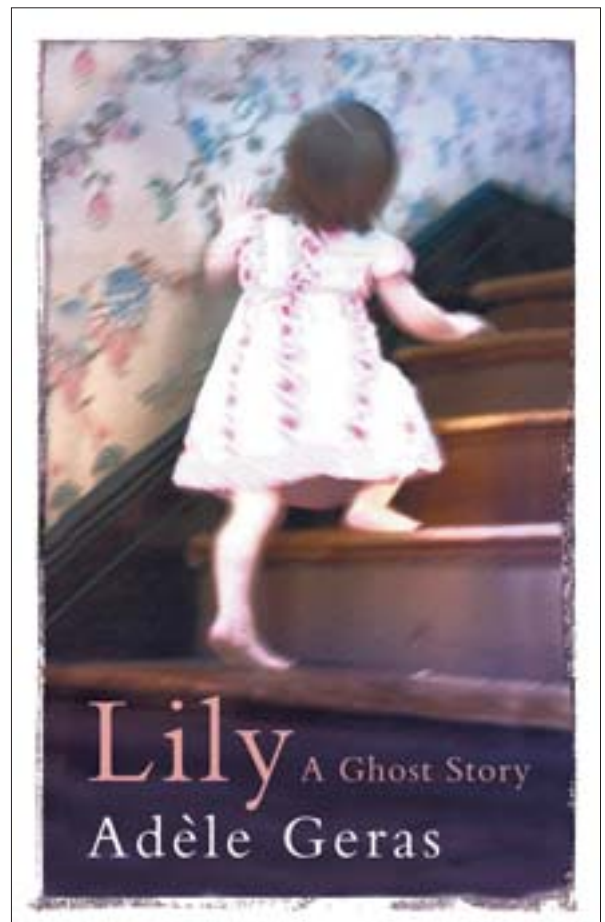
Lily

'My name is Marie Cotter and I want you to believe me. Every word of this story is true. This is what happened to me...'

Seventeen-year-old Marie has had a lot to cope with in her young life. But things are getting better, especially when she gets a job looking after four-year-old Amy. At first, her new job seems perfect.

Then things start to change. It seems that not everyone is happy with the new situation. There appears to be someone else in the house – someone who is determined to come between Amy and Marie.

This a masterful and heart-rending modern ghost story by a popular writer.



Activity focus: The lure of the unknown

This is a classic ghost story. The reader is offered an opportunity to escape but not into a comfortable fantasy – instead, they enjoy the vicarious thrill of another world. What is the appeal?

- What makes a good ghost story? When do we realise that there is something strange about the people in this story? How does the author build the suspense and gradually shift from things that could be explained naturally to things about which we are not sure and, ultimately, to things for which we have no natural explanation?
- Why do we like being scared? The main character is scared by things she cannot explain. Do we share her fear? Do we enjoy this feeling? Contrast ghost stories and horror stories.
- Is Marie a reliable narrator? To what extent has she lost her grip on reality before the book starts? Look at Marie's own life and identify what is and isn't real. Could the events that she describes be all in her mind – for example, what do we think about Zoe? Is Zoe really there? Could Dr Slade's explanation actually be correct?
- How does the paranormal work? Are certain people more susceptible to suggestion? Do we use our own experiences and predispositions to help us make sense of life? Readers might be able to share examples from their own experience or from other reading to support their views.

Resources:

- Examples of different types of ghost stories
- Other Quick Reads resource materials available at www.vitalink.org.uk for example, Activity 2 for *Woman Walks into a Bar* by Rowan Coleman (with reference to characterisation and plot) and the genre activity from *Approaches to Reading for Pleasure*

Supporting Web links:

- Investigating the paranormal – mediums, psychics, contacting the dead, Ouija boards
www.psychics.co.uk/ghosts/

Reading Development: Exploring genre/The suggestive power of language

- Reading for pleasure and escape (Rt/E3.1,2,4) (Rt/L1.1,3)
- Identifying the characteristics and appeal of a specific genre (Rt/E3.2,4) (Rt/L1.1,2)
- Appreciating the suggestive power of language (Rt/E3.2) (Rt/L1.2)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

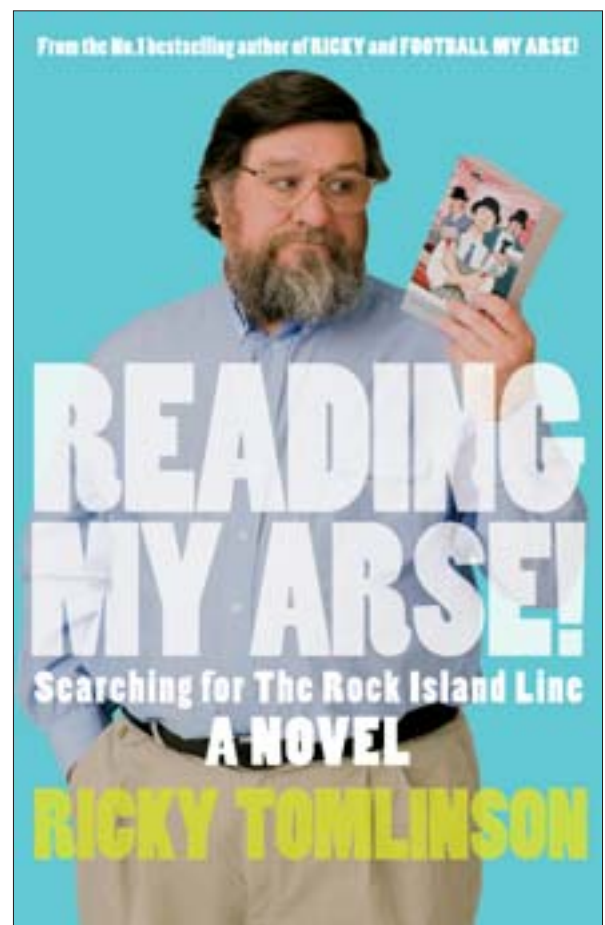
Ricky Tomlinson

Reading My Arse!

Ricky Tomlinson, popular actor and master storyteller, was right there in Liverpool at the start of the Mersey Beat music revolution that was led by The Beatles.

In this book, Ricky captures one of the most exciting eras in the history of rock n' roll, when it was being challenged in the popularity stakes by the washboard beat of skiffle. He tells the compelling story of how the lyrics of a song lead a young Scouse musician on an adventure that takes him across the United States and through a series of life-changing experiences.

This is a funny and irreverent novel about one man's decision to explore the world and how reading helps him on his quest.



Activity focus: Cross-cultural influences

These activities aim to help readers appreciate how reading can help us to understand other people, places and times. Readers hopefully will begin to appreciate the power such knowledge can bring and will want to follow Ricky Tomlinson's example and look to books to develop this power in themselves.

- Compare the different versions of the song 'Rock Island Line'. Why were changes made and how do they reflect the author, culture or time?
- Think about Eric's trip. Where does the Rock Island Line pass through in the US? How or why did these routes develop?
- A number of other places in the US are associated with popular music – for example, Route 66, Memphis (Elvis Presley), Detroit (Motown) and Nashville (country music). Readers may come up with more up-to-date suggestions in the US and UK and could research these with written or oral feedback.
- Where were you or your parents in the 60s? Interview: What are your/their memories of the 60s? How do they compare with Ricky's memories? Create a photo album of the times that focuses on a specific aspect – for example, fashion, football or music.
- Crime and punishment: Ricky Tomlinson, Andy McNab and John Bird all spent time in offenders' institutions and all look back to the period as seminal to them developing a passion for learning. How did they use their experiences in custody to change their lives?
- Pursuing a passion or a trip of a lifetime: Have you done this and where did it lead you? Would you like to do it? Plan it out.
- Is this book autobiographical? What relationships can be traced between Ricky himself and Eric's story?
- Reading as a passion: link to other Quick Reads – for example, Danny Wallace's *The Centre of the Universe* and Hunter Davies' *I Love Football*.

Resources:

- Printouts of versions of the songs that are in the book
- Maps of the US, possibly including railway map
- Tips on interview techniques and some sample questions to get started
- Audio examples of skiffle and rock n' roll from the late 50s
- Examples of American work songs – for example, 'Lead Belly'

Supporting Web links:

- Iconic images of the 60s: Search for images of the 'swinging sixties' and the political turbulence of the 60s (Vietnam War; student protests in US, UK and Paris; Prague Spring; and Cuban missile crisis) www.altavista.com/image/default
- Information on the Chicago, Pacific and Rock Island railroads: www.answers.com/topic/chicago-rock-island-and-pacific-railroad
- Readers could use the site GoogleEarth to find various cities associated with music or to follow Eric's trip in America today. This site needs to be downloaded, but the download is free: www.google.com/earth/

Reading Development: Interpreting descriptive and explanatory writing

- Reading for information (Rt/E3.1,2,3,4,8) (Rt/L1.2,5)
- Interpreting descriptive and explanatory writing (Rt/E3.1,2,8) (Rt/L1.1,2,3)
- Relating imagery to text (Rt/E3.9) (Rt/L1.3)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8,9; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

The Sun Book of Short Stories

A selection of the best from the
'Get Britain Reading' competition.

A woman's relationship with her eccentric mother; a chance meeting on a train; the unsolved murder of a young teacher; the man who wanted to know when he was going to die – these are some of the themes of the stories in this varied and entertaining collection.

All of the stories were written by readers of *The Sun* in response to a competition called 'Get Britain Reading', which was designed to tie in with World Book Day 2006. The best stories were published in the newspaper, and some of these have been collected in this Quick Reads title.

This is a compelling book that could encourage many readers to try their hand at writing stories of their own.



Activity focus: Stories and the different ways of telling them

Although the stories in the collection are by a wide range of authors, many common elements can be identified. Much of the interest in reading a selection such as this lies in identifying the similarities and contrasts between individual stories. If readers are helped to reflect on these, it will deepen their appreciation of the stories and encourage them to write their own.

- In what ways do individual stories exhibit a variation on the same theme? Grouping stories together allows them to resonate from each other. Here are a few examples, but others can be found:
 - The world of children: 'Ball Game', 'Super', 'Dad's Car'
 - Real and unreal: 'One Wish', 'There's a Queue'
 - Murder: 'Daylight Robbery', 'Murder in Catcher's Wood'
 - Family Relationships: 'The Lost Gene', 'Christmas Truce', 'I Don't Know Why'.
- What is the effect of different narrative styles – for example, first person or third person, present tense or past tense, or a mixture of both? 'I Don't Know Why' provides a good starting point for looking at first-person narration, as each character provides a different perspective on the same series of events and includes and omits different information. (This could link with the Quick Reads titles *Don't Make Me Laugh* by Patrick Augustus or *Chickenfeed* by Minette Walters.) The third-person narration of 'Ball Game' deliberately avoids any indication of Khaled's motive or any kind of moral comment on what he does.
- What techniques do writers use to draw in and retain the reader's interest? A very common technique is the withholding of information to produce a surprise or twist at the end of the story. For example, at the beginning of 'Murder in Catcher's Wood', the reader is led to believe that Simon is a pupil at the school. Only at the end of 'There's a Queue' do we realise that Charles is 'from the other side'. How do other stories withhold or reveal important information? (This could link with the Quick Reads titles *Hell Island* by Matthew Reilly and *Desert Claw* by Damien Lewis.)
- After considering the different possibilities of technique and theme, readers might want to try writing stories of their own.

Resources:

Other fictional Quick Reads and their resource materials

Supporting Web links:

- The 'writebuzz' website contains a number of short stories (and other writing) by amateur authors that can be read on screen, as well as advice on getting published, etc. www.writebuzz.com/index.asp
- Some very accessible tips for story writing by author Julie Myerson can be downloaded and printed from the Booktrust website at www.booktrust.org.uk. This would be useful to help readers get started on their own stories and find out more about writing techniques. www.booktrust.org.uk/writingtogether/tips.php

Reading Development: Exploring theme and narration/Reading for pleasure and to provoke thought

- Reading for pleasure and to provoke thought (Rt/E3.1,2,4) (Rt/L1.1,3)
- Identifying characteristic themes of the short story (Rt/E3.2,4) (Rt/L1.1,2)
- Appreciating some of the different techniques of story writing (Rt/E3.2) (Rt/L1.2)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

Allen Carr

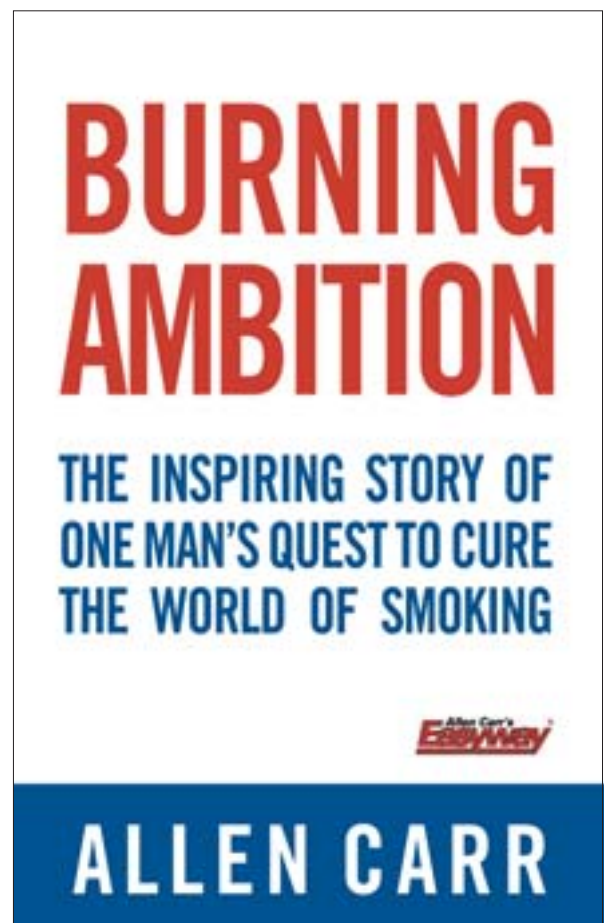
Burning Ambition

The Inspiring Story of One Man's Quest to Cure the World of Smoking.

For more than 30 years, Allen Carr was addicted to smoking. His first cigarette led to a 100-a-day habit that he couldn't break.

He tried every method of quitting, but they all failed – until he discovered the Easyway. From that moment, he knew he would never go back. He also knew his approach would work for other smokers who wanted to escape the nicotine trap. That's when he decided: 'I'm going to cure the world of smoking.'

This is his story. It is a unique insight into the life of the world's anti-smoking guru. His methods are tried and tested. Six million people can't be wrong.



Activity focus: Reading autobiography – sharing a passion

Like a number of other Quick Reads, this is an autobiographical story. It is also an inspirational story. These activities help readers to explore some reasons for reading biographies and to consider the balance between appeasing our curiosity about what makes someone tick and relating their experience to our own lives.

- Turning one's life around, making something happen: Why did Allen Carr start smoking? Why did he carry on – even though he says he hated it? What was the trigger that made him stop? Would Allen Carr's story on its own help other people stop smoking? What triggered points of change in our own lives? Did the inspiration to change come from within or from external sources? Did we follow specific suggestions or directions?
- Compare the stories in the Quick Reads by Kerry Katona (*Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best*) and John Bird (*How to Change Your Life in 7 Steps*) with the story told by Carr. Explore the ways each have used their experience to help others.
- Dealing with addictions: What are society's 'acceptable' addictions – for example, smoking, drinking, eating and gambling? If we share these addictions, why did we start and why did/do we carry on? Have we tried dealing with addictions ourselves? What methods have been successful and what conditions ensured success?

Resources:

- Copy of Allen Carr's book, *The Easyway to Stop Smoking*
- Publicity examples for other addiction treatment methods
- Other biographical Quick Reads, particularly those by Kerry Katona, John Bird and Richard Branson

Supporting Web links:

- Wikipedia's explanation of the word 'addiction' has some interesting points to make about other things to which we may be 'addicted': <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addiction>
- After smoking heavily throughout his early life and going on to work with addicted smokers in tobacco-filled rooms, Allen Carr was eventually diagnosed with lung cancer and died in 2006. After his diagnosis, Allen said that quitting had given him an extra 20 years of healthy life. An interview with Allen just before he died includes his views on cancer: www.guardian.co.uk/smoking/Story/0,,1962934,00.html

Reading Development: Appreciating argument and persuasion

- Reading for information (Rt/E3.1,2,4,8) (Rt/L1.2,5)
- Understanding chronological, continuous writing (Rt/E3.1,2) (Rt/L1.1,2)
- Interpreting descriptive and explanatory writing (Rt/E3.1,2,8) (Rt/L1.1,2,3)
- Recognising and interpreting persuasive writing (Rt/E3.2,8) (Rt/L1.1,2)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

Kerry Katona

Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best

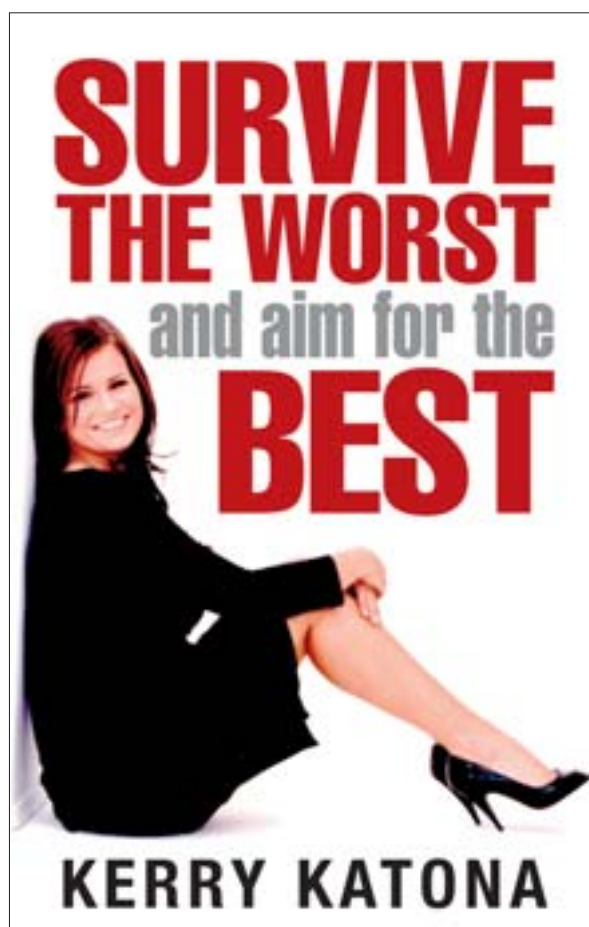
Kerry Katona knows what it's like to have to grow up fast.

At just 26 years of age, she's experienced more than most people – including domestic violence, depression and a very public break-up.

In *Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best*, Kerry shows how she has used some of her worst experiences to learn positive life lessons. Her ability to keep going when times are tough will strike a chord with anyone who has struggled. Through her own experiences, Kerry shows us how:

- your past doesn't have to be your present
- only you can help yourself
- to be proud of who you are, despite what others may say
- things may look different tomorrow
- not to judge others without knowing the full story.

Above all, Kerry shows us that the struggle really is worth it and that the things that really matter are often those closest to you.



Activity focus: Reading autobiography – the fascination of fame

The focus of these activities is to explore the multiple levels on which reading can satisfy us and, specifically, to help readers consider why we are fascinated by reading about other people's lives.

- Lives of famous people: What's the appeal? Are we interested in the roles they play for us or the people they are? Can we ever really know what celebrities are like? This could be discussed in comparison with other Quick Reads autobiographies (for example, by John Bird, Richard Branson and John Simpson).
- Health, wealth and happiness: Do they really go together? Do fame and wealth make people happy? Examine examples from the first activity to support your views.
- Why has Kerry told her story? What can readers learn from her experiences in relation to their own lives? How does this compare with what we learn from other Quick Reads authors such as Ricky Tomlinson, John Bird and Alan Carr?
- Tell your own story: What have you learned from your experiences? What would you like people to learn from you?

Resources:

- Magazines
- Publishers' and booksellers' catalogues
- Reviews/blurbs of film biopics

Supporting Web links:

- Website of Viv Nicholson, who won the lottery and then spent all the money. Part of her life story is similar to Kerry's. Click on the 'Viv Nicholson' link to read a quick history of her rags to riches to rags again story. www.vivnicholson.co.uk/
- HarperCollins web page on Jade Goody's autobiography: www.harpercollins.co.uk/books/default.aspx?id=35273
- *The Independent*: Interview with Dean O'Loughlin on the effect appearing on Big Brother had on his life: <http://news.independent.co.uk/media/article68036.ece>

Reading Development: Reading on different levels/Getting the message

- Understanding chronological, continuous writing (Rt/E3.1,2) (Rt/L1.1)
- Recognising purposes of text (Rt/E3.2) (Rt/L1.2)
- Identifying and extracting main ideas from text (Rt/E3.4) (Rt/L1.3)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8,9; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

John Simpson

Twenty Tales from the War Zone

John Simpson has been one of our best television journalists for 40 years.

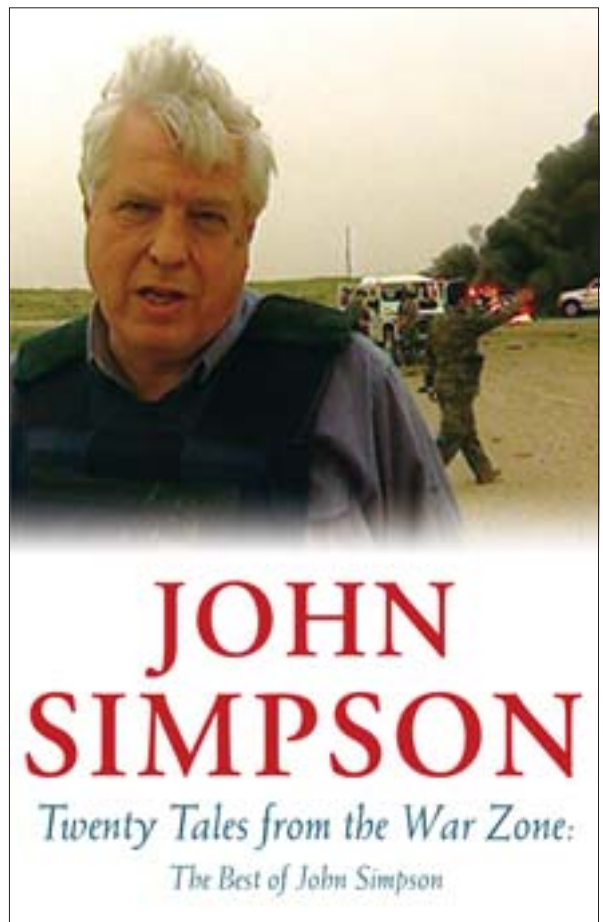
He joined the BBC as a sub-editor in the Radio Newsroom in 1966 but quickly became a political reporter.

Throughout his career he has frequently attracted publicity, starting with the time the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson apparently punched him in the stomach after John asked if he was going to call an election.

In the 1970s he switched to foreign affairs and, since then, has covered nearly all the major events in recent world history. As he himself has noted, it is almost as if major events just can't happen unless he's there to report on them.

This book describes the most hair-raising and sometimes downright hilarious experiences this famous TV journalist has faced when reporting from the front line.

It is a glimpse into the exciting places he has visited, the strange people he has met and some of the dangerous times he has lived through.



Activity focus: Current affairs

These activities aim to help learners develop their powers of reading to gain understanding and information and their ability to interpret and process persuasive texts. They could also develop research skills and widen their knowledge of the variety of informed sources of information available.

- Explore images from news reporting that have had a powerful effect on the public – for example, a burning child fleeing in Vietnam and the flowers left outside the palaces in London after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. What image might encapsulate each of John Simpson's stories? Explore the comparative impact of visual images and images created through language and the situations when each might be most effective.
- John Simpson has met many famous people during his career as a journalist. Find out more about some of the famous people mentioned in these stories. Readers might follow up on recent developments – for example, Diana, Princess of Wales, Afghanistan, Osama Bin Laden and Beirut.
- Using a world map, identify the countries or cities from which John Simpson has reported, perhaps recording them on a date line. Use this and the stories as a basis for discussion on what is revealed in terms of the shift of political interest from Europe to the Middle East at the end of the last century and the development of terrorism.
- Compare what Simpson has described in his book with the wider news story. Is journalism always impartial? Should it be? When can reportage become exploitation or voyeurism? This could be discussed with reference to current non-news television content.

Resources:

- Large world maps
- Dateline with space for completion of conflicts given in book
- Hard copies of pictures from current news stories

Supporting Web links:

- Interactive maps that chart the course of various wars in the Middle East on a timeline. Printable versions of slides are available: www.mapsofwar.com/ind/imperial-history.html
- Nick Ut's iconic photograph of a child fleeing after a napalm attack and an update on her present situation: www.vietnamwar.com/phanthikimphuc.htm
- Use the search facility of the *Daily Telegraph's* online newspaper to locate articles on different countries or images – for example, for interesting updates on the reconstruction after the Boxing Day tsunami: www.telegraph.co.uk
- Use the website Google Earth to find some of the places John Simpson has reported from and even see aerial photographs of them. This site needs to be downloaded, but the download is free: www.google.com/earth/
- Clint Eastwood's film 'Flags of our Fathers', which tells the story behind the famous photograph of the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima in the Second World War, provides a current and relevant exploration of the power of visual imagery: www.flagsoffourfathers.com
- Original online news article relating to events in Chapter 19 'Disaster in Iraq': http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2921807.stm

Reading Development:

- Reading for information (Rt/E3.1,2,4,6,8) (Rt/L1.1,2,5)
- Recognising and interpreting persuasive writing (Rt/E3.2,8) (Rt/L1.1,2)
- Relating imagery to text (Rt/E3.9) (Rt/L1.3)
- Using web for research (Rt/E3.5,6,7,8,9; Rs/E3.1) (Rt/L1.4,5)

Guidance on the ICT element of the resources

www.quickreadsideas.org.uk

The ICT-generated resources for the Quick Reads aim to provide extension tasks for readers and tutors, which will allow them to explore further the authors or texts that most interest them. The web-based tasks and links have been designed and chosen to increase readers' interest while offering them choice in what they explore.

Used independently, these resources will provide opportunities for readers to:

- find out more about authors and themes that interest them
- explore a range of media-rich texts that offer different perspectives and points of interest on authors and themes
- discover the potential of online, media-rich texts for developing their interest in authors or themes
- generate printable ideas of what most interests them and what they might read next.

Used within a group setting, individually or in pairs, these resources could help tutors and those supporting emergent readers to:

- plan and share a greater variety of tasks or 'ways in' to the Quick Reads, thus providing greater enrichment of readers' experiences of a particular text
- exploit multimedia texts that will appeal to a range of reader learning styles, so increasing the impact of the texts on individuals

- introduce the potential of online media to encourage further reading
- find a greater range of sources and resources that will add interest, topicality and relevance to the texts they teach
- expand their awareness of readers' interests and frames of reference.

These ICT resources have been designed to be used with only a basic level of ICT skills. For the best media experiences, access to the Internet via a broadband connection is preferable but not essential. Software may be needed to view video materials and is downloadable if organisational firewalls will allow. Audio material is extensive, and readers may need to be encouraged to develop considerate use of websites by wearing headphones in public places.

Readers may need some support to navigate their first webquest – for example, they may need guidance on how to return to the home page from the menus, how to make initial choices on what to explore and how to make decisions about other sites and related reading choices. A printable feedback form and quiz indicate possible further reading to explore. If readers are not confident at completing these online and then printing them, it may be best to provide them with a hard copy on which they can make notes as they go.

If Internet access is not available, it would be useful to provide audio and image files via CD-ROMs instead.

Full list of Quick Reads titles, including availability

Available March 2007

A Dream Come True	Maureen Lee	978 0 7528 8239 0
Burning Ambition	Allen Carr	978 0 141 03030 2
Doctor Who: Made of Steel	Terrance Dicks	978 1 846 07204 8
Lily	Adèle Geras	978 0 752 88224 6
Reading My Arse!	Ricky Tomlinson	978 0 7515 3953 0
The Sun Book of Short Stories		978 0 553 81882 6
Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best	Kerry Katona	978 0 091 91754 8
Twenty Tales from the War Zone	John Simpson	978 0 330 44999 1

Titles published in Wales available March 2007

A Day To Remember	Fiona Phillips	1905170904/978 1 905170906
Aim High	Tanni Grey Thompson	1905170890/978 1 905170890Z
Bring It Back Home	Niall Griffiths	1905170912/978 1 905170913
The Rubber Woman	Lindsay Ashford	1905170882/978 1 905170883

Reissues of 2006 titles

Chickenfeed	Minette Walters	978 0 330 44031 8
The Grey Man	Andy McNab	978 0 552 15433 8
How to Change Your Life in 7 Steps	John Bird	978 0 091 90703 7
Star Sullivan	Maeve Binchy	978 0 75287 954 3

Reprints of 2006 titles

Blackwater	Conn Iggulden	978 0 007 221660
The Book Boy	Joanna Trollope	978 0 747 582113
Cleanskin	Val McDermid	978 0 007 216727
Danny Wallace and the Centre of the Universe	Danny Wallace	978 0 091 908942
Don't Make Me Laugh	Patrick Augustus	978 1 902 934464
The Name You Once Gave Me	Mike Phillips	978 0 007 216710
I Am a Dalek	Gareth Roberts/Dr Who	978 0 563 486480
Hell Island	Matthew Reilly	978 0 330 442329

Other 2006 titles (only available in libraries)

The Corpse's Tale	Katherine John	1905170319
Desert Claw	Damien Lewis	0099493535
The Dying Wish	Courtia Newland	0349119635
I Love Football	Hunter Davies	0755314700
The Poison in the Blood	Tom Holland	0349119643
Screw it, Let's Do It	Richard Branson	0753510995
Secrets	Lynne Barrett-Lee	1905170300
Someone Like Me	Tom Holt	1841494461
The Team	Mick Dennis with the Premier League	0552153729
The Thief	Ruth Rendell	0091796865
Winner Takes All	John Francome	0755329481
Woman Walks into a Bar	Rowan Coleman	0099492288

Additional sources of support for working with emergent readers

Copies of the Quick Reads titles first published, re-issued or reprinted in 2007 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 – orders@bertrams.com
0870 4296600 www.bertrams.com
- Books for Students –
schools.services@bfs.co.uk
01482 384660 www.bfs.co.uk
- Gardners – custcare@gardners.com
01323 521777 www.gardners.com
- THE – 01782 566566 www.the.co.uk

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 editions of all the 2006 Quick Reads titles are available from BBC Audiobooks Ltd – library.sales@bbc.co.uk 01225 335336 www.bbcaudiobooks.co.uk/libraries

Large print editions of the 2007 Quick Reads will be available in June and a new imprint called Shortlist will include further titles appropriate for emergent readers.

The 2007 Quick Reads will be available in June and a new imprint called Shortlist will include further titles appropriate for emergent readers.

Opening chapters of the 2007 Quick Reads can be found on the Quick Reads website at www.quickreads.org.uk which also includes information about the new titles and supporting promotional materials distributed by NIACE.

Audio extracts from the 2006 and 2007 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

Over 500 titles recommended for emergent readers, including mainstream fiction and non-fiction selected against the Vital Link stock selection criteria, are listed on the First Choice Books database at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk

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

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

More about the Government's Skills for Life strategy can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/ This site contains information about the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum, the Access for All Guidance Manual (developed to support teachers of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) and a range of embedded teaching materials.



The Vital Link is run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust.

The Reading Agency was founded on the principle that reading has infinite potential for making life richer and that libraries are the most democratic medium for bringing reading to people. It runs major national library programmes, such as the Summer Reading Challenge, and has led to the creation of new national partnerships for libraries with BBC Learning (for the BBC RaW adult literacy campaign), BBC Radio, the nine Reading Partners publishers and Orange. For further information, visit: www.readingagency.org.uk.

The **National Literacy Trust** is an independent charity dedicated to building a nation in which everyone enjoys the skills, self-esteem and pleasures that literacy can bring. It is the only organisation concerned with raising literacy standards for all age groups throughout the UK. It runs a range of programmes including the National Reading Campaign and offers a web-support network for anyone interested in literacy at www.literacytrust.org.uk.



Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DfES Publications
PO Box 5050
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Nottingham NG15 0DJ
Tel 0845 6022260
Fax 0845 6033360

Quote ref: SFLQR

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Published by the Department for Education and Skills

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