

Press Release: for immediate release, 25 June 2010

Is gaming a solution to the nation's literacy skills problem?

**** National charity publishes report calling for the gaming industry to harness its power to support adult literacy. ****

One in six adults in this country struggle with reading and writing - with major social and economic consequences.¹ And yet millions play games every day which already involve them in reading and could help them develop their literacy skills. The Reading Agency today (Friday 25 June) publishes a report on gaming, and challenges the industry to harness its power to make a difference for those with literacy needs.

Gaming for reading indicates that gaming and other digital technologies can have a beneficial impact on learners' literacy skills. Learning practitioners in settings as varied as literacy classes, libraries and prisons have demonstrated that digital technologies can be a real stepping stone towards improved literacy skills.

As games grow in popularity at home, work or college, they are being taken increasingly seriously as a way of supporting skills development. Gaming for reading highlights their accessibility and motivational power and calls on literacy advocates to embrace the potential of gaming to attract new readers.

The report was launched last night at a roundtable discussion chaired by Tom Chatfield, author of *Fun Inc.: Why games are the 21st century's most serious business*, with contributors including games developer Adrian Hon, writer and gamer Rhianna Pratchett and Markos Tiris from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service.

On the power of games to attract struggling readers, Markos Tiris said: "Gaming lifts the stigma. People are happy to engage and you can't get a bigger gain than engagement. Games make the link between informal learning – where people are engaged in something for fun – and more formal learning. We need to get the message out to the sector that it's OK to use games."

The Reading Agency is keen to introduce a gaming element into its successful Six Book Challenge scheme for less confident adult readers that now attracts 10,000 people. "The trick has been hooking them into the process," explains The Reading Agency's adult literacy expert Genevieve Clarke, "so we look with envy at the ability of the gaming world to engage millions and have such a close relationship with its audience. Gaming allows people to fail and try again which learning is all about. We're calling on partners in the gaming industry to help us create a gaming version of our own 'analogue' game, the Six Book Challenge."

Adrian Hon, founder of games developer Six to Start, said "There's always a place for text in games and it's still one of the best forms of 'world building'. The Reading Agency's report has made me think about accessibility and keeping it simple to attract as wide an audience as possible."

¹ [Literacy changes lives](#), Dugdale & Clark, 2008, National Literacy Trust

Gaming for Reading: a feasibility study on the use of video games to engage adults with low literacy in reading for pleasure is published today, Friday 25 June 2010. For a copy, visit www.readingagency.org.uk If you would like to work with The Reading Agency or comment on the report, see <http://www.readingagency.org.uk/new-thinking/forum/>

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Notes to Editors:

- The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more. It is funded by the Arts Council and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. (www.readingagency.org.uk)
- The Reading Agency believes in the power of reading to change people's lives, equal opportunities for everyone to become a reader and the importance of public libraries.
- The Reading Agency's Six Book Challenge encourages less confident ('emergent') readers to develop a reading habit through choosing, reading and expressing their views about books. Participants are invited to read six books and keep a reading diary. The main activity for the Six Book Challenge 2010 concludes on 30 June. 70% of library services have been running the scheme with colleges, adult and community education, workplaces and prisons. www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk
- Participants in the Reading Agency's roundtable discussion were:
 - Jill Attewell, MoLeNET Programme Manager, Learning and Skills Network (LSN)
 - Tom Chatfield, Senior Editor at Prospect magazine
 - Adrian Hon, founder and Chief Creative Officer at Six to Start
 - Rhianna Pratchett, games script writer and story designer
 - Markos Tiris, Head of Teaching and Learning, Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)
 - Michelle Treagust, Project Manager, Adult Learners, The Reading Agency
 - Ben Wright, Digital Sales Director, Random House UK

A film of the discussion will be available shortly at www.readingagency.org.uk