

The Book Club Book!

**A GUIDE TO RUNNING A
SUCCESSFUL BOOK CLUB IN
YOUR SCHOOL**



Tower Hamlets Schools Library Services



Quality Resources - Quality Education



TOWER HAMLETS

BOOK GROUPS!

Getting a book group together at your school is a great way to share books and engage students in reading.

Below are some suggestions on how to get a book group started at your school, how to structure book chats and some activities these groups can do. Some of the first things you should consider are:

- Where your book club will take place - Will it be in the library? In a classroom? Make the space comfortable and cosy, so students have a positive association with the club.
- What books will be read and how long will it take for students to read them? Make sure the reading targets are realistic and that books are engaging for students.
- Who will be involved in the book club - Will it be a targeted group of children? A whole class? Small reading groups? How many students you have in your club will depend on the resources your school has available.
- How will the club run - Will everyone read the same book or will everyone take turns reading separate books? This will depend on how many copies of each book your school is able to obtain. Both of these options can work, it will just alter how you structure your discussions.

Once these factors have been decided on, you can begin running your club!

CHOOSING BOOK(S)

There are thousands of great books out there, and thousands of terrible ones, too! Choosing what to read (and how many books to read) can feel intimidating, so here are some suggestions.

Reading one book at a time

The traditional book group model is that everyone reads the same book over a set amount of time and then come together to discuss it and/or engage in activities based around this book. You're probably already using this model with your class reading text.

Pros

- You can plan specific discussion points and activities
- It's great for exploring a piece of literature in depth
- Children have the opportunity to present their own points of view and enter into a debate
- Some books have suggested book club questions and activities either in the book or on the publisher/author's website

Cons

- Children may not be enthused if this club is a very similar experience to studying their class text!
- Children read at different speeds and some group members may be left behind or have difficulty taking part if activities and discussions require a certain amount of the book to have been read
- Children who don't like the book may lose interest
- Requires multiple copies of the same book so can be expensive

Reading different books

If you've used the Chatterbooks model or shadowed a book award you'll be familiar with this. With this model, children each read a different book, though there is usually a common theme to link them. At each group they'll have the opportunity to talk about what they've read and swap books with another child.

Pros

- Enables different types of discussion, including promoting a book to the rest of the group
- Can be more cost-effective. Some book awards give free sets of books to schools and themed reading clubs can use books that are already in the library
- The wider the selection of books, the more likely that all of the children will find something they enjoy reading and responding to
- Book awards will often publish activities

Cons

- Some discussion-based activities can be slow to start until children have read more than one book.
- Deadlines for finishing/swapping books will be necessary.

CHOOSING BOOK(S)

Brand new books

If the school has just purchased or borrowed a selection of new books that the children are excited about reading, this can be a good opportunity to start a group – especially if being able to take these new books is seen as a treat! You don't even need to provide set activities like writing reviews. Let children make their own responses, but this book club may just be about letting children have the opportunity to read new books for fun.

Book Awards

There are many national and local book awards aimed at different ages, usually with up to 6 books on the short list. The books on these lists are newly-published and if the school has a budget for buying books for the library, combining this with shadowing an award is a good idea as the titles are generally of a high quality.

Some awards give free sets of books to schools provided that the shadowing group submits reviews or other responses to the books along with votes for which book should win. This is great, because you'll get ready-made suggested activities, plus an incentive for children to take part (they're responsible for which book wins a prize).

National awards include The Carnegies, the CLIPPA poetry prize, the Little Rebels Awards, the Diverse Book Awards and the Royal Society Children's Book Prize.

Books with a shared theme or feature

You can use this as an opportunity to get children to discover books that have been in the library for a while but may have been ignored! You can choose any books (old or new) of any reading level, provided there's a common theme. For example adventure stories, funny books, books with illustrations, comics and graphic novels, books about space, books about sports, etc. Some of these themes allow for a mix of fiction and non-fiction.

Activities can be based around the theme as well as the books – so all of the children can join in, no matter how much or little they've read. Some themes will lend themselves to arts activities and some may have STEM links.

BOOK GROUP **ADVICE**

2.

Keep it short – 30 minutes is plenty of time and 20 minutes is still enough. Any more than 30 minutes and it risks becoming a drag or, worse, a doss and a way to waste time.

An ideal structure would be:

5 mins – small creative activity

5 mins – quick catchup – who had what, what has been finished what is still ongoing etc.

15 mins – 1-3 questions about the books.

5 mins – swapping books, noting who has got what and who is due what next.



4.

Read or skim the books yourself before starting the club. It feels a lot easier to run when you have knowledge of the books yourself, even if it is just a glancing knowledge. Plus, it will expand your book knowledge!



1.

When you have your first meeting put the books in one big tempting pile and introduce each one by reading the blurb. Include any interesting information about the author too. You will always get at least one child who is immediately drawn to a book. If you are all reading the same book, just introduce the book you will be reading



3.

Try not to let one or two children dominate discussion. It's hard when they can get very enthusiastic, but it will bore the others quickly. We've included some questions in this pamphlet, and for quieter students some of the easier '3 word' questions might work well to draw them into the discussion. If possible, try and avoid questions that can be answered simply yes or no!



5.

Ideally, run it during the school day. If it's done during playtime none of the children will want to be there and if it's after school, it won't be taken seriously. If the children can be taken out of the class for 20 minutes, it gives it a sense of gravitas and it signals it as something special to the rest of the class too, that this book club (and therefore books) are important.

BOOK GROUP ADVICE

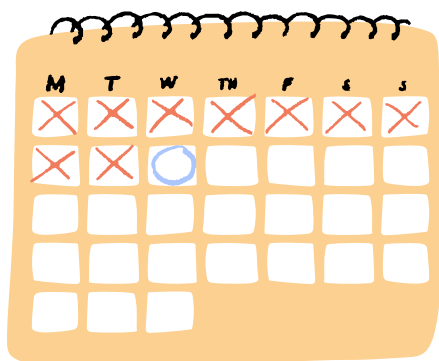
7.

Try and have something special and exclusive – this can just be a set of notebooks that the children can decorate themselves. These can be split into sections for each book and the children can write down their thoughts, draw in, or copy their favourite sections into. These also serve as an excellent way to show the impact of the book group at a later date if necessary.



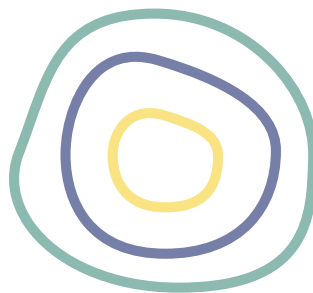
9.

Make sure the children know that there is a timeline for this book club and give them a date to have read the books by.



6.

You're allowed to hate a book! Make it absolutely clear to the children that they are allowed to dislike one of the books as long as they can say why, and they have tried reading it properly.



8.

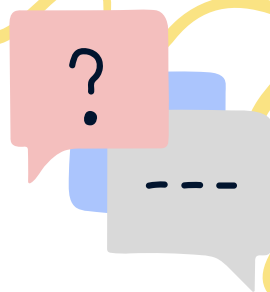
Start with a silly game if possible – “Guess Who” using post it notes on foreheads, write down as many animals that have an ‘e’ in their name in 30 seconds, a game of ‘I went to the shops and I bought...’, a quick riddle, that sort of thing. Something to get the children thinking creatively and engaged.



10.

Have some way to celebrate the end of the book club. This will give the students something to look forward to at the end of the session. This could be presenting the students with a certificate or prize for taking part or a special morning tea or lunch session.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



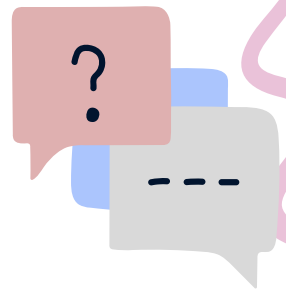
Starter questions

- What do you think about the cover? (We know we shouldn't judge, but we all do and publishers revamp covers a lot because of changing tastes and different types of reader, like Bloomsbury did with the Harry Potter covers)
- Why do you think this book has this title?
- What do you immediately want to know about the book?
- Where do you think it will be set?
- What type of book do you think it looks like? Introduce the concept of genre – is it adventure, mystery, action, funny, scary etc and why do you think you think that?

Whilst Reading

- Is this book a thumbs up or thumbs down so far? Where would you put this book on a scale of 1-5? How many stars out of 5? Etc
- How would you describe this book/main character in 3 words?
- Are any of the characters like you or do you want to be like any of them?
- Who is your favourite character and what about them makes them such a great character for you?
- Has anything surprised you about the book?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Which character is least like you?
- Is there any character you secretly love to hate?
- Does this book remind you of any others you've read? Why?
- Is there anywhere in the book you would like to go?
- Has anything in the book also happened to you (obviously be careful with this one)
- Have you learnt any new words, or are there any you're not sure about?
- Who is the most interesting character?

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



When the book is finished

- **Repeat question:** Is this book a thumbs up or thumbs down? Where would you put this book on a scale of 1-5? How many stars out of 5? If it's changed from their previous rating, why is that, what happened?
- Do we all agree?
- Was it easy to read or did you have to force yourself to read it?
- Are you glad you read it?
- If you would change anything, what would you change?
- Is there anything you think should be known about the book before you read it? (Hot Key publishers have trigger warnings on the backs of their YA books, should this book have something similar?)
- What bit did you not like?
- What was your favourite bit?
- If you wanted to convince someone to read this book, what would you say?
- What age range do you think this book is suitable for?
- If you could meet the author is there anything you would ask them?
- Would you want to see this book made into a film or a tv show? Would any bits of it not work on tv (eg. Peeves the Poltergeist is missing from the Harry Potter films but is in all the books)
- Did someone else in your house read this book too? What did they think of it?
- If the author wrote another book what would you want them to write about next?
- Do you think this book was inspired by something that happened to the author?

Book Group Activities

Utilising hands-on activities is a great way to get your book club engaged in the books. There a variety of activities that can be done with any book group reading material. These could be:

Art:

- Draw a scene from the book
- Draw the main setting of the book
- Adapt part of the story into a comic strip
- Draw a character portrait
- Write a review for the book

Writing:

- Re-write part of the story into verse, or a passage of verse into prose!
- Write an alternate ending
- Write a scene from another character's point of view
- Write the first chapter of the next book

Performing:

- Turn part of the book into a play. Have the book group act out part of the book, and perform it at a school assembly
- Create a short Tik-Tok-style video relating to one of the selected books from the shortlist. These can be as imaginative, clever or funny as you'd like. Filmed clips may be shown to the rest of the school

