Read On! with Sick Children

Reading for pleasure is an important resource for children who are not well. It is not just an opportunity to learn in a stress-free way. More importantly, it can become an important escape or distraction from illness or pain.

It is vital, therefore, that the books in the Read On! library should be presented to young people in this situation as a resource which can support their learning and not as a formal academic task. Use a light touch, make it fun and never test, impose comprehension activities or formal book reports. Consider the ideas below.

Meet the books with cover activities:

Try out this great idea from Read On! teacher, Philip Drury in Catania. Download and print the PDF from the website: www.oup.com/elt/readon. Print on A4 or A3 and laminate or stick to piece of card.

The Cover Game can be played by one or more players. Find a die and use coins or any small objects as counters. Roll the die and move the number of spaces indicated. If students land on a book cover, they should try predict the story. If they land on one of the spaces with a question, they should answer it. The first person to finish is the winner. Play with your students! As a variation your students can ask each other 5 W and H questions when they land on a cover (i.e. What are the horses doing? Why is the man running through fire? etc.).

You or your students can also create your own versions of the game by changing the covers and the questions.

To get images of the covers of the books go to www.coverbank.oup.com and type the ISBN numbers of the books you want to use in space provided and then follow the instructions.
Guess the Genre Game

Print off the two PDFs and glue them together on either side of a piece of cardboard and then cut out the cards. You can laminate them if you wish to make them more long-lasting.

Talk to the student/s about the kinds of films or television programmes they like and encourage them to identify as many different kinds of genres as possible. Encourage them to notice how similar most of the English words for genre are to the Italian words.

Place the cards cover side up on a table or a tray, if the student is in bed. See how many the genres the student can identify from looking at the covers and then checking by flipping the card. Discuss how the cover helps or does not help to identify the genre. Have competitions if you have more than one student.

Kim’s Game

The idea for this game comes from *Kim*, a novel by Rudyard Kipling written in 1901 and centred around ‘the Great Game’. Baden Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts popularised it.

This memory game is part of Kim’s training as a teenage spy in India during the late 19th Century when the British were worried about the Russian Empire’s growing power in central Asia. In the story, Kim is shown a tray full of jewels and is told to look at them carefully, count and even touch them. The tray is then covered with a cloth and Kim has to list all the jewels he remembers.

Play the game with the cards you have made above. Place 10 - 20 cards on a tray or table, the cover side visible. Allow students to look at the cards for 30 to 60 seconds, depending on the number you have used. Then cover them with a cloth. Students must list as many titles they can remember, either verbally or in writing.

**Variation:** Show the tray with the cards. Cover them as above but before you show them again remove one card. Students have to guess which cover image has been removed from the tray.

CLIL Connection: History repeats itself

The second half of the 19th Century and the early 20th Century saw the British Empire in India increasingly worried about Russian influence in central Asia. The 1878 political cartoon above shows the Emir of Afghanistan, Sher Ali, trying to remain neutral between the Russian Bear and the British Lion.

‘The Great Game’ is the name given to this Anglo Russian rivalry. Ask students to find out about this period of history and reflect how current events in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia are replaying the same old ‘games’.
Cover Stories

Ask the student/s to pick a cover they like and list as many words that they can identify from the cover. The nouns will be easy but how about verbs, adjectives and adverbs? Consider the example below. These are just some suggested words. There will certainly be more that are not included in this list.

Once the student/s has/have their collection/s, suggest they divide the words into two categories: positive and negative as shown in the example here on the right.

There are no ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers here. The way people respond to words is not only context dependent but also influenced by associations prompted by personal experience.

Face to Face Cards

Print off the two PDFs and glue them together on either side of a piece of cardboard then cut out the cards. Laminate them if you wish to make them more long-lasting. Below are just some ideas. Students and you will think up many more.

- **Categories:** Lay the cards on a tray or a table either ‘people’ or ‘animals’ side up. Student/s then sort the cards into two categories of their choice. How many paired categories can they find? Reward originality.
- **Pairs:** Use the cards ‘people’ side up. Ask student/s to pick two characters and imagine the conversation these two people might have. Students can script and then act out the conversations they have imagined.
- **Who’s for dinner?** Turn the cards ‘people’ side up. Students turn up two cards and discuss which of the animals is most likely to eat the other and why. A great game for boys and younger children!
- **History Lessons:** Use the cards ‘people’ side up. Ask students to order them historically according to when they think each character lived. Invite students to explain the way they have ordered the cards.
- **Brief Encounters:** Ask students to say whom they would like to meet and why.
- **Journalism:** Invite students to interview a character chosen by another student or you. Ask them to prepare the questions for the interview. If another student or you have read the story, either of you can be interviewed by the student journalist. Students can then write up the interview.
- **Choose a Pet:** Which animal would you like to own, why?
- **Rankings:** Ask students to rank either the people or the animals according to different criteria, for example best to worst; most powerful to weakest etc. Students should explain their rankings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>girl</td>
<td>cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hearts</td>
<td>clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diamonds</td>
<td>spades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dress</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flowery</td>
<td>fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shelter</td>
<td>attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hands</td>
<td>defend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eyes</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>pack</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Encourage students, either orally or in writing, to describe the scene on the cover using first the ‘positive’ words and then the ‘negative’ ones.

What changes to the mood of the scene do students notice between the two retellings?

Students can also use one or other list to write their own stories. Ask them to explain their choice.
Using Audio
The audio recordings of the stories are a great resource for children who do not feel well. Remember that being in hospital or sick at home means the student will have little energy for studying in a traditional way. Fear, discomfort or pain make it hard to study and learn. Consider making English language lessons less stressful and try out the following strategies. Make English lessons an enjoyable and distracting time.

Reading Aloud
Listening to the audio retellings of the stories, through earphones for example, is a very powerful way to practice English skills, including:

- Listening Comprehension
- Pronunciation
- Grammar and Vocabulary
- Structures

If you can persuade students to read along while listening to the audio, learning in all these areas is strengthened thanks to the double input, aural and visual.

This kind of reading is something students can do to while away the time when they are stuck in bed, learning while they listen and read.

Oral Predictions
Practise students thinking skills by playing part of a story from the audio recording or reading it aloud.

- What do they think happens next? Why?
- Do they think that the next events will be positive or negative? Why?
- What do they think about a particular character’s behaviour? What in their view should that character do next?

Then continue playing the audio to see if the student has predicted accurately.

A great way of playing this game is to choose a book which you don’t know. Then predict alongside your student/s. Enjoy the resulting discussions of how you have reached your decisions. What evidence did each of you use to come to your conclusions?

Mind the Gap
This is an oral cloze or gap-fill exercise. Use the recording of a story at the appropriate level for your student/s. Start playing the audio and then stop the recording and ask them to guess what they think the next word is. Restart the recording. Students check their answer/s and get two points for the correct answer and 1 point for any answer which is appropriate grammatically and makes sense in the story. They can submit as many answers as they can think of in 10 seconds. The game can also be played as a competition between students. Join in yourself. It’s lots of fun!

Drawing Listening Comprehension
Pick a section of a story which is well within students’ reading ability and describes a scene or a character. Play it or read it aloud to the students once. Then ask them to draw the scene or the person including as many details as they can. Replay or reread the text and get students to check how many details they have included. This can be played as a competition between students with students getting a point for each recorded detail or one student can choose the passage to read aloud while the other draws.

Complete the Conversation
One your students picks a conversation in a book at the appropriate level. They read one of character’s words and then ask the next student to continue the conversation. The first student then passes the book to the one who continued the conversation who then reads what was actually said. How accurate was the prediction? The second student then initiates a new conversation for the first student to complete and so on continuing the game.