HOW TO SET UP A BOOK CLUB IN YOUR SCHOOL
Reading groups and book clubs are a hugely popular way of engaging readers. They can increase the pleasure of reading as they enable us to:

- share our ideas
- explore differences of opinion
- find common interests.

Here, we offer some suggestions to make sure you get the very best out of running your group.
WHO IS YOUR BOOK GROUP FOR?

- Is it going to be a group that’s open to everyone?
- Do you have a target age group in mind?
- Do you have a particular group in mind e.g. ‘reluctant readers’, high attaining readers, mother and daughter reading group (or fathers and sons), transition reading group for children going to secondary school, teachers’ reading group?
- What limit will you put on numbers? Chatterbooks’ recommends a maximum of 15, but 8 –10 might feel like a more manageable number for younger children and will allow everyone to contribute without breaking into smaller groups. Also, if there are some absences, the group won’t feel too small.

Once you have decided who your book club is for, you will want to consider when is the right time to meet. For instance:

- a self-selected group might run as a club after school or during the lunch break
- a mother and daughter reading group may need to run outside regular school hours
- a teachers’ book club could replace a staff meeting once every half term.

Give readers enough time to read the book but keep the momentum going. Therefore, once a fortnight or once a month may be frequent enough.

Keep the meetings regular and schedule dates in your diary, e.g. the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. The group may lose interest if there are too many cancellations and postponements through lack of planning.

Chatterbooks is the Reading Agency’s network of children’s reading clubs, run in libraries and schools to encourage reading for pleasure.
**ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?**

**WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO HOLD YOUR BOOK CLUB?**

Your school library may be the most obvious place, if you have one. For that ‘book club’ feel, you will want to create an atmosphere that doesn’t feel like a lesson.

- Is the area cozy and welcoming?
- What seating arrangement is going to suit you: around a table, informal soft seating?
- Will you need to have access to materials for drawing, writing, etc?
- Will you provide refreshments? Books and food complement each other perfectly, even if it’s simply juice and biscuits. For the occasional special treat, you might theme a snack to accompany the book that you are reading e.g. jam tarts for *Alice in Wonderland*.

**CHOICES, CHOICES**

**WHAT WILL YOU READ?**

The books you choose to read will be determined to some extent by the type of group you are setting up. For instance:

- for a group of **high attaining readers**, you may have the goal of developing greater breadth, or offering choices that the children may not select themselves.
- for a group of **‘reluctant readers’**, you may want to develop greater independence and build in an element of member choice.
- for groups such as **mother and daughter** reading groups, you might choose a book that allows a discussion about a shared experience.

Most book clubs involve all members reading the same book, so that there is a shared context for discussion. Alternatively, members choose different books, which they review and bring to the group, thus widening the reading repertoire through peer recommendation.
1. **Introduction**: briefly introduce the book you have been reading. You may find that not every child has read the book, so a quick introduction helps everyone feel included.

2. **First response**: allow everyone to express their first thoughts about the book. A simple thumbs up, thumbs down can be a really good way into the discussion, especially if you encourage the children to talk to each other and justify their ideas. Avoid filtering the comments – you are a member of the group rather than the teacher.

3. **Taking it further**: if the discussion falters or becomes too circular, choose one or two of your key questions to get things moving and deepen the response.

4. **Time for a break**: take a short refreshment break. You might organise time for children to swap or recommend other books they have read.

5. **Read aloud**: choose a passage to read aloud to the group. Choose an exciting passage or give the children a choice. Older children might like to use readers’ theatre, which works especially well if there is a lot of dialogue.

6. **Before finishing**: introduce the next book and make sure everyone has the time and date of the next meeting.
QUESTIONS TO GET THE DISCUSSION MOVING

- What made you want to keep reading this book?
- Was there anything that put you off reading this book?
- Did this book remind you of any other books you have read or films that you have seen?
- Did it remind you of anything that you have heard about or something that has happened to you?
- Was there anything strange or puzzling about this book?
- Did you like the way the author had written the book? (e.g. narration, use of language, dialogue)
- Which character is most like you?
  - Would you like to have been a character in this story?
- Do any of the characters change during the course of this story?
  - Which character changes most during the story?
- Does the author tell you what the characters are thinking or feeling? Or just some of the characters?
- Do you think the characters are portrayed realistically? (This can be asked about types of characters as well as more generally. For example, do you think the teachers in this story are portrayed realistically?)
- If you were casting a film version of this story who would you get to play xxxx? Why?
- Who tells or narrates the story?
  - Is the narrator one of the characters?
- What do you think the narrator thinks about the things that happen in this story? Or about the characters in this story?
- Does the narrator tell you more about one character than the others or not?
- How vividly does the author create the setting for this story?
  - Was the setting important or could this story have happened anywhere at any time?
- Did you like the way the story ended? Why/why not?
- If you were writing the blurb for this story, what would you include to make someone want to read it? What would you leave out to avoid giving too much away?
- Do you think there are any important messages in this book? Are there any big ideas (themes)?
FINISHING TOUCHES

QUESTIONS TO ROUND OFF THE DISCUSSION

- Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why/why not?
- Have you heard anyone say anything about this book today that has made you change your mind about your first thoughts?
- Now that we have finished our discussion, what do you think were the most important things that we said about this book?
- Have you read any other books by this author? Would you recommend them to a friend?

NEXT STEPS

Find out more about setting up a book club as well as our reading recommendations by visiting: www.oxfordprimary.co.uk/readingforpleasure. Here you’ll find advice, reading notes and other suggestions for getting the most out of your children’s reading.

Have you had a look at Oxford BookMatch yet? Here, you can navigate the world of children’s books and find the perfect next read for every pupil. Visit www.oxfordowl.co.uk for further information.