

MBE BOOKS

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Insight report into reading initiatives and reading for pleasure at Key Stages 3 and 4

Autumn 2020

Introduction

Welcome to MBE Books' insight report into reading initiatives and reading for pleasure at Key Stages 3 and 4, which we hope you find informative and packed full of ideas for shared practice.

At MBE Books we have supplied books to thousands of schools for over 30 years, offering the most popular English set texts and latest titles spanning Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, GCSE and A-Level set texts, and we are proud of our service.

What we wanted to do – and this is a first for MBE Books – is to reach out to our community of school improvement leads, literacy co-ordinators, subject leaders, English teachers and librarians to learn more about their approaches to the teaching of reading with 11-15 year olds, and collate and share these within our community and with other schools more widely.

As you will see, we explore the use of initiatives such as Tutor Time Reading and resources such as Accelerated Reader; issues such as the reading ability of pupils in Year 7 and time given in school to reading for pleasure (and the barriers to this); specific titles read with students in Year 7 and favourite books to teach at Key Stage 3, as well as books to help grab the attention of reluctant readers.

Thank you to each and every one of the 320 people who completed our survey up to and including the end of the summer term in July 2020 – your input is greatly appreciated.

When considering some of the report findings myself I think it is particularly interesting to see:

- Within the 'Top 10' book lists we provide – but also the wider data that we have available – that these lists represent a genuine combination of the 'classics' and newer titles.
- There are some clear themes emerging: for example, that a significant number of books on these school-derived lists include war-based and fantasy genres, and increasingly diversity and inclusion titles as well.
- And finally the importance of graphic novels (as a genre) to engage reluctant readers.

As one respondent to our survey said: "Readers are all individuals and my job is to match an appropriate book with that child". It is our job, at MBE Books, to provide schools with the tools to deliver a collective and personalised education.

We plan to repeat this report in the 2020-21 academic year, but in the meantime remain available to help you in any way we can.

Jeremy

Jeremy Stallman
Managing Director
MBE Books

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Summary

Over half of respondents (59%) undertake Tutor Time Reading most days and 55% use Accelerated Reading within their school. Paired reading, reading buddies and Drop Everything And Read are other common reading initiatives

The most popular books that schools read with Year 7 students are:
1. The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas
2. Private Peaceful
3 = A Monster Calls, and Holes

Most schools (36%) allocate 10-15 minutes to reading for pleasure in school every day – but, for those who do not encourage this, nearly two thirds (64%) say this is because there is not enough time

60% of respondents are very concerned or concerned about the reading ability of students in Year 7

Schools' favourite books to teach Key Stage 3 students are:
1. Of Mice and Men
2. Animal Farm
3. Private Peaceful

Reciprocal reading, close reading, modelled reading, decoding and vocabulary, and discussion are schools' preferred teaching strategies for helping students understand the text

To grab the attention of reluctant readers at Key Stages 3 and 4 schools mostly recommend:
1. Harry Potter
2. A Monster Calls
3 = Of Mice and Men, and Noughts & Crosses

Key findings: Year 7 students' reading ability

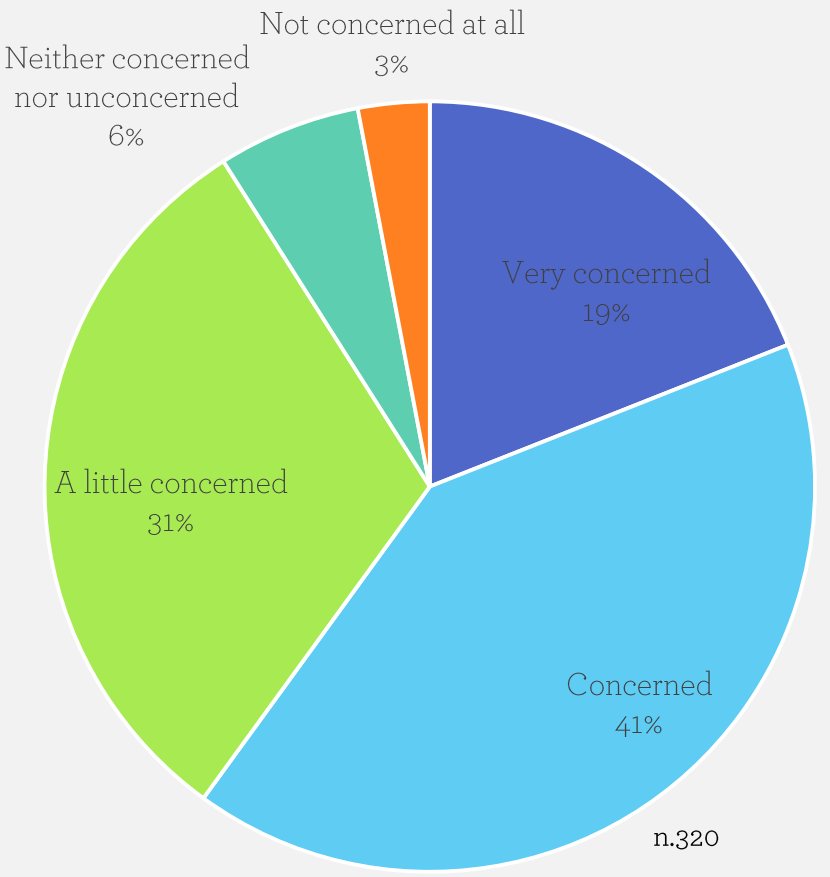
These next three pages focus on the concern of schools with the reading ability of students in Year 7, and the initiatives that have been put in place to counter this.

One of the key findings of this research is that over 90% of respondents are at least 'a little concerned' about the reading ability of students in Year 7, with 41% concerned and 19% very concerned.

These findings mirror those of other organisations such as the National Literacy Trust which found that in 2019 "children and young people's levels of reading enjoyment continue to decline and are at their lowest since 2013".

The opportunity to improve the life chances of students is clearly laid out: "young people who read daily in their free time are twice as likely to read above the level expected for their age than children who don't read daily." (National Literacy Trust, Children and young people's reading in 2019, 5th March 2020).

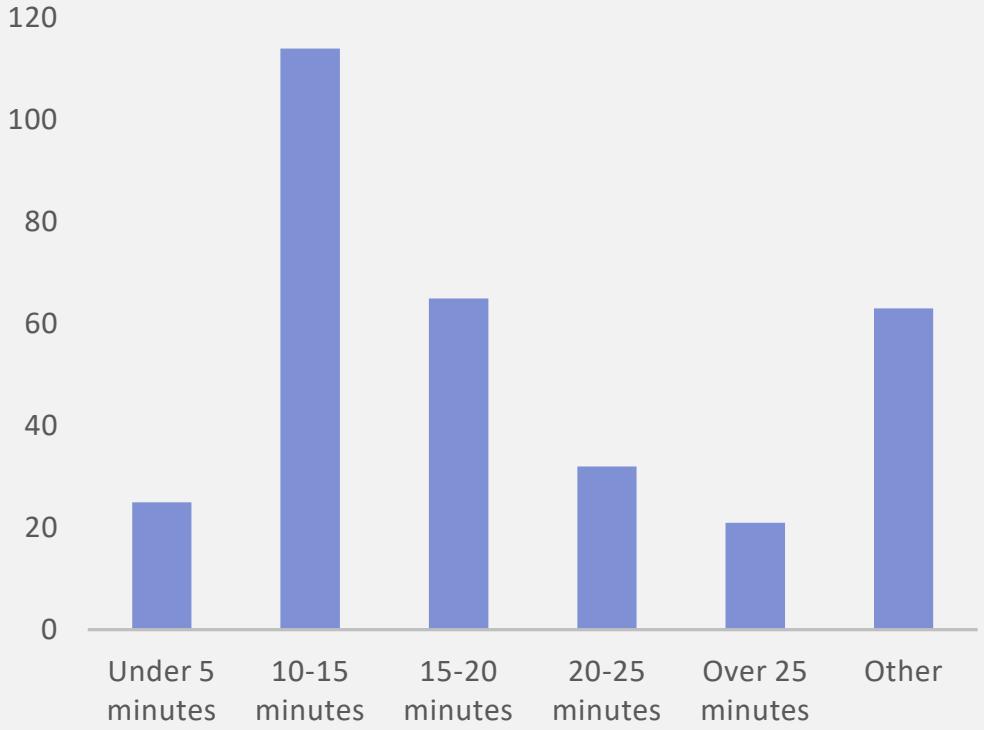
How much of a concern is the reading ability of students in Year 7?



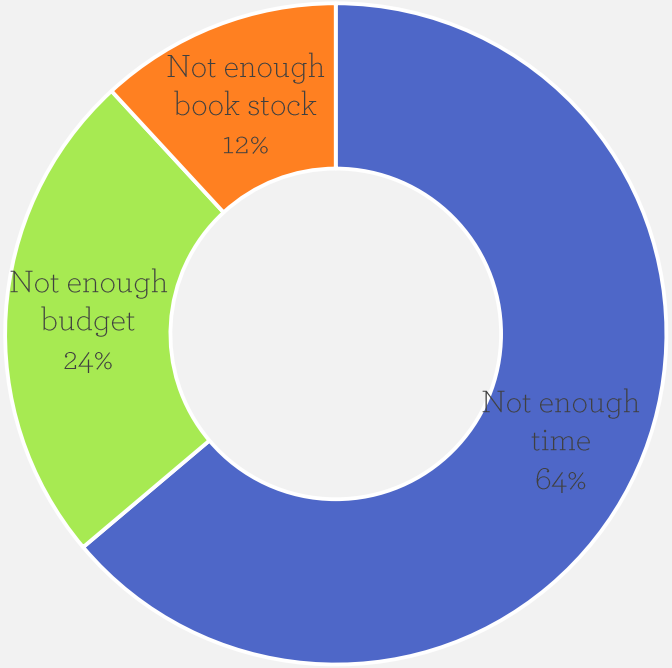
Key findings: Underpinning issues around reading

Later in this report we will be exploring some of the initiatives that schools are employing to help counter the lack of interest in reading for pleasure and some of the concerns about the reading ability of students in Year 7. 113 schools reported that they do not encourage reading for pleasure in school time due to a lack of time, and just over a third of schools suggested this was due to lack of budget and having too few books in school.

How much time do you give to reading for pleasure in school every day?



If you do not encourage reading for pleasure in school time, what are your main reasons why?



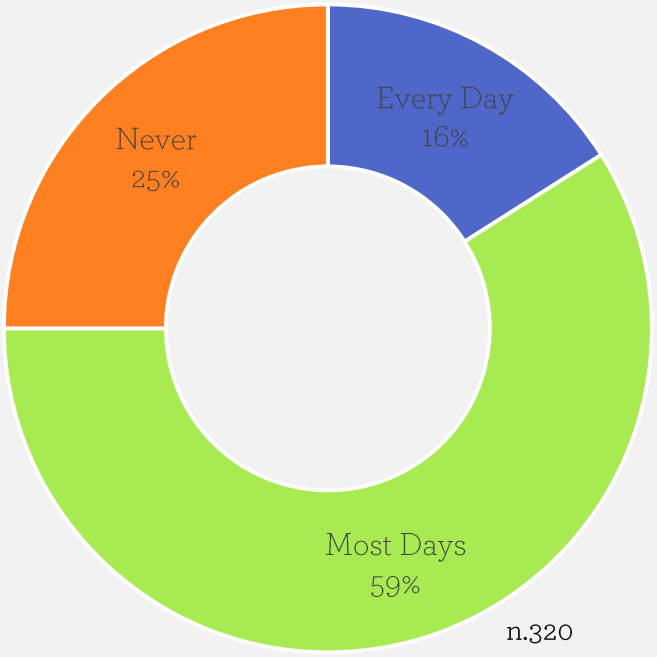
n.177

Key findings: Reading initiatives in Key Stages 3 and 4

To address some of the concerns that schools have about reading levels of students in Year 7, our research found that three quarters of respondents undertake Tutor Time Reading most, if not every day, and over half of secondary schools use Accelerated Reader. It is clear that the more concerned a school is about the reading levels of its students, the more focus is given to these two initiatives.

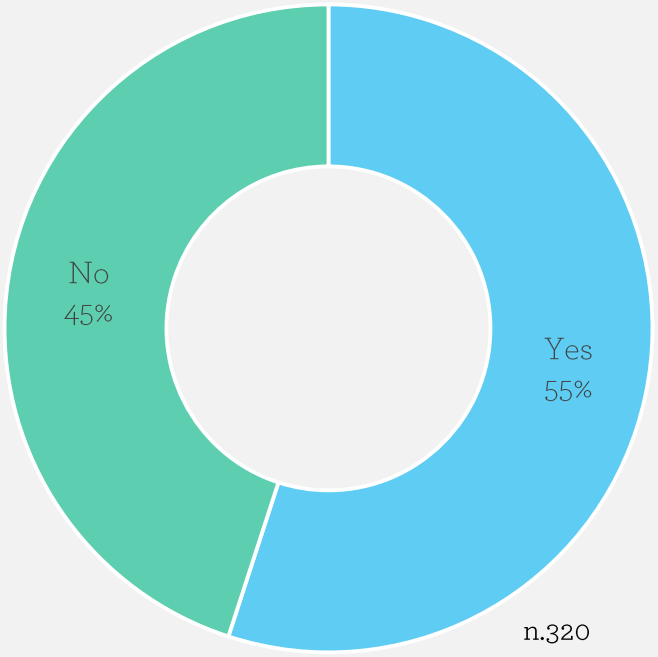
There were 313 'other' responses to this question, the top three most common are listed below. Just behind these three were a plethora of initiatives, such as Carnegie book shadowing, book clubs, reading competitions and many, many more.

Do you do Tutor Time Reading at your school?



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Do you use Accelerated Reader at your school?



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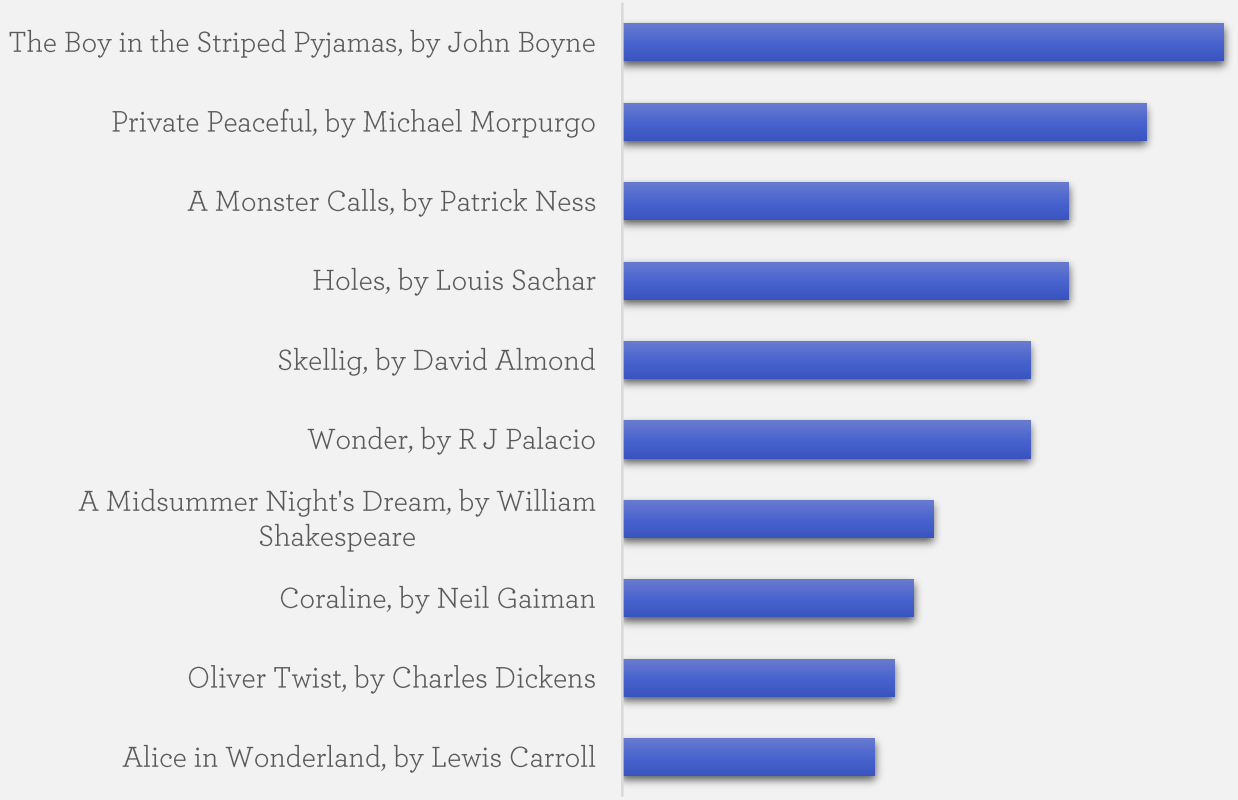
Top 3 other reading initiatives:

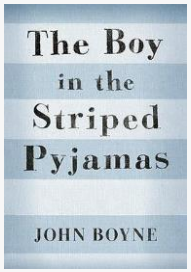
Paired reading
Reading buddies
Drop Everything And Read

Top 10: Books for reading with Year 7 students

From the comments supplied next to each book, there is clearly a great deal of love for the texts on this list in schools with words like “engaging”, “powerful” and “inspiring” appearing many times; and all of the books on the list are undeniably tremendous reads.

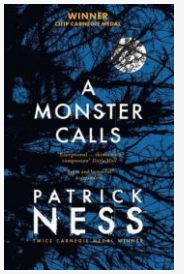
It was interesting to see how many respondents suggested that their book lists are in need of updating. There are signs that more diverse and inclusive books are being read further down the list, with books such as *Noughts & Crosses, The Bone Sparrow, Boy 87* and *The Boy at the Back of the Class* making appearances.

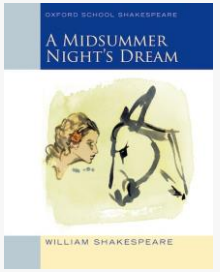




“It opens pupils' eyes to the importance of prejudice, and the horror that it can lead to, and also the value of friendship and love and humanity”

“Offers challenge for able students but is also engaging for struggling readers”





“The themes and acting potential”

“The story, the illustrations”

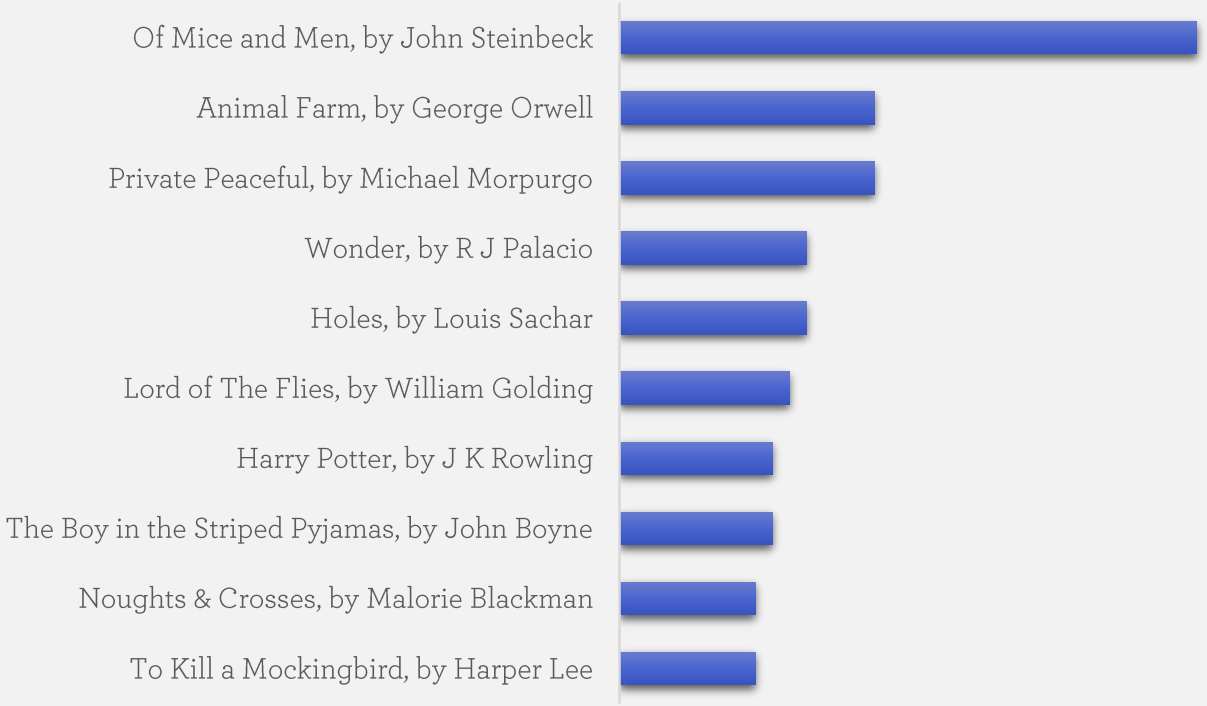


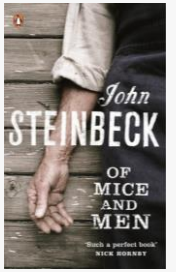
Top 10: Books for teaching Key Stage 3 students

Another great list of cracking books! *Of Mice and Men* is far and away the leader in the responses we had for this question, and the reason of "we can no longer teach it at GCSE" was mentioned more than once.

To highlight the benefit of teaching the first book in a series, this response to Harry Potter was noteworthy: "*The Philosopher's Stone*...is accessible, there are lots of digital resources (audiobook, film etc.) and allows students to engage with a full-length text with a longer series they can enjoy for pleasure afterwards."

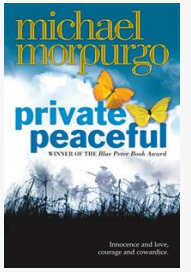
Just outside of the top 10 was *Boy 87*, alongside *Skellig* and *The Hunger Games*. In total there were over 100 different books mentioned.

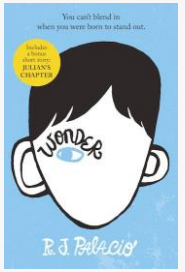




"There are so many issues that can be explored – students always seem to engage well"

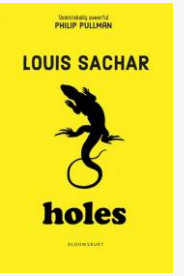
"I have never had so many students in one class love reading so much"





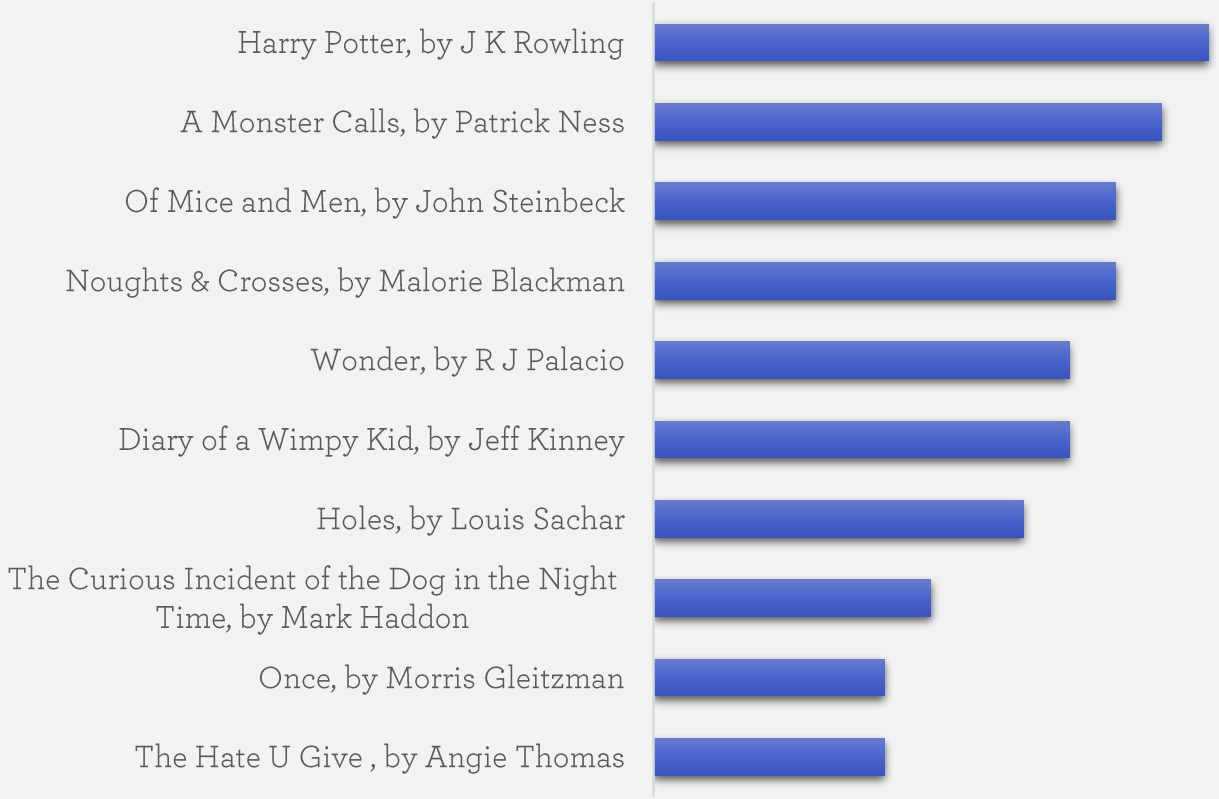
"It is about accepting everyone for who they are and not being prejudiced"

"It is gripping. There are so many 'holes' to fill in"



Top 10: Books to grab the attention of reluctant readers

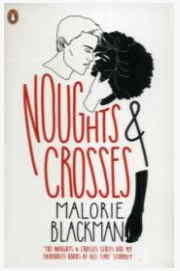
Where the previous two charts had a very similar feel to each other, half of the books on this list are different. Notably, the new entrants are more diverse and inclusive, but also in many cases highly illustrated. Indeed, if 'graphic novels' were a single book then it would be come in at number 7 on this list. The overriding feeling is that to appear on this list, books had to be "highly relatable", "humorous" or, as in the case of *The Hate U Give*, have "engagement from the first page" which may well explain why 70% of the Top 10 books here were published since the year 2000, compared to an average of 45% for the last two charts.

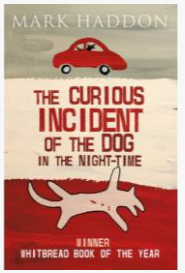




"Amazing for imagination but also teaching social lessons in a safe and calm way"

"It is a fantastic book to understand racism, class, identity, discrimination, privilege and empathy"





"Mixture of pictures and text, strong and interesting narrative voice, humour, hard-hitting themes dealt with sensitively"

"Topical and relevant to today's society"

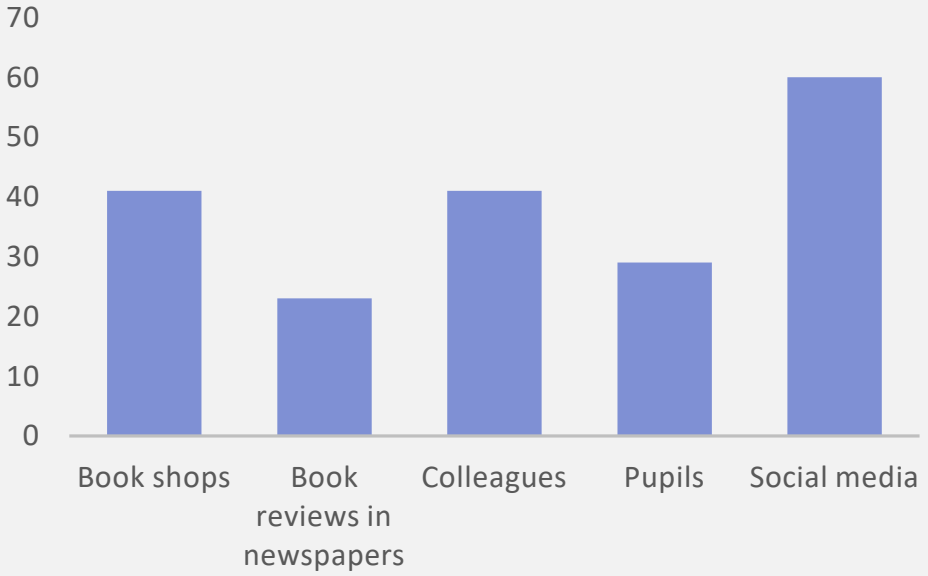


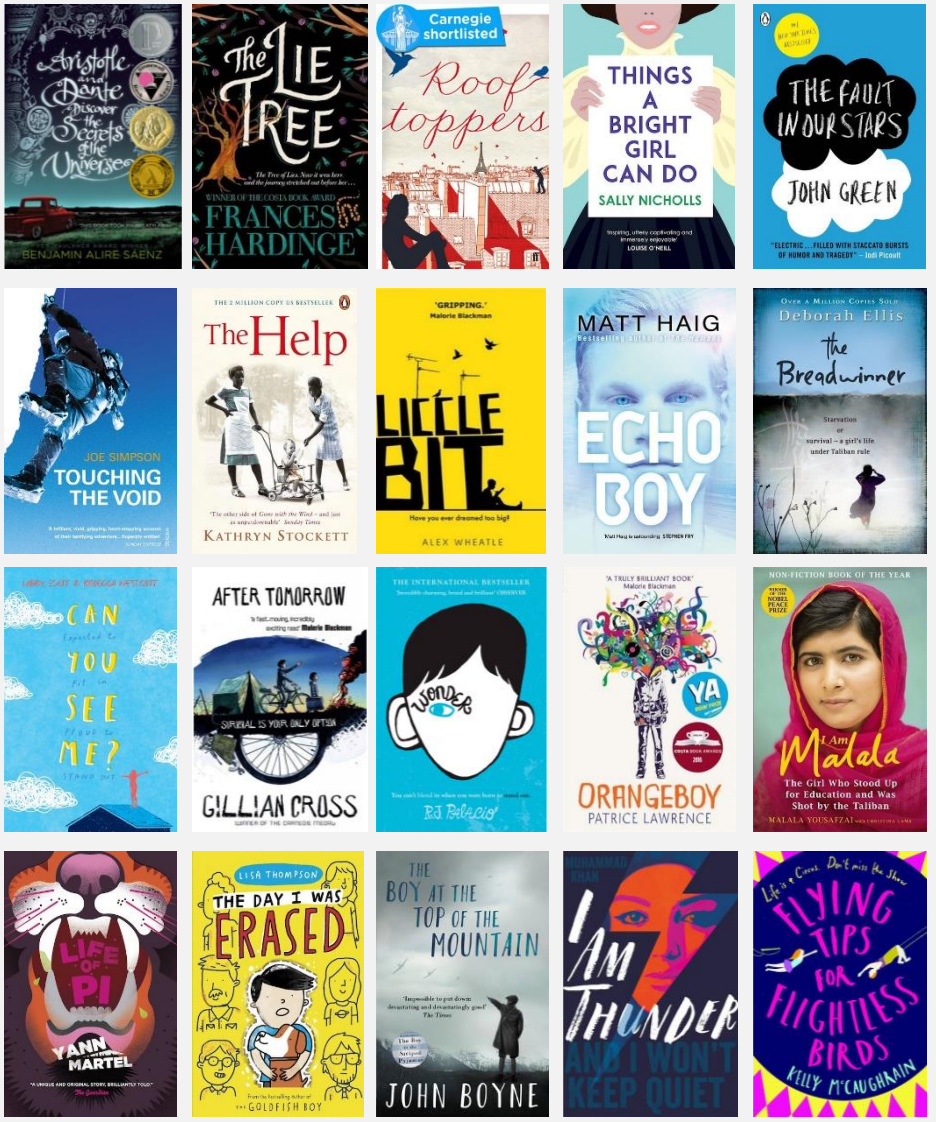
Where do you get your understanding of the latest releases in children's books from?

A significant number of respondents hear about new children's book releases through social media and colleagues. Facebook and Twitter were the top two social media channels for teachers (Facebook 203, Twitter 176), and 15 respondents selected Instagram. There was a significant minority that do not use social media at all (15%).

If we grouped the 'various' and 'all of the above' answers together it would have achieved 50 votes and appear in second place.

A number of other respondents mentioned their "excellent librarian", and the total number of mentions of librarians was 20.





Favourite strategies for helping Key Stages 3 and 4 students understand the text

Reciprocal reading

Reciprocal reading is a method of teaching comprehension which explicitly teaches strategies for predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising. It is an instructional reading strategy where students take turns to become the 'teacher' in small-group reading sessions.

Reciprocal teaching has been shown to increase both reading and listening comprehension, and has demonstrated that learners transfer their learning into other contexts.

"Using the four super-skills of reciprocal reading always helps students develop the metacognition needed to become independent readers"

"Pre-reading to understand difficult vocabulary, and close extract analysis"

Close reading

Close reading involves the reader developing a deeper understanding of a text, or passage of text, by reading and re-reading the text.

The goal of deep reading is to help pupils internalise the fact that purposeful re-reading and self-questioning are strategies that will help them understand many kinds of complex texts.

"Close Reading – Doug Lemov strategy"

"Pre-reading to understand difficult vocabulary, and close extract analysis"

Modelled reading

Modelled reading allows the teacher to explicitly demonstrate the process of reading by thinking aloud about the strategies that are being used to decode words, comprehend meaning and read with fluency and phrasing.

The teacher talks through what they are doing in a step-by-step manner to show students how reading is done, e.g. making predictions, re-reading or using context to work out difficult words.

"Reading to any class initially is vital, as they can listen to the modelling, especially using voices and then I slowly invite students to read parts which helps them understand the craft of a narrative, and by the end of the novel the class have control of the reading"

"One of the key things is not to manipulate people – to think about how you as an individual approach texts, and bring that same care and attention to students reading. Modelling reading by being authentic readers, and making reading social"

"Breaking it down into storyboards (for the very weak) but modelling reading out loud along with questioning is very effective"

Favourite strategies for helping Key Stages 3 and 4 students understand the text

Decoding and vocabulary

Decoding is the ability to correctly pronounce written words. Understanding the relationship of letter-sound, including letter patterns, gives students the ability to read words and understand words they haven't seen before.

At secondary schools, decoding work is often done alongside vocabulary instruction by direct and indirect exposure to words.

"Decoding practice, using the THRASS chart. Then the explicit teaching of vocabulary to talk about the text"

"Taking the time to understanding vocabulary first and then reading together"

"Look at the vocabulary BEFORE reading so that they start with some existing knowledge and understanding. This also encourages them to look out for the words they have just done some work on and therefore motivates them to read more actively"

"I often find students don't know what things are, for example, corrugated metal, gooseberries, maze, fire grate etc. I show pictures via Google"

Discussion

Discussion is a very important part of comprehension. Often used as part of a three-part instruction of listening, reading and discussion (Manzo, Anthony V., & Casale, Ula P. 1985), the discussion element allows students to consider their interpretation of the text in comparison to their peers.

Discussion is also part of the four-part close reading strategy.

"Discussion! Simple prompt questions, beginning with asking them what they liked/found interesting/stood out to them/what it reminded them of so they begin to identify what is going on – questioning can then be used to develop understanding or rectify misunderstanding"

"Discussing openly, asking focused, open questions and providing students the opportunity to think deeply about rich texts alongside targeted questions to help comprehension to develop"

"Discussion questions from Blooms"

"Discussion – read a bit, ask questions and open it up to the class for discussion. I like to throw in lots of open-ended, 'what-if?' questions to deepen their thinking"

Tutor Time Reading case study



Josie Mingay is School Improvement Lead at Greenshaw Learning Trust; a role she has held since September 2017, having originally worked for the Trust as Head of Literacy and Language.

The Trust currently has 16 primary, secondary and specialist schools located in Sutton – its main HQ – as well as other parts of Surrey, Berkshire and Gloucestershire. Josie is driving the Trust's innovative Tutor Time Reading programme across all secondary schools.

"The Tutor Time Reading programme is, put simply, an ambitious initiative for students in Years 7-11 to read for 20 minutes every day of the school year," Josie explained. "The programme sees tutors reading a text aloud, with students tracking the reading using a ruler or bookmark on their own copy. Given that our schools range from 600-1,500 pupils we needed a trusted book supplier who could provide high-quality texts with high challenge. One of our Heads of English recommended MBE Books, and this partnership has been key to a successful roll-out. The programme has already had significant impact on 7,000 pupils; it is a huge investment in time, energy and finances but one we are incredibly passionate about."

Formerly a Literacy Leader at Greenshaw High School, as well as a primary school teacher, Josie said that the Tutor Time Reading programme had "really broken the mould". She continued: "This is something we introduce to joining schools from their first inset day as part of the Greenshaw Learning Trust, and all early signs suggest that it is successfully improving reading across the board, particularly in our South-West schools but also in our South-East and South-Central schools. It is benefitting students as a settling activity in the mornings; improving cultural literacy; broadening minds; encouraging empathy; improving Tier 2 vocabulary and cultivating a wonderful community of readers. We measure impact against our original intentions for the programme; for students to improve their standardised reading scores, for increased enjoyment in reading together, and for continued exposure to and understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary. We are content with our decision not to measure every single aspect of the initiative, and know that with the help of MBE Books, pupils are being exposed to high-quality, rich texts on a daily basis."

MBE Books has been supplying books to thousands of schools for over 30 years and offers an unrivalled service delivering all orders for stock titles the following day. All books come supplied and fitted with free plastic jackets, saving schools a lot of time and prolonging the life of the books. The company was purchased by the UK arm of Scholastic in 2018. "We have been really pleased with the relationship with MBE Books; it has been very effective," Josie said. "The team have been hugely reliable and consistent in their approach. The free protective covers prevent wear and tear, meaning we can use the books again and again without damage. If the team has not had a title in stock, they commit to sourcing and delivering it for you. We have bought literally thousands of books from MBE Books over the past couple of years. Buying in bulk as a multi-academy trust has been incredibly beneficial – the Tutor Time Reading programme is part of our identity; it is something we do every day, so to make that happen, we really need a committed partner."

For now, Greenshaw Learning Trust will continue to run the programme in secondary schools, though Josie revealed that she is looking to introduce a similar model at primary level in the near future. "We believe that schools want clarity," she said. "Success for a reading programme of this scale relies on clarity of expectation and implementation, so we make it our business to ensure that teaching staff are not only clear on our reasoning behind the approach, but are also supported in using evidence-informed strategies in the classroom through rigorous training and carefully-implemented delivery. It is imperative that all senior leaders across our family of schools not only engage with the programme, but drive it from the top down; that is where we see the greatest success."

How can you get involved?

If you have found this report useful, please contribute to the research we will be undertaking again in 2020-21 by visiting www.bit.ly/MBESurvey and you will be entered into a prize draw to win £1,000 worth of class set books for your school.





About MBE Books

MBE Books has supplied books to thousands of schools for over 30 years. We offer the most popular English set texts and latest titles, all fitted free-of-charge with plastic jackets, saving schools time and prolonging the life of the books.

Our catalogue spans Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, GCSE and A-Level set texts and we offer a one-stop book supply service to schools, providing class sets of any titles in print. We provide an unrivalled service, delivering all orders for stock titles the next working day.

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