Reading for Pleasure

The importance of genre in offering different reading experiences

Webinar: 1 October 2026

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Housekeeping

- We will be recording this webinar and will share it with you all afterwards.
- We will also share these slides with you, so watch out for an email from us in your inbox in a couple of days.
- Your microphone is muted, but please submit any questions in the Q&A or chat box and our panel will answer as many as they can.

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Agenda

- Welcome and introduction.
- BookTrust's Daniel Payne sharing research on why genre is important in offering different reading experiences.
- Discussion panel with five authors: Sharna Jackson, JP Rose, Simon Mole, Ken Wilson-Max and Rashmi Sirdeshpande, chaired by BookTrust's Rachel Boden.
- BookTrust's George Lewins shares how the Great Books Guide can recommend a range of formats and genres to teachers.
- Thank you and questions.

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The importance of genre

What the evidence tells us

Dan Payne
Research and Impact Lead
BookTrust

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Benefits of reading recap: developing a self-motivated reading habit can support children in many ways

Overcome inequalities before they deepen

Bond with their caregivers and experience better mental wellbeing

Meet early development milestones and do better at school

Develop empathy, creativity and imagination

For more, go to: booktrust.org.uk/resources/reading-benefits

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Different types /genres of books can offer children different types of reading experience

These different experiences can then lead to specific immediate and long-term benefits

Table 1: How different genres can support different wellbeing benefits

Type of book	....provides...	...leading to...
Comedy	laughter, enjoyment	calmness, relaxation, positive mood (happiness, joy)
Fantasy and adventure	escapism, creativity, imagination, excitement	emotional security, problem-solving, resilience, empathy, comfort
Real-life books	self-reflection, deeper understanding	personal growth, empathy, self-awareness, social development
Non-fiction	intellectual stimulation, exploration of interests	curiosity, self-exploration

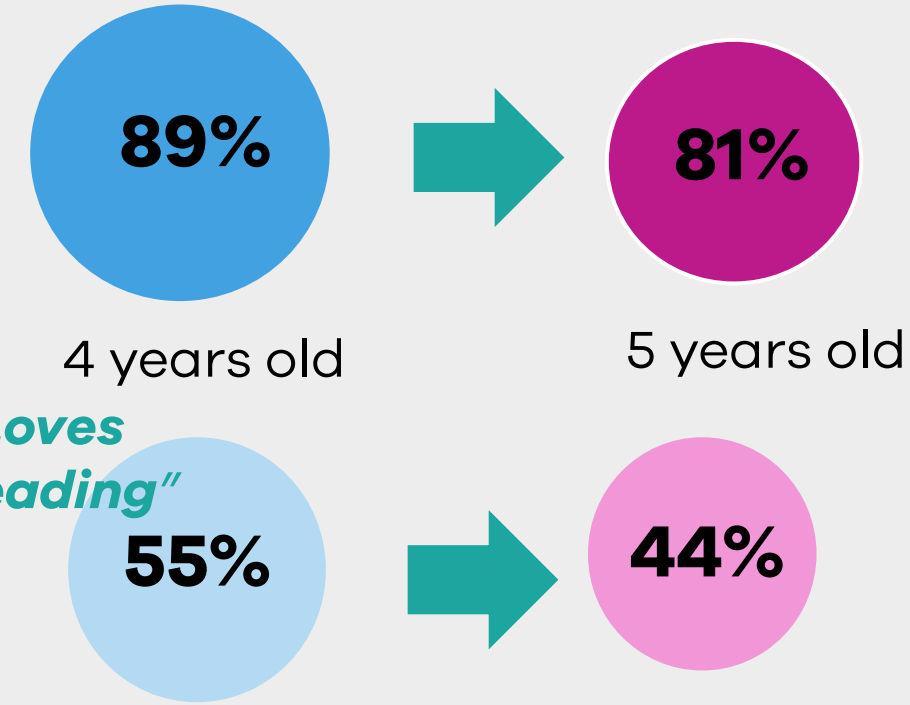
A range of genres can also give children more choice over what they read

Motivating children to read as children go through school is essential, as reading enjoyment drops

There is a noticeable drop in children's reading enjoyment between 4 and 5 years old:

This drop is larger when looking at children who are reported to '**love**' reading.

*Parents and carers who said their child **"Likes or loves** reading"*



Enjoyment of reading drop is also increasing concern for teachers. Our Teacher Survey (2024) with 2,942 primary school teachers in England showed that around 48% of Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 teachers express concern over reading enjoyment levels in their class, rising to 63% of Key Stage 2 teachers.

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In our survey, 'reading' is defined in age-appropriate ways that reflect how young children typically engage with books including sharing, looking at or reading books

Offering children access to a wide range of different genres therefore:

- .. offers children different kinds of reading experiences
- ... which can lead to supporting positive outcomes attributed to these different reading experiences
- ... and allows children to find personally meaningful reading content, which can strengthen children's motivation to read

Welcome authors!

Rashmi Sirdeshpande

Sharna Jackson

Simon Mole

JP Rose

Ken Wilson-Max

Great Books Guide

Our guide to 100 recently published children's books for primary-aged children, perfect for reading for pleasure.

Designed to save time in choosing brilliant, diverse and inclusive books for your school or to recommend to children and families.

Access the digital Great Books Guide here.

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What's inside?

An introduction to the guide

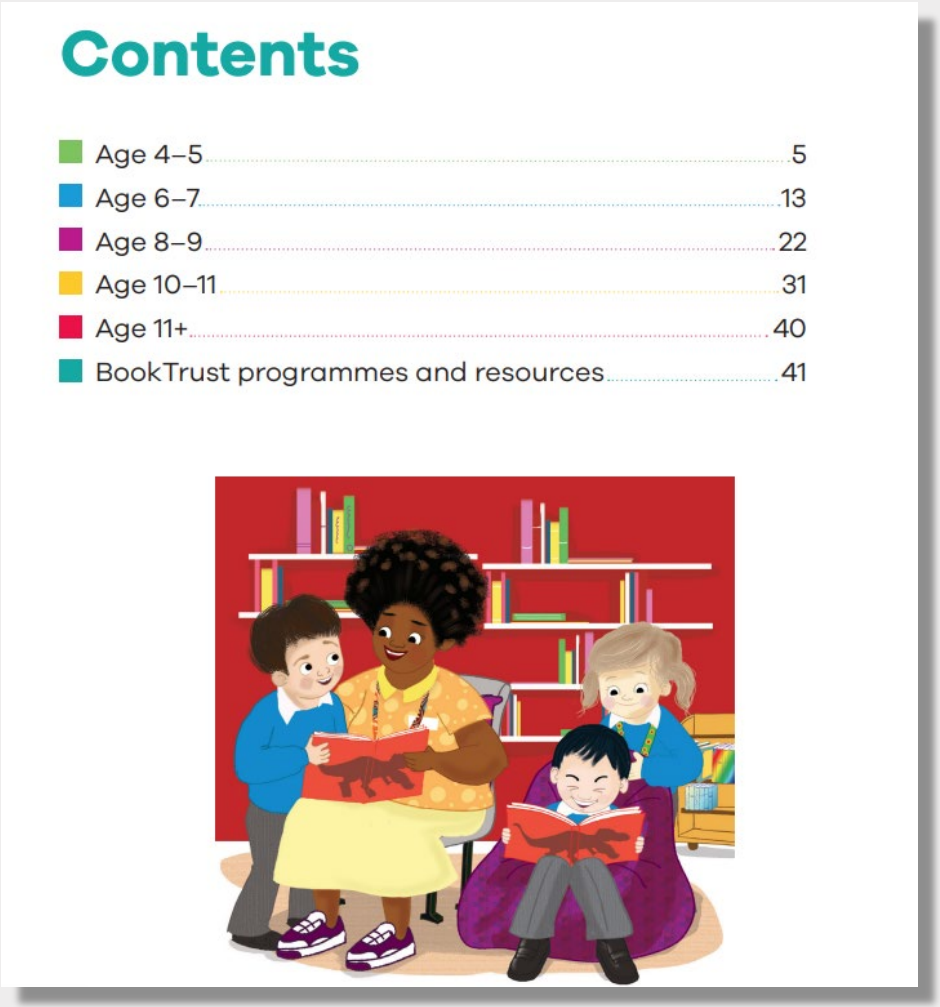
A one-page research summary on the role of genre

4 main age categories, each containing 25 books

A next reads section featuring 12 books for 11+

Information about our wider work, including:

- Our work with Wandle English hub
- Our Bookbuzz Primary programme
- BookTrust Represents
- An introduction to the new Waterstones Children's Laureate



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How are the books chosen?

Each month, we read and review new titles from a broad variety of publishers.

We team up with a panel of experts to create a high-quality longlist from the year.

We carefully consider diversity and representation in our selection.

We ensure a range of genres, themes, formats and accessibility.

We consider curriculum topics to integrate with planning processes.

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What's inside?

Cover image

Title information and author/illustrator

Genre

Synopsis and selection notes

The Fact-Finders Ocean

Tracey Turner, illustrated by Gillian Reid

DK

Non-fiction

Habitats
Nature
Ocean

Large colour non-fiction

64 pages

Guided by Shelly and her friend Bubbles the shark, readers are taken on a journey through various underwater environments and habitats, meeting incredible creatures and learning mind-blowing facts along the way about biomes, the water cycle and evolutionary adaptations.

This book is instantly appealing with bright, friendly illustrations and a super accessible comic-style format which is perfect for reluctant readers. The content is well pitched and is broken up into bite-sized chunks, captions and infographics that children can enjoy at their own pace.

6–7

Checkbox

Format

Extent

Keywords and themes

How to use the guide

Share the guide with all members of teaching staff and leave it in a high-visibility area like a PPA room or staff room.

Encourage colleagues to look through the guide and think about which of the books might match the reading for pleasure interests of their pupils.

Ask staff to create a wish list by marking the checkbox of the books they are interested in.

Use our dedicated Browns Books page to purchase your books while raising money for BookTrust.

Think about:

Books which match pupils' interests
Books that might generate discussion
Books that work with planned topics
Books that may spark curiosity
Books that generate empathy

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Moving forward

The guide is accompanied by a poster designed to inspire children to explore a range of genres.

This is supported by a downloadable challenge resource for children to use.

BookTrust Represents

BookTrust Represents works closely with talented authors and illustrators of colour to ensure all children see themselves reflected in the stories they read.

BookTrust Represents competitions

Last year: The book that represents me

This year: Spread the story

BookTrust Represents: Spread the Story competition

In 350 words or less, describe who you most want to share a story with.

Thanks to our sponsors Enterprise Mobility, first prize includes: **£3,000 of inclusive books** provided in consultation with an inclusive books expert and an **in-person school visit by an author of colour**.

Award-winning, bestselling authors **Rashmi Sirdeshpande** and **Nathanael Lessore** are guest judges.

Deadline: Midnight on **Friday 23rd October 2026**

All details can be found on our website: Spread the Story Competition

BookTrust Represents

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What is Bookbuzz Primary?

Bookbuzz Primary supports Key Stage 2 children to develop reading for pleasure and book choice skills by picking a book to take home and keep from a selection of 16 diverse and inclusive titles.

1. You receive a 'launch pack' containing two copies of each book (32 total).

2. Pupils make their choices and you send them to us.

With online and print resources to support each step of the programme.

3. We send each pupil's choice to you, ready for them to take home and enjoy.

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Thank you!

Find out more about the Great Books Guide

Find out more about Bookbuzz Primary

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The slides will be shared by email.