

# Supporting learners to read for pleasure

A CPD module for offender learning practitioners

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“Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.”

Frederick Douglas

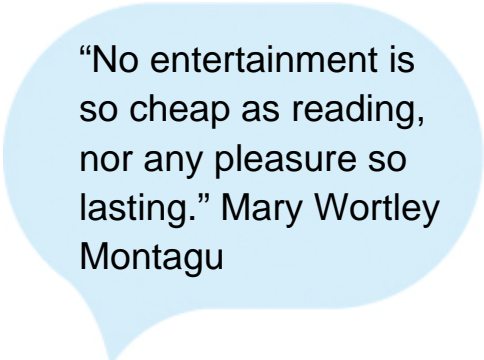


## Background and welcome

Welcome to the Reading for Pleasure CPD module for offender learning practitioners. This is a self-study module which should take you around three to four and a half hours to complete. It should help you to think about the benefits of reading for pleasure as a means to engage and motivate your learners, and provide some ideas and resources for you to use reading for pleasure in your practice.

By the end of this module you will have:

- explored your learners' attitudes to reading and their reading habits;
- identified some ways in which reading for pleasure can support the engagement and motivation of learners;
- identified some ways in which reading for pleasure can support learners to develop their reading skills; and
- explored some of the resources available to practitioners to support them in using reading for pleasure with their learners.



“No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting.” Mary Wortley Montagu



## Activity 1

### What is “Reading for Pleasure”?

Before you go any further it’s a good idea to spend some time thinking about what you mean by “reading for pleasure”. Make a note here of your definition of “reading for pleasure”, and what you don’t include in that definition:

### Our definition

This is the definition of reading for pleasure that we have used in developing this material:

**“What we mean by reading for pleasure is reading where the purpose is primarily that of enjoyment.”** This definition does not specify the type or level of text that is being read. It is possible, for example, to read a cook book as an instructional text – with the aim of cooking a particular recipe. It is equally possible to read a cook book for pleasure – in order to look at and think about food and cooking, without the intention of making any of the recipes.



## Activity 2

### What do your learners read for pleasure?

It is important to be aware of the kinds of “reading for pleasure” that your learners engage in, or would like to engage in. This activity helps you to find out that information.

Spend some time talking to a group of learners, or several individuals, depending on your context. Ask them to think about what kinds of reading they do, or would like to do. It may be helpful to ask them to consider whether there are any differences in their reading habits in prison and in the community, if you work in a custodial setting.

If your learners are unsure about what they’d enjoy reading, ask them to think about the TV programmes, hobbies or websites they enjoy, as this may give an indication of topics or genres.

You may be able to extend your discussions with some groups or learners to consider what it is that's pleasurable about a particular kind of reading. For example, the illustrations and photographs are an important part of the enjoyment of magazines, for many people.



Record your observations here:



Reflect on the discussions you had. Were there any surprises? Anything that makes you reconsider the kinds of reading material that you use with learners? Record your reflections here:

“Reading – the best  
state yet to keep  
loneliness at bay.”  
William Styron

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## Why is reading for pleasure important?

There is a range of reading research that identifies reading for pleasure, or activities related to it, as crucial in the development of reading skill.

One of the key reasons for using “reading for pleasure” with literacy and language learners is that it can help to motivate learners to read, and persist in reading.



### Activity 3

The following quotations and comments, from learners and offender learning practitioners using Quick Reads, highlight a number of the potential benefits of reading for pleasure. Read the quotes and comments, and identify the benefits described:

**Example:** “I found the book quite enjoyable. It was easy to read and understand. There was plenty going on in the book to keep you interested which made you want to keep reading.” **Benefits = enjoyment, interest, motivation**

1. “I never done any reading before these books...it gives me the confidence within that I could carry on a long way and I realised what I was missing.”
2. “It’s like joining a community of readers, we started discussing the books and getting feedback from others in the group.”
3. “I’ll take one of these books home and go to bed half an hour early and make that my time ... I go to bed and sit and read for half an hour whereas before I wouldn’t.”
4. Increased confidence and the fact that they have read a book for pleasure and enjoyed it.
5. Increase in confidence to go to the library (which was previously a “no go” area).
6. Some see themselves as readers for the first time.
7. More comfortable handling books and talking about what they have read.

8. I have been using them in my reading group and they have encouraged the men to read a “whole” book and have the opportunity to discuss themes within the books and then try other books as a result.
9. Increased confidence and pleasure in reading (at least partly as a result of using Quick Reads) open many doors – willingness to move on to higher level courses and to study other subjects being an example.
10. Pleasure in reading; fellow feeling of triumph over difficulties; increased confidence in helping children with reading for pleasure and school work; increased self-confidence.



#### Activity 4

NRDC carried out some research into the teaching of reading in Skills for Life programmes. Download the research summary here:

[http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications\\_details.asp?ID=82](http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=82)

Read the summary and answer the following questions:

1. Look at the information on teaching strategies on page 9 of the summary. Think about your own practice and assess whether and how frequently you use the strategies identified, including those that were not used frequently in this study.
2. Think about your own experience of teacher education and CPD. How were you taught to teach reading? Were you given advice about using particular strategies or approaches? Having read this summary report, is there any technique that you would like further information or training about using?



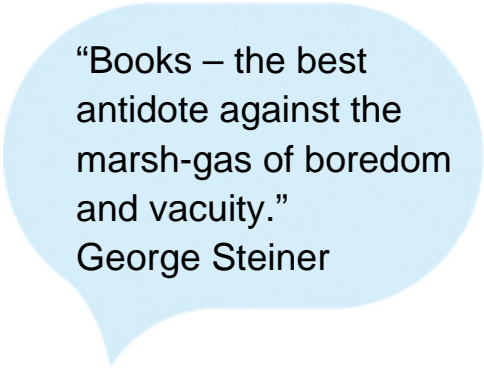


## Activity 6

Select a strategy to try out with your learners from page 5 of the report. Choose one that you haven't used before, if possible. Remember to discuss the strategy and your reasons for using it with the learners before you do the activity. If you feel that the risks associated with using one of these strategies with a group of offender learners are too great, try working one-to-one with a learner, as an alternative.

Following the activity, ask your learner(s) about how they found it. Did they have concerns before taking part? Did they feel any differently about oral reading afterwards? Use these questions to help you reflect on your experiences:

1. How well did the activity work?
2. What were learners' reactions when you introduced oral reading as a strategy?
3. How did your learners feel about it once they had taken part?
4. Would you use a similar strategy again? Why?
5. What would you do differently next time?



“Books – the best  
antidote against the  
marsh-gas of boredom  
and vacuity.”  
George Steiner



## Inspiration: HMYOI

**“Reading for them is hard work ... (you) have to gain a certain level of competence before you can really read for pleasure.”**

One HMYOI employs a Reader in Residence and she has tried out a number of approaches to encourage learners to read for pleasure. One that has been particularly successful is the Six Book Challenge:

“A core part of my job is about encouraging reading for pleasure – my job started in April 2006 and we heard about the Six Book Challenge in early 2007. The Six Book Challenge was being piloted in Yorkshire and Humberside – it has been such a phenomenal success – and has provided books, resources, author visits and incentives. If they read six books and write about them they can get a magazine – they can choose a magazine from any that they are allowed (by the prison). A pre activity sheet is used to record what they think about reading – and each time they read a book they write the details down – about a paragraph.

Lads have been allowed to take the Six Book Challenge twice if they want to – so have the potential for achieving two incentives, but after that the project would hopefully have encouraged them to start reading and by the end of this time they should be able to find books they want to read at their level without the need for a reward.

Everyone in the prison knows about the Six Book Challenge – and it is supported by the Learning Support Assistants who do one-to-one reading with the lads – the challenge is promoted through education and reading with/to someone (LSA) can count as part of the challenge. Course leaders also know about it – officers know about it – word of mouth has gotten the message out there – we also used the prison’s own magazine and the evaluation forms.

Any books can be read as part of the challenge – and the chaplaincy will also give books to lads – they are very supportive of the work being done. We don’t allow joke books but all other non-fiction counts – sport is very popular, as is crime and graphic novels.

So far, the HMYOI has had 647 people start the challenge – 415 have completed and 187 haven't. Of these, 123 were released before completion, 57 have lost interest and six were "other" e.g. banned from library for defacing books – 45 are still doing the challenge and 160 people have done it twice with 100 having completed.

Other factors that have helped the success of reading for pleasure at the HMYOI have been:

- Collaborative work with the Education Department and prison library staff
- Storybook Dads initiative
- Providing incentives, which are more reading material
- Providing opportunities to get books and read on the wing, as well as in the library
- Making connections between the choice of reading material and learners' own lives

Learners have gained a great deal from their experiences of the Six Book Challenge:

- "I liked the Donald Goines book – it was so detailed it was like watching a film"
- "It expanded my mind."
- "It stopped me being bored when I was on bang up."
- Standard bullets indent
- "I'm going to keep reading."



## Activity 7

Write a brief action plan about how you will use reading for pleasure with a learner or group of learners that you work with currently. If you find it helpful, use the pro-forma below. Don't forget to make your targets SMART!

What will you do?	When will you do it?	What resources/people will you need?	What do you hope to achieve?

“Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read.”  
Groucho Marx

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## Resources and ideas to try

There is a wide range of reading material, teaching resources, and ideas available for practitioners who want to use reading for pleasure with their learners. Here are some suggestions:

[www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/)

This BBC site has material which is useful for learners for whom English is a second language. The site includes news English, an online interactive soap opera, music and quizzes.

[www.niace.org.uk/quickreads](http://www.niace.org.uk/quickreads)

Quick Reads are short, exciting books by bestselling writers and celebrities for adults who are new to reading, have lost the reading habit, or who prefer a quick read. A sample of 1,500 literacy tutors and 30,456 learners reported leaps in confidence, progression to higher levels of literacy and improved communication skills through using Quick Reads.

[www.readingforlife.org.uk](http://www.readingforlife.org.uk)

2008 was the National Year of Reading and this website takes forward the year-long celebration of reading, in all its forms. It aims to increase awareness of the many values of reading – anything, anytime, anyplace – for children, families and adult learners alike.

[www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/the-vital-link/](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/the-vital-link/)

The Vital Link connects library staff and practitioners to inspire new readers. The website contains information on the reading for pleasure campaign and resources to support reading.

<http://www.storybookdads.co.uk>

Storybook Dads is a scheme that helps fathers keep in touch with their children, through reading.

<http://www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk>

The Six Book Challenge encourages readers to read for pleasure.

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/Ideas\\_prisons\\_YOIs.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/Ideas_prisons_YOIs.pdf)

The Vital Link has produced a useful brochure about ways to work with offender learners to develop reading.

## The Reading for Pleasure suite of materials:

- CPD modules: Reading for pleasure in a number of contexts
- Storytelling: CPD unit with lesson ideas
- Families, Learning and Storytelling: Using archives for community cohesion
- Take Your Partner: Engaging emergent adult readers
- Technology and Reading: How to use blogs, wikis, iPods and e-books to promote reading
- Putting two and 2 together: Creating a bridge between literacy and numeracy learning
- Resources for libraries: Guidance on how to engage families to read for pleasure

