

Reading Groups

A reading group is a great way to get together with people to share the pleasure of reading as well as inspiring you to perhaps try something new.

There are different types of reading groups; some meet in libraries or community centres, whilst others meet elsewhere e.g. pubs or cafes, member's homes, workplaces or even on-line. So choose which works best for you, or even start one of your own.

A huge range of books and audiobooks are available to borrow for groups from Leicester Libraries. We also offer a range of services to support your reading group, including advice in the selection of books, free extended book loans and possibly even a friendly place to meet (please note this would be subject to availability and might incur a room hire charge). Staff might even know of existing groups who are welcoming new members if you are just looking for a group to join.

For further information about library support for reading groups please contact: libraries@leicester.gov.uk

The following tips and pointers are by no means comprehensive, but they should give you plenty of ideas and help to get you started.

Getting Started/first meeting

- Discuss how your reading group might work (and what's it going to be called!). People may be unsure about how book groups run, or have different ideas, so make sure you talk about what your expectations are.
- It's all about sharing your reading experiences - what members thought about the book, story, poem, magazine article they read. How did it make you feel? Would you recommend to someone else? Did you even finish it!?
- What's important is that everyone is entitled to their own views – don't take it personally if someone disagrees with you –the range of opinions is what makes book groups interesting.
- And hopefully it will be fun – a social occasion that everyone enjoys, perhaps with tea, coffee and biscuits, or even a glass of wine or beer.
- A good “ice-breaker” exercise is to ask each person to talk about a book, story or poem they've particularly enjoyed; it could be brand new or an old favourite.
- Other suggestions include:
 - If you meet in the library, have a look around to find a book you would recommend to someone else.
 - Where/when do you read – your commute to/from work? In the bath??
 - Get a selection of books and discuss the covers – which do you like? Which don't you like? Who do you think they're trying to appeal to?
 - First lines. Take the first few lines from several books and discuss them. Do they make you want to read more? Or do they put you off completely? Do you have a favourite first line from a book?

- Desert Island Books - Which books would you take with you if marooned on a desert island? Would they be fiction/fantasy, or practical books which could help you survive?
- Books on screen. How well do books adapt to cinema/television? Is it better to read the book before seeing the film? Can the film ever be as good as the book? Do some film or TV versions make you go and read the book?
- Are there any books in the news at the moment?
- Have you read any best sellers, or prize-winning books lately?
- Do you read books about or by celebrities, sports men/women, or other famous people?
- What did you like to read or listen to when you were young? Can you remember any special books from your childhood? If you have children or grandchildren, do you share stories or books with them?
- Recommend a book which would be good to take on holiday.
- Which books would you banish to Room 101 and why?

How to run your reading group/what to read

- Do you all want to read the same book, and then discuss it, or, for example, read different books by the same author?
- If you generally read the same kind of books each time, maybe you'd like to choose a different genre sometimes to keep things fresh e.g. crime, poetry, or non-fiction.
- Many reading groups read the same book, taking it away at the end of the meeting and then return the following month to discuss it.

But you don't have to stick to the above models. The important thing is that you share your love of reading and that it's enjoyable. But, if keeping to the same format works for your group then that's absolutely fine.

- How are you going to select which books to read? You could use lists of titles provided by the library, or recommendations from staff, websites, newspapers or friends. Or you could take it in turns to choose?
- We can sometimes provide books in other formats e.g. on CD or large print. We also have thousands of eBooks and eAudiobooks too.

Other things to consider

If you're starting the group yourself, who would you like to invite? How often do you want to meet? Many groups meet once a month so they have enough time to read the book, but you can choose how often, and which day of the week and times best suit your group.

The group will need someone to organise it, referred to for our administrative purposes as the "main contact".

If using one of our buildings for your meeting, you may get help from library staff initially but, other than obtaining books for you, you will most probably be running it yourselves. Staff will, of course, explain how to order books from the library, how long you can keep them, and how to collect/return them.

Things to talk about

The following questions might help to get (and keep) the discussion going when you meet to discuss the books you've read -

- How did your feelings change as you read the story? Did it make you angry, frightened, laugh, or cry?
- Which relationship was most interesting and why?
- Did you get off to a slow start or were you hooked straight away?
- What did you think of the ending? Was it what you expected? How did you feel when you'd finished?
- Who was your favourite/least favourite character? Were there any characters you could identify with?
- Did you find some parts of the story more enjoyable than others?
- If the story was set in another time or country, how did that affect you? Was it convincing?
- Would you want to live in that time or travel to that country/place?
- If you've read a true story, biography, or autobiography, did you think it was well told? Did you find out more/less than you wanted about the subject? Have you changed your opinion of them now you've read their story?
- Is this a book you would recommend, and if so, why? Would you read another title by this author?
- Did you like the cover of the book? Would you have chosen to read it, and why (or why not)?
- Did you skip any bits or just read the end? If you gave up on the book, can you say why?
- If it was made into a film/TV series, which actors would play the main parts?
- Did it remind you of any other books you have read? Can you think of any other stories with similar ideas, characters, or settings?

Online information

There is lots of information online about authors and books; you can even use sites like Amazon, book shops or publisher websites to get ideas and inspiration for your reading choices. Other websites include -

- [Reading Agency](#) - Reading Groups For Everyone
- [Goodreads](#)
- [LoveReading](#)

- [Whichbook](#)
- [Who Else Writes Like...?](#) (your library card number is needed to access this site).
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