



Manchester

How to set up a book group

A book group is a great way to bring communities together so people can meet new friends and discover new books to enjoy.

While adult reading is often done alone, if you've been moved or inspired by a book, it's natural that you'll want to talk about it. A book group allows you to do this, and encourages you to think about why you liked or didn't like a particular book.

Organising a book group doesn't have to take a lot of time – once it's set up you just have to read!

The basics:

Venue and timings

Choose somewhere fairly quiet and easy for everyone in the group to get to. A local café, pub, workplace, or the house of one of your members can all work well. Choose a time to meet that is convenient for most people, and allow about a month between meetings to give everyone enough time to find a copy of the book and read it.

Members

Reading groups often grow by word of mouth, so you could start by inviting a handful of friends and asking each of them to bring someone to the first meeting. If you need to find extra members, you can print off a Read Manchester poster from readmanchester.org.uk to display in your local area and publicise your group.

If you register your reading group at Reading Groups for Everyone (readinggroups.org), new members in Manchester will be able to find you. You can also find existing reading groups there or ask a member of staff in your local library or bookshop.

Book choice

There are different ways you can choose what to read at your group. It's a good idea to make sure the books you choose are available in paperback.

- ★ Ask members for their recommendations, or take it in turns to choose a book
- ★ Follow the recommendations of a nationwide reading group like the Richard and Judy Book Club (richardandjudy.co.uk) or the local BBC Radio Manchester book of the month
- ★ Choose literary award-winning titles, eg. the Man Booker Prize (themanbookerprize.com) or Costa Book Awards (costabookawards.com).

#ReadMCR tip:
Choose books for a few months ahead so members can skip a book they aren't interested in, or start reading the next book if they finish early.

When you meet

You can keep things informal or decide to have a leader who can guide the conversation and encourage members to share their thoughts. You could nominate someone to take this role every month, or it could change when someone has recommended a particular book.

One way to begin is by discussing why the book was chosen and giving some details about the author. Another way is to have some general questions ready, such as:

- ★ How did the book make you feel?
- ★ Which characters were you particularly drawn to?
- ★ What did you think of the ending?
- ★ Did anything happen in the book that resonated with you and your own life?
- ★ If it were made into a film, who would play the main characters?

Laura's story:

"I moved to Manchester in 2010 but didn't really get to know anyone particularly well. I heard about a book club that meets locally once a month via its Facebook page and messaged them to see if I could go along. I turned up to my first meeting with my copy of *The Loney* by Andrew Michael Hurley and had a very friendly reception.

"The book club has helped me feel like a part of the community. I've made friends and picked up books I would never normally have read. I recommend joining or setting up a reading group to everyone - the more diverse the people in the club, the more interesting the discussions, as everyone has a unique perspective and interpretation."

At the end of the first session, don't forget to confirm the next book and agree the details of the next meeting.

Share the book your group is reading on social media with hashtag **#ReadMCR**.

Read to relax, escape, learn or be inspired.

