

How to set up a reading or writing group

Location			
Date & time			
Audience	<input type="checkbox"/> Families <input type="checkbox"/> Friends <input type="checkbox"/> Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Young adults (18+) <input type="checkbox"/> Retired adults <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
Genre	<input type="checkbox"/> All genres <input type="checkbox"/> Science fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Children's literature <input type="checkbox"/> Historical fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Mystery <input type="checkbox"/> Thriller <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....		
Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Books <input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Chairs and tables <input type="checkbox"/> Stationary	Spread the word	<input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Social media <input type="checkbox"/> Community networks
Structure of the session <i>(See below for potential adaptations to your reading group)</i>			
Checklist	<input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Book choice <input type="checkbox"/> Set up		

Adaptations to your reading group

Preparing questions beforehand

You might like to plan some questions to discuss in the session, particularly in the earlier stages of the group meeting. Below are some of the types of questions you could ask:

- **'Review' questions:** 'Did you enjoy the book?' or 'Would you recommend it to someone else?'
- **Questions on the author:** 'What did you think of their writing style?' or 'What were their strengths as an author?'
- **'Feeling' questions:** 'Did the book make you feel sad at any stage? Why?' or 'What emotions did you feel in this part of the story?'
- **'What if' style questions:** 'What if character A had never met character B?' or 'What if the book had been set in France instead of in America?' etc.
- **'Debate' questions:** 'Should Character A have married Character B?' or 'Was it right that Character C left the country?'
- **'Predictive' questions:** 'Were there any plot details you thought would happen?' or 'Were there any twists that shocked you?'
- **Questions on the book's title and cover:** 'Do you think the cover matches the plot?' or 'Now we know the story, why do you think this title was chosen?'
- **Reflective questions:** 'What has the book taught us about our own lives?' or 'Is there a strong message to the story?'

Selecting character(s) to focus on

You might choose to centre the session on a particular character and explore them in more detail, focusing on any of the following:

- How the author brought them to life
- Their personality traits
- Their decisions in the book
- Whether they are liked/disliked
- Comparing them to characters from other books

Reviewing the book

You could ask members to write a book review before the session. Each member could read and explain their review of the book, giving everyone a chance to contribute. Their thoughts on the book may lead to further discussions.

Comparing books

If your reading group is feeling very confident and is likely to be able to read more than one book between sessions, they could read two similar books. These could be both written by the same author, or on a similar theme. The questions could then be centred on comparing and contrasting the two books.

Debating

If there is a part of the book that is very controversial, a formal debate could be held. Debating involves a 'motion' being chosen. A 'motion' on the book would be chosen, for example, 'Character A should have told Character B the truth'. This would involve members choosing a 'side'. Each side either agrees with, or disagrees with the given motion. They would then give reasons for their side of the argument, with a winning team eventually being chosen by the group leader. This is a way of encouraging friendly, yet interesting discussion!

Next steps...

Take a moment to think about the following questions and share your thoughts or any feedback with our team at literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk.

- **How many people attend?**
- **Have you had positive feedback?**

