

WORLD  
**BOOK  
DAY**  
3 MARCH 2022

25 YEARS

***This March, World Book Day is 25 years old.***

***That's 25 years of changing children's lives by encouraging a love of books and reading.***

We know that reading for pleasure makes an enormous impact on a child's future – whether that's their educational success, well-being or mental health. It's more important than their family circumstances, or their parents' educational background and income.

World Book Day wants to see more children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the life-long habit of reading for pleasure that will improve their life chances.

During this time our charity's mission to promote reading for pleasure - and to offer every child and young person the opportunity to have a book of their own - has been shared and supported by all those who want to see more children reading.

So, to celebrate our milestone birthday, we asked leading figures across literary organisations and charities to look forward to a time when reading is at the heart of learning, wellbeing and enjoyment. What could the world look like on World Book Day's 50th anniversary?

The result is this powerful collection of statements and evidence that shows while there is still much to do to enable children to read, we also share huge optimism and ambition. With more children growing up as readers we can look forward to a fairer, more empathetic and literate society.

**Cassie Chadderton, CEO, World Book Day**

***What would the world look like, 25 years from now, if more of today's children had access to books, could see themselves in books and were reading for pleasure?***


**They would have better and more equal life chances:**

**Boris Johnson, Prime Minister**

A world without books would be a dull, grey universe of ignorance and misery. Reading enlightens, inspires and equips us to navigate the world and enjoy it.

Reading is a huge part in shaping children and young people's futures – from nurturing their early development, to opening up their imaginations to new and exciting worlds.

On World Book Day, whether you are dressing up as your favourite character or picking up a best-loved book today, it's a great chance to promote the benefits of reading for all.



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**Nadhim Zahawi, Education Secretary**

It is fantastic to see children from around the world marking World Book Day by dressing up as a character from their favourite book.

Reading for pleasure is a key indicator of a child's future success, which is why I want to see more children learning to read from a young age, whatever their background.

I am determined to meet our ambitious target for 90 per cent of children leaving primary school at the expected standards in reading and writing by 2030. I would encourage any child who is struggling to find enjoyment from reading to open a book on something they really love – whether that is animals, sports or superheroes.

**Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner**


Reading expands our horizons, boosts our imagination, and allows us to imagine new worlds. I have seen first-hand in schools how much joy reading brings to children. And, in the largest-ever survey of children 'The Big Ask' young people told me just how much they love learning. Through engaging children's imaginations and improving their literacy skills, reading opens up a world of opportunity. That's why we must continue to give children access to all the wonderful books out there!

**Emma Scott, Chair, World Book Day**

The world will be a brighter, happier place full of extraordinary potential and future opportunities for the children themselves and the adults they will become. We know that reading for pleasure has an enormous impact on a child's life chances in every sense, educationally, economically and for their mental health so my hope is that we no longer have 400,000 UK children without a book of their own. I also hope that in 25 year time, children will truly see themselves and their lives in the books they read and their fellow readers will develop greater tolerance, understanding and empathy by having a wider world view.

**Jonathan Douglas CBE, Chief Executive of the National Literacy Trust**

World Book Day is an important moment to inspire and delight children with the wonder of books and a powerful platform to reinforce the importance of building literacy skills for life. Economic studies have shown that reading for pleasure can result in children getting better GCSEs, in turn boosting their lifetime earnings and raising the UK's GDP. In the future, my hope is that more children will grow up to be adults who read and that reading and books are part of their world. A link to the research is [here](#).



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**Diana Gerald, CEO, BookTrust**

At BookTrust we are committed to ensuring all children experience the life-changing benefits of reading. Our research shows 53% of children (aged 7-17) whose parents reported liking reading told us that they read 4 times or more a week on their own, compared with only 14% of children whose parents dislike reading. And so we know that inspiring more of today's children to read books and stories, will help create a virtuous circle for generations to come: a happier, healthier and fairer world where no child misses out on the transformative benefits of reading.

**Marc Lambert, CEO, Scottish Book Trust**

The world would be a better and more equal place. Books are the essential tool for engineering change. As our Patron, the writer Val McDermid, recently reflected: "It's not rocket science to work out that putting books in the hands of children is the first step on the road to breaking the cycle of deprivation and poverty. It's not always easy to work out the best way to make beneficial interventions in people's lives. But this one is a no-brainer."

**Baroness Gail Rebuck, DBE**


Reading is empowerment. Being able to read fluently and for pleasure is fundamental to self-determination and social mobility, ambition and well-being. Reading opens up new worlds of possibilities. It allows us not only to dream but to achieve – and reading gives us the gift of empathy and the understanding of others. If every child was a confident and enthusiastic reader, with free access to a vast library of stories, the world would be a fairer, more harmonious and joyous place.

**Will Millard, Head of Engagement, The Centre for Education and Youth**

Reading is a joy in itself and a means to an end: being able to read unlocks learning. However, historically, too many children fall behind in reading. The Department for Education's own data shows that over a quarter of 11-year-olds were not reaching the expected standard in reading before the pandemic, and The Centre for Education and Youth's research – alongside that of other organisations – shows that the pandemic has likely made this worse. In 25 years I hope we no longer need interventions to help children catch up in reading because they haven't fallen behind in the first place.

**Phil Henderson, Sales and Marketing Director, Blackwell's**

Falling in love with reading - can be literally life changing. Research suggests that a quarter of all children in England leave primary school unable to read as well as they could. More than eight million adults in the UK have poor literacy skills, and half of all prisoners either can't read or struggle to do so. Greater access to books leads to opportunities, agency in people's lives, escape and education for everyone.



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**Katie Bareham, CEO, The Doorstep Library Network**

Doorstep Library is a literacy charity working with children aged 0-11 from disadvantaged areas. Our volunteers visit children weekly, with backpacks full of books, instilling a love of reading as a shared family activity. Our Research shows 96% of parents feel their child is more confident with their reading through our service. In 25 years, we believe that greater access to books would bridge the gap between children living in areas of deprivation and their more affluent counterparts, increasing their opportunities in life.

**Perminder Mann, CEO, Bonnier Books UK**

If more children read for pleasure, we'd build a more equal world. As the child of first-generation immigrant parents, stories built up my English vocabulary and they allowed me to dream, they opened up my eyes to possibilities and gave me hope. I learnt about the world and other people and their unfamiliar cultures through books. Reading for pleasure has the power to bring communities together, empower individuals and create greater equality of opportunity for children everywhere.

**Katie Waldegrave MBE, Co-Founder and Director, Now Teach**


I have seen first-hand both in my work as a teacher and as co-founder of First Story, that young people who write and read for pleasure can establish a sense of their place in the world and the value their voice and experience have.

If reading for pleasure were a commodity and we could ensure equal access to it, then there is no doubt at all that educational outcomes - and all the inequality which stems from them - would be far more evenly distributed.

But beyond utilitarian arguments, and most important of all, it would give more people the chance to experience one of the greatest, richest pleasures available to our species.

**Antonia Byatt, CEO, First Story**

The Young Writers' Programme at First Story starts with reading. Our secondary school students live in low income areas where they may not have the same access to books and cultural experience as their more privileged peers. Through reading, First Story students hear a diversity of voices and experience, understand how language can be used powerfully and incisively. They learn that their own voice is powerful, they value their own experience. When more marginalised children have such agency, the world will be fairer.



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### **Gina Cicerone, FEA Co-CEO**

The Fair Education Alliance believes that literacy is key to tackling inequality in the education system. Our Collective Action Group on Literacy has drawn on its combined experience to develop ambitious yet practical proposals, recognising that true literacy begins early in life, is nurtured by families, requires proper support for teachers and schools, and makes reading and writing pleasurable and meaningful for all pupils. If we equip schools, families and communities to support every child to improve their literacy, we will also improve those children's life chances, self-expression, and wellbeing.

### **Carl Cowling, Group CEO, WHSmith**

At WHSmith, we are passionate about championing children's literacy and our store teams love celebrating World Book Day. We know that one of the most effective ways of helping children to reach their potential is to engage them in reading for pleasure. We'd love to see a world in 25 years' time where every child is supported with the literacy skills required to succeed in life and has equal opportunity to immerse themselves in a great book that they can relate to.


#### **Further Reading:**

- [Reading for Change: Performance and Engagement across Countries: Results from PISA 2000, OECD, 2002.](#)
- [What does low proficiency in literacy really mean?, OECD 2016.](#)
- [Social inequalities in cognitive scores at age 16: The role of reading, UCL, 2013.](#)
- [Growing up a Reader, Scottish Book Trust in association with Edinburgh University.](#)
- [When Children Are Not Read to at Home: The Million Word Gap, Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics June 2019.](#)
- [BookTrust Families Survey 2021 \(nationally representative sample of 4,547 parents and 1,630 children aged 7-17\).](#)

**They will see themselves and their lived experiences reflected in what they read, they will be empathetic and understand other people:**

### **Louise Johns-Shepherd, CEO, Centre for Literacy in Primary Education**

At CLPE, we work tirelessly to support children to read for pleasure because we know what an enormous impact this has on your future. If we ensure all children have access to a broad range of quality texts reflecting their interests, lives, cultures, backgrounds and the wide world in which they live, then in 25 years, we'll have an empathetic, ambitious, critically literate and educated population who will be able to pass these attributes on to future generations. We'll have a literate society.



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**Stephen Lotinga, CEO of the Publishers Association**

Without any doubt, the more we can engage children with books and reading, the brighter our future world will be. Reading for pleasure is a superpower. It changes children's lives for the better by every measure imaginable. The more we can unlock this power, the more we can help children reshape the world into one which brings us together and has equality and empathy at its core.

**Aimée Felone, Managing Director, Knights Of Media**

Giving all children access to reading stories that centre their experiences, will create a society that tells our children that they matter. Books create empathy, they improve literacy, they have the power to give our children language to express their emotions and in turn aid them in developing healthy mental health habits. If 25 years from now we've managed to improve access and representation, we will have given children the tools to shape the future that they deserve.

**Mónica Parle, Forward Arts Foundation**

If more children were reading, both now and by World Book Day's 50th Anniversary, the world would feel much like the Pando colony of Aspens, with all of us linked together by the shared roots of ballads, poems and stories that bridge borders and divisions. Reading opens us up to the wider world, and when we sit down together to read, it also makes us feel more connected to those immediately around us. I love the idea of each and every child in the world, seeing themselves firmly rooted in their own community and in the global society.

**Phil Henderson, Sales and Marketing Director, Blackwell's**

Blackwell's mission is "to change lives through books and reading". If today's children have increased access to books and develop a love of reading then 25 years from now we will see increased empathy, more equality as children see role models in books and authors, a greater critical faculty which is essential in a world of unverified information, and lives truly changed through books and reading. This is why Blackwell's is delighted to play a part in supporting World Book Day.

**David Shelley, Group CEO, Hachette**

I grew up surrounded by books – living above the bookshop my parents ran. Most children are not as lucky as that and some have barely any access to books. If together we can change this, and in 25 years more of today's children had access to books and could see themselves reflected in them it would revolutionise our society. Reading is proven to promote empathy, social mobility, economic outcomes and happiness and it's our mission at Hachette to try to ensure more children have access to these incredible benefits.



**Ken Wilson-Max, Author**

The world would look much like a preschool or early years classroom of today; Curiosity driving people to engage without prejudice; Friendship driven by enjoying and embracing their differences; Better decisions driving a more equal society, which would include paying more attention to non human life.

**Sarah Mears MBE, Empathy Lab and Libraries Connected**

Public Libraries give children rich reading opportunities. Reading inspires creative, critical and innovative thinking. Libraries Connected would love every child to own a library card and visit their library regularly. If more of today's children had access to diverse books, in 25 years, our communities, our industries and our government would be led by open-minded, problem solvers unafraid to stand up for what is right, working together for a better future for humanity and the world we call home.

**Sue Ball MBE, Past Chair of ASCEL**

When books are currency and all children are reading, we will have a world which truly represents the image of us all, a world with empathy, a world where we know the answers lie in working together, and where all children can imagine and lift their heads to follow their dreams.


**Phil Kemp, President, NASUWT**

From learning to read, to reading to learn, books are an integral, essential part of every child's school career. Coming from diverse homes, a range of cultural backgrounds, and unique family settings, children can feel lonely and isolated. Yet, through the power of reading, the power of a book, young people can learn that they are not alone, that others struggle, that others have dilemmas and battles and, more importantly, that others succeed.

Since I was a young learner, the range of books has widened remarkably. A broader range of genres are more available. Writers are less afraid to tackle sensitive topics. Authors themselves are more diverse and more representative of the country and its young readers. In the next 25 years, I would wish this trend to continue, to accelerate even. Books are the lifeblood of education, but they are so much more than that. They offer escape, reassurance, fun and laughter, joy and sadness. They have undoubtedly enriched my life.

**Nicola Solomon, Chief Executive, Society of Authors**

Reading for pleasure develops the imagination and creates empathy. More reading in childhood leads to a kinder, more exciting world- and creates a wide and diverse pool of future writers who can continue to inspire following generations.



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### **Julia Lopez MP, Minister of State at the DCMS**

As the Minister for the UK's incredible publishing industry, I would hope to see a world where that industry had adapted to deliver the written word in exciting new ways. A world where technology had taken the magic of books and shared it with new audiences. Today's children would have become empathetic, curious, knowledgeable adults through their love of reading. Eager to delve into the unfamiliar, able better to understand their fellow human and excited to share favourite books with their own children, those avid readers would have sewn - without realising - a golden thread of creativity, intellectual rigour and collective cultural heritage through one generation to the next.

#### **Further Reading:**

- [Reflecting Realities, CLPE 2020.](#)
- [Reading fiction has been said to increase people's empathy and compassion. But does the research really bear that out?, BBC 2019.](#)
- [Reading fiction and empathy in children, University of Sussex.](#)
- [Does reading fiction make us better people?, BBC, 2019.](#)
- [Mental wellbeing, reading and writing: How children and young people's mental wellbeing is related to their reading and writing, NLT, 2018.](#)

### **They will have been supported to read what they love, and love reading:**

#### **Anne Longfield CBE, Former Children's Commissioner**

A world where children are surrounded by books and story telling that fuels imagination, builds knowledge, confidence and self-belief and opens up the doors to a lifetime of discovery and fulfilment.


#### **Dawn Finch, chair of the Children's Writers and Illustrators' Group of the Society of Authors**

When an adult reader is asked to pick a special book that is important to them they will almost always give you the title of a book they read in childhood. This is why children's reading matters. It's habit forming and good habits start young!

#### **Heidi Perry, Read for Good**

Read for Good's work over four decades shows that children love reading when they read what they love. We hope that in 25 years' time, all children will be able to access and choose from a range of high-quality, relatable and engaging books and that their reading choices will be valued. We believe this will motivate tomorrow's children to enjoy both losing, and finding, themselves in stories and books, allowing their imaginations to flourish and their well-being to soar.





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### **Meryl Halls, Managing Director, Booksellers Association of the UK and Ireland**

The world in 25 years' time would have a bookshop in every community, staffed, then as now, with knowledgeable, empathetic enthusiasts who could demonstrate to children the joys of reading – fun, escapism, knowledge gathering, perspective, enthrallment, joy, vicarious experience. Every child would have access to a bookseller to guide them through their first and subsequent reads and they'd be able to share their reading experience with friends in safe spaces and nourishing places close to where they lived, improving their mental health and sense of connectedness.

#### **Further Reading:**

- [Young People's Reading and Writing](#) An indepth study focusing on enjoyment, behaviour, attitudes and attainment, National Literacy Trust, 2011.
- [Exploring the impact of World Book Day on the reading lives of children in the UK 2019-2021](#), National Literacy Trust, 2021.

### **They will turn to books in difficult times:**

#### **Nickie Aiken, Member of Parliament for Cities of London and Westminster**


Reading has brought me such joy throughout my life. Books have made me cry, laugh out loud and some have stopped me in my tracks. No matter what our background books are a great leveller. They can unite and divide us. Reading can bring people together through a book club where we debate the love or despair of a character or plot. I urge everyone, children and adults alike to pick up a book and immerse yourself in the pure joy that is reading.

#### **Hazel Kenyon, Research Director, Nielsen Book Data**

In monitoring book markets for over 20 years we have observed the deep connection that consumers have with books. Despite the rise in engagement with digital activities, reading continues to be one of the most widespread leisure activities for children and during difficult periods we observe a boost to book sales. In recent times the successful catering of content to suit the reader means that we expect books to remain central to children's lives producing a generation of readers.

#### **Further Reading:**

- [Nielsen's Understanding the Children's Book Consumer 2012-2021](#).



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**They will live in a world that values every aspect of reading and will have been enriched by it:**

**Sue Williamson, Director of Libraries, Arts Council England**

In 25 years, when World Book Day turns 50, if more children have become readers, we will see a society that shows more empathy, that is better informed and that functions well. We at the Arts Council know that reading for pleasure brings so many benefits, not only in terms of sheer enjoyment and improved literacy, but also for mental health and well-being. In addition, if we read for pleasure, then reading for purpose becomes much less of a challenge and a chore. We need to celebrate authors and publishers. We need to cherish and support our public libraries and all our bookshops large and small, because they are the gateways to delight, offering the choice that children need to discover what gives them pleasure through reading.

**Professor Teresa Cremin, Professor of Education, The Open University**

If reading for pleasure in childhood became the norm, our young people would be living in a more humane and socially just world. Diversity and difference would be embraced more widely, and imagination and empathy fostered through new communities of connection. These interactive communities would include children, parents, and all teaching staff engaged as fellow readers, and would be characterised by debate, delight and desire.


**Alison Tweed, CEO, Book Aid International**

If all children read for pleasure, in 25 years more children around the world – especially girls - would have seen people like them accomplishing extraordinary things and have imagined new possibilities. We would have moved closer to the universal quality education envisioned in SGD 4, with more children reading confidently, staying in school and breaking the cycle of poverty. And more children would have grown into empathetic adults who are better equipped to work together to solve the world's problems.

**Jude Williams, CEO, Literacy Pirates**

Finding joy in reading opens a rich world of possibilities and knowledge for children. Our experience suggests that for many more children to be confident readers, we need to give them more support inside and outside of school, and the ability to see themselves reflected as protagonists in the books they read. We see a future where children can reach their potential. Join us to help create it!

Under those circumstances I think we would see a greater connection between people and a gentler, kinder, but more nuanced level of public debate and conversation.



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### **Stephen Page OBE, Executive Chair, Faber**

If more children are reading when World Book Day's lifespan has doubled, it will have profound impact for individuals, for society and for the UK economy. Beyond the evident joy that reading brings it also helps to develop empathy and can improve mental health. Children who read also broaden their vocabulary and improve their critical literacy skills, but they also attain better results in other subjects such as maths. So if more children read for pleasure in 25 years time it will mean that the UK is likely to have more citizens who are happier, more societally-engaged, and better skilled for work and life. This would be good for us all.

### **Steven Pryse, Director and Founder, Pickled Pepper Books**

For Pickled Pepper Books we'd see a world where instead of running just one book club a week, demand would be such that we'd be running book clubs every day both in schools and after school at various locations as an opportunity for all children to come together and talk about their favourites and share their reading discoveries with each other in an environment free from assessment and judgment.

#### **Further Reading:**

- [Correlation between regularity of reading for pleasure and ability in reading each reinforcing the other as students get older \(Cremin 2019, Torppa 2020\).](#)
- [Reading communities: why, what and how?, Cremin, 2019.](#)
- [Exploring the impact of World Book Day on the reading lives of children in the UK 2019-2021, National Literacy Trust, 2021.](#)
- [Learnings from Lockdown Exploring new insights around the benefits, barriers and solutions to more children reading for pleasure, Farshore, 2021.](#)