



The reading for fun charity

World Book Day Selection Guidance

World Book Day has created the following guidance to support decision making for all World Book Day submissions.

The aim of our selection process is to identify titles which children will want to choose and read for themselves, and families will want to share together with their children. We want the books to interest and be accessible to all children and families, including those who don't currently see themselves as readers. Our aim is for World Book Day books to offer a gateway into reading.

This guidance for the selection has been created with the support of partners (The National Literacy Trust, The Open University and Centre for Literacy in Primary Education) as part of World Book Day's evidence-based approach.

This guidance develops over time. We welcome your feedback and suggestions to improve it.

Working with World Book Day

Publishers and the selection panel should consider the opportunities for engaging readers through World Book Day:

- Content should not be about the joy of books and reading or refer to World Book Day.
- Are the proposed authors and illustrators, or an ambassador for the book, able to advocate for World Book Day and reading for fun to a broad audience? Are they likely to be able to take part in the World Book Day campaign, including PR, media and events?
- Can World Book Day work with them to produce accessible reading engagement content (such as interviews or activities)?

General Guidance

The core purpose for the books we are selecting is that they are chosen by children and families to read in their spare time (to read for fun). When selecting books or book proposals, for the £1/€1.50 books, we are seeking a selection which has the following qualities:

Connecting with readers: Content and presentation which allows children to develop their interest in and enjoyment of reading

- Will the premise, subject matter, themes, genre, characters, setting, structure, curiosity, mood have the potential to captivate readers throughout?

Bringing familiarity or excitement to readers: Identifiable or recognisable themes, authors/illustrators

- Is there some element of existing reputation or reach - will it present readers, booksellers, teachers and librarians with routes to reading further books?
- Does it tie to existing and popular interests (examples might include gaming, sports, crafts, fan-doms)?
- Do the proposed titles speak to young people's current socio-political priorities?

Inclusion and diversity: Offer authentically written content, stories and illustrations that reflect the diverse make-up of society

- Does the list reflect the interests, backgrounds and specific cultural influences of contemporary children and young people growing up in the UK and Ireland?
- CLPE's toolkit for choosing texts from their 2025 Reflecting Realities Report will be referred to in the selection process and is provided in summary in Appendix 1.
- We will seek assurance of authentic voice and the process you use to achieve this and reserve the right to request an authenticity read as part of the editorial process.
- References to religion:
 - Guidance around religious content in World Book Day £1 books and publisher materials

At World Book Day we are inclusive and celebrate all faiths, cultures and world views. We ask that our £1 books or materials are accessible to all children and not just those of one faith or culture. We aim to choose books that offer a window into diverse lived cultural experiences, whilst ensuring that religion is not the central theme.

Developing reading: Promote reading through rich and powerful writing (either fiction or non-fiction)

- Will the title invite re-reading or have layers of meaning that allow new detail and understanding to be made?
- What opportunities are offered for reading together with younger children, to encourage thinking and conversations?

Engaging less confident or less keen readers: Provide a selection, appealing to a range of ages, reading abilities, backgrounds and interests

- Is there an opportunity for illustration to be used, even for older readers?
- Could the writing style engage dyslexic or reluctant readers? For example, can it be concise and use short sections of text rather than continuous prose?
- Is there potential for 'dipping into' texts, both narrative and non-narrative?

Ensuring easy provision of accessible versions: working with RNIB, Guide Dogs and Calibre Audio and Listening Books to produce braille, large print and audio books

- Will it be possible for audio descriptions of pictures referenced but not described in the text to be provided?
- Is the text engaging for a child who cannot access the illustrations?

Specific genre guidance

The selection panel will pay attention to the overall mix of genres and bring expertise and experience around what proves particularly popular for children who do not see themselves as readers.

Fiction

- Does the concept for the book – development of the idea and resolution – provide potential for a complete and satisfying reading experience?
- Does the story offer an emotional connection; the chance for empathy and character development; the opportunity for immersion in the story?
- Are the backgrounds, interests and motivations of characters likely to resonate with target age readers?

Non-Fiction/Activity

- Does the book link into themes/brands already shown to be popular in the target age-group?
- Will the layout, design and illustrations encourage the reader to actively explore for information?
- Is the information accurate and engaging and are new terms clearly explained – perhaps being highlighted or defined in a glossary?

- Are the subjects showcasing a diverse spectrum of achievements without skimming over potentially contentious aspects of history or politics?

Poetry

- Is the poetry rooted in word games, wordplay, song and rhythm – reflecting the importance of it being heard as well as read?
- Does the poetry connect with personal feelings or events, to help the reader reflect on experiences to recreate, shape and make sense of it?
- Does the poetry offer the chance for children to read poetry in a range of forms? Pattern and shapes are important. Rhyme isn't essential.

Graphic novels and illustrated texts

- Will the choice of illustration, design and typeface make the book accessible and appealing to a wide range of readers? Note: uppercase lettering can contribute to visual blurring issues.
- Will illustrations serve to support or 'scaffold' readers' comprehension and understanding (will colour, layout and illustration style help tell the story)?
- How well do illustrations and text relate to one another?

Age-range categories

Individual titles (and ultimately the overall selection) should offer maximum opportunities for a wide range of children and families to engage with and feel excited by books and reading.

Children less engaged in reading are likely to have a reading level lower than their chronological age.

Particular thought should be given to:

- Age appropriateness of subject, complexity of sentence structure, word usage.
- What hooks exist within the proposed book and how will these work to attract and engage existing readers and emergent readers?
- If it is possible to create texts for older children who might not be at their age expected reading level but are of high interest? Graphic novels, poetry and non-fiction are often ways in for these readers.

Evidence

In preparing submissions, publishers might find it useful to consider these points which are drawn from selection panel experience and evidence from the National Literacy Trust, CLPE and BookTrust:

- Including a range of genres

'We need pitches across genres to appeal to the widest base of children.'

- Ensuring a spread of different character backgrounds and perspectives

'The books need to better reflect UK society, and we need a more diverse range of authors and illustrators in the younger category – pictorially having diverse groups of characters is really important.'

- Inclusion of non-narrative forms

'Non-fiction can be a good way in for a lot of children; it can be a gateway into reading.'

- Inclusion of poetry and verse

'Less text can be inviting for readers who feel less confident.'

- Inclusion of illustrated works

'Illustrated and graphic novel titles presented through all the stages would be really helpful.'

- Books which allow active or engaged readership- choose your own adventure, books with a puzzle or gaming element.

World Book Day Selection Guidance

'Activity books can be dismissed but they play an important role for reluctant readers as they aren't intimidating and involve children.'

- Humour plays an important role in reading for pleasure

'Reading needs to be presented as enjoyable and fun!'

- Titles which tie to interests that children might have, provide added interest appeal.

National Literacy Trust research shows 4 in 5 young people who play video games read materials relating to these once a month.

- Titles with characters that are familiar or are part of a series that children and families recognise

'A lot of our families are not readers so familiar characters can be a way of bridging uncertainty.'

Appendix

Appendix 1

Characterisation

- Are the characters in the book thoughtfully developed, well fleshed out, multi-dimensional individuals with agency?
- Is the ethnic minority character a well-drawn, well developed and well-rounded individual whose ethnicity does not define them any more than a white protagonist is defined by theirs and/or does the book ensure positive casual inclusion of ethnic minority characters who are not solely defined by their ethnicity?
- Has consideration been given to the positioning of racially minoritised characters in relation to the main protagonist? Consider the ethnic profile of secondary and side-kick characters, is their presence tokenistic? In a book with a 'multicultural cast of characters' is equal weighting given to the entire cast of characters in terms of presence, agency and voice.
- Does the book challenge misconceptions and prejudices about an under-represented group or does it reinforce them?

Illustration

- Has careful consideration of skin tones, facial features and hair texture been effectively made to ensure that a character's ethnicity is recognisable without being overstated?
- How do the props, background and other visual cues add layers to our understanding and appreciation of the character and their world?

Plot

- Is the plot driven by the character's ethnicity? If yes, to what extent is this necessary and appropriate in furthering the narrative and is the portrayal sensitively depicted?
- If the book includes social justice themes, does it effectively explore and convey the complexity of the themes with sensitive due regard and reverence to the subject(s)?

Endnotes

1. <https://clpe.org.uk/research/reflecting-realities>

(See also: <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/represents/booktrust-represents-diversity-childrens-authors-illustrators-report.pdf>

https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Diversity_and_children_and_young_peoples_reading_in_2020.pdf)

2. Reading Scale stages and behaviours from CLPE 'Reading Scales'

<https://clpe.org.uk/teaching-resources/reading-and-writing-scales>