

Hampshire SLS Teachers' Summer Reading Challenge

2019-20



As one of the Lead Advisers in the Hampshire School Library Service, I am constantly looking out for ideas about how schools can encourage reading for pleasure. In March 2019, myself and a colleague attended an **OU and UKLA Reading for Pleasure conference in Cambridge**. It was a great day, excellent value for money, full of practitioners and people passionate about children's books and reading and a motivational author presentation. It is always good to be reminded about why you love doing the day job! Talking over the day in the car on the journey home I was trying to think how the Hampshire SLS could encourage more teachers to read children's books. This had also been discussed with the Hampshire (HIAS) English Inspectors at a recent meeting who were concerned teachers were missing out on developing some of their work with the children because they had not read the book first. It was also trying to think of something that did not require huge amounts of SLS staff input to set up and definitely very little money!

The demands on teacher's time in the term is well recognised with many teachers finding it difficult to set aside time to read anything at all. It was at this point I wondered if we could link in with the very successful public library Summer Reading Challenge run by the Reading Agency. During the summer holidays primary aged children are encouraged to read six books and they receive a medal to acknowledge their achievement and participation.

The Hampshire SLS has a virtual learning site <https://sls.hias.hants.gov.uk/> which allows subscribing schools to access support 24/7. The intellectual property of the work is stored behind a password. As I wanted this to be as accessible as possible and remove any barriers, it was agreed this would be put on the front page for all to see and use (it was copied almost instantly!). I wanted the teachers, and indeed anyone in the school community, to focus on the reading and books rather than anything else, but we also needed an evaluation process to judge uptake.

The idea of the scheme was very similar to the children's Summer Reading Challenge. To read 6 children's books over the same period (though to be honest the scheme was self-policing and we were happy if school staff had read anything) and to answer a couple of questions about the book. We did not produce any prescriptive lists – reading lists are available on the SLS virtual learning platform – but we left the choice open, including whether to read fiction, non-fiction or poetry. A certificate could be downloaded at the end and we were



hoping school staff would proudly display this to show the children they too had been busy over the summer. The main difference between the schemes was that the books read by the school staff could be sourced from wherever was convenient: SLS centres, several of which were open during the holidays; public libraries; own books; SLS ebook or eaudio; buying them etc. The questions asked were:

- Which year group is the book aimed at?
- Would you read it aloud?
- Would you recommend it?
- To write a brief review

The scheme was advertised at the summer support group meeting for librarians (we targeted the primary age range); on the SLS virtual learning site; displays in the SLS centres; special open evenings in the centres; the reading champions from the public library often mentioned it at the assemblies they did in schools to promote the SRC; at every contact with a primary school during the summer term and at local meetings run by the HIAS English inspectors for school English Managers. Once the scheme started the service also used Twitter and Facebook to promote it.




As a service we were delighted with the response. There were 685 reviews posted which gave a 63% completion (if we were targeting 6 books). 51 different primaries took part and 6 secondaries who picked it up on the Twitter feed. 2 non subscribing schools participated and this was great to see and will be followed up to see if we can support them in any other way. Several schools have already asked how we will use the reviews and it has been decided we will produce a read aloud list from their recommendations as well as creating a database of the reviews which we hope to build on when we run it again next year.

I have also noticed, when out and about in Hampshire schools, that teachers took the idea and adapted it. Several did great displays of the books read by teachers and others used Twitter to contact the authors and then proudly displayed the replies in the library for the children to read.

Conclusion

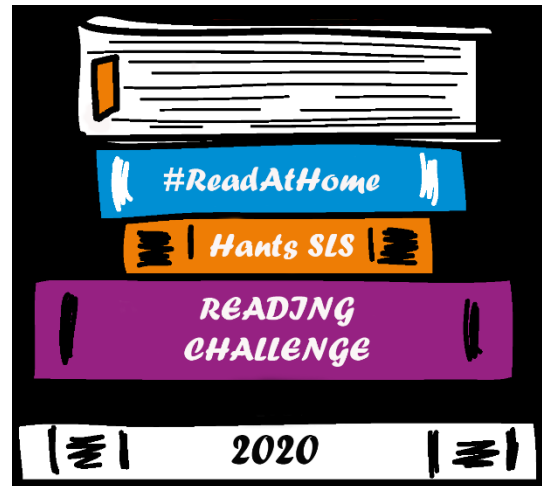
The Hampshire SLS were delighted by the support for the scheme shown by the different schools across the county. We hope to build on this success and will analyse the reviews taking particular note of books that were not recommended and why; produce a database of reviews and a read aloud booklist. This was a great exercise for customer feedback and engaging with school communities and it is hoped that with a longer lead in more schools will participate next year. It will also provide evidence to Ofsted of how the teachers are keeping abreast of children's books. We would also like to particularly thank the reading champions in the Hampshire public library service for promoting it and our colleagues in the Hampshire Inspection team.

Covid 19 Update

Due to school closures in March 2020, and wanting to continue to support schools, the Hampshire SLS adapted the Teachers' summer reading challenge to a pupil challenge changing the questions slightly and keeping it all on open access. Subscribers to Hampshire SLS have access to the Wheelers platform  as well as using



Borrowbox from Hampshire Public Libraries, both of which had increased investment, to encourage children to continue reading during lockdown. Launched in April it has already received over 500 reviews (May 2020). **Keep reading!**



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