

REVIVING THE LITERARY REALM FOR RELUCTANT READERS

By Tom Maguire



Ever Since the outbreak of COVID-19 forced the nation into lockdown, staying at home and being left to occupy our leisure time with indoor pursuits has evidently shown the well of entertainment can soon run dry. So if you find yourself having exhausted the offerings of Netflix and the thought of baking another homemade loaf of sourdough bread leaves you, tempted to stick your head into the oven alongside the doughy bloomer, why not reach for a book, it might not be as painstaking as you may first imagine.

From reevaluating the role of literature to relating film, television and music to books, NTU English Literature student Tom Maguire offers some useful guidance to rouse reluctant readers.



Reluctant readers, particularly those of a younger age category, are unfortunately a common breed. Give many an iPad and they will spend countless hours glued to the screen, immersed in a virtual realm. Seat them in front of a television and they will enter a trance-like state, captivated by the narrative being played out on the flickering screen, yet place a book in front of them and attention will quickly evaporate like bathwater down a plughole. This reluctance to become encapsulated by the written word is not only a pity but has further implications regarding their education. Research has found that children who read for pleasure perform better in school. So how can these children, who demonstrate an interest and engagement with story in a variety of visual media be drawn into an appreciation and willingness to the written word? Below are five areas which could help pave the way for readers of all ages to make a transition from reluctant to willing.

Read for Pleasure

It's vital for a reluctant reader to firstly find enjoyment and fun in their reading. At the initial stage of reintroducing books to children, and those of an older age, selecting a book that is both interesting and accessible should take priority over everything else. Fun, fast paced and lighthearted stories are more likely to engage a reluctant reader's imagination than ones which are slow-burning, heavy on description and light on action.

Recommending reading :

Children aged 5+

Captain Cat and the Treasure Map
- Lucy Diamond

Teenage & Adult

The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency
- Alexander McCall Smith



Twin a book with a favourite film or tv show

A person who can apply focus to a two hour film or hour long tv programme can demonstrate a pretty reasonable attention span. Why is it then this cannot be replicated when it comes to books? They may feel like the world of books are alien and out of touch with their interests. Selecting a book or series of books that have formed the basis for a film or tv show is a useful way of establishing an immediate connection between the reader and recognised characters and worlds.

Recommended reading :

Children aged 5+

Horrid Henry
- Francesca Simon

Teenager & Adult

Forrest Gump
- Winston Groom



Choose the right book

Selecting the right book is vital for interest, engagement and ultimately reading pleasure. Experiment with different types of books. Beginning with shorter stories or even graphic novels and comics can be a useful way in which to ease a reluctant reader into books. Shorter stories, by their very nature provide a reader with quicker narrative resolution and a faster sense of gratification. Graphic novels and comics which provide a balance of written word and visual storytelling add an extra element of sensory engagement.

Recommended reading :

Children aged 5+

Diary of a Wimpy Kid
- Jeff Kinney

Teenager & Adult

Persepolis
Marjane Saprati



Draw attention to parallels between Music and Poetry

Providing a reluctant reader, with an interest in music, with a song or lyric book from a favourite band or artist can be a useful segway into an engagement with poetry. Highlighting the similarities between lyric and poem could prove fruitful in sparking an engagement and enthusiasm with poetic composition.

Recommended reading :

Children aged 5+

Songs and verse
- Roald Dahl

Teenager & Adult

Songs and Poems
- Leonard Cohen



Organise a book club

Creating a book club for reluctant readers provides an opportunity to experiment with a wide range of books that can be read simultaneously among peers. Meeting up once a week to discuss books extends the solitary activity of reading to a wider social context and can be combined with other activities such as artwork and role play to develop and enhance the reading experience.



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