

March 2017

CRAZE OF THE MONTH: SIX NATIONS RUGBY



What is the Six Nations?

The Six Nations Championship is a rugby union tournament played annually between England, France, Ireland, Italy, Scotland and Wales. During the course of the competition each team plays every other team once. This year four points are awarded for a win, two for a draw and zero for a loss. An additional point is awarded for scoring four or more tries in a match or for losing by seven points or fewer. The team with the most points after all 15 matches have been played wins the tournament.

The first round of matches was played over the weekend of 4–5 February followed by round two on 11–12 February and round three on 25–26 February. The defending champions England currently **top of the table** having won all three of their matches so far. Round 4 will be played on the weekend of 10–11 March followed by the dramatic conclusion on 18 March, when all six teams will play.

How can the Six Nations be used for literacy teaching?

We know that tapping into children's interests is a great way of engaging them in learning. Our research shows that children who enjoy writing very much are seven times more likely to write above the level expected for their age compared with children and young people who do not enjoy writing at all. Similarly, children and young people who write outside school daily are five times more likely to be writing above the expected level for their age compared with young people who never write outside school¹.

Our Craze of the Month taps into children's and young people's interests to improve outcomes in literacy. The activities featured here relate to the English Programmes of Study from the National Curriculum in England²:

Spoken language

Pupils should be taught to:

- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others

1 Clark, C. (2016). **Children's and Young People's Writing in 2015**. Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual survey. London: National Literacy Trust

2 DfE (2013). The National Curriculum in England. Key Stage 1 and 2 framework document.

Writing – composition

Pupils should be taught to:

- develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by:
 - writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional)
 - writing about real events
 - writing for different purposes

Using it in the classroom

Rugby and the Six Nations Championship offer a number of opportunities to promote learning. Here we'll focus on how they could be used to promote literacy. The activities have been designed so that they could easily be adapted for another sport.

Warm up

Try these **crosswords and word searches**, originally developed for the 2011 Rugby World Cup but still great as starter activities.

Rugby glossary

Many sports, rugby included, have their own specific language which can sometimes make its way into every day usage. Ask pupils to put together a Six Nations glossary that explains some of the terms that people outside the sport of rugby may not be familiar with. You could also ask pupils to try to translate the words into languages used by other Six Nations teams. See the activity sheet at the end of this document which can be given out to pupils and suggests a few words to get them started.

Six Nations research

The competition is the perfect opportunity for pupils to find out more about the six countries taking part. They could research country facts, the main towns and find out about their food and culture – as well as researching the players that make up the national team.

How do you feel?

Ask pupils to imagine they are one of the players about to take to the field before a Six Nations match. How do they feel? What can they see, smell, hear and taste? Ask them to produce a piece of writing conveying these feelings and emotions. It could be in the form of a letter to a friend or relative, a song or poem or maybe a tweet to their followers.

Who will win?

Due to the format of the competition the Six Nations title might not be decided until the final match, based on how many points each team receive. Ask pupils to study the **results table so far**. Which teams still have a chance of winning? What would need to happen to stop England from taking the title? Is their favourite team still in with a chance? Who do they think will win and how?

Rugby and mental health

Scotland player Fraser Brown has recently spoken about how **rugby helped pull him out of depression**. Get pupils to read the article and discuss the importance of rugby and other sports to both physical and mental health. How do they feel when playing their favourite sport? How does it help them with other areas of their life? There are opportunities here to link with your PSHE curriculum.

Controversies

This year's Six Nations tournament has not been without controversy. For example, **Italy's tactics** during their match with England attracted criticism. What were pupils' opinions of this? Ask them to produce a piece of persuasive writing arguing for or against these tactics. These could be read aloud or organised into a class debate.



The **National Literacy Trust Network** supports schools to develop outstanding literacy provision by providing literacy leaders with tools, resources and inspiration. **Join now**.

Further reading and additional resources

Pupils who are interested in rugby might like to try some of these books, which can be used to promote reading for enjoyment:

- The *Rugby Academy* series by Tom Palmer
- The *Rugby Spirit* series by Gerard Siggins
- The *Rugby Zombie* series by Dan Anthony
- *World Rugby Records* by Chris Hawkes
- *The Last Try* by Tom Palmer
- *Pride and Penalties* by Chris Higgins
- *Jonny: My Autobiography* by Jonny Wilkinson

England Rugby have put together some fantastic rugby-based resources for schools to use in subjects across the curriculum including literacy, English, maths, geography, art and PSHE. The resources are free to download, you'll just need to complete a very short form to sign up.

You'll also find several free **rugby literacy resources** listed on Tom Palmer's website along with information about his books.

Got a class of sports fans? The National Literacy Trust runs several **sports and literacy programmes**, including Premier League Reading Stars, now part of **Premier League Primary Stars**. Secondary schools can purchase **Skills Academy**, a KS3 intervention that gets students reading and learning freestyle football tricks. You can also win tickets for your whole class to go to Wembley in the **FA Writing Challenges**.

By **Gemma Niebieszczanski**

Network and Competitions Manager



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Six Nations glossary



Rugby, like many sports, has its own vocabulary that many people outside the sport might find confusing! Below are a few suggestions of common rugby terms. See if you can write a definition for each term and an example of it being used in a sentence. Can you find the French and/or Italian translation?



Words to define: *maul, line-out, penalty, knock-on, conversion, tight head...* Can you think of any more?



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