

Back to school: reading for pleasure transition activities

Teacher guide for pupils aged 11 to 14

About the resource

As you welcome your pupils (aged 11-14) back to school, we've put together a set of easy-to-deliver transition activities to kick start your year and put reading for pleasure at the heart of your lessons. The activities below will help pupils settle back into the classroom, while fostering a love of reading and refreshing their key literacy skills.



Quick-fire warm up activities: get to know you

D-ice Breakers

Write six creative questions on the board. Put pupils in pairs or small groups and ask them to roll the dice and answer the corresponding question. Questions could include: *If you could spend the day as a book character, who would it be? If a genie granted you a wish, what would you wish for? If you could have a superpower, what would it be and why? Would you rather explore outer space or the bottom of the ocean? If you could only read one thing (the same text over and over!) for the rest of your life, what would it be? Who would you choose to play you in a movie?*

De-coding

Write on the board your own code sequences (five sentences should be enough) and a key to help pupils break the code. Ask pupils to create their own code and key, and share their sequences with the rest of the class.



Scattergories

What is it?

A word game that everybody can join in with.

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How to play:

In the time allotted (for example, two minutes), each team must attempt to think of a word or term that fits each of the 10 categories of the table, starting with the rolled letter. Any number of words in the answer is allowed, as long as the first word starts with the correct letter.

Example scattegrories

- *Teacher name*
- *Classmate name*
- *Classroom object*
- *A place in the school*
- *Book*
- *A place in the world*

Scattegrory	R	?	?
Teacher name			
Classmate name			
Favourite book			

Reading for pleasure activities:

Book talk

Invite pupils to bring in their favourite book from home or select one from the school library. Divide the pupils into small groups and provide each group with three books from the class' selection. Ask each group to:

- Make predictions about each book based on the front covers and blurbs
- Write the first line of the book (without looking inside of course!)
- If pupils know each other already, can they guess who brought in each of the books and why?

Change the story



Discuss well-known stories, ranging from fairy tales to Shakespeare. Ask pupils to pick a book or fairy tale they know well and write an alternative ending. They could start their story with:
...And that's how the story of (insert book name) was told for many years, but that's not quite true... you see, what happened was...

Twenty questions

One member of the class thinks of a character from a book that the rest of the group will know. The group asks yes or no questions to find out who the character is.

Opening lines

Select a range of books, including ones your pupils will have read in a previous school year, and a few that may be new to them. Read the blurbs to the students and ask them to write the first line of the story. Invite pupils to share their ideas and compare their suggestions with the real first lines.

Outer space reads

Ask pupils if pupils they were heading to outer space and only allowed to take one thing to read with them, what would it be and why? Encourage creativity – it doesn't have to be a book!



River of reading

A river of reading is an idea adapted from the work of Cremin et al. 2014 and Hodges 2010 and is a way of displaying different reading resources that pupils come across, such as books, webpages, recipes, instructions, food packaging, timetables, magazines and letters. There is plenty of inspiration for these online.

Start with a simple backdrop of a river made of fabric or paint, and add in new reading resources as your class discovers them throughout the term. At the end of each half term, take a moment to think back on the collective reading you shared together. At the end of the year, take time to reflect at a class on how much you've read. You might like to challenge pupils to create their own rivers of reading at home during holidays.

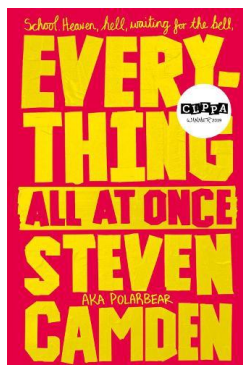
To introduce the river of reading to your class, prepare your own throughout the school holidays and share it with the class. This will not only help pupils to get to know you as their new teacher, but help to establish yourself as a positive reading role model. Ask pupils to then create their own rivers of reading and later share them with a partner or feedback to the whole class.

Cremin, T. Mottram, M. Powell, S. Collins, F. (2014) *Building Communities of Readers: UKLA* Adapted from Cliff Hodges, G. (2010) *Rivers of Reading: Using critical incident collages to learn about adolescent readers and their readership*

Recommended read and response activities

If you enjoyed the activities above, you might like to read our recommended book with your class, encourage discussion using our suggested questions and try out the response activities, which help pupils to explore the theme of transition.

Everything All At Once by Steven Camden



A collection of poetry about one week in a secondary school where everything happens all at once. Zooming in across our cast of characters, we share moments that span everything from hoping to make it to the end of the week, facing it, fitting in, finding friends and falling out, to loving lessons, losing it, and worrying, wearing it well and worshipping from afar.

Read and share the poem *Prologue* with pupils.

Discussion questions

- ✓ *How did the poem make you feel? Can you relate to it or part of it? Have you experienced anything like what is described in the poem?*
- ✓ *At the end of Prologue, life in secondary school is summed up as: 'Everything, all at once.' What do you think he means?*
- ✓ *Steve Camden uses juxtaposition to describe secondary school: 'It's a war zone. It's a haven.' What does this suggest about secondary school? Do you agree? Why or why not?*

Read and share *First Day* with pupils.

Discussion questions

- ✓ *How did the poem make you feel?*
- ✓ *Can you relate to it or part of it? Has your secondary school experience been similar or different? How did your first day at secondary school compare to the one described in the poem?*
- ✓ *Steve Camden uses similes throughout this poem. Can you think of a simile that would portray your first impressions of secondary school/your approach to the building on your first day back this year?*

Response activities:

Artwork

- ✔ Invite pupils to use *First Day* as a stimulus for a piece of art, creating a visual representation of the way in which secondary school is portrayed in the poem.

Performance

- ✔ Watch Steven Camden's performance of [Prologue](#). *Did anything surprise you? Does this fit with your understanding or preconception of what poetry is? How does it differ watching his performance versus reading the poem yourself? What did you prefer? Why? How did he emphasise key lines or phrases?*
- ✔ In pairs, invite pupils to perform the poem themselves. *What lines would they choose to emphasise – why and how?* If you have a copy of the whole text, you could invite pupils to select a different poem to perform that resonates with them.

Creating poetry

- ✔ Invite pupils to write a poem that captures a particular moment for them in relation to starting or changing schools, for example:
 - First ever day at secondary or primary school
 - First day back to school after the holidays
 - Last day in primary school

To get them started, pupils could begin with a mind map that lists the key vocabulary they associate with that moment including what happened - what they saw or heard – and a range of emotions, thoughts or physical sensations.