

Ideas into Action, Level 5, Sheffield's Favourite Reads Project

List of possible authors and books for the second blog

Name of organisation: Reading Sheffield, Sheffield

Website: <https://www.readingsheffield.co.uk/>

This note relates to the second task set out in the Project Brief:

Students will work in pairs or small groups to produce:

2. A blog (one each student) based on research on popular fiction. Word count: 750-1000 words. RS will provide a list of topics and authors.

Here is the list, drawn from Reading Sheffield's interviews with 60+ Sheffields born between 1920 and 1945. (Transcripts and audio files can be accessed from the website.)

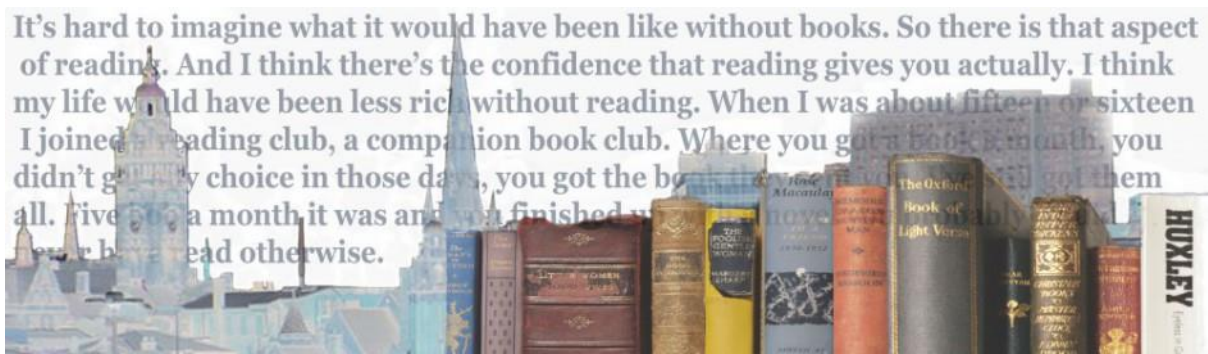
A. Authors associated with one particular book:

- Margaret Mitchell: *Gone with the Wind* 1938
- Nevil Shute: *A Town like Alice* 1950 or *On the Beach* 1957
- D H Lawrence: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* 1928
- L M Montgomery: *Anne of Green Gables* 1908.

B. Authors discussed without reference to any particular book

- Richmal Compton (Just William books in general)
- Capt W E Johns (Biggles)
- Charles Dickens
- Georgette Heyer
- Edgar Wallace
- Dennis Wheatley
- Agatha Christie.

It should be easy to find both books by the authors in (B) above and the specific titles in (A) above. All are available as e-books and in hard copy, from booksellers, including second-hand. Subject to access, the Adsetts Library holds copies of some, including in the reference-only 'Readerships and Literary Cultures 1900-1950' Special Collection.



Here are some points to consider in researching and writing the blog (but note that students may also want to consider other points that occur to them as they work):

1. Self-reflection and current preconceptions about the book/author, if any. With what knowledge or preconceptions did the student arrive at their choice?
2. Context of the book/author in the reading history of the interviewees who read it. Questions to ask: the interviewee's gender; age was the interviewee (roughly) when the book/author was read; how was the book/author identified as desirable; how did it come into the interviewee's hands; where did it lead the interviewee; what responses did it provoke?
3. Cultural context. This could include:
 - National and local book reviews
 - Sales figures or numbers of reprints, if available (publishing records scarce because many publishing house records destroyed in the Blitz in WWII)
 - Intended readership suggested by book designs. How has the design changed over time? What might this indicate about shifts in the appeal of a book or author and about perceived readerships then and now?
 - Social attitudes: How does the book/author approach e.g. politics, race, religion, gender and how does the depiction compare with today's attitudes?
 - Genres: various genres are covered by the authors and books chosen: children's books; young adult/transitional; crime; historical fiction; adventure; and romance. How representative are they? How is the specific genre perceived in cultural terms, and has the perception changed over time?
4. Cultural life of the author/book in twentieth and twenty first centuries. This could include consideration of:
 - Media transmission: TV, radio and film adaptations, fan fiction etc
 - Use of book or author or genre as shorthand for a particular readership, set of values or narrative genre, perhaps associated with contempt for such a particular readership.