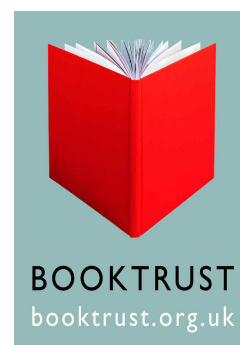


Page Turners

Guide To Setting Up Your Own Book Club



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The Page Turners guide to setting up your own Book Club.



Introduction

This guide provides some ideas on how to get the best out of Page Turners and advice on:

- **setting up a Page Turners book group**
- **what to talk about and how to structure your meetings**
- **finding other ways to share Page Turners books**

Whether you're reading by yourself or planning to start a reading group, you can plan your reading around Page Turners and join the Britain's biggest ever book club!



Book groups can be very enjoyable and stimulating. There are tens of thousands of them in existence in the UK and each one is different. If you're not already in a book group, Page Turners gives you the perfect opportunity to set one up.

Here is our ten-point plan on how to get started.

Ten-point plan

- 1** Who's in the group? Start with a few friends meeting together, then invite others to join you.
- 2** Find new members through word of mouth, or by putting up a notice in the local library, bookshop or café.
- 3** Be safe. If you're inviting strangers to join your group, meet in a public place and always agree in advance how the group will decide on who to accept, otherwise it can get difficult if you disagree.
- 4** How big? Most groups have around ten members – small enough for everyone to get a word in, big enough to cope with a few absentees per meeting.
- 5** Where to meet? You can meet in each other's houses, or in a café, pub or library. Which will suit you best? Do you want to eat at the meeting or just drink? Is everyone prepared to share responsibility for catering?
- 6** What kind of structure to the meetings? That's entirely up to you. Some just meet up and talk about whatever comes to mind; others are more formal, with an introduction to the book by one member. Some groups keep journals of their meetings with notes on the discussion. There is, of course, no right way to talk about a book.
- 7** Keep an eye on group dynamics. Make sure you have a balanced group where everyone contributes. It can be useful to have an 'expert' on the team – the sort who has always read other books by the author, brings along notes on the book downloaded from websites or clipped out of newspapers and usually has an anecdote about the time they met the author. On the other hand, don't let them or anyone else dominate! Everyone's opinions matter and the point is not to reach a consensus decision on whether the book was good or not. Other characters to handle with care include 'The Opinionated One' who has strong views on every book and a habit of condemning as reactionary anyone who dares to disagree. 'The Quiet One' – sits there every week saying nothing – are they bored or terrified to pitch in? You'll have to find a way to make them feel more confident about speaking up. 'The Touchyfeely' actually wants to talk about problems and relationships rather than books. Which is fine, as long as every body else does.



- 8** Agree at the outset to review on a regular basis how the group is going so that everyone has a chance to say whether it's giving them what they want.
- 9** Which book to choose? Decide together how you're going to choose. You could vote for what you want to read next or take it in turns to pick a book. If you pick the book for the next meeting be prepared to take the flak if the rest don't like it!
- 10** You don't all need to read the same book. There are ways to structure meetings, for instance with each member reporting back on what they're reading. And remember that you can always borrow the books for free from your local library.



Book Groups At Work

You might decide that rather than setting up a book group at home or with friends or in the community, you'd like to set up a reading group at work. Office, factory, shop, hospital – wherever you work, book groups can be a great way to get to know your colleagues better and to share something more than just the work you do.

Reasons to set up a Page Turners book group at work:

- As well as being fun, a book group can bring together staff from different corners and levels of an organisation to share ideas on an equal footing.
- A book group provides an excellent breathing space between work and social life. It can bring together people who wouldn't otherwise meet.
- It's good for a team to spend time talking creatively, learning, listening and thinking together.
- People can reveal to colleagues as much or as little about themselves as they wish, and still participate fully in the discussion.
- Do it now for Page Turners and see if it works. If it does, you may keep meeting for years to come.



When?

Once a month is probably best, giving everyone time to read the book and not too long to forget about it. You could meet after work, over lunch or even for books and croissants at the beginning of the day. If the firm wants to support the group they could let staff leave a bit early or have an extra long lunch break.

Who?

Send the word out – through an email to all staff, or a notice in the staff room – and see who responds. Talk to your Human Resources department about your plans, they may be able to offer support. You may need to do some persuading in person too. See if you can get a good range of staff, with junior and senior people, young and old, not just one clique. Diversity makes for an interesting discussion.

How?

Setting up a book group at work follows the same principles as setting up a book group with friends or in the community. Check out our ten-point plan for starting a reading group on page 4.



Starting up the group

Some things to talk about...

- Where do you read – on the train or in bed?
- Do you dip into lots of different books or work your way steadily through one at a time?
- Do you judge a book by its cover?
- Do you skip bits or plough on?
- Do you picture exactly what the characters look like or just have a sense of them?
- Do you try to work out what's going to happen or leave it to unfold?
- What voice do you hear in your head when you read?
- What do you imagine?
- And where does your mind wander?
- Do you love the feel of clean, new paperbacks, or prefer hard covers? Library books have their own special qualities – like the date stamp which raises the question of who were the other people in your district who chose to borrow this particular book.
- What makes a classic endure?
- Do you prefer seeing film adaptations before or after you've read the book?
- If you were making a film of one of the books who would star in it?
- Are all books an escape from real life?
- If you could have access to the secret diary of a character in one of the books, which would it be?
- How well do the characters in the books understand each other? Do you, the reader, think you know better?
- How would you feel about being transplanted into the world of these books?
- Which character would you most like as a friend?

Books don't exist in a vacuum. What music did a book remind you of? What book might be interesting to read after seeing a particular film or TV programme? Why not rent the movie of a book one night and watch it with your group, or go to the cinema together to see the film of the book – and then discuss which you preferred.



The 24 Page Turners

1. **A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian** By Marina Lewycka
2. **About Grace** By Anthony Doerr
3. **Becoming Strangers** By Louise Dean
4. **Chronicles Volume One** By Bob Dylan
5. **Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim** By David Sedaris
6. **Feast: Food That Celebrates Life** By Nigella Lawson
7. **Fleshmarket Close** By Ian Rankin
8. **Fools Rush In** By Bill Carter
9. **Not the End of the World** By Geraldine McCaughrean
10. **How to Be a Bad Bird Watcher** By Simon Barnes
11. **How To Breathe Underwater** By Julie Orringer
12. **Kafka On The Shore** By Haruki Murakami
13. **Leonardo da Vinci: The Flights of the Mind** By Charles Nicholl
14. **Let Me Go** By Helga Schneider
15. **Light on Snow** By Anita Shreve
16. **Never Let Me Go** By Kazuo Ishiguro
17. **Purple Hibiscus** By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
18. **The Icarus Girl** By Helen Oyeyemi
19. **The Kite Runner** By Khaled Hosseini
20. **The Last Crossing** By Guy Vanderhaeghe
21. **The Ninth Life of Louis Drax** By Liz Jensen
22. **The Understudy** By David Nicholls
23. **We Need to Talk About Kevin** By Lionel Shriver
24. **Inside Hitler's Bunker** By Joachim Fest



Which Page Turner to choose?

1. **A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian By Marina Lewycka**

Not a book about tractors nor a book set in the Ukraine, but a witty interesting soap opera of a novel about the battle two daughters wage in order to save their recently widowed father from the clutches of a ruthless gold digger.

2. **About Grace By Anthony Doerr**

Tense and atmospheric, strange and unsettling, About Grace has garnered high praise for its elegant, lyrical prose and the originality of its themes. Beautifully written, it remains a formidable literary achievement and an impressive debut from this award-winning short story writer.

3. **Becoming Strangers By Louise Dean**

Becoming Strangers is a fantastically observed debut novel about friendship, love and the remnants of marriage. In idyllic surroundings, two couples are forced to re-examine their relationships in the face of Alzheimer's, cancer and lives half-lived.

4. **Chronicles Volume One By Bob Dylan**

Not just for die-hard Dylan fans, Chronicles provides a unique insight into the psyche of one of the twentieth century's greatest artists. Revealing the creative mind in all its strangeness, Dylan's prose is filled with ideas, philosophies, enthusiasms, a warm appreciation of people and a rich sense of the absolute absurdity of life.

5. **Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim By David Sedaris**

Filled with fabulous observation, and underpinned by a warm and charming sensibility that misses no foible, Sedaris creates a poignant series of memoirs which are funny, caustic and always readable.

6. **Feast: Food That Celebrates Life By Nigella Lawson**

More than just a recipe book, Nigella Lawson's Feast is an uplifting and inspiring look into the reasons for feasting throughout history and in our daily lives. Feast is not just about the way we cook and eat but also about how we mark the connections between us and how we celebrate life.

7. **Fleshmarket Close By Ian Rankin**

Arguably Britain's greatest crime writer, Ian Rankin returns with yet another seamlessly plotted, effortlessly compelling read. Rankin is in total command of his craft: his ability to marry the social and political issues of the day in a way that is both artful and entertaining guarantees that Fleshmarket Close is one of the must-reads of this year.

8. **Fools Rush In By Bill Carter**

Fiercely intelligent and emotionally compelling, Fools Rush In is a surreal and startling portrait of Sarajevo during the height of the war in Bosnia, and the seminal book for this generation on the visceral and transformative impact of war in our time.



9. Not the End of the World By Geraldine McCaughrean

Everyone knows the story of the Flood and the animals that went in two by two. But what about the others that sailed on the Ark? In this claustrophobic and challenging adventure story we discover what it really was like when the heavens opened and the world drowned - and what might have happened in the days that followed.

10. How to Be a Bad Bird Watcher By Simon Barnes

In this funny and insightful book, Simon Barnes paints a riveting picture of how birdwatching has framed his life and reunited him with his father after a long-term feud. It shows why birdwatching is not the preserve of obsessive twitchers, but something we can all learn from and apply to all areas of our life.

11. How To Breathe Underwater By Julie Orringer

In her dazzling first book, Julie Orringer dives into the private world of childhood as told in a series of short stories. This debut collection blazes with emotion, with human appetite, with fortitude, with despair; these nine uncommonly wise and assured stories introduce an astonishing new talent.

12. Inside Hitler's Bunker By Joachim Fest

A fascinating insight into the last days of the Third Reich by the world's leading authority on Nazism. Using never seen before material, this is an eye-opening account of the true nature of Hitler and his entourage.

13. Kafka On The Shore By Haruki Murakami

Bewitching and ambitious, if at times mind-blowingly eccentric, Kafka On The Shore follows the fortunes of two remarkable and unforgettable characters, fifteen year old runaway Kafka Tamura and the aging Nakata, tracker of cats. Extravagant in its accomplishment, Kafka on the Shore displays one of the world's truly great storytellers at the height of his powers.

14. Leonardo da Vinci: The Flights of the Mind By Charles Nicholl

A writer of irresistible charm and quicksilver imagination, Nicholl takes us from the backstreet artists' studios of Florence to the glittering palazzi of the Medici, Sforza, and Borgia families as he pursues the most maddeningly elusive artist of all time. The result is a biography of rare grace and penetration.

15. Let Me Go By Helga Schneider

Like a slap in the face, Let Me Go is an extraordinary and powerful memoir that makes time stop. Much more powerful than fiction it describes the author's relationship and final encounter with her mother, a former SS guard at Auschwitz.

16. Light on Snow By Anita Shreve

A father and his daughter find an abandoned infant in the snow, an event which will forever alter the girl's understanding of the world and the adults who inhabit it. Powerful and moving, Light On Snow is a coming of age novel that will move all those who read it.



17. Never Let Me Go By Kazuo Ishiguro

One of the finest prose stylists of our time, Ishiguro's intelligence, sensitivity and stylistic brilliance offer obvious rewards to all who read him. With his characteristic finesse, Ishiguro infuses what seems like a classic adventure story with an ineffable tinge of strangeness and poignancy. This new novel remains one of the most eagerly awaited publications of the year.

18. Purple Hibiscus By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

By turns luminous and horrific and always disconcerting, Purple Hibiscus is fiction of the very highest order. Perceptive characterisation and an evocative portrayal of a fast-changing country on the brink of civil war mark this Orange-shortlisted novel out from the crowd.

19. The Icarus Girl By Helen Oyeyemi

The Icarus Girl tells the tale of Jessamy who is caught between Nigerian and English cultures yet never feels part of either. Mixing the spiritual and the physical, The Icarus Girl is an astonishing debut by a student who displays a clarity and maturity beyond her 20 years.

20. The Kite Runner By Khaled Hosseini

Told with simplicity and poise, The Kite Runner tells the tale of childhood friends Amir and Hassan as they grow up in 1970s Afghanistan. With its timeless themes of sacrifice and atonement, it is a soaringly lyrical and morally acute story.

21. The Last Crossing By Guy Vanderhaeghe

Compulsive and very readable, The Last Crossing infuses serious fiction with a great deal of black humour and you'll quickly be swept up in a pacy fusion of mystery and romance. Following the exploits of Englishmen Charles and Addington Gaunt as they try to find their brother Simon who has gone missing in the American West, The Last Crossing breathes new life into the Western.

22. The Ninth Life of Louis Drax By Liz Jensen

A powerful and moving – if at times uncomfortable - read. In The Ninth Life of Louis Drax, Jensen's gift for black humor and off-kilter narratives shines throughout. Her understanding of fractured psyches and their ability to heal is remarkable.

23. The Understudy By David Nicholls

A delicious, likeable, and loveable comedy, The Understudy is the latest novel by best-selling author David Nicholls in which he portrays the life of a downtrodden actor. It's clever, well-written and packed full of high quality gags and observations, and looks set to be a sure-fire smash.

24. We Need to Talk About Kevin By Lionel Shriver

Profound and deeply disquieting, We Need To Talk About Kevin breaks the mould of so-called 'mummy-lit' and shatters the cultural expectations of women balancing work, children and a husband. Shriver focuses on mass murder, parental attitudes towards their children and adult relationships. Bringing to her story a keen understanding of the intricacies of marital and parental relationships as well as a narrative pace that is both compelling and thoughtful, Shriver has created an unmistakable page-turner.



Other ideas to talk about

Great Book, Great Movie?

- What makes a book hard or easy to film?
- Do you prefer seeing the film before or after you've read the book?
- Are some of these stories more enjoyable on the big screen than on the page?
- What can books do that other media can't?
- Which book on the list do you think has made the best screen adaptation?
- And the worst?
- What does the film get wrong?
- If you were making the film who would star in it?
- Did the film change how you saw the characters in your mind?

The Dark Side

- What is 'dark' about these books?
- Which character is the most evil or disturbed?
- Why do we enjoy exploring evil and horror?
- How does it make us feel – frightened or reassured?

The Great Escape

- In what ways are these books an escape?
- Are all books an escape from real life?
- Some of these books appear to present idyllic places, but are they really like that?
- What inner journeys are the travellers undertaking in these books?

Other Worlds

- Why has the author created this place?
- Does the setting make it easier for the author to make a point?
- Would you like to live in any of these worlds?
- If you were creating another world what would you have in it?
- Did you find it hard to enter the book's world because it is too different from your own reality?
- How would the characters survive if they were transplanted into our world?

Shattered Worlds

- Why do we like reading about the worst human experiences?
- Does good come out of the terrible situations in these books?
- Does hardship bring out the best or worst of the characters?
- Are these books ultimately hopeful?
- Does a writer need to have lived through war or poverty to be able to write about it successfully?

Grand Passions

- How well do these writers describe what it's like to be in love?
- Is passionate love seen as a destructive or creative force in these books?
- Does reading about love affairs make you yearn to have one or delighted that you're over yours?
- You're an agony aunt – what would you have advised these characters to do?
- Do the problems the lovers face in these books still exist today?
- Would the book's treatment of love be different if the book had been written by a man instead of a woman or a woman instead of a man?



Family Affairs

- How are family relationships portrayed in these books?
- Do they remind you of your own experience?
- How do their families shape the characters of the heroes/heroines in these books?
- Are the families a support or a burden?
- Should we take responsibility for the actions of our families?
- Who is head of the family in these books?
- If you could have access to the secret diaries of just one of the characters, which would it be?
- Do you find it difficult to get to grips with the characters when the focus keeps shifting to different family members?

Forever Friends?

- Which of these characters would you like as a friend?
- Are there some things friendships can't survive?
- What do the characters really think of each other?
- How well do the characters understand their feelings towards each other? •Do you, the reader, think you know better?
- Is friendship always positive? Can it be destructive?
- Have you ever found that a book has helped you deal with a difficult issue with a friend?

The Great Divide

- What divides the people in these books?
- What brings them together?
- Are divisions inevitable in society?
- Do the characters overcome the divisions in these books?
- How do these books give you insight into divisions in the world now?
- In what ways can the society represented in the book help us understand our own?
- How would you cope with being transplanted into the world of this book? Do politics and fiction mix?

Coming of Age

- Is growing up about gaining experience or losing innocence?
- Do the characters have a particular moment where they grow up or is it a gradual process?
- Do these books remind you of moments in your life when you came of age?
- If you read this as a teenager how would/did you respond?
- How is the experience different as a mature adult?
- Do you still return to your childhood favourite reads as an adult?
- If so, why?

- Are the issues facing teenagers really universal and timeless or do the books make us realise how much things have moved on?
- Has a book helped you to understand 'growing up' for yourself or as a parent?



If you're not in a book group and don't want to be, you can still enjoy talking with friends and family about what you're reading. Take a look at the questions on page 9 and get chatting. Whether your favourite book is a thriller, a romance, a classic from the past or contemporary fiction, all readers have a lot they can share about the experience of reading.

Reading takeaways and recommendations

Give a friend a BBC Page Turners takeaway. Lend or buy them three books you've picked from The 24 Page Turners, with your friend in mind. One book is the starter: something short and accessible. The second is the main course: a substantial book on a theme they'll care about. The third is the dessert, maybe even the wine: powerful and delicious. You can write a menu describing the books and why you chose them. Personal recommendations from friends can tempt us to read books we wouldn't pick up otherwise and give you the impetus to experiment. If you are having trouble finding what to read next or just want to try something different why not ask a friend to choose for you. Or simply lend a Page Turners book to a friend who you think will enjoy it and put a letter inside it explaining why you chose it for them. If they're read it before they can always read it again.

