



Reading Aloud in Britain Today (RABiT)

Discussion, reflection and next steps for Prison Reading Groups and Prison Libraries

Reading Aloud in Britain Today (RABiT) is a two-year project researching whether, what, where, how and why adults read aloud. Findings so far tell us that most adults read *something* out loud (and listen to others reading) at least *sometimes*. Very few people never do this. What we read aloud is diverse, including newspapers, social media, books, religious texts, graffiti, recipes, poems, instructions, posters, children's books and crossword clues. Our reasons are equally diverse, including to share, entertain, inform, help, be together, worship, enjoy, memorize, learn, understand and write. Some people read to other adults, some to children, some to pets and some people read aloud when completely alone. Some of this reading we notice; some we may do regularly but rarely notice. Some people read out loud in different languages, including languages we may not use in conversation with others. Forms of reading aloud are important in many workplaces, as well as within family and community relationships, for learning and as part of religious practice.

Points for reflection and action based on a discussion with a Prison Reading Group in the spring of 2019

Throughout our daily lives in prison, we read aloud to

- *focus or slow ourselves down* when we are reading the last chapter or the last few pages of a novel and we want to make the most of it.
- *help others* – reading aloud canteen lists, menus or letters for people who may struggle with reading. We also read aloud when writing letters for others, to share and check what we are writing.
- *write something for ourselves*, whether as part of study or personal correspondence.
- *worship with others or alone*, reading Holy books or prayers.
- *learn* – reading aloud to understand, memorize or learn things as part of formal study or for our own interests.
- *enjoy* the language of poems and books, hearing different voices and rhythms.

Other thoughts

- Being part of a reading group means being challenged to read the kinds of books that we might not normally choose for ourselves and hearing other points of view.
- Listening to someone reading aloud in another language can help us hear the ways that the voice adds layers of meaning or emotion onto what is conveyed by the written words.
- Being able to read, aloud or silently, allows us to support other people with reading.
- Being less confident with reading can mean needing to find others to help you – others you can trust – and this can be difficult and frustrating.
- Reading aloud, whether practiced alone or in a group, can help build confidence not only in our reading but also in speaking out in groups and doing presentations.
- We can experiment with reading parts of novels aloud and seeing what difference this makes to our experience and how we build understanding, alone or in the group.

What do you think?

Thank you very much to everyone at Prison Reading Groups
<https://prison-reading-groups.org.uk/>
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Sam Duncan, April 2019