



NESTLÉ FAMILY MONITOR

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

*The Nestlé Family Monitor is a series
of research studies into family life
in Britain undertaken on behalf of
Nestlé UK by MORI*

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FOREWORD



Welcome to the seventeenth Nestlé Family Monitor.

This study highlights a number of interesting points: for example, the different attitudes of boys and girls towards reading – what they read, when they read ... even where they read!

There is another very important finding, for teachers in particular. 13/14 years old is the key age at which young people say they have better things to do than read books. Presumably this is due to the effects of a combination of biological, cultural, educational, social and domestic factors? If this web of factors could be disentangled, the implications for teaching could be explored but that, perhaps, is the subject for a different type of study.

There is much good news in this report as Julia Eccleshare's most interesting commentary highlights. I hope you find 'Young People's Attitudes Towards Reading' of interest.

Alastair Sykes
Chairman and Chief Executive
Nestlé UK Ltd.



COMMENTARY

JULIA ECCLESHARE, CHAIR OF THE NESTLÉ SMARTIES BOOK PRIZE

Say "teenager" and all sorts of unsavoury images spring to most people's minds. Teenagers are almost invariably portrayed in the media as lethargic, mindless and fixated only on music, clothes and sex. But, of course, there are many other kinds of teenagers. It's just that it is harder to make anything amusing out of them. Certainly, the idea that teenagers might be happy, even keen readers would hardly make a headline.

POSITIVE FINDINGS

That's a shame because, although there is and always will be a hard core of persistent non-readers, the findings of this survey are remarkably positive. Not only do the majority of teenagers find reading an enjoyable activity but their attitudes towards reading are surprisingly enthusiastic. They see reading as relaxing and even as fun! They know it is educational, can support learning and be informative but these 'useful' considerations come second. For many, reading is about the magic and escape that a great story can make possible. Beyond that the good readers know that it can even influence the kind of person that they'll become.

Lifelong readers are only made if they can enjoy reading in this kind of way. It is why it is so important that though schools are the place where reading is most actively promoted, it is through individual experience that real readers are made.

This survey shows that far from classifying teenagers as indifferent readers, the patterns of attitudes to reading, reading tastes and the relationship of reading to enjoyment of other media that adult readers show are well established among teenage readers. They should be no more castigated for not reading than their parents.

CHOICES IN READING

Within fiction, both girls and boys are quick to name favourite authors or books. With the exceptions of J.R.R. Tolkien whose success may in part be linked to the recent releases of the two parts of The Lord of the Rings films, and the perennially popular Enid Blyton, their favourite authors such as J.K. Rowling, Jacqueline Wilson, R.L Stine and Terry Pratchett are strictly contemporary. That their favourites are largely living authors is a shame but reflects not on the teenagers themselves but on the supply of books in schools, libraries and bookshops. Given a decent, wide range of books to choose from, there's no knowing what further reading teenagers might engage in.

Teenage reading tastes closely match those of adult readers. Fantasy seems endlessly popular and humour, too. It is a surprise, though, that girls like horror more than boys. The typical stereotyping of teenagers would suggest that boys who are seen as responsible for the 'laddish' culture and who are known to relish horror in films and violent computer games would also be the major readers of horror fiction.

What would be expected is that boys (as men do too) love to read about sport. And again, in line with adult readers, biography and autobiography are popular as well as classic fiction.



For the teenagers who have discovered reading, it is a pleasure. But during adolescence, especially as educational programmes become ever more highly assessed, there is little time just to relax. Reading has to be fitted in alongside the many other recreational activities. The fact that bed and bedtime are the place and time most commonly and happily associated with reading indicates a need for detachment from peers and a certain amount of calm – even if teenagers can do anything and everything while also listening to music! Adult readers, too, enjoy reading at bedtime and the sense of unwinding at the end of the day that a good story can give.

THE DOWNSIDE

Of course, the picture is not all rosy. Sadly, there is a very small core who do not read at all – even for school and certainly not for pleasure. For these young people the right book just has never been found. Instead they turn against books of all kinds either because reading is too difficult or because they have been forced to ‘study’ particular set texts which have put them off. This affliction is most worrying when it strikes at the heart of the world of literature: modern classics and, above all, Shakespeare. Shakespeare gets the thumbs down from teenagers, probably because his plays are compulsory in school and so cannot be found and enjoyed in private but must be mauled to death collectively.

THE CREATION OF AN UNDERCLASS

The social division that emerges around readers is also a worry. Girls who are currently outperforming boys in school may in part be doing so because they are more strongly committed to reading. Since we know that good readers do better both in school and outside this is a matter of critical importance. Cycles of non-reading are hard to break and teenagers from families where parents are not readers will almost always be less likely to be enthusiastic readers themselves.

READING AND OTHER MEDIA

Teenagers’ attitudes to reading have to be seen alongside the many other media to which they have ready and easy access. In terms of entertainment, reading for all ages has long been a minority leisure activity as compared with watching TV or, more recently, using the Internet. Teenagers’ reading should be seen a part of a whole pattern of entertainment rather than as something that is threatened by other media. Readers of all ages come to books through film or TV and the two should be seen as supportive rather than mutually exclusive.

CONCLUSION

Since both teenagers and reading are regarded as ‘difficult’, putting the two together might seem like a recipe for disaster! In fact, teenagers can be and frequently are keen, thoughtful and happy readers. Once reading is taken away from learning, they enjoy books and know that reading is one of the myriad ways of passing time in a pleasant way. That reading is regarded as “uncool” in many teenage situations means that readers and reading sometimes have to keep a low profile but it doesn’t mean that it doesn’t happen.

Teenagers know what they like to read and who it is by: this means that they’ve discovered the two most vital keys to becoming readers. Given a supply of the right books, there’s no reason to suppose that they won’t continue to enjoy reading for the rest of their lives.



READING HABITS

Girls are more avid readers than boys: approaching one in five (16%) boys say they never read in their spare time compared with just seven per cent of girls.

The bed is the favoured place to read among young people. Around seven in ten say they read in bed and, in line with this, the most popular time of the day for reading is at bedtime.

Findings also indicate that young people are experienced ‘multi-taskers’, with a significant number reading while on the move, watching television or listening to music.

HOW OFTEN DO YOUNG PEOPLE READ?

The majority of young people read books in school/college and for homework at least every week – a quarter (23%) say they read books everyday.

Outside school hours, over four in five (83%) young people read books in their spare time – 16% read them everyday.

However, there is a core group of young people who are not reading. Indeed, one in ten (11%) say they never read books outside school hours and four per cent do not read books in school/college or as part of their homework. Those in this group are more likely to attend state schools and live in a household where neither parent/guardian works, suggesting that socio-economic deprivation may have a part to play.

Other (non-MORI) research suggests that this may be because these young people are reading in different ways – for example, reading e-mails and magazines rather than books. In the current survey, while six in ten say they write e-mails in their spare time, those who never read are not significantly more likely to engage in this activity instead. In fact, they are found to be less likely to e-mail.

WHERE DO YOUNG PEOPLE READ?

The most common place to read is in bed – mentioned by around seven in ten young people. Girls in particular like to read in bed.

As one might expect, the classroom is another popular place for young people to read, with 64% saying they read books at school as part of lessons. However, reading at school during school break time is less common.

Young people also like to read ‘on the move’, with a quarter reading while travelling as a passenger in the car, and 14% reading while on public transport. Girls are more likely than boys to read books in the car.

The findings also suggest that young people like to multi-task, with nearly three in ten reading while they listen to music and one in eight reading in front of the television. Girls and older pupils (aged 15+) are more likely to read whilst listening to music, while (BME) Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) pupils are more likely than their white counterparts to read in front of the television.

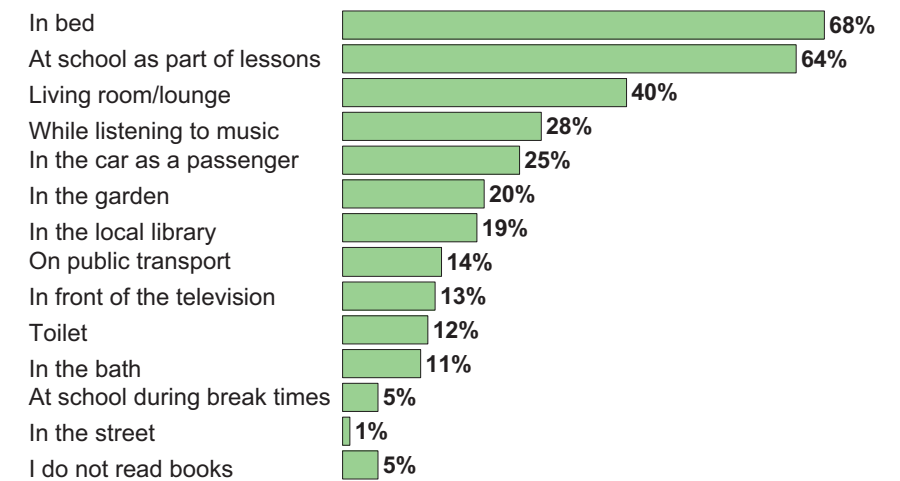


Similarly, around one in ten read while on the toilet or in the bath. Contrary to popular belief, boys are not significantly more likely than girls to read while on the toilet! Girls are, however, significantly more likely to read while in the bath and in the garden.

Findings from the Nestlé Family Monitor Number 16 ‘Young People’s Attitudes Towards Politics’¹ indicate that The Sun is the most-read daily newspaper. Two in five young people interviewed had read The Sun in the past week, rising to 45% among boys. This was followed by The Daily Mirror and The Daily Mail, while The Times ranked top among the broad sheet papers. The sports and entertainment pages emerged as the most popular sections read.

Where Do Young People Read?

Q In which, if any, of the following places do you read books?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003 Source:Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI

AT WHAT TIME OF DAY DO YOUNG PEOPLE READ?

In line with the above findings, the most favoured time for reading appears to be at bedtime. Three in five (62%) read when they go to bed – rising to three-quarters of girls.

Half (48%) say they read during school lessons. This is most likely to be older pupils (aged 15+). However, just six per cent say they read during school break times.

Outside of school, findings suggest that reading is one of the ways in which pupils fill their time during the school holidays (41%). Girls and pupils from independent schools are more likely to read during the holiday period. Again, this suggests that social class is a key factor influencing readership levels outside school.

While reading at weekends is also popular (35%), reading after and before school is less so (25% and five per cent respectively) – possibly because young people are busy doing other things at these times of the day (such as getting ready for school, participating in leisure activities and doing their home work).

ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

Encouragingly, young people, and in particular girls, are positive about reading. Reading is viewed by young people as both relaxing and fun, but at the same time educational.

Around two-thirds say they find reading an enjoyable activity, with fantasy fiction (in particular the Harry Potter series) the favoured type of book. Books about current affairs are the least popular.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S IMAGE OF READING

Young people were shown a list of ten words and asked to select those which best describe reading (see chart overleaf). Encouragingly, young people generally have a positive attitude towards reading. Girls are much more positive than boys.

Half describe reading as ‘relaxing’ and a third describe it as ‘fun’. Pupils attending independent schools are much more likely to use these descriptions.

The educational benefits of reading have not escaped young people. Indeed, two in five describe reading as ‘educational’, while around a quarter describe it as ‘informative’ and ‘for school/learning’. Older pupils (aged 15+) are more likely to mention the educational value – perhaps highlighting the importance of reading in their studies. However, it should be noted that the survey was confined to young pupils still at school and thus excludes 16-18 year old school leavers, perhaps the group who are least likely to read – particularly from an educational perspective.

Not only do young people recognise the educational benefits of reading, but a significant minority (16%) claim that it ‘improves my life’. Older pupils (aged 17+) are more likely to take this view.

However, a significant proportion (26%) describe reading as ‘boring’ – a description more likely to be chosen by younger pupils (aged 14 and under) and those attending state schools. Similarly, eight per cent describe reading as ‘hard work’ and six per cent describe it as ‘pointless’. Older pupils (aged 17+) are most likely to describe reading as ‘hard work’ – possibly reflecting the nature of the texts they may have to read as part of their studies.

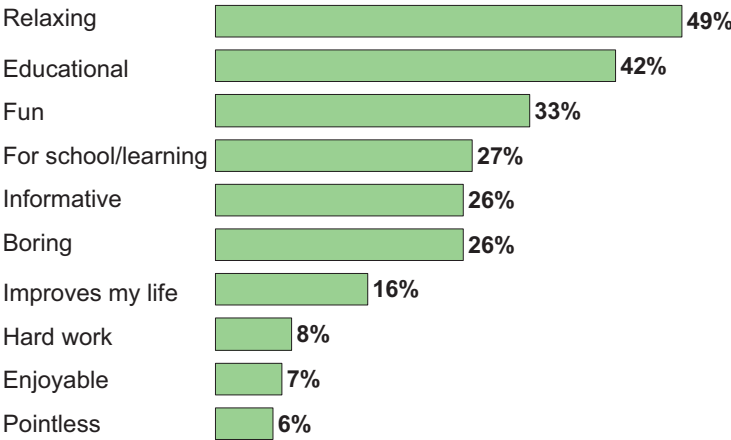
Girls are notably more positive towards reading than boys. They are significantly more likely to describe reading as ‘relaxing’, ‘educational’, ‘fun’, and associate it with ‘school/learning’. Boys, on the other hand, are significantly more likely to describe reading as ‘boring’ and ‘hard work’. Positive messages with regard to reading appear to be bypassing some boys.

¹ Nestlé Family Monitor Number 16 ‘Young People’s Attitudes Towards Politics’ was conducted at the same time as the current survey – see technical note for details.



Image of Reading

Q Which of the following words, if any, would you use to describe reading?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003 Source:Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI

ENJOYMENT OF READING

Not only do young people in general have positive attitudes towards reading, but they also perceive it to be an enjoyable activity. Indeed, two-thirds (65%) say they find reading enjoyable – 21% claiming it to be very enjoyable. Mirroring the findings outlined above, boys and those attending state schools are significantly more likely to say they do not enjoy reading. Similarly, white pupils are less likely to enjoy reading than their BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) counterparts.

Young people were asked about their favourite books and authors. Half were able to identify a favourite book, while four in ten identified a favourite author. A wide range of books and authors were spontaneously mentioned, with the Harry Potter series (J.K. Rowling), and the Lord of the Rings trilogy (Tolkien) the favourite books. A whole host of different authors were spontaneously named. The twelve most popular are listed below:

- Jacqueline Wilson
- J.K. Rowling
- Tolkien
- Roald Dahl
- Stephen King
- Philip Pullman
- R.L. Stine
- Terry Pratchett
- Anne Fine
- Enid Blyton
- Anthony Horowitz
- Lemony Snicket



MOST ENJOYED BOOKS

More generally, young people were asked about the types of book that they like and dislike the most. As demonstrated in the chart on page twelve, fantasy fiction, including Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings, emerge as the most popular, with two in five saying they enjoy this genre. Younger pupils (aged 11/12 years old) are more inclined to find this type of book enjoyable. This will come as no surprise to some given the enthusiasm (and large sales volumes) for J.K. Rowling’s latest instalment of Harry Potter: ‘Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix’.

Humour and horror/thriller books are also popular, with both types mentioned by around two in five. White pupils and those attending independent schools in particular enjoy reading humorous books. State pupils are significantly more likely than those in independent schools to enjoy horror. A finding that may be surprising is that girls are significantly more likely to enjoy horror/thriller books than boys (42% versus 33%).

However, following other gender stereotypes, boys are significantly more likely than girls to find sports books enjoyable, with 39% of boys naming this type of book compared with just six per cent of girls. Conversely, girls are significantly more likely to enjoy books about TV programmes, such as Big Brother, Pop Idol and Eastenders (29% versus 16%).

While younger pupils (aged 11/12 years old) are significantly more likely than older pupils to opt for fantasy fiction, horror books and books about TV, older pupils (aged 15+) are more likely to select biographies and autobiographies, modern fiction and classic novels.

LEAST ENJOYED BOOKS

The type of book which young people say they least enjoy reading is books about politics and current affairs. Half say this is the type of book that they find least enjoyable to read. Girls are especially ‘turned off’ by this type of book. This comes as no surprise given the findings in the last Nestlé Family Monitor (Number 16) ‘Young People’s Attitudes Towards Politics’, which found that young people know little about and are little interested in politics. For example, just six per cent said they were interested in the political pages of the newspapers.

Practical books, such as gardening books and cookery books are also found to be a turn off for young people (38% and 28% respectively). Stereotypically, boys are more likely than girls to find cookery books the least enjoyable read.

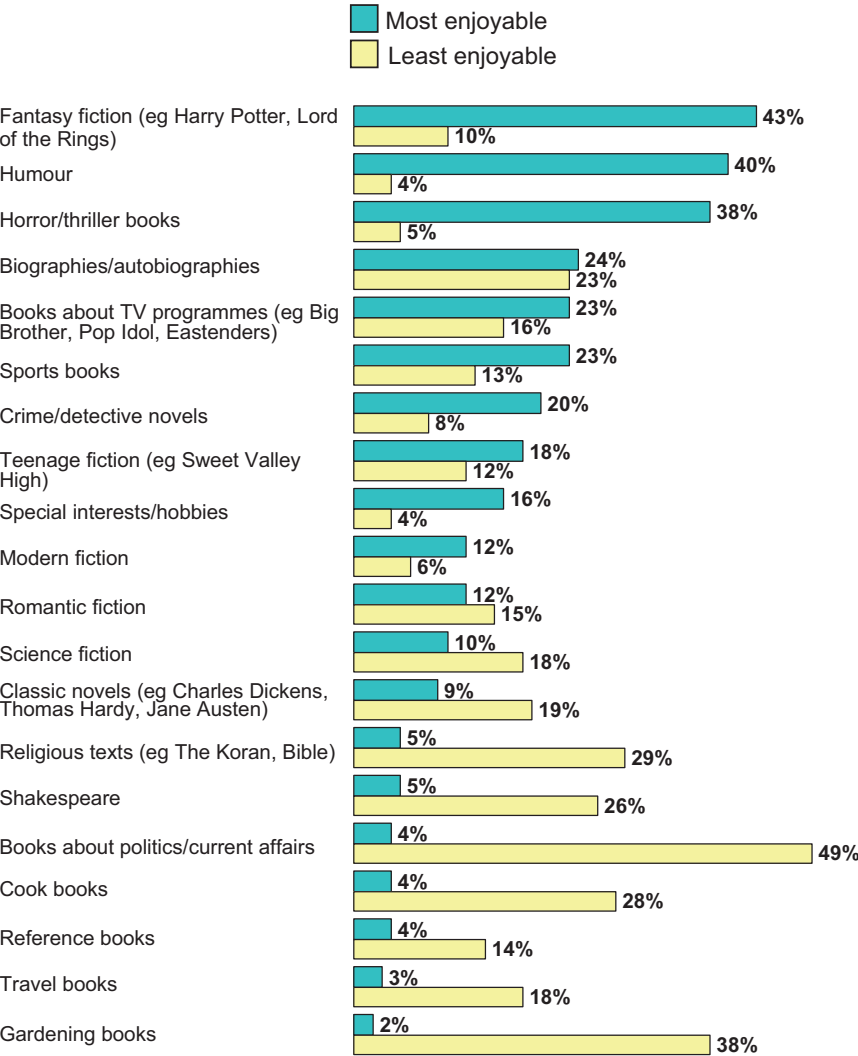
For three in ten, religious texts are not found to be enjoyable – particularly among white pupils (31% versus 13% of those in BME groups).

Texts often used in the school curriculum, such as Shakespeare and classic novels are also little favoured: 26% and 19% respectively say that these types of book are the least enjoyable to read. Younger pupils (aged under 14) are particularly averse to Shakespeare, as are state school pupils.



Most and Least Enjoyed Books

- Q Which two or three, if any, of the following types of books do you find the most enjoyable to read?
- Q And which two or three, if any, do you find the least enjoyable to read?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003 Source:Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI

ENCOURAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO READ

Young people themselves have the most success in encouraging a young person to read. Indeed, over two in five say that if a friend tells them about a good book, they are more likely to want to read that book. School and the family also have an influence, but to a lesser degree.

The biggest barrier to reading is time, with over half saying they would read more if they had more time. Older pupils are particularly pressurised by time.

WHAT MAKES YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO READ?

There are a wide variety of factors that encourage a young person to read a book – like many things, top amongst these is peer influence. Indeed, over two in five (43%) say that if a friend tells them about a good book that he or she has read, it makes them want to read that book. This rises to 55% among pupils attending independent schools.

Family and school also have an influence, but to a lesser extent. One in five say they would want to read a book if a member of their family tells them about it, and one in ten say they would want to read a book if it was recommend by a teacher. Girls are more likely to be influenced by their family than boys (26% versus 16%).

As one might expect, the author of the book plays an important part in influencing what young people read. Around a third say that one of the things that makes them want to read a book is if it is written by an author that they like. Similarly, around a quarter want to read a book if it is part of a series in which they are interested. Girls and those attending independent schools are more likely to be influenced by the book’s author and whether or not the book is part of a series.

Film and TV also have an influence. Just over a quarter of pupils are keen to read a book if it is about a film that they have seen and enjoyed, and 15% would be interested in reading a book if it is about a TV programme that they have seen and enjoyed. Similarly, 23% say that if the book is about a famous person, that they are interested in, they would want to read it.

An identical proportion (23%) say that if the book is about a subject, hobby or place in which they are interested, it makes them want to read it. This is more likely to be the case for boys than girls.

The findings also highlight that for young people, at least, you can’t always judge a book by its cover. Just 16% say the look of a book would make them want to read it, and fewer would want to read a book that they had seen at a book club or book fair.

WHAT MIGHT ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO READ MORE?

Time is the biggest barrier to young people reading more books. As shown in the chart overleaf, over half say that one of the things that would encourage them to read more books would be having more free time. Lack of time is a particular issue for older pupils (aged 15+), perhaps because of their studies and other commitments. In May 2003, Michael Hewett, the Chairman of the Independent Schools Association, suggested that the introduction in 2001 of AS-Levels had increased pressure on sixth form



pupils, resulting in many no longer reading for pleasure. He commented: "The lower sixth was once a time for reading and for enjoying the broader aspects of education. We were able to spend time in conversation and debate about the issues of the day. Not any more".

The cost of books is perceived to be another barrier with 45% saying they would read more books if they were cheaper. Contrary to what one might expect, it is independent school pupils who are more likely to be concerned about the cost.

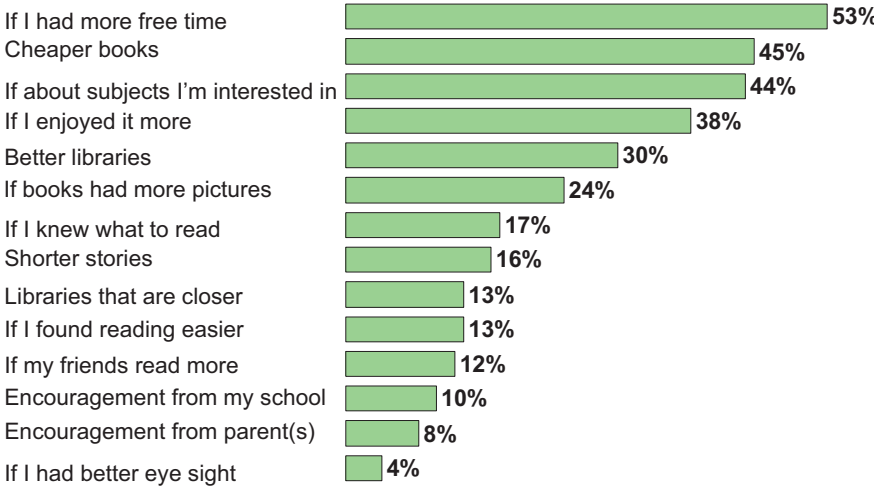
Capturing the interest of a young person is key to encouraging them to read. Indeed, more than two in five say they would be encouraged to read more books if they could find subjects in which they are interested. Similarly, 38% would read more books if they found reading more enjoyable, and one in five would read more if they simply knew what to read. Compared with white pupils, twice as many BME pupils say that they would be encouraged to read more books if they knew what to read (30% versus 15%).

Encouragement from their school (ten per cent) and parents or guardian (eight per cent) is only marginally lower than the encouragement brought on by seeing that their friends read more (12%). Pupils from the ethnic minorities are twice as likely to be encouraged by their parents or guardian (15%) than those from white backgrounds (seven per cent).

The provision of facilities is another important issue. Three in ten say they would read more if libraries were better, and one in eight if the libraries were closer to where they live.

Encouraging Young People to Read

Q Which, if any, of the following things might encourage you to read more books?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003 Source:Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI

THE PLACE OF READING IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

For years academics have expounded the wide-ranging benefits of reading for young people. Young people themselves are in agreement, with significant minorities saying that books have encouraged them to expand their understanding and to learn new things. Some would also go so far to say that reading has helped them to decide what they want to do when they leave school/college and the type of person they want to be.

However, despite this, seven in ten say they would rather watch television or a DVD/video than read a book. Similarly, over half would prefer to use the Internet and two in five believe that computers will have replaced books in the next 20 years.

READING AND EVERYDAY LIFE

For some young people, reading books has had an important impact on their wider life, above and beyond the educational benefits. Indeed, three in ten say that books have helped them decide on the type of person they want to be (however, more disagree than agree with this statement – see chart overleaf). Similarly, around a third say that books have helped them decide what sort of job they want to do when they leave school/college.

A higher percentage (55%) say that books have helped them understand different peoples and cultures, while around a third say books have encouraged them to try new hobbies and two in five to learn new subjects. Pupils aged 17 years and over and those attending independent schools have particularly been encouraged to learn more about new subjects (56% and 55% respectively). Younger pupils (aged 11/12 years old), on the other hand, are more likely to have been encouraged to try new hobbies (48% of 11-12 year olds). BME pupils are also more likely than their white counterparts to have tried a new hobby as a result of reading a book (46% versus 34%).

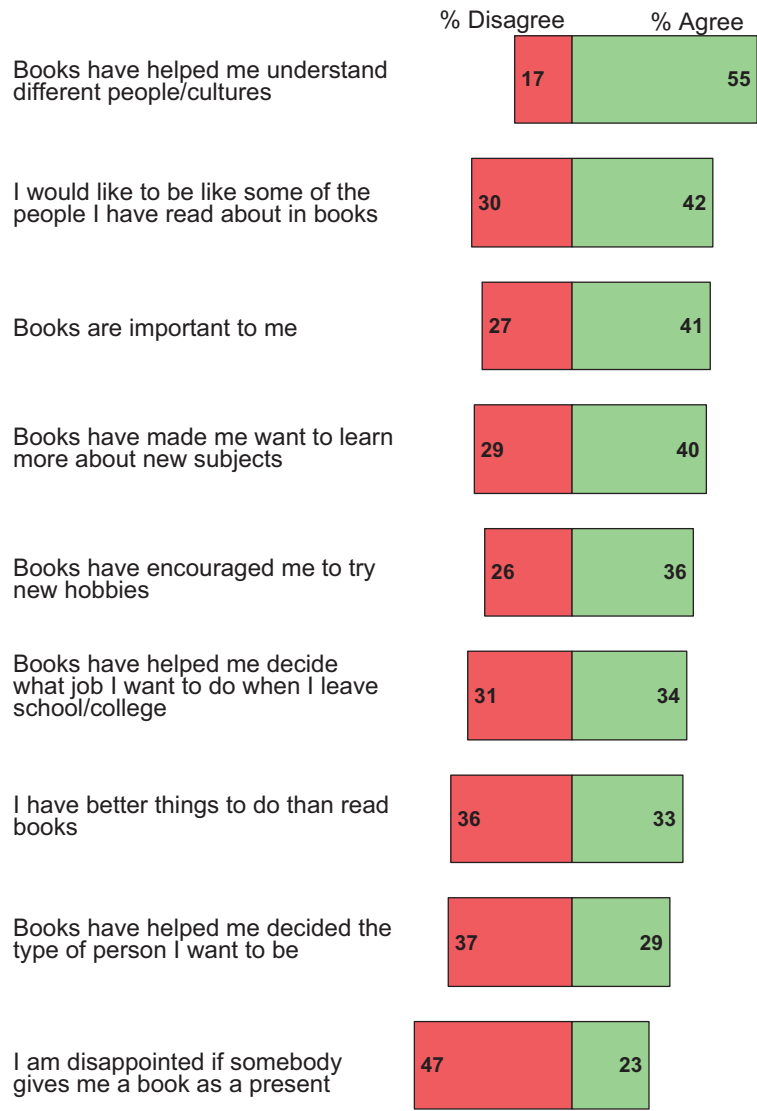
However, it is also clear that, for a significant proportion, reading does not play an important role in their lives, with a third saying they have better things to do than read books. Around 13/14 years of age seems to be the key age at which young people lose interest in reading, with the figure rising to 38% among this age group. Reading is also less likely to have a part to play in the lives of state than independent school pupils, with 36% saying they have better things to do with their time than to read. This compares with 24% of independent school pupils.

Enjoyment of reading obviously impacts on the importance with which reading is held. Indeed, around three in five (58%) of those who say they find reading not very or not at all enjoyable agree that they have better things to do with their time than read books. This compares with 21% of young people who find reading very or fairly enjoyable.



Reading and Everyday Life

Q Here are some things young people have said about books and reading. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003 Source:Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI

READING AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Young people were asked what they thought about the place of reading in the modern technological world.

Although two in five (41%) young people say that books are important to them, given the choice, seven in ten say they prefer to watch television or a DVD/video than to read a book. Similarly, over half say they would prefer to use the Internet than read a book. State pupils are more likely than those from independent schools to prefer both using the Internet and watching TV instead of reading.

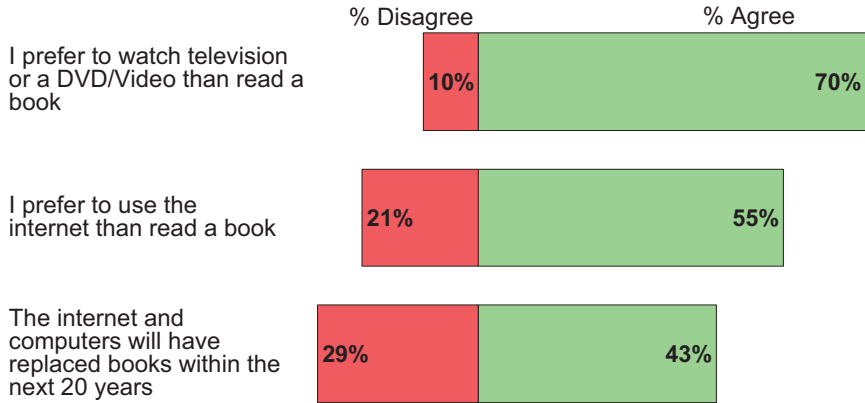
Stereotypically, boys are more likely than girls to agree that they prefer to use the Internet than read a book. As many as three in five boys agree with this – two in five strongly agree.



Two in five (43%) agree that the Internet and computers will have replaced the printed book within the next twenty years. This is a view more likely to be held by state pupils (45% versus 31% of pupils from independent schools). Not surprisingly, it is a view shared by those who have little interest in reading (59%).

Reading and New Technology

Q The following are things which some young people have said about reading. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003 Source:Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI



ATTITUDES TOWARDS WRITING

According to the findings, text messaging and e-mail are among the new forms of writing. Indeed, three-quarters say they send text messages in their free time compared with just over a half who say they use more traditional forms of writing, such as letters. However, a notable minority of young people practise the more creative forms of writing, such as poetry.

Young people acknowledge the benefits of reading when it comes to writing a piece themselves, with seven in ten saying that reading books helps them to be a better writer. Many young people also view writing as a therapeutic activity, with six in ten saying they find writing a good way to express themselves.

If writers were to visit schools/colleges, over half would like them to answer questions about their books. There is also interest in hearing at first hand what it is like to be a writer.

WRITING HABITS

While modern technology may affect the level of interest in young people's reading, it seems to have had a more positive impact on encouraging them to communicate with others. Indeed, three-quarters of young people say they send text messages and six in ten send e-mails, either in school or during their free time. Text messaging is more popular among older (aged 15+) and independent school pupils – perhaps reflecting the higher levels of ownership of mobile phones rather than a desire to text message.

Traditional forms of writing are still popular, though, with around three in five saying they write essays (58%) and half writing letters (52%) either at school or in their free time.

A sizable minority are involved in creative forms of writing. More than one third (36%) say they write short stories while an identical number say they write poems. Similarly, plays and novels are currently written by around one in ten and newspaper and magazine articles are written by around a quarter.

Creative writing is found to be far more popular among younger pupils (aged 11/12 years old), while older pupils (aged 15+) are significantly more likely to write with the aid of new technology.

As with reading, writing is a more popular activity among girls – they are significantly more likely than boys to send text messages, and write letters, short stories, poems and plays.

Just four per cent of young people admitted to not doing any of the writing activities listed – rising to seven per cent among boys.

Findings also indicate that attitudes towards reading and writing are correlated, with eight per cent of those young people who say they find reading not very or not at all enjoyable saying they do not participate – either in school or outside school – in any of the writing activities listed.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WRITING

Further evidence for the link between writing and reading emerges with seven in ten claiming that they believe reading books has helped them to become a better writer. Girls and pupils studying in independent schools believe they are better writers as a result of reading.

Not surprisingly the more regular and enthusiastic readers are found to be more likely to agree that reading helps them to improve their writing ability.

Views also differ with regard to a young person's cultural background. Indeed, 12% of white pupils disagree that reading helps them to be a better writer, compared with just four per cent of pupils from a BME background.

More than a third agree that they often write stories, poems and plays similar to those they read – this is particularly so for girls and younger pupils (aged 11/12 years old).

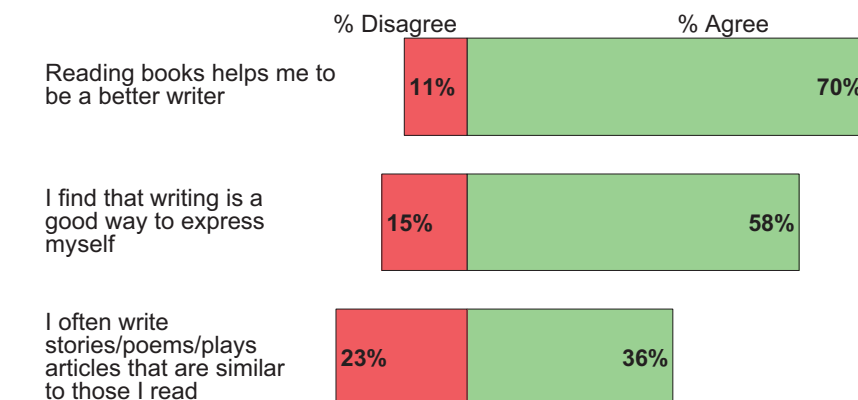
Findings also indicate that young people find writing therapeutic, with three in five agreeing they find writing a good way of expressing themselves. Girls are significantly more likely to use writing as a form of expression – seven in ten (70%) girls compared with just 47% of boys.

Young people living in a household where both parents work are also more likely to use writing as an expressional outlet.

Again, regular and enthusiastic readers are more likely to see the benefits of using writing to express themselves.

Attitudes towards Writing

Q The following are things which some young people have said about writing. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003

Source: Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI



VISITING WRITERS

Young people were asked what they would like writers to do if they were to visit their school/college (see chart below).

The majority (57%) would like the writer to answer questions about their books while on their visit to the school/college. Those living in the North in particular are keen on being able to ask such questions.

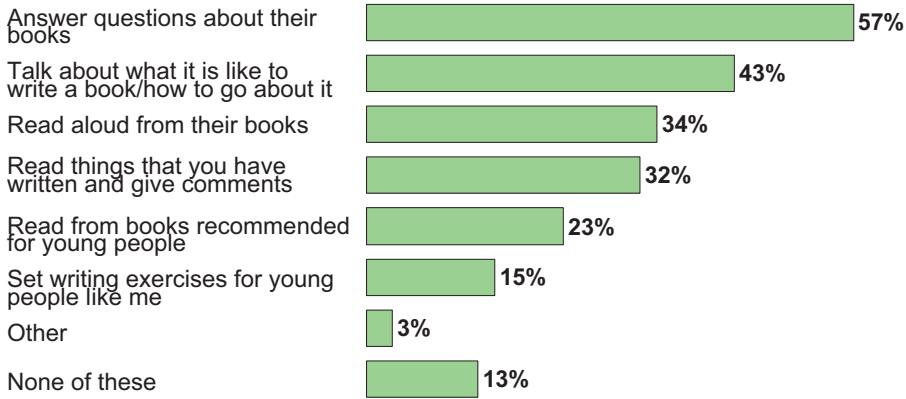
Over two in five would like the writer to talk about their own experiences of what it is like to write a book and how to go about it. This is followed by around a third who would like them to read aloud from their books. A similar proportion would like the visiting writers to read things they (the young people themselves) have written and comment.

Pupils are found to be less keen on practical exercises – just 15% would like to be set writing exercises to complete. Those who frequently read and enjoy doing so are significantly more interested in the practical side of writing. This is perhaps a reflection of young people’s own confidence with regard to both writing and reading.

Only a small proportion (13%) shows no interest in writers visiting their school or college. White pupils, boys and those who exhibit little enjoyment in reading emerge as the least interested in such visits.

Visiting Writers

Q If a writer visited your school/college, which of the following things, if any, would you like them to do?



Base: All young people aged 11-18 (914), March-May 2003 Source:Nestlé Family Monitor/MORI

AN EMERGING CULTURAL UNDERCLASS?

KEY DISCRIMINATING FACTOR IN READING AND WRITING

Gender emerges as the most discriminating factor impacting on behaviour and attitudes towards reading and writing.

GIRLS VERSUS BOYS

Girls are more enthusiastic about reading than boys and are more likely to find this activity enjoyable, relaxing and fun. They read more regularly, especially out of school hours and in a wider variety of locations. More than three quarters (77%) of girls agree that reading has helped them to be a better writer compared with under two thirds of boys (64%).

Girls are found to read in a wider variety of places and are significantly more likely than boys to read in bed, in their own living room, in the car, bath and garden and also whilst listening to music.

As well as reading in a wider variety of places, girls are also significantly more likely than boys to read at bedtime, during the school holidays and at the weekend.

Girls are also more likely than boys to claim that they have a favourite book (57% versus 44%) or author (49% versus 29%).

The benefits of reading are also more obvious to girls than boys, with a higher proportion recognising its educational value and its potential for improving their writing ability. Girls are also more likely than boys to share their books with friends.

Similarly, writing is more popular among girls; they are significantly more likely than boys to engage in the different forms of the written word – especially the creative forms such as short stories, poems and plays. Girls are also significantly more likely to use writing as a form of expression.

Girls gain enjoyment from a wide variety of books, primarily fantasy fiction, humour, and horror /thrillers. Quite surprisingly girls are found to be far more likely than boys to say they enjoy horror/thriller stories.

Boys on the other hand are not as likely as girls to enjoy reading – rather, many would prefer to use the Internet than to read a book.

Capturing their interest is key to enticing boys to read. Indeed, boys are significantly more likely than girls to say that they are encouraged to read if the book is about a place, subject or hobby in which they are interested. For example, boys are far more likely than girls to find sports books enjoyable.



TECHNICAL NOTE

METHODOLOGY

In total, 914 self-completion questionnaires were completed by 11-18 year olds attending 33 state and independent schools and 6th form colleges across England and Wales. Fieldwork was conducted between 3rd March and 22nd May 2003.

The data were weighted to reflect the known profile of the sample population by gender within age, school type and area.

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

A sample of the secondary school and college population has been interviewed, not the entire population. Consequently, all results are subject to sampling tolerances which means that we cannot assume that all differences between sub-groups are statistically significant. As a guide, figures from the main sample are subject to a margin of error of plus or minus six percentage points. Only those findings that are statistically significant have been commented upon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is clear that schools and colleges are increasingly working under great pressure. They also receive numerous requests to participate in surveys such as this. Consequently, we wish to record our gratitude to the many schools/colleges that took part and we are indebted to all pupils and staff who made this survey possible. As a thank you, all schools and colleges participating were sent a donation of £100.

MORI would also like to thank John Martin at John Martin Communications for his help and involvement in the project.





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For further information on the Nestlé Family Monitor please contact Katie Griffiths on 020 8686 3333 or write to her at the address below or visit our website at www.nestlefamilymonitor.co.uk



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