



Seasons: Spring

READING
FRIENDS

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This pack has been put together to help get everyone chatting

Use alongside the session plan Seasons: Spring. You can print out individual pages or the whole pack – whatever is easier for you.

Get in touch to let us know how your session went and if you have ideas for other sessions or resources that would be useful:

✉ readingfriends@readingagency.org.uk

These icons will help guide you to the appropriate resources for your group:

 Can be enjoyed by a group

 Best enjoyed one-to-one

 Dementia-friendly

 Large print

 Easy to read

Discussion Ideas

Here are some quotes about spring to facilitate thoughts, memories and conversation.

1. 'It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light and winter in the shade.'

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

What is your favourite kind of spring day?

2. 'She told us about the goddess called Persephone, who was forced to spend half a year in the darkness underground. Winter happened when she was trapped inside the earth, the days shrank, they became cold and short and dark. Living things hid themselves away. Spring came when she was released and made her slow way up to the world again. The world became brighter and bolder in order to welcome her back. It began to be filled with warmth and lights. The animals dared to wake, they dared to have their young. Plants dared to send out buds and shoots. Life dared to come back.'

David Almond, *Skellig*

Talk about this description of spring – what do you think of it? Have a look at the Greek legend about Persephone and her mother Demeter.

3. 'It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want – oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just makes your heart ache, you want it so!'

Mark Twain

How does spring make you feel? Why do you think it is called 'spring fever'?

4. 'Spring is a time of plans and projects.'

Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

Do you agree? Do you do a spring clean?



5. 'After the war of course it will be like the start of spring, which is always so brilliantly sudden. The leaves will burst back onto the trees and close the gap between the branches and we shall be startled – shan't we? As we are startled at the end of every winter. We shall think: oh, I had quite forgotten there were three liveable seasons.'

Chris Cleave, *Everyone Brave is Forgiven*

How do you feel when you realise that spring is here again? What do you especially like about the coming of spring?

6. 'Spring is nature's way of saying "Let's party."'

Robin Williams

Talk about which festivals are celebrated in spring. Here are some:

(2020 dates)

- Chinese New Year: 25 January
- Shrove Tuesday/Pancake Day/Mardi Gras: 25 February
- Holi: 9-10 March
- First day of Spring UK: 20 March
- Cherry Blossom Festival: 20 March-12 April
- Mothering Sunday: 22 March
- Easter Sunday: 12 April
- May Day: 1 May
- May Day Bank Holiday: 8 May – 2020 moved to coincide with VE day 75th Anniversary

Bonus: Go through the alphabet and think of a word that has something to do with spring for each letter – e.g. April, blossom, chicks, daisies, eggs. Write all your words on a large sheet of paper for everyone to see.

Spring Quiz

Ask your Reading Friends the following questions then chat about the answers.

- 1.** Name at least three spring flowers.
Daffodil, primrose, cowslip, bluebell, wood anemone, lilac, tulip, iris, peony, crocus, hyacinth, rhododendron, pansy, snowdrop, freesia, camelia, azalea etc.
- 2.** What happens when we put the clocks forward at the end of March?
The evenings are lighter.
- 3.** How many colours are there in a rainbow? Can you say what they all are and did anyone learn any ways to remember them i.e. Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain?
Seven – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.
- 4.** What May Day custom should you follow to make yourself more beautiful?
Go out early and wash your face in the morning dew.
- 5.** What custom do we enjoy on 1 April?
Playing April Fool jokes – talk about when you've been caught out by this!
- 6.** What is India's Holi festival?
A festival of colours – see <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Holi>



7. March is named after Mars, the Roman god of war. Why do you think his name was chosen for this month? What might the Romans have been preparing for at this time of year?
The beginning of the warfare season.
8. What animal leaps around and is said to go mad in March?
The hare.
9. What is Simnel cake?
A cake traditionally given by servant girls to their mothers on Mothering Sunday but it is now a classic Easter cake. It has two layers of marzipan – one in the middle and one on top.



I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:



For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.



Read the poem alongside images of daffodils or have fresh flowers in your meeting space. Ask if anyone knows which country's national flower is the daffodil and the national flowers for the other UK countries: England (rose), Scotland (thistle) and Northern Ireland (shamrock).

Today

Billy Collins

If ever there were a spring day so perfect,
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze
that it made you want to throw
open all the windows in the house
and unlatch the door to the canary's cage,
indeed, rip the little door from its jamb,
a day when the cool brick paths
and the garden bursting with peonies
seemed so etched in sunlight
that you felt like taking
a hammer to the glass paperweight
on the living room end table,
releasing the inhabitants
from their snow-covered cottage
so they could walk out,
holding hands and squinting
into this larger dome of blue and white,
well, today is just that kind of day.



The Trees

Philip Larkin

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too,
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

Also look at:

- *Home Thoughts from Abroad* by Robert Browning
- *Young Lambs* by John Clare
- *I Watched a Blackbird* by Thomas Hardy
- *Spring is like a perhaps hand* by E. E. Cummings
- *Spring, Spring Quiet or Another Spring* by Christina Rossetti

Tulips from Amsterdam

Max Bygraves

When it's Spring again I'll bring again
Tulips from Amsterdam
With a heart that's true I'll give to you
Tulips from Amsterdam
I can't wait until the day you fill
These eager arms of mine
Like the windmill keeps on turning
That's how my heart keeps on yearning
For the day I know we can share these
Tulips from Amsterdam.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPsq6flck2A>



Hot Cross Buns

Hot cross buns!

Hot cross buns!

One ha' penny, two ha' penny,

Hot cross buns!

If you have no daughters,

Give them to your sons

One ha' penny,

Two ha' penny,

Hot Cross Buns!

Also look at:

- *April Love* by Pat Boone
- *April in Paris* by Frank Sinatra
- *Here Comes the Sun* by The Beatles
- *Spring (The Four Seasons)* by Vivaldi



Pictures to look at

***Springtime or The Reader* by Claude Monet (1872)**



***Almond Blossoms* by Vincent Van Gogh (1888-1890)**





For more spring pictures go to www.pexels.com/search/spring%20scene/



Book suggestions

The Secret Garden

Frances Hodgson Burnett
Vintage 978-0099572954

The Wind in the Willows

Kenneth Grahame
Wordsworth Editions 978-1840227826

Spring: an anthology for the changing seasons

Melissa Harrison/ The Wildlife Trusts
Elliot & Thompson Limited 978-1783962235

the lost words

Jackie Morris/ Robert Macfarlane
Hamish Hamilton 978-0241253588

Heidi

Johanna Spyri
Puffin Classics 978-0141322568

Daffodil

Helen O'Neill
HarperCollins 978-0732299200

Springtime Stories

Enid Blyton
Hachette Children's Group 978-1444939330

The Selfish Giant

Oscar Wilde
Random House Children's Publishers 978-0099475866

Picture book suggestions



Miss Rumphius

Barbara Cooney

Puffin 978-0140505399

The Happy Day

Ruth Krauss/ Marc Simont

Perfection Learning 978-0812473575

Frog and Toad are Friends

Robert Lobel

HarperCollins Children's Books 978-0007464388

Make Way for Ducklings

Robert McCloskey

Puffin 978-0140564341

Peter Rabbit Tales - A Spring Surprise

Beatrix Potter

Penguin Books Ltd 978-0241355077

A Seed is Sleepy

Dianna Aston/ Sylvia Long

Chronicle Books 978-1452131474

Little Bear's Spring

Elli Woollard/ Briony May Smith

Pan Macmillan 978-1509807901

Tadpole's Promise

Jeanne Willis/ Tony Ross

Andersen Press Ltd 978-1783445868

I Am the Seed That Grew the Tree

Frann Preston-Gannon

Nosy Crow Ltd 978-0857637703

Ideas for interaction

- Make Easter cards
- Fashion your own Easter bonnets
- Grow broad beans or bean sprouts in jam jars
- Eat some Easter eggs or Hot Cross Buns!
- Have a picnic including fresh fruits
- Place some daffodils or tulips in your meeting space



READING FRIENDS

Reading Friends is a nationwide programme developed by The Reading Agency with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. The programme connects people experiencing loneliness by starting conversations through reading. Reading Friends is delivered in partnership with organisations across the UK.

 readingfriends.org.uk

 [@readingfriends_](https://twitter.com/readingfriends_)

The Reading Agency is a national charity that tackles life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. We work closely with partners to develop programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Reading Agency is funded by Arts Council England.

 readingagency.org.uk