I realized that reading made me happy.”
– World Book Night book recipient
Introduction

Executive Summary

World Book Night is The Reading Agency’s annual celebration of reading and books that takes place on 23 April.

In the lead up to World Book Night 2023, people came together to celebrate and inspire others to get involved in events and activities held in public libraries, prisons, hospitals, community centres and other organisations across the UK throughout the month of April. On the 23 April itself, The Reading Agency celebrated with people across the UK by inviting them to dedicate time to reading and connect with others in its well-established #ReadingHour.

As part of The Reading Agency’s commitment to ensuring as many people as possible are able to access books and take part in World Book Night, 74,120 print books and audiobooks were distributed as part of a giveaway across the UK via 400 organisations that can reach those who do not regularly read for pleasure, experience barriers to their reading or do not have access to books.

27 titles were donated by 16 publishers and for the second year running, The Reading Agency’s complete series of 2023 Quick Reads titles was included on the World Book Night booklist and giveaway for a wide range of readers.

This report summarises World Book Night 2023 and evaluates the difference it made to audiences.

“It offered the opportunity to enthuse about the benefits of reading & re-ignite the desire to read in those who had fallen out of the habit of reading. Many students were intrigued by the storyline & even though they said they didn’t read regularly, wanted to read this title. The giveaway enabled me to reach out to groups who perhaps feel unrepresented.”

– World Book Night gifting organisation
Highlights

74,120 books and audiobooks donated by 16 publishers across 27 titles

34,600 donated copies of the Quick Reads 2023 series

2,011 people who received download codes for publisher-donated audiobooks

7.3 million people reached through #WorldBookNight and #ReadingHour

Our 400 gifting organisations:
88 other e.g. arts organisations and charities
90 public or community libraries
62 colleges
48 hospitals or health centres
39 prisons and/or youth offender institutions
27 secondary schools
24 literacy and learning support organisations
7 homeless centres or hostels
5 youth centres or projects
5 social and supported housing projects
3 primary schools
1 care home
1 family learning project

As a result of receiving their World Book Night book or audiobook...

99% increased or continued reading for pleasure
86% increased or continued borrowing books from the library
95% increased or continued recommending books to others
94% increased or continued talking to other people about books and reading
89% increased or continued buying books

‘Being given a book gave me a boost of emotion and self-belief, and has got me back into the joy of reading’
– World Book Night book recipient

‘I realized that reading made me happy’
– World Book Night book recipient

‘It gave me comfort, being read to, especially at bedtime. It helped me fall asleep in a calm, restful way. I find reading a book difficult, due to a lack of concentration, caused by my depression.’
– World Book Night audiobook recipient

‘We work with a wide variety of people, particularly vulnerable adults with mental health issues and anxiety. We also work with people who need lots of support to cope with everyday life, so every book helps us to reach someone.’
– South Lanarkshire Council, Youth, Family and Community Learning Service

#WorldBookNight
worldbooknight.org
The 2023 booklist

In 2023, we distributed 74,120 books and audiobooks on the World Book Night booklist to people across the UK. We also worked with public libraries to promote the list in the run-up to and following World Book Night.

The World Book Night 2023 booklist was curated by The Reading Agency sector experts, featuring 27 titles across a range of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, cookery, short stories, Young Adult (YA) and more.

To better support public libraries with the promotion of World Book Night activity and the booklist, 415 Point of Sale (POS) packs (English and bilingual posters and bookmarks) were sent out to libraries across the UK to create displays, in response to library feedback detailing the ways in which physical resources can support them to run their World Book Night activity and promote the booklist.

Images L-R: Littleborough Library POS display, Middleton Library POS display, Quick Reads 2024

Bookmarks were also sent to each of the 400 organisations participating in the giveaway to provide alongside their book, signposting to World Book Night resources and evaluation surveys. A further 200 bookmarks were sent to London Book Fair and displayed in the press room to promote World Book Night and the Road to Reading – The Reading Agency’s new project aimed at supporting people to read for up to 30 minutes a week over 10 weeks.

The Reading Agency also provided libraries and community organisations with activity toolkits, decorations and social media assets so as to support wider World Book Night activity.
World Book Night was celebrated by events and gifting taking place across the country (map comprised of respondents to our events and gifting survey).
Night: gifting and donations

In 2023, The Reading Agency and 16 publisher partners gifted:

- **74,120** World Book Night books, including:
  - **34,600** copies of the Quick Reads series
  - **8,000** audiobooks

Research shows that not everyone is able to access books and reading for a variety of reasons, including individual, financial, health and mental health related reasons. The Reading Agency is determined to change this, and to get everyone reading. As one part of the solution, World Book Night ensures that as many people as possible can celebrate and engage with reading every year, through its annual gifting initiative. Working with publishers and key community partners across the UK, World Book Night ensures The Reading Agency and their partners are able to reach people who would benefit from the gifting initiative the most, including people in underserved areas and individuals who experience barriers to their reading.

In 2023, The Reading Agency and their partners gifted 74,120 books across 27 titles to people across the UK as part of World Book Night. Donated by 16 publishers, the books included something for everyone, with a diverse array of genre, formats and suitable for different age groups and reading levels. As part of this, 34,600 copies of the Quick Reads series were donated to those who may benefit from accessible, shorter-format texts, including emerging readers, people with low literacy levels and those with English as a second language. The 74,120 gifted books also included 8,000 audiobooks donated by publishers, as well as print titles that were targeted towards young adults, providing further opportunities to engage in reading in different ways, through various formats and genres.

The Reading Agency’s 400 gifting organisations included:
World Book Night: gifting and donations

Spotlight on: Quick Reads

As part of the World Book Night 2023 gifting, 142 organisations across the UK were gifted 34,600 books from The Reading Agency’s Quick Reads programme. Quick Reads aims to reach those who may experience barriers to their reading and those who may read less regularly by producing short, accessible and affordable books written by popular authors. The titles are also a suitable option for more avid readers, who would like to try a new author and or genre.

Quick Reads titles were gifted to audiences most in need of the benefits of reading:

- 64% People who don’t read for pleasure
- 49% People with low literacy levels
- 44% Low-income households
- 36% People with mental health needs
- 28% Isolated and vulnerable older people
- 22% ESOL students
- 19% Students or secondary school pupils
- 19% People experiencing homelessness or accessing housing support
- 16% Other specific people or group
- 14% Parents of school age children
- 7% New or expectant parents
- 6% People isolated or at risk of loneliness due to Covid-19
- 4% People in prison
- 2% Care leavers

Percentages might not add up to 100% due to survey respondents being able to give multiple answers.
Impact for Quick Reads gifting organisations:

In total, 95% of organisations\(^3\) that were gifted with a Quick Reads title reported they would continue using Quick Reads in the future.

Respondents indicated that the particular strengths of the titles were their accessibility, ensuring they were able to engage participants with low literacy levels and those that are less confident when reading.

“Everyone was delighted with their new book! They are now encouraged to try other Quick Read books and it has enhanced their confidence in reading as the story is so gripping and that has spurred many of them on(...) The book gave them something new to talk about.” – New Malden Library, gifted Wish You Were Dead (Quick Reads 2023) by Peter James

“Excellent opportunity to celebrate reading - the Quick Reads title appealed to Young students and individuals with low literacy levels.” – Hillingdon Libraries, gifted Hello Mum (Quick Reads 2023) by Bernardine Evaristo

“The title we received was excellent, ticking all the boxes of accessibility, appeal and popularity.” – Solihull Libraries, gifted The Double Clue (Quick Reads 2023) by Agatha Christie

Impact for Quick Reads book recipients:

Recipients of the Quick Reads titles\(^4\) reported several positive effects after taking part in World Book Night:

- 55% would like to read more books by this author or genre
- 53% said their Quick Read title helped them to relax
- 45% said their Quick Read title helped to boost their mood
- 38% said their Quick Read title helped them to feel more connected to others

Findings from our book recipient survey reinforced the impact that gifting Quick Reads titles had on this year’s World Book Night participants.

“ It was good to receive a book by an author I hadn’t read before, and I’ll certainly read more in the series. I love receiving the gift of a book” – Book recipient, received Wish You Were Dead (Quick Reads 2023) by Peter James

“Great book! Easy to read.” – Book recipient, received Hello Mum (Quick Reads 2023) by Bernardine Evaristo

\(^3\) Events and gifting survey, see Annex for the evaluation methodology

\(^4\) Book recipient survey, see Annex for the evaluation methodology
World Book Night: gifting and donations

Impact for book and audiobook recipients

The Reading Agency created and circulated online surveys (also available in print) to people who received a World Book Night print book or who had downloaded a free copy of a World Book Night audiobook to understand more about the difference receiving their book made to them. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive and are outlined in the following section of the report.

World Book Night gifting supported people to read more and read more widely

- **94% of respondents who had received a free print book and 100% of respondents who had received a free audiobook increased or continued reading for pleasure**
- **63% of print book recipients and 75% of audiobook recipients said that they would like to read more books of this author and/or genre**
- **84% of print book recipients and 96% of audiobook recipients increased or continued buying books**
- **82% of print book recipients and 92% of audiobook recipients increased or continued borrowing books from the library**

Comments from a large proportion of respondents reflect that being selected to receive a book for free was of critical worth to many, providing motivation to some and ensuring many felt valued themselves. Respondents noted that they enjoyed reading something new and expanding their reading choices.

- “*Being given a book gave me a boost of emotion and self-belief, and has got me back into the joy of reading*”
  – Book recipient, received *You Think You Know Me* by Ayaan Mohamud

- “*The gift of a book is always a pleasure and makes me feel cared for.*”
  – Book recipient, received *Pulling Through* by Catherine Jessop

- “*It was good to receive a book by an author I hadn’t read before, and I’ll certainly read more in the series. I love receiving the gift of a book*”
  – Book recipient, received *Wish You Were Dead*, (Quick Reads 2023) by Peter James

- “*Being given a book is really a fun way to learn different genres*”
  – Book recipient, received *This Monk Wears Heels: Be Who You Are* by Kodo Nishimura

Book and audiobook recipients noted that the gifting initiative provided them with the motivation to find the time to read, commenting on how this format allowed them to carry on with their daily responsibilities, including work, household chores, travel or caring for children, whilst also spending time reading.

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5 This section includes organisation and recipient feedback on both Quick Reads and the other World Book Night titles.
“Helped me to slow down. Protect some time for me.”
– Book recipient, received *This Monk Wears Heels: Be Who You Are* by Kodo Nishimura

“The audiobook opened up a whole new level of reading. Am usually so busy or tired that reading a physical book took a back seat, but now I can listen, complete activities while I listen or just relax. It also allowed me to share the experience with my husband, rather than listening solo.”
– Audiobook recipient, received *The Woman in the White Kimono* by Ana Johns

“It was great to receive a book and have the aim of the discussion group to read it by. I received feedback that it made people make the time to sit and enjoy the book. My team have busy lives working for the NHS and often struggle to fit in reading for pleasure.”
– Book recipient, received *Hello Mum* (Quick Reads 2023) by Bernardine Evaristo
World Book Night gifting nurtured meaningful discussion through reading.

91% of print book recipients and 99% of audiobook recipients reported that they increased or continued recommending books to others

90% of print book recipients and 99% of audiobook recipients increased or continued talking to other people about books

World Book Night aims to bring different people together to connect through reading, whether avid readers or new to reading altogether. Our evaluation findings show that the 2023 gifting initiative was successful, not only in engaging people in reading in the first place, but in harnessing that engagement and sparking meaningful conversation. Comments reflected this movement to connect more with others through reading, following being gifted a book:

“I organised a reading group and we met up to discuss the book over coffee and cakes. We all enjoyed the story and it provoked some interesting conversations about family life and society. I would love to take part in World Book Night again.” – Book recipient, received Hello Mum, (Quick Reads 2023) by Bernardine Evaristo

“I love the idea of World Book Night - receiving a gift is always a joy, and especially when it is a book. Knowing that many others in my organisation received the book means we can discuss the book together.” – Book recipient, received Pulling Through by Catherine Jessop

Comments also reflected the value in feeling part of something and connecting through the gifting initiative with people in their community, including staff gifting the books as well as other people in book clubs and other community events they may have attended as part of the wider World Book Night promotion.

Great to feel part of a wider book community, as it’s a solitary activity at face value.” – Book recipient, received This Monk Wears Heels: Be Who You Are by Kodo Nishimura

It’s given me the opportunity to meet and interact with new people” – Book recipient, received Passing by Nella Larsen

World Book Night gifting expanded people’s awareness of other experiences

When asked to specify any further impact their gifted book had made to them, one of the strongest themes to emerge from people’s feedback was that their book allowed them to better understand other people’s life experiences. For many people, their book was cathartic as it resonated with something they or a close family member or friend had experienced. Our evaluation findings support wider research that indicates that reading can play an instrumental role in nurturing empathy by providing people with the tools and knowledge through which to understand individual experiences.

Excellent read, good for me and my understanding, but also so relevant to the patients that I work with as well as some of my friends who may find it helpful. Anyone who has been affected by a health condition, either directly or as a family member/loved one.” – Book recipient, received Pulling Through by Catherine Jessop
“I have a Husband who has been diagnosed with stage 4 bowel cancer and what the author was going through is what I am experiencing myself. It was good to see that I am not alone in my emotions and thoughts” – Book recipient, received Pulling Through by Catherine Jessop

“Completely eye opening and revelatory about the experience of growing up as a black man in Britain. Some of his insights and observations will stay with me forever. His direct and humane style has been brilliant” – Audiobook recipient, received Maybe I Don’t Belong Here by David Harewood

World Book Night gifting supported people’s wellbeing

- **80% of print book recipients and 75% of audiobook recipients said their book helped them to relax**
- **67% of book recipients said their book helped boost their mood**

Both the quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered in surveys issued to print and audiobook recipients indicates that the World Book Night gifting had a positive impact on people’s wellbeing in 2023. This was borne out by the number of people who commented that they felt valued by being selected to receive a free book and that reading, in different formats including audiobooks, supported recipients to relax, either by providing an escape or a point of focus. Audiobooks ensured some recipients who find it difficult to concentrate owing to mental health conditions, could engage with reading provided with new, more accessible opportunities to do so.

“I enjoy reading and like to read to relax. This book is very descriptive and is amazing at making you feel the emotions felt by the young boy who’s lost his family. As someone who has experienced loss myself through a very sudden and traumatic loss I found this book quite relatable” – Book recipient, received Dear Edward by Ann Napolitano

“As someone who loves reading for pleasure, the audiobook option is great for when doing housework, driving or going for walks as it distracts your mind and gives you something to focus on when your mind starts whirling with day to day stress. I have always recommend reading to people and will continue to do so in any accessible format available” – Audiobook recipient, received The Natural Health Service by Isabel Hardman

“It gave me comfort, being read to, especially at bedtime. It helped me fall asleep in a calm, restful way. I find reading a book difficult, due to a lack of concentration, caused by my depression.” – Audiobook recipient, received One Body by Catherine Simpson

Our evaluation findings support the wider evidence that reading supports wellbeing. In fact, in 2023, 67% of book recipients said their book helped boost their mood. Comments reflect this, with respondents noting the ways in which their books helped them to escape from the world around them and lifted spirits, as well as the gifting itself supporting them to feel better.

“I could relate so much to the author’s experiences in this audiobook. Listening to her read her book gave me hope that my mental health can improve. An inspirational and encouraging listen.” – Audiobook recipient, received The Natural Health Service by Isabel Hardman

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“Helped me forget some of the things going on around me.”
– Book recipient, received *Hello Mum* (Quick Reads 2023) by Bernardine Evaristo

“Listening to the book while doing chores helped keeping my mood up and feeling more positive” – Audiobook recipient, received *One Body* by Catherine Simpson

“It was lovely to be offered a new book for free when I was visiting the hospital. It cheered me up and the people giving out the books were dressed up which was fun. They also said I can get free audio books from the local library on an app.” – Book recipient, received *The Double Clue* (Quick Reads 2023) by Agatha Christie

“It was good timing getting the book it made me feel better about things in my life.”
– Book recipient, received *Pulling Through* by Catherine Jessop
Impact for organisations

Gifting organisations told The Reading Agency about the impact of the World Book Night gifting initiative in 2023:

91% of organisations agreed that if a book is given away on World Book Night it makes them more interested in reading that book

98% agreed that the books donated by publishers in 2023 would help encourage people to read more often

66% of organisations agreed that taking part in World Book Night had allowed them to do more with the audiences they targeted than they had been able to do in the past.

World Book Night gifting supported organisations to expand their reach and engagement with underserved communities

As well as positive effects that World Book Night had for book recipients and event attendees, respondents to the events and gifting survey told us of the value that this year’s celebration brought to their organisation. Respondents indicated that taking part in World Book Night had helped their organisation, to expand their own reach, interact with new audiences and support people who are vulnerable or those living with disadvantage in their community.

“I am an administrator by background so I don’t work closely with the people I have distributed the books to. However, the wards who have requested the books were very happy to receive these. I was able to give books to social care workers who work in the community and who have people in their client group who will benefit from the books. I was also able to share some books with colleagues who are involved with a combatting loneliness initiative.”
– Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, gifted The Trust by M.H. Eccleston

“It allowed us to begin building relationships with the local Guiding groups and continue to foster relationships with our local college and our visiting We Great Ladies groups.”
– Barnsley Libraries, gifted The Songs You’ve Never Heard by Becky Jerams & Ellie Wyatt

“We have been able to reach staff who don’t have easy access to our physical library and give them a book to keep or share with colleagues. We were able to link this with our wellbeing plan, quick reads, wellbeing and health collections for children and adults.”
– South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, gifted Paris for One (Quick Reads) by Jojo Moyes

“We work with a wide variety of people, particularly vulnerable adults with mental health issues and anxiety. We also work with people who need lots of support to cope with everyday life, so every book helps us to reach someone.”
– South Lanarkshire Council, Youth, Family and Community Learning Service, gifted The Patient: A DS Cross Thriller by Tim Sullivan

6 See Annex for evaluation methodology
Case study

In 2023, The Reading Agency gifted 80 copies of the World Book Night title *The Songs You’ve Never Heard* by Becky Jerams & Ellie Wyatt, to Grimm & Co, a children’s literacy charity based in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. They provide writing workshops to children and young people, from birth to age 18, unleashing imaginations through the joyful discovery of stories. These workshops are all free, and support children with their self-esteem, resilience and self-belief, raising literacy levels and building confidence. They have a ‘Forgotten Library’, full of lonely books that have been forgotten about and need a new home. They ask for donations of good-quality books that people are ready to part with, and encourage all visitors to take a book or two for free.

The Reading Agency spoke to Louise, Communications Coordinator for Grimm & Co, about the impact of the World Book Night gifting initiative for their charity.

“As a literacy charity, we recognise the huge importance of books and reading. When a child is introduced to reading for pleasure at a young age, their skills and confidence improve, and they can carry this through into adulthood. The power that comes from this skill cannot be overemphasised and we know that reading has a big impact on writing, and when someone has the skills to write, whether for an exam, for pleasure, as a job, or simply to apply for jobs, it can be life-changing. This is why libraries, and schemes like World Book Night are so incredibly important in the process of helping people to read for pleasure.”

As part of their celebration of World Book Night, they ran a pop-up in their local indoor market and spent a day chatting to people, giving away the World Book Night books as well as some thesauruses and donated books from their ‘Forgotten Library’, an area full of lonely books that have been forgotten about and need a new home.

“We made up little ‘treat bags’ for people to take away, with the World Book Night book itself, some tea and a lollipop, bookmarks and a poem written by some of our young people. All you need to curl up and relax with a good book!”

“As we are a children’s literacy charity, we held the event during the Easter holidays, and provided free writing activities for the children (and adults!) to enjoy. One was a song-writing activity inspired by our book, *The Songs You’ve Never Heard* (which we have also featured on our website), and one was blackout poetry. Both were really well received among the young people, and we even had some adults joining in as well.”

“It was a lovely event that meant that we could really focus on reading (and writing!) for pleasure, encouraging people to give it a go and take a book without the pressure of cost or having to return it to a library. Some of the adults we spoke to were time-poor mums, so having a YA book to give away meant that it’s an ‘easier read’ at the end of a long day. It was also great that we could talk about the free audiobooks - an excellent way to listen to stories if you haven’t the time to sit and read.”
World Book Night: Events Celebrating Reading

The #ReadingHour

On 23 April, The Reading Agency runs the #ReadingHour; a dedicated hour of the day where people are encouraged to engage with reading in whatever way they choose, whether reading with a family member, talking about what they’ve read with friends, reading by oneself or other activity. To understand more about how people across the UK take part in the #ReadingHour and the difference this made, The Reading Agency created and circulated an online survey via CultureCounts to people taking part in the #ReadingHour in 2023. Responses were very positive and outline the multiple ways in which people celebrated and engaged with reading during the set hour on 23 April 2023.

What did people do during the #ReadingHour?

The Reading Agency asked people taking part in the #ReadingHour what they did, and their responses outline a variety of activity ranging from reading novels, listening to audiobooks and reading aloud to family members as well as hosting their own events. People listed the types of books they read, including different genres and formats, with one person enjoying it so much they continued past the hour, and another reading to their children.

“Spent half an hour listening to an audiobook and half an hour reading a printed book.” – #ReadingHour participant

“It ended up being more like reading 2 hours!” – #ReadingHour participant

“I read a book to my daughters and they loved it.” – #ReadingHour participant

Organisations taking part also told The Reading Agency about the events they hosted as part of the #ReadingHour to engage more people in reading, including online promotion, author events and staff presentations.

“We encouraged students who had taken books to spend an hour reading and/or discussing the book. We, as staff, did the same so that we were prepared to talk about how we had spent the hour the following day.” – #ReadingHour participant

“Staff were encouraged to join online and tweet about what they were reading during the #ReadingHour. Some libraries had book displays with some of the WBN titles. All our reading groups were told about the #ReadingHour.” – #ReadingHour participant

“We held a virtual author event with Caro Giles.” – #ReadingHour participant
What difference did the #ReadingHour make?

When asked about the difference the #ReadingHour made to them, people reported that finding the time to spend reading was critical, where the promotion of World Book Night and being involved in the #ReadingHour provided people with the motivation and space to dedicate time to themselves and reading for enjoyment.

“ I joined up as a way to read for myself as a mindful activity and since joining I have realised that reading for pleasure is really important. It allows me time away from everything else – to relax and join a book” – #ReadingHour participant

“ Just reminds me how much I love reading for pleasure, takes me away from what’s happening around me” – #ReadingHour participant

People also noted the benefits to their wellbeing, providing a sense of social support and community through the notion alone that other people across the UK were also involved in the hour dedicated to reading.

“ It has been beneficial for my mental health. I live alone but the reading made me feel part of a community of like-minded people.” – #ReadingHour participant

“ Nice to know that there were people enjoying a bit of quiet reading time.”
– #ReadingHour participant

“ I live alone and the World Book Night #ReadingHour makes me feel more connected to people. Even though I’m reading on my own during this time, I feel part of a community.”
– #ReadingHour participant

Avid readers who took part in World Book Night noted the ways in which the #ReadingHour allowed them to share their love of reading with others, reading with family members and spending quality time together as well as enjoying being able to encourage more emerging readers to read more and to enjoy it.

“ As an avid reader anyway, I would have likely been reading anyway. But I encouraged my 13 year old daughter to join me for an hour reading, which we both enjoyed.”
– #ReadingHour participant

“ Reading is already really important to me but I appreciate the opportunity to connect with other people and to encourage people who don’t read much to read more. Sharing a love of books and reading is so valuable.”
– #ReadingHour participant
World Book Night: Events Celebrating Reading

Community events

As part of World Book Night, and in the run-up to 23 April, community events took place across the UK celebrating the power of reading for pleasure, encouraging shared reading and conversation about books. We asked organisations to share information about the audiences they reached through these events and the difference taking part in World Book Night made to them. The following information was sourced from the 261 responses from the organisations that responded to our gifting and events survey.

How did organisations celebrate World Book Night?:

- **28%** Held a group reading activity
- **24%** Held a book-themed event using titles from the World Book Night booklist
- **16%** Hosted a book-themed event (using World Book Night branding) For example, hosting a quiz night or ‘sharing stories’ session
- **22%** In another way
- **12%** Ran an activity/event as part of the #ReadingHour
- **6%** Created a recommendation wall (using World Book Night branding and suggestions of new reads)

Organisations engaged with audiences both online and in person, promoting different aspects of the campaign:

- **75%** Promoted World Book Night within the organisation and/or on social media
- **40%** Promoted the #ReadingHour within the organisation and/or on social media
- **39%** Promoted the World Book Night booklist within the organisation and/or on social media
- **34%** Promoted the World Book Night booklist within the organisation and/or on social media

“A local Author launched his book in one of our libraries as part of World Book Night and also did a Q&A (...) we gave out the World Book Night Book which were gifted to those who attended and also the author read a section from the book Life Your Vibe. Mindfulness walks was another event we hosted.” – Oldham Library, gifted *Lift Your Vibe* by Richie Norton

“I used the event to help run a new prisoner book club, we also helped promote reading and WBN among staff who don’t normally read.” – HMP & YOI Polmont Scottish Prison Service, gifted *This Book Kills* by Ravena Gurun

“Invited ESOL and Functional Literacy (L2) students from our adult centre provision for tea and cakes where they were presented with copies of WBN title The Double Clue. Free copies were also offered to our sixth form students through a display in our Library.” – Aquinas College, gifted *The Double Clue* (Quick Reads 2023) by Agatha Christie

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7 Percentages might not add up to 100% due to survey respondents being able to give multiple answers
8 Percentages might not add up to 100% due to survey respondents being able to give multiple answers
World Book Night: Events Celebrating Reading

Impact of Community Events

Organisations shared the value that hosting events for World Book Night had on them and the people they reached. Respondents to our gifting and events survey highlighted how World Book Night events had helped them reach new people, generate interest in reading for pleasure and engage with their community.

“Our writing competition was very popular and attracted a number of learners with broad range of reading/writing capabilities. Tying it in with World Book Night felt like a fabulous way to encourage our learners to pick up / re-visit / start thinking about and enjoying the power and freedom that reading can offer.”
– Halesowen College, gifted You Think You Know Me by Ayaan Mohamud

“We had a lot of people attend the reading session, which was more than we were expecting and as a result some of them are going to join are regular book club/creative writing groups.”
– Fromeside AWP NHS Trust, gifted Maybe I Don’t Belong Here by David Harewood

Hosting a local event that is part of a wider national celebration around reading provided many organisations with the opportunity to reach and engage different types of readers, including those who do not regularly read for pleasure. It also served to strengthen local community bonds, with events offering new ways for organisations to interact with the local public and raise their awareness.

“This is key for our community. We serve a community with low mood or poor mental health, low literacy levels or who are non-English speakers. We have provided free ESOL classes and providing a text to readers to build their skills has been wonderful. As we also linked reading to provide support for low mood/mental health, this also supported families.”
– Oakwell Rise Primary Academy, gifted You Think You Know Me by Ayaan Mohamud

“The World Book Night books sparked so many interesting conversations around reading and really helped me to engage with the public at outreach events. They also raise the profile of reading with partner organisations, including in the areas of health, care and literacy.”
– Slough
Raising World Book Night’s profile

This year, we were supported by high-profile World Book Night Champions including Fearne Cotton, Katie Piper, Shaparak Khorsandi and Nadiya Hussein, who supported World Book Night on social media. Some of the PR highlights included: My Weekly; an interview with Ayaan Mohamud by Jumoké Fashola on BBC Radio London and a Q&A in Africa in Words. Debbie Hicks MBE was also interviewed with BBC Radio 4’s Open Book to talk about this year’s Road to Reading.

Regional coverage included broadcast mentions across BBC Jersey, BBC Northampton, BBC Hereford and Worcestershire, BBC Cumbria, as well as pieces in News and Star, Whitehaven News, West Cumberland Times and Star, Worcestershire Observer and Evesham Observer.

We were also supported with 14 social media posts from 9 influencers with a potential combined reach of 223.9K. Gifted book packages were featured in a number of unboxing videos where influencers spotlighted titles from this year’s reading list, using the key hashtags #ReadingHour and #WorldBookNight.

Our combined press circulation figure was 2,123,165.

Online engagement

An estimated 9.4 million people were provided with the opportunity to engage with World Book Night in 2023 through The #WorldBookNight and #ReadingHour hashtags.

The Reading Agency’s social media posts had a reach of 790,779 and at least 21,143 engaged with The Reading Agency’s World Book Night posts. Between December 2022 and June 2023, worldbooknight.org had 379,373 pageviews including 152,874 unique pageviews.
Summary and key conclusions

In 2023, World Book Night ensured many more people engaged in reading through a dedicated booklist, celebratory events and activities hosted in public libraries and community organisations across the UK including the #ReadingHour, a gifting initiative, and a targeted promotional campaign.

Evaluation findings were overwhelmingly positive. Celebratory World Book Night events hosted in the run-up to 23 April allowed public libraries, prisons or youth offender institutions, hospitals and other community organisations to expand their audience base, reaching both avid readers and people new to reading or who experience specific barriers. The #ReadingHour was successful in providing space and time for people to engage in reading and to feel connected to a wider reading community. People who received books or audiobooks as part of the gifting initiative noted the ways in which they felt valued by being offered a free book, and that by reading their texts, this had allowed them to widen their reading choices, expand their knowledge of other people’s experiences and perspectives and improve their wellbeing, feeling more able to relax and less stressed as a result of reading or listening to their books. Gifting organisations indicated that the initiative had allowed them to do more targeted work with audiences who may experience specific barriers to their reading, including literacy-, financial-, health- and mental health-related barriers.

In summary, World Book Night was successful in its mission to engage more people in reading, to nurture connection through meaningful discussions and to improve individual and community wellbeing.
Annex

Evaluation methodology

To understand more about the audiences World Book Night events and gifting reaches, campaign monitoring data was collected from organisational givers and event partners as part of their application process and in the run-up to 23 April 2023. We also collected loan data from public library e-loan suppliers.

Data reflecting the reach of the wider World Book Night campaign was collected through social media analytics, Midas’ press monitoring and Vuelio. Data on the reach and use of the website was collected through Google Analytics to determine pageviews and resource downloads.

In 2023, The Reading Agency circulated online surveys (hosted in SurveyMonkey) to people who took part in World Book Night events, activities and gifting.

The Reading Agency asked people taking part in the #ReadingHour to respond to a survey asking about whether taking part made a difference to their reading habits, behaviours and wellbeing. 12 people responded to the survey. Owing to the limited number of responses, the data presented in the report solely encompasses the views of people who responded to the survey.

The Reading Agency also circulated an online survey to organisations involved in World Book Night, with an option to select whether they ran their own events as well as whether they were part of the gifting initiative. 261 people responded to the survey in total, 214 of which ran their own events celebrating World Book Night. 173 people responding to the survey were part of the gifting initiative.

Anyone who received a book as part of the gifting initiative or applied to download a free audiobook was also encouraged – via social media and directly through these organisations – to complete a short survey about the impact of World Book Night on them and their own reading habits. The book recipient survey received 118 responses from people who had started to read their gifted book (we received 158 responses in total) and the audiobook recipient survey received 67 responses who had started to listen to their gifted audiobook (we received 84 responses in total). The Reading Agency also collected further information on the profile of people downloading the audiobook through an online survey at application. 722 people responded to this survey.

Throughout the report, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding of numbers, totals may not add up to 100%. All quotes are presented verbatim as written.