



NORTH CLONDALKIN LIBRARY



Good morning. My name is Paula Murphy and this is my colleague Seán Rafferty. We are delighted to be here with you this morning to talk about Shared Reading and South Dublin Libraries. We both work in North Clondalkin Library in South Dublin. North Clondalkin Library is a state of the art, purpose-built library which opened to the public for the first time in December 2020.

We have many wonderful amenities to offer our customers including books (!), an IT room, meeting rooms, a coffee machine and a recording studio and some of the services we currently offer are adult and junior book clubs; chess club, adult coffee/music mornings; sensory equipment and garden; Tovertafel table and adult education classes.

The library is situated in an educationally and socio- economically deprived area where no previous library culture existed. Almost 11% of the population in the area left school before 15 years of age and the number of people who left school after primary level is higher than the national average.

So while we are a new library and staff are working hard to make connections with the people and the community by working with, among others, community centres, primary and secondary schools, local Men's' Sheds and a social prescriber we have found it challenging to engage with adult readers. Our experience is that parents are more than happy for their children to become library members but when it's suggested to them that they might like a library card, the response is often "ah no, it's not for me, I'm not a reader."

In response to this situation, an initiative that we are about to roll out in North Clondalkin library is Shared Reading for adults and older teens.

I will hand you over to Seán who will tell you more about Shared Reading.

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The Reader Ethos



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That is one of The Reader's Core Values

The first Shared Reading Group [known as Get Into Reading] took place in Birkenhead in 2002. Over the next twenty years, thousands of people from around the world have become part of the Shared Reading movement. 20 years later we are delighted to be the first public library in the Republic of Ireland to embrace The Reader.

SO WHAT IS SHARED READING?

Shared Reading brings people together in person, online or by phone, in small groups, to read aloud from a book, short story or poem.

Groups are free of charge and meet on a regular basis. These reading groups are a great way for people to connect to what they're reading, and to each other.

A friendly leader provides a warm welcome and the text of something specially chosen to read. This may be a poem or a piece of prose. Group members join in the reading and the conversation, or just simply sit back and listen.

There's no right or wrong way to enjoy Shared Reading, or pressure to attend every session.

Reading the literature aloud in real-time, means that everyone is involved in a shared, live experience. Group members are encouraged by the Reader Leader to respond personally, sharing feelings, thoughts and memories provoked by

the reading.

Everyone experiences the text in their own way, but the literature provides a shared language that can help us to understand ourselves and others better.

We've started the Read to Lead Training and Spoken Word and we've attended international meetings. Why it is important for South Dublin and NCL in particular.

Seán and I have commenced training to become Reader Leaders and have had the pleasure of experiencing shared reading on several occasions. We have found it to be a relaxing, comforting, thought-provoking and reflective process and a great luxury to be afforded time to think in this manner.

We want to be a part of the revolution that The Reader is striving to bring about, so that everyone, regardless of reading ability, can experience and enjoy great literature, which we believe is a tool for helping humans live well.

Over time, we will read in North Clondalkin Library, with schools, adults in community spaces, people in care homes, people with physical and mental health conditions, those coping with or recovering from addiction, and people in the criminal justice system.

We hope that everything we will do with our Shared Reading will build a warm and lively community by bringing people together and books to life.

I don't imagine that there is a person in the room this morning that hasn't experienced the joy that great literature can bring.

You don't have to take my word for it:

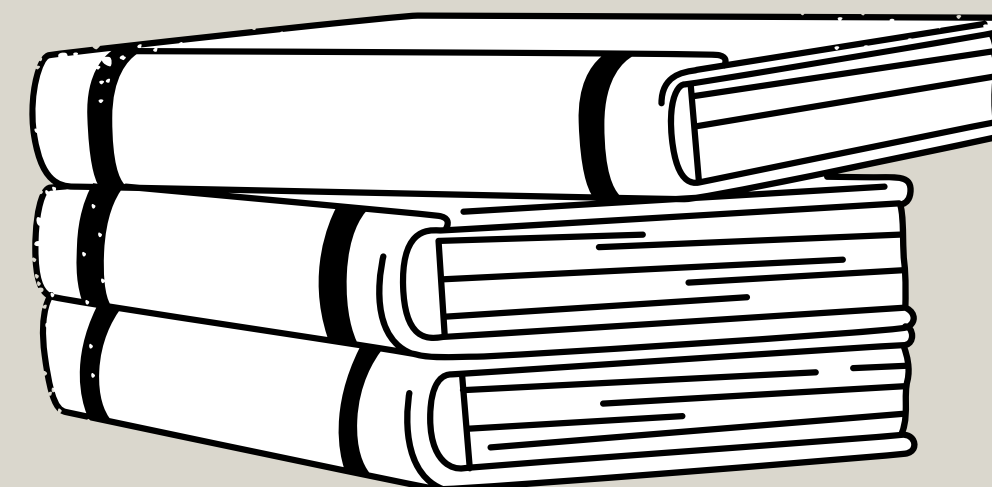
"That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You **belong."**
- F. Scott Fitzgerald



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Jane Davis, the founder of The Reader expresses the feeling perfectly: **[Slide 4]** 'The best moments in reading are when you come across a thought, or feeling, a way of looking at things that you thought particular to you. And here it is set down by someone else, maybe even someone long dead. And it's as if a hand has come out and taken yours.'

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- Jane Davis



Working together in the group to find the meaning of a story or a poem gets your mind working in a good way, it enlivens it. You feel calmer, more in tune. You're on the same frequency as other people. YOU BELONG

Lots of people attest that the main thing that happens is connection. People are listening and talking to each other.

In this post-pandemic world we hope to bring people together, people who may have spent recent times in isolation, and help them reconnect with others through literature.

[Slide 5]

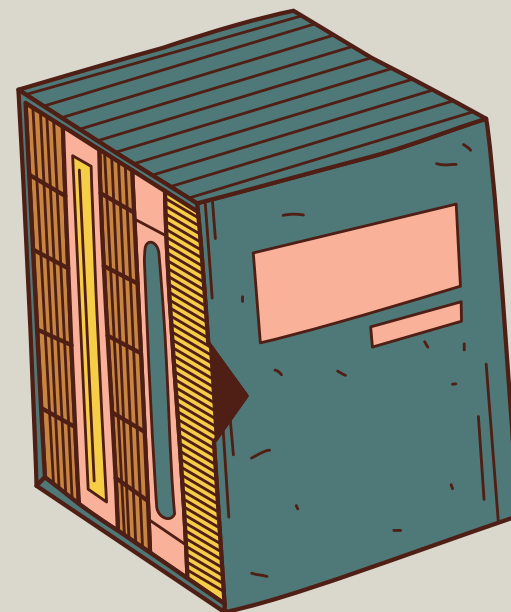
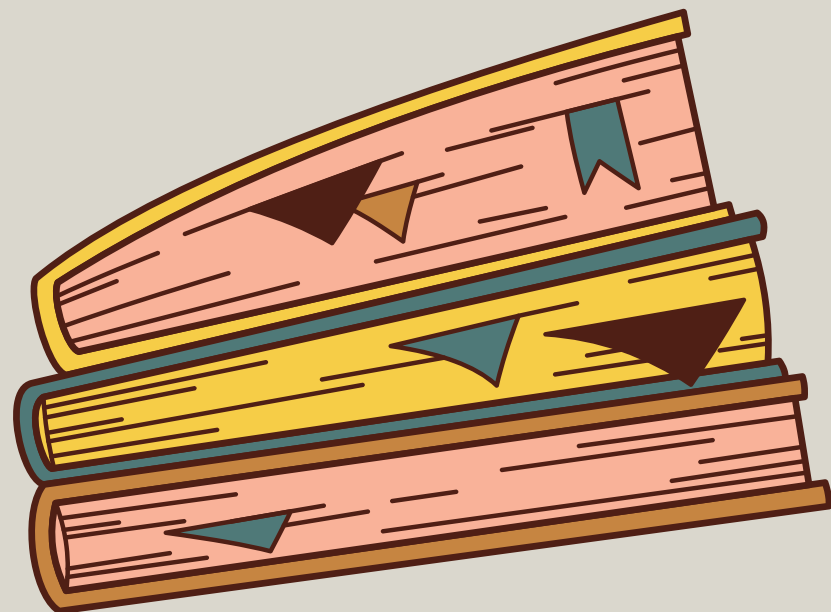
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I'll finish with a quote from James Baldwin: **[Slide 6]** 'You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive.'

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- James Baldwin**



We will complete our Reader Leader training in mid-August and will launch our Shared Reading group on Culture Night, 23rd September 2022. We will work extensively with our library users and local partners to identify interested individuals who might wish to attend our group. The group will initially meet on a monthly basis with a view to increasing the frequency to fortnightly by early 2023. Our hope is that all public libraries in South Dublin will offer a Shared Reading group to their customers in due course.

Seán and I are really excited about this project and feel it will be of much benefit to all who attend, both participants and reader leaders alike!

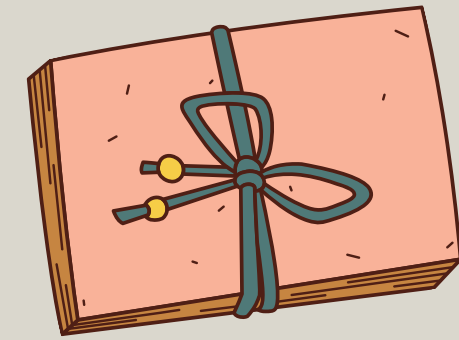
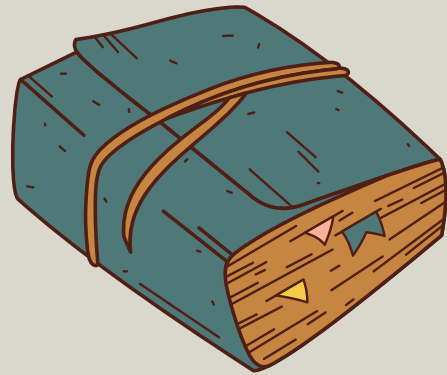
Happiness

by Raymond Carver

So early it's still almost dark out.

I'm near the window with coffee,
and the usual early morning stuff
that passes for thought.

When I see the boy and his friend
walking up the road
to deliver the newspaper.



They wear caps and sweaters,
and one boy has a bag over his shoulder.

They are so happy
they aren't saying anything, these boys.
I think if they could, they would take
each other's arm. It's early in the morning,
and they are doing this thing together.

They come on, slowly.
The sky is taking on light,
though the moon still hangs pale over the water.

Such beauty that for a minute
death and ambition, even love,
doesn't enter into this.

Happiness. It comes on
unexpectedly. And goes beyond, really,
any early morning talk about it.

