



Join Our Silly Squad

A Communications Toolkit for the Summer Reading Challenge Launch

Prepared by The Reading Agency for Teachers

#SillySquad2020



About The Reading Agency

At The Reading Agency we work every day towards a world where everyone is reading their way to a better life.

We mean everyone – from toddlers and children to young adults, prisoners and older people – irrespective of age or economic background. We believe that reading can tackle life's big challenges, from social mobility to mental health – and we're determined that no one is left behind as we strive towards realising our vision. In 2019-20, The Reading Agency reached over 1.8 million people across the UK, including more than 950,000 children and over 900,000 adults and young people.

The Summer Reading Challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge, delivered in partnership with public libraries, is an annual event aimed at 4 – 11 year olds. Children are encouraged to read any books of their choice during the summer holidays (we recommend at least six) with collectable incentives and rewards, plus a certificate for every child who completes the Challenge.

This year, with the disruption caused by COVID-19 and the impact of social distancing on schools and public libraries, the all-new digital aspect of the [Summer Reading Challenge](#) is launching earlier than usual to keep children reading over the summer and support parents and carers with children already at home.

The theme for the 2020 Challenge is "Silly Squad" – a celebration of funny books, happiness and laughter, featuring bespoke artwork from award-winning children's author and illustrator, Laura Ellen Anderson.

We hosted a virtual event with guest celebrities and authors on the Summer Reading Challenge [Facebook](#) page on Friday 5 June to launch the digital Challenge. The videos are still available on the website if you would like to use them. The Challenge website is free to access and a place for children to

rate and review their books, and work towards their reading goal. It also features video content, games, quizzes, and digital and downloadable activities to incentivise and encourage children and their families to take part in the Challenge at home.

Libraries across the country will launch their own local activity (either physical or virtual) as and when they're safely able to do so later in the summer.

"I feel the Summer Reading Challenge is extra important this year! How sensible to have a silly theme. We've all had to deal with serious and scary issues, so it's time for a bit of fun. There are so many comical and crazy children's books to cheer us all up. Let's get reading and get happy!"

- Jacqueline Wilson, Summer Reading Challenge Ambassador

Why the Summer Reading Challenge is so important

Children's reading can 'dip' during the long summer holidays if they don't have regular access to books and encouragement to read for pleasure. This can be a problem for schools to put right in the new term. The Reading Agency's annual Summer Reading Challenge really helps by getting approximately 700,000 children and their families into libraries over the summer. There is no other free reading activity that involves so many children, introduces families to their library, encourages children to choose books freely and independently and is endorsed by parents, teachers and the Department for Education.

This year, in light of COVID-19 and social distancing measures, it's more important than ever to ensure that children are encouraged to read for pleasure and avoid the 'dip'. Parents and carers will need fun, family-friendly activities to keep children occupied and we want to help libraries to continue to deliver the Challenge through virtual services and e-lending platforms, and encourage their users to take part in the Challenge from home. Once libraries can safely reopen, we will work with authorities to deliver a blended

model of both digital and physical resources wherever this is feasible, to ensure we are reaching those children who need the Challenge and libraries the most.

If you are currently teaching children aged between 4–11 years old, we would love you to get involved in the Challenge and help support and encourage families to sign up via the website. You could hold an assembly (in person or virtually) with a storytime session using a book from the Book Collection. You could also hold colouring in / activity sessions using the Silly Squad activity sheets, and encourage students to use the Book Sorter to select books to read. You can find more information on the resources available to teachers in the [Asset List](#) below. More resources will become available over the summer on the [School Zone](#) of the Summer Reading Challenge [website](#).

You can support us on your social channels (suggested posts are on page 6) and spread the word to your fellow teachers and students about ways to get involved.

We are working closely with BBC Bitesize to create content to support the Challenge, with details to follow in the coming months.

We are also working closely with TES to curate a webinar to support teachers who want to use the Summer Reading Challenge – this will be scheduled in early July, with more details to follow.

The call to action: Join Our Silly Squad!

This year, we're asking everyone to get silly for the Summer Reading Challenge. These are difficult times, and the Challenge offers an opportunity for us all to have fun and be silly together.

We know that reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education and is a more powerful

factor in life achievement than socio-economic background¹. Past studies have shown that, for children, the most popular reason for reading is emotional— children read because they enjoy it and because it can make them feel relaxed². There is also evidence that reading helps give children and young people the ability to connect imaginatively with others — even when they're not physically with them.³

So, in these challenging times, we want to encourage children and their teachers, carers and families to read together throughout the summer and have fun!

The Book Collection

The Silly Squad [book collection](#) comprises a selection of must-have reads for children aged 4-11, providing a wealth of inspiration for young readers choosing books for this year's Summer Reading Challenge and beyond. Every title in the collection has been specially picked by children, librarians and industry experts to reflect the funny theme, with plenty of choices and genres to entertain readers at all stages.

There are two lists - one for younger children (aged 4–7) and one for more confident readers (aged 8–11) - representing the best in contemporary children's fiction, non-fiction, picture books and graphic novels. Many of the books in the collection are brand new titles, which will be published in 2020.

The books will be available in e-book formats that can be downloaded for free via various library e-lending platforms.

¹ Sullivan and Brown (2013) Social inequalities in cognitive scores at age 16: The role of reading

² Department for Education (2012), Research evidence on reading for pleasure: Education standards research team, 2012

³ Department for Education (2012), Research evidence on reading for pleasure: Education standards research team

Campaign Assets for Teachers

You can access various assets to help promote and implement the Challenge from **this [dropbox](#)**.

You can access these assets, and additional resources, via the [School Zone](#) of the Summer Reading Challenge [website](#).

Assets available include:

- Summer Reading Challenge Assembly plan
- Article: How Can Schools Get Involved with the Summer Reading Challenge
- Article: How to Run a Virtual Reading Group
- Schools Pack
- Guide: How to Motivate Your Class to Read for Pleasure
- Silly Squad activity sheets
- Branding guidelines – please ensure you read these carefully and adhere to them when creating assets – if in doubt at all please contact us for approval
- Silly Squad Social assets for Instagram, Facebook and Twitter (see additional notes below)
- Silly Squad newsletter and website banner
- Logos
- Summer Reading Challenge Digital Platform Guide – how to use the new platform
- Silly Squad Character and Narrative Guide – guide to this year's theme
- FAQ/Troubleshooting Guide

You may also like to direct parents and carers to the [Home Zone](#) on the Summer Reading Challenge website.

If you use Silly Squad images and logos, you must credit our illustrator with the following line: **Illustrations © Laura Ellen Anderson 2020.**

If you would like additional design assets of the Silly Squad characters or blank branded social cards to use across your channels, please make a request to saffeya.shebli@readingagency.org.uk as this will need to be approved by the illustrator.

You can also find a whole host of resources on The Reading Agency website - <https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/>. You may also be interested in [Chatterbooks resources page](#) as it has hundreds of free publisher-provided resources.

Suggested Social Posts

We would appreciate if you could help us to signpost people to the site to sign up by using the assets alongside social posts like:

- *Have you met the Silly Squad yet? You can join them by signing up for the @readingagency #SummerReadingChallenge – just head over to sillysquad.org.uk*
- *Want to join the #SillySquad2020 this year? Sign up to the #SummerReadingChallenge and have a seriously silly summer with the @readingagency at sillysquad.org.uk*

Here are some ideas for content we would love to see:

- Videos of readings from your favourite funny book / poem / joke
- Photos with your favourite book, pulling a funny face or striking a silly pose / image of a silly space that you read in / a silly snack that you read with / or even your own Silly Squad!
- A post sharing your favourite funny author and book or a joke and always asking your followers to share their favorites as well!
- A poll – do you love Instagram polls? If so, why don't you find out your friends' favourite joke, book, silly face, silly snack etc.

You can find a guide to how to film videos with a smartphone [here](#).

Remember to use the hashtags #SummerReadingChallenge and #SillySquad2020

Please tag [@ReadingAgency](#) and if you're on Facebook tag [@SummerReadingChallengeUK](#) so we can share your posts!

You may also wish to tag our illustrator, Laura Ellen Anderson. Laura is on Twitter [@Lillustrator](#) and her Instagram page is [@laura_ellen_anderson](#)

Our Channels

www.sillysquad.org.uk

www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk

www.readingagency.org.uk/summerreadingchallenge

www.twitter.com/readingagency

www.facebook.com/SummerReadingChallengeUK

www.instagram.com/readingagency/

www.youtube.com/user/readingagency

This year's hashtags are: #SummerReadingChallenge #SillySquad2020

If you have any queries about the Summer Reading Challenge then please email summerreadingchallenge@readingagency.org.uk