

## Want to feel like a teenager again? Just dig out the books you were forced to read at school

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss in pairs.

- What three books do you remember fondly from childhood or adolescence? What did you enjoy about them?
- Would you like to re-read any of those books as an adult? Why (not)?

#### 2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

challenge      curriculum      deodorant      fabric      funding  
medication      nostalgic      qualification      shock      stretch  
trend      union

1. a new or difficult task that tests somebody's ability and requires effort to solve; a popular trend on social media that asks people to do something and post about it \_\_\_\_\_
2. a general direction in which something is developing or changing, often about popular or current styles \_\_\_\_\_
3. a substance people put under their arms to hide bad smells \_\_\_\_\_
4. feeling a little bit sad because you're remembering happy times in the past  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. an organisation of workers formed to protect their rights, improve working conditions and negotiate fair contracts \_\_\_\_\_
6. make something longer, wider or looser \_\_\_\_\_
7. an exam, course or training that someone completes to do a particular job or activity  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. the subjects included in a course or taught in a school \_\_\_\_\_
9. money provided, especially by an organisation or government, for a particular purpose  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. a sudden and surprising feeling, often resulting from an unexpected or unpleasant happening  
\_\_\_\_\_

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11. material made by weaving or knitting wool, cotton, silk, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

12. a drug or substance used for medical treatment to prevent or treat an illness  
\_\_\_\_\_

**b. Use some of the key words from task A and complete the examples. You may have to change the form of the word.**

1. The thunder was so loud that it \_\_\_\_\_ all of us, even the dog!

2. A teaching \_\_\_\_\_ is required to work in state schools.

3. Reading Shakespeare's plays can be a \_\_\_\_\_ for many secondary students.

4. The school board revised the English \_\_\_\_\_ to include more diverse authors.

5. Social media, especially TikTok, is where young adults find and create new  
\_\_\_\_\_.

6. The student received additional \_\_\_\_\_ to complete the research project.

7. The teachers' \_\_\_\_\_ negotiated for smaller class sizes, better pay and more educational resources.

8. She asked her doctor for different \_\_\_\_\_ to help with her headaches.

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**Nell Frizzell**

**28 August, 2024**

- 1 This isn't a popular writing challenge or book trend from social media. But maybe it should be. When I read the first chapter of *Animal Farm* again, it was like looking at an old photo album. I see myself as a teenager, wearing a Punkyfish T-shirt under my white school shirt. My hair's tied up with plastic butterfly clips, and I smell like my mum's deodorant. I can taste blood from my braces cutting my cheek.
- 2 Reading this book transports me back to school. It's funny how words on a page can take us to another time in our lives. Reading about Boxer and Clover's quiet love, I feel nostalgic, missing a boy I once liked. He wore skater shoes, listened to Finley Quaye, and often moved his hair out of his eyes. And yet, at 39, I see the book differently. Since first reading it, I've been to Russia, joined a union, attended long government meetings, and worked on a building site. I've read the rest of Orwell's books too. The political ideas, simple writing style, and descriptions of the English countryside slipped past me when I was 14.
- 3 But the biggest surprise? I re-read it during one ferry ride to Dublin. *Animal Farm* is short! How did we stretch it out over a whole term? Well, I'm about to find out. Like 26,955 other people last year, I've decided to study for a teaching qualification, and *Animal Farm* is on the curriculum. I can do it part-time, get funding and buy a new pencil case.
- 4 *Animal Farm* is not the only book that shocked me with its length. *A Christmas Carol*? You could finish it in a day! Dickens was a journalist. I didn't know it at 16, but he enjoyed critical opinions and odd details as much as any writer or interviewer. And yet, the whole thing is only 112 pages!
- 5 What I remember most isn't the story of Tiny Tim or descriptions of dirty central London. Instead, it's the view out of my English classroom to the dinner hall, where they served food like pizza baguettes, hot chicken tikka rolls and chips with ham and mayonnaise. I remember the Virginia Woolf poster on the wall. I remember the odd feeling of my homemade school skirt on my knees. Mum and

I found special swimwear-like material in a fabric shop. When I moved, my skirt sounded like someone shuffling a deck of cards.

- 6 There's so much I forgot over the years. Frankenstein is from Geneva? Boxer hurt his foot? Jack makes himself a crown? But I didn't forget the details from my own life. They came back a little too clearly.
- 7 So this is why I would like to suggest to anyone who got exam results this summer: put a note in your phone to re-read some books in the future. Try *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in 2053. By then, you might have lived in a small flat, had a bad boyfriend or struggled with the wrong medication. Or read *Lord of the Flies* in 2051, after your children have started school and you've worked in an office. Or *Pride and Prejudice* at 40, and you've been married for 12 years, talking about loading the dishwasher. Because these books will mean something different to you then; and you'll be able to travel through time.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What does the author say it was like when she read the first chapter of *Animal Farm* again?
2. What are two details the author used to describe herself as a teenager?
3. What life experiences did the author have before re-reading *Animal Farm* as an adult?
4. What surprised the author about the length of *Animal Farm*?
5. What book is mentioned as being part of the teaching curriculum?
6. What does the author say she remembers best about reading Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*?
7. What book does the author mention can be finished in a day?
8. According to the author, what profession does Dickens's style reflect?
9. Why does the narrator suggest re-reading books like *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Lord of the Flies* later in life?
10. What personal examples does the author provide to suggest how people might relate differently to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Lord of the Flies* in the future?

#### 4 Key language

a. Read the sentences from the article. Underline the verb phrase. Then circle the correct verb tense.

1. But I didn't forget the details from my own life.  
a. simple present                      b. simple past                      c. simple future
2. Because these books will mean something different to you then.  
a. simple present                      b. simple past                      c. simple future
3. The whole thing is only 112 pages!  
a. simple present                      b. simple past                      c. simple future
4. You'll be able to travel through time.  
a. simple present                      b. simple past                      c. simple future
5. My skirt sounded like someone shuffling a deck of cards.  
a. simple present                      b. simple past                      c. simple future
6. Reading this book transports me back to school.  
a. simple present                      b. simple past                      c. simple future

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## 5 Discussion

**a. Discuss these statements.**

- The books we read as children shape our worldview more than the ones we read as adults.
- Remembering being a teenager is better than being a teenager.
- Novels entertain us, but they also help us learn empathy.

## 6 In your own words

**a. Do some research about the current bestselling novels for adults, teens and/or children. Answer these questions.**

- Which books sound the most interesting to you? Why?
- Are there any common themes on the bestseller list? If so, what are they?
- What do you look for in a good book?
- What would you recommend a teenager to read?

**b. Report your findings to the class and share the facts you learned and your opinions.**