



Brit Teenagers Score Top Marks While Adults Fail to Pass the Test!

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August 21, 2001, London: As the yearly benchmarks of Britain's educational standards--GCSE and A-level results--come around again, research revealed today by Amazon.co.uk suggests that classic British literature strikes more memorable chords with today's schoolchildren than current bestsellers. In stark contrast, Britain's adults display a disappointing level of literary knowledge and could do much better!

The UK's leading on-line retailer quizzed pre-GCSE schoolchildren from Years 8 and 9 to measure their knowledge of classic novels versus a modern day equivalent by asking them to identify the opening sentences of 15 bestselling novels. Adults were then asked to identify the same quote.

Childhood Favourites

Nearly nine out of 10 (88 per cent) of children correctly identified the opening lines of ES Nesbitt's classic *The Railway Children*, compared with less than one in three (28 per cent) adults. The youngsters also fared better than their elders on *The Hobbit* with four out of five (81 per cent) recognising the first sentence compared to only half of adults (52 per cent).

The research findings revealed a clear--and surprising distinction between the two groups' ability to assign a title to a quote. The children achieved higher awareness on 14 of the 15 titles--the exception, Terry Pratchett's *The Colour of Magic*, was correctly recognised by over two thirds (64 per cent) of adults compared to only one in five (23 per cent) of children.

Harry Potter & The Philosopher's Stone was the only novel to be clearly identified by a similar number of each group (57 per cent kids/ 55 per cent adults).

Generally readers of all ages remembered the fantasy adventure novels such as *The Hobbit* (72 per cent) and *The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe* (53 per cent) and *Harry Potter* (56 per cent), much better than they did the self-confessional diary style of *Adrian Mole* (26 per cent), *Anne Frank* (25 per cent) and *Bridget Jones* (9 per cent).

Room for Improvement

Despite the teenagers out-scoring their adult counterparts by nine to one, low recognition levels on some of the texts reveal a clear gap in school children's knowledge with much-required room for improvement. *To Kill a Mockingbird*--a novel included in the national curriculum Key Stage 4 reading list, was recognised by only one in five (19 per cent) of the pupils. Less than one quarter (20 per cent) of teenage respondents correctly identified *Great Expectations*, another Key Stage 4 set text.

Commenting on the findings, Gabriela Vinader, General Manager for Books at Amazon.co.uk said: "The titles we chose for this study are some of our bestselling children's novels and span decades of British writing. Because of their popularity with readers of all ages we felt sure they would be recognised equally by both children and adults so we were really surprised when the adult responses showed such a low awareness".

Amazon.co.uk is the leading on-line retailer of books in the UK. It offers almost every UK book in print (over 1.5 million) and a selection of US bestsellers (250,000)--this amounts to approximately 10 times the amount of books in the largest high street bookstore.

For further information please contact the Amazon.co.uk press office on 020 8636 9280.

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