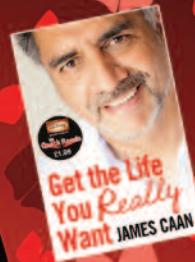


Quick Reads

Fall in love with reading

Reading Groups Toolkit



Bite-sized books,
big-name authors; discover
your perfect match.






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This toolkit was written by Linda Dixon and Sue Southwood (NIACE)



'I'm not particularly one for reading thick heavy books as I find I get bored too easily but I found with the Quick Reads books they were short enough but long enough.'

1. Introduction

This toolkit is for anyone who wants to start a Quick Reads Reading Group. It includes hints and tips on getting started, facilitating sessions and evaluating your group.

A Quick Reads Reading Group is a social activity to meet other people, share ideas and build relationships. It also has great potential to:

- build confidence in reading and speaking in a group
- develop creative, independent and critical thinking
- develop the ability to question, read between the lines and compare and contrast information

A Quick Reads Reading Group can be a stepping stone into other learning opportunities, improved confidence or better health.

'I am a very busy woman because I am a housewife with four children but I still find time to read Quick Reads.'

2. Why Quick Reads?

Many adults don't see themselves as readers. Quick Reads are bite-sized books specially written by bestselling authors and celebrities using short sentences and clear language. They are ideal for less confident readers who may be daunted by longer texts, people who have given up the reading habit, those who feel too busy and exhausted to find time to read longer texts, such as parents of young children or people experiencing mental health issues who cannot concentrate for long periods.

'The fact that they are quite thin books makes them seem more available, not so scary as a thick novel.'

3. Getting started

You can publicise your group through posters, flyers, newsletters and texts and you can also send personalised invitations if there are particular groups of people you are keen to target. Get as many people as possible involved in spreading the message. Word of mouth is always best as people may need personal encouragement. You can also think about other hooks such as competitions, quizzes, setting up a book display or inviting in a guest speaker.



Before you start, use the checklist below to help you.

Checklist

- ✓ Have I got a minimum number of people to agree to come along?
- ✓ Do I know how to contact them?
- ✓ Have I got enough books for everyone?
- ✓ Have I secured a suitable room to use with comfortable chairs?
- ✓ Have I considered access to refreshments?
- ✓ Have I consulted on what date and time is most suitable for everyone?
- ✓ Have I got a plan for the first session including a warm-up activity? (See page 6).
- ✓ Have I got a record-keeping plan?

'I'm profoundly dyslexic so reading is always going to be difficult for me. Quick Reads have helped me to overcome that barrier.'

4. Organising your first meeting

Use the first meeting to decide which book to read first and how the group will operate. Agree some rules. Depending on your setting, you can do this with a flipchart and put it on the wall or just agree some informal rules but it will be helpful to take some notes just in case you need to refer to them at a later date.

Here is an example.

Reading group guidelines

How shall we pick titles?

Do we all want to read the same title or swap views on different books?

Everyone's view is valid and should be respected.

Don't interrupt or talk over people

Lateness – informal or punctual?

Comfort and refreshment breaks

Still come along even if you haven't read the book

Is it ok for the facilitator to text you to come along?



A Quick Reads Reading Group can be an opportunity to change attitudes and reading habits! You can use the first meeting to get to know each other and find out about attitudes to reading. Give out the following checklist and ask people to compare with the person next to them. Use to stimulate a discussion for the whole group.

Attitudes to reading checklist	Agree	Disagree
I love reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have favourite authors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like reading fiction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like reading non-fiction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I only read on holiday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I read occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have read some Quick Reads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would like to read for pleasure but I don't know what to pick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I read things I have to but not for pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have time to read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find a lot of texts difficult to read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find jargon and/or long words off-putting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fall asleep if I read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



5. Facilitating a Quick Reads Reading Group

It's likely that you will get a core group of people who come along regularly and have other members who find this more difficult. It's really important to make people feel that they are always welcome even if they have missed a few sessions as otherwise they may feel reluctant to return.

Warm-up activities

- **Passion Swap.** Divide the group into two and give each group an egg timer. Each person takes a turn to talk about something they feel passionate about until the egg timer runs out.
- **Word association.** Start with a word or phrase e.g. 'Detective stories' or 'romantic fiction' and ask each person to respond with one or two words and see where it leads!
- **Talk about why and how we choose books.**
- **Talk about what you generally read and why – include newspapers and magazines.**
- **In pairs, ask people to discuss their current reading habits.**
- **Some Quick Reads are biographies, for example, Kerry Katona, Colin Jackson and Scott Quinell. How many books or films about someone's life have people read/watched or heard of? – discuss what makes them interesting.**
- **Put together a list of five or six opening sentences from well-known books from www.openingsentences.com and discuss what makes them effective. Do the same for Quick Reads or ask people to bring along theirs from books, newspapers or magazines.**

After the warm-up activity, you can encourage participants to remind each other about the book and conversations from the previous session, "What can anyone tell us about this story?", "What themes have we already discussed?" Always encourage different views, "What do others think?" "Does anyone have a different view?" Wait time is important as some people take longer to think through their responses or ideas – don't be tempted to fill the silence but allow pause for thought.

People may talk about other books they have read, television programmes or films they have watched or their own life experiences. Encourage this. The conversation doesn't have to stick rigidly to the book. Here are some suggested themes for discussions:

- **How important was the plot?**
- **What messages are in the book?**
- **Discuss the characters – were they believable and could you relate to them?**
- **How important was the setting to the story?**
- **Are the themes timeless?**
- **Personal reactions – what did you like or not like about the book?**

You can find lots of resources to help you at www.quickreads.org.uk/resources

6. Evaluating and sustaining a group

Keep records including brief quantitative data on attendance and the books you have read. You can also collect some qualitative data, for example, make a note of which titles people are most interested in.

Every six weeks or so,* carry out a brief evaluation either written or as a discussion and take some notes. Include:

- **What have you most enjoyed about the Quick Reads Reading Group?**
- **What have you least enjoyed?**
- **Has it changed your reading behaviour or your attitude to reading?**
If yes, describe.
- **Has the Quick Reads Reading Group improved your self-confidence?**
If yes, describe.
- **Have you got any suggestions to improve the group?**
If yes, describe.

You can use the information to improve your Quick Reads Reading Group and quotes will help you with publicity to attract more participants.

Maintain an interest in the group by having a display of Quick Reads in a prominent area with a poster advertising the Reading Group – update regularly to maintain interest. You can download a poster template from www.quickreads.org.uk/resources

Encourage participants to spread the word and bring along friends, family or work colleagues. At some point, your group may want to start reading other books, go to: www.readingagency.org.uk/findaread/ to find other accessible titles.

Other ideas to keep the group fresh are:

- **Introduce a Book Review board where readers post their comments**
- **Start a Twitter group - guidance is included in this toolkit**
- **Invite a VIP guest along to your group**
- **Arrange library visits and bookshop visits**
- **Send in reviews to: www.quickreads.org.uk/reviews**
- **Hold a Six Book Challenge www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk**

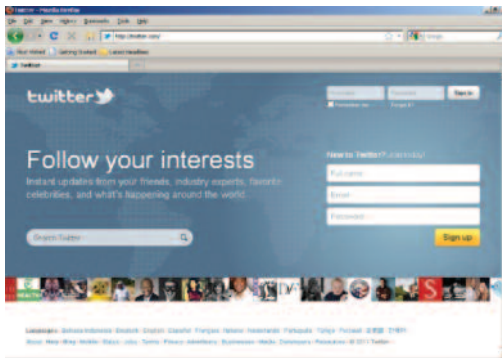
*Note this is slightly different for pilot groups who are required to evaluate after 10 weeks



7. Using Twitter

Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service that allows you to send 140-character long messages, called "tweets", to "followers." The short format of the tweet is a defining characteristic of the service, allowing informal conversation and quick information sharing.

To get started, go to **Twitter.com** and sign up for a free account. Choose a user name and customise your profile.

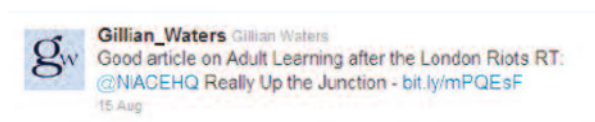


You can now log onto your account, use the 'search' bar to find friends, colleagues and anyone else you'd like to follow. By clicking on user profiles you can see who they're following, which is a good way of unearthing new people to follow.



Familiarise yourself with the main terminology.

@ symbol – attach @ to the front of a username in a tweet and it will appear in that person's Twitter feed as a public mention or reply. You can also send and check your private messages by clicking on 'Messages' along the top of your account.





Retweet / 'RT' – spread other people’s tweets to your own followers, showing solidarity for what they are saying. To do this, hover your mouse over a tweet and click on:



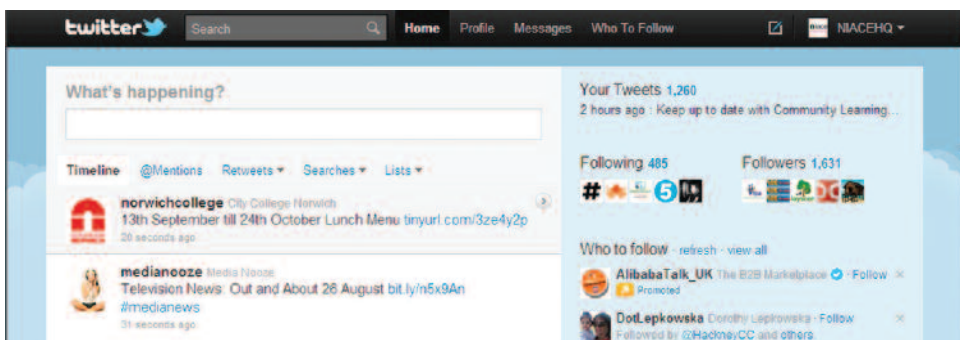
Hashtags – Type a topical word/phrase with a # in front of it in the ‘search’ box to see what people are saying on that subject at that exact moment. Using #s in your own tweets will also allow your messages to show up in other people’s # searches. Examples of popular hashtags in this country have been #londonriots and #phonehacking. Other hashtags you might want to use are #adulthood and #QuickReads

You can shorten your URLs to maximise your 140 character limit. Do this easily by signing up to the Bit.ly website for free. Sign in, copy your long URL into the ‘shorten’ box on Bit.ly and it will automatically create a shorter link for you to paste directly into your tweet.



You’re now ready to start tweeting! You can tell your friends your username or send them the link to your Twitter page - twitter.com/username. Provide links to your twitter account from the following if you have them: your website, Facebook profile, blog and so on.

See what people are saying about you. Enter your user name in the ‘search’ bar to see real-time results of tweets mentioning you. You can also achieve this by clicking your @Mentions or ‘Retweets’, found directly under your text box.



Quick Reads: Reading Groups Toolkit

There's plenty more help for using Twitter on **tweeternet**. For a more in depth and advanced guide on using Twitter and its related applications, try **The Ultimate Guide for Everything Twitter**.

Now that you've set up your own Twitter account you can interact with Quick Reads and keep up to date with our news, by finding and following **Quick_Reads**.



Make sure you type **@Quick_Reads** in your tweet. It's also a good idea to find and follow local colleges, libraries, learning providers and so on. This will help you find out how others are using Quick Reads and can become a way of sharing learner stories and Quick Reads anecdotes.

Many Quick Reads authors are also on Twitter. To interact with them, find them by typing their name into the 'search' box. To get you started, here are a few we've found:

-  **Cathy Glass: CathyGlassUK**
-  **Sheila O'Flanagan: sheilaoflanagan**
-  **Lucy Cavendish: lucycavi**
-  **Lola Jaye: LolaJaye**
-  **Adele Parks: adeleparks**
-  **Alexander McCall Smith: McCallSmith**
-  **Tony Parsons: TonyParsonsUK**
-  **James Caan: jamescaanonlin**



'I thought this doesn't look like the sort of book I would read but I didn't want to be the only person who hasn't read the book! But I enjoyed it.'

8. Case studies

Southwark Residents Reading Group

Southwark Take Time To... Group residents gather weekly in their local learning centre to talk about Quick Reads. The group is rapidly working their way through the titles and are already on their fifth book! Members take turns to choose a book for the rest of the group to read and then introduce it to the group saying what they liked about it and why they picked it.

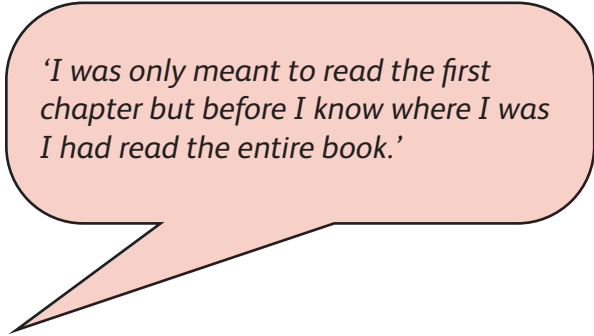
Conversation flows easily as members discuss their own experiences in relation to topics raised by each book, "We talk about everything so we start with the book and if it mentions something like love, relationships or domestic violence, we talk about our own relationships or experiences." They really like the Quick Reads titles as they are short and quick to read, "The books are short but sometimes there's more to say!"

Some of the group write reviews and these are collated into a book by the facilitator. Once a month, they choose a different topic to talk and write about, generated by the books they have read. The last theme was beauty and what it means to you.

The group has mainly come together because of existing connections with the learning centre. It has helped people from the community meet others who are like-minded, "It's more fun than reading on your own - to talk about it with others". Some are attending courses and others are friends or family members, "My daughter told me about the group, I'd not heard of Quick Reads but it's on my doorstep so I thought I'd give it a try." Mother and adult daughter attend, another member has brought her grown-up daughter along to encourage her to read, whilst another reads regularly but enjoys "the chance to talk about a book, not just read it on my own." One member commented, "I joined because I wanted a challenge and it has made me want to read more." Members of Take Time To... take it in turns to present their Quick Reads book choice, its daunting for some, but has resulted in increased confidence. The group meets between 5pm and 7pm so that working members can still come along.

One of the group's favourite reads is Jack and Jill by Lucy Cavendish because it was written through the eyes of a child and the tension throughout, it was a memorable read. They discuss plots, "Sometimes we talk about how we would change the ending" and all of the group agree that it provides a valuable learning experience, "The group has helped me understand different viewpoints and it's really helpful to see what other people think about the books."

The facilitator has noticed an increase in confidence amongst those who were quiet at first. She provides refreshments to help create a relaxed atmosphere and feels this has contributed to the success of the group, one member commented, "I like the group because it's relaxed and not dominated by one person. It's not like formal learning with a teacher but you do learn!"



'I was only meant to read the first chapter but before I know where I was I had read the entire book.'

Peaks Education Reading Group

Peaks Education at Rampton Hospital has three members of staff who provide both formal and informal education for up to 40 patients with personality disorder and associated mental health difficulties. Bringing together a reading group presented a few challenges but they wanted to make sure group members got on well with each other, had similar interests and also ability which would encourage motivation and would therefore benefit the most from being part of the group. Arrangements included providing a comfortable, relaxing and safe environment with the aim of having fun as well as reading books.

The facilitators set aside two hours per week and group members were able to choose the titles they wanted to read. Members were able to keep the books afterwards and gained a certificate after finishing the 10 week project. This added incentive and developed commitment within the group.

All the reading group members read a Quick Read in the group and on their own. They reviewed the books weekly, recording their thoughts in a small reading diary. They included what they thought of the book, why they did or didn't enjoy it and if they thought any of the characters made it special to them, they also graded each book with a 1-5 star rating. Those who were more confident completed a larger literacy diary encouraging the group member to analyse the book more deeply, looking at the style of writing, how character's developed, who their favourite character was and why, whether they learned anything specific from the story and whether they would recommend the book to a friend.

The facilitator has encouraged members to read aloud. Initially some were hesitant but over time joined in and enjoyed the experience. This has improved confidence enormously and has met personal learning goals.

All 6 took part for 10 weeks and some have gone onto read other books and evaluate them too. Some have taken out longer books written by the same authors. One member who read "Bloody Valentine" has become a James Patterson fan! He commented, "I was unable to put this book down and became 'lost' in the story, watching things unfold."

The reviews written by the members are to be blown up as thumbnails in the library above shelves containing all the books read by the group and other books read since. This will hopefully encouraged other learners to pick up a book and read.

The group aim to continue by ordering the new set of Quick Reads titles and two new members have now joined. The most popular book for the group was "Buster Fleabags" by Rolf Harris as it brought humour to the group. They were all familiar with Rolf Harris and saw him as a popular figure and a particularly open person, someone they could relate to.

Quick Reads Book Review

Create a book review notice board

If you have read a book recently that you would like to tell other people about, fill in a book review and inspire others to read it too.



Title of book

Describe the book in one sentence

.....
.....
.....

One reason why you think others should read this book

.....
.....
.....

One thing you did not like about this book

.....
.....
.....

Or send in a review to www.quickreads.org.uk/reviews



Quick Reads Reading Group 2012

Certificate of Participation

This is to certify that:

.....

Has taken part as a member of the Quick Reads Reading Group at:

.....

Date:

.....



Quick Reads: Reading Groups Toolkit

Since their launch in 2006, over 70 Quick Reads have been published. Below is a list of Quick Reads titles that are available, many of them can be bought from both high-street and online book sellers. Some titles are now out of print but can be found in your local library.

Patrick Augustus	Don't Make Me Laugh	Xpress	(2006)	9781902934464
Linwood Barclay	Clouded Vision	Orion	(2011)	9781409121251
Priya Basil	Strangers on the 16:02	Transworld	(2011)	9780552777056
Maeve Binchy	Star Sullivan	Orion	(2006)	9780752879543
Maeve Binchy	Full House	Orion	(2012)	9781409136613
John Bird	How To Change Your Life In 7 Steps	Random House	(2006)	9780091907037
John Bird	The Ten Keys to Success	Ebury	(2008)	9780091923600
John Boyne	The Dare	Black Swan	(2009)	9780552775298
Richard Branson	Screw It, Let's Do It	Virgin	(2006)	9780753510995
James Caan	Get the Life You Really Want	Penguin	(2012)	9780241958780
Camelot	We Won the Lottery: Real-life Winner Stories	Accent Press	(2010)	9781907016110
Alan Carr	Burning Ambition	Penguin	(2007)	9780141030302
Lucy Cavendish	Jack and Jill	Penguin	(2011)	9780718157487
Rowan Coleman	Woman Walks Into A Bar	Random House	(2006)	9780099492283
Catrin Collier	Black-Eyed Devils	Accent Press	(2009)	9781906373610
Josephine Cox	Girl on the Platform	Harper Collins	(2008)	9780007270088
Hunter Davies	I Love Football	Hodder Headline	(2006)	9780755314706
Dragons' Den	Dragons' Den: Your Road to Success	Collins	(2009)	9780007299331
Terrance Dicks	Doctor Who: Made of Steel	BBC Books	(2007)	9781846072048
Terrance Dicks	Doctor Who: Revenge of the Juddoon	BBC Books	(2008)	9781846073724
Bernardine Evaristo	Hello Mum	Penguin	(2010)	9780141044385
Vanessa Feltz (editor)	RaW Voices of Hardship and Hope	BBC Books	(2008)	9781846074462
John Francome	Winner Takes All	Hodder Headline	(2006)	9780755329489
Mike Gale	Men at Work	Hodder	(2011)	9781444711776
Adele Geras	Lily	Orion	(2007)	9780752882246
Cathy Glass	My Dad's a Policeman	HarperCollins	(2011)	9780007374755
Alvin Hall	Money Magic	Hodder Headline	(2010)	9780340998502
Rolf Harris	Buster Fleabags	Transworld	(2010)	9780552160599
Sherrie Hewson	The Tannery	Pan Macmillan	(2009)	9780330464345
Tom Holland	The Poison in the Blood	TimeWarner	(2006)	9780349119649
Tom Holt	Someone Like Me	TimeWarner	(2006)	9781841494463
Conn Iggulden	Blackwater	Harper Collins	(2006)	9780007221660
Conn Iggulden	Quantum of Tweed: The Man with the Stolen Gun	Harper Collins	(2012)	9780007455980
Colin Jackson	Life's New Hurdles	Accent Press	(2008)	9781906125936
Peter James	The Perfect Murder	Macmillan	(2010)	9780330507851
Lola Jaye	Reaching for the Stars	Harper Collins	(2009)	9780007297184
Terry Jones	Trouble on the Heath	Accent Press	(2011)	9781907726200
Kerry Katona	Survive the Worst and Aim for the Best	RH	(2007)	9780091917548
Cathy Kelly	The Perfect Holiday	Harper Collins	(2010)	9780007331444
Lynda La Plante	The Little One	Simon & Schuster	(2012)	9780857209207
Premier League, Mick Dennis	The Team	Transworld	(2006)	9780552153720
Maureen Lee	A Dream Come True	Orion	(2007)	9780752882390
Maureen Lee	Amy's Diary	Orion	(2012)	9781409137382
Damien Lewis	Desert Claw	Random House	(2006)	9780099493532
Alexander McCall - Smith	The Cleverness of Ladies	Little, Brown	(2012)	9780349000282
Val McDermid	Cleainskin	Harper Collins	(2006)	9780007216727
Val McDermid (editor)	Life's Too Short	Transworld	(2010)	9780553825138
Andy McNab	The Grey Man	Transworld	(2006)	9780552154338
		Transworld	(2007)	9780552155984
		Transworld	(2010)	9780552161688
Andy McNab	Last Night Another Soldier	Orion	(2009)	9780752884509
Kate Mosse	The Cave	TimeWarner	(2006)	9780349119632
Courtia Newland	The Dying Wish	Transworld	(2011)	9780552161787
Charlie Oatway	Tackling Life	Headline	(2011)	9780755359318
Sheila O'Flanagan	Follow Me	Penguin	(2008)	9780141034942
Gilda O'Neill	East End Tales	Penguin	(2008)	9780141034911
Adele Parks	Happy Families	Harper Collins	(2012)	9780007449132
Tony Parsons	Beyond the Bounty	Random House	(2011)	9780099556756
James Patterson	Bloody Valentine	Harper Collins	(2006)	9780007216710
Mike Phillips	The Name You Once Gave Me	Penguin	(2009)	9780141039923
Gervase Phinn	All These Lonely People	Accent Press	(2008)	9781906125950
Scott Quinell	The Hardest Test	Harper Collins	(2008)	9780007270965
Gordon Ramsay	Humble Pie	Orion	(2009)	9780752884493
Ian Rankin	A Cool Head	BBC Books	(2009)	9781846076435
Jacqueline Rayner	Doctor Who: The Sontaran Games	BBC Books	(2012)	9781849902861
Jacqueline Rayner	Doctor Who: Magic of the Angels	Pan Macmillan	(2006)	9780330442329
Matthew Reilly	Hell Island	Random House	(2006)	9780099497882
Ruth Rendell	The Thief	BBC Books/Random House	(2010)	9781846079283
Justin Richards	Doctor Who: Code of the Krillitanes	BBC Books	(2006)	9780563486480
Gareth Roberts	I Am A Dalek	RH	(2008)	9780099522348
Chris Ryan	One Good Turn	Macmillan	(2007)	9780330449991
John Simpson	Tales from the War Zone	Bantam	(2007)	9780553818826
The Sun	The Sun Book of Short Stories	Barrington Stoke	(2009)	9781842996713
Patience Thomson	101 Ways to Get Your Child to Read	Little, Brown	(2007)	9780751539530
Ricky Tomlinson	Reading My Arse	Bloomsbury	(2006)	9780747582113
Joanna Trollope	The Book Boy	Random House	(2006)	9780091908942
Danny Wallace	Danny Wallace & The Centre of the Universe	Pan Macmillan	(2006)	9780330440318
Minette Walters	Chickenfeed	Random House	(2010)	9780099542285
Alison Weir	Traitors of the Tower	Bloomsbury	(2011)	9781408802908
Benjamin Zephaniah	Kung Fu Trip			