National Literacy Trust

Change your story

Senior National Reading Champions Quiz



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ALCS

Guide for schools

This guide focuses on the regional heats with some brief information on the final. After all the regional heats have taken place, the teams that have progressed to the final will be provided with additional information.

Delivery of the quiz is based on our experience running the quiz in previous years as well as feedback from staff and students.

Even if you have taken part before, please do look at the guide as some details have been updated for 2027.

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1. Entering teams for the quiz

Students from across the UK aged between 11-14 years can take part in the quiz. **Students must not turn 15 before 1 September 2027**. This age bracket reflects:

- Years 7, 8 and 9 in England and Wales
- S1, S2 and S3 in Scotland
- Year 8, 9 and 10 in Northern Ireland

Your team members can come from one single year group or can be a blend of year groups.

Each team consists of four students plus a reserve. The reserve is not compulsory, but we recommend you having recruited someone just in case someone falls ill on the day or is not able to take part at the last minute. The reserve can watch the quiz from the side lines on the day but is not able to help with the answers.

You can enter up to two teams from your school and it costs £30 per team. If your team progresses to the final then the team members must be kept the same.

We cannot accept bookings from schools outside of the UK.

2. What is the quiz about?

This quiz is aimed at keen readers and the content reflects that. All questions are based on fictional titles and involve book titles, characters, authors, brain teasers and story details.

There will be multiple genres included such as comedy, horror, graphic novels, LGBTQ+, historical, classic, crime, poetry and sport to name a few. A team with multiple reading interests is recommended.

Although we look to include some questions on very well-known books, series and authors, we focus more on the amazing breadth and variety of children's publishing available today. Please take a look at **the range of titles** we used in the last couple of years to give you an idea.

We don't provide a booklist for the quiz. We avoid this because we reference 250+ books in the regional heats and these are not finalised until shortly before the quiz starts. We are aware that book access across schools is extremely varied and so we are cautious about setting a reading list, as this might pressurise schools with limited resources. We think that students who love reading should attend because they enjoy it and not because they have checked books off a compulsory list. This also makes it a more open competition. We appreciate this can be frustrating if the books your students are into don't come up, but they may be luckier next time and this is reflected in the turnover of teams that make the grand final.

Note on Young Adult titles: there will be questions on YA books scattered throughout the quiz that some of the youngest participants may not have read yet but may well discover in the future.

3. Preparing for the quiz in school

Why not have some quiz trials within the school, to see who is interested and has the reading knowledge to be in your team.

Please find a selection of sample questions on the website to help you with the process. These quiz trials can be enjoyable events in their own right and who knows who you might discover as your next reading quiz star!

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The quiz is a fun and engaging event, and we hope your students feel excited about taking part rather than nervous. They won't be put on the spot during the quiz. If they find the quiz difficult, please don't let them get discouraged, the marking is strict but no one is being judged on their performance and we hope there is plenty for them to cheer about.

If you have time, do allow your teams to practise together. Like any competition, practise always helps. Why not ask your non-team members in school to write questions for the team to practise with and test their knowledge on a range of different titles?

4. Information on the questions and answers

The quiz will consist of 75 questions: seven categories with ten questions each and a final category which will have only five questions. Each category will have a different theme and within each category there will be multiple choice questions, true or false questions, free text questions and illustrated/visual questions.

For online heats, answers will be written into an email (like a shopping list) and submitted directly to the marking team after every two rounds. For in-person heats, answer sheets will be provided on the day and teams will hand those in for marking.

Answers will be read out after every two rounds. E.g., Answers for rounds 1 and 2 will be given out after rounds 3 and 4, answers to rounds 3 and 4 will be given out after rounds 5 and 6, etc. This allows for any delay in a team submitting their answer email.

5. How will the quiz be marked?

We try to set questions that have clear cut answers so that the marking is consistent across the board and not open to interpretation. We allow for spelling mistakes but otherwise the marking is precise.

With multiple markers working in each heat we must ensure fairness so half-right answers are marked incorrect to ensure consistency. We do not award half points. For example:

- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time = correct, one point
- The Incident of the Dog in the Night-time = incorrect, no point
- The Curious Incident of the Dog at Night = incorrect, no point

When the answers are submitted throughout the quiz the marking team will review each answer and then add up the points for each round, providing a total at the end.

During the quiz, teams must assume that the answers read aloud by quiz master Mr Dilly are the only answers that are acceptable to the marking team. The marking team and the moderators will not discuss variations of possible answers in the MS Teams Chat function. If you have any concerns, then please email NRCQ@literacytrusts.org.uk after your heat for clarification.

Each region has a regional organiser who has volunteered to help run the quiz. They provide a team of markers and all work extremely hard on the day to provide fair, fast and precise scoring. We all owe them a huge amount of thanks because otherwise this quiz wouldn't be able to take place.

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6. How and when do we find out our score and the final leader board results?

Schools who are placed in the top three will be announced at the end of the quiz by the quizmaster. A full scoreboard will be circulated afterwards to each region so that schools can see how they placed. Scores will not be shared by the NLT in any further public capacity outside of the individual heat circulation list post-event.

In the event of a tie for first place, a tie-breaker question will be actioned before the quiz finishes, and the scoreboard finalised and announced after the results of the tiebreaker are in. No tiebreaker will take place if schools tie for second or third place, only for first place.

7. What are the prizes and when will we receive them?

All participants are supplied with a certificate for taking part via the quiz website.

For the regional heats the prizes are:

- **First** - £100 book token (£25 per student) plus regional trophy
- **Second** - £80 book token (£20 per student)
- **Third** - £60 book token (£15 per student)

In addition to the top three prizes, each heat will have a £30 book voucher for:

- **Participation prize** - the school (outside of the top three) with the best engagement e.g., cheering or team spirit, as judged by the quiz master and National Literacy Trust moderator
- **Newcomer prize** - a 'welcome to the quiz' (outside of the top three) awarded to a school quizzing with us for the first time

All regional heat prizes will be despatched in the summer term and should be received by the end of May.

8. Quiz delivery

Most regional heats will be delivered online via MS Teams. We are running a small number of in-person heats. These will all be listed on the booking form at the time of registration. Please do take extra care when booking to make sure you book into the correct heat. If you enter a team out of area then your score will be disallowed.

The regional heats will be delivered by quiz master, Mr Dilly. All events are live and will not be recorded. Mr Dilly will read aloud all 75 questions and give 15 seconds for the teams to write down each of their answers. There will be a couple of minutes after each category for the teams to check their answers for the round and, when instructed to by Mr Dilly, submit their answer emails to the marking team.

Mr Dilly will guide and support your students through the quiz in a friendly, encouraging and energetic way.

The quiz will last around two and a half hours and will take place during standard school hours.

Online heats:

You will access your regional heat via a live link. **This link and any additional information will be sent one week in advance of your regional heat**. Please advise us at least 48 hours in advance if you have not received the link. Do not wait until the morning of your quiz to flag you have not received the information; there are multiple elements to delivering each live quiz and we may not be able to help you in time.

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The event will open on MS Teams before the quiz starts with a countdown slide of 30 minutes– this slide has a checklist for schools and background music so you can check your connectivity AND audio. We recommend all schools log on to the quiz at this time and certainly no less than 15 minutes before the start. This allows time for you or a colleague to rectify any IT difficulties.

If the quiz is due to start at 10am then you will be able to log on from 9.30am. Please do not wait until 10am to advise the NLT moderators you have no audio, let us help you sort this out in the 30 minutes beforehand.

It takes around ten minutes to read and answer each round. There will be a 15-minute interval after round four (half-way through) to allow for food, drink and a bathroom break.

In-person heats:

Regional organisers in charge of the heat will contact you directly with information pertaining to your specific heat but the structure remains the same.

9. Technical advice for the online quiz heats

Email accounts: You will need to decide from which email account(s) you will be sending in your team(s) answers. At least **48 hours** ahead of your regional heat you need to send an email from each email account to your designated marker email address. This ensures that emails are getting through and not being blocked anywhere. Do not send a test email and then decide on quiz day to use a different email address, as that will be untested and may not reach the marking team correctly.

Please note you do not need to have an MS Teams account at school to access the quiz. You will be emailed a live link in advance of the quiz, which will look like this:

Click here to join the meeting.

When you click on it at the appointed time you will be able to join the quiz through your standard web browser. **As soon as you join the online quiz please introduce your school and team (Team A or Team B if you have both) in the chat function**.

E.g., Hello from Abbey School Team B! / We are the Firth School Team A&B etc.

You will need to mute yourself and your team throughout the quiz and please do not interrupt the quiz at any point by unmuting yourselves.

If you have any queries then these can be written in the chat function on MS Teams and will be addressed by the National Literacy Trust, moderating the heat in the background, rather than the quiz master who will be busy delivering the live quiz.

Submitting your answers:

Two categories will be submitted each time.

Please type your answers out as a list, start a new line for each question and start each line with the question number (even if you do not know the answer).

Correct example:

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. X (if answer unknown)
5. True
6. False
7. John
8. X (if answer unknown)
9. Her sister
10. The Little Prince

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Incorrect examples:

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. True
5. False
6. John
7. Her sister
8. The Little Pri

In this example, the team have omitted the answer for the question they cannot answer, but not the question number. The only indication for the markers that something is wrong, is when they realise there are no answers after no.8. So which questions couldn't the team answer? 9 & 10 or any number between nos. 1 to 8. Again this is not for the markers to guess at or investigate.

1. A
2. B
3. C

5. True
6. False
7. John

9. Her sister
10. The Little Prince

In this example, the team simply omitted the question they couldn't answer altogether. The answers look ok as they run 1 to 10, but nos. 4 & 8 are missing. For markers using a grid this is confusing and wastes precious time.

School with one team entered:

- the minimum requirement is one computer that the team use to watch both the quiz on Microsoft Teams and answer the questions via email (split screen format – one screen required).
- an alternative set up would be to have the quiz delivered on a computer/smartboard in classroom while the team work on a separate computer and answer the questions via email (two screens required and recommended).

School with two teams entered:

- if both teams are in the same room, then both teams watch the quiz via the same screen/smartboard, but they have their own computer per team to write and submit their answer via email – N.B. make sure the teams can't confer/hear each other (three screens required).
- if two teams are in two different rooms then they can use either of the options mentioned above for the one team entry format (one or two screens required depending on choice).

Photo to give an idea how your set up could work:



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Webcams: it is vital that you have a working webcam so please ensure you have booked and tested this ahead of time. If the NLT moderators and marking team cannot see your team(s) then we cannot accept your submission. The whole team needs to be in view, not just one member.

The most successful set up is a webcam situated at the front of the room which captures your team(s) in full - it allows for transparency and space for teams to move, celebrate and enjoy themselves whilst remaining on camera.

10. Wi-Fi connection

Internet connection is an essential part of a successful online quiz. If your internet connection is lost or you do not hear a question properly, due to a bad connection, please do not verbally interrupt the quiz or ask the quiz master for questions to be read aloud again. With so many teams and so many questions it would be too difficult to accommodate multiple requests. Please use the chat function during the quiz and the National Literacy Trust moderators will do their best to bring you up to speed on any questions you may have missed.

If your internet goes down during the quiz, please email NRCQ@literacytrust.org.uk. If possible, have a mobile phone available so that you can at least stream the quiz live to your students and you can complete the quiz as best as possible. If you have a fire alarm (yes, this has happened a few times!) then let the moderators know and we will most likely email you the questions missed, to bring you up to speed as quickly as possible.

We cannot circulate full sets of questions to individual schools before, during or after the quiz.

11. Safeguarding and integrity of an online quiz

– this is very important and must be read!

- Teams must always be chaperoned by an adult.
- The use of phones or search engines is not allowed during the quiz.
- Cameras need to be on from the start to ensure transparency during the whole quiz.
- No member of staff must help the students in answering the questions, especially if a staff member is acting as a team's scribe.
- Your teams are not allowed an audience; ideally your team should not be in a public area and there should be no help from passers-by.
- If two teams are competing, they must not confer.

Please help us maintain the integrity and high standards of this quiz by not interfering with your students' discussions and answers. This moment is all about their own knowledge and achievement – let's help them celebrate that.

12. Permissions

In terms of permission from parents it might help for them to know that the heat is not being recorded (it's a live event). It is a closed, invitation-only meeting and the only people, besides the school teams, who will be on the call will be the Regional Organiser, Mr Dilly (the quiz master) and colleagues from the National Literacy Trust. If you have a child who doesn't want to be recognised on screen then they could sit with their back to the camera and still participate as part of the team if they are sitting on opposite sides of a table. If an author is able to attend your heat, then you will be given advance warning.

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13. Size of regional heats

We allow 28 teams per regional heat. This number allows students to enjoy a close rapport with their fellow competitors and the quiz master and gives teams a good chance of winning a prize. A standard number allows for a similar experience across all heats.

There is a cut-off date for applying, but please note applications will be closed for individual heats as soon as they become full, so you are encouraged to sign up as soon as possible. We will run a waiting list for those schools who would like to fill any cancellation positions.

Equally we are running three cross-regional heats for schools who are unable to secure a place in their regional heat because it is sold out, because their heat is in-person and they cannot travel or because it is on a date not available to them.

14. Reaching the grand final

The winner from each of the regional heats will go on to take part in the grand final. The final will take place, face to face, at a venue in central London and will involve the support of well-known authors and sponsors. The format will be like the regional heats but with a fresh set of categories and questions.

If you qualify for the final please start making travel arrangements for you and your students as quickly as possible.

15. What if my team cannot attend on the day of my regional heat?

According to the Terms and Conditions you can claim a refund up to a month in advance. After this time unfortunately no refund will be given. However, please do email NRCQ@literacytrust.org.uk as soon as you can if you have a problem, because we will do our best to accommodate you in an alternative heat if there is space available.

If you are able to, having an additional colleague connected to the quiz and ready to step in at the last minute, in case the lead contact is unable to support the team(s) on the day, can be helpful to try and mitigate any last-minute cancellations.

16. What is the entry fee for?

The fee allows you entrance to the quiz and all funds are invested directly back into the quiz.

17. What if I cannot attend my allocated regional heat?

If you cannot attend on the date allocated to your regional heat, or your heat is an in-person event and you cannot travel with your team to take part, please book a place in one of the three cross-regional heats. Please do not choose another region that is 'nearby' to your own. If you enter a heat out of area, then your score will not count. Either book for your specific region or book into a cross-regional heat.

Please note: in 2026 we ran a pilot scheme in one region where we asked a school that had won for three consecutive years to step aside into a cross-regional heat for a year to allow a different school a chance at coming first. We are grateful to the King's School, Cheshire for trialling this for us and proving its effectiveness.

Therefore, going forward, any school that has won their heat for three consecutive years will be asked to participate in a cross-regional heat for one year to allow for wider opportunities across their specific region.

We wish for every school to have a chance at qualifying for the grand final and all that the experience brings and so expect this 'fallow year rule' to support as open a competition as possible.

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18. What are the different regional heats?

Area	Counties	Cities and towns as examples
Northern Ireland: in-person	All	All
Wales: online	All	All
NW, W and SW Scotland, Scottish Isles: online	Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Orkney Islands, Renfrewshire, Shetland Islands, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, The Highlands, West Dunbartonshire	e.g., Glasgow, Greenock, Kilmarnock, Stirling, Dunblane, Airdrie, Dumbarton, Inverness
NE, E and SE Scotland: online	Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, City of Edinburgh, Dundee City, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Moray, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, West Lothian	e.g., Edinburgh, Dunfermline, Perth, Kirkcaldy, Falkirk, Aberdeen, Dundee
Merseyside and Greater Manchester: in-person	Merseyside, The Wirral, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, South Lancashire	e.g., Liverpool, St Helens, Chester, Crewe, Macclesfield, Alsager, Southport, Warrington, Manchester, Rochdale, Bolton, Wigan, Altrincham
Merseyside and Greater Manchester: online	Merseyside, The Wirral, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, South Lancashire	e.g., Liverpool, St Helens, Chester, Crewe, Macclesfield, Alsager, Southport, Warrington, Manchester, Rochdale, Bolton, Wigan, Altrincham

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Northeast England: online	Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Durham, Teesside	e.g., Newcastle, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Durham, Sunderland, Gateshead, Hexham, and Morpeth
Northwest England: online	Cumbria, North Lancashire, Isle of Man (**excluding Merseyside and Manchester areas – see specific heat**)	e.g., Cockermouth, Sedbergh, Preston, Lancaster, Blackburn, Blackpool
Yorkshire: online	North Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire	e.g., York, Leeds, Wakefield, Skipton, Bradford, Hull, Sheffield, Doncaster, Barnsley, Settle, Hawes
West Midlands: online	Staffordshire, Shropshire, Hereford & Worcester, West Midlands, and Warwickshire	e.g., Birmingham, Coventry, Warwick, Stratford upon Avon, Stoke on Trent, Stafford, Wolverhampton, Worcester, Evesham, Telford
East Midlands: online	Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, Rutland	e.g., Worksop, Corby, Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham, Oakham, Immingham, Lincoln, Bourne, Uppingham, Northampton, Towcester, Kettering, Sleaford, Spalding, Brackley
Oxford, Berkshire & Buckinghamshire: online	Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire	e.g., Oxford, Burford, Witney, Banbury, Wantage, Abingdon, Newbury, Reading, Wokingham, Slough, Maidenhead, Windsor, Ascot, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, High Wycombe
East England: in-person	Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire	e.g., Norwich, King's Lynn, Ipswich, Stowmarket, Downham Market, Aylsham, Attleborough, Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Peterborough, Huntingdon

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Thames Gateway, East London, Essex and Kent: in-person	Essex, Kent and all London schools with an E## postcode	e.g., Colchester, Chelmsford, Southend, Romford, Epping, Harlow, Barking, Walthamstow, Stratford, Dartford, Rochester, Orpington, Canterbury, Saffron Walden, Thurrock, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Dover, Sevenoaks, Maidstone
Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire: online	Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire	e.g., Stevenage, Hertford, Potters Bar, St Albans Watford, Berkhamsted, Dunstable, Luton, Harpenden, Hatfield, Letchworth, Bishop Stortford
North London and West London: online	London schools with N##, NW## postcodes, W##	e.g., Ruislip, Harrow, Ealing, Enfield, **PLUS HOUNSLOW**
Southwest London: in-person	London schools with SW##, EC## and WC## postcodes, Surrey inside M25	e.g., Fulham, Teddington, Reigate, Banstead, Egham, Southall, City of London, Sutton, Kingston **EXCLUDING HOUNSLOW**
Southeast London: in-person	London schools with SE## and BR## postcodes, Croydon	e.g., Bromley, Bexley, Croydon, Dulwich, Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark, Woolwich
South England: online	East & West Sussex, Hampshire, Surrey outside M25	e.g., Eastbourne, Chichester, I of Wight, Basingstoke, Southampton, Portsmouth, Horsham, Guildford
Southwest England: online	Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall	e.g., Gloucester, Bristol, Bath, Dorchester, Exeter, Swindon, Trowbridge, Truro, Taunton
Cross-regional Heat One: online	Any school not able to attend their regional heat	All UK
Cross-regional Heat Two: online	Any school not able to attend their regional heat	All UK

Thank you and good luck!

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