

What

**Kids**

Are

**Reading**

Australian 2025 edition

## **Foreword**

### **Megan Light**

#### **Kids Own Australian Literature Awards Council Member and Past President Junior School Teacher Librarian, Cranbrook School**

Reading connects young Australians to ideas, stories, and voices that shape who they are and how they see the world. The What Kids Are Reading 2025 report provides a comprehensive overview of children's and young adults' reading engagement across the country, offering valuable insights into the titles they choose, the genres that sustain them, and the patterns that emerge in their reading journeys.

The data affirms that students often return to familiar titles that appear on bestseller lists and feature in children's choice awards. This is a natural and important part of developing as a reader. Yet, the report also reminds us to ask a critical question: how do we guide and support students to read beyond the familiar, to stretch their skills, and to sustain a lifelong connection with books?

The report's recommendations are clear. Providing access to both much-loved favourites and fresh voices, encouraging variety, introducing new authors and genres, and building communities of readers where students share their own recommendations - all play a vital role in keeping young Australians engaged. Students are most likely to remain readers when their choices reflect their personal interests, experiences, and curiosities - while also opening doors to new perspectives.

At the heart of these strategies are school libraries and teacher librarians, whose expertise makes them essential partners in learning. Yet, at a time when this need is greater than ever, Australia faces a steady decline in both. Too many schools are reducing or closing their libraries, and qualified teacher librarians are becoming increasingly scarce. This loss risks narrowing students opportunities, particularly in communities where access to books and expert guidance is already limited.

The What Kids Are Reading 2025 report is an invitation to conversation and action for schools, parents, and educators: to build a collective commitment to ensure every student experiences growth through reading - as a source of creativity, empathy, and lifelong learning.

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#### **Introduction**

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# Introduction

## By Crispin Chatterton, Director of Education, Renaissance

Welcome to the 2025 What Kids Are Reading report for Australia. Like the US and UK editions published earlier this year, it is an authoritative guide to the books read and enjoyed over an entire academic year, using insights from Accelerated Reader quizzes.

This report examines the reading habits of nearly 60,000 students across 356 schools nationwide. Collectively, they read over 20 billion words from more than one million books, averaging 17.1 books each.

While the data shows that reading engagement remains strong, it also signals some emerging challenges. The average ATOS book difficulty score held steady at 3.8, but average comprehension scores dipped slightly to 74%. This underscores the importance of balancing reading volume with comprehension, particularly as students progress to more complex texts.

The reading picture differs markedly between primary and secondary students. In primary years, engagement and comprehension levels remain high, reflecting the strong reading habits built in the early stages of schooling. In secondary years,

however, both reading volume and comprehension drop, with students often selecting easier material. This transition period poses a key challenge for Australian schools, underscoring the need for targeted strategies to maintain momentum and enhance comprehension skills.

As always, the report provides teachers, librarians, and parents with valuable information on the books and authors most engaging pupils of all ages. At Renaissance, our goal remains to provide insights that help foster a lifelong love of reading and support schools in building the confidence, comprehension, and curiosity of every student – and we hope that this report proves to be a helpful guide in achieving these objectives.

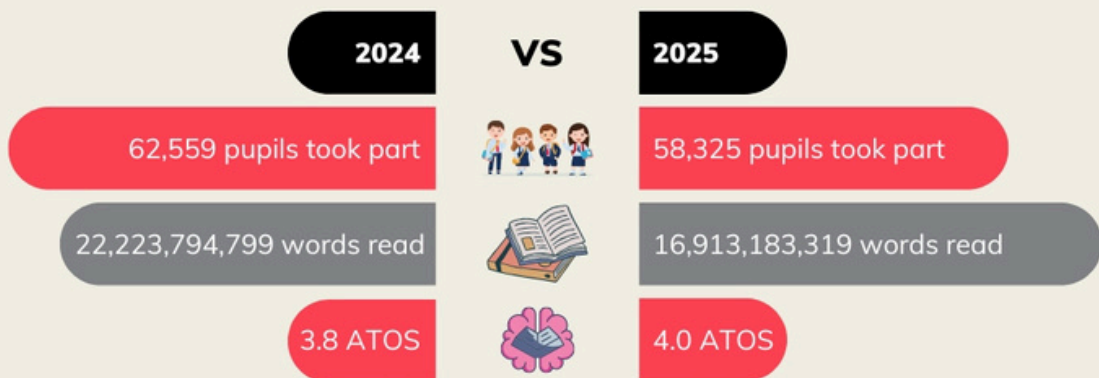
### Closing the gap between reading and understanding

Across Australia and New Zealand, students are continuing to choose books that offer a healthy level of challenge. Yet, comprehension hasn't always kept pace with the complexity of those texts, particularly in the secondary years. This suggests that while students are engaged with their reading, more targeted support is needed to help them fully absorb and reflect on what they read.

### Sustaining strong reading habits and turning them into lifelong skills

Students across the region remain committed readers, regularly engaging with books and building positive reading habits. The task now is to harness this enthusiasm and guide it towards deeper comprehension and critical thinking. By pairing choice and enjoyment with strategies that strengthen understanding, schools can help ensure that reading remains both a habit and a skill for life.

## COMPARISON



# Overview of Reading Habits in Australia

## Participation and Scope

The 2025 report draws on data from **58,325** students across **356** schools in Australia and New Zealand, a 7% decrease from last year. Despite the drop in participation, engagement with the Accelerated Reader (AR) program remained strong, with students reading **996,614** books over the year, an average of 17.1 books per student, matching 2024 levels.

However, the total words read declined from 22.2 billion in 2024 to 20.4 billion in 2025, reflecting broader shifts in reading habits and underlining the importance of maintaining momentum, particularly as students enter secondary school.

### Participation and scope

The average book difficulty (ATOS) was **3.8**, consistent with previous years, while the average comprehension score (APC) was 76%, below the recommended benchmark of 85%. This gap between book choice and comprehension suggests that while students are selecting moderately challenging texts, they may not always be reading them with deep understanding.

## Reading Trends and Performance

As in previous years, primary school students (**Years K–6**) demonstrated higher engagement and stronger comprehension than their secondary peers. They read more books, took more quizzes, and achieved higher APC scores. In contrast, secondary students (**Years 7–12**) showed a noticeable decline in both reading volume and comprehension, with many opting for less challenging material. This mirrors international patterns and highlights the need for targeted secondary reading programs to sustain engagement and strengthen comprehension as students progress through their schooling.

The data also reinforces that the transition from primary to secondary remains a critical turning point for reading habits. Students often face heavier workloads, more screen-based learning, and a wider range of extracurricular commitments, all of which can reduce time spent on voluntary reading. Without structured support — such as dedicated reading time, guided book selection, and teacher-led comprehension strategies — these students risk losing the literacy gains made in their earlier years. Addressing this drop-off is key to ensuring that secondary students continue to develop the critical thinking, vocabulary, and comprehension skills needed for academic success and lifelong learning.

# Years K-2

In the early years of schooling, Australian students continued to show strong engagement with books by local authors. Anh Do and Aaron Blabey once again topped the most-read lists, with titles such as *WeirDo* and *The Bad Guys* proving popular for their humour, relatable characters, and strong visual appeal.

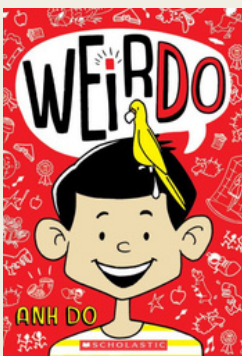
The average ATOS score for K–2 was 2.8, which is slightly above chronological age expectations, indicating that young readers are still selecting texts that challenge them. However, the average comprehension score (APC) remained steady at 80%, suggesting that while students are engaging with these books, comprehension continues to require support.

Picture books and early chapter books remained key to building foundational literacy skills. Still, the data suggest that younger students often read at a difficulty level slightly above their comprehension ability. This highlights the ongoing importance of guided reading support from teachers and families.

## Most Popular Books

In the early years of schooling, students across Australia and New Zealand continue to gravitate towards local favourites. Anh Do’s *WeirDo* and Aaron Blabey’s *The Bad Guys* and *Pig the Pug* remain at the top of the most-read lists, thanks to their humour, bold illustrations, and relatable characters.

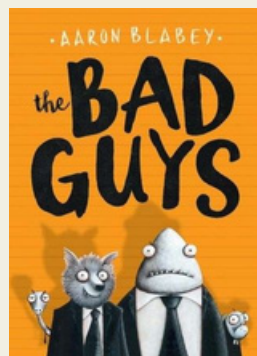
The average ATOS score for K–2 was slightly above age expectations, showing young readers are willing to take on a challenge. Comprehension scores, however, suggest there’s still value in guided support from teachers and families to help them fully engage with these stories. These top titles balance fun with learning — from *WeirDo*’s silly school-life situations to *The Bad Guys*’ action-packed adventures and *Pig the Pug*’s gentle lessons in kindness — helping build the foundations for a lifelong love of reading.



### **WeirDo**

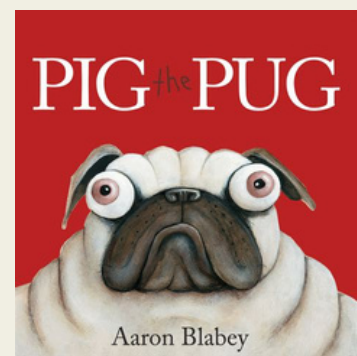
Anh Do  
(3.4/LY 5-8)

Title, Author (ATOS level, interest level)



### **The Bad Guys**

Aaron Blabey  
(2.4/LY 5-8)



### **Pig the Pug**

Aaron Blabey  
(1.7/LY 5-8)

## Research Analysis\*

### Years K-2:

# Establishing a Strong Reading Foundation

The early primary years are a pivotal stage in building lifelong reading habits. These are the years when children move from recognising words to making meaning from text, a shift that shapes their confidence and success as readers. Our 2025 data confirms that Australian students in K–2 continue to engage with books that challenge them, but their comprehension often<sup>1</sup>lags behind their enthusiasm for reading.

This is not unusual. At this stage, students are developing the stamina and skills to move beyond sounding out words to truly understand the content. Books that mix visual storytelling with simple narratives, such as picture books and early chapter books, remain key to bridging that gap.

#### Why daily reading practice matters

Building reading stamina takes time and regular practice. Research shows that the amount of time spent reading is a powerful predictor of literacy growth. Students who read more often are exposed to a broader range of vocabulary, sentence structures, and ideas, which in turn enhances their comprehension and fluency.

Even small increases in daily reading time add up. Students who read for at least 15 minutes per day are likely to encounter millions of words over their schooling, words they may not come across in conversation or classroom instruction. This daily exposure feeds both vocabulary growth and critical thinking skills, laying the foundation for academic success.

The data also highlights a key challenge: more than half of K–2 students still fail to meet the 15-minute daily reading benchmark. With busy family lives and packed school schedules, finding time for reading can be a struggle. This underscores the importance of schools, families, and communities working together to create space and support for regular reading practice.

## The More Kids Read, The More They Grow

Reading even 15 minutes a day exposes students to millions more words—building vocabulary, literacy skills, and background knowledge.



**Less than  
15 min/day**  
1.5 million words  
by graduation



**6.8 million  
words by  
graduation**

Reading may look passive, but every word encountered builds knowledge. This incidental vocabulary learning comes in addition to words learned through direct instruction, and the difference over time is enormous.

## Unlocking interest through STEM topics

Young readers are naturally curious, and tapping into that curiosity can be the key to motivating them to read more. One of the most promising trends in 2025 was the continued appeal of STEM-themed books among early readers.

While STEM titles represented a small share of total reading volume, many K–2 students still chose at least one book on topics like space, animals, machines, and the natural world. These subjects sparked engagement, especially among students who might otherwise read less.

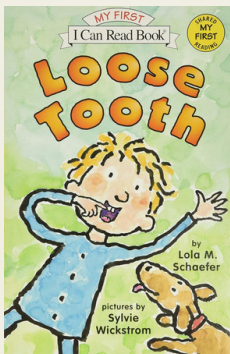
STEM books often combine accessible language with vivid illustrations or engaging facts, helping students build knowledge while practising reading. They also offer an ideal bridge between fiction and non-fiction, supporting both literacy and subject knowledge.

# STEM topics inspire young readers



### Popular STEM Books for K-2

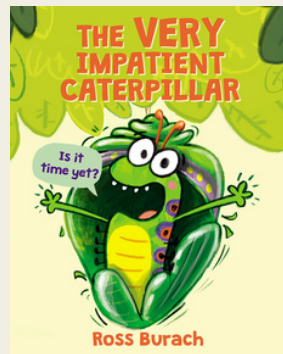
Consider these popular STEM titles and find others at [www.arbookfind.com.au](http://www.arbookfind.com.au).



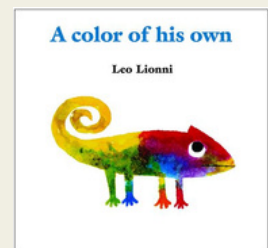
**Loose Tooth**  
Lola M. Schaefer  
(0.9/LY 5-8)



**From Head to Toe**  
Eric Carle  
(1.0/LY 5-8)



**The Very Impatient Caterpillar**  
Ross Burach  
(1.7/LY 5-8)



**A Color of His Own**  
Leo Lionni  
(2.3/LY 5-8)



# Years 3-5

By Years 3–5, Australian students are reading more independently and starting to show distinct preferences for series and authors.

In 2025, the most-read books reflected a strong appetite for humour, adventure, and fantasy, with *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Harry Potter*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* remaining top choices.

The average ATOS level rose to 5.3, confirming that students are selecting longer and slightly more complex texts than in earlier years.

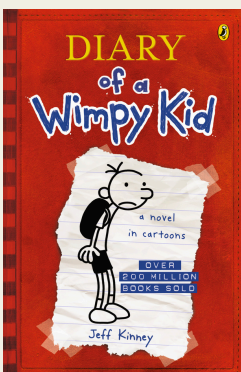
However, the average comprehension (APC) slipped to 79%, down slightly from last year, which may reflect the growing gap between what students want to read and what they fully understand.

This suggests that while reading motivation is high, comprehension support remains essential, especially as students begin to experiment with more sophisticated language, complex plots, and deeper themes.

## Most Popular Books

For Years 3–5 in Australia, titles like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* by J.K. Rowling, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl remain perennial favourites for their mix of humour, fantasy, and relatable moments.

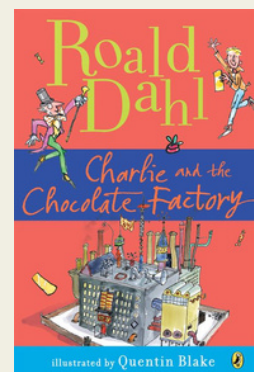
The *Wimpy Kid* series hooks readers with Greg Heffley’s everyday mishaps, blending diary-style humour with comical illustrations that make even reluctant readers eager to turn the page. While Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series offers a more challenging read, drawing students into a world of magic, mystery, and adventure. Alongside the fantastical elements, strong themes of friendship, bravery, and perseverance give readers both a sense of escapism and opportunities for deeper reflection.



**Diary of a Wimpy Kid**  
Jeff Kinney  
(5.2/MY 9-13)



**Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone**  
JK Rowling  
(6.0, MY 9-13)



**Charlie and the Chocolate Factory**  
Roald Dahl  
(4.8/MY 9-13)

## Research Analysis\*

### Years 3-5:

# Maintaining Reading Momentum

Years 3–5 mark a turning point in reading development. Students at this stage move beyond learning to read; they begin reading to learn. This shift means they not only encounter more challenging texts but also need to develop the habits and skills to understand and engage with them more deeply.

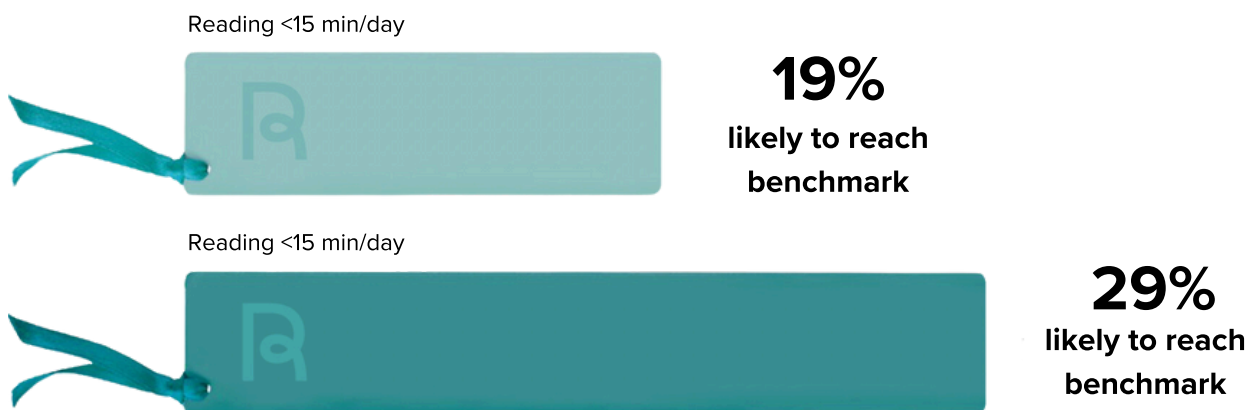
Our 2025 data highlights the significant impact reading practice can have. Students in Years 3–5 who read for 15 minutes\* or more each day were more likely to show growth in comprehension and overall reading achievement. In fact, those who started the year below the benchmark increased their chances of reaching the benchmark by 10 percentage points when they established a regular daily reading habit.

## After learning to read, do kids really need to keep practising this skill each day?

Making time for reading, even small amounts each day, can have a lasting impact. This is particularly true for students at risk of falling behind, as the additional exposure to words, ideas, and complex language structures supports both comprehension and confidence. The difference between reading for a few minutes and sustaining that practice for 15 minutes or more each day can mean a noticeable boost in achievement by the year’s end.

For many students, this daily commitment becomes a turning point, helping them move from passive readers to active, engaged learners. Consistent reading time not only reinforces vocabulary and fluency but also builds the stamina needed for more complex texts. By making reading a regular part of the day—whether at school, at home, or both, students strengthen the skills that will support them across all areas of learning.

### At Risk Readers Hit the Mark with 15+ minutes per Day



\*Source: Based on data from Accelerated Reader

## Years 3–5: The power of series reading

One of the strongest patterns in the 2025 data is the ongoing popularity of book series among students in Years 3 through 5. Whether it's following the adventures of Greg Heffley in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* or joining Harry Potter at Hogwarts, book series remain a key driver of reading engagement. Series provide readers with a familiar world, recurring characters, and storylines that develop over time. This familiarity helps young readers build confidence, increases their motivation to pick up the next book, and encourages them to spend more time reading overall.

### Why Series Matter

- They build reading habits: Students who connect with a series are more likely to make reading a daily habit.
- They increase reading volume: With each new book, students naturally extend their reading time and exposure to vocabulary.
- They grow reading stamina: Longer series help students tackle bigger books and follow more complex plots over time.

Beyond these benefits, series reading also fosters a sense of community and shared experience among students. Talking about characters, predicting plot twists, and recommending the next book to friends creates social motivation to keep reading. This peer-to-peer encouragement can be particularly powerful in classrooms, where a popular series can spark a wave of reading enthusiasm across the cohort.

### Encouraging Series Reading

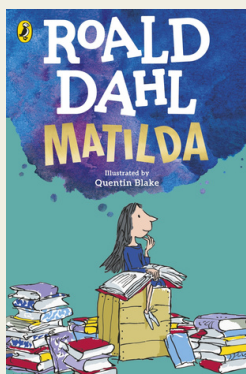
Educators and families can help maintain reading momentum by encouraging students to explore series they enjoy and by introducing them to new ones. Providing access to a mix of familiar favourites and new series helps keep readers engaged and challenges them to stretch their skills.

## Popular Books for 3-5

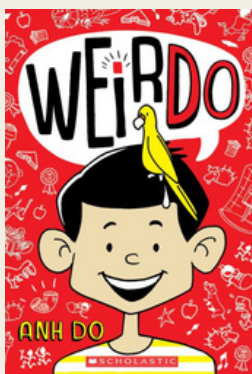
Consider these popular titles and find others at [www.arbookfind.com.au](http://www.arbookfind.com.au).



**Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**  
JK Rowling  
(6.0/MY 9-13)



**Matilda**  
Roald Dahl  
(5.0/MY 9-13)



**WeirDo**  
Anh Do  
(3.4/LG K-3)



**Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire**  
JK Rowling  
(6.8/MY 9-13)



# Years 6-8

Years 6–8 represent a critical stage in reading development, and one of the most challenging. In primary school, students often experience rapid growth in reading, but by middle school, that momentum begins to stall.

Our 2025 data show that while students in years 6–8 are selecting books with a higher average difficulty (ATOS 5.6), their average comprehension has dropped to 76%. This is part of a broader trend we have observed across multiple years: reading engagement and comprehension tend to plateau or decline as students move into the later primary and early secondary years.

The reasons are clear. Social dynamics, extracurricular activities, and growing academic demands all compete for time to read. Added to this is the temptation for students to revisit well-loved series or easier books rather than challenge themselves with new material.

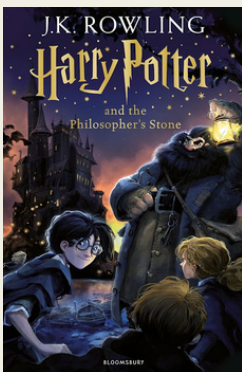
Yet, maintaining a regular reading habit during these years remains critical. Students who read daily, especially for 15 minutes or more with good comprehension, show stronger growth in literacy skills compared to peers who read less frequently.

## Why middle school reading matters

The middle years are a time when students begin to develop independent study habits and take on more complex academic work. Reading supports not only English outcomes but also comprehension across various subjects, including science, history, and mathematics.

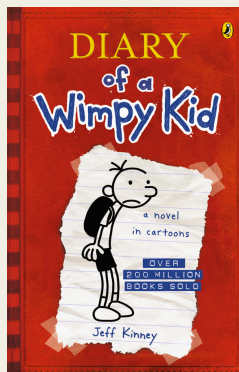
Helping students sustain reading through these years means helping them sustain overall academic confidence. Encouraging variety, introducing new authors, and maintaining access to high-interest books all play a role.

These books have become mainstays for students in years 6–8, blending humour, fantasy, and dystopian adventure. These titles succeed because they meet students at their level, offering excitement and connection while still pushing them to engage with more substantial texts.



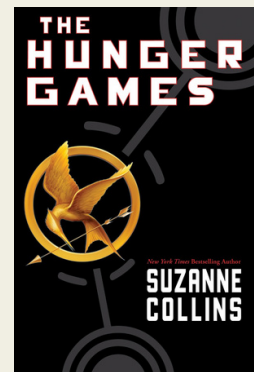
**Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**

JK Rowling  
(6.0/MY 9-13)



**Diary of a Wimpy Kid**

Jeff Kinney  
(5.2/MY, 9-13)



**The Hunger Games**  
Suzanne Collins

(5.3/MY 12+ )

## Research Analysis\*

### Years 6-8:

# Re-Engaging Youthful Readers

While overall comprehension scores decline slightly in middle school, the impact of consistent reading remains clear. Students who read for 15 minutes or more per day, with strong comprehension, consistently show higher growth in literacy skills compared to their peers. The challenge is finding ways to encourage students to continue reading despite the distractions and pressures of early adolescence.

#### What works for middle school readers

- Offer choice and variety: Students are more likely to keep reading when they can choose books that reflect their interests, whether that's fantasy, adventure, mystery, or real-world topics.
- Encourage series reading: Our data shows that students who read multiple books in a series tend to spend more time reading overall. Series help build habits by offering a familiar world that students want to return to.
- Promote peer recommendations: Students often trust book suggestions from classmates more than from adults. Creating space for students to share recommendations builds a community of readers.
- Balance challenge and comfort: While favourite series like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Harry Potter* remain popular, encouraging students also to try new genres or authors can help extend their skills and interests.

Students who maintain strong reading habits grow not only in literacy but also in their ability to handle academic content across various subjects. These middle years are not the time to ease off reading; they are when sustained engagement matters most.

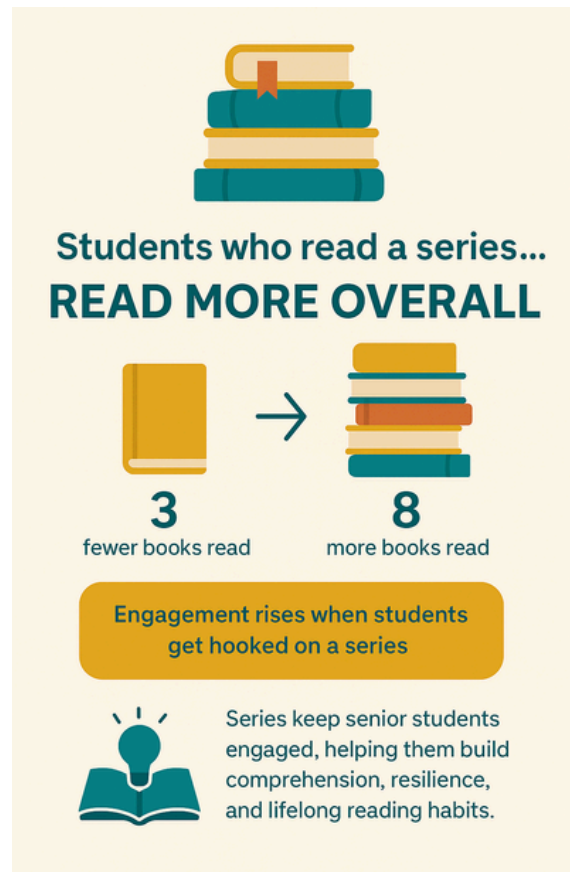


## Why series reading matters in years 6–8

The middle school years are a critical period when reading habits can either flourish or decline. Our 2025 data confirms that students who engage with multiple book series read more, spend more time reading daily, and show stronger reading growth.

Students who read three or more series over the year:

- Read an average of 50 books, more than double the average for students who read only two series (23 books)
- Spent 46 minutes reading daily, nearly double the 24 minutes recorded for students who read non-series books
- Built stronger reading stamina, improving their overall literacy engagement



**Students who read a series...  
READ MORE OVERALL**

3 fewer books read → 8 more books read

Engagement rises when students get hooked on a series

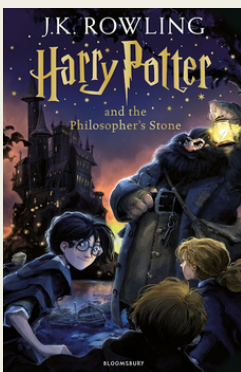
Series keep senior students engaged, helping them build comprehension, resilience, and lifelong reading habits.

**Students who got hooked on a series were drawn back again and again, not just to that series but to reading itself. This engagement translated into more time spent reading and a higher volume of books read.**

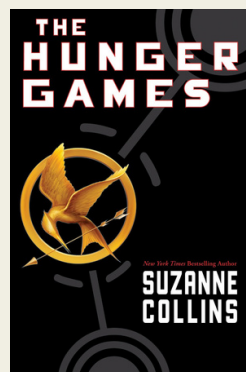
- breakdown is based on US data

## Popular Book Series for Years 6–8

Consider these popular book titles and find others at [www.arbookfind.com.au](http://www.arbookfind.com.au)



**Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**  
JK Rowling  
(6.0/MY 9-13)



**The Hunger Games**  
Suzanne Collins  
(5.3/MY 12+)



**Wonder**  
JR.J. Palacio  
(4.8/MY 9-13)



**Once**  
Morris Gleitzman  
(4.1/MY 12+)



# Years 9-12

By the time students reach years 9–12, reading for pleasure has often been replaced by academic demands, social commitments, and digital distractions. Our 2025 data indicate that this is the point at which both reading engagement and comprehension decline sharply, and where the gap between reading potential and actual reading becomes most apparent.

The average ATOS level for years 9–12 was 5.9, a modest increase from years 6–8, but still well below the expected reading age levels for this group. Despite being capable of tackling more complex texts, many students continue to select books better suited to much younger readers.

At the same time, average comprehension dropped to 82%, down from 89% in previous years. This suggests that even when students do read, they may not be engaging with texts in a way that builds deeper understanding.

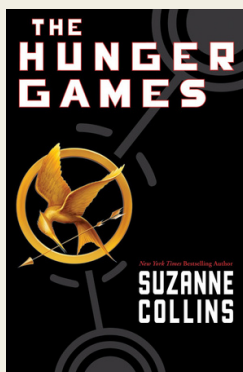
## The challenge of the senior secondary years

Students in years 9–12 were reading, on average, three years or more below their chronological age. This reading gap has significant implications, not just for literacy outcomes, but for performance across subjects that demand critical reading, analysis, and comprehension.

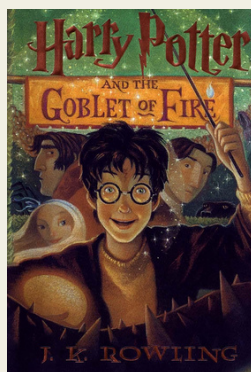
While some classic literature appears among the most-read books, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Animal Farm*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, these titles are likely linked to curriculum requirements rather than student choice.

Popular series like *Harry Potter*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and *CHERUB* remain among the top selections. However, even within this group, notable shifts have occurred: J.K. Rowling’s presence in the top lists dropped from seven titles to three, reflecting changing student preferences.

These results suggest that even in senior secondary, students often gravitate to familiar titles or curriculum-driven reading, with few pushing themselves toward new or more challenging material.



**The Hunger Games**  
Suzanne Collins  
(5.3/MY 12+)



**Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire**  
JK Rowling  
(6.8/MY 9-13)



**Cherub Series**  
Robert Muchamore  
(5.4/MY 12+)

## Research Analysis\*

### Years 9-12:

# Realities of High School Reading

Our 2025 data makes one thing clear: by the time students reach years 9–12, reading habits are at risk of dropping off entirely. While many students maintain some connection to reading through curriculum texts or favourite series, far fewer continue to read widely or for pleasure.

The challenge is compounded by the fact that academic reading demands increase in these years. Students who are not regularly practising comprehension and critical reading outside of set texts may struggle to meet the expectations of senior secondary study.

## What helps senior students stay engaged with reading

- **Choice matters:** Providing students with options, even within a set curriculum, increases the likelihood that they will engage with the material. Access to a broad range of genres, authors, and formats can help sustain interest.
- **Relatability counts:** Books that reflect students' own experiences, questions, or world views are more likely to capture their attention. Introducing contemporary authors alongside classics may help bridge this gap.
- **Encourage reading beyond assessment:** When reading is only linked to assignments or exams, it risks being seen as a chore. Building space for independent reading, even in small doses, helps reconnect students with reading for enjoyment or interest.
- **Discuss, don't just assign:** Class discussions, debates, and shared reading experiences can transform reading from a solitary task into a shared activity that builds engagement.

### Why it matters

Reading habits formed or lost in the senior years can have a lasting impact.

Students who continue to read regularly build not just vocabulary and comprehension, but critical thinking, empathy, and resilience.

As students move toward higher education or the workforce, these skills underpin success far beyond the classroom.



## How Australia compares to the world

The decline in reading engagement during the senior years is not unique to Australia. Our 2025 data shows this is a global pattern, but with some key differences:

- Australia and New Zealand students were reading three or more years below their chronological age by years 9–12, with comprehension slipping to 82%.
- Canada saw a slightly stronger comprehension score (84%), but students still read books three and a half years below their age level by senior years.
- UK students followed a similar pattern but showed a sharper decline in both reading level and comprehension once they entered secondary school.

**High School Reading at Risk**  
Years 9–12

Reading engagement drops sharply in Years 9–12

Academic demands increase, but many students stop reading for pleasure.

**82%** comprehension in Aus/NZ by Year 12

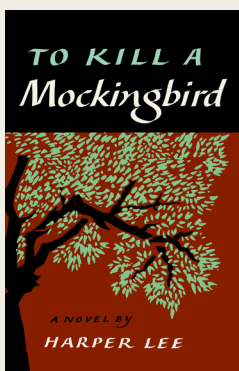
**What helps students stay engaged**

- Choice** options & variety
- Relatability** contemporary + classics
- Beyond assessment** independent reading
- Discussion** shared experiences

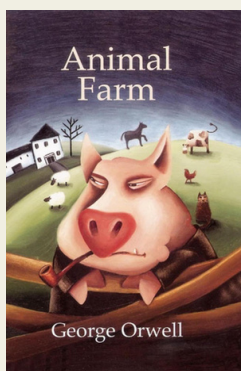
Despite national differences, the message remains the same: the middle and senior years are where reading habits often falter, and where focused support can make the most significant difference.

## High-Level Contemporary Books for Years 9–12

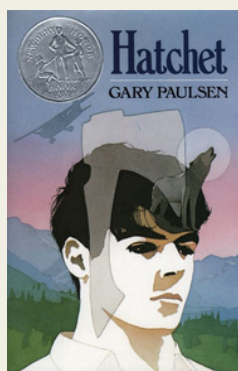
Consider these popular titles and find others at [www.arbookfind.com.au](http://www.arbookfind.com.au).



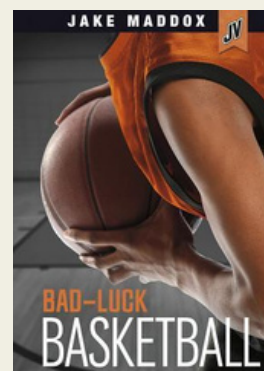
**To Kill A Mockingbird**  
Harper Lee  
(5.6/MY 14+)



**Animal Farm**  
George Orwell  
(7.3/MY 14+)



**Hatchet**  
Gary Paulsen  
(5.7/MY 9-13)



**Bad Luck Basketball**  
Thomas Kingsley Troupe  
(4.3/MY 9-13)

# About the Report

## A message from the Renaissance Australia team: keeping students reading

At Renaissance, we have the privilege of working with thousands of educators, schools, and students across Australia. Every year, we see firsthand the impact that reading has on learning, growth, and confidence.

The data from the 2025 What Kids Are Reading report reinforces what many of you already know from experience: students start strong. They read widely in the early years, challenge themselves, and build crucial comprehension skills. However, as they progress through school, reading engagement often wanes.

This is not just an Australian story. We see the same patterns across Canada, the UK, and internationally. But it is also not a story that has to end this way.

Keeping students reading, primarily through the critical middle and senior years, is possible. It requires deliberate action, a whole-school commitment, and a belief that reading is about more than test scores. It is about building the skills, curiosity, and confidence that last a lifetime.

Year group	Reading behaviour	Comprehension trend
K–2	High engagement with challenging texts, though comprehension requires support	Strong, but dependent on guidance
Years 3–5	Reading volume remains high, especially with popular series; comprehension starts to dip	Slight decline as books become harder
Years 6–8	Engagement begins to slow; students stick to familiar titles or series; challenge and comprehension plateau	Noticeable drop in comprehension
Years 9–12	The sharpest decline in both reading and comprehension, students read well below their potential and mostly for set tasks	Significant fall in comprehension, especially with harder texts

## Why this matters - beyond the classroom

Reading builds more than literacy. It strengthens vocabulary, critical thinking, empathy, resilience, and creativity. These are not just academic skills; they are life skills.

When students read regularly, especially by choice, they are more likely to:

- Develop stronger language and comprehension skills
- Build stamina for independent learning and long-form tasks
- Think critically and engage with information thoughtfully
- Understand diverse perspectives and build empathy

These skills serve them far beyond school, into further study, work, and their role in society.

What makes the difference: lessons from the data and the classroom

- Start early, stay consistent: Developing daily reading habits makes a lasting difference. Even 15 minutes a day can build momentum and literacy growth.
- Encourage challenge with support: Students grow when they stretch their reading, especially when comprehension support is in place.
- Leverage the power of series: Series reading is a proven way to build reading stamina and habit, particularly in the middle years.
- Give students choice: Ownership over reading choices drives engagement and motivation.
- Make reading social: Book discussions, shared reading, and peer recommendations turn reading from a task into a shared experience.

### **A shared responsibility and a shared reward**

We believe that keeping students reading is a shared responsibility, one that belongs to schools, families, and communities alike.

When reading is valued, visible, and supported in every part of a student's life, it becomes more than a skill; it becomes a habit and a source of confidence. At Renaissance, we are proud to support educators across Australia in this mission. Together, we can help students stay engaged with reading, not just for school, but for life.



## Matching books to kids

At Renaissance, we believe every student deserves the chance to find books that inspire them, whether they are avid readers or reluctant ones just starting their journey. Choosing the right book means thinking about content, structure, a reader's motivation, background knowledge, and the complexity of the text itself.

To help students connect with texts at the appropriate level, this report utilises two research-based measures of text complexity: the ATOS Readability Formula and the Lexile Framework for Reading. Both ATOS and Lexile place students and books on a shared scale, helping match readers with texts that suit their skills and needs.

The **ATOS Readability Formula** considers three key predictors of text difficulty:

- Average sentence length
- Average word length
- Average word difficulty level

ATOS reports reading levels on a year-level scale. For example, an ATOS of 5.4 suggests a typically performing year 5 student could likely read and understand the text by about mid-school year.

To find ATOS levels for nearly any book or to analyse your own text, visit [www.arbookfind.com.au](http://www.arbookfind.com.au) or use the ATOS text analyser tool at [www.renaissance.com/resources/atos-analyzer/](http://www.renaissance.com/resources/atos-analyzer/).

We also pair ATOS levels with publisher recommendations based on interest levels, taking into account content, themes, and maturity. These interest levels are:

- LG (lower years, K–3)
- MG (middle years, 4–8)
- MG+ (middle years plus, 6 and up)
- UG (upper years, 9–12)

Deciding if a text is suitable for a student is always best done by educators, parents, and caregivers who know the student well.

The Lexile® Text Analyser also helps measure a book's reading level by analysing sentence length and word difficulty. Lexile measures range from below 0L for early readers to above 1600L for advanced texts. To view Lexile reading ranges by grade and see how they align with college and career readiness, visit: [lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/college-and-career-readiness/](http://lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/college-and-career-readiness/).

MetaMetrics® Inc. provided the Lexile measures used in this report.

## Supporting reading growth with Accelerated Reader and myON

At Renaissance, we are dedicated to helping educators foster a lifelong love of reading in every student. Our tools, Accelerated Reader (AR) and myON, support schools in building reading habits, tracking growth, and encouraging students to engage with a wide range of texts.

### **Accelerated Reader: proven to build reading habits and comprehension**

Accelerated Reader (AR) is a reading practice program that helps teachers guide students to appropriate books and monitor their comprehension.

With AR, students select books within their reading range, read independently, and take a brief quiz to assess their understanding. Teachers get immediate feedback on comprehension, reading progress, and engaged reading time.

#### **Key features:**

- Matches students with books at the right level
- Tracks reading comprehension and progress over time
- Supports reading stamina and vocabulary growth
- Provides actionable data for teachers and schools
- Engages students with rewards, goals, and recognition

AR helps students read more, understand more, and grow in confidence as readers, making it one of the most widely used reading programs in Australian schools.

## myON: access to thousands of digital books anytime, anywhere

myON gives students access to a personalised digital library with thousands of fiction and non-fiction titles, available anytime on any device.

With myON, students can explore books matched to their interests and reading level, while teachers track engagement and monitor time spent reading.

#### **Key features:**

- Thousands of titles, from high-interest fiction to curriculum-aligned non-fiction
- Personalised reading recommendations based on interests and level
- Embedded comprehension tools, including audio support and annotation features
- Real-time data on reading time, engagement, and book completion
- Accessible at school, at home, or on the go

myON helps schools promote reading for pleasure and practice, providing every student with access to a diverse and engaging library, wherever they are.

Together, AR and myON help schools foster independent reading, track progress, and build reading confidence from the early years through secondary school.

To learn more, visit [renaissance.com.au](https://renaissance.com.au)



**Renaissance**  
**myON**

## About Artwork

The student artwork featured on the cover and section-opening pages of the report was created by students in years K–12 who took part in an art contest asking them to illustrate, “How reading makes you feel about the future.”

In addition to the inspiring student winners’ artwork, ten honourable mentions are pictured here. Our sincerest thank you to all of the student participants—we are awed by your hard work and creativity.

We hope our readers continue to be energised and hopeful about all the future brings.

“Kids can depend on reading as a way to relax, to learn, and to gain understanding of events that have happened earlier or are unfolding before us. ”





Inspire lifelong learning with powerful literacy solutions from Renaissance.

**Contact us today**

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