

QR Code is the new black in Reading for Pleasure

Tips for early years and primary school teachers on how to use QR codes to connect to Reading for Pleasure at home and expand children's digital reading experiences

You have seen them before because they are everywhere these days- QR Codes! With their typical black squares in the corner and central black-and-white grid with encoded information, QR Codes (Quick Response Codes) are the easiest way to connect an electronic resource with a smartphone. A simple scan of a QR Code with a mobile phone camera or QR Scanner on a tablet takes the user directly to a website or a digital resource. These free, easy to use codes can be used for a number of Reading for Pleasure activities.

Although they have been around since 1994, QR Codes have filtered into our daily lives to facilitate contact-less transactions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, QR Codes are widely used in healthcare, but also to facilitate payment in Asian countries, and checking in and out of places across Europe and Australia. Following the lockdown restrictions in the UK, businesses are getting creative with QR Codes in shops and restaurants and on public transport. This means that parents and children from diverse backgrounds are likely to have seen or used QR Codes in various contexts.

If you have never heard of QR Codes, or never created one yourself, have a look at this comprehensive [guide for educators](#). It contains videos on how to create a QR Code (it's really easy!) and how to use them for teaching more broadly.

Using QR Codes to connect reading at home and in the classroom

While national governments collaborate on creating QR Codes to enable safer travelling, teachers could use QR codes to facilitate collaboration between home and school and thus enrich children's reading at [home](#). Most parents are likely to have a mobile phone with a camera and they are likely to have seen a QR code before. Teachers can send parents codes that connect to various reading-related resources. This is easier and safer than sending an URL link which is too long or difficult to copy. A standard black-and-white QR Code can be enveloped in frames and made more aesthetically pleasing with images or colours that take parents to several online resources.

Here are some ideas you could try out:

- create a digital library with various e-book titles and connect each e-book to a QR code for easy download. For some recommended e-books, check out [this RfP resource](#).
- [create a "Menu" of reading activities for families](#) or children to try at home. You could describe each activity on a separate Google Document. Individual documents can be hyperlinked with individual QR Codes for ease of use.
- connect a PowerPoint presentation (for example with key information about a recent reading session) to a QR Code, so that parents can read it on their phone wherever/whenever they wish.

- encourage families to film themselves during their shared reading activities or during the child's own reading. The video can be uploaded on the family's own cloud system (e.g. the parent's own Google Drive) and the QR Code can be shared with the classroom. This avoids large data sharing and ensures the videos stay on family servers.
- if your school, classroom, or you as a professional, have a social media account that you would like parents to follow/be aware of, you can create [the Social Media QR Code](#), which displays all social media platforms on one mobile-optimized landing page.
- instead of printing out leaflets, you can provide them digitally, by emailing or texting parents QR Codes to an online folder or an online file, where they can access the PDFs.
- for more advanced uses, schools could explore taking contactless payment through QR Codes.

Using QR Codes to expand book-reading

Although a QR Code is nothing more than a two-dimensional barcode, it can significantly expand 2D resources into 3D experiences, or enrich digital and physical resources with added capabilities. During the lockdown, several children's authors volunteered to read their books aloud and their videos are freely available on the authors' websites or on Vimeo and YouTube. The OU RfP has its own video examples of reading with children on its [Youtube channel](#).

QR Codes in digital books can take readers to an author's video or website. QR codes in print books can connect to audio files that give physical books a "voice". Such hybrid encounters enrich and expand reading for pleasure. Here are some tips for creative teachers:

- *select an author's video of reading a book.* Use the video's URL for a QR Code that is emailed to students, printed and stuck on a book's cover or available on the school's noticeboard for anyone to scan.
- *narrate an audio for a short poem and store the file online.* The QR Code can be part of the book's cover and accessed whenever readers wish to access the audio version of the print text.
- *put several QR Codes into one document in different colours.* Each colour can represent a different version of the same book, adjusted to different reading levels/preferences and needs of individual students. The codes can be in different colours and connected to a photo or another symbol next to them for greater personalization.
- *create several QR Codes in the form of [a scavenger hunt map](#).* Adapting this summer reading adventure would enable children to progress through the map and get access to different digital resources. The activity can be used at home, where

children can use their parents' or their own mobile phones or in the classroom, if the school has iPads or Android tablets.

- *create a portable audiobook library with a several audio-books available digitally, each associated with its own QR Code and keyword. Such "Menus" can be printed out or they can be hyperlinked with another QR Code for easy download on individual devices.*
- *connect various resources with a QR Code, for example different versions or formats of the same story, or different text genres (for example a poem with a story).*

QR Codes are a very low-tech solution, so as long as you check that the codes connect to the right website, there isn't much that can go wrong.

Have fun!

Some QR Codes to try



Children's Digital Book Award



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