



## Transcript

Focus group with six boys in Years 3 and 4  
Dersingham Primary School, Newham, London E12  
Conducted by Lizzie Poulton and Jim Sells, 30 May 2012

Lizzie: I'm going to tell you a word and I want you to think of all the words that you can think of to do with that. For instance, video games.

Boys: PSP, PS3, Xbox.

Lizzie: What about fun?

Boys: Nintendo DS, PSP.

Lizzie: What if I say football?

Boys: Rugby, basketball, Ronaldo.

Lizzie: What if I say reading?

Boys: Dull, Sarah Janes, *Matilda*, *Beast Quest*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *Oliver Twist*, *Captain Underpants*.

Jim: Magazines?

Boys: Nerds, newspapers, *Beano*, comic books, Ben 10, Secret 7.

Jim: What about the people who read?

Boys: J. K. Rowling, nerds, Roald Dahl.

Jim: What sort of people do reading?

Boys: Nerds, weirdoes, what do you mean by reading?

Lizzie: That's a very good question.

Boys: Teachers, Ms Griffin.

Lizzie: Who else? Friends?

Boys: Adults, journalists, grandparents, babies. Jim and Lizzie read, parents. Toddlers.

Lizzie: Yes, they can read picture books.

Jim: What do you think about reading?

Boys: Sometimes it's boring, sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's weird, sometimes when you read it builds up excitement.

Jim: Tell me why you think it's boring.

Boys: Sometimes these guys, grown-ups, make you read five-year-old books, it's boring. Or if you have read the same book again and again. Or if the words are too easy.

Jim: Someone here said exciting; tell me why you think it's exciting.

Boys: Like Ben 10, the comic.

Jim: So action stuff. Let's think about more widely than just books, because we're talking about reading. Where else can you find reading?

Boys: Newspaper, a phone, Kindle, library, school.

Jim: What are other things you can read?

Boys: Action books, signs, facts.

Jim: Who enjoys reading?

Boys: [Four out of six say they do] Sometimes when you read and you read by yourself it just happens. Horror books.

Jim: So you like horror books?

Boys: That's the best thing about books, mystery books. I like funny books and horror; I like joke books. You just like Wimpy Kid books. Like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

Jim: I haven't read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, should I read it?

Boys: Yes. It's funny.

Jim: Why do you like those particular kinds of books? Why do you like action?

Boys: Because it's like saving the day. First they'll be a villain and they'll be a hero. The villain tries to take over the world but the hero stops him. I like mystery books because you have to solve something.

Lizzie: So where you can get involved?

Jim: And is there anything that puts you off reading?

Boys: Video games.

Jim: You mean because you'd rather be doing that?

Boys: Hanging out, talking, texting, running around, watching TV.

Jim: So these are distractions from reading. Is there anything about the actual words or books that puts you off reading?

Boy: Yeah, sometimes there are long words and if you can't find out what it means in the dictionary you'll never find out what it means.

Boy: Getting stuck on a page.

Boy: You could skip it.

Boy: Why can't you ask your Mum or Dad, they've been in school much longer than you?

Boy: Like what does chaos mean?

Jim: Are there any specific types of books that put you off?

Boy: Pink books.

Jim: If I gave you a book by Jacqueline Wilson in a pink cover would that put off?

Boys: Eww!

Jim: Anything else like that that puts you off? What sort of things would make you go eww?

Boys: Fairytales, baby books, princess books.

Boy: I don't mind, they might be good. You just look at the cover and think I'm not going to like it.

Jim: What are the signs that you're not going to like it?

Boys: Look, colour, picture on the cover, blurb.

Lizzie: So you were saying about reading, and sometimes you're reading in school and you have to read certain books at school. But do you guys read many books at home?

Boys: Yes.

Boy: I read Famous 5 books.

Boy: I read horror books.

Boy: I read *Diary of Wimpy Kid*.

Boy: I read Tintin books.

Boy: Roald Dahl.

Lizzie: And do you find it easy to read at home? Or are there too many distractions?

Boy: When my baby brother's crying it just makes me get angry.

Lizzie: Do you read lots at home? How often do you read?

Boy: I read once a week.

Boy: I read every night because there's nothing to distract me, I just get in my bed and I put the light on and read for half an hour and then I go to sleep.

Boy: I do too!

Boy: I read for five minutes a day.

Lizzie: Do you read before bed, when you get home?

Boy: I don't read books; I'd rather watch TV or play outside.

Lizzie: And what about the rest of your family? Do your parents read books; do your brother and sisters?

Boy: My parents are too busy. My whole family's too busy.

Boy: My Mum reads books because she has coursework at the hospital to do, and she if she doesn't read books then she's not going to pass.

Boy: My Mum has a book but it's on paper.

Lizzie: So it's bound with paper?

Boy: My father reads stuff about buses because he's a bus driver.

Boy: My brother can read books; my brother loves to read books. He's four and he can read band 3/ band 4 books.

Lizzie: And do you talk about books with your brother? Do you read books with your brother?

Boy: Yes.

Lizzie: What about you guys? Have you got brothers and sisters that you read with?

Boy: My brother won't listen – he's too hyper.

Boy: My brother's too young.

Boy: My little sister likes books, especially picture stories.

Jim: Have any of you got brothers and sisters that are older than you? Do they ever recommend anything to you?

[Pause]

Lizzie: What about friends? Do you ever talk about reading with any of your friends?

Boy: We do talk about it sometimes.

Boy: I don't talk about any books because my friend might get some ideas.

Jim: Why would you not want that?

Boy: When I tell him about books he gets this idea to make a game where someone always chases another person. I don't really want to play that.

Jim: What do your other friends think about reading?

Boy: They like it.

Boy: Every single boy that we know that are our friends, they don't like books. They like playing.

Jim: So that's quite different from what the others are saying.

Jim: Do you think you like reading the same things?

Boy: No.

Jim: So you don't like the same sort of things? You think you like quite different sorts of things?

Jim: And if you had a choice between reading and doing something instead, what would you pick?

Boy: Reading.

Boy: Playing outside.

Boy: Playing on the computer.

Jim: You would do reading, but the rest of you wouldn't. So two of you would rather do reading, but four of you would rather do something else.

Boy: I'd rather do playing outside or helping my Mum with the baby.

Boy: I'd watch TV.

Boy: Playing on the Xbox.

Boy: Watch horror movies.

Jim: So if your friends don't like reading, what do you think you can do to encourage them to read?

Boy: If you can't read you're never going to learn.

Boy: If you read then you might get a good job when you grow up.

Boy: To be a literacy teacher you have to be very good at reading.

Boy: Maybe you could give your friend a book and discuss the book.

Boy: I'd rather be something that's more easy.

Boy: No, not all the jobs are easy.

Boy: The easiest job is just walking around with a police badge on you, then everyone will be scared of you.

Lizzie: What do you think about the difference between boys and girls and reading?

Boy: Girls really like reading; boys there not really into it. They're always encouraging boys to read. Boys play video games.

Boy: Girls sometimes play video games as well; they play Little Mermaid.

Lizzie: Do you all agree? Do you all think girls like reading more than boys?

Boy: Yeah.

Boy: NO!

Lizzie: If you think girls like reading more, why do you think they like reading more?

Boy: Princess books.

Boy: Because girls don't really like the Xbox and PS3.

Boy: Yes they do!

Jim: Do you think girls like football?

Boy: No.

Boy: Yes, in America.

Jim: Do you know what the most popular sport for girls is?

Boy: Skipping.

Jim: It's football.

Lizzie: Do you think girls read more or less?

Boys: More.

Lizzie: And do they read the same things as you?

Boy: Fairytales, princesses

Boy: Kissing stuff.

Boy: Like Barbie.

Lizzie: So what are the books that are more for boys, would you say?

Boy: Ben 10.

Boy: Pokémon.

Lizzie: What about *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*? Is that more for boys?

Boys: Yes.

Lizzie: Do you think there should be different books for boys and girls or should we all be reading the same things?

Boy: If we're reading Barbie and Ken books then boys wouldn't really like it. They'd put it in the bin.

Boy: I would just give a girly book to my little sister as a present.

Jim: So would you rather have books marked: this book is for a boy, this book is for a girl?

Jim: Are you aware that lots of people, people like teachers, people from our organisation, and people from the government are worried that boys aren't doing as well as girls at reading?

Boy: Hey!

Boy: Yes.

Jim: What do you think about that? Do you think it's true?

Boy: I think it's completely bonkers.

Boy: The only thing I see boys doing is playing outside. Whenever I walk down the street I look in houses and I just see girls reading.

Jim: How many of you think boys should be reading more? All but one of you.

Jim: Why do you think boys read less than girls?

Jim: Let's put it this way. Why do you think boys don't read as much as girls?

Boy: I think it's because of their jobs. You don't have time to read.

Jim: Are you thinking about grown-ups? I'm asking about boys your age.

Boy: They'd rather play video games.

Boy: Boys don't like reading because they're addicted to like electronic things, electronics.

Boy: Boys are more into like sport and football, electronics and games. Girls like more princess and Barbie stuff.

Boy: Girls always bring little books with them; they'll always read stuff. Boys just like electronic stuff. Girls don't really like electronic stuff.

Boy: There's too much technology for boys. The books get addicted to technology.

Jim: What do you think people could do to get boys to read more?

Boy: Make a DS book where you can play the story.

Boy: Maybe to stop making so much electronic stuff and start making more books.

Boy: You could make an electronic book and have all the superhero books on it.

Boy: More adventure books.



Boy: Stop showing electronic stuff on TV, you've got to stop making electronic stuff.

Jim: So less advertising?

Jim: What can we put into actual reading to make it more interesting?

Boy: Put video games into reading.

Boy: TV show books. Like a Ben 10 book.

Jim: What about writing? Who likes writing?

Jim: Two of you like writing.

Jim: Why don't you like writing?

Boy: Because you keep having to write lots and your fingers get tired. All you want to do is have a break but you can't, and you just have to keep going on. You have to think fast. When you forget it you have to cross it out and write more.

Jim: You said you like writing. Why do you like writing?

Boy: You can write a story.

Lizzie: Do you think it would be more interesting to read a book on a Kindle? Do you know what a Kindle is?

Boy: It's like an iPad.

Boy: A Kindle's like an iPad and it can store 400 books in there.

Jim: Who would like a Kindle?

Boy: I would like as Kindle because you can download your favourite books. But you can't text with it.

Jim: So would you all like to read more if you could do it on an electronic format?

Boy: Yes, because on books sometimes you get two pages stuck together whereas if you get a Kindle you can just press a button.