
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Do we read to show off?



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Neil...

Alice

... and I'm Alice. Sorry, wait a minute Neil. I'm just finishing this book.

Neil

OK.

Alice

Last page... nearly there... ohh - fantastic book!

Neil

Well I'm glad you enjoyed that. I'm glad you finished your book there Alice! We're talking about books in today's programme. What was it you were reading there?

Alice

No, never mind Neil. It's not your kind of book. You wouldn't like it.

Neil

How do you know?

Alice

Well I just think you might read something a little more **intellectual**.

Neil

Oh I see... Well, we are talking about the kinds of books people read, and what they say about them today.

Alice

Yes. Perhaps you read the works of a famous writer - the classics - Charles Dickens, Shakespeare.

Neil

People will think you are an intellectual. You can **show off** by reading these books – **the classics**.

Alice

Or perhaps you read popular novels or **romantic fiction** – a **light easy read**.

Neil

When you go on holiday – maybe to the beach – what kind of books do you read? And what do you read when you're going to work?

Alice

We're going to hear part of a BBC interview with David Adshead from the Commuter Book Club. A commuter travels to work by bus, train or here in London, the Tube, a train that goes all over the city, mostly underground.

Neil

And Alice as usual, we have a quiz question. Are you ready?

Alice

Yes, absolutely.

Neil

OK. It's about classic book sales. So these days are people buying...

- a) more classic books?
- b) the same number of classic books?
- c) fewer classic books than they used to?

Alice

Oh that's an interesting one. Tricky to guess but I'm going to say c) fewer classic books.

Neil

OK, well, let's find out the answer at the end of the programme. But now here is David Adshead from the Commuter Club. What kind of book does he say people usually take with them to the beach?

INSERT

David Adshead, Commuter Book Club

People often think that, you know, traditionally you take a light easy read for the beach, and on the train, um, you maybe read something very different.

Interviewer

... if only to show off.

David Adshead

Exactly, to appear to others to be more intellectual. But actually, what we find in this is that it really comes down to the individual – what they like to read and actually we've seen this

summer a lot of the book sales - summer reads is general lighter books, easier to get on with, to take away on holiday - but the big retailers have seen a **shift** actually - people moving sort of slightly higher brow, taking away more classic books. Sales in that way have increased.

Neil

David Adshead from the Commuter Book Club there. He says that people usually – traditionally – take a light, easy read to the beach or on the train.

Alice

Yes. He says these books are easier to get on with. David says that it really comes down to the individual – each person is different. But he says that there has been a shift – a change – in what people read.

Neil

Yes, he says that the shops that sell books – that's the **retailers** – say the books people are buying are more **highbrow** – the classics, as we were talking about.

Alice

Absolutely. Highbrow books are read by intellectuals, or perhaps the people who read these books are just showing off.

Neil

Yes, maybe they are. Well I wonder if these people have read any books by Fiona Harper. She writes romantic novels – that's stories about love.

Alice

Light reading – not highbrow. She was also at this interview about the Commuter Book Club.

Neil

Now, do commuters read her romantic novels on the Tube?

Alice

Well here is novelist Fiona Harper talking about how she writes her romantic novels. She wants people to not stop reading her stories once they start – she wants them to be **hooked**.

INSERT

Author Fiona Harper

I think what it comes down to most of the time is you just want to write a really good story, because if you write a good story then hopefully people are hooked, they'll keep turning the pages and..

Interviewer

And do you wonder whether they are reading them on holiday - I mean presumably they're more likely to read your stuff on holiday than when they're sitting on the Tube being looked at by lots of other people. I don't know.

Author Fiona Harper

Possibly, although with the **advent** of **e-readers**, you can read anything you like and no one knows – or on your phone – no one knows what you're reading.

Interviewer

And that's an important point.

Neil

That's the author Fiona Harper talking about romantic novels. So do commuters read her books on the Tube?

Alice

Well perhaps you don't want others to see you reading that stuff. It can be a bit embarrassing. It shouldn't be, but Fiona says you can also use an e-reader.

Neil

An e-reader - that's an electronic book. Instead of pages you read off a screen.

Alice

Well if you use an e-reader or tablet, no one knows what you're reading.

Neil

So perhaps they are reading a romantic novel – no one knows. OK. Let's take a moment to look at some of today's words.

Alice

Here they are:
intellectual
show off
the classics
romantic fiction
light read
heavy read
retailers
highbrow
shift
hooked
advent
e-reader

Neil

And before we go, the answer to today's quiz question. I asked about classic books. Are people these days buying...

- a) more classic books?
- b) the same number of classic books?
- c) fewer classic books than they used to?

Alice

Yes. And I said c) fewer classic books.

Neil

Well I'm afraid to say Alice that you're wrong.

Alice

Oh no.

Neil

I know. They're reading more classic books!

Alice

Oh excellent!

Neil

Sales of these books are apparently increasing.

Alice

Well that's good to hear.

Neil

And that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. Please do join us again soon.

Alice

And keep reading books... in English. Highbrow classics or a light read – it doesn't matter.

Neil

It doesn't matter at all.

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

intellectual

a person who has studied a lot and knows a lot about a topic

show off

someone who does something well and always wants others to know that

the classics

very well-known old novels

romantic fiction

easy to read love stories

light read

entertaining and easy reading material, such as romantic fiction

heavy read

very difficult reading material, such as academic textbooks

retailers

people or shops that sell things

highbrow

culture (book, art, theatre) that intellectuals enjoy

shift

change

hooked

addicted

advent

(here) beginning

e-reader

electronic device that contains lots of written text