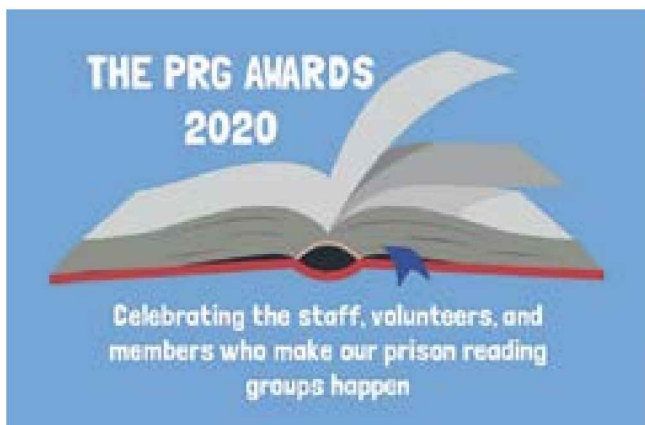


Reading Group Round-Up

Promoting reading and reading groups in prisons



It's not news that last year was very tough for prisons, but good things happened so let's start 2021 with some whoopee!

COVID made face-to-face reading group meetings impossible in most prisons but many of PRG's librarians, prison staff and volunteers went into action straightaway to keep things going. With the help of our Booktalk suggestions and resources, groups chose books for in-cell reading and then wrote comments to be shared with other members. A big challenge for everyone, but brilliant responses show just how much appetite there is for reading and comparing views even - or especially - when the going gets rough.

PRG made eight awards, all of them for really outstanding work. One of the winners was librarian David at North Sea Camp 'for his determination to get the men reading widely, critically - and with pleasure'.

His group's choices ranged from Ben Macintyre's *The Spy and the Traitor to Normal People* by Sally Rooney and East of Hounslow by Khurram Rahman. Jeffrey Archer's *Nothing Ventured* provided some members with a great escape from lockdown: 'I enjoyed this book, a good way to pass the time on a beach somewhere or in a prison cell during isolation'.

But it was Jon Ronson's *The Psychopath Test* that really got readers thinking:

'Absolutely fascinating...I read it in one sitting'.

'Like an episode of *Panorama* and quite frightening with it...a really good piece of investigative journalism.'

The best tribute to David came in a surprise email to PRG 'from a library somewhere in the North':

'I have recently been released from prison. I was part of the North Sea Camp book club for 12 months and we read some really good books (and some terrible ones too!) Dave deserves a lot of credit and I thought it would be nice to let you know his work does not go unnoticed'.

Kirstin volunteers at HMP Shotts and has kept her group going throughout lockdown. She sends discussion notes and shares the written feedback in a newsletter. Her award celebrated the ripple effect of her group:

'There's now such a buzz that reading group books are passed on to other readers on the wing and there's book talk everywhere'.

Her group's choices were challenging. *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri was a tough read for some but made members think and write about the realities for refugees escaping war and destruction:

'As I was reading there were lots of reports about people dying in their attempts to find safety. The news turns people into statistics that are cold and negative. Lefteri challenges this with the personal story of Afra and Nuri. And I think the bees represent people - underneath the surface of chaos they can help and communicate with each other'.

Some of the most pleasing awards were for partnerships, like that between Jenny and Paul at HMP Send. Jenny

co-founded PRG 21 years ago and has been volunteering at Send since 2000. She takes readers out of their comfort zone and makes them glad they took the chance. Her meetings are lively, combative and full of laughter. No wonder members adore them. As one member wrote:

*'I felt really privileged to have a small insight into a community [in *Girl, Woman, Other*] that I wouldn't ordinarily have been able to get'.*

Paul has been Send's fantastic librarian for 10 years. His newsletters are ace, his library is full of brilliant books and he says 'yes' to all reading projects that come his way, including of course PRG!

Here's the full list of the awards, with PRG's heartfelt congratulations and thanks:

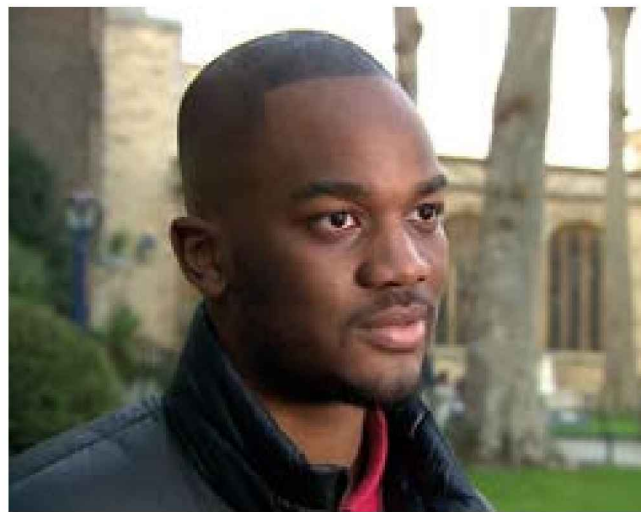
Diane, Librarian at HMP Dovegate. Julian, Writer in Residence at HMP Warren Hill. Kelly, Librarian at HMP Erlestoke. Liz and Anna, Quaker Chaplain and CM at HMP Wandsworth. East Sutton Park reading group.

Last words to a new group that started since lockdown and are very glad they did:

'A truly open and respectful forum for all viewpoints...all thoughts about the book are safely welcomed and encouraged...No-one is right or wrong about the book'.

'We always give the book a fair crack of the whip. We don't necessarily agree...why should we? That's the beauty of the book club'.

If your prison doesn't have a reading group, encourage your librarian to have a look at www.prisonreading-groups.org.uk and email admin@prg.org.uk if they would like to receive updates and resources from us.



Inspirational words on NPR this month

National Prison Radio

Jeremiah Emmanuel (above) is 21 years-old, but he's managed to fit more into those years than many people do in a lifetime. But it's certainly not been a smooth ride.

He's going to be on National Prison Radio every Thursday from 21st January, reading his debut novel 'Dreaming in a Nightmare', and telling NPR his incredible story.

Jeremiah grew up in South London and at the age of four he started doing community work near his home. His mother was a youth worker and she inspired him to volunteer his time to do good in his community. He joined a youth choir which would sing at his local hospital, and by the age of 13 he was deputy young mayor of Lambeth.

He's continued to campaign on youth issues as an activist and entrepreneur. Elected to

the UK Youth Parliament; awarded a British Empire Medal and with co-signs from the likes of Richard Branson and Tinie Tempah, it'd be easy to think life has been easy for Jeremiah.

But *Dreaming in a Nightmare* is the story of being caught between two worlds. In one world, he dreamt of success and having the ear of people in power. In the other world, he was surrounded with the issues that impacted him as a young black man growing up in the UK. "This is a guide to recognising the nightmare - and a blueprint for dreaming your way out of it", says Jeremiah.

It's an inspirational story that we're thrilled to share with you on NPR in 2021 in our 'New Chapters' slot, supported by the National Literacy Trust.

Tune in to NPR every Thursday at midday and 6pm to hear Jeremiah Emmanuel's debut novel 'Dreaming in a Nightmare', as part of our New Chapters series with the National Literacy Trust.

Freeing Your Mind

The New Year can bring new pressures when you're in prison, and coping with jail at the best of times isn't easy. We've teamed up with NHS England to bring you 'Free Your Mind' - your spot on National Prison Radio to help you focus on getting into a good headspace.

We'll be hearing from people both in prison and after release about some of the things they felt while they were inside, such as disconnection from family and friends, over-thinking and paranoia, confusion and change, feeling

stuck and not having a purpose.

We'll also be hearing from Dr Sarah Allen, who specialises in supporting people in prison through times of distress. She'll be offering practical solutions and self-help tips that can help you to free yourself from the worries that come up in prison.

Free Your Mind will broadcast fortnightly as part of NPR Talk from Wednesday 13 January, at midday and 6pm, with a repeat on Sundays at midday.

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JAN 2021 UPDATE: WE ARE OPEN

We hope everyone is well and staying safe. Thankfully, we remain open and have been able to continue to provide our catalogue service with our 2020 Winter Supplement Catalogue being published back in November which we hope you enjoyed. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the NHS and key workers who might be reading this. Your efforts throughout what was a very difficult year have played a vital role in us being able to continue to serve our customers, many of which rely on the products we offer for relaxation or escapism from the day to day so on behalf of everyone at Gema Records, thank you. The pandemic is ever evolving so please do continue to bear with us if anything changes following the publication of this notice. It is forever our intention to work as quickly as possible, within the guidelines, to process our customer's orders and enquires and to keep any delays to a minimum. **From all at Gema Records, we wish you the very best for the new year and we look forward to supplying you with the new releases and special offers this year brings!**

Product	Storage	Price	Special Price
XBOX 360 'S'	4GB	£159.95	£154.95
	250GB	£174.95	£169.95
XBOX 360 'E'	4GB	£169.95	£164.95
	250GB	£184.95	£179.95
	500GB	£199.95	£194.95

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