

Small Island

Read 2007

Evaluation report

Melanie Kelly

An initiative of:

Liverpool reads ...



creative
Bristol
A European Centre of Culture

eye write!
*BANK OF SCOTLAND book festival

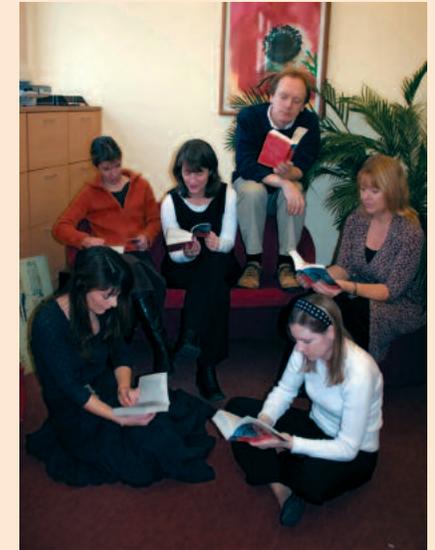
www.smallislandread.com



Andrea Levy on stage in Hull.

Contents

Introduction	5
Key statistics and findings	8
Distributing the books	9
Publicising the project	13
Support material for readers of <i>Small Island</i>	17
Participant response and profile	21
Library readers and reading groups	29
Special events	35
Educational activities	39
Budget	49
Conclusions and recommendations	51
Acknowledgements	59



*Readers at the University of Bristol
(Laura Thorne).*



Andrea Levy with local children in Liverpool on launch day.

Introduction

Small Island Read 2007, which ran from 11 January to 31 March, was the largest mass-reading project to have taken place in Britain. It was a community-based initiative drawing together partners from Bristol and the South West, Liverpool and the North West, Hull and Glasgow. Based upon the collective reading of the same book at the same time, *Small Island Read 2007* promoted further reading, writing and creative work inspired by that shared experience, and provided an accessible and innovative means of learning about the past and its continuing relevance.

The chosen book was Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, a widely acclaimed and award-winning novel that describes the arrival in post-war Britain of black Jamaican immigrants, the descendants of enslaved Africans. *Small Island Read 2007* was linked to the 2007 commemorations of the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Slave Trade Abolition Bill. Andrea Levy's novel addresses the themes of identity, racial awareness, forgiveness, ignorance and survival with humour, high drama, anger and pathos, making it an unforgettable read and a fitting topic for discussion in 2007.

Andrea Levy at the start of the project said:

I am very excited that Small Island is the focus of this ambitious mass-reading project. I feel deeply honoured that it has been chosen in the year that commemorates the ending of the slave trade, and that the novel, which is set in the 1940s, is being used as the springboard to look back to the important issues of slavery

and its aftermath. It has always been one of the aims of my writing to make the history of African-Caribbean people in this country more visible and to show their story to be an important part of British history. I hope everyone who takes part in the Small Island Read 2007 really enjoys the experience.

Small Island Read 2007 drew upon the success of two previous mass-reading projects – Liverpool Reads and the Great Reading Adventure (based in Bristol and, since 2006, covering the whole of the South West) – and brought in partners new to the mass-reading phenomenon from Aye Write! Bank of Scotland Book Festival (Glasgow) and Hull Libraries.

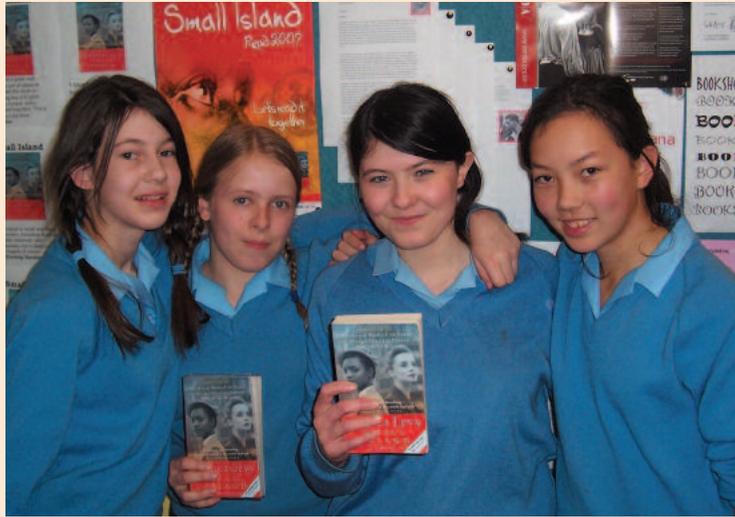
All four cities have links to the slave trade and its abolition. They collaborated in the delivery of *Small Island Read 2007*:

- To develop standards of literacy through the promotion of reading.
- To stimulate new forms of creativity inspired by the reading experience.
- To use reading to facilitate learning about the past.
- To bring diverse communities together through the act of reading and thereby foster a sense of shared identity.

Liverpool Reads is a city-wide reading initiative supported by the Liverpool Culture Company as part of the lead-in for 2008 when Liverpool becomes the European Capital of Culture. Various reading groups, public readings, and school and community projects are coordinated around the chosen read. The project started in 2004 with *Holes* by American author Louis Sachar. *Millions* by Liverpoolian author Frank Cottrell Boyce, winner of the 2004 CILIP Carnegie Medal, was the 2005/2006 book. Liverpool Reads works with an extensive range of partner schools and community groups including the Ethnic Minority Traveller Achievement Service, Asylum Link, Age Concern and Walton Neurological Centre. The annual city-wide read acts as 'social glue': through reading the same book at the same

Glasgow Libraries' drivers delivering copies of Small Island around the city.





Pupils from Badminton School in Bristol with copies of *Small Island*.

time, a community of readers is created, and people can share the experience of reading together. It is managed by a freelance coordinator based at *The Reader* at the University of Liverpool.

Between January and March each year, everyone in Bristol is encouraged to join the Great Reading Adventure and read a book that is either set in Bristol, is by a Bristol author or is about issues that are of interest to people in Bristol. The first three books that have been used since the project was launched in 2003 were Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (partially set in Bristol), John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (which allowed debate about environmental issues and GM technology) and Helen Dunmore's *The Siege*, which promoted learning and reminiscences about the Second World War. In 2006 the project extended across the South West region as a contribution to Brunel 200 – the year-long celebratory programme marking the bicentenary of the birth of the engineer

Isambard Kingdom Brunel led by Bristol. The selected book was Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, a classic novel that dramatises the sense of excitement and limitless possibilities brought by nineteenth-century innovations in transport. The Great Reading Adventure was initiated and is led by Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP), Arts Council England South West, Bristol City Council and Business West.

The Aye Write! book festival began in 2005 and is an initiative of Glasgow Libraries linked to Glasgow City Council's inclusion and learning strategies. The second festival – now with title sponsorship from the Bank of Scotland – took place in February 2007 and will henceforth be an annual event. Aye Write! builds on the strong tradition of writing in Scotland – especially Glasgow – and also brings the best of international writers to the city. In addition it is committed to the next generation of writers and readers, providing a free week-long children's programme for schools. Aye Write! aims to widen participation in reading, writing, learning and community activities; celebrate and nurture Glasgow's writing talent; confirm the Mitchell Library as the city's literary hub; and be exciting, enjoyable and fun.

Hull Libraries considered *Small Island Read 2007* to be the centrepiece of their William Wilberforce commemorations. The project has enabled the city's library service to further its work in promoting reading as an inspirational and rewarding activity, as well as providing a range of educational opportunities through work with schools and adult education services. *Small Island Read 2007* has provided the lead-in to the forthcoming Humber Mouth Literature Festival that will take place in June 2007.

Small Island Read 2007 was funded through the National Lottery by both Arts Council England (ACE) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Announcing their support, Nick Capaldi of ACE and Adrian Tinniswood of HLF said in a joint statement:

We have supported two Bristol reading projects already and are delighted to be supporting this national project. Remembering the victims of the slave trade is essential to everyone's lives. Just as important is celebrating the diversity of the modern city.

They added:

The mass-reading project – and the associated arts and heritage projects – provides a fitting start to the 2007 commemorations.

Small Island Read 2007 was also supported by Arts and Business, Bank of Scotland, Bristol City Council, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, Business West, Liverpool Culture Company, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Riverside Housing, among others.

In November 2006 when the lottery funding was announced, the partners from the four lead cities said:

We are all committed to promoting reading and literacy, at the same time as encouraging learning about the past. We are confident we will achieve both of these aims with Small Island Read 2007 and are delighted to be working together on such an exciting and inspirational project. All this work will promote the pleasures of reading and learning about the past and celebrating the present – in this case the diversity of our cities.

They added:

The Bristol Great Reading Adventure and Liverpool Reads have already shown how mass-reading initiatives can engage a wide range of people in a single book, inspire discussion and debate, encourage more reading, writing and creativity, enhance social capital through the building of networks across the community, promote learning about our heritage, and be fun for all those involved.

This report summarises the findings from the evaluation of *Small Island Read 2007*. It combines statistical data collected by the

organisers and their partners with qualitative feedback gathered from self-completed surveys, interviews and correspondence. Additional news, images, feedback and examples of work created during the project can be found on the *Small Island Read 2007* website at www.smallislandread.com. This also includes a complete list of all the activities that took place.



Michael Wood, the Town Crier for Hull, and Terry Fisher, as William Wilberforce, at Hull Paragon Station on launch day.

Key statistics and findings

- 50,000 copies of *Small Island* provided free of charge across the country, from Glasgow to the tip of Cornwall, for distribution through libraries, schools, businesses, community centres and other sites.
- 80,000 copies of a free illustrated readers' guide giving background information about Andrea Levy, slavery and migration distributed alongside the books.
- 8,000 copies of Benjamin Zephaniah's *Refugee Boy* and 3,000 copies of Mary Hoffman's *Amazing Grace* distributed for younger participants in the project.
- Over 100 events associated with *Small Island Read 2007* took place including library talks, discussions, exhibitions and competitions, plus over 60 school workshops.
- Most ages and all socio-economic groups participated in the project.
- The project website had a total of 20,336 visits between January and March 2007.
- Nearly 17,000 people borrowed *Small Island* from library services in the South West from January to March.
- Nearly 90 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said joining the project had enhanced their reading experience.
- Nearly 88 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said they had learned something about slavery and migration by joining the project.
- Nearly 98 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said they would be interested in joining in future mass-reading initiatives.
- The project was the topic of at least 100 stories in the local, regional and national media.

Distributing the books

Headline, the publisher of *Small Island*, printed 50,000 copies of a special promotional copy of the book for use in the project that included references to *Small Island Read 2007* on the back cover and inside front page. Bloomsbury printed 8,000 copies of a special edition of *Refugee Boy* that included information about the project at the back. The 3,000 copies of *Amazing Grace* provided by Frances Lincoln did not have any special text but a reprint was rushed through to ensure there would be enough in stock ready for the start of the project. All books were provided to the organisers at discount.

Table 1 gives details of where the books were initially distributed direct from the publishers.

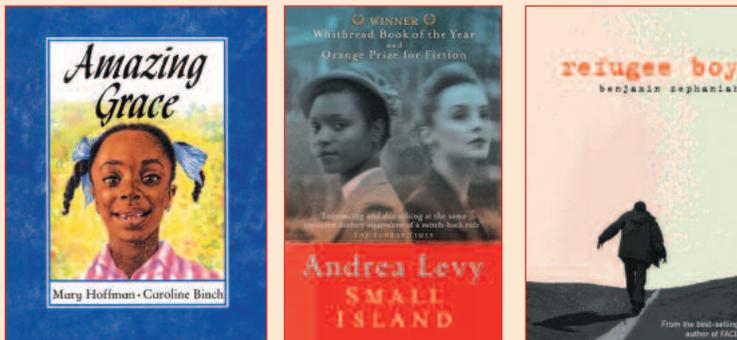


Table 1: Initial book distribution

	<i>Small Island</i>	<i>Refugee Boy</i>	<i>Amazing Grace</i>
Glasgow Libraries	13,000	3,000	1,000
Hull Libraries	5,000	500	100
Liverpool Reads (The Reader offices)	1,000	500	100
Out of the Bluecoat, Liverpool	6,250	1,000	0
Lister Drive Community Library, Liverpool	6,250	1,000	0
Bristol Cultural Development Partnership	1,400	2,000	1,800
Bath & North East Somerset Libraries	400	0	0
Bristol Libraries	1,200	0	0
Bournemouth Libraries	500	0	0
Cornwall Library Service	1,100	0	0
Devon Libraries	1,600	0	0
Dorset Libraries	900	0	0
Gloucestershire Libraries	1,050	0	0
North Somerset Libraries	500	0	0
Plymouth Libraries	550	0	0
Poole Libraries	450	0	0
Somerset Libraries	1,000	0	0
South Gloucestershire Libraries	500	0	0
Swindon Libraries	550	0	0
Torbay Library Service	200	0	0
Wiltshire Libraries	900	0	0
Arnolfini Bookshop, Bristol	500	0	0
Blackwell Bookshop, Bristol	1,000	0	0
Parsons Brinckerhoff, Bristol	200	0	0
Rolls-Royce Engines, Filton	1,000	0	0
Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, Bristol	1,000	0	0
University of Bristol	500	0	0
University of the West of England, Bristol	500	0	0
Wessex Water, Bath	500	0	0
University of Plymouth	500	0	0
TOTAL	50,000	8,000	3,000

Source: BCDP

Covers of the books used in Small Island Read 2007.



Member of staff reading *Small Island* in the Arnolfini bookshop, one of the distribution points for free copies in Bristol (Laura Thorne).

The majority of the books were distributed to members of the public via libraries, either as loan copies or as give-aways. Glasgow Libraries, for example, exchanged free books for coupons printed in *The Herald*, Liverpool Libraries used coupons printed in the *Liverpool Echo*. Coupons were also used in Bristol where they were exchanged for copies held at Arnolfini Bookshop and Blackwell on Park Street. Most of the remainder of books went direct from the publishers to businesses and educational organisations for staff reading groups. Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory's copies were given to the first 1,000 people to attend their new production of *Othello* in Bristol.

Table 2 provides a list of some of the organisations to receive bulk copies of the books that were initially delivered to the three Liverpool distribution sites, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, Glasgow Libraries and Hull Libraries.

Table 2: Recipients of books in the four main cities

Liverpool	Merseytravel	BCDP
Al-ghazali Arabic Centre	Multicultural organisation, Lauries Centre, Wirral	Over 60 Bristol schools and colleges
Blackburne House – women’s education centre	NACRO Liverpool Moves Project	Early Years Equality Conference
Brunswick Youth Club	Newsham Adult Education Centre	Taunton NHS Trust
Central Youth Club	Picton Neighbourhood Resource Centre	Business West
City Church	Picton Sure Start	Arts Council England South West
Clubmoor Youth Group	Quynny’s Caribbean Restaurant	Glasgow Libraries
Community Centres across Merseyside	Riverside Housing Directors	<i>The Herald</i>
Croxteth Gems Youth Group	Riverside Housing Head Office	Waterstone’s, Sauchiehall Street
Get into Reading – reading project across the Wirral	Riverside offices: Community Seven	All Glasgow secondary schools
Granby Adult Learning Centre	Sola Arts – refugee artists organisation	Some Glasgow primary schools
Harthill Youth Centre	St Cyprian with Christ Church	Home Library Service
Jaguar Factory	Stagecoach	Hull Libraries
Kensington Community Learning Centre	Swan Centre – women’s education centre	The Wilberforce Lecture given by the President of Barbados on 25 March
Kensington Regeneration	Walton Project Post Youth Group	Hull Museums Service
Kensington Surestart	WAM Friendship Centre	Hull University English Department
Key Stage 3 English Coordinators		Zest Brasserie
Libraries across the city		BBC Open Centre
Liverpool colleges and universities		Schools Library Service
Liverpool primary and secondary schools		Book Ahead Project



Unloading books for Exeter Libraries.

North West Libraries received 3,200 copies of the books via Liverpool which were then redistributed to 21 library services including Wirral, Sefton, Oldham, Lancashire, Cheshire and Blackpool. Bank of Scotland had a total of 600 copies which were sent from Liverpool and Bristol to branches in Leeds, Halifax, Edinburgh and Cardiff for use by staff members. Other recipients of bulk copies of *Small Island* included council officers and members in participating areas, the Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust and the Devon Record Office.



Alistair Machray (left), editor of Liverpool Echo, with Professor Drummond Bone (right) and pupils from St Silas school at Penny Readings event in Liverpool (Mealeys Photography).

Publicising the project

Promotional material and images

The imagery used on the cover of the *Small Island* readers' guide, throughout the website and on the project's promotional material was created by Qube Design Associates Ltd in Bristol. It consisted of a background montage of archive pictures of Jamaica and abolitionist campaign material with a stock photograph of an African man's face superimposed on top. The colour scheme was an eye-catching red, black and yellow. The promotional material included 33,000 postcards and 6,500 A3 display posters distributed across all sites, on-street banners created for Bristol and Hull, and 25 bus adverts used in Liverpool.

Launch-day events

Launch day was 11 January 2007. Andrea Levy travelled to Liverpool for a photo-opportunity and invitation-only gathering at the Merseyside Maritime Museum at Albert Dock in the morning, followed by an interview and reading event in the early evening at Liverpool Central Library which attracted over 250 members of the public. Mary Hoffman, author of *Amazing Grace*, was in Glasgow for a free session for nearly 200 local primary-school children held at the Mitchell Library. In Hull, an actor in the guise of William Wilberforce, the Hull MP who played a leading part in the abolition campaign, toured the city distributing 600 free copies of *Small Island* accompanied by the official town crier. In Bristol, the morning began with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress reading *Amazing Grace* with pupils from Hannah More Primary School then joining guests at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum for a selection of readings and performances linked to the project.

Other launch-day events and photo-opportunities included the following:

- At Poole Central and Creekmoor libraries there were readings from *Small Island* and of a Benjamin Zephaniah poem, a poetry reading

from Louisa Parker, an introduction to the Dorset Black History project, the handing out of copies of the book and readers' guides, and refreshments.

- At a busy haematology clinic in Treliske Hospital in Cornwall staff and patients assisted in a photo-opportunity in which 100 copies of the book were given away.
- Falmouth Library presented a selection of readings from *Small Island*, some Caribbean poetry and a talk on Cornwall's Jamaican connections, accompanied by tropical refreshments.

Media coverage

Media partnerships play a crucial part in reaching as wide an audience as possible for initiatives such as *Small Island Read 2007* and in positioning the project within the local community. The official media partners for *Small Island* were:

- *Liverpool Echo*, which provided coupons to exchange for books and some news coverage.
- *Bristol Evening Post*, which provided coupons and some coverage.
- *The Herald* in Glasgow, which ran a coupon and gave the most extensive feature coverage of all the partners.

There was no media partner in Hull. The *Liverpool Post* was originally also a media partner and its logo was featured on support material, but when the *Echo* insisted on the exclusive right to run the coupons – even though both newspapers belong to the same company – the *Post* withdrew its support, providing a useful lesson in the sensitive politics of local newspaper relationships. In the past, similar difficulties had arisen in Bristol with the *Bristol Evening Post* and *Western Daily Press*.

As well as developing one-to-one partnerships with the key local newspapers in each city, press releases were sent to over 350 media contacts, locally, regionally and nationally. The clipping service Durrants recorded 102 items, valued at the advertising equivalent of £191,701 and reaching an estimated circulation of 5,010,423 people.



Promotional banner for the project.



(Top) Poet Edson Burton reading from *Small Island* during the launch event at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol (Laura Thorne).



(Above) Lucy Urquhart (Arts Officer, Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust), Maureen Twose (Cornwall Library Service) and staff and day patients of the Haematology Clinic, Truro with books, guides and posters on launch day.

This figure does not include the coverage in the Bristol *Evening Post* and some other smaller local newspapers nor editions of *Metro* and other free newspapers. In addition, *Venue*, the Bath and Bristol listing magazine, distributed 10,000 copies of the illustrated guide with its early January issue – a service it charged for – which contributed to the marketing of the project.

Running the self-completed coupons in the local press worked well as this provided some useful background information on those who received free copies of the book for evaluation purposes. It also meant each newspaper could offer something extra to its readers by way of thanks. What was disappointing was the general level of coverage the project received from its partners. In previous Great Reading Adventures, for example, the Bristol *Evening Post*, in addition to regular news items on activities, had provided substantial special features, which included in 2003 serialising the whole of *Treasure Island* and in 2005 having a daily archive photo of Bristol in wartime. The coverage for 2007 was not as comprehensive. Bristol Cultural Development Partnership had suggested a series of historical and contemporary articles on slavery and migration themes that could be run in association with the project and hoped the newspaper would put out a call for migration stories from readers, but none of these ideas were taken up. Although the news stories on the launch and on some of the workshops and other activities were welcome, it could have been a much more productive relationship (and the newspaper failed to cover Andrea Levy's visit to the city at the end of February). A lesson learnt is that content itself needs to be provided, rather than ideas alone, to guarantee sustained coverage, as it was in previous years.

The Herald in Glasgow did respond well to the suggested topics and devoted over 20 pages of specially commissioned articles relating to the project in its Saturday magazine supplement on 6 January 2007. This included the official *Small Island Read 2007* interview with Andrea Levy, a debate on whether Glasgow should apologise for its involvement in the slave trade, an article on modern-day forms of

slavery and a feature on Zachary Macaulay, the Scottish abolitionist. This commitment was a model for how a newspaper can get behind a community initiative. *The Herald* is the official media partner of Aye Write! so its involvement in *Small Island Read 2007* was mirrored in its coverage of the festival itself.

Janette Harkness, Deputy Editor of *The Herald*, said:

The Herald was delighted to support the Small Island Read with articles in the paper and by publishing the 20-page special. The themes explored within Andrea Levy's novel gave The Magazine team an ideal springboard into the issues surrounding Glasgow's role in the slave trade – and the part played by its citizens in its eventual abolition. Herald readers were delighted with the opportunity to participate in the project by exchanging the coupons for the free books. As a result of the interest generated by the Small Island Read, Andrea's event at Aye Write! attracted a sell-out audience and was one of the highlights of this year's festival.

The project also received coverage in in-house bulletins, on various websites, on local television (for Andrea Levy's visit to Bristol) and on local radio (including BBC Radio Cornwall). There was international coverage from an item that appeared in both *The Jamaican Gleaner* and the Jamaican Government website about writers of Jamaican descent (Andrea Levy and Benjamin Zephaniah) being involved in a major British reading project.

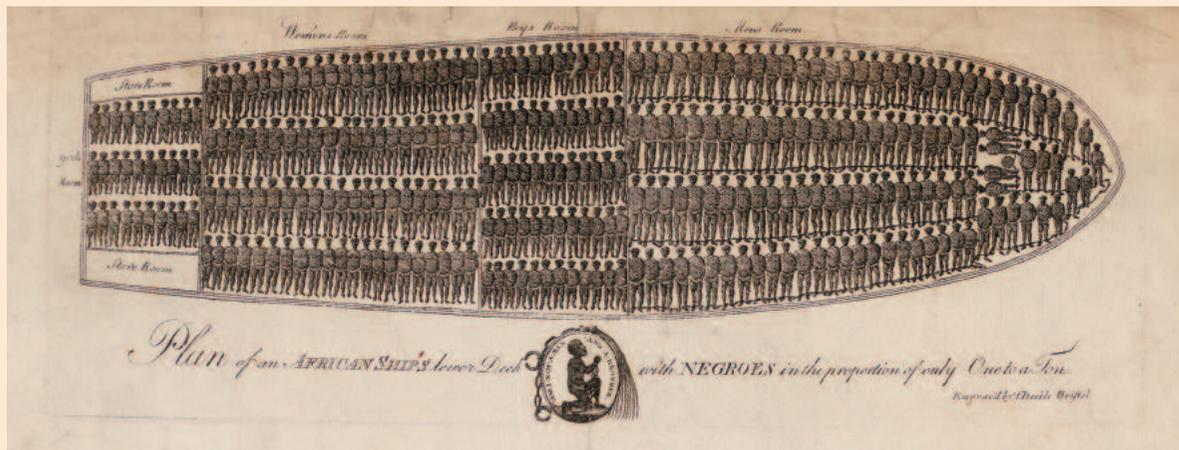
Of those who provided information on where they first heard about the project, around 52 per cent said 'local library', 11 per cent said 'local press', seven per cent said 'word of mouth', three per cent said 'local radio/TV', three per cent said 'school or college', two per cent said 'internet search' and one person said 'on street poster'. Of the 20 per cent who choose the 'other' option on the survey, the most commonly referred to forms of information were other types of print media, reading groups, work notices and emails.



Andrea Levy with Beatlife drummers in Liverpool on launch day.

(Right) Portrait of a slave by an unknown artist, c 1800 (Wilberforce House Museum, Hull City Council), one of the illustrations used in the guide.

(Below) Depiction of how slaves were loaded on board the Liverpool-registered slave ship Brookes (Bristol Record Office). The plan was used on a pamphlet distributed by an abolitionist group from Plymouth, an extract from which was on the project website.



Support material for readers of *Small Island*

An illustrated readers' guide was produced as part of the *Small Island Read 2007* support material, providing background information on the author and the historical and social context of the book. Sections included 'The Transatlantic Slave Trade', 'The Windrush Generation' and 'Settling In', with text boxes on the abolitionist campaigners Ignatius Sancho and William Wilberforce, Glasgow and slavery, Darwin and slavery, the Jamaican maroons, black Americans in Bristol and the black community in Liverpool. There was also a Jamaica timeline.

Although there are considerable cost implications in printing a document of this kind, the Great Reading Adventure has found that providing a glossy guide with comprehensive content encourages people to learn more, to value the product and also is a useful means of demonstrating visually to potential partners and funders the quality of the project. Of those who completed a survey, around 61 per cent had read the guide and 97 per cent of those who expressed an opinion thought the information it contained had been useful (some of those who said 'No' commented that it had been interesting rather than useful, so perhaps this question should have been worded slightly differently).

Comments regarding the guide included:

I found the section of the book itself most useful but the historical background was very interesting and highly relevant. The guide definitely helped me to appreciate the book.

We had studied the slave trade at school, particularly with regard to William Wilberforce and the British government but was interested to read about other participants who pressurised for abolition of slavery.

I appreciated the way the guide gave me lots more background information about historical facts behind all the characters. I also liked the links to the slave trade and its abolition. It added an extra dimension to my reading of the book.

It added to the information that was appearing in the media relating to the anniversary of the abolition of slavery and it was good to be able to develop my own understanding of some of the issues. I think it also increased my pleasure of reading the book.

I saw Small Island as a springboard to Abolition 200 and the book/guide helped to contextualise the significant people in history.

Well presented and information made excellent background to the book. Not everyone is aware of the colonial or slave trading background because of modern ways of teaching history in schools.

Well laid out and informative. Gave a historical background to the setting of the novel which gave it an extra edge. Some excellent photography as well.

It prepared one's mind on the background to the book. I found it useful and I'm sure that anyone under 40 would find it almost essential.

Terrific resource for school!

Great historic detail – will keep it for that alone.



Photos collected by Glasgow Libraries of readers from Croatia, Romania and China who were featured on the website.

The guide was also available as a download on the project website in PDF and Microsoft Word formats. The Word format and the website pages themselves were compatible with the Royal National Institute for the Blind's JAWS speech output system and the whole site was compliant with the W3C accessibility guidelines.

The project website also included further background information on the author and the historical context – including extracts from several original documents relating to the abolition campaign, the conditions on the Caribbean plantations and personal experiences of arriving in Britain – as well as news of events that were taking place, photographs of readers and reader comments. Glasgow Libraries had taken up the migration theme by sending some of their books around the world with staff members and friends, and photographs of these international readers were featured on the website including images from China, Kazakhstan, Costa del Sol and Lanzarote. Copies of the book are also known to have found their way during the project to India, Spain, New Zealand, Nice, Bermuda, Pearl Harbour, Thailand and the USA, and 50 copies were released 'into the wild' by Halton Libraries via the official Book Crossing website as part of World Book Day.

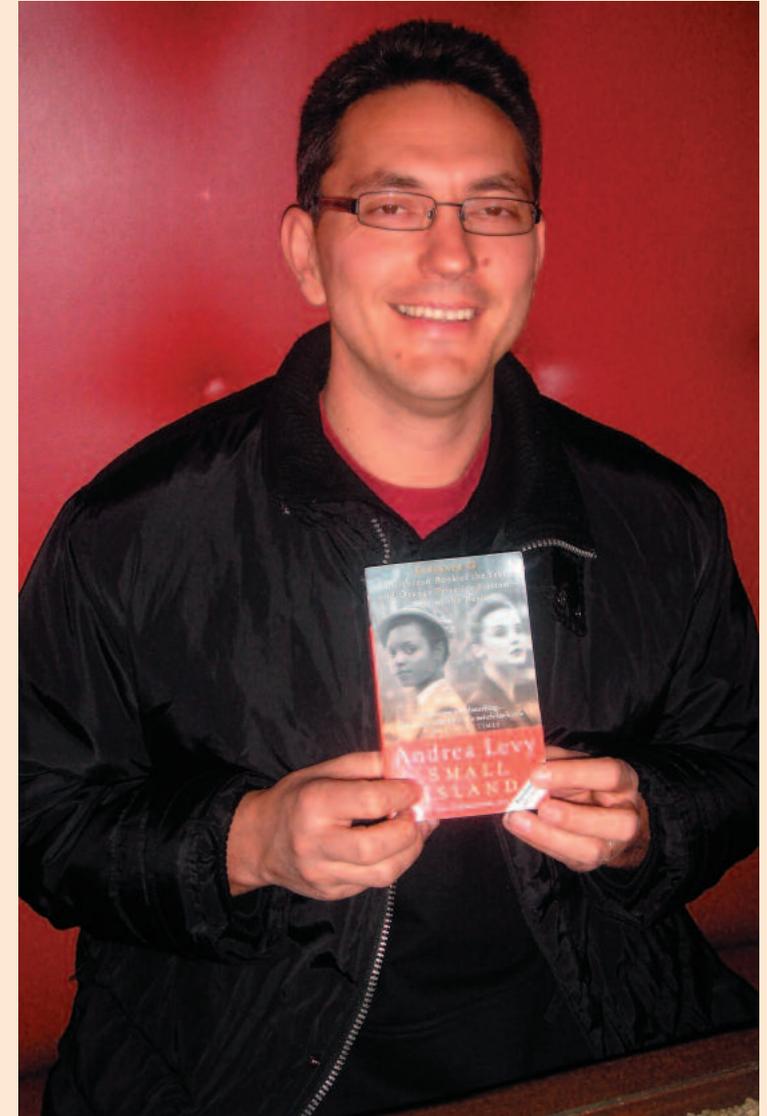
Table 3 provides details of the *Small Island Read 2007* website visits.

Table 3: Website visits

	Number of visits	Average visit length
January	6,366	00:09:09
February	6,488	00:07:37
March	7,482	00:07:57
TOTAL	20,336	

Source: E3. Over 5,000 visits per month were also recorded in April and May, after the project ended.

In addition Liverpool Reads recorded 2,964 new visitors to its own local website at www.liverpoolreads.com. This far exceeded the



expectation which, based on last year's statistics, was to achieve 1,400 new visitors during the course of the project.

Of those who completed a survey, 31 per cent had visited the website. This relatively low figure may in part be explained by the fact that so many of those who completed surveys were in their sixties or older, and therefore were less likely to have ready access to the internet. Of those who expressed an opinion nearly 90 per cent thought the information on the website had been useful.

Comments on the website included:

Clear, concise, easy to navigate.

Added depth to the book.

Useful and lively website that gives plenty of background information.

Opportunity to share views on the book, to read others' opinions. I also enjoyed the section on the poetry where young people with a background of migrancy in their heritage explored and shared their experiences.

It is a site that I shall keep returning to. There is so much information on it and there are so many links that I shall be exploring.

The support material for *Small Island Read 2007* was designed to add another dimension to the reading experience by providing contextual information linked to the issues raised by the novel in as attractive and comprehensive way as possible. The material contributed to the sense in which the project was about more than 'just' reading the book. Of those who expressed an opinion, nearly 90 per cent said that joining the project had enhanced their experience of reading *Small Island* and nearly 88 per cent thought they had learnt something about slavery and migration as a result of taking part (some of those who said they had not learnt anything added the comment that they already knew about the subject).

Small Island Read 2007

HOME LIBRARIES REGISTRATION FORM ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ABOLITION BILL

Home

What's On

Small Island

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Migration

Education

News and Press

Reader Contributions

Resources

Small Island Read 2007 is the biggest mass-reading initiative that has ever taken place in Britain. It brings together the pre-existing annual reading projects The Great Reading Adventure (Bristol and the South West) and Liverpool Reads, and partners from Aye Winte! the Glasgow book festival and Hull Libraries.

Everyone in the areas covered by the project is being encouraged to read Andrea Levy's award-winning novel *Small Island*.

2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Slave Trade Abolition Bill and *Small Island Read 2007* is part of a wider national initiative commemorating the ending of the trade and exploring slavery's continuing influence upon multicultural Britain. The novel *Small Island* has been chosen not only because it is an entertaining and enjoyable read but also because it provides an insight into the initial post-war contact between Jamaican migrants, descendants of enslaved Africans, and the white 'Mother Country'.

Thousands of copies of *Small Island* are available for loan from branches of libraries in the participating local authorities (see Libraries [add link] above). Some free copies of the book and its accompanying readers' guide can be obtained while stocks last from selected sites (see the Registration [add link] above for details). It can also be purchased from all good bookshops.

Books for younger and emergent readers that address similar themes are also being used as part of the project (see Education [add link] for details).

On this website you can download a copy of the readers' guide which will tell you about Andrea Levy and her work, the slave trade and post-war migration. Further background information can be found by following the links in the side bar. In addition, this site provides calendars of events and news of all the activities that are taking place as part of *Small Island Read 2007*, as well as downloadable copies of the education material that has been produced.

We are keen to receive feedback from readers on what they think of the book and to hear of their own experiences of migration, and will post a selection of the contributions we receive on the Reader Contributions page [make link].

We hope you will enjoy taking part in *Small Island Read 2007*.

Some of the documents on this site are in PDF format and require Adobe Reader. Download it here [link to Adobe download]. Word versions are also available, which are compatible with the RNIB-approved JAWS system and which can be reformatted in a font to suit the individual reader.

BWINNER O
Whitbread Book of the Year
and
Orange Prize for Fiction

Andrea Levy
SMALL ISLAND

Page from the *Small Island Read 2007* website.



Claire Burkitt, General Manager, Playwrights' Studio Scotland, with the book.

Participant response and profile

Qualitative feedback on *Small Island Read 2007* has mainly been obtained via a survey that could be completed online or in hard copy. This focused exclusively on *Small Island* rather than the books for younger readers. There were around 400 responses, a disappointing number, but at least this generated some interesting personal responses to the book and project that have been of value in compiling this report.¹ Additional feedback has come from individual emails sent by readers, informal feedback collected by library staff, evaluation forms used in schools, press comments, and interviews with partners in the project.

Of those who completed a survey, 79 per cent had read *Small Island* for the first time when they joined the project. There was what one Devon librarian described as 'the Marmite factor' regarding reactions to the book: people either loved it or hated it. However, although some reported they had struggled with the Jamaican dialect, the book's length and the switching between different voices and time periods, the vast majority of comments received were favourable. They included the following:

Found it powerful and affecting, also extremely funny and moving. I loved the way Andrea managed to draw the worlds of Jamaica, England and the time of the 2nd World War together. Would recommend it highly.

It was a book I would never have picked up if it had not been for the mass-reading project but I totally enjoyed it.

An excellent read, sad and hilarious, entertaining and educational. Characters and situations worthy of Dickens. A thoroughly enjoyable and informative book. Thanks to the author and yourselves for allowing me to read it free of charge.

Well written which made it easy to read. It had everything – humour, pathos, just enough description, wonderfully researched.

Fantastic book, excellent read, highly enjoyable, and I couldn't put it down!

I think Andrea Levy told her story very cleverly – one never felt 'preached to'! The characters will live in my memory – always a good test of a book!

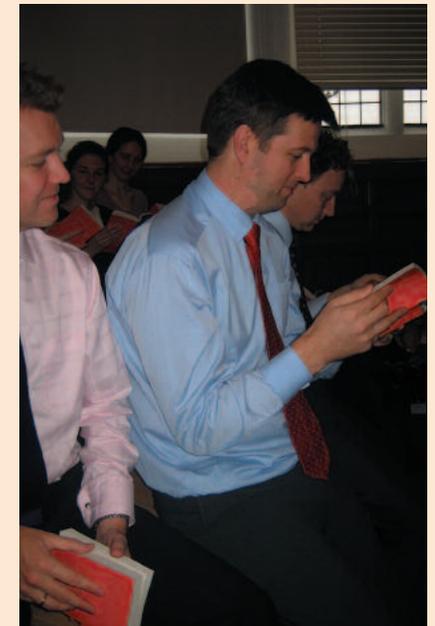
Really enjoyed it. I'd thought about reading it for ages, and this spurred me on. I couldn't put it down! The Small Island Read project was a great way to introduce me to an amazing book that I wouldn't normally have read.

Thought I would struggle with it as it's not my type of read, but I enjoyed it – humorous but thought provoking.

This was a fantastic read, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I joined the book club only a few months ago, and this was the best book we have read so far. All members of the group unanimously gave it a 'thumbs up' as we found it moving, eye-opening and completely believable. It is the kind of book I personally would pick up and read anyway but I had not heard of it previously.

Captivated from the first page of prologue. Moved deeply by the writing, the description and prejudices and the characters were so clearly done that I truly felt I moved in the shoes and souls of the characters.

I thought the book was excellent. I don't think I would have read this book if it wasn't for Small Island Read, but I'm glad I did. The characters are so realistic, the settings vivid and the plot



Staff at Parsons Brinckerhoff, Bristol reading the book.

¹ There is a separate summary report on the questionnaire in which all the comments received via the survey are compiled and this can be downloaded from the project website.

although perhaps a little reliant on coincidence is very rewarding, moving and thought provoking. That said it's also very enjoyable, entertaining and easy to read. I would recommend it to anyone and will be passing my copy on.

This is not a book I would have chosen to read, but for the reading project – I enjoyed it very much, it was well written and the 'personal' experiences of the various characters were quite eye opening.

A thoroughly engrossing read that, at times, had me both smiling and crying! I loved it, such a thoughtful and intelligently-told story. It was really interesting how my sympathies for the characters changed depending on who was telling a particular part of the story. It really challenged how I form personal opinions about people based on my own assumptions etc, rather than listening to a situation from their point of view as well.

Made me rethink some of my attitudes to minority groups. Reminded me of how we live in such a small world – the way the characters were connected... Much better 'read' than I had anticipated.

I thought it was a brilliant read. I wouldn't have selected it for myself but read it as part of the promotion and was really surprised at how much I enjoyed it.

Andrea Levy writes beautifully from so many perspectives. She captures the experience from both the black and white point of view as well as male/female characters. It is a remarkable novel, even a masterpiece for working social history into such a good read. It is important to read Small Island to remind us all of a time that has passed, but only just. I cannot recommend this book highly enough, I loved it.

The book gave historical information about immigration, while being humorous and the characters involved were very real. I

enjoyed it, and plan to read it again, some time in the future. I will recommend it to my friends.

A wonderful book. It should be compulsory reading and I will be telling everyone I know to read it. It is bitter-sweet, very humorous at times too though. The characters are very real and I want to just hug Gilbert. I have just finished it and am fighting back the tears with some difficulty. It is beautifully written and will stay with me forever.

A few complained about what they considered to be Andrea Levy's biased account of the post-war period – one which did not recognise the comparable suffering of the resident white population – but most praised the book for the important historical and social issues it raised, and 'thought provoking' was one of the most common descriptions. Additional comments included the following:

Gave me a far greater insight into the problems associated with discrimination and the hopes and aspirations of British citizens living in the Caribbean.

I learnt a lot about racial tension during the war, which has not been mentioned a great deal elsewhere.

I feel I know much more about what happened in and during the war and after.

Enjoyable – I like books about 'real' people and educational. I learnt aspects of being an immigrant I'd not considered previously.

Thought it was brilliant and learnt a lot about the expectations of the Jamaicans coming to the Mother country and the reality of the ignorance (although not always hostile) of many white people in the UK... I found it a compelling read, and most informative too.

I enjoyed reading Small Island. It was full of humour and thought provoking racial issues. My partner is Jamaican and I took

pleasure in superimposing the character of Gilbert on to his body. They share many traits.

It was an interesting insight into the Caribbean immigration to Britain and a good talking point about attitudes to race relations.

I loved the book. It was very interesting for me to get a glimpse in the history of Caribbean immigration to the UK, since I am a new immigrant from Brazil as well. I never knew how racist the Brits were in those post-war times. Many aspects of the book made me laugh as well, although it is such a tragic story.

I was only a small child at the time the book is set, and whilst I have always been aware that there was, and still is, a lot of racial prejudice this book has made me aware of what it means in a personal way.

The novelty of the book is that it offers the racism perspective from both the black side as well as the white post-war British side. The fact of the war-weary threadbare Britain having to absorb many 'reparation' workers from her colonies is very interesting and offers fresh insight into this perennial issue.

Very surprised at the racism encountered at that time both in this country and from the Americans – the land of the free. I had known there was racism but had not comprehended the extent of it.

I found it to be a very enjoyable book. It was easy to get into the story and also gave me an insight into what it was like for members of the Commonwealth. It also made me feel ashamed that some of my fellow Brits could have treated other human beings in this way. So an enlightening experience for me!

A good enjoyable read which really made me think about the issues surrounding race and how much attitudes have changed (or not) in the last 60 years.

A wonderful book to remind us we are all made of the same material and how war makes it even more difficult, more complex to trust to be human. It answered so many questions we prefer not to ask.

That such a charming, gentle and informative book should leave a feeling of sadness!! The author has made the subjects and situations so real one is personally involved in their lives. I finished with the hope that the child is the light at the end of the tunnel, and that these diverse cultures would grow to accept one another. Wonderful book!

An excellent read, finely crafted. Made me really aware of the problems facing people coming from other countries, also the ignorance of the indigenous population. This was a book with great characters and great attention to detail in every way. A learning curve.

An excellent story, well written, believable characters. Good for people here to be told these facts. As a white woman I have to ask myself, candidly, if I would have taken in a black person into my home – the disapproval of neighbours can make cowards of us all, no matter how we try to justify our actions.

It gave me a lot to think about. It was interesting finding out about the prejudices all the characters had and the expectations and realities of life in Britain after the war.

Very moving, made me feel ashamed to be British. Made me more aware of how other people struggle to live, especially in mixed race communities, living as I do in a predominantly white area of Scotland.

Using the ACORN classification system, it has been possible to ascertain the socio-economic backgrounds of many of those who received free copies of the book along with a few of those who

Reader at Severn Beach Post Office book drop.

borrowed books from the library. In the main, this has been taken from data on the coupons exchanged at the various distribution sites. Postcode information was also collected by Poole and South Gloucestershire Libraries. The postcode analysis identifies particular household types. Table 4 provides details of the analysis for Bristol (which also includes South Gloucestershire), Glasgow, Liverpool and Poole.

Table 4: ACORN postcode analysis of recipients of books where known

Category of household	Bristol	Glasgow	Liverpool	Poole
1. Wealthy Achievers – wealthy executives, affluent greys, flourishing families	20.9	22.8	15.5	36.6
2. Urban Prosperity – prosperous professionals, educated urbanites, aspiring singles	24.8	40.6	7.2	1.8
3. Comfortably Off – starting out, secure families, settled suburbia, prudent pensioners	33.5	16.9	26.1	48.2
4. Moderate Means – Asian communities, post industrial families, blue collar roots	12.1	5.1	17.8	3.6
5. Hard Pressed – struggling families, burdened singles, high rise hardship, inner city adversity	8.6	14.6	33.3	9.8

Source: amh/BCDP This data is based on 660 (0.4 per cent of the total population) postcodes from Bristol, 724 from Glasgow (0.3 per cent), 4,030 from Liverpool (0.7 per cent) and 112 from Poole (0.2 per cent). It would have been useful to include Hull in this analysis but postcodes were not collected here when books were given away and there was no coupon system in place.



Table 5 provides the analysis of the population as a whole in each city for comparison.

Table 5: Socio-economic profiles of the four sites

Category of household	Bristol	Glasgow	Liverpool	Poole
1. Wealthy Achievers – wealthy executives, affluent greys, flourishing families	5.9	2.0	14.7	36.3
2. Urban Prosperity – prosperous professionals, educated urbanites, aspiring singles	24.8	30.8	5.8	5.6
3. Comfortably Off – starting out, secure families, settled suburbia, prudent pensioners	25.4	7.7	30.8	41.7
4. Moderate Means – Asian communities, post industrial families, blue collar roots	19.5	4.4	16.0	4.5
5. Hard Pressed – struggling families, burdened singles, high rise hardship, inner city adversity	24.4	55.1	32.8	11.9

Source: amh

This snapshot of participants shows that both Poole and Liverpool's samples were a fairly close match to the general population. In Bristol and Glasgow there was an over-representation of Wealthy Achievers and an under-representation of the Hard Pressed. This discrepancy may partly be explained by the nature of collecting the data. In Bristol free copies were distributed to the general public through two city-centre bookshops, environments that are more often visited by the upper social strata than the lower. In Glasgow the sample was taken from those who submitted coupons from *The Herald*, Scotland's leading high-quality newspaper of whom 83 per cent of readers are in the social category ABC1. Some of the targeted approaches for distribution of the book, which did not involve the coupons, were aimed at the more hard-pressed members of the community thereby increasing participation coverage in this social category above that which is shown by the postcode analysis. Comparable socio-economic information is not generally available on those who borrowed books from libraries, but library branches are located in areas covering all five categories and all services actively seek to be inclusive.

The gender balance of recipients of the book was around 72 female to 28 male (this is based on 5,718 coupons where gender was shown). The Great Reading Adventure usually has a gender balance of around 70 female to 30 male so this is a similar breakdown to previous projects. Targeted initiatives such as distributing 10,000 copies of the guide via *Venue*, which has a readership that is 50 per cent male, will have increased male participation in the project above the figures shown on the coupons.

The only specific ethnic origin data collected for participants was via the self-completed surveys which showed that nearly 91 per cent of those who provided this information described themselves as White British. However, it is known that members of the Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, Somali, Yemeni and Afghan communities attended events and took part in activities.

All adult groups were represented in the age analysis of respondents to the survey, where information was known. Table 6 provides details.

Table 6: Age of survey respondents

Age Group	
15-18	0.5
19-25	2.9
26-35	8.6
36-45	15.5
46-55	23.3
56-65	27.3
65-75	17.1
Over 75	4.8

Source: BCDP. Note that younger participants who read *Refugee Boy* and *Amazing Grace* were not covered by this particular survey, but would number in the thousands.

For many of the older readers, the events described in the book happened in their lifetime. The book also provided younger generations with an insight into what older members of their family had experienced. Personal comments from the survey and other feedback received included the following:

Interesting, very readable. Shaming insight into something my generation knew about – the 'no blacks, no Irish' prejudice – but chose to ignore. No wonder we have a marginalized sub-culture of Caribbean ethnic origin.

I enjoyed the book. My mother migrated to England in 1952 so it was good to read about the 50s in a way that reflected some of our experiences and perspectives. It was well written, a good story and brought out all sorts of issues without being 'preachy'.

Coming from Jamaican parents the book gave me an insight to some of the issues that my parents faced when they arrived in the UK.

I thought the book was an excellent depiction of Jamaican life and the characters reminded me so much of my in-laws. At times I

laughed at the similarities especially regarding religion and expectations of Britain.

I really enjoyed this book. Having been born in the early 1950s I could recall events such as the ones I read. I remember growing up in an all white area and being intrigued at the sight of the few coloured people I met. In my late teens when I worked and met some of these coloured people socially I was appalled at their treatment, particularly in work places when bosses would refuse to give jobs to them regardless of their qualifications. It is worth noting that an Irish friend of mine who arrived in England around the same time remembers lodgings displaying signs saying 'no blacks, no dogs, no Irish.' We also had Catholic neighbours who many treated as aliens because of their faith. This prejudice works both ways though. Reading the book it made me feel sad that we are still seeing different races not trying to understand each other and live together in love and respect.

Interesting and thought provoking. My father emigrated to England in 1953 so it gave me an insight into his experiences.

It took a while to get into the book, but I enjoyed it and it brought back memories of the difficulties experienced by black and white people with the different cultures and work ethics after the war.

I enjoyed the book – it was slightly uncomfortable reading at times and made me think of how openly racist my grandparents' era was.

Well written, thought provoking, as I grew up in South London and I am just about old enough to remember the arrival of the Jamaican people. I eventually couldn't put the book down until finished. It makes you feel very humble.

I absolutely loved it. I am a black man of Caribbean descent and I felt that the descriptions of Jamaica and of the central black characters were so well written that they could easily have been my own grandparents. Excellent.

It had so many dimensions which interested me and having lived through the 1950s, though not the '40s, it revived memories of life at that time and the impact it had on me as a child (I had a close friend who was an immigrant).

I thought it was a great book, and about time that somebody from the community should 'document' what went on in the past. I am close to 50 years old, born in Tottenham and I clearly remember always wondering that every time I went shopping with my parents how people would come up to me in the street (I must have been 3-4 yrs old) and make a fuss of my hair, my skin, and my colour. But there was always when in white company, that I should be silent and only speak when I was spoken to.

During the war my parents lived in a small isolated hamlet in Devon which was saturated with thousands of American troops training for D-Day because the narrow country lanes of Devon were like the Bocage of N. France and the beaches similar. A platoon of coloured GI was accepted without any prejudice and the only hostility shown was to one villager who gave breakfast to a German airman who had baled out of his plane, while she waited for the village policeman to come for him – but as she put it, 'He was some poor mother's son,' and it was soon forgotten.

This brought back post-war memories. At first I thought the discrimination was over-stressed but then remembered a time when my mother had a small guest house in Branksome and had a coloured band member from a travelling circus staying. Other guest houses had refused him accommodation although they had rooms vacant.

I grew up in the 1950s and the feel of the book was very real to me. I remember there being only two black (Jamaican) families in the village where I lived just outside of Bristol. There was a girl from one of these families in my school, a bit younger than me. She had a baby brother and I was absolutely fascinated by him, every day I asked her

if I could come home with her to see him. I didn't tell my parents I visited. I remember all about my fascination and the prejudices that local people had but I didn't ever think about how it was for these families. I had no idea where Jamaica (Small Island) was, what it was like, what expectations these families had or whether they were disappointed with what they found in Britain. Reading the book actually raised these questions in me and together with the reading project went some way towards answering them.

Participants were encouraged to share their own stories of migration and of experiencing diversity during the course of the project. One of the contributions received via the website was prompted by reading about the racial segregation of American troops while they were stationed in Britain. It was submitted by someone from Bristol:

I would like to share a memory that my grandma shared with me. I am in my 30s now but she told me this when I was small and it has stuck with me since. The readers' guide mentions a riot at the bottom of Park Street between black and white GIs so this memory has even more poignancy for me now.

She was walking in Queen's Road, Bristol with her Dad. She was a young woman at the time. A couple of black GIs were walking along towards them on the same pavement but they then stepped out onto the street and crossed over. This, it seemed, was the norm. Black GIs always crossed or stepped out into the road even when there was plenty of space on the pavement to pass. But her father shouted out across (in a Bristolian accent) 'yer, what you crossing the road for? You're in our country now and you don't have to do that here'. He was very angry at how they were treated.

When I recall this story I feel proud that my ancestors stood up in a small way against injustice and have instilled in me a sense of tolerance and acceptance of others. I feel proud that Bristol gave a temporary home to GIs during the war but also really sad to know

that prejudice existed and still does. When I myself am intolerant of others this family anecdote helps me.

My gran also remembers the GIs stationed around Wraxall/Tyntesfield with affection as mentioned in the readers' guide because she worked on the buses with her route up that way.

Additional reader comment and migration stories can be found in the Reader Contributions section of the website at www.smallislandread.com.

Michael Wood and Terry Fisher handing out books to Hull residents in Princes' Quay Shopping Centre on launch day.





Staff at Devon Libraries headquarters with books and guides.

Library readers and reading groups

The majority of copies of *Small Island* were distributed through libraries and most project events were organised by library staff. All 15 library services in the South West took part along with the library services in Liverpool, Hull and Glasgow and much of North West England. This project was taking place at a time when many library staff faced increasing pressure from budget cuts and reorganisation and it is to their credit that so much activity took place despite the difficult circumstances.

The following feedback, compiled from Glasgow Libraries, is typical of the staff response:

Great project, it was brilliant to see the books fly off the shelves, helped by such strong publicity in The Herald. The timing was good too as it really caught the imagination of people in the run up to Aye Write!, and allowed all the community libraries to be involved in the festival. Many people re-read the book and many more discovered it for the first time. We particularly enjoyed comments from people who said it wasn't the sort of book they'd have picked for themselves, but they gave it a go and now were passing their copy on to a friend urging them to read it too. Book supplies worked very smoothly, quantities suited us perfectly...

Each of the library services was provided with bulk supplies of *Small Island* and the readers' guides for distribution to their branches, as well as posters and postcards for use in displays. Most also purchased large-print, and audio versions (CD and cassette) of

Small Island to supplement existing stock to widen access to the project. It was reported that attempts to order foreign language editions were unsuccessful as they were out of stock at the usual suppliers.

In Glasgow, Liverpool, Hull and the North West most of the copies received by libraries were given away for free at special events, to existing library members and as an added incentive for joining the library service in membership drives. In the South West, the bulk of copies were added to loan stock but some copies were given away as sets to reading groups and at special events, such as the launch of the One Somerset diversity and inclusion exhibition. In Plymouth, 200 copies were given to members of the public through Your Local Co-op stores in the city (last year Plymouth Libraries ran a similar give-away campaign via Chinese takeaways). A spokesperson reported:

...it was a good opportunity to bring the title to a new audience through the shop distribution – in hindsight, we should have given away more copies this way. The Co-op would have welcomed more free copies.

As part of this offer, Your Local Co-op said they would give a free Fairtrade chocolate bar to customers who returned books so they might be reused, but most people seem to have wanted to hold on to their copy or pass it on directly to family and friends.

An advantage of having copies within the library loan system is that it increases the likelihood of multiple readers getting access to the books. Table 7 provides details of loan activity in the South West where data is available. The previous loans period is between three and six months prior to the start of the project, depending on the retrospective data available in each library service. The figures include large print, audio, hardback and other editions as well as the paperback.

Table 7: Loans of *Small Island* January - March 2007 in South West

Authority	Previous <i>Small Island</i> loans	Loans of <i>Small Island</i> Jan 2007	Loans of <i>Small Island</i> Feb 2007	Loans of <i>Small Island</i> Mar 2007
Bournemouth		66	61	56
Cornwall	158	741	545	503
Devon				2,838
Dorset				1,692
Gloucestershire				924
Libraries West	446	2,225	2,251	1,951
Plymouth	79	184	153	180
Poole	41	131	155	105
Swindon		184	176	189
Torbay	42	181	215	167
Wiltshire				1,063
Total	766	3,712	3,556	9,668

Source: BCDP. Note that not all library computer systems were able to provide monthly breakdowns, retrospective figures or loan figures for some of the additional editions. Libraries West is a consortium of B&NES, Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset, Somerset HMP, South Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire HMP library services. More detailed loan information for most of the services is available on request from BCDP.

When it was announced that *Small Island* was the chosen book for 2007 some librarians thought the increase in loans would be marginal because it was already a popular and well-read book having won so many major awards. It was also thought that the project would not be as successful as the 2006 Great Reading Adventure because – slightly contradicting the previous observation – the book was not as well known as *Around the World in Eighty Days* and was also perceived as a more difficult read. Although loans in some areas were slow and there seemed little interest from the local public, many staff members were pleasantly surprised by the outcome, with some branches asking for more stock in the first few days as all their copies

had gone out. Allowing for gaps in the data available, overall loans of *Small Island* in the region were over 2,000 per cent higher during the course of the project than over the previous loan period and at 16,936 were only 7,866 lower than for *Around the World in Eighty Days*, when many more books were in circulation. Loans were mainly to individual adult library members but also to reading groups, the housebound, staff and other categories of borrowers including some teenagers.

Among feedback received from South West librarians was the following:

I am glad to say that the Read has gone very well for us this year, despite the stress of less staff, more imminent cuts and dramatic changes afoot. I think our issues will be at least comparable with last year, which is brilliant seeing there were fewer books to go around.

Generally speaking, it has been very successful. When we were first told that this would be the Big Read book, I thought that it wasn't as accessible as the Jules Verne, but in fact I think it has been far more popular. The book has certainly provoked discussion among staff and borrowers. It's a bit of a generalization, but older readers are rather horrified at remembering the attitudes that prevailed in this country only a short time ago (opinion differed as to whether attitudes had improved or not). To younger readers, it seems like a long time ago and they think things are different now.

We all agree that the choice of book was much more popular than last year's and we had no difficulty in distributing the copies during the first couple of weeks (in fact I think the whole stock disappeared within three days).

Small Island was a great success here. The vast majority of readers loved it and thought it a well written and thought provoking read.



Small Island Read 2007 display in the children's section of Taunton library.

We displayed the books on one of our 'display walls', topping up as the copies disappeared, which they did very rapidly.

Some copies of *Small Island* and/or the other related material were also available for loan at library sites outside the South West, even though the majority of new books received were distributed free of charge. Liverpool Central library, for example, reported a 1,260 per cent increase in loans of large print and audio editions of *Small Island* compared with the previous six months as a result of the publicity for the project and the purchasing of additional stock. Ninety-two copies of *Small Island* itself were added to the existing loan stock and were borrowed 210 times in total. Sefton Library Services gave all its new copies of *Small Island* away but recorded 63 issues from its existing lending stock and commented that this was 'an excellent figure for a

book which was originally published four years ago'. Glasgow Libraries had 300 copies available for loan as back up for when their free copies ran out and recorded 307 loans during the course of the project. They also reported 70 loans of the large print version and 50 of the audio versions. Hull added 600 copies of *Small Island* to loan stock and recorded 822 loans. There were 179 loans of *Refugee Boy* on the basis of 167 copies. For the previous six months, loans of 24 and seven for the respective titles had been recorded.

Library reading groups were key participants and many libraries used the project as a means of promoting membership to their groups in open meetings. *Small Island* is already a popular choice for reading group discussions, both those organised by libraries and by others, but many groups who had read it before were keen to revisit the book. Wendy Clegg of Clevedon's National Women's Register Book Group re-read *Small Island* during the project as part of a review of all the books that the members had read in the last 16 years. Each member voted for their favourite ten books and *Small Island* came out on top. Wendy wrote:

We then discussed what characteristics make a good read, and came up with the following thoughts:

1. *Enthusiasm for subject chosen.*
2. *Different perspective on an event.*
3. *Insight into other cultures, social classes and their interaction.*
4. *Engage and 'grab' the reader!*
5. *Empathy for the characters and able to visualise them.*
6. *Good imagery.*
7. *Atmospheric.*
8. *Interlocking strands.*
9. *Engrossing plot.*
10. *Flowing style of prose.*

We think that Small Island had all these!!

Andrea Levy speaking at an event in Liverpool Central Library on launch day.



Feedback from other reading groups included the following:

- Knowsley Hey Art College staff reading group reported that they found the book 'a real eye opener' and 'it also has put them back in touch with reading which many said they didn't have time for'.
- Blackburn Libraries said that at their reading group meeting white members recalled when they first saw a black person and an Asian member told of her experiences when her family first arrived in Britain.
- A prison librarian promoting the project with inmates in Devon reported that one 'lifer' not only borrowed the book but also bought an additional copy via the library to be sent on to his partner so that they could read it at the same time.
- The book prompted discussions in Huyton on how few black people lived in a certain area of the city, teaching qualifications after the War, immigration from Eastern Europe, reactions to black GIs and recollections of American bases in the North West during the War.

- The Kilmarnock Ladies' bridge club reported they had thoroughly enjoyed the book and one member had taken her copy to her son in Australia.
- Members of Kirby reading group reminisced about black individuals that they had known at the time the book was set.
- A Devon library reported that its Books without Babies reading group really enjoyed the book which provoked an interesting discussion about racism in the '50s and whether the same racism exists now, but is just less overt.
- All ten reading groups run by East Renfrewshire library authority took part in the project, discussing the book at their February meetings, the first time they had all read the same book at the same time.
- The Bristol Central Library reading group for the Visually Impaired enjoyed *Small Island* via audio versions.
- A book discussion at Saltash library – comprising a mixture of reading group and non-group members – persuaded one male reader to go back to reading fiction, rather than his usual biographies, in his quest for social history.

Other group reading activity included the following:

- The Caribbean Reading Group, Liverpool, which ran for 15 weeks with free Caribbean food at the first session, gave participants a chance to read *Small Island* and Caribbean poetry or to just sit back and listen.
- At the Grand Reading Group event at Alkrington Library, Rochdale to which all reading groups in the Borough, both library-based and private, were invited participants were able to discuss *Small Island* over a glass or two of wine.
- Spike Island reading group, which includes members with learning difficulties, were supplied by Hartcliffe Library with a mix of print and audio versions of *Small Island*.
- Eighteen people thoroughly enjoyed the rare (for adults) treat of being read to during five *Small Island* Storytime sessions at Pollokshaws Library, Glasgow and members of staff found the

experience so positive they want to do the same with other books in the run up to next year's Aye Write! book festival.

- A Food for Thought event at University of Liverpool gave an opportunity to discuss *Small Island* over a buffet lunch.
- A Readers' Day in Devon was attended by 100 people.
- Bristol Libraries supplied copies of the book to the homeless through The Park Bench project.

There is more reading group feedback and figures on the website www.smallislandread.com within the What's On calendars of events.

New reading groups formed during *Small Island Read 2007* included those at Eastville, Clifton and Dartmouth libraries, the Battlefield Book Group which met at Langside Library in Glasgow, a church-based reading group set up in Bristol by the Revd Tim Higgins to discuss the ethical issues raised by the book as a Lent study, two new USA groups in Torbay, and around 20 in Liverpool including those at Asylum Link, Sola Arts, the Caribbean Centre and Vauxhall Medical Centre. BBC Radio Cornwall received a box of the reading guides to help promote their renewed broadcast book group.

James Proctor, an academic in the School of English at Newcastle University, is running a trans-national AHRC-funded project investigating the way readers make sense of contemporary migrant or diasporic writing. One of the project's four set texts is *Small Island* and part of the initiative involves collecting recordings of reading groups discussing the book. Eleven reading groups from St Ives, Penzance, Dorchester, Bradley Stoke, Bedminster (Bristol), Liverpool, West Kirby and Hull who had joined *Small Island Read 2007* participated in James's project. The recordings will be transcribed and the findings assessed next year. In addition, reading group sessions at the Mitchell and Whiteinch libraries in Glasgow were filmed by Stirling University as part of the project.



Mr Priddie and Violet from the Caribbean Reading Group in Liverpool.



Nadine Marshall, reader at the Penny Readings in Liverpool, an event which attracted 500 people (Mealeys Photography).

Special events

Not only did the *Small Island Read 2007* encourage people to make more use of their local libraries for borrowing books, the libraries provided an important focus for events. These included creative workshops, exhibitions, story-telling sessions, talks, discussions, international food tasting and family fun days. A full list of events along with attendance figures and feedback can be viewed via the What's On calendars on the website www.smallislandread.com. There were well over 100 in total.

Andrea Levy attended the Aye Write! Bank of Scotland Book Festival's opening night at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow on 16 February, speaking to nearly 400 readers, her biggest ever audience. Interviewed on stage by Karen Cunningham – and as reported in next day's edition of *The Herald* – she said:

The great thing for me is that I think [a mass read] gets to people who won't normally pick up a book, a much wider group of people than is normally the case. It's also great that the story of the immigration of people into Britain in the 1940s and 1950s, has segued into the commemoration of the end of the slave trade, it helps bring people into discussion about those subjects – and that's why we are here [tonight].

Aye Write! included a number of sessions linked to the slavery and migration themes explored in *Small Island Read 2007* including an apologies debate with Clare Short, Mike Phillips and A C Grayling, and Louisa Waugh and James Walvin discussing historic and contemporary slavery.

The festival also ran a free event linked to the One Glasgow Many Cultures competition in which local people were encouraged to share their stories of living in a diverse city. The session included contributions from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, poet and playwright Ghazi Hussein, writer and performer Jamila Brown, pupils from Drumchapel High, the Greater Pollok Carers Group and the rap group The Da Chics. The short story competition attracted over 100 entries and the judges were impressed by the wide variety of material and the high standard overall. The following extracts are from some of the winning entries:

It all started on a cold Christmas Eve afternoon, when we were shopping at Lidl. The three of us, mum, dad and me. We had bought what we needed and I went outside and played with the trolleys, leaving my parents inside to pack the bags. After a while, two figures marched out the shop, carrying their shopping. Absolutely mindlessly I followed them. After about three minutes of trotting after the two people who I assumed were my parents, I finally jogged right up to them and stopped dead in my tracks. I'd never seen them before in my life! They smiled and walked off, leaving me on an unfamiliar street. I wanted to ask them the way home but I didn't. I couldn't. Give me a break, what was I supposed to say? 'Excuse me, do you know where I live?' and anyway, I didn't even know how to speak English. The cold wind blew against my face. I shivered, partly because of the cold, partly because I was hopelessly lost.

From 'My First Christmas Eve in Glasgow' by Anna Guo

Every night that summer, they gathered at the crossroads, shouting and gesticulating with that rasping tongue they had, laying claim to streets that had belonged to others long before them. The community was unhappy. A residents meeting was called. People felt unsafe, threatened, the Chinese restaurant owner was losing business. The Muslim community who had



Louisa Adjoa Parker, a British-Ghanian poet from Dorset, at the Small Island Read 2007 launch in Poole library.



Audience at Andrea Levy event in Bristol (Laura Thorne).

arrived decades before were shocked at the brazen arrogance of a people who strutted around like the world owed them a living. When they had first arrived in Scotland, they were humble, grateful, kept themselves to themselves... but these people!

Then one of them stood up. A handsome man, dark with pale blue eyes everyone thought inappropriate to his skin tone, but which secretly had sent many ladies' hearts in the community hall fluttering.

From 'Crossroads' by Jacqueline Cameron

First time I see Jan, I'm turning the 66 into Battlefield Road. He's parked his bus outside the Vicky hospital and is waving me to stop. He shouts over, but I cannae make him out. Something about a passenger looking for Aldi. The only supermarket I can think of is the Somerfield at Muirend. So I get out the cab and cross over to see what he's on about. The lassie on his bus is in a right state, moaning about being late for work because the bus driver cannae understand her. I get her to calm down and ask which Aldi she's looking for. Then she starts screeching again. 'It's no Aldi! It's All Day!' She wants an All Day ticket.

We all have a good laugh about it at the garage later. Jan's laughing as well. The thing is, his English is better than any of us, but he hits the buffers when it comes to parliamo Glesga. Cannae be easy for somebody just arrived frae Poland. So at dinner time I give him a wee masterclass. Basic lingo for the bus, like 'gonnae gies wan an a hauf tae the Briggat'. Then big Gavin chimes in with slaggin words drivers have to put up with, like 'ya tube, ya numpty'. Jan starts getting confused, so I tell him we'll just do a word a day – one day at a time, just like Lena Martell. And Jan says 'Who's Lena Martell?'

From 'Warsaw Express' by James Carson

Andrea Levy visited each of the four main cities as part of the project to talk about the novel and her writing. Her session in Bristol was organised by Bristol Libraries and was held on the evening of 28 February in the Council Chamber of the Council House. A capacity audience of 330 attended this free event, including members of 27 reading groups. Andrea was interviewed on stage by Sara Davies of the BBC and then answered questions from the audience.

Cynthia Martin, Assistant Libraries Manager, who has been directly involved with the Great Reading Adventure in Bristol from the outset said:

It is always exciting to work so closely on a project with a living author. Small Island had already been popular with readers and reading groups as winner of both the Orange and Whitbread prizes; the Small Island project brought in a whole new wave of readers. Several libraries reported that they had run out of copies, and the readers guide was in great demand. We were fortunate to host an event with Andrea Levy, and we felt it went very well. Andrea proved an excellent reader and speaker to an attentive audience, and feedback was enthusiastic. Although I know this is the cut off point for your evaluation, we shall be keeping the project going in libraries for some months yet – and will probably keep back some stock to use again later in the year during Black History Month. The material on the website was very useful to libraries for mounting displays featuring Small Island and reflecting the Abolition 200 theme.

On 13 Tuesday Andrea Levy was at Zest Brasserie in Hull in a session organised by Hull Libraries that had an audience of around 120 people. Hull also organised a mini-tour of illustrated talks on William Wilberforce which visited four of the city's libraries, and a Rainbow Event for families on a diversity theme which included puppet making, origami and storytelling, and was attended by 75 people, 40 of whom received a copy of *Amazing Grace*.

Dorset Libraries' series of events during *Small Island Read 2007* included sessions for young children of rhymes and stories from around the world, a family fun day based on the African-set story *Handa's Surprise* and a talk entitled 'My Personal Journey: Slavery to Reconciliation' by Bill Grimke-Drayton which traced his remarkable journey from Christchurch to South Carolina to explore his family's roots. Poole Libraries' main events were a poetry reading at Hamworthy by Louisa Parker and an abolition event at Rossmore organised by DEED (Development Education in Dorset) that included an introduction to the Dorset Black History Project, poetry reading, recording of black and ethnic minority people's reminiscences of growing up in Dorset, and hand-printing on fabric as well as a display and educational materials about the film *Amazing Grace*. Cornwall Library Service held sessions in Bodmin and Saltash in which users without home-internet access were invited to take a guided tour of the *Small Island Read 2007* website.

Events not directly related to libraries that took place during *Small Island Read 2007* included:

- Heart Beats Poetry Night, Liverpool: Anthony Joseph from Trinidad and Michelle Scally Clarke from Leeds performed alongside reggae DJs Senator Sound System.
- Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow: Exhibition of newly commissioned work by Graham Fagan exploring the connections between Glasgow and Jamaica.
- Home Truths: Readers Day, University of Bristol: Participants discussed work by three visiting authors – Gautam Malkani (*Londonstani*), Romesh Gunesequera (*The Match*) and Segun Afolabi (*Goodbye Lucille*).
- Sola Arts, Liverpool: An exhibition of work by Clubmoor Youth Centre, Walton Project Post, the Al-Ghazali Centre, and Blackmoor Park Junior School created in response to reading *Refugee Boy*.

- Salt-sweat & Tears, Bridport: Launch of new collection by Dorset poet Louisa Parker who had previously taken part in library events during the project.
- St Mungo Museum of Religious Life, Glasgow: Workshop on Slavery and Scotland, and an exhibition of recent photographs of the black African population in Glasgow and their contribution to the city.
- Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery Family Fun Day: Activities on a migration theme included searching for and investigating objects from around the globe that were on display, and recording family travels on a large-scale map.
- Liverpool Hope University Lectures: A series on the Liverpool slave trade.

Clare Short (Abi Johnson) who appeared in an apologies debate at Aye Write!





Tenzin, Tibetan artist, putting up New Artists exhibition at Rotunda College in Liverpool.

Educational activities

With regard to educational activities, *Small Island* was too advanced for most adult learners and too long to be incorporated into the curriculum for sixth forms and upper secondary schools. One group leader in Liverpool working with 16-18 year olds who are 'Not engaged in employment or training' reported that an extract describing Hortense and Gilbert's wedding night was used in a session.

In the South West, at the end of the project, the manager of the Learning Resources Centre at Kings of Wessex School collected all copies of the book remaining in Arnolfini in Bristol and distributed these to over 30 senior schools in Somerset for use in reading groups and PSHE classes. There was also some educational use made of the book at other sites. However, most learners and young people participating in *Small Island Read 2007* read Benjamin Zephaniah's *Refugee Boy* or Mary Hoffman's *Amazing Grace*.

Refugee Boy tells the story of Alem, a young boy with an Ethiopian father and Eritrean mother, who is left alone in London and needs all his courage as he faces up to the British justice system. It is a powerful and topical novel. *Amazing Grace*, with beautiful illustrations by Caroline Binch, sensitively and intelligently tackles stereotypes and unacceptable behaviour. Grace loves performing but is discouraged when classmates say she cannot play the part of Peter Pan because she is a black girl. Grace learns from her Trinidadian grandmother that she can be anything she wants to be.

Multiple copies of the two books were distributed to the four main cities for use in libraries, schools and learning groups. Some library services outside the main sites also bought their own copies.

An activity pack was created for each book providing background information, discussion questions, guidance for conducting further research, suggestions for poems and other writing activities, and, in the *Amazing Grace* pack, colouring sheets. Hard copies of the pack were printed off in Bristol for use in educational activities there and could be downloaded from the website in PDF or Word format.

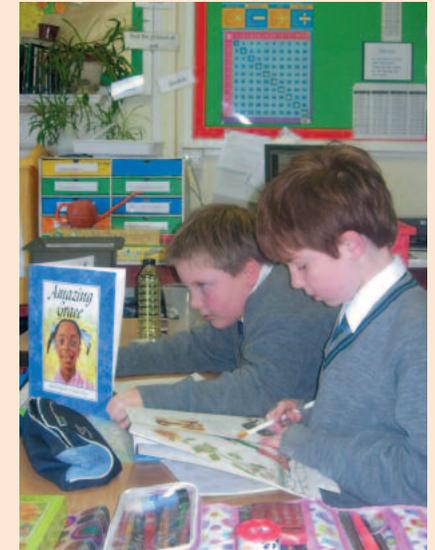
Comments received from teachers and pupils on the books and packs included:

...just to let you know that my Class (3) are enjoying Amazing Grace. We've had some interesting discussions about racism and sexism! After the initial uproar at my mention of the S word, we went on to write Cinquain poems about Grace's character and experiences, and poems about the Slave Trade. The fact sheets in the activity pack have been really useful – we re-enacted the story of the African boy who went on to write his story – children had great fun pretending to chain each other together as they lay across their desks! (at least they will remember it!).

The books have been whisked away and pupils and staff have been busy reading and letting me know how they're getting on. A pupil, who took Refugee Boy, came in a couple of days later and requested more books by Zephaniah, saying the book was 'totally brilliant!'

Just a quick e-mail to say thank you! The books were recently delivered to school and we are thrilled with them. I think the choice of text (especially Amazing Grace) are perfect and the best yet. As you know I've always enjoyed participating with the Reading Adventure but I believe this year's could potentially have the most impact on reading in our school, particularly KS1.

Thank you for the opportunity of being involved in this project. The children gained so much and were thrilled to be given books that they enjoyed so much. Refugee Boy was an excellent choice



Pupils of Clifton High School enjoying Amazing Grace during their book week.

for this age range (Y9). They enjoyed the novel – gritty, real, tough etc. Very good for raising difficult issues to do with asylum etc.

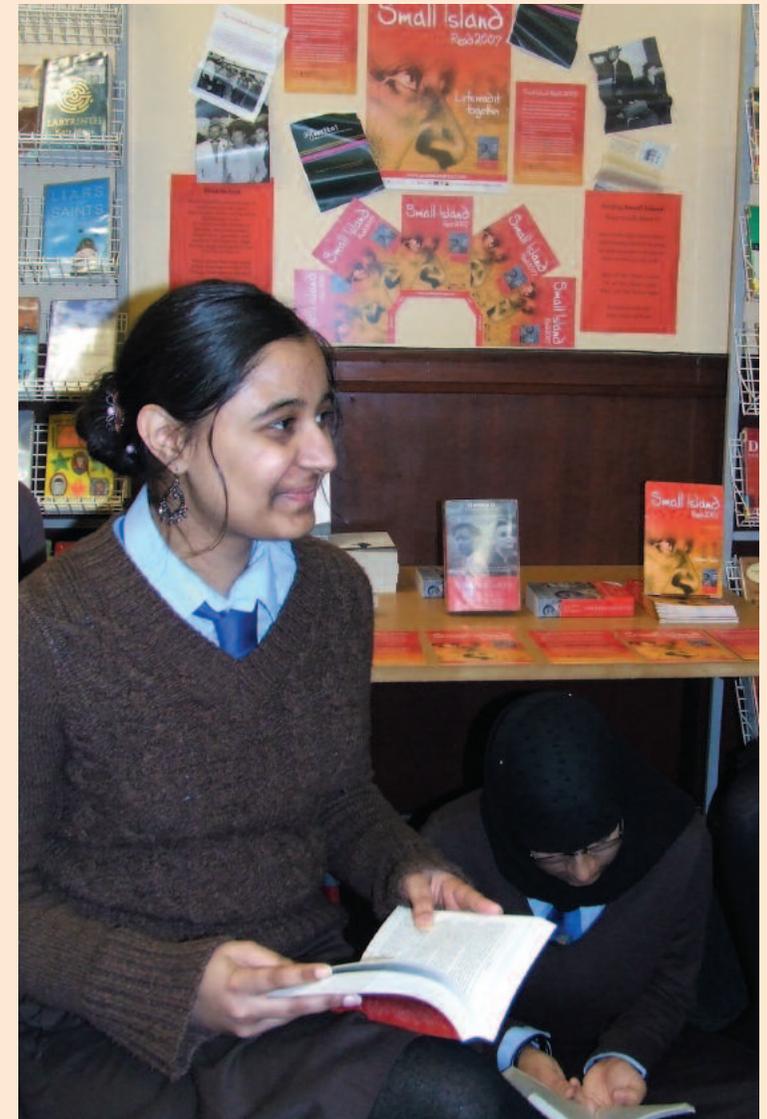
They loved the fact that they had their own copy of our class book Refugee Boy! Some read it almost over night upon receiving it! The story really hooked them as well – they learnt a lot and it prompted a lot of really valuable and positive discussion about the issues it raised about refugees and discrimination. We have a partner school in Ethiopia that we are raising money for and so the link also hooked them.

The issues in the books were extremely relevant to our children. We are a 90% BME school with many children and their families born outside the UK. The younger children, nursery – Year 2, really engaged with Amazing Grace. The year 5 and 6 children particularly boys, particularly Somali boys, were riveted by the story of Refugee Boy. I used the materials in the Small Island readers' guide to discuss migration, stereotyping and other issues with a group of parents.

In our two Year 6 classes, we used the material in the activity pack as the basis for our Literacy learning in our International Week. It provided structured shared reading sessions of the book and of the poetry. It was a fantastic teacher's aid and made us really use the book as part of the children's learning. The children were absolutely hooked on the story and our week produced some fantastic poetry and very in-depth discussion on the issues raised in the book and activity packs. (Refugees, discrimination, racism, abolition of the slave trade etc).

In anticipation of *Small Island Read 2007*, Paula Dixon, head teacher at Prenton High School in Liverpool, gave the following endorsement for the project:

Pupils at Notre Dame High School in Glasgow reading Small Island.



Our involvement in the Small Island/Refugee Boy project is particularly relevant. The Wirral is a predominantly white community although here at Prenton we have a growing number of Muslim girls, predominantly Bangladeshi. Belonging to a small ethnic minority group brings with it many issues which are explored in Small Island/Refugee Boy. Highlighting them with our students and pupils at a neighbouring primary partner school will help to promote racial tolerance and further their understanding of the difficulties faced by young people coming to a new country. Our older students are very much excited at the prospect of working with younger pupils many of whom will be facing issues of 'not belonging' and being the newcomer when they make the transition from primary to secondary school. The text will also help our students to discover more about the history of migration on Merseyside, looking at such issues as slavery and more currently of asylum seekers, thus improving their knowledge of the heritage of Liverpool and Merseyside.

There is much to be discovered concerning the history of our local area here in Wirral and the connections with Liverpool, shipping and the slave trade. Many wealthy merchants had grand homes right here on our doorstep in New Ferry and Birkenhead, many of which survive to this day but which lack most of their former glory. It would be wonderful for our students to learn more about this fascinating heritage and to teach our primary partners about it.

This is an exciting and thoroughly worthwhile project which we are enthusiastically embracing. I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to work with Liverpool Reads.

Once the project was underway, a Twilight Session for Liverpool Heads of English was held where teachers could find out about *Small Island Read 2007* and get free copies of the books. A *Small Island* teaching and learning resource was devised by Liverpool education practitioner Steve Padget aimed at schools and community groups.

It comprised a CD Rom containing audio material and PowerPoint slides. Optional workshops led by Steve could also be booked. Other educational activity in the city included five creative writing workshops that were held in two Liverpool community libraries. They were attended by 122 Year 5 children who used the themes in *Refugee Boy* to create their own written work, which has been collated into booklets. Two examples are given here:

I was Scared

I was scared, I was shy
 All I did was sit and cry
 I couldn't sleep, I counted sheep
 I heard some cars go beep beep beep
 I saw a tank by the river bank
 People giving things, saying thanks
 I saw war
 People are poor and hate doing more and more
 I miss my mum and dad
 It really makes me very mad
 I see birds flying by
 People in aeroplanes in the sky
 It's nearly night, it is a fright
 I feel stressed out and very tight

I am a Refugee

I am a refugee
 I got taken away from my home
 My mum is dead
 My dad got shot
 And I am all alone

 I've lost my family
 I've lost my friends
 I've lost my pet dog
 And I'll never see them again

I live with strangers
I miss my home
I wish these people
Would leave me alone

I've settled in
And got new friends
It feels like
I am alive again

In the Liverpool Mentoring Project, 160 pupils from eight local schools read *Refugee Boy* together, and 42 members from four youth groups developed responses to the book through the Sola Arts New Artists Project that were exhibited at Rotunda College. Also in Liverpool, 12 young Somalis took part in the New Heys writing project and ten young Afghan asylum seekers took part in a textiles project through Out of the Bluecoat.

In Bristol, the Great Reading Adventure has been working directly with local schools and colleges in providing free books and support material since 2003, and has organised a programme of free creative workshops since 2004. This year books were distributed to over 60 locations and included nurseries, primary and infant schools, secondary schools, sixth form colleges and adult learning groups. All of BCDP's copies of *Refugee Boy* and *Amazing Grace* went to schools along with around 650 copies of *Small Island*, which were mainly for teacher and parent reading groups.

The 2007 schools' workshop programme in Bristol was bigger than ever with over 60 sessions led by artists in addition to 16 special assemblies, a new initiative designed to reach and inspire a larger audience of young readers. Poet Claire Williamson, who has worked with the Great Reading Adventure since 2004, ran writing and drama workshops during the project ranging from Year 1 pupils at St Nicholas of Tolentine School to the Youth Education Service's group

of adult learners. New writing produced during Claire's workshops included the following poems. The first, inspired by *Refugee Boy*, was created by a group of students with learning difficulties on a vocational access course at City of Bristol College, the second is a class poem created at Ashley Down Junior School inspired by *Amazing Grace* and the third by a Youth Education Service student.

Refugee

Feeling nervous
Scared
Standing on a street corner
not knowing the language
feeling vulnerable
not knowing which way to go
Everyday stressful, tiring, confusing
trying to work harder at communicating
and understanding
Nowhere to turn to
Trying to make friends
and peace.

After Grace Goes Home

After the final performance of Peter Pan,
Grace felt more proud than before.
So proud, she flew gracefully
all the way home
for a magnificent tea party
with Raj, Natalie, Nana, Ma and Paw Paw.
Grace felt sleepily drowsy.
So she took off her shiny, pearly, leafy dress
and as soon as her weary head
hit the plump pillow,
her eyelids closed and she dreamt
of wanting to play Hansel from Hansel and Gretel.



Ruth Pitter and Val Mower performing an extract from the Our Stories Make Waves assembly during the Bristol launch (Laura Thorne).

David said, 'You can't play Hansel, because you are a girl.'
Sarah said, ' You can't play Hansel, because you are not greedy enough.'
Nana said, 'You don't have to look like it, sound like it, or smell like it. Just be it!'

Confidence

Before you know confidence
you must know confusion.

Confidence is like

a

big

open

space.

It is borderless.

Confusion is like a busy street
where everyone is bumping into you.

Confidence is fleeting.

It is the cuddly toy that escapes the claws
of the machine

in the fairground.

But sometimes

the odds are with you.

More poems, as well as pictures, stories and other work produced in the workshops are on the Education pages of the project website at www.smallislandread.com.

Two visual art workshops were run by Gloria Ojulari Sule in which colourful Caribbean-style banners were produced that were inspired by the reading of *Amazing Grace*. Moira Hunt ran drama workshops, as did Graham Hodson of Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory (SATF). Graham's workshops were linked to SATF's acclaimed new production of *Othello*. Two of these were for a group of ESOL students at City of Bristol College, some of whom were asylum seekers or refugees.

Nearly all of these participants commented that Othello's story was their story too and ten of them were able to see the play for free thanks to SATF's support. The artists' group Our Stories Make Waves – Ruth Pitter, Val Mower, Ros Martin and Valda Jackson – led specially devised participatory assemblies entitled Open Suitcase. These were accompanied in most schools by workshops in which drama, writing, clay modelling and creative expression were used to explore the theme of migration. Mike Ratnett, a performance poet, led workshops based around the creation of multicultural poems. During February half-term, he also ran six workshops in Bristol libraries and, in addition, the library service had over 1,000 children attending various events linked to *Amazing Grace* including Story Times and school visits.

A full list of school workshops and assemblies is given below in Table 8.

Table 8 School and college activities, Bristol

Claire Williamson	Mike Ratnett
Ashley Down Junior School	Badminton School
City of Bristol: Vocational Access	Bristol Cathedral School
Colston's Girls' School	Chester Park Junior School X 2
Cotham School	City of Bristol College: Addiction Recovery
Fair Furlong Primary School	City of Bristol College: Adult Literacy
Hannah More Primary School	Monks Park School
Hareclive Primary School	Parson Street Primary School
Millpond Primary School	Sea Mills Infants School
New Oak Primary School X 2	Gloria Ojulari Sule
Red Maids Junior School	Avon Primary School
St George C of E Primary School	Elmfield School for Deaf Children
St Joseph's RC Primary School	Graham Hodson
St Nicholas of Tolentine School	City Academy
Sefton Park Infants X 2	City of Bristol College: ESOL X 2
South Street Primary	Colston's Girls' School X 2
Speedwell Technology College	Hillcrest Primary
Stockwood Green	Our Stories Make Waves
Upper Horfield Primary School	Cheddar Grove Primary School
Youth Education Service X 2	Colston Girls' School
Moira Hunt	Colston Primary School
Badminton Junior School	Cotham School
Burnbush Primary School	Elmlea Junior School
Cheddar Grove Primary School X 2	Fair Furlong Primary School
Clifton High Juniors Department X 2	Hannah Moore Primary School
Easton Primary School	Oldbury Court Primary
Elmlea Junior School	Parson Street Primary
Glenfrome Primary School	Red Maids Junior School
Hillcrest Primary School X 2	St Barnabas Primary School
Parson Street Primary School	St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School
Stoke Bishop Primary School	St George C of E Primary School
Two Mile Hill Junior School X 2	St Matthias and Dr Bell Primary School
	Sefton Park Infants

Source: BCDP. Workshops lasted between one and three hours and were generally for a single class of around 30 pupils. Assemblies were on average half an hour and were either whole-school or for particular age groups. There is a separate summary report listing all the school feedback from Bristol.

Feedback from the Bristol schools and colleges who had workshops included the following comments:

Claire really helped to bring Refugee Boy to life, and helped all to empathise with the experience of refugees. They really enjoyed working with someone who was 'a real poet'. The issues were drawn out and provided follow-on activities. It was beneficial having so many speaking and listening activities – they loved making the group poem.

What Mike did do very successfully was to explore general themes touched on in the novel; issues surrounding reading and reading choices, and brilliantly linking Small Island with the novel Coram Boy, which all the girls did know well. We were very grateful to have received this material and to have been allotted Mike for a workshop session.

We focused on Amazing Grace because it really celebrates a) stories and b) positive 'can do' role models for pupils. We had already identified elements of stories with symbols, pictures, drawings etc and Gloria was more than happy to take what pupils were bringing to the workshop and make two fantastic banners. It was great to see them being stimulated by many of the ideas in Amazing Grace and wanting to make their own piece. The way things worked out Gloria got them working really intensively and under pressure which was really good for them! ...keep up the good work – visual art can be so stimulating and inclusive for kids who are struggling with reading in the first place!

It was wonderful! Some super ideas and ways to link Amazing Grace to drama... Lots of interesting activities linked to the structure of stories and Moira encouraged the children with question/answer sessions. They all gained in confidence and understanding as the session progressed.

Graham's workshop was very well planned, and executed with a variety of very useful activities for our students. These had all been well negotiated and discussed with the tutor beforehand. Great facilitators. Good experience.

Ruth Pitter provided the following personal anecdote:

I bumped into a friend in Broadmead today with her daughter. I'd not met her daughter before. The daughter said 'I recognise you, you came to my school a few weeks ago and did an assembly on Refugee Boy!'...Her mother then said to me 'Oh, it was you was it! She was really buzzing when she came home that day about how much she had enjoyed the assembly!' The daughter then said, without any prompting, 'Your assembly was wicked, it was the best we've had – our class went back to our classroom and none of us could stop talking about it, the teacher couldn't shut us up! It was so interesting.'

All the teachers who expressed an opinion on the workshop programme felt their students had benefited from the experience, with the most common recommendation for future activity being variations on 'More of the same'. Among comments from pupils were: 'Helped to relieve pressure by being able to say how I feel', 'My favourite part was working with my friends on the book', 'It taught us how to act our feelings', 'I thought I would be scared and embarrassed but it was fine', 'I loved all of it! It was great! Can we do it again?'

In Glasgow, 200 staff members and pupils at Notre Dame High School took part in the project, either reading *Small Island* or *Refugee Boy*,

as did 60 people from Eastbank Academy. During a learners' celebration session at Aye Write!, 150 copies each of *Small Island* and *Refugee Boy* were distributed. Fifty copies of *Small Island* were distributed to learners' groups through the Adult Literacy Network and on World Book Day, a talk about reading for pleasure was given to 50 adult literacy tutors who each received a copy of *Small Island*.

Cornwall Library Service had run a number of educational events linked to the 2006 Great Reading Adventure but found it harder to involve schools in 2007. However, two school sessions did take place. A Year 5 class from Berrycoombe School attended a storytime and presentation at Bodmin library that included a talk from Caroline Binch, illustrator of *Amazing Grace*, a History Detective workshop from Cornwall Record Office and a look at some Jamaican art, photos and artefacts with the library manager who had spent some of his youth on a coffee plantation in Jamaica. Later in the project, 60 children from Brunel School went to Saltash library to listen to Caroline Binch and look at the life of a picture book, including seeing Caroline's original artwork and research photographs. The children also saw a *Small Island* display that included records of petitions from Cornish towns against the slave trade, business accounts from Cornish-owned estates in the Caribbean and some real, growing sugar cane, courtesy of the Eden Project.

Elsewhere, author Bali Raj talked to groups of KS3 school children in Hull, and in North Somerset a school received a set of *Refugee Boy* for its reading group from the local library service.



Pupils at Avon Primary School with one of the banners they created with artist Gloria Ojulari Sule inspired by Amazing Grace.



Reader James Hughes from Glasgow.

Budget

Table 9 provides details of the expenditure and income of *Small Island Read 2007* (some of these costs represent in-kind support by BCDP and its partners rather than cash payments). In comparison the 2006 South West Great Reading Adventure cost £100,015 and Liverpool Reads 2005/2006 cost approximately £30,966.

Table 9: *Small Island Read 2007* Budget

Expenditure	
Management and evaluation	35,000
Design and publicity material	7,500
Launch event	3,000
Website	6,000
Books and readers' guides	70,688
Education packs	5,000
Workshops	81,750
Postage and telephone	3,500
Travel	1,500
Training	500
Stationery	1,000
Total expenditure and income	£215,438

Source: BCDP. Note that the estimated media value of the project was worth at least an additional £191,701 (source: Durrants).



Aida Macleod reading a copy in Kazakhstan that had travelled from Glasgow.



All 150 musicians and staff of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in Glasgow took part in the project (Peter Devlin).

Conclusions and recommendations

Working across the four city sites – and out into the wider regions, where appropriate – posed a few logistical and political challenges but these were largely overcome by the enthusiasm and commitment of the key individuals working directly on the initiative. They were Bea Colley and Jane Davis (Liverpool), Jessica Leathley (Hull), Mary Greenshields (Glasgow), and Andrew Kelly and Melanie Kelly (Bristol). It would also have been impossible to deliver such an ambitious programme without the contribution of the hundreds of library staff, community project leaders, teachers, artists and reading group leaders who took part.

The four core partners were Liverpool Reads, Hull Libraries (Hull City Council), Aye Write! Bank of Scotland Book Festival (Glasgow City Council/Glasgow Libraries) and the Great Reading Adventure (Bristol Cultural Development Partnership). The following comments, taken at the end of the project, are from spokespeople from each of these organisations:

Liverpool Reads has been running for three years now but the Small Island Read has been our most successful project to date. Having thousands of books to distribute was both an added bonus and a new logistical problem for us and undoubtedly helped raise the profile and reach of our read. Liverpool libraries gave away 13,000 copies of Small Island and were inundated with requests for more books once stocks ran out.

During the last couple of months, it has been exhilarating too for the Liverpool Reads Board to see people on the bus or in cafes or parks reading Small Island.

There has never been such a strong sense of a city-wide-read as with the Small Island project, and it has enabled us to reach communities that we hadn't managed to access in the past. In particular, there was a real buzz surrounding the read within Liverpool's Caribbean Community, made obvious by the diverse audiences for the launch events when along with other members of the Liverpool Black community, Chief Angus Chukuemaka, the African Chief responsible for the libation on Slavery Remembrance Day attended the VIP launch of the Small Island Read in Liverpool.

Working with other cities was a new challenge for Liverpool Reads but ultimately an extremely positive experience. With such a large scale project, there were bound to be differing agendas and expectations but we felt that the cities worked well to overcome difficulties, through calm discussion, team work and shared resources.

Thanks to the Small Island Read, Liverpool Reads has been firmly placed as a central event in the city's cultural calendar. Senior library workers are currently lobbying the council for funding for the project without prompting from the Liverpool Reads committee as they feel that the mass read has become such an important part of their year. We are already using this success to build up to 2008's read when Liverpool will become the European Capital of Culture.

Jane Davis, Chair, Liverpool Reads

Small Island Read has been a huge success in Hull demonstrating the power of literature to challenge the prejudices and beliefs of local people. The project has stimulated thought and discussion around the issues of racism and commonwealth, and residents

have expressed their pleasure at taking part, through reading, in Hull's Wilberforce commemorations. Small Island Read has reached far beyond Hull's geographical boundaries and copies of the novel have been sent to ex-Hull residents all around the UK and even as far away as Tasmania. The success of Small Island Read has been due to the collaboration of the four cities and is a superb example of how reading can bring together people from many different backgrounds and cultures.

Michelle Alford, Principle Librarian, Hull Libraries

I am delighted with the success of Glasgow's first citywide reading project which created a real buzz around the city in the run up to our book festival, when I had the privilege of interviewing Andrea. It was great to hear that the books were being read and discussed in book groups, in offices, in schools, in sheltered housing complexes and even by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. I am really pleased with the way the staff grasped the opportunity to engage with their communities. Working with the three other cities added an extra dimension to the project and allowed our readers to connect with readers around the country. We are now planning next year's mass read.

Karen Cunningham, Director, Aye Write! Bank of Scotland Book Festival

I've enjoyed all the reading adventures so far and I've seen for myself how they create something big for Bristol. Over the past two years the Great Reading Adventure has extended its reach from Bristol to the South West and in 2007 to the whole country. What a great book this year's has been: education about slavery past and present and about the origins and benefits of our vibrant, diverse society.

Louis Sherwood, Chair, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP)

Although the four partners may not work together as a group again, they will continue to promote reading and learning. BCDP is planning a city-wide Great Reading Adventure for 2008 based on a specially commissioned comic-book style history of Bristol and a region-wide project in 2009 linked to the Charles Darwin bicentenary. Liverpool Reads is currently in discussions over the book for 2008 when Liverpool will enter its year as European Capital of Culture. Aye Write! will include another community project linked to reading for the 2008 festival.

Of those who completed a survey nearly 98 per cent agreed that mass-reading projects were a good idea and the same percentage said they would be interested in joining in future initiatives.

Comments included:

They are great – like random book clubs – you're bound to find someone else reading!

...it's nice to know I'm not alone (as a pensioner).

I think that this is an excellent way to get masses of people to read a worthwhile book that might not get the reading attention it deserves in the city. The project offers a great and unique chance for people across the city, and beyond, to share their reading experience of the book.

This was my first experience. If this book is typical of books chosen then they are an excellent idea.

Great idea getting as many people as possible to read same book, sense of inclusion and joint interest.

Anything that encourages and helps people to read is a brilliant idea.

I think they're great for so many reasons – keep up the good work!



The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Bristol reading Amazing Grace with pupils of Hannah More Primary on launch day (Laura Thorne).



Mr Silky Soccer Skills with Liverpool Reads volunteers (Mealeys Photography).

I think it is a very interesting concept, encourages people to read, but more importantly it makes the books more discussed individually and in groups.

A brilliant idea and I wholeheartedly agree with the choice of book this year.

Having recently moved to Bristol it spurred me on to look further into the history of the city. The mass-reading element also made me feel part of something.

I think mass-reading projects would encourage many people who never open a book to realise that once they start reading a good book it's impossible to put it down. Reading books is so much better than just watching television.

A great idea – more please – it's good to have a chance to promote real reading.

I think mass-reading projects provide thought provoking discussion between individual readers and/or reading groups. I believe they help to create a more informed knowledge base of the subject area as they provide an opportunity for people to contribute their own specific viewpoint on a subject that they may never have considered were it not introduced in the text of a novel which was made readily available to them... This approach to fostering effective reading is innovative and should be continued.

*Small Island Read 2007 received most of its funding and support in kind from Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts and Business, Bank of Scotland, Bristol City Council, Business West, Liverpool Culture Company, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Riverside Housing. In the following comments, spokespeople from these organisations reflect upon why they wanted to back *Small Island Read 2007* and what they thought the project achieved:*

We supported the reading adventure through our work with BCDP and also financially through Grants for the Arts. It's the perfect project to get people reading and learning about their heritage. We were delighted to see artists working with schools in Bristol and with communities in Liverpool to encourage people to learn more about the history of the slave trade in their city and to celebrate the vibrant, diverse society that Britain has become. Another wonderful reading adventure and one where cities in England and Scotland benefited as well as the South West.

Nick Capaldi, Director, Arts Council England South West

This is just the kind of project that the Heritage Lottery Fund is eager to support. It has reached an astonishingly wide audience, and it has helped that audience to reflect on an important part of our common heritage. I congratulate everyone involved.

Adrian Tinniswood, Chair South West Committee, Heritage Lottery Fund

To see the Great Reading Adventure evolve into the Small Island Read and become the biggest project of its type is a testament to the organisers and all involved, including funders and business sponsors, who have all created a unique opportunity with which people of all ages can engage.

James Taljaard, Director, Arts and Business South West

This was the Bank's first year of title sponsorship of Aye Write! We had an amazing first year, made even more special by the fact that colleagues from across the HBOS group were able to participate in the Small Island reading project. There was a high level of enthusiasm among staff who all really enjoyed the book and the experience. We are delighted to be involved in a project which encourages people to read and look forward to being part of the next one.

Karen Tighe, Head of Sponsorship, Bank of Scotland

The reading adventure is always one of the highlights of Bristol's year. In 2007 it moved from being a large Bristol project to a massive national one. It went as smoothly as all the previous projects, embraced libraries, museums, the arts, public and private sector organisations, young and old. I can't remember a project that was more inclusive. It was also second to none in promoting learning about the past and was the perfect start to our Abolition 200 events. Once again BCDP excels in its work.

Cllr Simon Cook, Bristol City Council

Companies always play a big role in the Great Reading Adventure. Rolls-Royce, for example, involve thousands of their employees; over 300 people in Wessex Water read the book and Business West has over 100 participants. It's an excellent way of encouraging companies to learn about their city, to read more (and to read more widely), and to promote discussion. It also sets Bristol apart from other cities, given the scale of each project. For Small Island, of course, it also showed Bristol bringing together the partners for a national reading project as it involved Glasgow, Hull and Liverpool as well as Bristol.

John Savage, Director, Business West

Liverpool Culture Company supported Small Island Read 2007 to enable Liverpool and the Merseyside region to be part of a pioneering collaborative reading project undertaken with three partner cities. It was a major contribution to a year of extensive national collaborations to commemorate the Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery, encouraging and developing diversity in and across participative reading activity. The support also enabled significant professional development and experience for Liverpool Reads as an anchor organisation in infrastructures in the city that support literature, writing and reading activity.

Jackie Malcolm, Co-ordinator, Literature/TalksFest Liverpool Culture Company

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation is proud to be associated with Liverpool Reads, a clearly able organisation who have strong local and regional connections. Trustees to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation agreed that the Small Island project provides a vital focus for the activity of reading across the whole community. The project not only raises the profile of reading by encouraging participation but it also encourages people of all ages and backgrounds to share their reading experience within and across groups in a variety of different ways.

Barbra Mazur, Grants Officer, Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Riverside Housing are pleased to have supported the read during 2007. The books have been distributed to schools, community groups, tenants and residents in some of our most deprived areas and the resulting interest and discussion about the books and their underlying topics has been great to see. The choice of books has been excellent as the subjects they deal with have a great deal of resonance in Liverpool today and hopefully will result in greater understanding and community cohesion.

Paul Booth, Community Investment Officer, Riverside Housing

Other supporters of the project included Bristol *Evening Post*, *The Herald*, *Liverpool Echo*, Arnolfini (Bristol), Blackwell (Bristol), Bluecoat Arts Centre (Liverpool), Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services, National Museums Liverpool, The Reader, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, Time to Read North West, University of Liverpool, Waterstone's (Glasgow) and the library services of the South West, Liverpool and Glasgow.

Small Island Read 2007 aimed:

- To develop standards of literacy through the promotion of reading.
- To stimulate new forms of creativity inspired by the reading experience.
- To use reading to facilitate learning about the past.

- To bring diverse communities together through the act of reading and thereby foster a sense of shared identity.

It is impossible to assess the extent to which standards of literacy have been developed by the project but it is hoped that the extensive promotion of reading as an activity that all can enjoy and derive benefit from will have contributed to the achievement of this aim.

New creativity inspired by the reading experience during the project includes the short stories written in the One Glasgow Many Cultures competition (many of the entries by people for whom English was not their first language), the banners, poems and dramatic improvisations devised during the Bristol educational workshops, and the textiles and written work created during the educational projects in Liverpool.

The reading of the novel, backed by the information contained in the support material and some of the special activities that have taken place, has expanded knowledge about the slave trade and migration to Britain, as feedback shows, and the discussions within reading groups and elsewhere will also have provided an opportunity to share personal stories of the past.

Analysis of some of the participants in the project has demonstrated that a range of people (by age and socio-economic background) have joined together in the act of reading and the surveys included a number of comments regarding the value of feeling part of a collective experience, sharing common ground.

The key learning points and recommendations from *Small Island Read 2007* are:

- Handling media partners can be a delicate operation requiring considerable political skill, particularly when dealing with sister newspapers within one organisation, and this is best done face-to-face if possible to establish a rapport.

- Choosing a book by a living author has the advantage of being able to base events around a personal appearance but there are considerable cost implications when having to compensate for a potential fall in royalty income as a result of discounted bulk purchases.
- As Liverpool Reads discovered, being able to distribute multiple copies of the chosen book for free makes for a much bigger and better project than if the public were expected to buy their own or only borrow from the library.
- The enthusiasm and creativity of library staff is a crucial factor in engaging the wider public in the project, and this is easier to develop if someone from the organising group is able to visit each branch site in person to motivate the staff there before the project begins.
- The success of a project of this scale is dependent on good forward planning and a supply of good resources.
- The project needs to be at least three months in duration to allow time for reading the book before discussing it, and to accommodate the school activities, but for some library branches this is too long to set aside display areas if there is not sufficient local interest and so some discretion is needed as to when to take promotional displays down.
- It is better to concentrate efforts on schools and other organisations that actively wish to be involved and can commit time and effort to the project, thereby getting maximum benefit from resources, rather than having a blanket approach.

All four partners have increased their confidence to manage a project of this scale as a result of their experience in running *Small Island Read 2007* and look forward to future ventures.



Staff at Blackwell on Park Street, Bristol, one of the distribution points for free books (Laura Thorne).



Arrivals on the Windrush (Science and Society Picture Library/NMPFT Daily Herald Archive), an image used in the Small Island Read 2007 guide.

Acknowledgements

Small Island Read 2007 was a collaborative project and thanks are due to the organisations and individuals who have provided data and feedback used in this evaluation report, including those who completed the on-line reader survey.

Small Island Read 2007 is a collaborative effort and thanks are due to all those who have given their time and support.

It is a partnership initiative led by:



National funders:



Major local funders:



Main media partners:



Other partners and supporters: the library services of Bath & North East Somerset, Bournemouth, Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Glasgow, Gloucestershire, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, North Somerset, Plymouth, Poole, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Torbay, Wiltshire, Wirral; Arnolfini, Blackwell Bristol, Bluecoat Arts Centre, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services, National Museums Liverpool, The Reader, Riverside Housing, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, Time to Read North West, University of Liverpool, Waterstone's Glasgow.

Published in 2007 by:
Bristol Cultural Development Partnership

Leigh Court
Abbots Leigh
Bristol BS8 3RA

For further information contact
Andrew Kelly, Director, BCDP
E: andrew.kelly@businesswest.co.uk

© BCDP, 2007

Design: www.qubedesign.com
Printer: Doveton Press

