

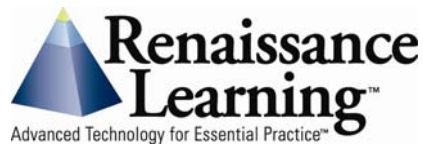
**\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\***

**“*What Kids Are Reading*” Report Finds Boys Read at a  
Higher Level than Girls at a Younger Age**

For the first time, comprehensive research has been conducted into the actual reading habits of boys and girls in UK schools Years 3-11 using Renaissance Learning’s Accelerated Reader<sup>1</sup> (AR) program, which holds the world’s largest database of student book-reading behaviour. Featuring a foreword by Jonathan Douglas, Director of the **National Literacy Trust**; the leading charity of the **National Year of Reading** – the report analyses over 29,000 pupils in more than 600 UK schools.

In addition to detailing the top 20 books read in the year 2007-2008 by school children, the report investigates reading differences between year groups and gender – as well as what books are being read by more able readers – and has produced some interesting results:

- Over half of the top 20 books read at Year 3 are at or above Year 3 level. However, the difficulty level varies significantly in Years 4 and 5.
- In Years 4-6 children start reading below their chronological age, and whilst girls are already devotees of Jacqueline Wilson, boys are reading JK Rowling.
- In Years 6-8 Roald Dahl is popular, whilst more difficult books by Rowling are becoming more widely read and offer a degree of challenge.
- In Years 7-9 Rowling appeals to both genders, but boys prefer Dahl whilst Wilson remains exclusively the girls’ favourite. Overall, however, boys continue to read at a higher level than girls at this stage.
- Whilst most books are read at upper primary and lower secondary level, a sharp decline in the amount of reading was noted after Year 8.
- In Years 9-11 Lauren Child appears twice in the top titles, suggesting older readers continue to value picture books, which is interesting as none of the top 20 books are at or above a Year 9 level of difficulty.
- Differences between more able and all readers were also evident.



The report also applied the ATOS formula<sup>2</sup> for establishing book difficulty levels to popular UK publications The Economist, The Times, The Daily Mail, The Sun and Hello magazine – which produced some surprising results.

As Jonathan Douglas states, reading is not a static activity and changes from generation to generation, so reports such as this play a vital role in understanding what kids are not only reading, but also understanding. The publishing of this and subsequent reports into the book-reading habits of students in British schools, demonstrates Renaissance Learning's commitment to understanding, and helping improve, levels of literacy in schools.

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#### Notes to Editors

1. Currently used in over 2,000 UK schools, AR is an accurate and continuous progress-monitoring system that measures both the quantity and quality of individual book reading.
2. Book difficulty levels are determined by the ATOS formula, which uses four factors to establish readability: average sentence length, average word length, word difficulty level, and the total number of words in the book. As the entire book is scanned, rather than a small sample, ATOS can be applied to all publications.

A full copy of the report can be requested from: [www.renlearn.co.uk/kids\\_reading](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/kids_reading)

#### About Renaissance Learning UK Limited

Renaissance Learning UK Limited is a subsidiary of Renaissance Learning Inc, a company founded in Wisconsin (USA) in 1986. Renaissance Learning UK Ltd is a leading provider of educational solutions to primary and secondary schools across the United Kingdom.

Adopted by more than 73,000 schools, Renaissance Learning's advanced technology makes the practice component of a school's reading, maths and writing curriculum more personalised and effective than ever before. The company's hosted and web-delivered Accelerated Reader Advantage and Accelerated Maths Advantage programs are used successfully by well over 100,000 children in the UK every day to help them improve their results and achieve a life-long love of reading.

Renaissance Learning produces software that provides teachers and pupils with immediate access to information on academic performance. This information technology provides timely and reliable feedback that enhances individualised instruction, creating a better learning environment for more motivated pupils.

Renaissance works closely with the National Literacy Trust and Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, and is supported by best-selling authors for children, such as Jacqueline Wilson, Malorie Blackman, Peter J Murray and GP Taylor.