



Reading Champions

Top of the game

Holding a Top Trumps cards tournament is a great way to give Reading Champions the opportunity to organise an event themselves. Elizabeth Jackson, Literacy Coordinator at Audenshaw Primary School explains how their tournament has raised the profile of the library, given pupils a chance to practise their communication skills and has been loads of fun.

The “Top Trumps Library Tournament” idea was sparked when one of the teachers provided us with a kit for the library. Top Trumps is a card game where each card contains a list of numerical data about an item. The aim of the game is to compare the value of one item on the card with your opponents. The player with the highest value wins a peg and the first player to win nine pegs is the winner. Each pack of Top Trumps is based on a different theme. Since the year five Reading Champions were so keen on the idea of a tournament, I called on them to organise the event in order to gain their bronze award.



“Top Trumps Tournament” gets underway

The boys immediately got down to business making sure they were familiar with the rules by playing the game themselves. They would therefore be able to run the tournament themselves with minimal supervision. They decided that 36 pupils playing in six heats with a grand final would be the best structure, as the kit allows for six people to play.



It's getting tense

The pupils in key stage two were encouraged to sign up on a first come first served basis. Then the names were drawn for each heat during assembly, which made it more dramatic. This meant that each team had a mix of year groups as well as boys and girls.

The games were played at lunchtime in the school library and each contestant was allowed to bring a “supporter” to help with decisions and, at times, the reading.

The games were played with six different packs and the players soon began to have their favourites. The subjects of the cards were varied: TV programmes, world wonders, film, sport, toys, and pop stars. It did not appear that a particular pack was more popular than another, but it was amazing how quickly the pupils got to know which cards had the best statistics and which “stats” to pick when competing. The boys running the tournament were scrupulous about shuffling the decks and being fair, but it was difficult for them not to give advice as they got to know the cards so well. The sessions were full of excitement and often quite noisy. Samuel from year five said, "I was shaking with excitement".



“Supporters” offer advice

The Reading Champions then presented the winner with the prize in a whole school assembly. It was so popular that Harry from year three exclaimed, "We should do it next year". Quite right he is too; our “Top Trumps Library Tournament” is to be extended and held annually. Next time we are certain there will be far more than 36 participants. We will need to prepare for long heats.

The tournament was really successful as it was not only bags of fun, but also gave the Reading Champions the opportunity to develop organisational and communication skills and got the pupils thinking about new vocabulary. Since the event we have purchased more packs of Top Trumps cards and extended the library. It has also been a great way to raise awareness of the library's existence and encourage pupils to visit who might not normally. The year six Reading Champions are currently running a football club where they are reading football magazines and making football scrap books. They are also running a mini tournament of their own with a world cup football themed Top Trumps pack. There seems to be no end to the world of Top Trumps.

See how to set up your own “Top Trumps Tournament” below:

Guide to setting up a “Top Trumps Tournament”	
1	Purchase a Top Trumps kit. The kit provides a spinner, six different packs of cards, pegs and instructions for playing four different games as indicated on the spinner.
2	The Reading Champions organisers hold a meeting to discuss how they want to run the event.
3	The Reading Champions practise playing prior to the tournament to familiarise themselves with the rules of the games.
4	Put up a sign up sheet with 36 spaces on the Reading Champions notice board. This number allows for six players in each round including the final.
5	Invite pupils to sign up. A first come first served approach seems to spark interest.
6	Get the Reading Champions to do a draw in assembly to announce who will be in each round.
7	Each round can be played at lunchtimes. They take around half an hour each. Allow the boys to manage the rounds with just one member of staff to supervise. Each player can bring one supporter to help advise and provide an audience. The player with all the cards at the end is the winner.
8	The winner from each round then plays a final and a prize can be given out in assembly to the winner.