



The BooX Factor

Have you got the X-Factor? King Edward VI Secondary School in Staffordshire certainly has. Helen Emery, Librarian and Resource Centre Manager, explains how their BooX Factor has got students reading for pleasure.



As The X Factor mania swept the nation before Christmas, I wanted to encapsulate the excitement to encourage reading for pleasure in our school. So, I decided to run a BooX Factor: an X Factor book judging competition.



The competition was carried out over eight weeks with eight year seven tutor groups. Each group had about ten students participating. Each student within the group was both a judge and a mentor. I chose a book ('contestant') for each student to 'mentor'. As with the television programme, the judges could not choose who they mentored, but I made sure each student got a book that targeted their interests and ability.

Mine's the best...No, mine is!

In the first week, we heard a little from each 'contestant'. The students took turns to introduce their book, show its cover and read the opening paragraph. All students then voted for which book they wanted to keep in for the following week. The voting was kept secret to avoid students being influenced by their peers. The two books with the fewest votes entered a 'read off' where we heard a little more from each one. They then voted for one to go out of the contest. This continued for the following seven weeks. Some students even labelled one book as 'the Jedward'; some loved it, some hated it. We continued to vote out one book each week until we had a winner. The winning books then featured on our plasma screens around school.

The students loved the idea of being judges. Some pretended to be Cheryl Cole or Simon Cowell. We even sang the theme tune at the start of each session and did a little Dermot O' Leary twirl. One student commented, "BooX Factor was cool! Everyone likes The X Factor, so it made it fun". BooX Factor could be easily adapted for other age groups and abilities by simply using different books and

genres. There were occasions where my choice of book was not quite right, so I quickly learned to be spot on with reading and interest level.

I think the activity's success was due to the fact that we did not concentrate on just one book but heard a little from each, keeping everyone interested and wanting more. As the books 'stayed in', the students got to hear more and more of the story. It was great that other groups in year seven were doing the same activity with different books. I did not insist that the students read the whole book they were judging, but some did. Some then read each other's books by choice too. One student said it was "a great way of getting into books that you wouldn't usually read". Students wanted to know what the other groups' winners were and there was much discussion between groups as to 'what went out this week'.



A student enjoys a bit of down time with a book

A verbal feedback session at the end of the competition showed that it had introduced students to new authors and vocabulary. We often stopped to clarify meaning or define an unfamiliar word. They also felt their confidence had grown with reading, and reading aloud to an audience. Some students loved it so much they put in a request for a 'mega final' in the future where all eight tutor group winners are judged against each other to produce an overall year group winner.

We will definitely be doing this again. It works best when The X Factor is on television. Next time, I would like to play the theme tune on the whiteboard and maybe use our interactive voting system 'Activote', which is also used via the whiteboard. Roll on season two.