

**“What is the point of books without pictures and conversation?” said Alice**



**reading groups for  
visually impaired  
people (VIPs)  
in the UK**



**Nottinghamshire**

**Hampshire**

# The Scoring System

## Girl with a Pearl Earring – Tracy Chevalier

Group	Date	Scores	Average
Alton	30.09.05	8, 9, 10, 10, 10, 8, 9, 10, 8.5	9.1
Basingstoke	12.12.05	3, 0, 5.5, 7, 7.5, 8, 7, 6.5, 6.5, 7, 6	6.0
Eastleigh	01.04.05	6, 9, 7, 5, 7, 9, 10, 9, 9, 3, 9,	7.5
Fareham	01.03.07	8, 8, 4, 7, 8.5, 7, 5, 8	6.9
Farnborough	4.10.06	8, 7, 9, 8, 8, 7, 6, 7, 8, 8	7.6
Gosport	22.08.08	8, 7, 8, 9, 6, 8	7.6
Hedge End			
Lymington	26.04.06	4, 8, 1, 0, 9, 8, 8, 7, 6, 6, 3, 8	5.6
New Milton	29.06.05	6, 6, 6, 7, 7, 8, 8, 5, 6, 9	6.8
Petersfield	15.08.05	8, 9, 8, 9, 8, 10, 9, 7, 10, 8, 8	8.5
Tele-Group	31.12.08	8, 8, 8.5, 6, 9.5	8.0
Waterlooville	27.11.06	10, 8, 8	8.6
West End	21.01.05	5, 3, 7, 5, 8, 8, 7	6.1
Winchester	11.09.06	9, 9, 9, 9, 8, 9, 10, 9	9.0



# Joyce - National Reading Hero



**BBC Radio 4 interview**

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 Hampshire  
County Council

**2008**  
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## **READING RELAY**

It is based on a decade's worth of reading - the best of the 50+ books that our Reading Groups across the county have debated, argued over and ultimately awarded marks out of 10. Now we invite you to take up the baton and join the debate. Choose a Reading Relay book and see whether you agree with our groups. Record your own score on the card inside the book to pass on to others. Let's keep the conversation going!

NB The groups largely comprise blind and visually impaired people so all the Reading Relay books are also available in large print and unabridged audio formats.





## An Equal Music Vikram Seth

Is it possible to capture music in print? This is the question you may well be asking yourself in Seth's novel set in the world of classical music. Michael, the narrator, is a violinist in a string quartet and by chance meets up with Julia, his former lover. He attempts to resurrect their old relationship and in the process discovers her devastating secret. But central to the book is the love affair with music and it catches very well the dynamics between a small group of professional musicians and their precarious existence. The Alton and Petersfield groups certainly heard the music with mostly high scores of 8, 9 and 10. (And there is also a CD available of the music featured in the book.)

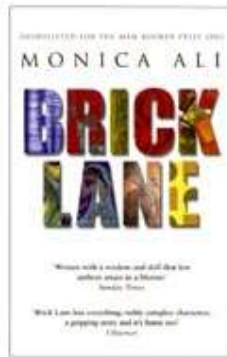
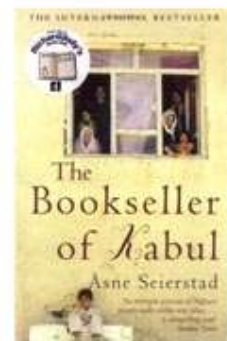
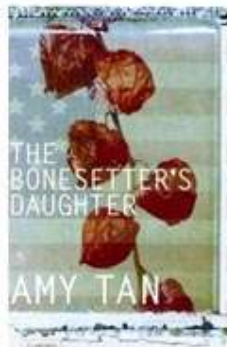
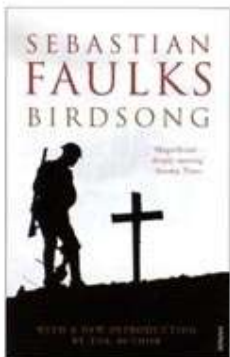
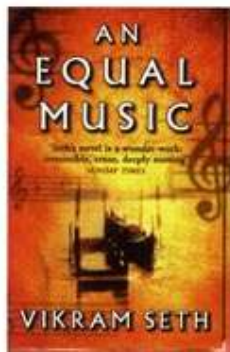
## Angela's Ashes Frank

McCourt

Winner of the 1997 Pulitzer Prize, this 'memoir of childhood' has been fuelling heated discussions among readers since it first appeared. A well attended Eastleigh Group meeting awarded it an average of 9.3, thanks to two illegal scores of eleven out of ten, while West End gave it a mere 4.9, including one score of zero. If you can't hear the humour in Frank McCourt's narrative voice, this account of his 'miserable Irish Catholic childhood' is going to feel like purgatory.

## Birdsong Sebastian Faulks

The phrase used repeatedly by critics, both amateur and professional, to describe this novel of the First World War is 'deeply moving'. It certainly succeeded in moving the Hampshire VIP book groups because each of them, without exception, gave the novel an average score of 8 or more. No other book has achieved such a consistently high level of appeal. Opinions may vary about the quality of the writing in the sensual opening section of the novel but overall Birdsong is a clear Hampshire favourite.



## The Bonesetter's Daughter

Amy Tan

A complex mother / daughter relationship, women in early twentieth century China, contemporary San Francisco and the deep differences between generations in migrant Chinese families - we are in familiar Amy Tan territory here. Farnborough was particularly impressed with the compelling middle section set in China which records the extraordinary life of Luling and her family of ink makers. The ending perhaps is a tad too neat for some tastes but otherwise Tan is on top form.

## The Bookseller of Kabul

Asne Seierstad

The reaction of the book groups to this journalist's account of everyday life in Afghanistan has been generally positive, with the Alton group giving it the highest average score - 7.7. It invariably stimulates discussion about the treatment of women in different cultures, and often people need reminding that equal rights legislation in the West has been a long time coming. Another interesting point of debate is how objective the author has been. Read it and decide for yourself.

## Brick Lane Monica Ali

Set in the Tower Hamlets area of London and focusing on the Bangladeshi community living there, Monica Ali's debut novel was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Is it really that good? Most of the book groups thought so, such as Farnborough whose members gave it an average of 8. A recently made film of the novel doesn't begin to do it justice. The subject matter is controversial and didn't win the author many friends within her own community. However, those who write unflinching portrayals of life as they see it do not set out to court popularity with their subjects.



# Consumer feedback



Very easy to use  
– in fact the most  
difficult thing  
was getting it out  
the case

I'd like to  
boomerang it  
back ...

The  
batteries  
last such  
a long  
time

"It's lovely lying in  
bed listening to it ... I  
can listen right the  
way through without  
interruption ...

My grandson couldn't  
believe his granny had  
got an MP3 player

It kept speaking  
to me after I'd  
put it away in  
the draw

Absolutely marvellous machine. I had an overwhelming  
desire to get out a knife and find out how so many words  
could be hidden away in such a small device

















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*This audio book is narrated by :-*

Chris Hedges  
CEO, Open Sight.

*and*

Dani Sinha  
courtesy of the BBC.

*Produced in association with :-*

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