

No to Age Banding

Readers' comments

To suggest that all children develop at the same rate is condescending at best and offensive at worst. Would the 'Harry Potter' books have been the success they were with age banding?

ME

Books are one of the only true freedoms left.

AC

This is just another example of commerce and Political Correctness banding together in an unholy alliance to censor who reads what. How can one possibly take a 'one size fits all' attitude to books?

KH

We mustn't put children off reading. It's one of life's greatest pleasures.

JS

It's a very narrow minded view of books in general. I feel that if kids grew up with age banning - I mean banding - on books, they would naturally assume that's the way it has to be and never question it. Do we really want kids with that sort of view on books? That everything is limited?

JS

The idea of age-banding books really scares me. It worries me, because I'm afraid it will prevent some children from reading some amazing books. And an amazing book can turn any life into an amazing one.

CA

There are so many books and not enough lifetime to read them all in. We shouldn't restrict children. We should give them the freedom to explore and the encouragement to expand their horizons. Books are amazing, wonderful things. They should not be categorised by arbitrary age ranges that only serve to hold back the more fluent readers and humiliate the less literate.

If an adult wants to judge if a book is suitable for a child they should open it. If they like what they read, the child probably will too. If the child can't read it yet, the adult should read it with them. A simple solution, and more constructive than age-banding.

LE

Who decides what's average? Is there really such a thing as an average child? Had such age banding been in place, I might not have had the opportunity to read many of the books I came to love, and would have quickly become bored.

AM

I fully support the idea that reading is an individual achievement and that everyone develops at their own pace and should not be made to feel bad should they develop slower or faster than their peers.

HM

Growing up as an avid reader with conservative parents, this could have stunted a lifelong passion and severely hindered my education had it been announced 25 years ago.

MR

I was a child who read Jane Eyre and adult versions of the Greek myths at age 8, and I still read Beatrix Potter and Little Grey Rabbit at age 55. Stick age labels on books, and some children (or their parents) will think they're too difficult or too easy, so they won't dive into that glorious boundless pond that is the world of books. There are plenty of book magazines and websites to help parents and youngsters choose suitable books if they want help, and library staff or good booksellers can offer advice and booklists. But let's not label books as if they were baby food or ready meals.

SP

My name is (JH) and I am 13, and love reading anything. My book shelf contains almost two hundred books, and I have borrowed many more from other places. Books should be enjoyed by everyone, and children shouldn't be pressured into reading what adults — who unfortunately hold little idea of what is appropriate for different age groups — believe is suitable.

These new age guidances are ridiculous. ... Children should be encouraged to read whatever, whenever, whether that means that a twelve year-old is ploughing through Jodi Picoult, or a fifteen year-old is struggling with Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, it doesn't matter. Just let them enjoy the amazing range of literature that is out there. Just remember, the Harry Potter series has been read by millions, all of different age groups, and that didn't do anyone any harm.

JH

I find this ban insulting to children and adults everywhere. Are we not smart enough to decide what ignites our imaginations?

SL

The only outcomes will be a reduction in young readers and a stifling of imagination and pleasure.

LK

I feel this a symptom of the helicopter-parent syndrome - facilitating adults who would restrict children's reading to a "safe" category without any respect for the individual capabilities and tastes of each child.

FH

Age ranges will discourage young readers and are unnecessary. After all, few authors set out to write unsuitable material and the blurb on the back should be adequate to decide if a book is appropriate.

SG

Age banding will unfairly suggest a book is beyond the reach or interest of different ages and will stigmatise reading.

JS

The banding works in two ways. Obviously it will affect children. My partner's brothers (aged between 6 and 12) all read at different reading ages. As one of the eldest brothers is slightly autistic he reads the books of the youngest. Seeing a 'suitable for age 5' badge on the book isn't going to help in the task of reading and progressing. The youngest is a competent reader and punches well above his weight in terms of reading.

A secondary problem to this would indeed affect adults. I'm not the only who was reading the latest Harry Potter on the work commute. I just wonder how many would have read the latest HP were there to be a big 'suitable for 8 year olds' sticker on the sleeve? I would assume this would affect the sales of books. Books are for everyone to choose what they read, regardless of age.

I'm all for bookshops to designate shelves to age groups to help the book gift buyers and occasional readers. I just think a permanent motif on the actual book is a little extreme.

BD

Children should be encouraged to read widely about topics that interest them in the form of novels, picture books, magazines, etc, and gain an appreciation for all printed matter, no matter what age group it's aimed at. Age does not define everything about a person.

EH

I always read ahead of my 'age' but I was considered thick because I cannot spell or write clearly. I would have been devastated if I had only been offered books in my age range - or, worse, below. Stop labelling children - they have a hard enough time as it is. Plus, I still read children's books now when I am in the mood. Bit embarrassing to have the age category of the book on the cover for all to see!!!

SS

How does one learn without being challenged? My vocabulary was vastly increased by scouring my parents' bookshelves for new titles. I just don't believe in censorship where literature is concerned.

CB

I am someone who experienced both sides of the difficulty as a child. First, I had to re-learn to read in English after first learning in Welsh, then I had a far higher "reading age" than most of my class, and read constantly. I completely oppose this plan.

EW

Their argument that it would help parents is rubbish. If the parents aren't clued up enough to know what their child should be reading, are they going to understand that there is a categorisation on the back?

NH

To suggest that the people who buy books for children - including the children themselves - aren't capable of gathering the information needed to make a sensible choice of book is simply patronising. More power to your writing elbows!

DM

There are certain books that cannot be categorised by including them in an age banding class. They were deliberately written to tell a different story to different age groups - Animal Farm springs immediately to mind.

JS

I fully support this campaign. It is ridiculous to limit the abilities of the brighter to some marketing set age band, and make those who are less able feel ashamed to admit to reading the 'wrong' books.

JS

I feel that putting age banding on books will have a far more damaging effect than a beneficial one. The concept is misguided and should be scrapped.

DT

Why should we inflict more stereotypes onto children, especially when there should be no age limit for readers to read any type of books they like? Book shops, libraries etc all have their books in age groups already, so why should we stick them onto books as well?

MC

I still buy children's books and I'm way out of that range. Are they going to stop selling them to people the wrong age?

AK

I worry that shortcuts like this relieve parents and teachers from the responsibility of knowing their child's reading level, interests and abilities. If they just pick up a book stamped '8-10' for a 9-year old then that child might not be challenged, or conversely might be dissuaded from reading since they're not 'average'.

MH

The state continues to silo us all and this is another attempt in restricting individualism.

SP

Had my parents not been sensible and flexible, and had my next teacher not been so encouraging, I could have been put off reading fiction altogether. The very thought sends an unpleasant chill down my spine.

JS

I cannot think that this can be in anyway helpful. People learn to read at different ages and progress at different rates. As others have said, books and people are unique.

MM

I whole heartedly support the opposition to this stupid idea.

MC

I think the idea of age banding of books is ridiculous and will negatively impact on young people who read and those who are being encouraged to do so.

AC

No age ban was put on me; reading became something we all did, all the time. Today, of course, I see that a lot of what I read was emotionally beyond me, but the fact that NO book was banned, meant an enormous amount of freedom to explore and learn. I learned to read at six, and after that there was no stopping me. This freedom also meant that I self-selected books that I found interesting and comprehensible. I am strongly against imposed age banding of children's books. Any good librarian/book seller can easily give me (now a grandmother) very good advice on new children's books.

HA

Our children, instead of being regulated, need the freedom to mould their own imagination, in their own way and in their own time.

AB

I think that age banding on books is a total waste of time and ill-conceived. Being a teenage reader myself, I think that other readers could easily be persuaded to change their minds about reading what could be a fantastic book, just because the book is not branded their particular age group.

TM

What an utterly stupid idea.

DL

I am a thirteen year-old and I have a huge love of reading. I would really like to be counted as someone who does not agree with the age banding system. Every child has different reading habits and will choose books themselves that they know they can and want to read. I don't care what people think. Children cannot be dictated to in what to read. It is an impossible and disgusting act to even attempt to give a book an age range, as all children and stories are different. To restrict what a child should and shouldn't read is vile. Every single human being should be free to read whatever books they want, regardless of their age or the story's themes. Restricting the child's reading range is like condemning their imagination. I for one will not stand for it. I am proud to be among so many writers, illustrators and others that say no to this restriction and feel privileged that so many people are prepared to fight for us children's rights.

CM

What an atrocity!

HB

If ever there was a time when children need to learn to not judge a book by its cover it is now! We cannot set this bad example. As a precedent, it really represents the opposite of what encourages curiosity and enthusiasm in young readers.

AC

Age banding will seriously undermine all of the hard work authors, schools, libraries and programmes like Richard and Judy have done towards making it once again cool to read a novel. Leave the placing of books in bookshops up to those who know their job - the managers of bookshops. Similarly, leave the placing of books in Schools and Libraries to those skilled in their job, who know the best place on the shelves.

CK

I am against age banding because it seems burdensome and unnecessary, not to mention restrictive and close-minded. Throughout my relatively short life I have read both beyond and below typical age bands guided for me, so as such I usually pay no heed to them. However, I know very well for many people they can be embarrassing and confusing, ignoring individual needs and generally causing havoc.

TJ

I'm a teenager and I read all kinds of books. I recall when I was younger and seeing children teasing other children because they watched 'baby' television shows and I know that that kind of stuff will only increase with age banding. I also hated it when people didn't want me to read books they thought I was too young for. Again, that sort of 'helpfulness' will only increase with the use of age banding. And I think that most books are useful to many different age ranges. I totally agree that age banding is a very bad idea.

KP

I was about to say that I hold no special position in the book trade, being only a reader, but without readers there would be no book trade. I am horrified by the proposal, as it would seem to restrict all abilities of readers.

RL

I cannot think of anything so misconceived as age banding. It has the effect of limiting the scope of readers. People come to books at different times.

TJ

I will read a book if it's engaging. I don't look at the supposed age of a book.

PG

I believe age-banding is a ridiculous concept. When I started reading habitually at the age of 5, I was already reading books such as Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys. At the ages of 6 and 7 I was reading books that dealt with issues like death that many would consider "inappropriate" for my age. But because my brain, like every other person's in the world, developed differently than those of my classmates, I could read such novels and not be emotionally "scarred." Banding is almost as bad as banning, but in some ways worse. With banding, a seed is being planted in the minds of many that certain books are bad for a child because the child happens to be a year younger or older than the specified age limit. Limiting a child on what they can read is also providing them with the tools to brush away the concept of recreational reading altogether.

TP

I am 16 years old. I totally agree with the NO TO AGE BANDING cause; age banding is a ridiculous idea. Some of the best adult books started out as "children's" or "teenage" literature, my favourite example being Meg Rosoff's How I Live Now which, of course, is now widely acclaimed as an "adult" book.

LB

Age-banding is particularly unhelpful. Whatever it does for adults buying the books, it will not help children.

TY

I know that age bears little relation to a child's ability to interpret, enjoy and comprehend text. Each child is unique.

JD

Children should read whatever they want to, not what they are told to read! Reading is about personal discovery.

PS

Totally agree think age banding is ridiculous. All books should be age-less, timeless, and not pigeon holed.

KW

As a teenage reader with a distaste for any fiction aimed at teenagers, I feel that age banding is irrelevant and pointless, and undermines the author's right to reach a wide audience with their work.

LM

My mind would be immeasurably smaller had my parents constricted my reading to 'suitable' books!

LG

Age banding is an insult to children and children's authors everywhere!! Get real, publishers!!!

LM

Please add my name to the list of dissenters; if the plan is a marketing strategy it will backfire; if it is not, it is surely a form of censorship.

Dr N G

It was with great horror that I read about this dastardly idea. It is because of my early foray into reading that I feel I am where I am at this time! At the age of 32 I have accomplished more than most people my age as well as possibly more than people twice my age. ... I graduated from high school and began college by 17. I've been a registered nurse for 11 years and have been able to work my way into a top position as a Director of Nursing, which most nurses aren't able to attain until well into their 40s. All of this I attribute to being allowed to read Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy at the tender age of 5 (of course with multiple pronunciation assists from my parents!) which began a ferocious appetite for all things written! The idea that others would not be allowed this freedom is terrifying.

DP

I see the introduction of age bracketing on the book itself as an excessive attempt to control and segregate in the name of bureaucratic self-interest, and can fail to see any benefit for the readers concerned. Publishers need to stop patronising children and young adults, and to value their independence and ability to make informed consumer choices.

PL

It discourages reading. A critical fundamental to reading is exploration. Age banding destroys this with its freedom-sucking stickers. It is the personal right of every reader to choose a book not based on these stickers, but based on what the book offers. Beyond that it's detrimental to struggling readers. I don't understand why readers can't open the book and try reading a couple of pages. If the vocabulary is too difficult, move on. If the subject matter is too suggestive, move on. But this is a choice readers make for themselves.

Besides, you can't put an age limit on enjoyment.

JT

This is just sheer silliness leading on to potential censorship.

DF

Indeed, what would be next? Age banding for newspapers? "No, young lady, you can't read *The Independent*, or any such stuff. Why? Well, these publications have an unsettling habit of relaying disturbing information about the world, and are therefore unsuitable for your consumption. Read instead comics and so on, until you have *Come of Age*. Until then, please remain in the dark."

KG

The age banding idea is ridiculous. Children learn, read and mature differently, and a rating system will not be beneficial to parents or anyone purchasing a book for a child. The best way to know is to know the child and be familiar with the book.

CE

Reading is too important to impose limits; we all find our own level in reading, as we do in life.

MJ

Freedom of speech walks hand in hand with freedom of knowledge. If an author has something to say, why not broaden his audience instead of suppressing it?

H St. J

Encouraging children to use their developing intellects by reading is one of the best things we can do in terms of education.

KH

Age Banding would actually put me off buying books. Have the publishers thought that they may actually lose sales?

SM

Children sometimes need to relax with an 'easy' book, just as they like to read comics. Other times they want a challenge. Children don't mind if they come across things they don't fully understand at the time. The meaning may become clear later in the story or long after the story ended. The main thing is that the story expands their outlook. So I say NO to age banding.

LE

Age banding is one step further on the road to censorship. This is just what kids today need - more labels put on them.

KC

If it wasn't so scary it would be laughable. The idea of age-banding books is the over-protective state gone into obsessive over-spin.

AP

As a karate instructor, I have seen a lot of children from the age of five and up, and no child is ever the same. It's unfair to limit children based on their age.

AR

I have always thought more efforts should be put in teaching children about the virtues of reading, and age ratings in books will not help, but do the opposite.

LG

I'm a college student and an avid reader who started reading at a young age and shudders at the idea of age-banding. There are already enough children not reading, and this is only going to increase those already unacceptable numbers.

SC

The notion of excluding people from reading a book based entirely on age is absurd. The beauty of books is you can read them year after year and each time a new thought or understanding is brought to light based on each reader's ever-changing personal context. I know of parents who would never let their children even read C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia because they have some preposterous belief that they are too young for it, yet will let these same kids sit through hours of brutal physical humour on cartoon shows. It will be a sad day in literary history if this does come to be.

EH

The idea of limiting children to books 'suitable' for their age group is a ludicrous one. How on earth should one define what is suitable given the tremendous range of reading levels, interests, and emotional and intellectual maturity at all stages of childhood?

EK

A young person's chronological age is almost never the same as their reading age. To mark books with an age band will actively discourage young people from reading books that would stigmatise them and deny nurture to advanced intellects.

DH

I'm not anyone special, just someone with an understanding of and love for children.

AS

I, as a reader and falling into the category of being dyslexic, would love to be added to your list. If this happens and they do age range the books, I can just imagine sitting somewhere, even in a library, reading, and hearing the people talking and saying things like, 'Look what age that's for,' or, 'Why is she/he reading stuff for little kids?' I am 25. I would prefer to read stuff meant for younger ages and be able to do it easily instead of getting frustrated and end up giving up because of people giving me weird looks.

BK

Sometimes I like to read books that would probably be described as too young for me, and sometimes I like to read books that might be thought

too old for me. It's my choice, isn't it, not someone else's, and it's nobody's business what I read, as long as my mum is happy, and I'm happy. But I certainly wouldn't read books that had the shop assistants laughing at you behind your back when you took them to the counter to buy them.

HG

I really, really disapprove of this idea. Why should I be made to feel silly and babyish if I read books that are younger than my years, or nerdish if I read books that are supposed to be for older boys than me? I want to be able to buy what I want and not feel people are pointing at me.

PG

As well as the very good objections listed on the website I'd add that it seems to me that one of the great benefits of reading is that it teaches the reader new ideas and broadens their horizons. Books help children to grow up. I've laughed with friends that we all remember the first book we read which contained sex; and I can remember the first books that introduced me to other adult concepts. These books didn't corrupt me, they helped me to understand the world I was growing into.

KM

It is a step towards censorship and is a marketing gimmick which we certainly don't need.

VL

As a child with a reading age well above my actual age, I had regular disagreements with teachers who didn't think I should be reading particular books. Thankfully my Mother was able to ensure that I got to read whatever appealed to me when I wanted to. Age banding might have given the teachers the upper hand, and I might have been put off reading for a long time. NOT GOOD.

SH

As a dyslexic I had a hard time getting into reading books as a kid. I remember feeling terribly nervous about reading Watership Down at 10 which had 11+ label stuck on it at the library!

HE

Books are all about freedom and this prevents freedom.

AJ

I heartily disagree with the idea of age banding books for children - again a squashing of creativity.

EJ

I find the entire idea of age banding abhorrent.

BD

I think age banding is stupid as it belittles people who read below the age band, and puts others off books well above.

CM

Labelling books with ages would put me off buying some books whose authors I didn't know, and I would feel more self-conscious about reading the books. By that system I would be reading books considered "too young" for me. I think anything that assumes all people of a certain age are the same is very wrong.

KR

I am a keen teenage reader. I would like to sign the petition because as soon as I heard about this age banding nonsense my blood started to boil! I have always liked books, but a few of my friends only started reading, with interest, when they were 13-14 years old - and it's the Jacqueline Wilson books that got them going. I'm very aware that some of her books may be given a much younger rating, and I can imagine that putting many young people off, in their situation.

SV

Age banding of books serves no useful purpose, in my opinion, and is more likely to harm than help.

WW

Yet another attempt to quash individuality.

CH

I feel it is a bad idea because:

1. There are many pupils, like myself who have a reading age much higher than average.
2. For the people who are at a higher reading age, we would be limited to what we can read, as we may not be encouraged to read what we can, but encouraged to read what some adults think is "appropriate", therefore not achieving what we are capable of.
3. Publishers who have little intention of reading our books are categorising our books with little, if any, contribution from the readers themselves.
4. Phillip Pullman and Mark Haddon are also very good examples of, not only children's, but adult's writers, and the audience of the books range from children as young as eight or nine to adults. Many people would not read the books if they were directed at a certain age.
5. Many children who struggle with reading would be embarrassed to be seen reading a younger child's book, and would limit the time they spend reading.

Basically I 100% agree with the many people who are backing up this subject. Good Luck,

SP

This will only put yet another unnecessary barrier between young readers and a lifelong love of the written word. I support your opposition to any such plan.

PH

I think that this is not a good idea/ Reading is for everyone, not just a certain age group. It is quite discriminating. It's just wrong!

MD

I feel that people should be able to choose which kind of books they want to read at any age.

AM

I disagree with age banding because I think that you might be embarrassed to read a book that is banded for a younger age. Also I think children should be able to choose what books they read whether they are for younger readers or for older readers. If books are age banded I think fewer people will read books for people older than them. I think it is important to make sure that when you read you are learning or improving your vocabulary.

YP

I disagree with age banding. I think it should be the author's choice who reads the novels, and if there should be age banding on their novels. I feel very strongly about this subject. I am very much obliged that you have read this email because you can change the future of our young readers and society.

Group of young readers, Swansea

I disagree with age banding because readers won't read different age group books from their own, and there will be fewer sales on them and they might be very interesting books.

AW

There are some people who can't read the books they should be able to read. Some children are dyslexic so they will not be able to read books for their age group, so I believe that there should be no labels on the books.

SA

I am against age banding because I believe that we have a right to read whichever books we want. If adults want us to read they could at least let us choose the books that we want to read. I also believe that if someone wants to buy a book they should read it themselves first.

SG

No two children are alike and their reading abilities vary enormously. My reading was never censored in any way, enabling me to learn how to judge a good book, and to learn even from badly written work.

TW

Whose bad idea was this, then?

NH

Book age rating is a stupid idea - it limits people's imagination. In my opinion that's a crime.

JB

I've read books that would be considered older than my age since I was about 10. I still read books and I am now 16 and going through all the classics!

DM

Fewer and fewer people are reading these days, preferring to spend their leisure time staring at TV. This proposal of age-banding will just be another nail in the coffin of under-funded libraries across the country.

KL

I am a 17 year old student at a High School in Scotland. I am vehemently against Age Banding, for I have been reading since I was 2 years old. I wouldn't be capable of the intellectual level which I possess today had I not been able to partake in the literary field.

RN

It saddens me to hear that so many people in my generation are deprived of the wonders of literature, which in my opinion is the optimum stimulant of the imagination. This age-rating system will only exacerbate youth's disinterest in reading, and must be stopped at all costs.

CS

What a strange idea, to indicate a recommended age on a book! How arbitrary it is. Why not a recommended IQ?

VP

The good thing about books is that there are no boundaries. I am 17 and dyslexic. It severely affects my reading, but I love the idea of reading, and choose to read books for much younger children. Many children will be laughed at in school in they do this. This will put them off reading, and they will feel low themselves if they see they are reading a younger book for their age. It doesn't matter what you read. Reading matters.

SK

It is a ridiculous idea because individual readers have such diverse needs and abilities. It needs a human being in the form of a librarian or bookseller to advise on choosing a book. If distant relations need help when buying from the Internet for children, then by all means let the various websites arrange something, but no way should anything be on the actual book.

SW

Absolutely atrocious idea. Surely this cannot happen in the UK?

RC

Simply ludicrous. It is a shame to even have to stand up against such an unimaginable block in the road of literature, which was created to enlighten, to expand the mind, not to limit it. It would be heart breaking to know that children would be unable to freely feed their minds as they chose, bringing them further into the light of knowledge. I am a reader, a writer and a believer in unrestricted education. I wish us all the best of luck against this silly age banding scheme.

PF

I feel very strongly that publishers should not label books with age banding. Who are these books for, the children or the parents? There is plenty of advice to people buying books for children without further confining children's reading into yet another box. Children are as much individuals as adults and should be allowed to choose.

MH

What next? Do they want to say whether books are for male or female readers too?

JF

Age banding is a huge backward step, which may be seen as an attempt to compartmentalise the young. It should be avoided.

AS

Such a daft idea – I get all het up each time anyone mentions it.

NF

I think it has more to do with marketing convenience than being of any real benefit to the reader, young or old.

FN

Myself and my fellow more able and talented pupils at Comprehensive School would like to offer our support to your campaign. Our reasons for supporting you are as follows:

- Children at any age should be able to choose the books they want for themselves without being embarrassed.
- Children will get teased or even bullied for reading books below their age group.

DCB and fellow able and talented pupils at (School name)

I would like to add my support to the campaign against age-banding for children's books. I was contacted by (teacher) who teaches my son at school. Like them, I regard this as a very retrograde step and wish you the best of luck in campaigning for its repeal.

DM

We strongly disagree with the age banding of books. We believe that to do so would be very unnecessary and very inappropriate. We agree with all your views as we believe that books are all about imagination and expanding your vocabulary. We believe that books should be free for whoever should wish to read them. We believe that you are as good a reader as you are, and should be able to read books that you wish, not ones that comply with your age.

ML, JH, AS

We have thought about the many issues surrounding the book banding and we strongly disagree with publishers' plans. We have concluded that the age banding for books is very unnecessary. We believe that restricting children from books they wish to read is absurd, and unfair for adults too. It is also very inappropriate for the film industry if books are made into films, as the age ratings for films may be different to the age ratings for books. We also think it is unfair for writers as their sales are about to go down. Over all, we have concluded that the age banding on books is ridiculous for both the writer and the reader.

RH, EB, EW

As a young adult I think its wrong and don't see the point in it at all.

RB

This is a very bad idea, and it sounds as if it will be executed even more poorly. I hope very much that it will be discarded, as all bad ideas should be.

JL

I am a reader, aged 67. Do I want to walk around with the next Philip Pullman or Eoin Colfer with a big age stamped on? I love children's books. They are often better than the fiction written for adults. Please don't embarrass me by doing this. People are not stupid. They can work it out without a publisher stamping an age range on the front. Children can work it out too. I can see me buying a book and tearing the cover off as soon as I've got it and no one will know what I'm reading. When people see me with a book I am enjoying, they cannot think, "Oh, she looks like she is really enjoying that, maybe I should buy it."

JF

I feel that compulsory age-banding of children's books is counterproductive. I still enjoy some of the books I read as a child and encounters with more recent children's books, along with various types of books marketed for adults. My daughter, now twenty-two, has the same reading pattern. Why should part of our enjoyment be labelled as inappropriate in this way? I think many children combine books that they find easy with others that are more challenging, and some may lack the confidence to feel comfortable about owning up to enjoying 'babyish' books.

GH

I think this is a truly awful idea. It will lead to lower sales figures and readership, as more able children will be directed away from books labelled for older children, although well within their grasp, and less able children will be put off if offered books labelled for younger children, but which are more academically accessible.

AM

This will have an adverse effect on children's reading at a time when many children do not read for enjoyment anyway!

RR

I should like to add my support to the growing number of professionals, colleagues etc. who are against age banding books. Children need to feel free to read any level of book with which they can be comfortable and not to feel that their reading level fits into 'a slot'. Books, above all, are to be enjoyed and age banding will prohibit this.

SC

Who came up with this stupid idea? In my far distant childhood I read anything and everything I could. My parents encouraged this and allowed me to read what ever I brought home from the local library. In contrast, I know a twelve year old who has difficulty reading. She is not dyslexic, just has problems and would find the idea of reading a book for younger children humiliating, as I think would many children. Is this a case of authority gone mad yet again?

Please think of the youngsters who read younger age group books for whatever reason, and those adults who still read children's books.

PM

What arrogance! What qualifies anyone to decide at what age a book should be read. Some books are ageless. I am 70 and still read *Wind in the Willows*; it has a timeless charm and insightfulness of character. The ease with which Pullman introduces the concept of parallel universes is not lost on a child, nor is its profundity not acknowledged by the most advanced cosmological theorising. Age banding smacks of the nanny state - forget it!

PL

I'm definitely against anything that would, whether intentionally or unintentionally, lead to cutting children off from reading books through misinformation or over zealous categorization.

HE

Children's minds are inquisitive melting pots and banding cannot take into account the unique curiosity and preferences that each individual child possesses.

SF

Children should be encouraged to read; and if they have any difficulties in this area, these are likely to be compounded if they feel they will be stigmatised if they are seen reading books which they are able to manage, but publishers have deemed to be for a younger age range. Similarly if a child is an ardent reader they should be stretched in the type of books that are available to them as only by doing so will they increase their levels of understanding and vocabulary.

CS

I am absolutely shocked that it is being considered. Had this been in place when I was a young reader, I would have been robbed of reading some wonderful things.

LH

Is this age banding insulting the intelligence of parents?

HS

What an idiotic and short sighted idea.

HW

I'm glad so many people are voicing their displeasure at this proposal!

As well as pigeonholing authors and limiting children's reading, it also seems to me further to dehumanise the process of bookselling and buying. Where's the encouragement to browse beyond a book's cover if it (apparently) tells you all you need to know?

G U-H

This will encourage teasing, and bullying of children who may read books designed for a younger audience.

RH

I just would like to say that age banding is a terrible idea. Let children read at their own pace and not feel pressurised to read things because they are the 'right' age.

MD

Insane. Just insane. And potentially profoundly damaging.

MS

I feel that there is no way a system like the one described could ever plausibly work, and in fact it would have a negative impact on the number of children reading and their reading abilities. No one has a right to restrict what a child can read.

SM

Reading more 'grown-up' books is an important part of a child's education. When I was 14 I was a judge in the Lancashire Children's Book of the Year, and it struck me that many of the books which made the shortlist were not ones about simplistic subjects deemed suitable for children: they were the ones about real-life issues such as drugs, arranged marriages, and racism. I believe children appreciate these subjects as they are not patronising, and they treat children with more respect, realising that not just adults, but young people, are allowed to have an opinion about important issues. Books are a key path into adulthood and allow children to achieve maturity, and I would really love to become fully involved in this campaign as I believe what you are doing is absolutely right!!

JP

I wholeheartedly reject age banding as useless and damaging. As an adult, I don't hesitate to read novels that might be counted as children's books. However, if children's books were blatantly labelled with age recommendations, I know that my feelings of embarrassment might cause me to miss out on some truly universal and beautiful stories.

AT

I would like to be registered as someone who does not agree with the age guidance on children's books. This will stop children reading out of their comfort zone. Indeed, it may actively put off many readers who already struggle with texts, and will then be seen reading books of a 'lower' age bracket. Please do not do this!

GS

Whilst parental advice on explicit language or violent / sexual content would be genuinely useful, "age banding" for fiction is prescriptive patronising nonsense and shows no real understanding of young people.

LM

It is completely beyond my comprehension why the publishers have taken this action. I can't believe that they will sell any more books or make any more money by doing so - so what is the motivation?

BW

Accurate judgments about age suitability are impossible, and approximate ones are worse than useless.

LP

Children are intensely competitive. What 10 year old boy is going to read a book that says 7+ on it - even though that might be precisely the kind of low ability/high interest book he should be reading?

Children are in this modern world intensely tested all the time at school. The effect of age banding would be to reinforce this notion that children should read to the top of their ability all the time (when adults certainly don't) and for many children would therefore reinforce the notion that reading is not fun, but another part of the education process.

No self-respecting child or young adult would ever be seen with something marked for someone younger under their arm - so a great wealth of really brilliant books would be lost to them.

MS

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