

Game of Loans

By Julia Petricevic

School context

At Genazzano FCJ College, reading for pleasure is supported in the school through scheduled library sessions for students in Year 5 to Year 10, called ROAD (Reading Opens All Doors). These classes are led by a teacher-librarian, with a focus on reading across a range of genres, encouraging book discussion, and having time to read.

In the last two weeks of Term 2, the library celebrates books and reading with an annual Literature Festival, known casually as LitFest. This joint activity with the English Faculty includes plays, competitions, author visits, workshops, a book sale, a literary dinner and many other special events. This year we wanted to create a new competition for LitFest with the intention of extending the ROAD philosophy of creating communities of readers. Our aim was to harness the motivational power of a competition to entice students to read and discuss their reading with enthusiasm and purpose.


Strategy

We started planning the competition at the beginning of Term 2, with the intention of launching it around halfway through the term and thus generating an excited buzz for LitFest.

Competition criteria:

- A competition for the lower end of middle years (we chose years 5 to 7).
- Every student had to participate at least once.
- The home rooms at each level would compete for each year level cup.
- A range of activities accessible for all reading levels.
- Encourages students to read different genres, styles and formats.
- Emphasise reading as a community activity that can be shared and discussed

We thought activities such as 'Reading Bingo' and Jackie French's 'Share a Story' calendar could be adapted into something suitable for our Middle Years Students. We brainstormed a fun name, and Game of Loans was born. A *Game of Thrones*-inspired font helped ensure our signage and display materials have a cohesive theme, and provided a cheeky giggle for the older students and teachers who understood the allusion. We wanted to provide a diverse range of fun, challenging and different types of reading experiences (see figure 1). Students could choose the length and difficulty of the reading materials according to their capabilities and interests.



Read for one hour without interruption	Read outside	Read for 30 minutes every night for a week	Read a book suggested by another student in ROAD	Read a whole series
Read a CBCA Book of the Year in any category	Read a book being studied by another year level	Read a book that became a movie	Read a book that makes you cry	Read a book published in 2015
Read a book set in the past	Read a book based on a true story	Read a book in which the characters are animals	Read a book set in another country	Read a book with a one word title
Read a book with more than 300 pages	Read a book by two authors	Read a non fiction book	Read a book suggested by a teacher	Read a graphic novel
Read a book that belongs to your brother or sister	Listen to an audio book	Read a book set in the future	Read an ebook from our Overdrive collection	Read a book based on a fairytale
Read a book written before 1950	Read a book set in the summer	Read a book with a dragon	Read an illustrated book	Read to a sibling or pet

Figure 1.

Students were awarded a point as they completed each challenge, and they had to pool their points together in their homeroom groups. We had three trophies made to award to the homeroom group with the most points from each year level, to be presented at the end of semester assembly.

Students had to report completing the challenges to a library staff member. This could take place during a ROAD session, and allow other students to hear and discuss, or it could be done at any time, allowing for a more personal interaction with the student or small group of students. The points were visually represented on a scoreboard, using coloured dots (see figure 2). The game proved to be very effective at stimulating rivalry and maintaining interest. We included bonus points for the team who completed their board first, with smaller bonus points as the other groups finished, so there was continued incentive to keep going.



Figure 2.

Outcomes

For the duration of the competition the library was often buzzing with activity and noise (even more than usual!) as the students chatted to the library staff or recommended books to each other. The fortnightly ROAD sessions were similarly filled with excitement, with an increase in the number of students offering to discuss their reading with the class or individually with the teacher. Another pleasing result was that the

students ventured into reading different types of books. The graphic novels became popular with the younger students, who found they enjoyed the colourful illustrations and storylines about friendship and school. Some activities required reading to a pet or sibling, or reading a book recommended by a parent and this created a pleasing link between reading at school and home. Being able to visually track the progress of their group on the scoreboard gave the students a sense of accomplishment and confidence in themselves as readers.

Reflections

While we were very happy with the enthusiastic uptake of the competition, it would benefit from an evaluation of the organisational structure. The rules (see figure 3) proved to be somewhat complex and full of loopholes – what kind of limits would we need to impose upon the same book being used to complete challenges by multiple students, or the use of class novels, or the use of picture books to complete challenges? We also had to trust the students to be honest when reporting they had completed challenges. The purpose of the competition was primarily for fun and to increase engagement, and we didn't want to get bogged down in onerous note keeping.

LitFest Cup 2015: Games of Loans Rules

The ultimate reading battle begins Tuesday, 12th May.
Challenges must be completed before Thursday, 18th June.
The winning group from each year level will be announced
Friday, 19th June.
Each student must complete at least 1 challenge.
Each challenge completed gets 1 point.

When you complete a challenge you must report your success to a library staff member. Your challenge achievements will be celebrated in ROAD classes.

The FIRST group from each year level to complete the whole board gets 50 bonus points.

The other groups will get 20 bonus points when they finish the whole board.

Once the board is complete you can do extra challenges for extra points, BUT you can't repeat the same challenge.

The group with the most points WINS!



Figure 3.

One homeroom teacher offered the additional prize of a pizza lunch if the group won, which they did. While pizza proved to be an effective and delicious motivator, other year levels participated enthusiastically for the sake of the competition factor alone. The trophies were on display for the duration of the competition, acting as a reminder of the glory to be won. Overall, Game of Loans was successful in achieving our intentions of broadening the reading horizons of our students and getting them excitedly talking about reading with each other. We aim to run the competition again next year, with a vigorous re-assessment of the rules.

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