



# Book Review Process

## The Premier's Reading Challenge History

- The NSW Premier's Reading Challenge commenced in 2001 to encourage NSW students in their middle years of schooling to read more, and to read more widely, for leisure and pleasure. Over time, the Challenge expanded to incorporate students in Kindergarten to Year 4 and Year 9. There are four Challenge levels (K-2, 3-4, 5-6 and 7-9), each with their own booklist, specially selected to provide quality literature and to encourage reluctant and non-readers.
- The Challenge runs from March to August each year. In **2019**, the Challenge will open on **March 4** and will close for students on **August 30**. Between September and February, students are encouraged to continue reading and can include these books in the next year's Challenge.
- The 3-4, 5-6 and 7-9 Challenges require students to read 20 books independently, with at least 15 from the PRC booklist for their Challenge level or above. Students can include up to five personal choice books.
- Students in K-2 are required to experience 30 books from the list by reading independently, having shared reading or books read to them. At least 25 books must come from the booklist for their Challenge or above, and can include up to five personal choice books.
- All students can read at or above their challenge level.

## Booklists

Each year, the four PRC booklists are refreshed and enhanced to ensure that new, award-winning and notable books, and established and new Australian authors, are included. Books are sourced from publishers, bookshops and libraries, and titles are also suggested for inclusion by librarians, teachers, students, parents and the general public. Reading and reviewing for booklists is usually finalised in October. In 2017 the decision was made to update booklists more regularly, with new books added to the Challenge each school term and uploaded onto the PRC website. All books sent to the PRC or requested copies are rigorously reviewed by Book Panel Members.

**The criteria for inclusion includes the requirement that the booklist include books that are:**

- Easily obtainable for any student in NSW.
- A current publication.
- Quality literature.
- Suitable for students in the Years K to 9 range (K-2, 3-4, 5-6 or 7-9 booklist).
- Include a range of classic, modern and contemporary books.
- Represent a range of book types e.g. fiction, non-fiction, illustrated and picture books, and poetry.

If a book is approved and recommended to be included on the PRC list, it will be added to the PRC booklist that is accessed by thousands of students. Please note that due to the high volume of books received that we are unable to directly contact publishers or authors about their book being added to the PRC Booklist. The booklists go live every school term, and for approved series they go live in late November after the Challenge Closes so that students' reading records are not interrupted due to the challenge rules.

## **PRC Reviewers**

Reviewers must be mindful at all times that the booklists support the Premier's Reading Challenge which is an initiative of the NSW Premier. The Premier represents all constituents in NSW and the booklists should include books that are appropriate for students between Kindergarten and Year 9.

**A Premier's Reading Challenge Book must:**

- Enhance the reputation of the PRC booklist as quality, diverse and interesting books.
- Be appropriate for readers in the K–9 range.
- Encourage love of reading for interest and pleasure.
- Foster awareness of the value of books.
- Encourage students to think about who they are in relation to their family, community and society.

**A book on the PRC booklists should not:**

- Offend a reasonable member of the community
- Contain themes that are inappropriate for the target age group.
- Contain themes that are too mature for our audience.
- Promote mediocrity.

Similar standards apply to visual texts as to literary texts.

Some excellent literature may still not be suitable for placement on the PRC booklists.

Parents and grandparents should feel comfortable buying books from the PRC lists.

**Reviewers should also note that the PRC review process is confidential. You should not discuss your potential review of books with authors, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, or anyone else who may have connections in the industry. Doing so may be perceived as an attempt to gain favour for positive reviews, and there is no guarantee that a book reviewed favourably by a PRC reviewer will automatically make it on the booklist, as this decision rests with the PRC Team. If questioned about the status of reviews or submissions for inclusion on the PRC list, all queries should be directed to the PRC Officer.**

You may share a review of books you are submitting for consideration on your personal review platforms if appropriate, however please do not reference the PRC in these personal reviews.

## Completing the Book Review Form

Remember that the PRC is about students' reading for leisure and pleasure so try not to consider a book in terms of guided teacher or parent reading, or its connection to the curriculum.


Reviewers should contribute a review all books provided by the PRC team, and can also add reviews for any other books they come across that they consider would be appropriate for the challenge. If a reviewer receives a book from the PRC but is unable to complete the review, they should return it to the PRC Team.

The onus is on each Book Panel Member to rigorously review and carefully record all the information for each book. Reading with a review sheet/ post-its and pen will help! When completed, reviews are submitted online. Please email the PRC Team if you need help with this.

**On the review form, please include the following information:**

1. Record publication details so that the book's information is correct for the website.
2. Indicate whether the book's author and/or illustrator are Australian.
3. Indicate whether the book is part of a series and, if known, the number in the series.

**Please note:** for a **new series** we generally review three titles before accepting the series.

4. Record all contentious issues, as outlined below, and detail page numbers where these contentious issues appear in the text. This is very important because a decision about the need for a further review can be made on this information. Without this level of detail, the book has to be read again to get to the same stage in the process.  
**Contentious issues include** adult themes, violence, drug use, inappropriate language, cultural insensitivity, prejudice, little literary merit.
5. Indicate whether the book on the 7-9 booklist is a **mature read**, to indicate that the book is usually read by students in Years 9, 10 and above. Please include this phrase at the end of your Annotation of the book: **“Usually read by students in Years 9, 10 or above”** so that we flag the book to our readers. We also recommend that you state any potentially confronting issues in your Comments. This may include
  - Strong/coarse/blasphemous language in context.
  - Adult themes, sophisticated humour or challenging concepts suited to more mature readers.
  - Cruelty to animals or domestic violence.
  - A confronting, controversial topic with inherent violence
6. When recommending a book, be mindful of the Premier’s Reading Challenge criteria and the spirit of the booklists. Mediocrity is a good reason to reject a book. Don’t be nervous about rejecting a book!
7. If recommending or unsure about a book, select **one** booklist level only from K-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-9 or 7-9  (denotes books for more mature readers, as described in point 5 above). Indicate whether the book could be classified as an ‘Easy Read’ for that Challenge level.
8. When recommending a book for the 3-4, 5-6 or 7-9 booklist, **at least one** genre or category (preferably up to 3) must be selected.
9. Supply a brief but comprehensive annotation that a student can use to select a book and one that a teacher, librarian or parent may use to make a decision about the suitability of a book. The Annotation should reflect the mood of the book, whether serious, mysterious, whacky, informative, interesting and so on. Don’t give the ending away! We usually use the book blurb at the back of the book for the Annotation section. Remember, this is the section that students will read to help them decide whether they want to read it or not.