

<p>Interview Summary Sheet Project: Memories of Fiction: An Oral History of Reader's Lives</p>
<p>Reference No.</p>
<p>Interviewee name and title: Alison Williams</p>
<p>Interviewee DOB and place of birth: 1963, Kingston upon Thames (home) Interviewee occupation: Librarian Book group(s) attended: Putney</p>
<p>Date(s) of recording: 8th June 2015 Location of recording: Battersea Library Interviewer: Amy Tooth Murphy Duration(s): 01.45.50 Summariser: Alison Chand</p>
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<p>Key themes: Education, career, family, reading, childhood, libraries, reading groups, reading genres, reading for feeling.</p>
<p>All books and authors mentioned (those discussed for >20 seconds in bold): Lewis Carroll, <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> J. K. Rowling, <i>Harry Potter</i> J. B. Priestley, <i>An Inspector Calls</i> Andre Norton, <i>Octagon Magic</i> AA Milne, <i>Winnie the Pooh</i> Arthur Ransome, <i>Swallows and Amazons</i> Noel Streatfeild, <i>Thursday's Child</i> Noel Streatfeild, <i>White Boots</i> Noel Streatfeild, <i>Ballet Shoes</i> Dr Seuss Richard Scarry Rosie Thomas Hilary Norman Rosamunde Pilcher Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, <i>Half of a Yellow Sun</i> Andrea Levy Dave Boling, <i>Guernica</i> Beatrix Potter Andrew Lang's <i>Fairy Books</i> (<i>The Green Fairy Book, The Yellow Fairy Book, The Gold Fairy Book</i>) Johanna Spyri, <i>Heidi</i> E. M. Forster, <i>A Passage to India</i> D. H. Lawrence, <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i></p>

D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*
Leslie Thomas, *The Virgin Soldiers*
William Shakespeare, *King Lear, The Tempest, Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, Othello, Twelfth Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet*
Philip Larkin
John Keats
 Thomas Hardy
 William Wordsworth
Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*
Audrey Niffenegger, *The Time Traveler's Wife*
Helen Macdonald, *H is for Hawk*
 Agatha Christie
Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon*
George R. R. Martin, *Fever Dream, A Game of Thrones*
Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*
 T. H. White, *The Sword in the Stone*
Sarah Waters
Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief*
Stephen Kelman, *Pigeon English*
 Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*
Roger Deakin
Richard Mabey, *Flora Britannica*
 Charley Boorman/Ewan McGregor
Henry James, *Washington Square*
Charles Dickens
 George Eliot, *Middlemarch*
Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*
Anne Bronte, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*
 Dame Lynley Dodd, *Hairy Maclary*
 Dan Brown

Interviewer/Summariser comments:
Part one of two

00:00:00	Introduction to interview, interviewee's age given as 52, remarks on living in London throughout life, 18 year old son, comments on education, working in libraries throughout life, passion for reading.
00.01.20	Comments on avid reading as child, avid reading since birth of son, space between childhood and birth of son (ages 15 to 35, 1978-1998), only reading texts studied, taking time to be mother.
00.02.40	Remarks on birth at home in Kingston on Thames, father's South African origins, mother's upbringing in Dulwich. Comments on father's bank work, mother's work as primary teacher. Remarks on younger brother.
00.03.30	Comments on memories of lots of books in house as child, memories of being read to by father, strong memories of father reading <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (Lewis Carroll), father's theatrical interests, putting on voices, wishing father was alive to read <i>Harry Potter</i> books (J. K. Rowling) to son. Memories of reading of

00.05.40	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i> aged between six and eight (1969-1971), memories of physical copies of childhood books.
00.07.30	Remarks on reading to son, reading <i>Harry Potter</i> . Further comments on reading <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> with father in parents' bedroom, sitting on patchwork blanket knitted by mother. Further comments on reading to son, son's preference for partner's less dramatic reading style.
00.08.50	Further comments on father's interest in amateur dramatics, going to see father's plays, <i>An Inspector Calls</i> (J. B. Priestley), fun and 'awful' nature of plays. Comments on becoming snobbier about theatre with age.
00.10.10	Remarks on book called <i>Octagon Magic</i> (Andre Norton), loving book as child, clear memories of book, comments on plot, remarks on mother buying book, reading book alone.
00.10.50	Comments on other childhood books read, <i>Winnie the Pooh</i> (A. A. Milne), <i>Swallows and Amazons</i> (Arthur Ransome), reasons for enjoyment of <i>Swallows and Amazons</i> , not remembering much about stories or characters.
00.12.40	Remarks on reading Noel Streatfeild books, <i>White Boots</i> , <i>Thursday's Child</i> , <i>Ballet Shoes</i> . Comments on appeal of Noel Streatfeild, interest in themes of freedom and independence, further remarks on plot of <i>Thursday's Child</i> , identifying with adventures of characters. Comments on reading Noel Streatfeild between ages of eight and ten (1971-1973), being grown up for age, reading books earlier than others.
00.13.50	Comments on lack of memory of parents directing reading, lack of memory of going to library as child, having books provided at home, first memories of library on going to secondary school. Remarks on lack of memory of mother bringing books from school, mother buying books for children.
00.15.10	Remarks on brother's reading tastes, recent Facebook trend about nominating ten favourite books, nominating brother to list favourite books, differences between own list and brother's. Comments on brother's lack of clear memory of <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> . Comments on brother's interest in Dr Seuss, Richard Scarry.
00.16.40	Remarks on lack of memory of being given books at school, not associating books with school. Comments on reading as leisure time/pastime. Remarks on vague memories of actual books, linking books to periods of life, remembering books because of positive memories of experience of reading, haziness about details of books.
00.18.10	Comments on reading when pregnant/breastfeeding, difficulties of reading challenging material when tired, reading 'nonsense' when breastfeeding. Remarks on reading Rosie Thomas, Hilary Norman, Rosamunde Pilcher.
00.19.20	Remarks on being broad reader, being reading 'snob', reading relaxing material and reading to learn, reading for different reasons. Remarks on having 'rubbish' book on the go at same time as 'more worthy' book.
00.19.20	Comments on reasons for choosing books, reading group books, having to finish reading group books. Comments on not reading challenging material on beaches/trains/commuting, needing to be reading in bedroom or sofa to read challenging

	material/focus. Further comments on reading books for reading group would not have otherwise read, feeling surprised by own attitudes to people/places in books. Comments on enjoyment of reading challenging material to develop self, learn about other cultures/people. Remarks on enjoying lighter reading as form of relaxation.
00.22.00	Further comments on learning about self, human suffering from books, feeling fortunate when reading about experiences of others, interest in what people have overcome, cruelty/charm of people. Remarks on considering self as rounded person, books challenging perception of self.
00.24.10	Comments on <i>Half of a Yellow Sun</i> (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie), remarks on Andrea Levy, central characters overcoming suffering. Comments on <i>Guernica</i> (Dave Boling), annoyance at bad writing style, learning from experiences of central character, vivid and harrowing nature of descriptions.
00.25.20	Comments on being emotionally affected by books, crying when reading books. Remarks on moving on from reading experience, often going to sleep after reading, books staying with interviewee in subtle way, not remembering details but being affected on some level, remembering feelings.
00.26.40	Remarks on lack of memory of plots, further comments on enjoyment of books because of feelings, relative irrelevance of plots.
00.28.00	Comments on not following up particular authors even when books enjoyed, finding different books to try. Comments on reading lots of Rosie Thomas books, reliably enjoyable nature of books, choosing to read Rosie Thomas books to relax, not wanting to be disappointed in expectation of relaxation. Remarks on not always having expectation of enjoyment of reading group books.
00.29.40	Further comments on reading Noel Streatfeild books when young, interest in plots but continued link to feelings.
00.30.40	Comments on association of <i>Winnie the Pooh</i> with mother, memories of reading book with mother, nicknaming brother Roo, liking feisty nature of Piglet's character.
00.31.30	Comments on grandparents' house, playing in attic, dressing up, shelves of book in attic, <i>Andrew Lang's Fairy Books</i> , Beatrix Potter books, memories of book covers, enjoyment of books because of memories of room, mention of <i>The Green Fairy Book</i> , <i>The Yellow Fairy Book</i> , <i>The Gold Fairy Book</i> .
00.33.00	Remarks on memories of <i>Heidi</i> (Johanna Spyri), memories of book cover, spending a lot of time reading in grandparents' attic, reading alone. Comments on lack of memory of reading with grandparents.
00.34.00	Comments on grandparents' reading tastes, grandparents' and parents' house being 'packed' with books.
00.34.30	Remarks on parents' reading tastes, memories of father reading in garden with drink, smoking pipe. Comments on mother's encouragement to read Rosie Thomas, mother's interest in historical fiction, mother belonging to two reading groups, mother buying books rather than using libraries, occasionally throwing out books.
00.36.30	Remarks on dim early memories of libraries, studying education

	and English, training as teacher but having more interest in English than education, not wanting to be teacher at end of degree, having idea of being librarian but having little experience of libraries before working in one. Comments on university libraries, school library, lack of memory of public libraries.
00.38.10	Comments on lack of memory of learning to read, being known as reading above age at school, being known as good reader, being good at English.
00.39.00	Remarks on secondary school reading, <i>A Passage to India</i> (E. M. Forster), going on to read other E. M. Forster material.
00.39.20	Remarks on dislike of Jane Austen at school, not minding Bronte sisters' work, reading Jane Austen as child and adult. Comments on enjoyment of D. H. Lawrence at school, reading <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> , <i>Women in Love</i> . Remarks on being allowed to read <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> .
00.40.40	Comments on picking up rude, sexual book in uncle's house, <i>The Virgin Soldiers</i> (Leslie Thomas), feeling that shouldn't be reading book aged between 13 and 14 (1976-1977). Remarks on being allowed to read material of choice, develop own taste.
00.42.10	Further comments on blank memories of reading between teenage years and university, only memories being of set texts studied, other life activities distracting from reading. Comments on other activities, having boyfriends, swimming, going out in countryside.
00.43.40	Remarks on university texts studied, doing special paper on Shakespeare, love of Shakespeare. Comments on having seen <i>King Lear</i> 13 times, finding each performance different.
00.44.10	Comments on love of poetry developing at university, studying Philip Larkin, modern poets, love of John Keats and Larkin, leading to exploration of other poets. Further comments on interest in poetry originating with interest in Larkin and Keats. Comments on dry nature of some Victorian poetry, dislike of Thomas Hardy poems, William Wordsworth.
00.46.40	Comments on correlation between interests in fiction and poetry, reading for feeling, enjoyment of descriptive passages. Remarks on reading group members who dislike books without plots, self description as visual reader.
00.48.00	Remarks on <i>Life of Pi</i> (Yann Martel), description of book as favourite, book's lack of success in reading group, people being put off by allegorical nature of book. Remarks on film of <i>Life of Pi</i> , films being more likely to disappoint than book.
00.50.20	Further comments on study of Shakespeare, first study at O level, never struggling with language, enjoying stories. Remarks on good English teachers at school, enjoying <i>King Lear</i> , <i>The Tempest</i> , histories, disliking <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , enjoyment of <i>Hamlet</i> , <i>Othello</i> , lack of enthusiasm for <i>Twelfth Night</i> , enjoyment of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , preferring weightier plays.
00.52.30	Remarks on text studied by son at GCSE, son's study of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , son only having to read small portions of texts.
00.53.30	Comments on facilitating Putney reading group from 2007, group splitting into two. Remarks on reasons for becoming facilitator, enthusiasm for role. Comments on previously filling in on book group sessions, never having been member of book group. Remarks on expectations of book group, not expecting to enjoy

	group, concern about age demographic of group, surprise at enjoying group. Comments on democratic nature of process of choosing books, members rejecting idea of <i>The Time Traveler's Wife</i> (Audrey Niffenegger).
00.57.20	Remarks on differences between two new groups, members' expectations of intellectual engagement from book group. Comments on process of new members joining, differences between book groups.
00.58.40	Comments on own role as book group facilitator, influencing choice of books, managing meetings, not letting people dominate sessions.
01.00.50	Remarks on what makes good book for discussion, books with themes which have affected members, books joining people in experience, people talking about how books relate to themselves, people sharing experiences. Comments on rule about not digressing too much, different expectations of library groups and private reading groups.
01.03.00	Comments on not encouraging group to push boundaries.
01.03.20	Remarks on group being shadow group for Booker prize, meeting authors, going to events.
01.04.20	Comments on books being rejected by groups, one group refusing to read <i>H for Hawk</i> (Helen Macdonald), separate groups developing different identities. Remarks on process of dividing groups, original group being too big, groups being interested in what the others are reading, plans for big group meetings twice per year.
01.08.30	Remarks on trying crime fiction, mother enjoying Agatha Christie, not getting into Agatha Christie. Comments on mother's current interest in Scandinavian crime fiction, lack of interest in crime fiction. Remarks on discussing reading with mother. Comments on lack of interest in journey to solve crime, enjoyment of some crime fiction stories on film/television.
01.10.10	Comments on reading some science fiction books, enjoyment of <i>The Mists of Avalon</i> (Marion Zimmer Bradley), comments on plot, reading book aged around 18 (1981). Remarks on reading <i>Fever Dream</i> (George R. R. Martin) before fame of <i>A Game of Thrones</i> .
01.11.40	Remarks on not having watched TV version of <i>A Game of Thrones</i> . Remarks on Margaret Atwood, general preference for Atwood's non science fiction work, general lack of appeal of science fiction. Further comments on genre fiction.
01.13.40	Remarks on <i>Jamie's Dream School</i> programme with Jamie Oliver, doing library display related to <i>Jamie's Dream School</i> . Comments on displays about different themes, example of countryside.
01.14.40	Comments on most popular fiction in libraries, enthusiasm for crime fiction in Battersea library, popularity of 'novelties' section in Putney library, popular sections depending on library demographics.
01.16.10	Further comments on <i>The Mists of Avalon</i> , reasons for enjoyment of book, mention of reading T. H. White, <i>The Sword in the Stone</i> .
01.17.10	Interviewer lays out plans for next interview.
01.17.30	Comments on books read, interest in Sarah Waters, Margaret Atwood. Comments on popularity of Sarah Waters in book groups.
01.18.10	Remarks on <i>The Book Thief</i> (Markus Zusak), comments on

01.19.10	reasons for liking book, memories of reading book on Cornish coast in sunshine, comments on walking around UK coast, finishing book on train on way home, man lending hanky. Comments on dislike of a lot of books when reading group was Booker shadow group, enjoying <i>Pigeon English</i> (Stephen Kelman), remarks on reading group debate about book, author not being from black community, remarks on plot.
01.20.10	Comments on <i>The Hare with Amber Eyes</i> (Edmund de Waal).
01.20.20	Remarks on interest in countryside/outdoors, enjoying travel writing, comments on Roger Deakin, engaging style of writing. Comments on <i>Flora Britannica</i> (Richard Mabey), interest in gardening.
01.21.30	Comments on development of interest in non fiction, interest developing after starting to work in libraries, not growing up with non fiction. Further comments on Roger Deakin. Further remarks on walk around UK coast, sections of walk completed, mention of major surgery on legs, doing walk over course of 15 years thus far. Comments on going for first walk to escape, developing love of walking, walking on coast initially for navigational ease. Remarks on always taking books on walks.
01.24.40	Remarks on reading memories of walks, reading <i>Alias Grace</i> (Margaret Atwood), Charley Boorman/Ewan McGregor book about motorbike journey. Comments on occasionally buying books when walking.
01.26.10	Comments on always finishing reading group books, not finishing other books when not enjoying them, feeling responsibility to read reading group books to keep conversation going.
01.26.50	Comments on dislike of Henry James, <i>Washington Square</i> , lack of enthusiasm for Charles Dickens.
01.28.20	Comments on George Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , indifference to book, enjoyment of Emily Bronte, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Anne Bronte, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> . Further comments on lack of interest in Jane Austen, comparison between Bronte sisters and Jane Austen, importance of sense of place in Bronte sisters' novels. Further comments on themes of <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , importance of love, passion, place.
01.33.00	Remarks on not feeling pressure to read particular classic/well known books.
01.33.50	Comments on reading titles rather than authors, further comments on enjoyment of Sarah Waters, Margaret Atwood books.
01.35.00	Further comments on role of poetry in life, interest in language works of art, reading fictional books for experience, reading poems for beauty. Remarks on reading poems when less time available.
01.37.10	Remarks on reading with son as child, mention of <i>Hairy Maclary</i> (Dame Lynley Dodd), remarks on son losing interest in reading aged around eight, rediscovering reading, not reading fictional books, reading zoology books.
01.39.20	Comments on partner's enthusiasm for reading, house policy of throwing out a book every time one is bought. Remarks on different reading tastes with partner, partner reading more non fiction material, following up TV interests in reading. Mention of partner reading Dan Brown, 'weird, modern' authors.

01.42.10

Remarks on ratio of women to men attending reading groups, women being 'better talkers', comments on men attending reading groups, speculation about feminine perceptions of book groups, remarks on not noticing differences between men's and women's views of books.

01.45.50

END