



Brief set by
Penguin

In collaboration with
Rob Estreinho (VCCP)

How can Penguin make books and reading an unmissable part of pop culture?

Related Disciplines
Open Brief

Deadline
22 March 2022, 5pm GMT

Page 1 of 2

The backstory

Penguin make books for everyone, because a book can change anyone. In 1935, Penguin founder Allen Lane introduced the paperback – revolutionising the book market, making reading affordable and part of everyday conversation. But in today’s world, filled with visual media, books have fallen away from taking centre stage in pop culture.

Although some passages of literature have become part of the wider cultural narrative, (for example, ‘it is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife’ from Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, has been adopted, adapted, parodied and quoted in daily life in the 200 years since it was penned), most fail to make the same break unless they are adapted into tv shows or films.

Unlike other culture we consume on a regular basis – art, television, film and theatre; reading is a mostly solitary experience – even music can be shared with other people at a concert. The way these other art mediums can be shared lend themselves to today’s social media channels through memes, gifs and reels. Even cultural institutions like [the V&A](#) are able to turn their content into culturally relevant digital experiences.

Of course, there is importance in making time to spend by yourself, but it still leaves a hole for interacting with other book buyers. And as such, the content provided by these sources is often left by the wayside when it comes to popular culture, despite the strength of its relevance.

How can Penguin bring books back to the fore and make books and reading an unmissable part of pop culture?

What’s the challenge?

Break books into the mainstream cultural conversation and play with their content in formats not traditionally associated with books to encourage occasional book buyers to engage with them on a deeper level.

This could come to life through an experience – in-store, a festival, in-game or other digital experiences; through social media – for example, adapting meme culture; finding unconventional partners or using celebrities in new and interesting ways; or something else entirely.

Whatever your idea, you need to think about how you’ll make books a water cooler moment, something discussed in the ‘here and now’ amongst the wider public.

Who are we talking to?

Occasional book buyers who buy 3-5 books a year. They often rely on book recommendations from others to determine their purchasing, which may come from their social circle,

influencers or traditional media. They span a wide range of ages, but are engaged with cultural conversations and aware of the latest releases in other media, from television to content streaming.

You can choose to select a specific community within this group to target. Think about the genres that bear significant relevance for them.

Things to think about

Question the reading experience

Investigate why nearly every aspect of the reading experience is solitary. If you could start from the drawing board, what would you want the book buying, reading and post-read experiences to look like? Consider that reading doesn’t look the same for everyone – it can be anything from purchasing and reading a physical book, borrowing one from your local library, or listening to an audiobook.

Fitting books into everyday

Think about who we’re trying to reach, and what a typical day might look like to them. Where are the potential places books could fit into that? What media do they already engage with, and where does it fit into the wider cultural conversation?

Who does this brilliantly already?

Lots of streaming platforms and shows are already incredibly active in this space. We don’t even need to have watched a show to understand someone posting a meme about it. There is also lots of really interesting intersectionality out there, where two seemingly completely different worlds within media collide (take a look at [Ru Paul’s Drag Race UK’s Instagram page](#), for example). How could this become the same for books?

Adapt the journey

Books can go on very different journeys. Sometimes a book is an instant smash hit, so consider how you might be able to capitalise on this success with your idea. Some books are slow burners, so how could your idea drive awareness and engagement with a title people might not yet have heard of? And some books might have been around for centuries, but a modern event might drive people’s interest in it all over again. Is there a way your response could be adapted to work for books across these different scenarios?

What to avoid

Penguin are open to a wide range of responses, but there are a few things they are not interested in:

- Book cover designs
- Food or clothing
- Logo changes/redesigns



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Page 2 of 2

The important stuff

Whatever you make, you need to showcase how it will enable books, reading, and their content to become part of the wider cultural conversation, on par with visual mediums.

Present:

Your solution. Clearly explain your idea and how it would work.

Your creative process. How you arrived at your solution and key insights from your research.

What and how to submit: Read *Preparing Your Entries* before you get started for full format guidelines.

Main (essential):

Either a **presentation video** (max. 2 min) OR **JPEG slides** (max. 8), showing your solution.

Optional (judges may view this if they wish):

Interactive work (websites, apps, etc); if your main piece is **JPEGs**, you can also submit **video** (max. 1 min total); if your main piece is **video**, you can also submit **JPEGs** (max. 4).