



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Shortlist announced for the 2009 Penguin Orange Readers' Group Prize**

**London, 20 May 2009:** Four reading groups from across the UK have been shortlisted for the 2009 Penguin Orange Readers' Group Prize; the UK's only annual award for reading groups.

Now in its eighth year, the prize forms part of Orange's portfolio of literary partnerships. Entrants to the competition were asked to demonstrate how they made reading social and submissions were made via the online book community [www.spinebreakers.co.uk](http://www.spinebreakers.co.uk).

The four shortlisted reading groups are:

- **Book Club and Book Tree, (Edinburgh).** Jen Campbell recently finished her English Literature degree at Edinburgh University, where she ran her online book forum with over 100 topics for discussion. This proved so popular that she launched the Book Club and Obsessive Book Club in August 2008 and there are now over 5,000 international members with a diverse age range from 13 – 50, hailing from Australia to Finland.
- **Eliot Reading Group, (Liverpool).** Inspired by the Ruskin Reading Group (see below) Dr Celia Bell started this group for patients with severe mental health problems in November 2008 at Ashworth Hospital. The membership of the group is open and different patients and staff attend each week.
- **North London Reading Group, (London).** Paul Drinkwater began the group and its website in 2007 with a simple web page asking if anybody wanted to join his reading group. Over 100 enquiries later, there is now a network of over 100 people across North London with four sister groups in addition to the original NLRG.

- **Ruskin Reading Group, (Liverpool).** Dr David Fearnley formed this reading group in February 2008 within a high security psychiatric hospital with the help of the Get into Reading Project, associated with the University of Liverpool. Patients, staff, visitors and students all meet weekly on the ward. The project helps build patients confidence as well as being a therapeutic experience.

Chloe Bingham (12) from Haringey, North London, was highly commended but ineligible as she was under 16. Chloe acknowledged this on her entry but wanted to enter and highlight teens doing something positive with their lives. She has set up an online group called Book Chat, a Facebook quiz and is an active blogger on reading site Fronter.

The six youth panel members chosen to shadow the judging process of the official Orange Prize for Fiction 2009 selected the shortlist of four from a wide variety of entries. Kate Mosse, author, Orange Prize Honorary Director and Chair of judges for the 2009 Readers' Group Prize, will choose a winner to be announced on 27<sup>th</sup> May.

The winner receives a cheque for £1,000 and a pair of tickets to the Orange Prize for Fiction 2009 awards ceremony in London on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. Runners up will receive sets of the Orange Prize for Fiction 2009 shortlisted books.

Magda Lojszczyk, Partnerships Manager, Orange UK commented: "As the only prize of its kind in the UK, this competition continues to highlight the powerful effect reading has on people's lives."

She continues: "Whether it is creating book forums which inspire discussions from members all over the world, to the therapeutic benefits of a hospital reading group; we are delighted to reward this kind of grassroots passion."

Anna Rafferty, Digital Marketing Director from Penguin UK commented; "We know that when you've finished a great book, the first thing you want to do is talk about it. Readers love to discuss why it turned out like *that* or to ponder those still-unanswered questions, to share what they loved about the ending or what they hated about the protagonist. This prize proves that those conversations are happening more than ever; books are

true social currency and readers want to share their passion and discuss their reading in private real-life groups, in huge online forums and in combinations of both.”

**For further information:**

[www.spinebreakers.co.uk](http://www.spinebreakers.co.uk)

[www.readersgroupprize.com](http://www.readersgroupprize.com)

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**Notes to Editors:**

**Penguin**

Penguin ([www.penguin.co.uk](http://www.penguin.co.uk)) was established in 1935, is one of the world's leading consumer publishing businesses and is part of Pearson plc, the international media company with market leading businesses in education, business information and consumer publishing. Penguin publishing comprises the Allen Lane, Fig Tree, Hamish Hamilton, Michael Joseph, Penguin, Penguin Classics, Puffin and Viking imprints.

Penguin has offices in 15 countries and runs over 50 reader and community websites, including [www.spinebreakers.co.uk](http://www.spinebreakers.co.uk), the only online community for teenage book lovers, by teenage book lovers.

Penguin's Reading Groups website [www.penguin.co.uk/readers](http://www.penguin.co.uk/readers) has been running since 2001 and supports tens of thousands of 'real life' book groups as well as facilitating virtual reading groups and online book discussions.

**About Orange**

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At the end of 2008, France Telecom had consolidated sales of 53.5 billion euros (12.7 billion euros for the first quarter of 2009) and at 29 April 2009, the Group had a customer base of almost 184 million customers in 30 countries. These include 123 million mobile customers worldwide and 13 million broadband Internet (ADSL) customers in Europe. Orange is the number three mobile operator and the number one provider of broadband Internet services in Europe and, under the brand Orange Business Services, is one of the world leaders in providing telecommunication services to multinational companies.

In the UK, Orange provides high quality GSM coverage to 99% of the UK population. At the end of March 2009, Orange had almost 17 million customers in the UK – 15.8 million active mobile customers and close to one million fixed broadband customers.

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