



Launch of the UK's first online book community for teenagers

Spinebreakers.co.uk, a pioneering entertainment portal into the world of books, run by teenagers themselves launches today (Monday 8th October 2007). Editorial control of the site is in the hands of a core editorial team of nine teenagers aged between 13 and 18 years, supported by a large network of contributing teen editors from across the UK. The site also invites contribution of vidlogs, blogs, short stories, alternative book jackets, soundtracks, reviews from any young person aged 13 to 18.

A survey commissioned by Penguin UK into teen reading habits showed the following results:

- Three in four teenagers get their information on books from the internet and wished there was more information on books available to them on the internet.
- Nearly 44% of surveyed teens never or rarely visit a chain bookshop and 68% never or rarely visit an independent bookshop.
- 69% of teens think they will be doing more reading online in the future.
- Teens who rate reading as cool are the most frequent visitors to social networking sites.

Anna Rafferty, Penguin's Online Marketing Director, said: "Publishers and the book trade are failing to reach teenagers via traditional methods of marketing and have been slow to create a space on or off line where teenagers can interact with books. Penguin is taking the lead, making books a far more attractive proposition in a crowded teen market place, harnessing their creativity, getting them involved in the creative process and hopefully making them readers for life."

Launched to coincide with publication of **Nick Hornby's** first novel for teenagers, *Slam*, spinebreakers.co.uk allows teenagers to debate and interact with Penguin's rich source of publishing from contemporary titles such as Meg Rosoff's *Just in Case*, Charlie Higson's Young Bond titles, Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* to classics such as J.D Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Kerouac's *On the Road*.

The teen team began bringing the site to life in July with an intensive four-week internship at youth marketing agency Livity who Penguin have teamed up with to create spinebreakers.co.uk. The team have produced a wide variety of multi-media content including video and audio reviews, alternative book jackets and endings, soundtracks, author interviews, podcasts, blogs, short stories and much more.

"Spinebreakers.co.uk will take the user from the page to the web and vice versa," says Rafferty. "There will be a seamless collaboration between Penguin's unbeatable pool of writing, design and publishing talent and the ever-expanding legion of creative, internet savvy teenagers around the world."

Mahta Hassanzadeh, aged 18, said: "Getting teenagers involved with the running of the website is an excellent idea! It encourages more teenagers to participate in schemes where they can get hands on experience in a field they may want to go into

in the future. Also, the fact that teenagers are so heavily involved in the project could make creative writing and reading more appealing to other teens.”

“There aren't many sites where teens can share and discuss their ideas about the books that they have read, and this is a great chance to do so.” says Aijamal Bahibek Kizi, aged 15. “Sometimes you have read a book and none of your friends know about it and you are dying to talk to someone, and this is just a great place to do so. Plus you can find out a lot about other books that may be interesting to you that you don't know about.”

Note to Editors:

1. **Penguin** was established in 1935 and is one of the world's leading consumer publishing businesses. Penguin publishing comprises the following imprints: Allen Lane, Fig Tree, Hamish Hamilton, Michael Joseph, Penguin, Penguin Classics, Puffin and Viking. Penguin has offices in 15 countries and is part of the international media company Pearson. Penguin is home to the most prestigious list of authors in the UK, publishing a range of award-winning, best-selling authors including Nick Hornby, Zadie Smith, Jamie Oliver, Marian Keyes, Michael Moore, Melvin Burgess, Roald Dahl, Eric Carle, Madonna, Charlie Higson.
2. **Livity** is a specialist youth marketing group with a conscience. It specialises in responsible youth communications and has a proven record of successfully engaging with young people on key issues that affect them. As well as Penguin, clients include Dfes, Make Your Mark campaign, Red Bull, Lambeth Youth Service and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit. It's home to LIVE magazine and record label LIVE Recordings both run by young people and a traditional marketing division running public and private sector campaigns.
3. One thousand teenagers aged 13 to 17 years were surveyed in Penguin's poll on teenage reading habits.
4. **Nick Hornby's** first novel for teenagers *Slam* features 16-year-old skateboarding obsessed Sam whose world flips upside down when his girlfriend Alicia becomes pregnant. Nick Hornby is the internationally bestselling author of *Fever Pitch*, *About a Boy* and *High Fidelity*.