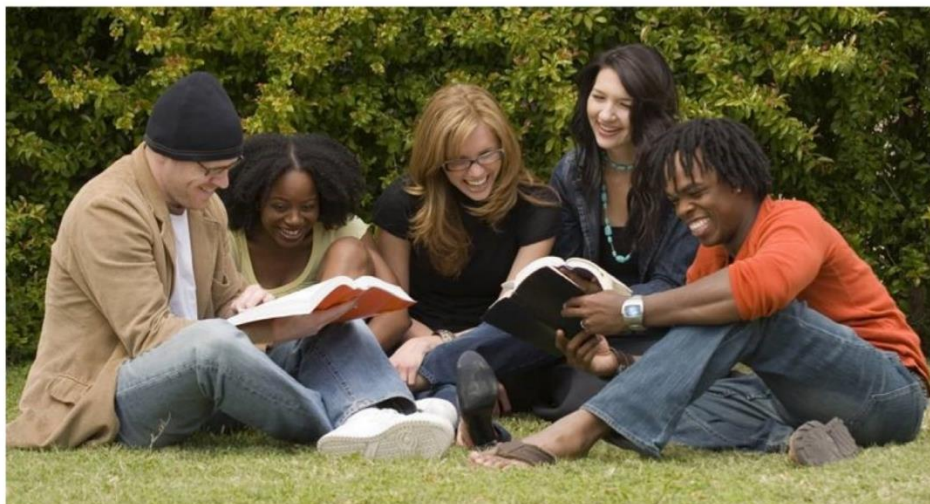




Kent **Libraries**

Reading Groups Toolkit



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Getting started

Reading groups are a great way to meet new people and stimulate your mind. Reading groups can take place in person or virtually, where people get together online. Reading group members can choose to read printed or digital books.

First of all, you may wish to see whether there are existing reading groups available in your area.

- Many Kent Libraries run reading groups, see [reading groups](#)
Libraries can also provide information about groups taking place locally
- You can also search our [database of clubs and societies](#) for more reading groups
- The [Book Club Hub](#) website, run by The Reading Agency, has lots of useful information
- Bookshops may run reading groups or be able to tell you about those available locally
- You may also be interested in the [Kent Libraries Bookchat Facebook group](#), which provides a space for readers to come together to chat about books and reading. It does not focus on reading a particular book and discussing it; but is a place to recommend books, ask for ideas and share anything book and reading related.

Setting up a reading group

If you decide that you would like to set up your own reading group, here are some suggestions to get going:

Finding members

You could begin by asking friends, colleagues and neighbours to join you.

You could also advertise for members by displaying a poster in your local library, bookshop, café or on a community notice board. Social media is good for reaching out to people too.

You can decide whether you wish to meet in person or virtually.

In person reading groups

Numbers

Most reading groups have between 6 and 10 members. This means that there is a range of opinions, but gives everyone the opportunity to take part. More than 15 members can be harder to manage. The choice of books from Kent Libraries for groups larger than 10 may be limited.

Where to meet

When deciding on a venue, think about finding somewhere accessible and relaxing for all members. Some groups meet in libraries, and in Kent we encourage library-based reading groups. Other venues include bookshops, village halls, pubs or cafés. Many groups meet in members' homes. If you choose this option, it's a good idea to take turns so that the task of hosting is shared.

When to meet

Members' availability will determine whether you meet in the daytime or the evening, on a weekday or at the weekend. Once you get everyone together for an initial meeting, you can discuss when and where you are going to meet in the future.

Monthly meetings usually work well, as there is enough time to read your selected book between meetings, but you get together often enough for everyone to feel involved.

Reading group meetings usually last around 60 to 90 minutes.

You can decide whether you wish to have refreshments at your meetings. That works well in a pub or café. If you meet in members' homes or community venues, you can share providing refreshments either by having a rota or all contributing.

Virtual reading groups

If it is difficult for group members to meet up in person, or if you prefer, you could set up a virtual or online reading group.

A virtual reading group allows you to include a large number of people, so it is helpful to focus on what you wish to gain from your group. If discussing a particular book, it works best to keep the numbers reasonably small and to "meet" at a certain time. As for groups that meet in person, around 10 members works well. If the aim is to share ideas about what to read and have a more general discussion, then a larger group can work well, with people opting in and out.

How to meet virtually

Group video calls

These can help recreate the feeling of a group where people meet in person, and you can see your fellow group members. You will need a Wi-Fi or Internet connection to use any of the following methods of staying in touch:

- [Zoom](#) – online video/audio chat which is easy to use. Sign up, set up a 'meeting' and share the link with the rest of your group to join in. There is a limit of 40 minutes when using the free account option, but you can log back in after that to resume the meeting. See the [Zoomettes Guide to ZOOM](#) and watch the [‘How to use ZOOM’ film here](#)
- [Facebook messenger](#) video or phone chat, which can be used for groups
- [WhatsApp video](#) and phone calls. You will need to create a WhatsApp group with at least one other participant, then you can 'Invite to Group via link' for people to join

which is helpful if you are worried about data protection. To start a group call click on the icon

- [Google Hangouts](#) online video/audio chat for people who have Gmail or Google accounts
- [Jitsi](#) free video conferencing service

Forum discussions

Using online groups means that members can share their thoughts as they have them more easily by posting online. You can still arrange a time for most of the discussion to take place, but the conversation can be more open over a longer period of time. This can also work well for larger groups, or groups that are completely open for anyone to join.

- [Facebook group](#) – make the group either public for anyone to join, or private so people have to request to join. Facebook Live allows you to video yourself - log into Facebook and in your closed Facebook group click on Live Video in your create post options
- A [WhatsApp](#) group also enables group members to keep in touch and share thoughts.
- [Goodreads groups](#) let you create different discussion topics for each book you're reading.

Running a reading group

Coordinating the group

You will need to decide who is going to coordinate your group. This involves taking members' details (e.g. addresses/ e-mail addresses/ phone numbers/ social media information) so that you can all keep in touch with each other.

For groups borrowing printed books from Kent Libraries, the coordinator will also

- Take care of the reading group library ticket
- Place requests for library books (including those in alternative formats such as large print, if needed)
- Collect the books from the library and distribute them to group members
- Collect payment for any lost or damaged books

You may wish to draw up an agreement with guidelines for your group, such as giving everyone an opportunity to talk and defining acceptable behaviour. It is also helpful to think about how much time you wish to spend on socialising and non-book talk.

Leading your group meetings

You will also need to decide who will lead your meetings. It usually works well if everyone takes a turn at this. It could be that the person who has suggested a title leads the discussion about it, or the person hosting the meeting.

It is helpful for the meeting to have some structure, and the leader can do some initial preparation to get the conversation started. Try to give everyone the opportunity to contribute if they want to, but avoid putting anyone on the spot if they prefer to be a listener.

You may have to deal with someone who wants to dominate the discussion. Round the table questions are a good way of getting everyone involved. There will often be different opinions about a book, and disagreement can make things more interesting. Do remember that everyone's opinion is valid and should be treated with respect.

Some suggestions for discussion:

- Ask whoever chose the book to introduce it (briefly!) and say why they chose it
- Ask people why they liked the book, or didn't like it
- Consider the themes, characters, plot, style
- Did the book deal with any issues?
- Find out about the author from their website
- Has anyone read other titles by the same author? How do they compare?
- Look at reviews

You could also think about introducing some additional activities such as book related quizzes or viewing films based on books.

Choosing what to read

You can choose books by taking turns, having a lucky dip or voting.

You can decide to all read the same title (as most book groups do), read different books and compare them or discuss books and reading in general.

You may wish to focus on specific genres or read a variety of books.

You can reserve copies of each title from Kent Libraries with a reading group ticket (your local library can set this up for you).

Check availability of titles on the [public library catalogue](#).

It is a good idea to have a few options from the group or chooser in case there are not enough copies or there is high demand. There is likely to be a waiting list for newly released best sellers, so please wait a while to request these. Reserving a month in advance should be enough time to ensure copies are available if most are on the shelf or on a three week loan with no waiting list. If there are different editions (paperback / hardback) spread the reservations across these.

Log in to the library catalogue to reserve items and keep track of your loans using your reading group card number and PIN.

See page 11 for how to reserve books for your reading group.

There is a huge variety of titles available for multiple copy reservation and we aim to maintain at least ten copies of popular reading group titles and classics, but occasionally we may not hold any or enough of a title.

If you would like us to consider purchasing multiple copies of a title for the library, use the *Suggest a purchase* link in the *Can't Find It?* section on the home page of the catalogue. In request notes please enter the number of copies you require. There is a charge per title suggested (not per copy).

Sources of information

Library staff will be able to help with book suggestions and recommendations.

General

- [Book Club Hub](#)
Advice, resources and reviews from The Reading Agency
- [The Reading Club](#)
Advice on setting up and running a book club
- [The Bookseller](#)
Magazine for the publishing industry available in print and through the website – some content is available without a subscription

Reading guides

- [Reading group guides](#)
Discussion guides for a wide range of books which can be searched by author, title and genre
- [BookBrowse](#)
You can search for books by genre, setting, time period and theme. Also includes listings of new titles and reading group guides
- Publishers' book guides, for example:
[Random House Readers Circle](#)
[Harper Library Book Club](#)

Media book clubs

- [BBC Between the covers](#)
- [WH Smith Book Club with Richard and Judy](#)
- [BBC Radio 2 Book Club](#)
- [BBC Radio 4 Bookclub](#)
- [BBC World Service Book Club](#)

Literary Prizes

[Waterstones](#) lists some of the major prizes. For example:

- [The Booker Prizes](#)
- [The Women's Prize for Fiction](#)

Book recommendation websites

- [Goodreads](#)
Offers personalised book recommendations and a strong social element. You can organise your own virtual library, create a wish list and find out what your friends, or other members of the community, are reading and reviewing. The site comes with a Facebook app, and is linked to Twitter.
- [Whichbook](#)
Choose books based on combinations of different factors to match your interests or mood. There are sliders which you can move *happy* to *sad* or from *conventional* to *unusual*, for example. Whichbook then generates a list of matches. You can also choose books by character, plot and setting, and there are lists such as *Comfort zone* and *weird and wonderful*.
- [LoveReading](#)
Experts from the world of books and publishing select and review books in a range of categories – fiction, non-fiction, children's books and audio books, each arranged in sub-categories such as action adventure/spy, historical fiction and relationship stories for fiction. There is also a blog and a podcast.
- [What should I read next?](#)
This site provides suggestions of what to read next based on a title that you have enjoyed. You can also browse the results by subject.
- [Fantastic fiction](#)
This provides bibliographies for over 40,000 authors and you can search by author, book or series. It highlights new authors and books, as well as those about to be published. You can also follow your favourite authors.
- [Bookish](#)
Presented by NetGalley (which helps publishers and authors promote digital review copies to book advocates and industry professionals), this site offers thematic lists, blogs and features.
- [The Bookbag](#)
Reviews of new releases and old favourites, including children's books. Plus author interviews, top tens and recommendations.
- [Jellybooks](#)
This provides free e-books in exchange for receiving reading data such as when you read and your reading style.
- [Book riot](#)
A blog featuring book-related news, reviews, commentary, advice and information.

- [Book club forum](#)
Book discussion forum.
- [LitLovers](#)
For people who like reading. There is guidance for reading groups, book reviews and over 3,000 reading guides, literary games and ice breakers.
- [Library thing](#)
A cataloguing and social networking site.
- [Read on](#)
An app developed by London Libraries which is about building reading habits in the style of Couch to 5k. You can create reading plans, take part in reading challenges and interactive quizzes, and discover reading recommendations.
- [StoryGraph](#)
This helps you track your reading and choose your next book based on your mood and your favourite topics and themes.
- [The global network of discovery \(GNOD\)](#)
This provides a different approach as it is an experimental site using artificial intelligence. It is a self-learning system which asks you about things you like so that it can suggest new things. The literature map is strangely compelling – type in the name of an author you like and it produces a map of other writers recommended by people who like the same author. The site also covers music, film, art and products.
- [Tasteditive](#)
A recommendation engine that helps you explore your taste in books, as well as film, music and television. You can set up a taste profile and find and follow other people with shared interests.
- [Free book notes](#)
An aggregation of study guides and summaries from a range of content providers.

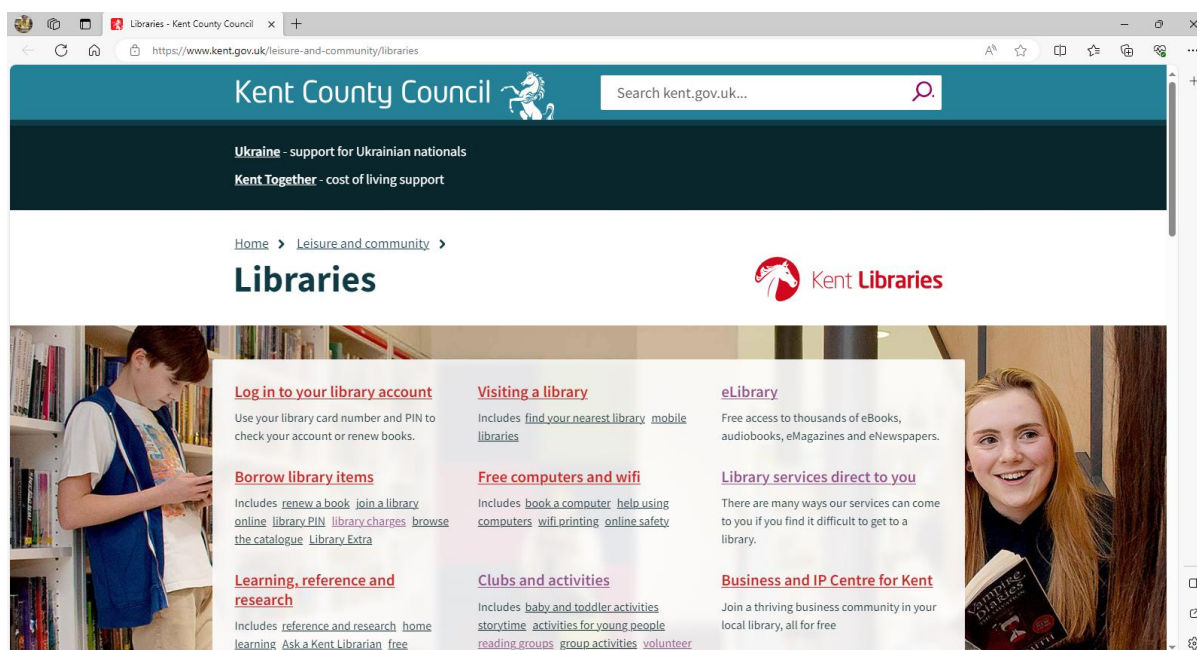
Children's book recommendation websites

- [BookTrust](#)
BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. The website features reviews of new books, booklists, a book finder and reading tips.
- [LoveReading4kids](#)
For children and teenagers, this provides book lists by genre and age. There is also information on book awards and recommendations for people with dyslexia and reluctant readers.

- [Epic Reads](#)
Book lists and reviews for teen and young adult titles. The focus is often on American books.
- [Children's Book Sequels](#)
This lets you search for other titles in series of children's books and gives the order of titles. It can be searched by series or author.

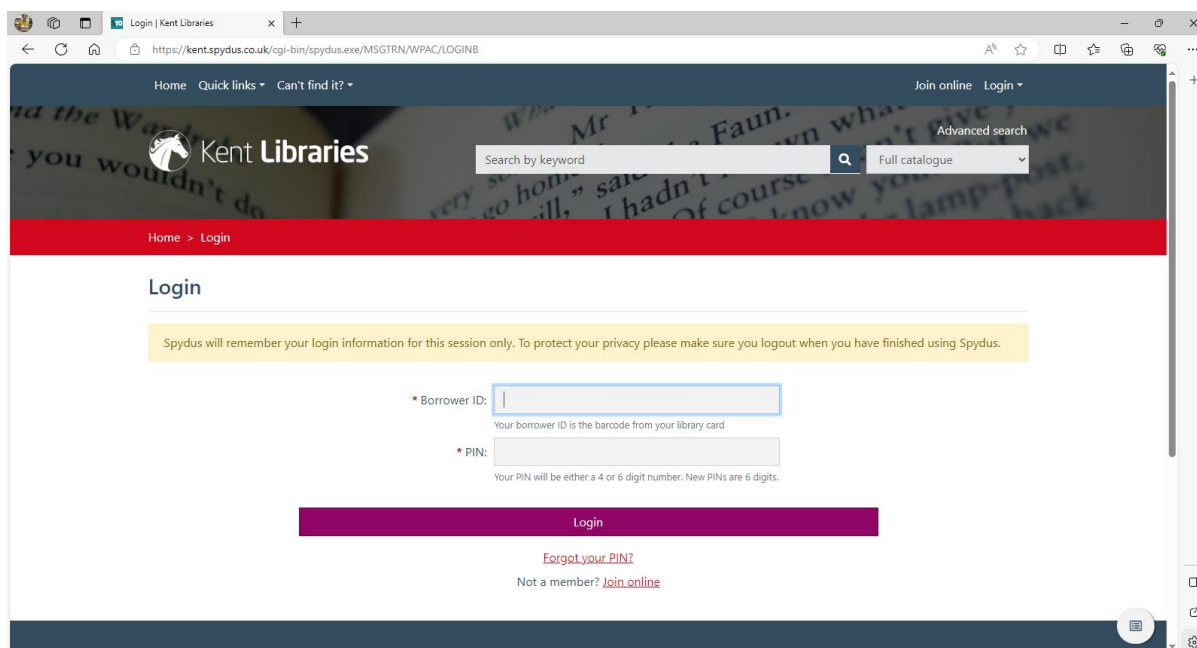
How to place a reservation

1. Find the [libraries web page](#)

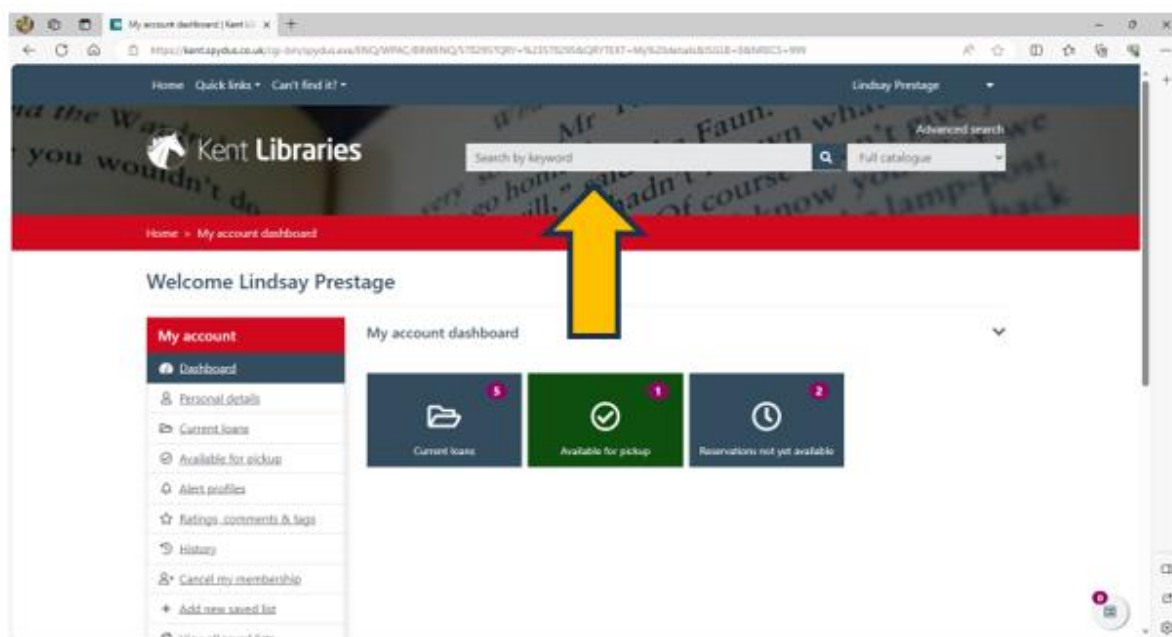


2. Log in using your library card and PIN

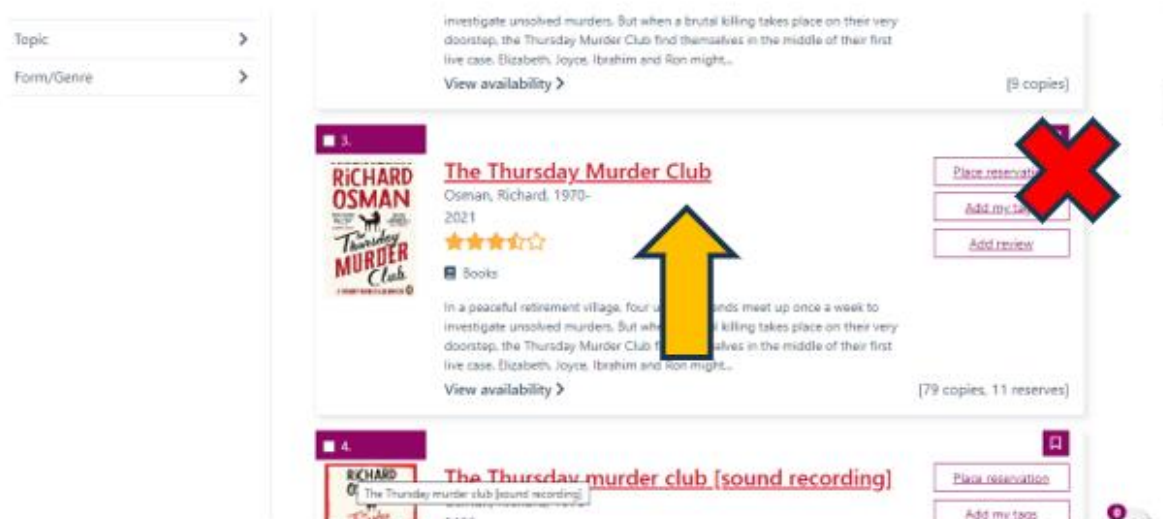
Click on log in to your library account in the top left corner



3. Use the search bar to find the book you would like to reserve



- Click on the title you wish to reserve. To reserve multiple copies of the book DO NOT click on Place reservation before clicking on the title



- To place your reservation, click place reservation. You will be able to see how many copies of the title we have and how many are already reserved



6. Here you can:

- a) Select the location for pick up (this should already be set to your preferred library)
- b) Use the drop down to select the number of copies (if you have more people in your group than copies available, select the amount you can here and then go back to the search and find another edition of the same title and order the rest)
- c) In notes it is helpful to add your group name to help staff when allocating to the collection shelf
- d) Suspending – you can use this if you are reserving books for the future. If you suspend the reservation the system will not start to reserve until that date, so for example book required in March can be set to be found starting in February)

The screenshot shows the 'Place reservation' form. At the top is a red breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Back to full display > Place reservation'. Below this is the title 'Place reservation'. The form has several sections: 'Title to reserve' with a text input containing '1. The Thursday Murder Club'; 'Pickup location' with a dropdown menu showing 'Maldstone - Kent History & Library Centre (Kent Libraries & Archives)' and a 'Change location' button; 'Items to reserve' with a dropdown menu showing 'Any item held at Kent Libraries & Archives'; 'Number of copies required' with a dropdown menu showing '1'; 'Suspend until' with a date input field showing 'dd/mm/yyyy'; 'Not required after' with a dropdown menu showing '12 months'; and 'Notes' with a large text area. At the bottom, it says 'Available items: Kent Libraries & Archives - Reservable items 78, available 24'. Four yellow arrows with labels a, b, c, and d point to specific parts of the form: 'a' points to the 'Change location' button, 'b' points to the 'Items to reserve' dropdown menu, 'c' points to the 'Notes' text area, and 'd' points to the 'Suspend until' date input field.

There is a huge variety of titles available for multiple copy reservation and we aim to maintain at least ten copies of popular reading group titles and classics, but occasionally we may not hold any or enough of a title.

If you would like us to consider purchasing multiple copies of a title for the library, use the *Suggest a purchase* link in the *Can't Find It?* section on the home page of the catalogue. In request notes please enter the number of copies you require. There is a charge per title suggested (not per copy).

Kent Libraries also has a great selection of eBooks and eAudiobooks. Individuals can borrow up to 10 eBooks and eAudiobooks at a time.

To see which eBooks and eAudiobooks are available you can browse the [OverDrive library](#) without downloading anything or signing in.

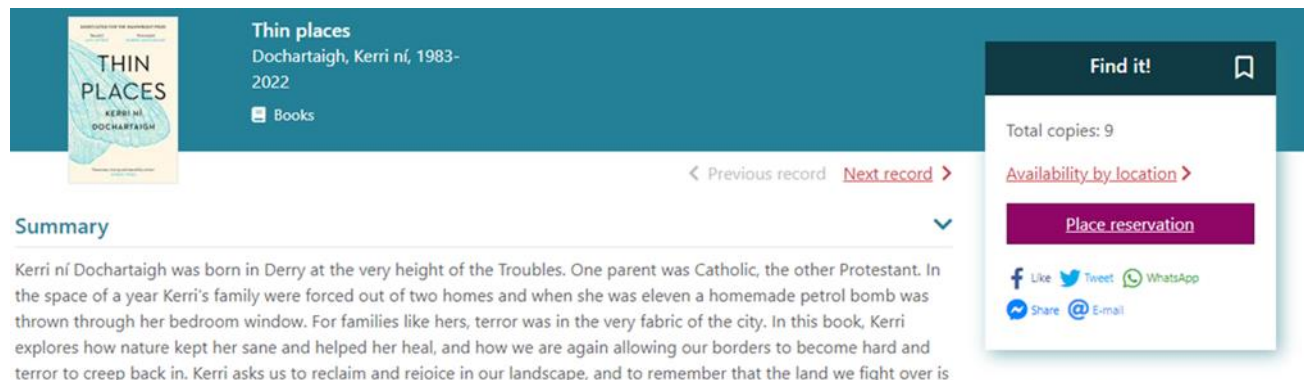
To borrow eBooks and eAudiobooks you need to be a library member, and you will need your library card number and PIN. You can join at your local library or [online](#)

To find out more about eBooks and eAudiobooks, read the [getting started guide](#) on the OverDrive website. There is a guide for using OverDrive on different devices, and a link to the software you need to download. Alternatively, the Libby app makes it even easier to borrow eBooks and eAudiobooks.

You can add book reviews to our online catalogue

To leave a review:

1. Find the title on the [online catalogue](#)




The screenshot shows the online catalogue entry for the book 'Thin places' by Kerri ní Dochartaigh. The book cover is displayed on the left. The title 'Thin places' and author 'Dochartaigh, Kerri ní, 1983-2022' are shown. A 'Books' icon is present. Navigation links for 'Previous record' and 'Next record' are visible. A 'Summary' section is expanded, showing a paragraph about the book. A 'Find it!' sidebar on the right shows 'Total copies: 9', 'Availability by location', a 'Place reservation' button, and social media sharing options (Like, Tweet, WhatsApp, Share, E-mail).

Thin places
Dochartaigh, Kerri ní, 1983-2022
Books

< Previous record [Next record](#) >

Summary ▼




Kerri ní Dochartaigh was born in Derry at the very height of the Troubles. One parent was Catholic, the other Protestant. In the space of a year Kerri's family were forced out of two homes and when she was eleven a homemade petrol bomb was thrown through her bedroom window. For families like hers, terror was in the very fabric of the city. In this book, Kerri explores how nature kept her sane and helped her heal, and how we are again allowing our borders to become hard and terror to creep back in. Kerri asks us to reclaim and rejoice in our landscape, and to remember that the land we fight over is



Find it! 

Total copies: 9

[Availability by location](#) >

[Place reservation](#)

 Like  Tweet  WhatsApp

 Share  E-mail

2. Click on 'Add your review' which is towards the bottom on the catalogue page

Reviews ▼

No reviews available as yet

[Add a review](#)

3. Log into your account
4. Add your review

Record of books on loan

Book group name _____

Title _____

Author _____

Date books given out _____

Reader's name	Book barcode	Date returned