

# Scottish Readers Remember Reading

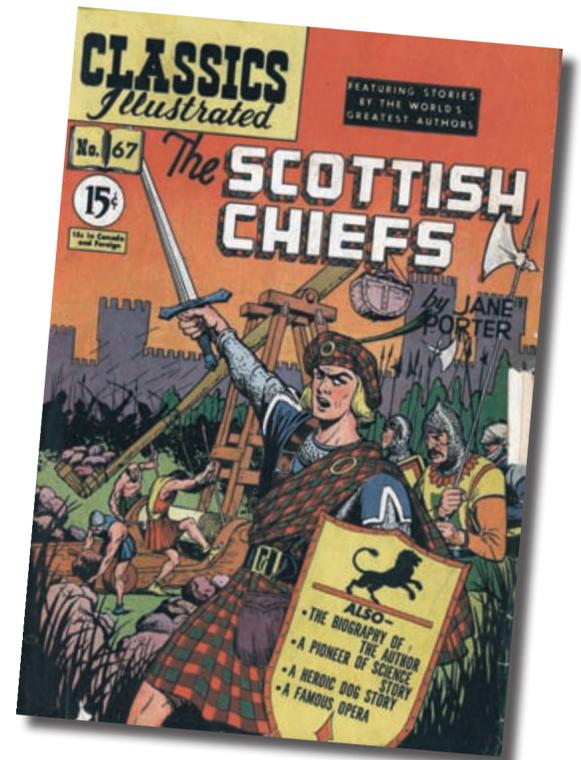


*It's been the best part o' ma life – reading.*  
Janet

**R**eaders bring books to life. Books cannot exist without them – or if they do, it's only as lumps of paper with markings in ink. The words on the page gain meaning when readers apply their intellect and their imagination to them. Reading can be a very intimate experience, engaging and absorbing us unlike other forms of media.

Yet the activity of reading can be such an ordinary, everyday part of life, we may only reflect upon it occasionally. We lose awareness of the skill exercised in reading a book yet learning to read is actually one of the hardest things we ever do.

Compulsory education resulted from the Education Acts at the end of the nineteenth century. Publishers responded to the increase in the literate population by producing a great number of popular magazines, newspapers, and pocket novels. Genre fiction was very popular and imprints were formed which concentrated on just one type of writing, crime, romance or adventure. Often the imprint was more recognisable than the author; this was certainly the case with the later development of paperbacks.



While these books were sold cheaply and were affordable to most, the network of public libraries that grew in the first half of the twentieth century to serve all areas of Scotland meant that no one needed to buy the books they read.

Although we learn to read books, newspapers and magazines, types of onscreen text are now more likely to be the major forms upon which we exercise our skill. More books are being sold than ever before but fewer people are reading them. This means that those who do read books do so with an intensity and a passion that are part and parcel of the reading process.

