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## *The KU Big Read – 2017 Shortlist*

Since 2015, Kingston University has given a book to every undergraduate and masters student about to join us as part of the KU Big Read campaign, which promotes student involvement and ensures new arrivals feel welcome before they get here.

After the success of KU Big Read 2016, more than \_\_\_ titles were suggested for this year's reading pleasure, by Kingston University staff and students who took part in last year's campaign.

**We are now delighted to announce the final shortlist for 2017.**

Title	Author	Publisher
My Name is Leon	Kit de Waal	Viking (Penguin)
The Brilliant and the Forever	Kevin MacNeil	Polygonn (indep)
Radio Sunrise	Anietie Isong	Jacaranda (indep)
The Power	Naomi Alderman	Viking (Penguin)
The Elephant and the Bee	Jess de Boer	Jacaranda (indep)
The Penguin Lessons	Tom Michell	Penguin

When we began the KU Big Read campaign, we observed similar projects in the US which have shown that creating a community through shared reading *before* students arrive helps them feel welcome and settle in quickly. Whereas a few universities in the UK have experimented with reading schemes linked to specific types of books (e.g. prize winners) and within particular faculties, *Kingston University is the first in the UK to establish and analyse a scheme on such a wide scale, and to involve the entire University community as well as inviting the wider local community to participate.*

### **What happens next?**

The shortlist will now be read by a selection panel drawn from students and staff from across the University. You can also join in by borrowing the books from each of the campus libraries. The chosen book will then be produced and sent to all those scheduled to join us, with current staff and students invited to help themselves to a free copy from various locations across our five campuses. Stock will be available in time to be taken away on holiday and discussed with wider family and friends. A number of related events will be made available from September onwards, including author talks to the students, staff and wider community.

### **How do you choose the shortlist?**

We began by researching attitudes to such a scheme within the student community, and finding a very positive response went ahead, choosing Nick Hornby's *About a Boy* as our first KU Big Read in 2015. The response from students and staff vastly exceeded expectations – the book had to be reprinted twice and was used in many ways we had not anticipated. Last year's title – *The Humans* by Matt Haig – was chosen through a carefully developed algorithm which provided a shortlist of six

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titles, which were then read and discussed by a varied selection panel from all corners of the University. It proved another phenomenal success, with a total print run of 28,000 copies, a great turnout to each of the events and several external partners such as Edinburgh Napier University coming on board.

There were several reasons why basing the selection of the shortlist on an algorithm appealed to us. With so many suggestions made, there was insufficient time for a panel to read the entire list before making a choice in April. As a university we were of course keen to experiment with, and evaluate new methods of working and we collaborated extensively with our students, with our University IT department and a local data analyst and economist Jackie Steinitz to produce an algorithm which takes into consideration all of the factors that our own students and staff consider important in a Big Read.

This methodology is new to book selection panels and has attracted interest from across the university – as well from the local borough and libraries.

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