



Outside the Book

The Book

Josie Long:

Shaper of minds, springboard to revolution, substitute table leg; the book's an invention we can all be truly proud of. But what exactly is a book?

Well let's start with what it's not. It's not a text, which is a word for any kind of writing, whether it's in a book, a manuscript or badly spelt aggression in an online comments section.

Then there's the *idea* of a book, which can imply all sorts of things: like the writer's authority and the book's commercial viability.

Before books, scrolls were the big reading-gizmo. They were storable *and* portable, making them far superior to Roman wax tablets or Ancient China's carved bone.

But you still had to *scroll* all the way through to find what you wanted. The great thing about a book is you can just flick straight through to the juiciest bit.

And what with electronically searchable text, it's become *even easier* to gain an unrounded knowledge of your chosen subject.

So, will the book go the way of the scroll or do we love our dusty paperbacks too much for that?