

Context

Currently I am the English Coordinator/Reading Champion at Moorlands Primary Academy in Norfolk. The school has had a turbulent few years (high turnover of staff, disappointing KS2 SATs results) and is looking to rebuild. Creating a genuine reading culture is at the centre of our plans.



Research inspiration and rationale

The Reading Environment by Aidan Chambers (1991) and the *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers* research project by Teresa Cremin et al (2014) highlight that spontaneous and informal book talk ('inside-text talk') is one of the key factors needed to create a classroom Reading for Pleasure culture. We sought to build on this initial argument and later research.

Aims

- To create a classroom culture which ensures that 'inside-text talk' takes place regularly in the classroom.
- To improve children's knowledge of books and authors.
- To use a range of strategies to involve all children and adults when talking about books in class.



Outline

Building up to spontaneous 'inside-text talk' with a class can take several months of scaffolding and modelling. In its early stages, it will need to be led by the teacher.

There are several simple ways to help initiate 'inside-text talk', which include:

- Bring in a book you're reading at home and talk about it. Compare it to other books you've read. Ask them if there's anything they would like to know about it.
- Leave new books in prominent places around the classroom, including on your desk.
- Add a short book review to a book by putting a sticky note on the front cover. Give it to a child who you think will enjoy it.

- Read the blurb or first page of a book and ask the children what they think. Don't ask about vocabulary or for predictions, just if they think they'd enjoy it and why.
- Share with the children when you visit a library, a bookshop or discover a new author.
- Talk about books at different times during the day, for example, when getting changed for PE, as they line-up for assembly, when they first walk in, etc.
- Ask the children for recommendations on what you could read next and then actually (try and) read their suggestions and tell them what you think.
- Ask your headteacher, secretary, etc, what they're reading when they visit the classroom.



- Share a book trailer on YouTube, an exciting Tweet from a writer or a clip from a radio/TV interview about children's books.
- Allow the children to work with partners and in groups of four and five when introducing the concept, to allow the less confident children to take part.

As the year goes on and the children get used to talking about books, it will become more child initiated and spontaneous.



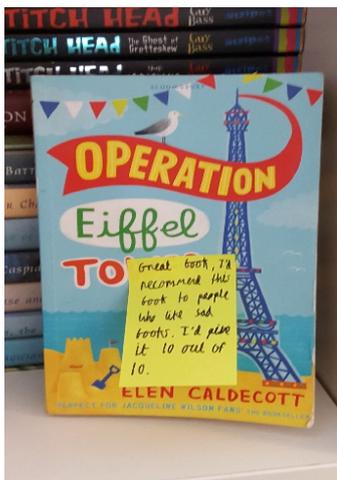
'Inside-text talk' is now an established part of our classroom routine. Rarely a

day goes by when we don't stop for five minutes to talk about reading.

We sometimes have a slightly longer session if we have a 'major event' to talk about, for example, a new Children's Laureate or the winner of a book prize being announced, a favourite author brings out a new book, etc.

Impact

- Class attitude to reading has been transformed over the past year and 'inside-text talk' has been integral to this.
 - Very positive feedback from parents- children going home enthusiastic about reading and wanting to talk about it with their family.
 - Knowledge of books and authors has improved greatly- children generally able to name 15+ authors and poets, plus many books from a variety of genres.
 - Can also compare authors and make suggestions of similar authors that their peers may enjoy.
 - 'Quality' of discussion has improved- children able to give reasons why they enjoyed a book, recommended an author, etc



- The teacher's role has reduced noticeably in recent months as the discussion has become more spontaneous. Main roles now are to ensure that all children have an opportunity to speak and to share knowledge and opinions of new books and authors.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The development of 'inside-text talk' has made a real difference, so this next year I'll be modelling some of the sessions to other members of staff (or possibly recording a session on video to share in a staff meeting).



Some teachers may be concerned about the lack of structure and clear outcomes, so I will reinforce how important the spontaneous aspect of it is.



It is vitally important for SLT and other staff to understand the value of 'just talking about books'.