

### Context

I teach at Bannerman Road Community Academy and Children's Centre a 1 ½ form entry (soon to be 2 form) inner-city primary school in Easton, Bristol. Our school is very diverse with over 80% of children speaking English as an additional language and over 30 languages spoken across the school. We have a high proportion of Pupil Premium and above average SEN. I am currently teaching Year 3/4. The Desert Island Books activity was undertaken with my class of 28 children on a weekly basis over the period of a term.



### Research inspiration and rationale

Having read the book on the TaRs research (Cremin et al, 2014), I realised that in my classroom there were not many opportunities for children to discuss texts informally with each other and that their own reading books which they can (and some do) take home to read, were not being shared within the class. I felt that in order to create more of a reading community within the classroom I needed to ensure that there was time in our busy timetable for children to informally discuss books that they have enjoyed and that they would recommend to others. Also, I hoped that this would provide insight into what my children were reading outside of school.

### Aims

- to provide opportunities for children to informally discuss texts they have enjoyed
- to share recommendations in the reading environment in order to create more of a reading community

### Outline

Once a week children in groups (approx. 5 per group) were invited to discuss their favourite books. Each child was asked to share their favoured Desert Island Book with their group and explain what they thought of it, why they had chosen it and what it was that had been enjoyable about reading it.

These discussions were not structured by specific turn taking or questions. The children were encouraged to develop their own discussions, and these included many tangential conversations, comparisons to other texts and the contexts they were reading it in. During this time, adults circulated the groups to support children as necessary and join in the discussions. They shared their experiences of known texts and showed their own personal favourites, but tried not to dominate the discussion.

At the end of the discussions, two children's names were picked at random to share their Desert Island Book with the class and draw the cover of their book and write the title on a small card book printout. This was then added to our 'Desert Island Books' display.



### Impact

Children enjoyed discussing favourite books with their peers, the discussions were lively and the children were engaged. The display of books in the book corner led some children to want to read these texts and enabled children to interact with the reading environment. The children were also very eager to share their recommendations on the display. It also provided a valuable insight for me as a teacher into different children's reading experiences.

Some children had a very clear understanding and memory of the books they had read and enjoyed, whereas others were unable to recall their favourite books and would often choose the title of any book they could see. Some children were able to clearly explain why they had chosen a specific text e.g. "I chose *The Twits* because the pranks are really funny". Other children found this harder as they either could not remember any of the specific books they had read or could not articulate why they enjoyed it.

However, as this has become a more regular activity, I have been able to identify specific children to support by retrieving the books they have read from the book corner with them to aid their discussions and ensuring that I support them during the activity. The children also began to anticipate our Desert Island Books discussion and were thinking about which book they would choose in advance. This activity has had a positive impact on my class's attitudes towards reading for pleasure as it provided a platform for them to discuss the books they have been reading and share their recommendations within our emerging community of readers.

### **Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice**

The TaRs research impacted upon my practice because it made it clear to me that the children in my class needed time and space to share their experiences of books with each other in order to begin to create a reading community where all voices were heard and valued. The research also highlighted the need for interaction within the reading environment and that was something I felt had been lacking within my classroom. The Desert Island Books activity was intended to respond to these key issues and has begun to make me appreciate the difference time and space to talk about known texts can make to young readers.