

## Context

I teach in a 5-form entry infant school, Altmere Infant School, that is federated to a junior school and forms part of the Altmere and Lathom Federation in East Ham, London. My school is privileged enough to have a Children's Centre on site which is visited by a wide range of the community daily.

I am the Reading Leader for the infant part of the Federation.



## Research inspiration and rationale

Developing Reciprocal Reading in my school has been a priority since we joined the Newham Reading Guarantee Reciprocal Reading Project. The aim of this work in Newham was to develop expertise in the components of comprehension and the wider aspects of reading and to create effective 'Reading Champions' in the borough. This project chimes very well with the TaRs research findings on the significance of informal book talk which helps develop children's reading for pleasure. Although the former focuses on fostering comprehension and the latter on building communities of engaged readers, I was inspired to see how they are complementary and connected.



## Aims

My aims for Reciprocal Reading were to introduce it in to the Infant part of the Federation in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 where children would have the opportunity to further develop their comprehension skills. I aimed to develop a system where teachers would only use picture books or pictures/art to complete these sessions as I didn't want teachers to confuse Reciprocal Reading with guided reading, which in our Infant setting, is different.

I wanted teachers to understand the difference between guided reading and using phonic skills for getting words off a page, Reciprocal Reading to further develop children's comprehension and the value of the children's informal book talk which was fostered in Reciprocal reading and could later be nurtured through making time for conversations around texts. .

## Outline

I completed a school INSET with staff and introduced them to what Reciprocal Reading was and how it works and included detailed explanations about the different roles children could adopt;

1. The Questioner
2. The Summariser
3. The Predictor
4. The Clarifier.

I explained to staff that because we were taking a different approach using picture books and art/pictures we would only be focussing on the 'The Questioner' role as a starting point. I introduced staff to the 3 different questions types and explained these in detail;

1. Looking Question:



A looking question is a literal question. They start off as the 'easier questions' however they are the most important questions and crucial to understanding. These questions expose children who show an understanding.

2. Clue Question:



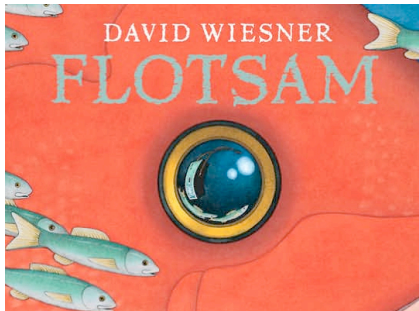
A clue question is a question that involves children finding information in the text or looking further into the picture to find evidence. These questions focus on deepening children's understanding and comprehension of what they have read or seen.

3. Thinking question:



A thinking question involves children thinking about their answer and not relying on the text or picture to provide them with an answer. These questions are inductive questions and focus on expanding children's knowledge beyond the text to deepen their understanding.

I modelled using a picture how you can use these 3 different question types using a picture from David Wiesner's Book - Flotsam.



Looking question: Are the fish all the same?



Clue question: Are all the fish real fish? How do you know?



Thinking question: How do you think the different fish feels?

I then explained to teachers I had created a flip chart with pictures on that they could use in the upcoming weeks to begin to practise planning the three different questions and shared a recording sheet where the class TA could scribe what the children were saying in the session, sharing their understanding of the pictures.

I then focused on sustaining such talk around text by encouraging informal book talk with the children, providing them with opportunities to use their developing skills as Questioners in other less formal instructional contexts. For example at the start of reading aloud or when I was sharing a book with a child or group of children during a quiet reading time or lunchtime.

Impact

Teachers have used the flipchart with the pictures I had added and began to think about and plan the 3 different questions. They have used the recording sheet to record children’s responses.



Recording sheet:

Reciprocal Reading Sheet – Planning Sheet  
Picture/Art Piece: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:	Class:	Group:
Questions:	Children's Responses:	
1. Looking Question:		
2. Clue Question:		
4. Thinking question:		

Children thoroughly enjoy these sessions and teachers have said that they feel they are getting better at setting the 3 different question types. Children are really looking deep into the picture to find meaning and understanding and teachers are very interested in the range of different answers they can get from one question, dependent on the children's interpretation of the picture.

In addition, I have noticed that when we discuss books informally- in tune with the TaRs findings about the importance of relaxed book talk , children are beginning to ask more questions. I try to hold back and watch as they look closely, allowing them time to ponder and wonder without requiring them to share their questions and puzzles.

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

Using the TaRs research has allowed me to pay attention to informal book talk alongside more formal methods such as Reciprocal Reading. The latter has introduced the staff to new texts and widened their repertoires which the TaRs research highlighted is essential in order that book conversations, the former, can take place.

Teachers have begun to look at texts or pictures closely beforehand to be able to develop good questions for children to access. They have started to have more confidence talking about texts with children, not just those they are using for reciprocal reading but other texts also. The reciprocal reading sessions alongside the informal book chats have made a difference to children's RfP. We are gradually hearing more focused questions, seeing more curiosity and close attention to picture fiction and this will surely begin to impact on both their desire to read and if they chose to read at home and at school. Children are discussing books more as they have become aware that people have different understandings of what they have read and staff are chatting about books as well as using them for formal instruction.