THE POE-TREE

This project was conducted with a year 3 class from Widnes during my final professional practice. In an attempt to encourage enthusiasm and motivation towards reading, the project ran over a ten week period in the hope that children develop their knowledge of poems, poetry books, poets and an overall love for poetry.

By Sarah Grady

Edge Hill University

"...TEACHERS WHO EXAMINED THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES OF READING WERE BETTER POSITIONED TO DEVELOP GENUINELY RECIPROCAL READING COMMUNITIES"

"BY SHARING THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES OF READING, THESE TEACHERS MADE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S DESIRE TO READ AND FREQUENCY OF READING AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL"

The Open University | Research Rich Pedagogies

RESEARCH INSPIRATION AND RATIONALE

When researching into Reading for Pleasure (RfP) and Teachers as Readers (TaRs), it became apparent that I first needed to reflect upon and share my own reading habits in order to build a sense community with my class. As a child, I was a very reluctant reader. I read at a slow pace and felt that I was not good at it. Years later I discovered that I had dyslexic tendencies which may explain both the pace of my reading and the difficulties I had absorbing information.

As a child, the only forms reading that I would partake in voluntarily was script reading, or and reading and writing poetry with my gran. Script reading came with the motivation of indulging my passion, as performing was an outcome. However, I enjoyed reading poetry because of the sense of accomplishment and completion it gave me as poems are shorter than novels.

Findings from the OU TaRs research *building communities of readers* project identified that reluctant readers developed an increase in self-confidence and perceptions of their abilities (ukla, 2008). From personal experience, my confidence was developed through poetry, and so I chose to base this project around introducing children to the world of poetry.

Open University, 2019. Reading Teachers: Teachers who read and readers who teach. Research rich pedagogies. [online] Available from: [Accessed on 27 April l2019].

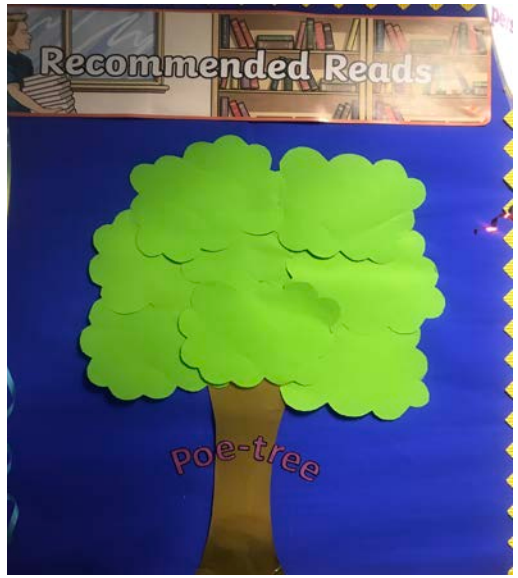
UKLA, 2008. Teachers as Readers`; building a Community of Readers Executive Summary 2007-2008. [online] Available from: [Accessed on 27 April 2019].

OUTLINE

Each day, I read a poem to the class. Having a love of poetry, I already had numerous poetry books from my childhood that I sourced for this project. Two key texts were 100 Best Poems for Children (Puffin Poetry) and Moon Juice by Kate Wakeling.

I chose the poems depending upon themes and content appropriate for this Year 3 class that varied in length and type of poem. This ensured that the children received a wide range of poetry to engage with. Once a poem had been read, the children were encouraged to discuss whether they liked or disliked the poem with their partner. Crucially, I emphasised the value of having an opinion, but also how it is important to respect those of others. By doing so, the children were encouraged to justify their opinion of the poems.

At the end of each week, a vote would be taken upon which poem was the favourite. Children were allowed two votes and the winning poem would feature on the class' Poe-tree.



AIMS:

- Increase children's knowledge of poets.
- Increase children's knowledge of types of poems.
- Encourage children to discuss their opinions of a poem and give justifications for their views.
- Children find their own poems.
- Children understand that anyone can be a poet.

IMPACT

- Over ten weeks, the Poe-tree became a success. Children would frequently ask when we were going to read 'today's' poem in excitement and anticipation of what was to come. This resulted in numerous children either going to the library to find poetry books or printing copies of poems that they wanted to be 'put in the running' for a place on the Poe-tree.
- In week 3, I decided to read the children a poem that I had written when I was their age. The children were astounded. This encouraged multiple children to begin writing their own poetry and contributing it to the poem-a-day, with some winning a place on the Poe-tree.
- It was evident that the children enjoyed listening to poems, forming opinions about them, discussing them with their peers and having the opportunities to decided what content is presented on the recommended reads wall.

IMPACT

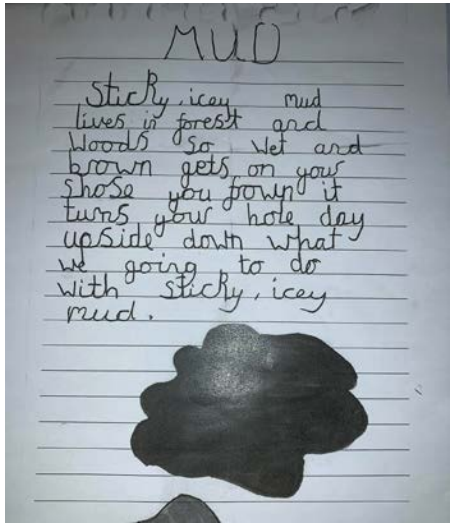
- All pupils, including reluctant readers, were a part of the process of the Poe-tree, whether this be discussing the poem, finding a poem to read or writing one, this project was accessible to all.

- The classroom walls were not the boarders of where the children's enthusiasm stopped. Some were overheard discussing a poem on the playground, others were seen to be reading poetry book during lunchtime. However, a personal highlight was when three children told me that they had added 'poetry book' to their Christmas list because they enjoy our poem-a-day at school.

- As a side note, this project also developed children's efforts with handwriting. I suggested that who tried to work on their handwriting during the week could be chosen to write the poem title and author on one of the apples presented on the Poe-tree. This motivation saw both girls and boys give consideration to their presentation in their books, which was an area for development for the school.

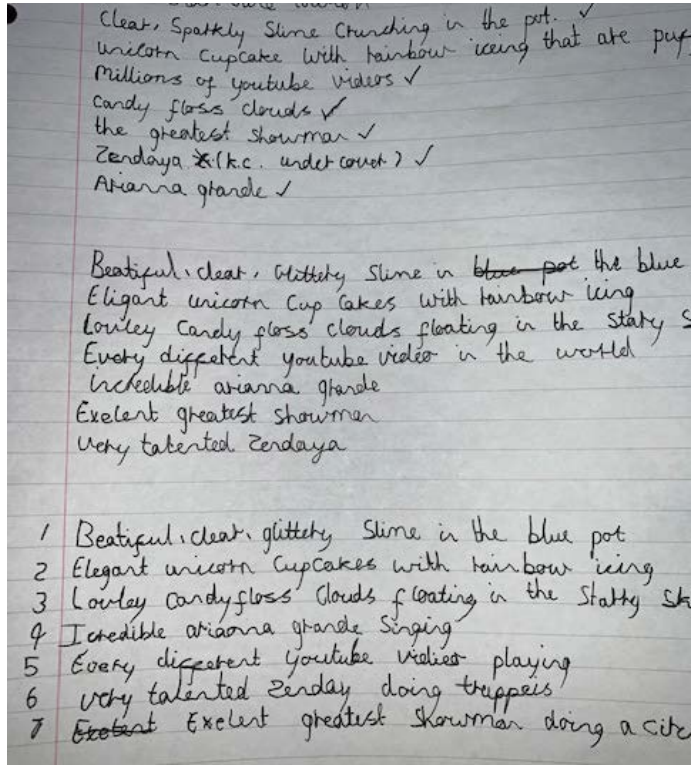
IMPACT

- Before beginning the project, I asked the children to complete questionnaires to establish their initial knowledge of poetry. These two questions went unanswered:
    - *Can you name the title of a poem?*
    - *Can you name any types of poems?*
- When asked *Do you know any poets?* five children responded: *Shakespeare*.
- When asked *Who can write poems?* 8 children responded: *Poets* and 2 children responded: *anyone*.
- By the end of the project, I asked the children the same questions as a whole class and noted down their responses.
    - *Each child could recall the title of a poem that they enjoyed listening to.*
    - *Most could remember the names of poets, whilst others named themselves.*
    - *Children could describe different types of poetry.*
- Evidently, their knowledge surrounding poetry had developed. As a result, I was asked to hold a Year 3 Poetry Club in which we further explored types of poetry and began to write our own in contribution to a school wide project, based upon Leon and the Place Between. It is hoped that this initial exploration of poetry will have formed the foundations for engagement and enjoyment to continue and grown from.



MUD

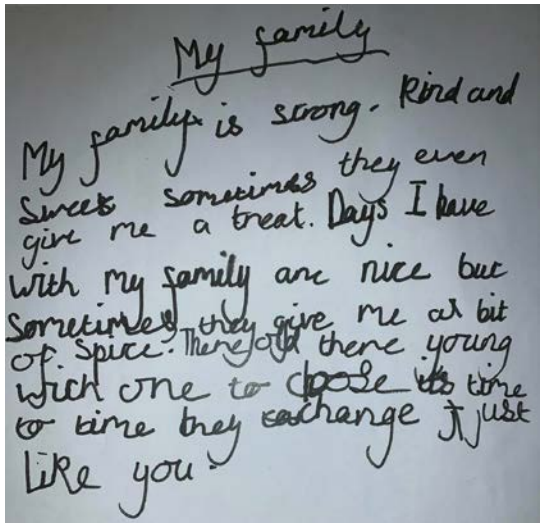
Sticky, icey mud
lives in forest and
Woods so wet and
brown gets on your
shoes you frown it
turns your hole day
upside down what
we going to do
with sticky, icey
mud.



Clear, Spatkly Slime Crunching in the pot. ✓
Unicorn Cupcake with rainbow icing that ate pup
Millions of youtube videos ✓
Candy floss clouds ✓
the greatest showman ✓
Zendaya ✓(k.c. under cover) ✓
Ariana grande ✓

Beatiful, clear, Glitterly Slime in ~~blue pot~~ the blue
Eligant unicorn Cup Cakes with rainbow icing
Lovley Candy floss clouds floating in the Starry S
Every diffarent youtube video in the world
Incredible ariana grande
Exelent greatest showman
Very talented Zendaya

1 Beatiful, clear, glitterly Slime in the blue pot
2 Elegant unicorn Cupcakes with rainbow icing
3 Lovley candyfloss clouds floating in the Starry Sk
4 Incredible ariana grande Singing
5 Every diffarent Youtube videos playing
6 Very talented Zenday doing trappeis
7 ~~Exelent~~ Exelent greatest Showman doing a cite



My family

My family is soorng. Kind and
Sweets sometimes they even
give me a treat. Days I have
with my family are nice but
sometimes they give me a bit
of spice. There all there young
with one to choose its time
to time they exchange it just
like you.

Beautiful rainbow in the blue clear sky

Elegant faries liplocing on the sparkly ground.

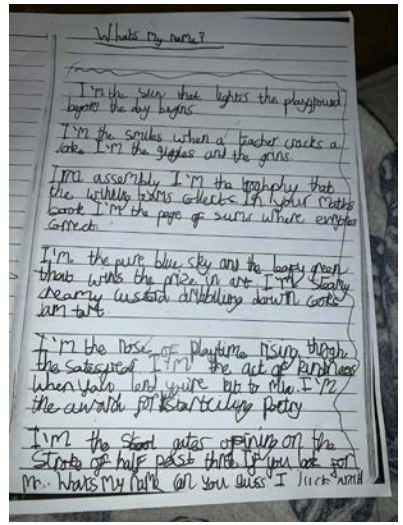
Lively unicorns prancing in the air like they dont care.

Incredible mermaids splashing the clear water up and down.

Exciting cat laghing widely why playing tag

Very talented Zandaya doing trapel brilliantly.

Enormously famas Arian Grande singing nicely and loudly



Whats My name?

I'm the bell that lights the playground
beyond the day begins

I'm the smiles when a teacher cracks a
joke I'm the giggles and the grins.

I'm assembly, I'm the trophy that
the whole team collects In your Maths
book I'm the page of sums where everything
corrects

I'm the pure blue sky and the happy green
that wins the prize in art I'm Starry
dreamy custard dribbling down cooks
arm-tats.

I'm the rose of playtime rising through
the saturday. I'm the act of kindness
when you're left you're out to Me. I'm
the award for Starcrossing poetry

I'm the steel guitar opening on the
Stroke of half past three. If you look for
Mr. Whats My name on your class I

REFLECTION

I believe this project was successful in achieving its aims of developing children's engagement with poetry. It successfully motivated children to read for pleasure, both inside and outside of school, whilst surpassing expectations by encouraging children to adjacently write for pleasure.

Cremin et al (2008) explained that children who read for pleasure have a narrow range of authors, lacking the knowledge of wider texts, poets and picture books. This project not only encouraged children to read for pleasure, but also exposed them to a variety of authors. This encouraged some to find more using library and online services.

I believe that my pre-existing knowledge of children's poetry supported the success of the project as I was able to pick appropriate examples for the poem-a-day and give children individual recommendations. This contributed to the children's initial engagement and drove their enjoyment of poetry.

This supports the concept of Teachers as Readers. If a teacher is able to obtain knowledge of relevant, appropriate literature, they can use it encourage volitional reading in the ways that I did with poetry. Sharing my experiences, knowledge and passion with the children allowed them to be aware of how reading can be a social activity and ignited a desire to discover if poetry could serve as enjoyment to them, as it does to me.

This project was extremely enjoyable for both me and the children, providing a sense of community and positive impacts upon children's reading habits. What began as a project became a part of the class' identity. The concept behind the Poe-tree is something that I intend to use throughout my career in an attempt to encourage children to read volitionally and discuss literature informally in day to day life. This will broaden the scope of authors and texts that children become aware of, but also create a community of readers within a classroom.