

## I'm starting with my next book

Eleanor Mastin

### Context

I am a student at Bishop Grosseteste University studying Primary Education with QTS. I have always enjoyed reading children's literature, however, when completing a recent teaching placement, I recognised that my repertoire of current children's authors was very limited. To inform my future teaching I thought that it would be valuable to understand the practices involved when teaching children to read for pleasure.



BISHOP  
GROSSETESTE  
UNIVERSITY

### Research inspiration and rationale

While reading the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) research, I was intrigued to find that teachers who read can have a significant impact when creating reading communities and engaging readers in the classroom. The TaRs research explores the importance of teachers' knowledge and use of children's literature in helping to foster children's reading for pleasure and emphasises the importance of reading for pleasure pedagogies in the classroom.

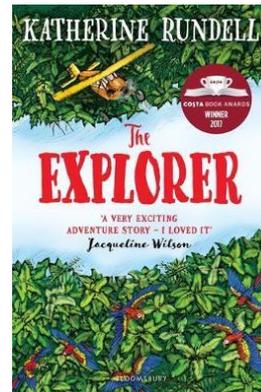
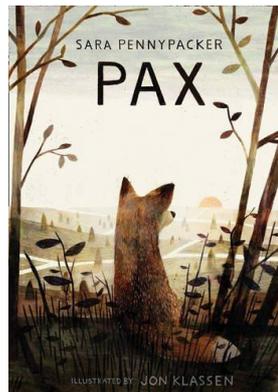
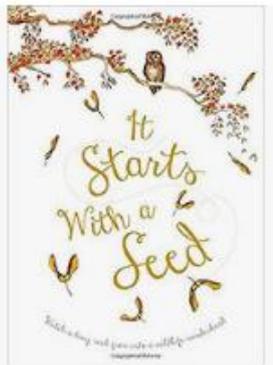
The research states, '*To motivate young readers and nurture the development of positive reader identities, a breadth of knowledge of good-quality children's literature is essential*' (Cremin et al., 2014: 50). This was something that I had very little knowledge of. As a child, I really enjoyed reading and being read to. I believe that this greatly improved my ability to read and comprehend which in turn helped me to access other areas of learning more easily. Since leaving primary school, the time I have taken to read for pleasure has been limited. This research inspired me to spend more time reading for pleasure in order to impact on my future classrooms.

### Aims

- To broaden my knowledge of contemporary children's literature.
- To develop a better understanding of children's reading practices.
- To develop a better understanding of Reading Teachers - teachers who read and readers who teach - pedagogies.

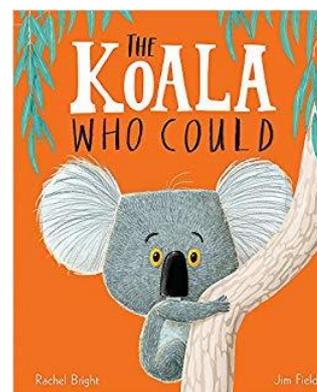
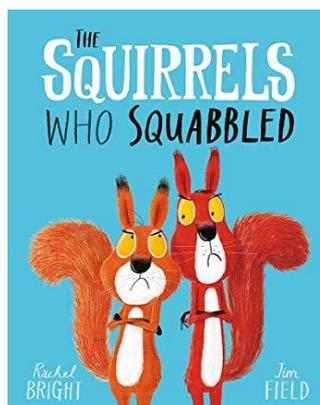
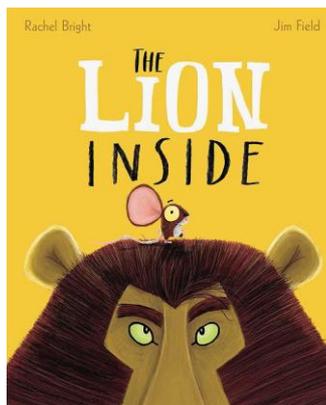
## Outline

I introduced myself to contemporary authors by researching children's book awards, for example the Blue Peter Book Awards. This provided me with an opportunity to read current children's literature and expand my repertoire of children's texts. Talking to teachers and other students has also been incredibly valuable. Being able to discuss books and share recommendations has introduced me to literature which I would have never thought of reading before undertaking this work.



Some of the children's titles I read to expand my repertoire.

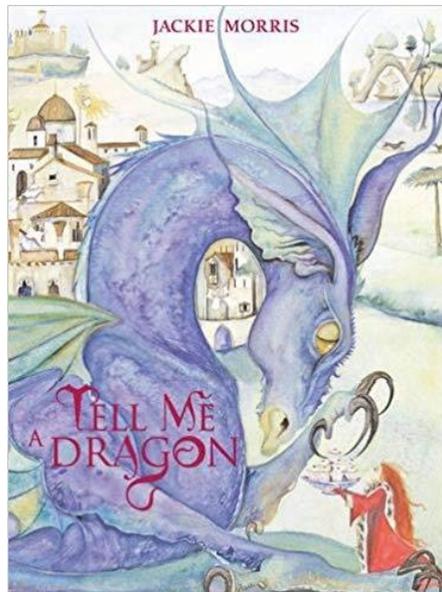
One of the valuable books I have read is *The Lion Inside* by Rachel Bright and Jim Field, along with *The Squirrels Who Squabbled* and *The Koala Who Could*. These books demonstrated to me the way in which children's fiction can be used by teachers to explore important issues with children in a non-threatening way. *The Lion Inside* supports children to understand that inside us hides both a 'mouse' and a 'lion'.



These books support children to learn about themselves and others.

During a teaching placement, I ensured that I spent time discussing reading with the children and aimed to integrate their interests and preferences in the books shared. For example, one Year 2 boy was very interested in dragons and repeatedly read *Tell Me a Dragon* by Jackie

Morris. As this was the only book on dragons in the classroom, I made an effort to find other books about dragons in other classrooms. I was also able to integrate this into my English planning; the class was visited by a dragon over the holiday and children responded by writing a letter to a 'Dragonologist'.



Children's literature to inspire writing.

The pupil was thrilled to see that there were more books on dragons for him to read; he invited his friends to the reading area where they read the books and discussed them – sharing their views. This group loved writing a letter to a real-life dragon expert and created several, well-chosen questions to ask him!

As part of my work in school, I also sought to find out from staff what they did to support reading for pleasure and how important they felt reading children's literature was for their practice.

### Impact

My knowledge of children's literature has improved significantly, with regards to both current and older texts. This has allowed me to have a better understanding of the skills needed to engage children when teaching English and the links between reading and writing. During my placement, it was clear that the children enjoyed reading and being read to and I took every opportunity to engage in book talk with my class. I think my growing knowledge of children's literature supported this talk and my ability to choose books to share aloud. Every day the children would ask "What are you going to read today Miss?" and, "Please can I read to the class today?" This showed me that the children clearly saw me as a reader and a teacher who loved books, and it has helped me to

understand the importance of reading aloud and engaging in informal book talk with children about their reading practices.

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

The TaRs research has highlighted to me the importance of discussing both my own and the children's reading with the pupils that I will teach. It has made me aware that it is important to find out about the children as readers and use this to support what I do in the classroom. I have seen the impact of this on the children's enthusiasm.

Looking to the future, I will continue to develop my knowledge of current children's literature so that this impacts discussions and choices within my classroom. I'm starting with my next book, *The Infinite Lives of Maisie Day* by Christopher Edge.