

Title: Big up your book!

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Context

I am a Year 6 teacher in my third year of teaching at a Free School in the Isle of Dogs, London: Canary Wharf College Eastferry. CWC is located in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, one of the most diverse yet depriving boroughs. Currently, writing and writing for pleasure is one of our school's key focuses on the development plan. After some disappointing moderation results at the end of KS2 in 2018, CWC has decided to put a large emphasis on writing across the school. Promoting writing for pleasure through engaging Literacy topics taught daily as well as extra-curricular clubs and whole school projects. I believe that the road to achieving writing for pleasure, begins with reading for pleasure. Reading and writing go hand in hand, therefore I believe that in order to support children's love for writing, it is essential to support and develop their love for reading. As well as this, Literacy – reading and writing in particular – are a passion of mine which I want to pursue further in my career. Therefore, I am keen to explore different ways in which to promote this within the classroom.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

Initially, my main aim was to develop my own repertoire of children's literature to use in the classrooms, within lessons as well as to suggest engaging, exciting, unusual books to children when they ask. My aim is to expose myself to a range of children's literature, both stories as well as poetry, reading for pleasure, not reading for teaching, and to build my confidence around children's books and genres. The OU TaR 1 was the main focus for my rationale and the main drive for me to participate in the RfP group. However, this partnered with TaR 3 also links closely with my aims as it is focussing on informal book talk and recommendations of books.

Additionally, I also wanted to promote and give time for children to discuss books and reading. I was aware that this was (informally) taking place during lessons as well as play times and break times, but I rarely took time to engage in this 'chat' with children. Mainly, due to the fact that I did not feel confident as I felt my knowledge of children's literature was limited.

It is suggested that in order to influence children's attitudes to reading then you must focus on the children from the outset by learning about them and their interests (Cremin et al, 2008). I will be able to get to know the children's reading patterns through my research which will lead to myself recommending and guiding children in certain directions,

particularly those who become lost and disengaged with books. Essentially – and hopefully - developing their love for reading.

Furthermore, I wanted to do a little bit of work in reading within the wider community. After hearing that a large amount of children don't read because they don't see their parents reading, and therefore don't think it is fun shocked me. Developing a love for reading within the home environment may spark and feed into children's reading for pleasure. Thus, I wanted to be able to incorporate some sort of reading within the wider community.

Aims

- To explore a wide range of children's literature to expand my own knowledge of texts.
- To learn more about my children and what their relationship with reading is, what they like to read and their own recommendations.
- To extend the knowledge of literature within my classroom, creating a buzz around books.
- For children to be given the time to recommend their own favourite books, as well as being exposed to a wide range of books they may choose to read.

Outline

For this RfP project, I wanted to focus on developing children's love for reading whilst developing their knowledge of books of a wide variety. Alongside this, my own repertoire would also expand. I wanted to make this an enjoyable time slot for an otherwise jam-packed week for my Year 6 pupils, something to take away the stress of the Key Stage 2 exams, as well as giving them ownership over something and developing their confidence when speaking in front of the class.



I created 'Big Up Your Book', which came from an idea from a fellow RfP member. It was ideal as it created a relaxed and enjoyable environment for children to share their favourite books and recommend to the rest of the class. I wanted children to see both teachers and their peers recommending books to one another, so the children also see teachers as readers, hopefully feeling inspired. 'Big Up Your Book' happened weekly on a Friday afternoon, something that the children could look forward to. I introduced a 'sign up' sheet once I had explained this to children and I was the first person to big up my book, modelling the process. I also brought along biscuits so that we could sit as a class, enjoy the biscuits and listen to one another share and recommend our books.

The children were able to 'sign up' whenever they liked with their name and the name of the book they would like to big up. Each week, I would select 2 or 3 children to bring their book the following week to big up. Even my TA and LSA got involved by bigging up a book!



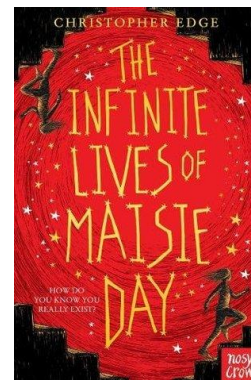
As the weeks went on, there was a buzz around 'Big Up Your Book' on a Friday afternoon in 6EA and children were confidently recommending stories in front of the class. Children were encouraged to bring in any genre of book that they had enjoyed, even if it might only appeal to a small select group of their peers. I thought this was perfect as it also exposed readers who have habit genres to new and exciting books. Throughout the first term, we had to start creating 'waiting lists' for children to sign up for books that children had bigged up as they also wanted to read them. This resulted in children

sharing their books around the class, developing an element of trust with their peers.

Impact

The impact of this project has been substantial. Within minutes of explaining the new project I had more than 10 names signed up to big up their book. Throughout the weeks the buzz had remained ignited and children continue to sign up and ask whether 'Big Up Your Book' is happening this week. The children have brought in a wide range of children's fiction which has also expanded my own knowledge of books.

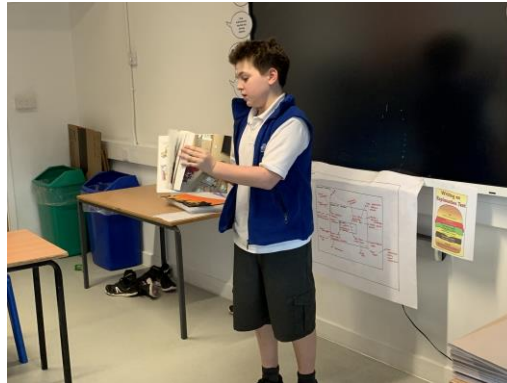
Additionally, after my initial recommendation of 'The infinite lives of Maisie Day' by Christopher Edge, over the weekend 4 children out of 20 in a class had gone away and purchased this book – one of which was one of my more reluctant readers – which was a personal 'proud' moment for me. This has continued throughout the weeks in which children have also bought various other books recommended by myself and others. It is clear that the introduction of 'Big Up Your Book' has encouraged and inspired my class to read as we now have 'borrowing lists' around the classroom and in the reading corner for a range of books that other children have recommended, meaning that the book will be passed around the class. This shows how children have listened tentatively and have been inspired by their peers to read more.



It has also made me feel proud that an LSA that works in my classroom asked to big up a book she had read at home; this was great for the children to see an adult, other than myself, promote reading for pleasure. Again, this resulted in many children wanting to borrow the book bigged

up by the LSA. As well as this, in my absence, my TA also took it upon herself to continue running 'Big Up Your Book' where she also recommended books to the class.

Since introducing 'Big Up Your Book' in 6EA there has been an increased buzz around informal book talk. It is something I personally now take time to speak to children about, whether it is during our allocated time or not. I often place new books on my desk which instantly creates excitement; children will pick these up and read the blurb and ask to borrow straight away. Introducing a trust worthy environment, in which I allow the children to borrow my own books, encourages them to do the same.



The children take care of one another's belongings but in turn this encourages them to read for pleasure as it draws away from those who do not go out and buy their own books.

After the first term of implementing 'Big Up Your Book' I asked the children if they had read a book or waiting to read a book recommended by one of their peers or teachers; 75% of children said yes. I asked the children if they themselves had "bigged" up their book, 65% said yes. When I asked the children if this is something that they would like to continue next term, 100% said yes. For me, this highlighted the success of the project and how it had impacted the children's attitudes towards informal book talk and reading for pleasure.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

TaR 1 and TaR 3 were particular focuses of mine and I feel that my own knowledge of children's literature has significantly expanded. In addition to this, I feel that there is a definite buzz for books and reading within my class and I am taking more time to discuss books and reading with children which is in turn exciting them about reading and recommending texts too.