

Guiding Readers

Beyond Guided Reading in the Early Years

Aaron Millward

Context

As a teacher in the Early Years Team with an interest in promoting children's early reading development, I embarked on this project to support children with nurturing the skills needed to be stronger readers and access a range of texts. **The aim being: more confident readers who are empowered to read for pleasure.** Whilst reflecting on guided reading sessions with children, I highlighted an opportunity to enhance our reading provision within the classroom environment to develop skills and values, that they can transfer to their own book sharing time.

Moorside Primary Academy

Droylsden, Greater Manchester



OU Research Inspiration and Rationale

I was greatly inspired by Cremin et al. (2014)'s vision of a community of engaged readers and felt it was a vision I wished to place into practice in my foundation stage classroom – the perfect setting for a community of energetic, curious and insatiable learners! The work of Cremin et al (2014) allowed me to reflect that I do not actively consult children on their reading preferences and knew little of their home reading practices and experiences of literacy. I also considered the need to welcome a wider breath of texts and consider how effective children's peer-peer book talk was in developing their understanding and enjoyment of books. Goodwin (2017) suggests that a reading area is indicative of the value and status of literacy in a classroom. This prompted me to think: am I actively advocating the value of the reading area or am I taking literacy away from the reading area? Chambers (2011) discusses the crucial role of the enabling adult in the sequence of 'the reading circle' and the continuous interactions we have with children to foster their pleasure and knowledge of books. Reflecting upon the previous research allowed me to form a clear rationale to cultivate my own community of engaged and empowered readers.

Chambers, A. (2011). *Tell Me: Children, Reading and Talk with The Reading Environment*. Stroud: The Thimble Press.

Cremin, T. et al. (2014) *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure*. London: Routledge.

Goodwin, P. (Ed) (2017) [4th ed.] *The Literate Classroom*. London: Routledge.

Aims

Following an observation of the reading area in the classroom and a reflection on guided reading (GR) sessions, it was noted that children were not applying taught skills in GR sessions in their independent exploration of texts. To empower children as readers for pleasure and makers of meaning, the following aims were created to develop their independent reading practices:

- To support children to share their own reading preferences.
- To develop children's independent inference skills.
- To encourage independent storytelling.

As a TaR, I would also ensure more of my teaching took place in the reading area and that I was proactive in awarding the reading area the status and value needed to support a community of learners who read for pleasure.

Outline

To support children to share their own reading preferences

By adapting the 'Basic Questions' of Chambers' (1993) Tell Me approach I can guide a conversation with children about books shared in class, whilst also finding out about their preferred books and wider literacy at home. Through discrete book conversations when in the reading area and when sharing a book, I can begin to see the interests of individual children and of the cohort. This will allow me to continuously update my literature spine and introduce new texts as the children reveal their passion for them.

I like...

"The bit where the fisherman, Jim, Jeff and Jonathan rescue the bear in their net."

I disliked...

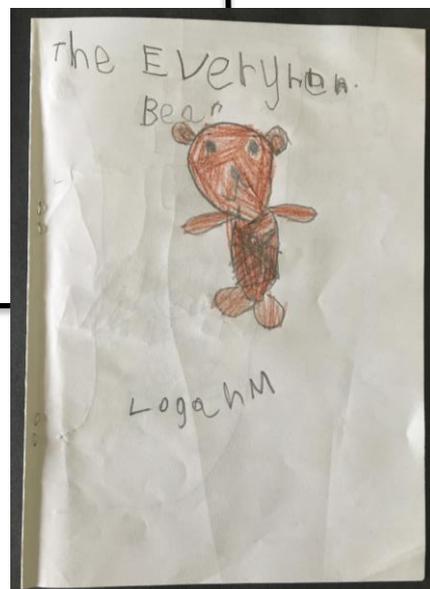
"I didn't like the cat. It's sneaky and Matt lost the Everywhere Bear because of it."

I would have liked...

"I think it would be better if scuba divers found the bear in the ocean!"

It made me think of...

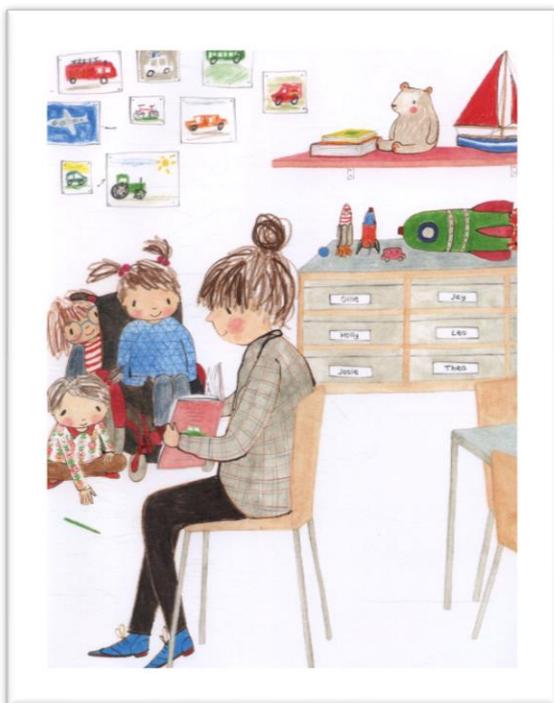
"You know the man in the van, he's painting lines, so people know



Logan is keen to share his thoughts on the Everywhere Bear that we have shared as a class. After we finish our 'book talk' he creates his own copy of the book in the reading area with his thoughts carefully illustrated.

To develop children's independent inference skills

Perkins (2017) comments on the multitude of texts that children see in their early experiences, that are beyond a traditional book: posters, films, road signs, flat pack furniture assembly instructions, YouTube lyrics videos. This constant exposure to language has led to a deep level of knowledge that is so embedded, that children often do not realise they possess it. Reading should be seen as a treasure island of experiences, which we can carefully explore through **'focused browsing'** (Perkins, 2017). Through focused browsing I can model questions that require children to understand and then analyse/evaluate, whilst also highlighting connections to other books (Chambers, 1993 Tell Me approach). The children can then explore these questions, independently or collaboratively, by searching through carefully selected texts to build their skills of observation and inference. As the children become more confident with focused browsing, they will generate their own questions, patterns and links to solve. This will lead to greater reading miles and the pleasure of becoming much more familiar with a book.



Julia Donaldson's *The Everywhere Bear* was a text that naturally invited the children to have a focused browse of texts, guided by open prompts.

On the page:

'Can you see anything on the page that gives us a clue to where the bear might go next?'

'Who will take the bear home next?'

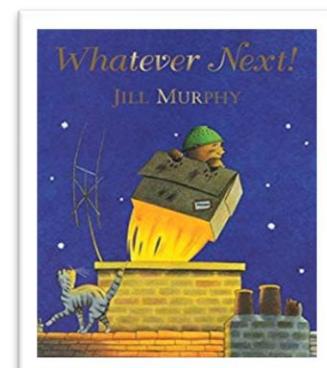
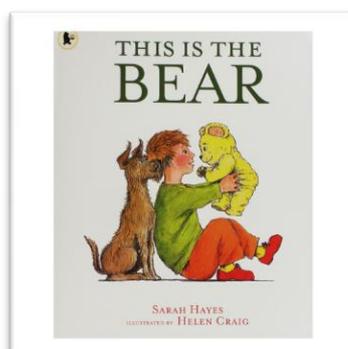
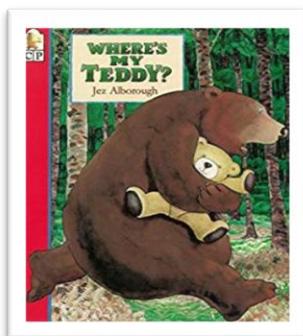
'Is the bear in a safe place?'

Outside the text:

'Can you think of any other bears who get lost?'
(Where's my Teddy? This is the Bear)

'Do bears like to go on adventures?'

(Whatever Next)

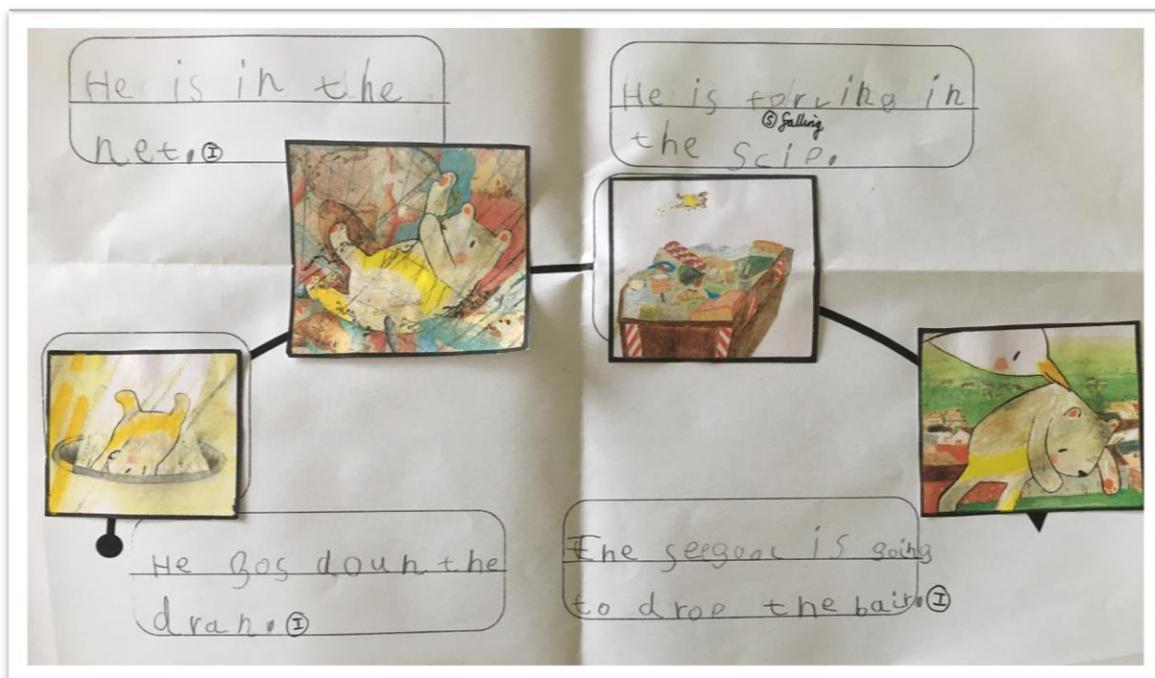


Perkins, M. (2017) Making Space for Reading: Teaching Reading in the Early Years. In Goodwin, P. (Ed.) [4th ed.] *The Literate Classroom*. London: Routledge.

To encourage independent storytelling

In the reading area I have observed children sharing our class story together and becoming animated in their retelling. However, they would sometimes try to record their retelling in print and begin to lose the flow of the story. I have adopted the work of Corbett and Strong (2016) on the use of story mapping and story mountains. I resource the reading area with a variety of templates of story maps and story mountains with different levels of sequencing and accompanying illustrations. The children have found it much easier to control the story when retelling with their story map/mountain in hand. It has also allowed children to realise how they can retell the same story in different words, building upon the previous aims of reading preference and inference of a story to gain a stronger comprehension and familiarity.

Corbett, P. and Strong, J. (2016). *Talk for Writing in the Early Years*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.



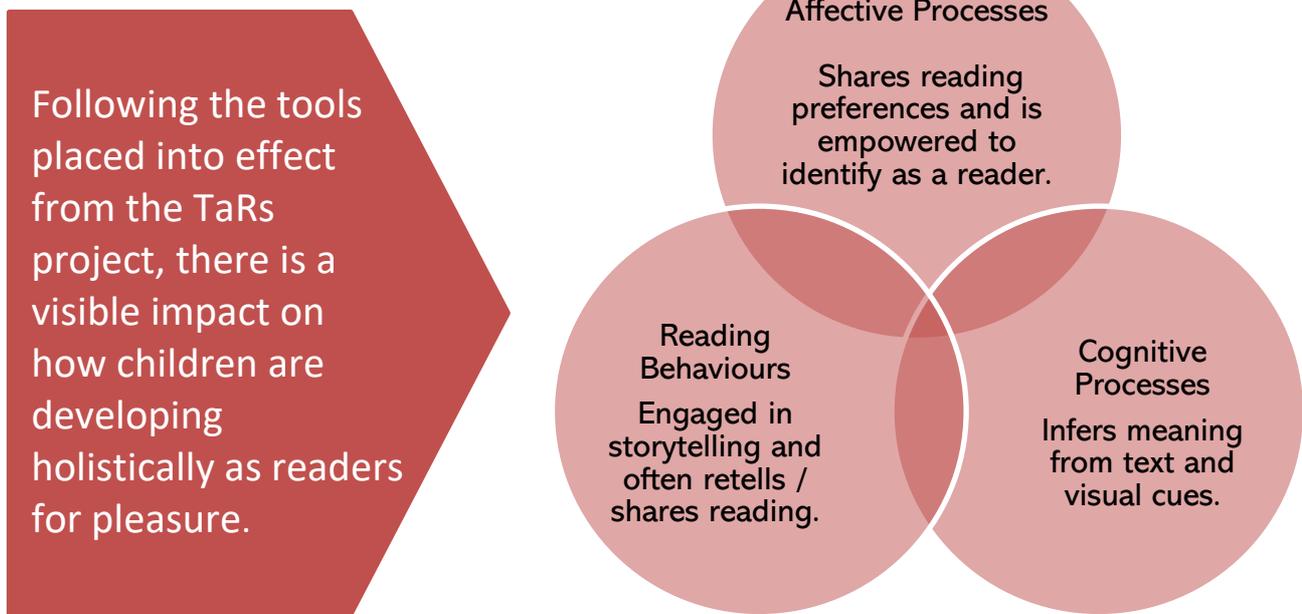
By working on my three aims through the use of the Tell Me approach (Chambers, 1993), focused browsing Perkins (2017) and story mapping/mountains (Corbett and Strong, 2016) I have developed professionally as a Teacher as a Reader. The TaR project has allowed me to reflect on the models and concepts I have given to children, so that they have **the independence to**

read for:

- meaning
- understanding
- pleasure
- life.

Impact

The impact in the setting is evident: children are actively sharing stories; book talk is more purposeful; children are making links between stories and independently rereading stories to deepen knowledge; adults and children are using the reading area with greater effectiveness. Ultimately, there is more enjoyment around the teaching of literacy. This is just the first cycle of TaR action research and I am excited to see where the provision continues to develop next.



The Impact of the Aims on supporting the Read On. Go On. tripartite model. National Literacy Trust, 2017.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The TaRs research has allowed me to reflect on my practice and adopt a much more succinct approach to teaching literacy. I have refined ideas from a wealth of authors and theorists and tailored them to fit the needs of the learners in my classroom. This is the first step in creating a community of passionate and energetic readers who enjoy sharing stories and making meaning of the world around them.

The next step is continue to delve on TaRs research to trial and implement further ideas from colleagues. Drawing on the case studies from the community of TaRs will allow me to further develop my practice to ensure children's reading development builds on cognitive processes, affective processes and effective reading behaviours. I look forward to seeing which texts my children wish to share and enjoy next!