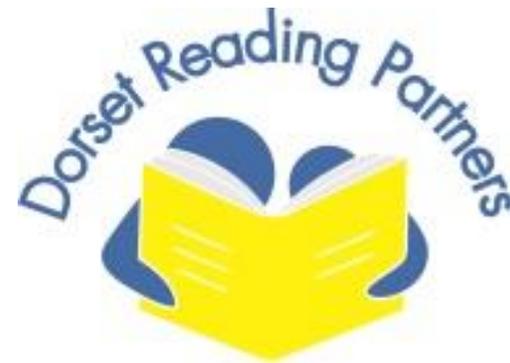


Building a
Reading for Pleasure
community with
Dorset Reading Partners

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Volunteer Coordinator



The Open
University



UKLA



Context

Dorset Reading Partners is a charity that recruits, trains and equips volunteer reading partners to support children with their reading development.

Our team of 90 Reading Partners provides regular, tailored, one-to-one help to hundreds of children across Dorset each year, inspiring them to enjoy reading, improving their literacy skills and encouraging them to become confident in their abilities.

As Volunteer Coordinator, my role is to provide regular support and training to our Reading Partners. Through regular newsletters, observations, training workshops and speaker presentations, we value the importance **of building a community of literary-interested, enthusiastic and committed volunteers** who share good practice amongst themselves, the schools the work in and the children they read with.

Reading Partners involved in the OU/UKLA Reading Groups are all working in Dorset Primary/First Schools with both KS1 and KS2 children.





Our Reading Partners currently meet with other volunteers 3 times a year at our Book Exchanges. Informal conversations at these gatherings include book recommendations and successful strategies to engage a reluctant reader. **There is always lots of spontaneous book blethering and desire to share.** The Reading Group offers an opportunity to draw upon and build on this knowledge and experience.

Dorset Reading Partners work in 60 schools around Dorset. The Reading Group is an ideal opportunity to build a reading community with these schools, libraries and other reading groups, highlighting the importance of the work being carried out by OU/UKLA.





The TaRs research project (Cremin et al., 2009) found that RfP is strongly influenced by relationships between children, teachers, families and communities.

As the teachers developed their own reading communities in local groups, they came to value the time as adult readers to read, share and discuss their reading; they also valued the space for reflection on these reading experiences. Through this process, they widened their repertoires of children's literature and other texts and learnt about themselves as readers.

OU research inspiration and rationale



Aims

- Offer all Reading Partners the opportunity to receive regular enrichment. These sessions will allow reflection on their own reading practice, widen their knowledge of children's literature and explore and share new texts. Reading Partners will then research, develop and measure the impact of their own chosen Reading for Pleasure work.

- Ensure our whole community of Reading Partners are kept informed on the progress of this Reading Group and that new examples of good practice are shared amongst them all.
- Raise awareness of the work of the OU/UKLA Reading for Pleasure by inviting Dorset schools whom we work with, libraries and other similar reading charities to our meetings. Provide regular communication via newsletter, sharing ideas we have learned, developed and adopted thereby building a wider reading for pleasure community.



Dorset TRG update

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Dorset TRG update

Dorset Reading Partners is a charity that recruits, trains and equips volunteer reading partners to work 1:1 with children. When I heard about the OU/UKLA Teachers' Reading Groups, I was keen for Dorset Reading Partners to get involved. We are not teachers, but 'Reading for Pleasure' is our strapline.

Towards the end of October, following a launch evening in September, we had our first session with a good-sized group present. We had also communicated with the schools we work in about the TRGs and many were interested to hear about it and what we were doing. So we decided to produce a newsletter. This has been emailed to our distribution list of volunteers involved in the TRG, our Trustees, Dorset Education Advisors and our local library. All are offering us their support and our newsletter is about sharing how we can all help to encourage children to Read for Pleasure. You can download the newsletter below.

[Download \(pdf file, 420 KB\)](#)

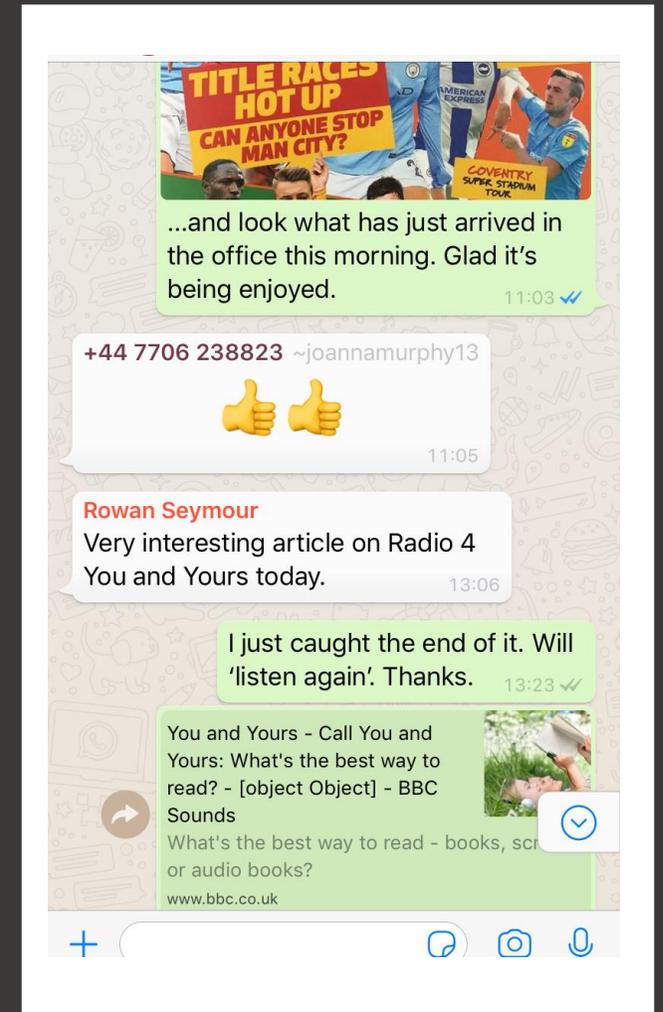
Outline

Newsletter

We produced a newsletter at the end of every session. This was distributed to all Reading Partners and also teachers, librarians and Education Advisors from our wider community who had requested being kept informed on the group's progress.

WhatsApp group

We set up a WhatsApp group for our Reading Group which encouraged book conversations between each other and offered a forum outside of the sessions for the Reading Group to share ideas. This helped to keep up enthusiasm in between meetings. We were also able to recommend new books/articles which we thought might help others with their project.





Working with Dorchester Library

Having introduced DRP to the Library Manager, we arranged for our RfP group of Reading Partners to have talk from a librarian about the resources and services on offer at any Dorset library. During this visit we ensured that everyone received a Teacher's library card. This now means Reading Partners can:

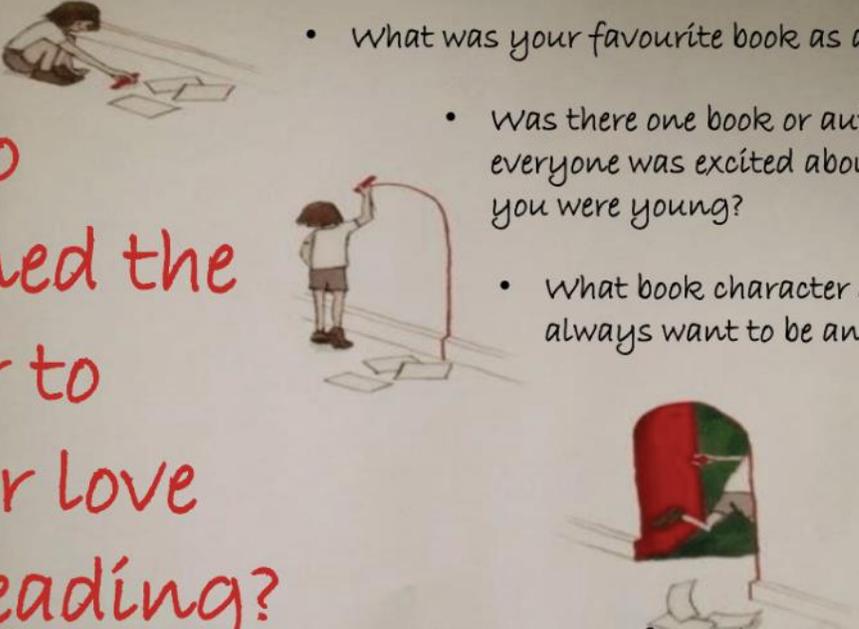
- borrow up to 20 items (children's fiction, non-fiction and spoken word books)
- keep books for 42 days
- no overdue charges to pay on items borrowed
- free reservations
- available from all Dorset libraries and Community Managed libraries

We have since arranged for other Reading Partners to also attend this talk and receive a Teacher's library card too.

Dorchester library have also allowed DRP to use their training room facilities free of charge.

Buzzing with Ideas Workshop

We ran a workshop for our community of Reading Partners. The workshop drew on new ideas, many of which came from the OU RfP examples of practice website and our own Reading Group.



Who opened the door to your love of reading?

- What was your favourite book as a child?
- Was there one book or author that everyone was excited about when you were young?
- What book character did you always want to be and why?
- What was your favourite place to read in?





Impact

In April, I asked members of the RfP group to complete a questionnaire, reflecting on their journey as a volunteer and member of this group.

The questionnaire included the following:

- Do you think your own reading habits have changed during the last year?
- As a volunteer, do you share your own reading practices and preferences with the children?
- Do you think attending the group has influenced your knowledge of children's authors, children's picture book authors/illustrators and children's poets?
- Has this impacted on how you decide which children's book to use in your reading sessions?

Do you think your reading habits have changed during the last year?

Yes No

If so, in what ways?

I've become more aware of literature aimed at older primary children. I've been reading more short stories.

Yes No

If so, in what ways?

Reading/looking at more childrens books
more time to read.

Yes No

If so, in what ways?

I have widened my knowledge of childrens authors and feel more enthusiastic to widen my own book choice.

4. Do you think attending the group has influenced your knowledge of:

	Not at all	←————→			considerably
Children's authors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's picturebook authors / illustrators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's poets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Has this impacted on how you decide which children's books to use in your DRP sessions?

Yes No

(if so, in what ways)

- Encouraged me to use a greater variety of texts.
- Less concerned about using resources that are 'too young'

5. Has this impacted on how you decide which children's books to use in your DRP sessions?

Yes No

(if so, in what ways)

In hearing from other volunteers how they have included particular sorts of books e.g. flap books for 2yrs+, and recommended authors - I am prompted to consider my own practice to improve the

6. Do you think attending the group has impacted on: children's experiences

4. Do you think attending the group has influenced your knowledge of:

	Not at all	←————→			considerably
Children's authors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's picturebook authors / illustrators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's poets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Has this impacted on how you decide which children's books to use in your DRP sessions?

Yes No

(if so, in what ways)

I'm more confident about choosing books to be read 1 session + also choosing books/stories that will stimulate ideas + discussion.

3. As a volunteer, do you share your own reading practices and preferences with the children?

Frequently Fairly regularly Rarely Never

If so, in what ways?

I have an A4 sheet entitled "What am I reading" and display this with a photocopy of the cover of the book which I am currently reading. This is in front of my readers alongside the display of books for them to read - this goes rise to questions and discussion at their prompting. It's up to the to ask or make an observation rather than me 'pushing

Feedback from 'Buzzing with Ideas Workshop'

2. What did you find most useful about the training?

TO LOOK AT METHODS + IDEAS FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES + TO ENCOURAGE ME TO BE PERSONALLY MORE PRO-ACTIVE → DISCUSS MY INTERESTS MORE + RELATE SIMILARITIES TO MY YOUTH. NEW IDEAS TO STOP US FEELING 'JADED'

2. What did you find most useful about the training?

Lots of new ideas - especially for reluctant readers

Key impact outcomes and future directions

- Following the workshop, I have observed our Reading Partners sharing more poetry.
- Book bags are being used more widely, encouraging reading for pleasure
- We have asked by our local school of 13-18 year olds to attend their 'Freshers' Fayre' in September. Interested 6th formers will receive training from DRP on how to encourage and support 'Reading for Pleasure'. As a 'Reading Mentor' they will then regularly visit local first schools.
- A primary school in Dorset has asked us to deliver a workshop to their parents on 'Reading for Pleasure'. This will also take place in September. I hope to be asked to do this more, at a minimal cost for the service.
- At a first school, where we already have 2 Reading Partners volunteering, we have been asked to meet and discuss how we could support the school further in the coming year, as they plan for their 'big push' on reading for pleasure.



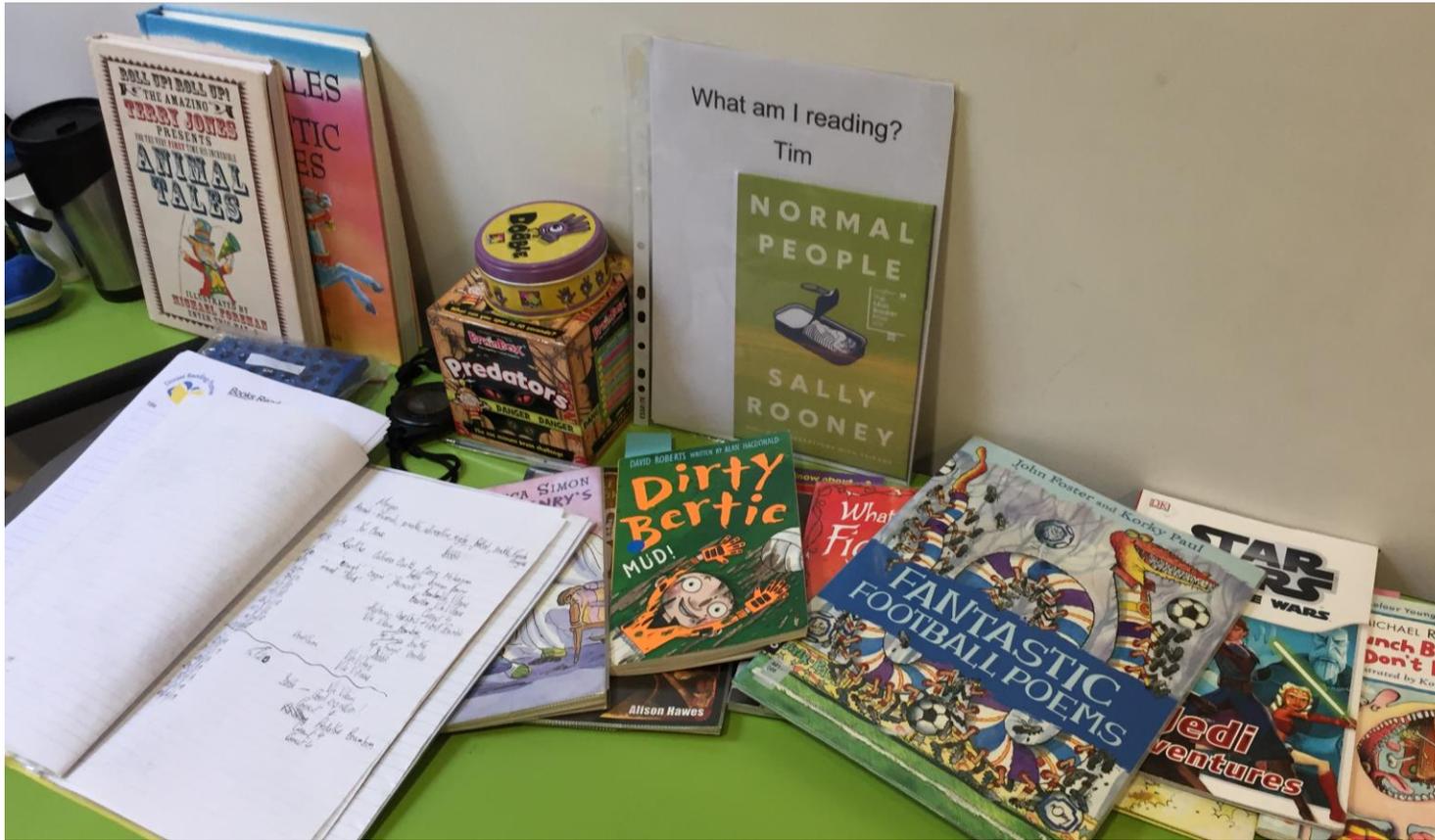
Reflections

All Reading Partners who have taken part in this year's project will present their findings to our community of Reading Partners at our next Book Exchanges in September/October.

We will update our book resources based on project recommendations.

We will recommend that ALL Reading Partners subscribe to the OU RfP newsletter.

We will continue to raise awareness, in the schools we work in, of the OU RfP website.



Reflections

We will continue to hold 6 sessions a year for Reading Partners (and our wider community) interested in developing their knowledge of children's literature and poetry. These dates will be set in advance with the opportunity to 'dip in and out', according to their other commitments. Each of these sessions will focus on a different aspect of Reading for Pleasure, focusing on ideas learned from being involved in this project and examples of practice found on the OU RfP website.

We will continue to work closely with Dorchester Library. All new Reading Partners will be offered an opportunity to receive a Teacher Card and to attend a talk about the facilities and resources they offer.