

# Poetry Post by Jon Biddle

## Context

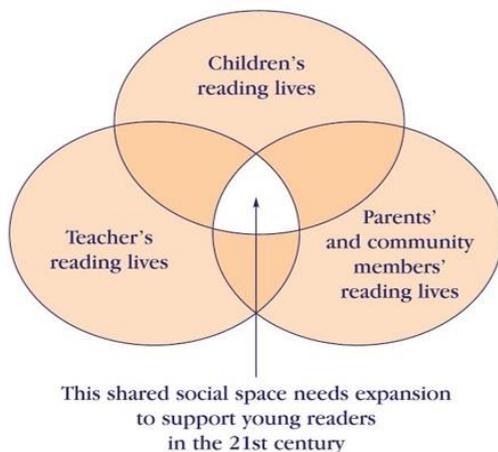
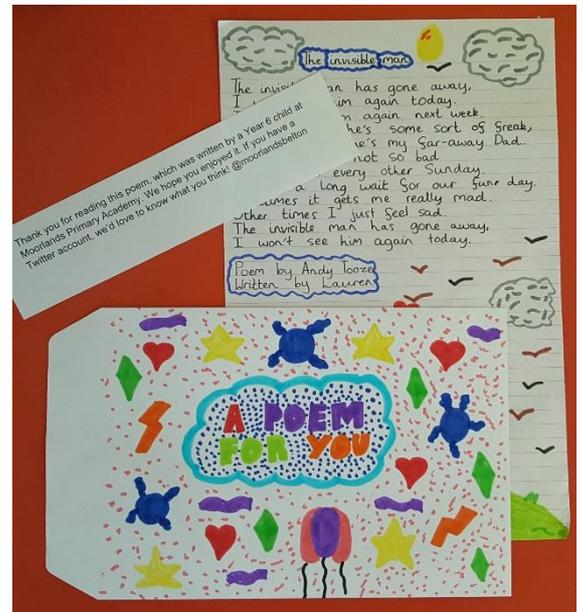
I am the English Coordinator and a Year 5/6 teacher at Moorlands Primary Academy in Norfolk. The school has recovered from a

turbulent few years and has recently been graded 'Good' by Ofsted. Creating a genuine reading culture across the school has been at the absolute centre of this improvement. Although pleasing progress has been made in engaging the local community with the school's approach and attitude towards reading, it is still an area that needs further development.



## Research inspiration and rationale

Whenever we have carried out a survey about attitudes towards RfP with children and staff, we have found that knowledge of poets and poems is generally one of the weakest areas. This was also the case in the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) survey where 22% of 1200 teachers could not name a poet! (Cremin et al., 2008). I was looking for a simple way engage more children with reading poetry, as well as to improve staff knowledge, and felt that having the pupils write 'Poetry Post' which could be shared with the community would be a successful approach. It is a strategy I have used before at a class level, and believed that it could work even more effectively when rolled out to include other classes.



In addition, I am always conscious that one of the key recommendations from the *TARs* project (Cremin et al, 2014) is for the need to construct more equivalent reading relationships with families and community members, and to build reading communities that blur the boundaries between children's home and school reading worlds (see diagram). By creating and sharing a love of poetry with the local community, I was confident that we would be able to form a more reciprocal reading relationship with the residents of Belton.



## Impact

- Within hours, we had received several emails, tweets and phone calls from people who had received a poem. **The feedback was universally positive.** A few days later, the children were sent a couple of letters, as well as a wonderful gift of some poetry books. Several threads were set up on various local Facebook groups, talking about how much the poems had been enjoyed and appreciated.
- We shared the feedback with the children, who were absolutely thrilled to see what a positive impact their poems had had. They were particularly interested in a letter from an elderly resident of the village, who shared how she had regularly used the poetry of Christina Rossetti when she was a teacher.
- Some children asked if they could take home poetry books and envelopes, and create more Poetry Post in their own time. Several also visited the school library at lunchtime to look for other poems that they thought would be enjoyed.
- Immediately, there was a visible increase in the number of children reading poetry during independent reading time, as well as more children wanting to get involved with the class Poem of the Day.
- Poets including Brian Moses, Rachel Rooney and Joseph Coelho engaged with our **#PoetryPost tweets**, causing the children to seek out and enjoy more of their work.
- The class suggested that we put on a poetry show for any residents of the village who would like to attend. Although plans are still in an early stage, if this does take place, it will further deepen the children's knowledge of poetry, improve their performance skills and continue to develop reading relationships with the local community.



To Eagles Class,  
I do not have a Twitter account, therefore, I am writing to 'Thank You' for the poem Flat by Christina Rossetti.  
It was lovely to receive some pretty post rather than bills in brown envelopes. The writing was lovely and clear.  
Christina Rossetti has written many poems that spark children's imagination, I often used them when teaching Drama. Did you know she wrote the words to one of my favourite Christmas Carols, In the Bleak Midwinter?  
Keep up the good work all of you.  
Best Wishes  
Mrs. Cornish

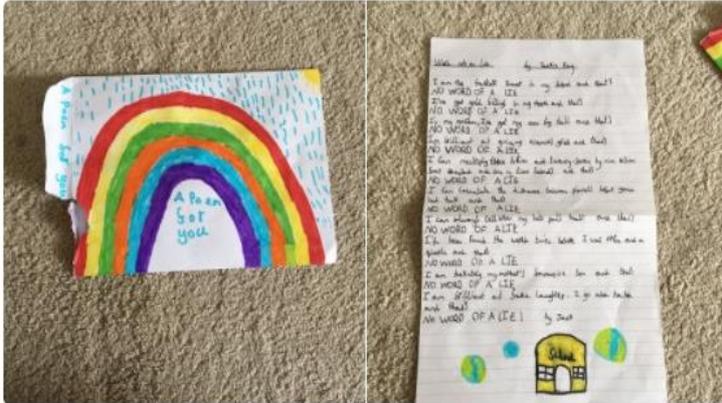
## Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Deer Class Retweeted



**steph knight** @nursey83 · 9h

I received the most wonderful poem through the door today from Jack. It made my day 🌈 @moorlandsbelton



This year was the third time my class have written Poetry Post and each time I have been amazed by the instantaneous impact that it has on their attitude to poetry. Therefore, in order for it to be effective over the longest time period, I moved it to the beginning of the school year, rather than at the end as it has always previously been.

As two other classes were involved this time, meaning that more poems went out into the community, it generated a huge buzz of enthusiasm for poetry in

the school and around the village. The children thought carefully about the poems they chose; they really tried to consider which kinds of poems might be enjoyed by different people and it was an excellent opportunity to help further develop empathy skills. A parent of one of my pupils came in after school to let me know that delivering Poetry Post had completely changed her daughter's attitude towards reading and writing. She was spending time at home enjoying reading poetry (which had never happened before), as well as writing more poems to deliver round the village with her family at the weekend.

The initiative also made me reflect on the poetry diet that we have available for our older children, as well as the selection of books in our staff library and parents' borrowing box. Although we have a reasonably broad range, there is a definite need to increase the diversity of poets available, which is something that will be addressed.

Next year, the plan is for the whole school to take part in Poetry Post, which means that over 250 poems will be delivered. We're already excited about the potential impact this will have, both on the children's enjoyment of poetry and on the reading relationship that the school has with the local community.



**Mark Fishbourne**

Conversation starter · 8 October at 14:07

It is so lovely

Of the young children from moorlands school in belton. Just came to my door with an envelop

With a lovely poem. All the years I lived in belton this is the very

First time . Many thanks to the children and there teachers. From moorlands

school



You, Joanne Thurtle, Jolanta Pacek and 55 others

20 comments



Like



Comment



Share



**Dorothy Knight** I have received one as well, had one before. It's a lovely idea and much appreciated

Like · Reply · 5d



**Caroline Aske** I got one too.

Like · Reply · 5d



**Alice Phillips** Last year my elderly client 82 years old also recieved a letter/poem from moorlands. It really cheered him up!

Like · Reply · 5d



**Debby English** 🌈 I got one yesterday, it's lovely

Like · Reply · 5d



**Denise Brzeczek** Rose What a lovely idea 🌈

