

Title: From I-read to we-read – Book Club!

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Context:

I am a PGCE student teacher with a passion for reading which I have carried with me since my own reading journey began with shop signs and Peter Rabbit twenty-five years ago. My enhanced study as a PGCE student centres on Children's Literature, and I am also part of an online community of teachers committed to reading 52 books in one year.

The school where I am placed, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Aylesham, is a small school, consisting of fewer than one hundred pupils aged 4-11, and is in an area of material deprivation (top 20% nationally).

This part of my project, as part of my PGCE year focussed on a mixed-age after-school 'Book Club' which I was very kindly given the opportunity to lead for four weeks.



OU research inspiration and rationale:

The element of the OU study which jumped out for me was the emphasis on the social element of reading. As stated in *Building Communities of Engaged Readers*, 'the act of reading [is] profoundly social' (p. 5). Initially my plans were wide-ranging, focussing on the social side of reading outside the school community. However, when conducting preliminary questionnaires with my placement class of 9-11 year olds, it became clear that many pupils could not say what their friends enjoyed reading. Whilst I remained convinced that long-term the children would need to be engaged in reading scenarios with their families, my study switched gears to look more closely at in-school reader relationships. The teacher-reader relationship project I conducted, 'From I-Read to We-Read – Book-share', is written up in a separate post. This 'Book Club' side-project was able to focus, then, on introducing children to the idea of building reader relationships with peers.



Aims

In light of the revelation that there existed very few reader-relationships in the school, this aspect of my project had the following aims:

- To provide a space for enjoyable and social reading.
- To facilitate the growth of pupil-pupil reading relationships.
- To increase the dialogue about reading between pupils ↔ pupils.
- To introduce younger children to the experience of a reader-relationship.

Outline:



I was privileged to lead the school's 'Book Club' each Monday evening for four weeks. I wanted this time to be, above all else, fun for the children. As such, I split the first thirty-five minutes of the club between an opening shared story which I led, and a free choice, whereby the children could continue hearing a story or could go and read books from the book corner alone or in a small group. During this time, I encouraged older children (primarily Year 4) to read to younger children

(primarily Reception and Year 1). For the remaining few minutes, I asked each child to bring a book that they had enjoyed back to the carpet. I shared with them a book I had enjoyed in the session, putting emphasis on precisely why I had enjoyed it. The children then had some time to find a partner and 'book-share' what they had been reading to each other; in effect sharing an impromptu book review. Thus, the very youngest children in the school were given the opportunity to engage not only in free reading choice, but also discussion and dialogue about reading.

Impact:

Younger children were given the opportunity to choose both their reading materials and the way they wanted to read, either alone, with a same-age friend, or an older model. Consequently, they were encouraged that the act of reading contains manifold choices which they have a right to. They were also introduced to the idea of talking about what they read. C. S. Lewis (an author whose work I shared in my 'Book-share') wrote that 'we praise what we enjoy because the praise not only expresses but completes the enjoyment.' (*Reflections on the Psalms.*) The very youngest children in the school were encouraged to complete their joy in reading by having the opportunity to share each week. It also impacted upon my practice of reading, as it forced me to identify precisely what I enjoyed in a book, be it the pictures, turns of phrase, characters, or even the way a book 'felt' to me!

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

As a result of this element of my project, I am convinced of the potential of reciprocal reader relationships, in this instance pupil to pupil. If it is true that we share what we enjoy, and I believe that even anecdotally we see this to be true, and if it is true that young children enjoy books, again I believe this is so, then we should not need to *create* reading communities, but rather *foster* them. Moving forward as a trainee, I will continue to experiment with the language I use to talk about reading, and to give children time to converse with each other about theirs. To practice what I preach, I will also be involving myself in the #52books2017 project among teachers on social media, embedding the practice of sharing my reading. In this way I hope to be able to become fluent myself in the language of sharing reading, and to be able to model this for children in the near future.