

## All the places we can read by Helen Brown

### Context



I am a Canterbury Christchurch student teacher in a Year 1 class. I saw that some children would not choose books as a pleasurable activity and many boys said books are boring. I wanted to provide an exciting setting to share books and give children opportunities to experience reading as a fun and sociable activity.

### Research inspiration and rationale

- There is a big gender gap in reading for pleasure.
- Some schools find it difficult to fit encouraging reading in because of time issues.
- Many factors can affect whether children have an intrinsic satisfaction towards reading such as school, home relationships, peers, teachers and family members.
- Children's reading identities are influenced by parents, so involving parents in understanding reading can help promote attainment and achievement.

### Aims

Drawing upon and UKLA's *Teachers as Readers* research, the aim of this project was to develop a literacy activity which promotes a love of reading.

I was intrigued by the value this research places on providing physically attractive reading environments which promote reading aloud, own reading time, and informal book talk.

### Outline

- I set up a small tent in my classroom where the children could read by torch light.
- I read alongside the children in the tent twice a week during guided reading

time (five children at a time).

- After reading, I made time to ask children about their opinions about reading by torch light in the dark tent.
- In addition to launching the reading space in the classroom, I was also keen to encourage children to carry on reading outside of school. I sent a letter to parents, inviting them to take photos of children reading in unusual places and different settings.
- I encouraged children to read books which they had chosen from the school library. I also encouraged them to bring in books from home. I wanted them to have a sense of ownership over their reading material.

*Dear Parents,*

*I am training to become a teacher. One of my activities is to create a project to promote a love for reading. I have set up a reading den in the classroom where the children can read books under torch light. This will be an exciting activity which I hope to use to inspire children to experiment reading in different settings and environments. This project has been informed by research which supports the idea that reading spaces have a significant impact on a child's motivation to read. I hope that children will be able to use this as an opportunity to discover who they are as readers and where they best like to read.*

*I would be very grateful if you could take part in promoting your child to read for pleasure at home by encouraging them to read in an imaginative setting. For example, reading by torch light, reading in an unusual place, reading to a pet etc. Again, I would be very grateful if you could take photographs or write down any comments your child says about reading in an unusual place to use in my portfolio.*

*Please circle the yes if you are willing for me to use your child's photograph in my portfolio or no if you do not want me to use their photograph.*

Yes                      No                                      Child's name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

*Thank you very much for your support, I hope this encourages your child to read for pleasure!*

### **Impact**

The discussions I had with the children made the children think about different settings they could read in.

What children said about reading in the dark tent with a torch:



*Ronnie: "Reading at a table is boring, but that was amazing."*

*Jacs: "I usually don't like reading but I love reading in a tent to my friends!"*

*Rio: "This is great fun."*

*Dominic: "I like reading in the dark."*

*Reuben: "I like talking to my friends about stories in the tent."*



*Jessica: "I've never read by torch before but I'm going to do it at home."*

*Pebbles: "I never knew reading could be fun."*

*Lily: "I can't wait to show my brother."*

*Lucas: "This is really fun I'm going to show my mum at home."*

*Sam: "I absolutely loved reading with a torch, I'm going to read under my covers with a torch then it doesn't even have to be dark."*

Children shared their own ideas of different places they could read:

- *“Under the covers in my bed and use a torch.”*
- *“To my dog.”*
- *“In my play shed, in the garden.”*
- *“On top of my climbing frame.”*
- *“On the sofa, under my duvet with a torch.”*
- *“Make a den and then read in it.”*
- *“To my guinea pig.”*
- *“To the chickens in reception playground.”*
- *“Under a table.”*
- *“In my sister’s play tent.”*

Boys who would never normally choose to read now go and pick up a book and ask to go in the dark tent to read. One parent wrote on their consent form that their child had come home so excited as they had been in the dark tent to read. A parent sent in a photo of their child reading to her pet dog.



### **Reflections**

The comments from children and from parents, and the photos, all show that the activity of reading in a dark tent using a torch encouraged children to read and helped to change their perceptions of reading.

I now think the children will think about where to read much more than they did before this project. This activity showed the children that they are not restricted to where they can read. This activity helped to open up their imagination by showing them that a book is transportable, interesting and can take you to many different places.

From informing parents about the reading for pleasure project, I think this encouraged them to promote the love of reading at home. I had parents informing me that their child had wanted to read at home in a strange place!