

# Developing a Reading Classroom

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Experienced Teacher category

## Context



I work as a year 6 teacher at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Derby's city centre. It is a culturally diverse school, with an EAL population of 49%.

## OU Research inspiration and rationale

1. *Considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts*
2. *Knowledge of children's reading practices*
3. *A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:*
  - *Social reading environments*
  - *Reading aloud*
  - *Independent reading*
  - *Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*
4. *As Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach*
5. *Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.*

This blog post mainly looks at the pedagogy around reading for pleasure, particularly around social reading and informal book talk. Ultimately I want my classroom to be a place where we can all talk about a range of books, authors and genres with confidence. This has stemmed from my own development as a reading teacher (strand 4), which in turn has helped to grow my knowledge of children's literature.

## Aims

1. To develop my own knowledge of literature for RfP, for cross-curricular teaching, and for author studies when developing writing (strands 1 and 4)
2. To encourage children to read more widely both in and out of school, developing a repertoire of authors, books and genres to draw upon and to recommend to one another (strands 3 and 5)

## Outline

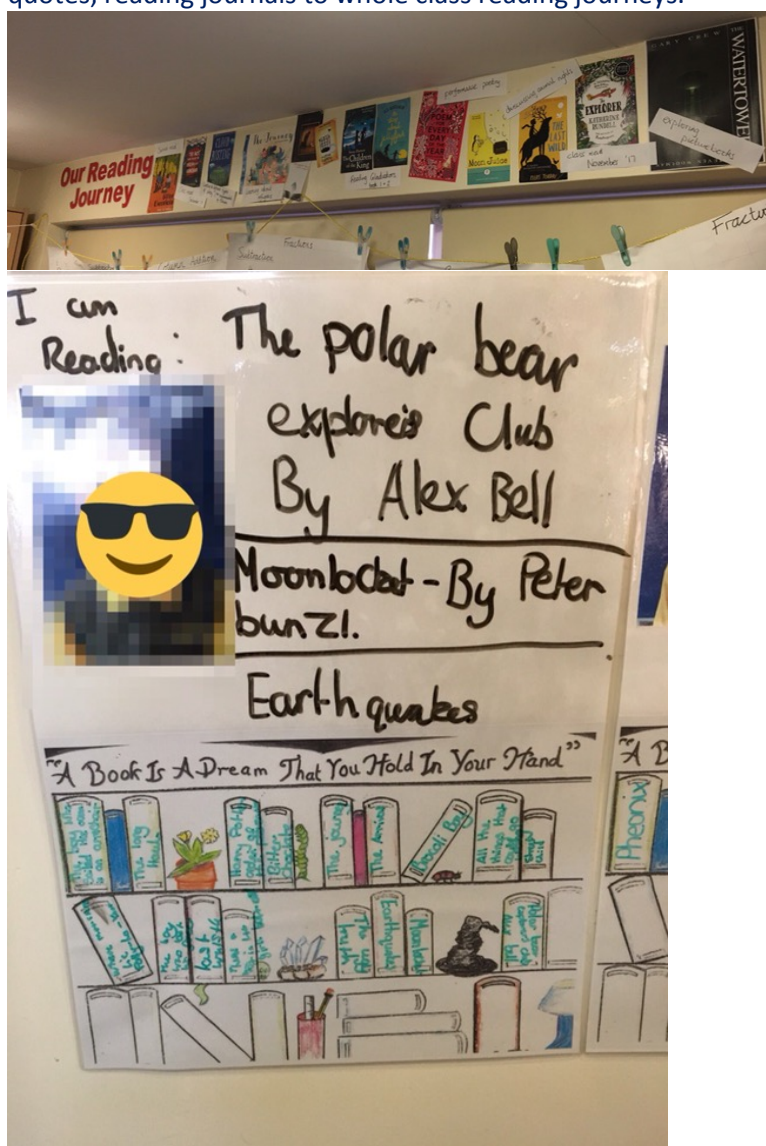
A series of steps I took in order to meet these aims were as follows:

1. Read more – know about new authors, illustrators, poets and publishers, and then share these with my children, essentially building my own personal library that they can borrow from. I have used Twitter extensively for this, following a

range of people who have been able to recommend a wide variety of texts that I otherwise wouldn't have known.



2. Share – I always tell the children which book I've just finished, and usually try to recommend it to a particular child. Nine times out of ten the book has disappeared from my shelf by the end of the day.
3. Engage with authors – Twitter allows so much contact with authors, and my experience is that they are all only too pleased to engage with the children. We've had emails and Skype calls with Lara Williamson, letters from Frank Cottrell Boyce, blog comments from M.G. Leonard and many more interactions that have been valuable to the children.
4. Time to read – either time for the children to read to themselves, or a shared time where a class text is shared; both have great value. Some of our children love to join in and act out the story, providing voices and personalities for characters.
5. Visibility – thanks to resources created online (particularly by Ashley Booth), my classroom is covered in reading paraphernalia, from book covers to author quotes, reading journals to whole class reading journeys.



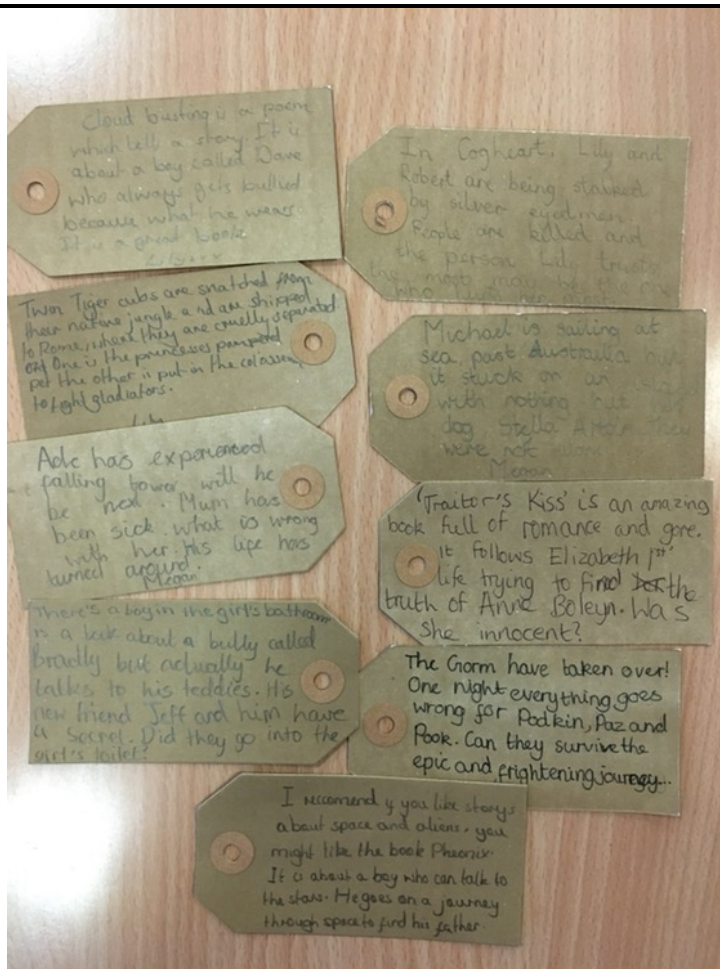
6. Shared bookshelf – our focus author's books go on the top shelf, followed by their recommendations (Lara Williamson, Katherine Rundell and Stewart Foster kindly emailed their favourite children's books). My own recommendations have



a shelf, and now the children's recommendations are taking over as they write a short blurb for a book they've enjoyed.



7. Peer recommendations – this is partly from the above, and really is book talk, but some of the children are happy to recommend books for their peers through a mini-presentation each week. They provide a brief synopsis, reasons why they liked it and volunteer somebody else to read it.



8. Reading questionnaires – this has been invaluable. I asked my class to complete one at the start of the year and then another just before Christmas – the results were (in the main) pleasing but really eye-opening too.

## Impact

I have every confidence that the children I have taught have grown to love reading more and more. They are much more assured in choosing a text (and in saying why they do or do not enjoy something in particular); they are able to make links between stories and poems with increasing confidence; they are recommending books to each other at much more of a social level (reading is not seen as 'work' now, rather something to be enjoyed); and, above all, they are reading regularly. Books are on every desk – almost to the point that they are in the way – and time to read is becoming something the children enjoy and treasure.

The reading questionnaires have really highlighted the impact of a term's reading in class. Since the start of the year, the percentage of children who 'love reading' has increased from 50% to 62.5%. A smaller increase has also been shown when the children were asked whether they saw themselves as good at reading (58% to 62.5%).

The two areas that the children showed the greatest change was when asked who they read with. In the first questionnaire, 30% of children said they read with mum, then 18% each with either dad or their teacher. In the second questionnaire, mum and dad shared equal weighting with 18% each. This is obviously a lower percentage than before, but it

also meant that children were reading with other people too – the majority share here was 27% of the children reporting that they read with their friends. Grandparents and siblings also increased – might this show that children are reading more frequently, or at least discussing it more often?

The second area was in the children's knowledge of authors. In the first questionnaire, 52% of answers were either Roald Dahl, David Walliams or J.K. Rowling. Second time around, this was down to 19%. The children's knowledge of authors has grown exponentially, and they can now talk about so many different authors with ease that it has become a pleasure to hear them do so.

Who is your favourite author?

Keiran Larwood, Peter Bunzl, Lara  
Williamson, Piers Torclay, Kiran  
millwood Hargrove

What is your favourite book ever?

The Legend Of Podkin One ear -

About you

Name: [REDACTED] Class name: Y6Mr <sup>Conors</sup> Date: 6-12-17

Lara williamson, David walliams,  
R.J Palacio, Michael morpurgo,  
Shaun Tan, Gary crew

Thank you!

Who is your favourite author?

J. K. Rowling, David Solomon, Ali Benjamin  
Katherine Rundell, Lara williamson

What is your favourite book ever?

Mr. hatter is a superhero.

FramaticApp

## Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Having read the TaRs research, I feel I have taken as much of it as I can into my own practice. I am now much more confident in recommending books to children and adults alike, I feel I've promoted RfP as a worthwhile and worthy activity, rather than just homework or in guided reading sessions, and, best of all, my children are now buying and borrowing books from a huge range of authors.

Reading is now having an impact in other curriculum areas too, but most importantly for me, the children I teach are developing a love of literature. I hope it continues.