



The potential of a good read.

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Context

The University of Cambridge Primary School is the first primary training school in the country, committed to high quality teaching and learning that is rooted in research. We adopt a principled approach in all we do. The school opened in 2015 and is a three form entry primary school. At this stage in the school's life, I am the only Year 4 teacher – Year 4 being the oldest year group at present. I have a science background and happily lead science at school.

From the outset, UCPS has established a culture of reading for pleasure for children and adults. There are, for example, carefully chosen texts that accompany each half-termly topic, a developing library and timetabled twice weekly visit times for each class, learning streets (open corridors connecting 6 classrooms) full of age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction – topic related and general interest.

As the children are moving through the school they have days filled with rich experiences. We have strong connections with the University, for example, and host many inspiring visitors.

I feel strongly that part of my role as the 'first' Year 4 teacher is to nurture this but also to embed and develop further the children's love for reading for pleasure.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

My focus was inspired by **STRAND 3 of the TaRs research. A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:**

- *Social reading environments*
- *Reading aloud*
- *Independent reading*
- *Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*

In order to support this, I have enjoyed a steep learning curve through the five sessions of the R4P research-informed course led at the school by Teresa Cremin. Through this, and my own research, my eyes have been opened wider than ever I thought to the power and breadth of children's literature.

Aims

- To encourage spontaneous 'book talk', and book appreciation in the classroom and beyond.
- To help reluctant readers find pleasure in reading.
- To develop my own knowledge of children's literature.

Outline

1. Lunchtime clubs

Having asked the children to complete a Reading Questionnaire available on the website, and following my own observations, I identified reluctant readers and invited them to a lunchtime club to read together, and explored books in a super informal environment.

I invited the most experienced readers and writers to a 'StarFruits' club to develop a wider appreciation of the breadth of possibility for books. Some chose to write, others to illustrate and design. The remit was simply that they could justify their choice of activity.

2. Book Feedback

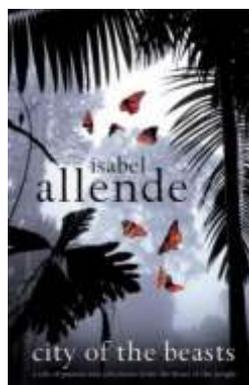
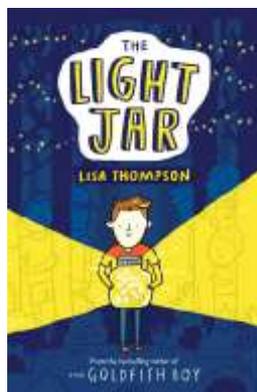
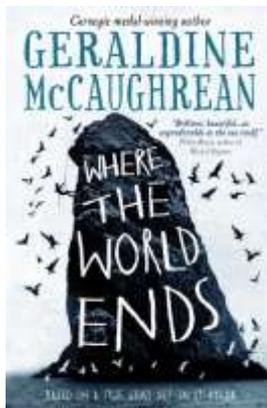
In order to support my aim for encouraging informal booktalk and for books to be a thread running through our learning, I:

- created loan sheets for some of my own books
- delivered World Book Day activities which included exploring the power of the information held on book covers and then children designing their own
- read to the whole class as a non-negotiable in the school day.

3. Personal Development

I aimed to take opportunities to develop my own repertoire and knowledge of children's literature:

- the school set up a Reading Group for teachers and TAs which meets in a hotel garden located across the road from the school.



- I made amateur efforts to use social media to support my reading PD too; work in progress!
- I attended UKLA (Eastern Region) conference in March which included practical workshops and a talk by author SF Said.
- a recent Oxfam Book Shop trawl which also enabled me to develop a class bookshelf

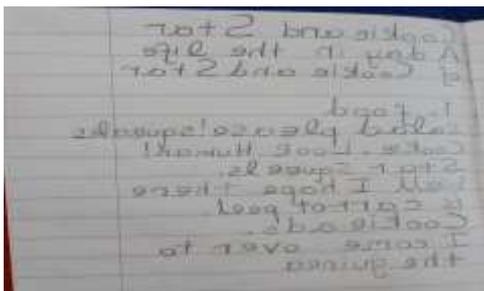


Impact

Lunchtime Clubs:

Children are now engaged in:

- Emulating existing authors
- Exploring and playing with layouts – realising there is no ‘wrong’ way to write
- Creating books
- Constant book blether, and some courageous experimentation in class writing.



Reciprocal Reading:

Allowed time to explore different delivery methods for RR. Now rebranded after observing Wayne Tennant's wonderful demonstration session. Renamed simply 'Book Club'. Mixed experience groups, same text for each group, Alpha, Beta, Gamma... group names which are popular. Children not reading with me have gained the time to read independently, and less experienced readers have frequent opportunities to share their reading with a TA and peers.

Personal development

- I am loving this R4P reading group as a chance to talk books and catch up with colleagues in a relaxed environment. This is ably propelled by a booky colleague, Aimee Durning – but gaining its own momentum. We all look forward to it very much
The keynote at the UKLA conference from SF Said inspired me so much I bought the book. Varjak Paw has been a phenomenally popular class reader; Varjak the Outlaw has been voted in for next class read.

Reflections. My eyes have been opened to a world of possibilities.

Next Steps

- Reading survey suggested that many children wanted a cosy place to read in school – more cushions and blankets are on the wish list
- Personally - keep reading
- Push regular Book Weeks and other book events in school
- Research author visits
- Tweak and reboot the same aims with new class cohort in September
- Explore Jon Biddle's Reading Buddies work to use at UCPS for reluctant readers

Quotes from the children which will inspire further work around RfP pedagogy_

- "Is this from The Explorer? I recognise the artwork from Mrs Durning's door."
- "I can escape into my own world when I read."
- "I love to read in my bed now – it's cosy and peaceful."
- "Can you please read that to us?" "Then this one!"
- "You'll love this book Mrs Bullen-Smith; it's really funny with, I think, 3 different stories running through it which is so cool."
- "I'll lend you this when I'm finished, I think you'll like it as the story is like Harry Potter but better."