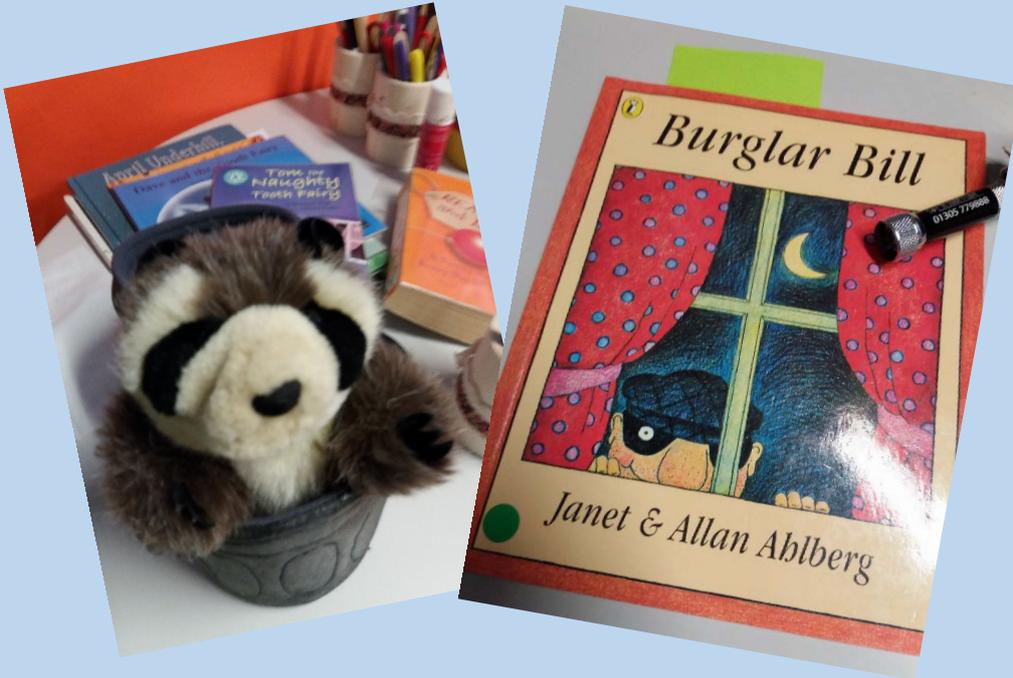


# The power of puppets and performance

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## CONTEXT

I am a volunteer reading partner with Dorset Reading Partnership, I read with Year 3 pupils in a First School in Dorchester, Dorset. This is my first year as a reading partner, I meet once a week with 4 pupils for 25 minutes each.

## OU Research Inspiration & Rationale

### ***Inspiration:***

Reading for pleasure and informal book talk, inside text talk and recommendations (Cremin et al., 2014).

### ***Rationale:***

Puppets can break down barriers and provide an effective means to initiate communication.

A puppet can be a good way of capturing the attention of a pupil especially if the adult gives the puppet an engaging personality.

Pupils who lack confidence and are reluctant to speak or read out loud may be more willing to talk or read to a puppet informally and with spontaneity.

Puppets come to life as characters creating a reading environment that becomes more socially engaging. They can portray different personalities and can share happiness or

sadness; they can be naughty or good, cheeky or shy, and can listen and chat with the pupil about the books, the pupils can become more engaged without realising.

Pupils can use puppets to re-tell stories and create their own stories and scenarios, encouraging playfulness and fun.

Puppets can facilitate book talk through intimate conversations, pupil to puppet, about the book, authors and illustrators, characters and scenarios. This gives pupils the opportunity to develop a greater interest and responsibility for their own reading, tempting them to try new authors and texts.



## AIMS

- To engage reticent and reluctant readers
- To enjoy reading/sharing a book
- To develop questioning and talk about the story and characters
- To encourage an awareness of different emotions through playing with characters voices and using the puppet to comment/engage

## OUTLINE – What did I do?

- I introduced a racoon hand puppet inside a cloth dustbin to each pupil in turn
- I use the puppet to capture their attention and engage directly
- Each pupil named it which we use in our session together: POW, Racoony, Erin and Hedgy. The puppet can become anyone or anything he or she wants, a best friend, a brother or sister, teacher, a pet or a character from a story
- I animate the puppet to listen attentively to the child reading, ask questions and engage with the pupil, it whispers to me and comments on how well the child is doing so has a character and personality of its own – another person in the room
  - I use different voices to give the puppet different characters
  - The children also use the puppet and give it a character of their own, they talk directly to it and engage with it as a real person, one pupil uses the puppet to decode words and help with reading
  - Two pupils are reading Burglar Bill. We used different voices for Bill, Betty and the Baby, the puppet takes on one of the characters and reads with the children, commenting, asking questions and engaging with the story and the child
  - I have made finger puppets of Bill, Betty and the baby and the pupils use them to read/retell the story



- We have acted out being Burglar Bill using a torch and pinching things from around the classroom, “That’s a nice paintbrush, I’ll have that!”
- The puppet and I peek to see what is going to happen next in the story and keep it a secret, both pupils cannot wait until the next week and are excited to read straight away to find out what happens
- I have also used the puppet to encourage conversation with one very quiet child who was reluctant to talk at all, she tickles it under the chin and is delighted and excited when it responds
- One pupil has been reading jokes to the puppet, and double checks with me that I won’t tell the puppet the answers as she knows I’ve heard the jokes already

### Other resources used:

*Green Eggs and Ham* and other Dr Seuss books, *Mr Creep the Crook* and other Allan Ahlberg books which led on to “if you like this you might like this...”

Lots of Tooth Fairy books including *Autobiographies you never thought you’d read - The Tooth Fairy* by Catherine Chambers, and a finger puppet tooth fairy for a pupil who was losing her milk teeth and so excited about it!

*The Orchard Book of Fairy Stories*

Using my DRP card at the County Library for a more books based on my knowledge of the pupils’ interests.

### IMPACT

- Increased confidence of all four pupils and me!
- Using the puppet has a positive effect on the pupils, they are completely engaged and use the puppet as an additional person in the room, breaking down any barriers and creating a lovely social atmosphere
- Using the puppet has encouraged lots of spontaneous conversation and informal chat about the books, writers and illustrators
- The use of different voices and acting out bits of the story kept the pupils excited and they were keen to find out what would happen next in the story and enjoyed guessing
- Telling their own stories to the puppet has given the pupils a purpose and sense of responsibility and expanded their repertoire and knowledge of storytelling
- Acting out parts of a story has energised, changed the pace of our sessions and involved movement – so has been a very useful and positive break from sitting which the pupils have enjoyed



