

Swimming against the Tide

Expanding children's reading experiences in an age of 'Celebrity Authors'

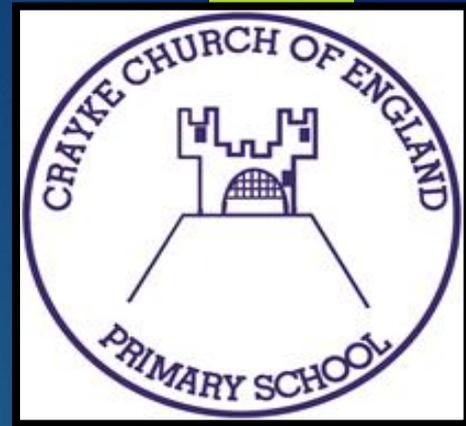
A submission for the 'experienced teacher' EGMONT 2020 RFP Award

Louise Rayner
@thegiddyteacher



Context

- ▶ I have taught primary school children for over 11 years.
- ▶ I teach a mixed Year 3 and 4 class at Crayke C of E Primary School in North Yorkshire and am English Co-ordinator.
- ▶ Our reading results have been consistently above the national average in the last few years.
- ▶ Children generally enjoy reading across the school.
- ▶ A RfP survey I administered to Key Stage 2 pupils in July 2019 showed that the top three favourite authors across **every year group** included **only** Roald Dahl, David Walliams and J.K Rowling.
- ▶ Children were **only** reading fiction texts for pleasure, with no poetry or non-fiction mentioned at all by any pupil.



OU Research inspiration and rationale

The following Open University's Teachers as Readers (TaRs) findings inspired me to develop 'Reading for Pleasure':

1. Developing a considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts

Through analysing the results it was clear that, although our school's results were excellent, children weren't being exposed to a wide enough range of texts for enjoyment, despite having the reading ability to be able to do so. We, as teachers, needed to take the lead and understand more about children's literature and other texts, to be able to turn the tide on their choices of celebrity authors and poorer-quality texts.

2. Knowledge of children's reading practices

This is what started it all off; realising that, as a staff, we didn't really know what the children were reading for pleasure outside of school (or if, indeed, they even were!) It was an area that had been left unchallenged, with the knowledge that our children were good readers in terms of their academic success.

3. A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:

► Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations

It was then clear that the children needed someone to offer them recommendations of quality texts and the tools with which to identify quality texts and ultimately recommend them to each other.

5. Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.

Developing a reading community would be crucial for the success of this 'mission.' It needed to be something sustainable and have a long term impact. (Cremin et al., 2014)

Aims

- ▶ To broaden the children's experiences of reading books by different authors.
- ▶ In response to the results from the pupil RfP survey in our school, support children in selecting a wider range of authors and genres.
- ▶ To focus on one of the aspects of the key TaRs research findings:

“Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations”

in addition to involving parents through developing
“reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.”

An example of the 'Reading Newsletter'

Crayke C of E Primary School Reading Newsletter Spring Term 2020

Author Spotlight

Approach to our school's book club author Catherine Cook

I've always loved writing. I found my old creative writing exercise book recently from Year 4 and I vividly remember all those short stories and poems and how much fun, care and enjoyment eleven-year-old me took from crafting each sentence. One was about a haunted mansion, another was about a mountain made of carrots... I was 11. I was older, Thomas Hardy, Jane Austen and Charles Brown... That's a key part of being a writer: reading other people's words. When I was older, my love of writing led me into a career in TV journalism, telling other people's stories, then, when I had my three children, I resumed to writing my own. Now, I write children's books. I wrote *There's a Troll on My Toilet* for my then 5-year-old. She's now ten! It takes a long time to publish a book: some writers have a special place where they write - a desk in a special room for example with inspiring pictures and ornaments around them - but I don't mind where I am. It's all about the writing though. I can't write to order. I have to feel inspired and be in the right 'place' in my mind. I love writing in rhyme the best. It's so fun and so satisfying when you feel the perfect rhyme. I love description too, probably a little bit too much! Often I have to cut it down. I love seeing something completely different in the ordinary. Cotton wool instead of clouds... a fly equipped with chest instead of the sunny sky. Try it! It's fun. Oh and when you're writing, don't worry about getting it perfect straight away. The first draft is always going to change; just get your ideas and thoughts down as roughly as you like, you can always edit it many times as you like, before you come up with the version you're happy with. Enjoy the process! Finish, clear your brain of all the everyday stuff and dip your pen into the boundless world of your imagination.

Book Club

This term we are reading *The Girl, Forest Boy* by Chloe Daykin

Book Club is open to years 3 & 4 this term. We meet every Thursday after school until 4.15 to informally discuss great books and share the reading of a quality book (with some treats thrown in for good measure too!) If you don't get a place this term, don't worry, you'll be on the Book Club! You can check out about the book with others and could be in with a chance of joining if a space becomes available, too.

Easingwold Library Opening Times

Monday, 10am to 5pm
Tuesday, 2pm to 5pm
Wednesday, closed
Thursday, 1pm to 5pm
Friday, 9.30am to 5pm
Saturday, 10am to 12.30pm
Sunday, closed

A New Bookshop in York!

The Blue House Bookshop

A brand new bookshop, dedicated entirely to quality children's books for all ages. A must-try!



10 Bootham, York

Celebrating Poetry

Look out for a beautifully illustrated new poetry book coming out by talented poet Julie Anna Douglas, which inspires creativity and art. She will announce it at the end of January, but in the meantime, Julie Anna Douglas has shared this poem for us:

The Dragon's Eyes

The Dragon's eyes are diamond bright,
mirror smooth and crystal clear.
The Dragon's eyes are dancing flames,
full of hopes and dreams and fears.
The Dragon's eyes are ancient pools
as dark and deep as any sea.
The Dragon's eyes are wide and wise
and they are staring straight at me.

What happens when you feel stressed? Maybe you start sweating or your heart beats faster. When Charlie Douglas got stressed, something a little bit different happened. He turns into an animal. Unfortunately, things are getting quite stressful for Charlie: 'He did a business in it real trouble. He might even have to have his Aunt Brenda and her seventeen cats (and wooden leg). And getting harder and harder to control his powers. Luckily, Charlie best friends Flora, Vlogan and Hosenan can help him out. Can Charlie help him master his powers once and for all, or will he end up stuck as a pigon forever?'

The brilliantly funny debut **SAM WU** book - the bravest scardy-cat in the world! Perfect for reluctant readers and fans of Pamela Butcher.

Sam Wu is NOT afraid of anything. Except for quite a lot of things. Like ghosts. Sharks too. And also THE DARK! And when Sam goes camping in the woods with his friends and cousin Stanley, who knows what scary kind of things they'll face...?

Poetry Books to Try...

I am the Seed that Grew the Tree by National Trust. A Poem for Every Day of the Year by Alle Elin. A First Poetry Book by裴 Corbett and Gabr Morgan and Michael Rossen's A-Z.

Fiction (aimed at Class 1 and 2)

You can't take an Elephant on the Bus
by Patricia Cleveland-Peck

You can't take an elephant on the bus. It would simply cause a terrible fuss.

Elephants' bottoms are heavy and fat and would certainly squish the seats quite flat.

Never put a camel in a sailing boat, or a tiger on a train, and don't even THINK about asking a whale to ride a bike... This riotous picture book is filled with animals causing total disaster as they try to travel in the most unsuitable vehicles. A real triumph of a book, with hilarious rhyming text and spectacular illustrations.

Two greedy squirrels learn to share, in this hilarious rhyming adventure from the bestselling creators of *The Lemon Squeezy*.

Greedy squirrels Cyril and Bruce both have their sights on a very special prize: THE BUNCY LAST NUT OF THE SEASON! As the nut bores crazily through the forest, the squirrels race after it, between the trees, over boulders, down the river and - ARGH! - right to the edge of a waterfall! Working together might be the only way to save themselves now...

Charlie turns into a T-Rex, by Sam Copeland

Sam Wu is NOT afraid of anything. Except for quite a lot of things. Like ghosts. Sharks too. And also THE DARK! And when Sam goes camping in the woods with his friends and cousin Stanley, who knows what scary kind of things they'll face...?

New Fiction for 2020 (aimed at Class 3 and 4)

The Kid who Came from Space, by Ross Welford

A small village in the wilds of Northumberland is rocked by the disappearance of twelve-year-old Tammy. Only her twin brother, Ethan, knows she is safe - and the extraordinary truth of where she is. It is a secret he must keep, or risk never seeing her again. But that doesn't mean he's going to give up. Together with his friend Leo and the mysterious (and very hairy) Helzyan, Ethan teams up with a spaceship called Philby, and Sassy the trained chook, for a nail-biting chase to get his sister back... that will take him further than anyone has ever been before.

Chaya, a no-nonsense, outspoken hero, leads her friends and a gorgeous elephant on a noisy, fragrant, joyous adventure through the jungle where revolution is stirring and leeches lurk.

Will staying the queen's jewels be the beginning or the end of everything for the inisppid gang?

The Girl who Stole an Elephant, by Marissa Frenck

Swept into the bright hustle and bustle of New York, Lily, Robert and Malkin discover shadowy secrets lie beneath its surface. For there are chilling goings-on in their hotel.

A strange boy held captive, haunted by an undersea mystery, and a revealing villain with a treacherous plan. Searching for clues, Robert and Lily are plunged into deep water... But can they reveal the deadly truth before the secrets submerge them? (The final book in the 'Coffgrave' series)

Fantastically Great Women who Saved the Planet

From bestselling author and illustrator Kate Parkhurst, descendant of Emmeline Pankhurst, comes another 'informative, inclusive and accessible' book about trail-blazing women. Tackle the plastic problem with Isatou Ceesay by recycling waste into beautiful objects. Marvel at the intelligence of chimpanzees with Jane Goodall. Learn why it's important to shop fair trade and cruelty-free with Anna Rodnick and The Body Shop. Fascinating delectable information and plans seeds of change with Wangari Maathai.

Your Recommendations

Last term, Key Stage 2 were all busy adding their favourite books onto our 'recommendations' display... there were so many, the whole display board ended up covered! Here are a few highlights:

- **TeaBibbles**, by Heidi Hardy
- **Thunder on the Roof of the World** by Jess Bullenworth
- **Talesmancer** by Thomas Taylor
- **'Alex Rider' series** by Anthony Browne
- **The Last Child** by Peter Tardy

Quality Non-Fiction

Migration: Incredible Animal Journeys by Mike Unwin

Animals of all shapes and sizes make epic journeys across our planet, through harsh weather, avoiding hungry predators, in their efforts to survive. Travel around the globe with some of the world's most incredible animals and discover their unique migration stories.

With stunning colour illustrations, uncover the astonishing migrations of 20 creatures, in this truly inspiring narrative. Written by Mike Unwin, a UK Travel Writer of the Year, and illustrated by Jenni Desmond, winner of the New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book, prepare yourself for a journey like no other.

Who built the first houses? What the difference between an arch and an architrave? How does a dome stay up? Who invented concrete? Can you build a house from paper? If you want to know more about the buildings around you, this entertaining illustrated guide is a perfect introduction to architecture around the world. From the most hazy of ancient history to today's towering edifices, you can explore iconic buildings and find out more about the people who created them. You'll also discover the developments of different building materials, from mud and straw to paper, steel and reinforced concrete.

Discovering Architecture by Mia Bardsley

Exceptional Men in Black

History by Yashni Harrison

Did you know that the father of African cinema was originally a bricklayer? Or that Vogue's editor-at-large read his first Vogue magazine in his local library?

Learn all about the exceptional black men who broke barriers and fought injustice to realise their dreams and make the world a better place. With Yashni Harrison's beautiful illustrations and illuminating writing, discover the stories of black men from all walks of life, including:

- Doctor Harold Moody
- Diplomat Kofi Annan
- Activist Paul Stephenson
- Architect Sir David Adjaye
- Comic book author Dwayne McDuffie
- Musical Prince

Earthshattering Events! Science behind Natural Disasters by Sophie Williams and Robbie Jacobs

This book explores nature at its most destructive. Clear, coherent explanations break down the science behind phenomena including hurricanes, tornadoes, avalanches, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes, alongside fascinating facts about the bigger and the worst. Informative, accessible illustrations by Sophie Williams make this so much more than your standard geography book.

You'll be transported by riveting adventure tales from around the globe, like being dragged off by a hyena in Botswana, surviving a Saharan dust storm, being taken by an intruder emperor penguin in Antarctica. This breath-taking book is packed with information on wild camping, rapping, exploration, and shelters and desert life on the first aid and tying knots. Expert instructions on wilderness basics, like building a fire, what to do if you get lost, and how to build various types of shelters are accompanied by more specific skills culled from many years of experience, like baking campfire bread, creating a toothbrush from a twig, making a suture from soldier ants, and even how to pan for gold.

Monthly Messages to Try...

Storytime

STORPTOWN

Touch down with a *Misson to the Moon* in Storytime issue 65, packed with stellar stories: *Meet a Sleazy Giant*, a *Happy Prince*, and a *Wise Parrot*. There are some fairies up to mischief, and a brave little girl with a wicked stepmother. Plus the White Rabbit is running late as usual - will he miss a very important date?

Whizz Pop Bang

Prepare for science that BOOMS, BANGS and BURSTS, because Whizz Pop Bang's EXPLOSIVE SCIENCE. This issue, scientists-in-training can make water bombs, create explosive art, detonate a homemade bath bomb and off a chemical reaction that ends with a mild explosion. Who chat to a chemist who blows things up to inspire her students, look inside a fireworks, discover what amazing plants and animals that explode, and SO MUCH MORE!

Aquila

Aimed at confident readers aged between 8 and 12, in this issue, children can investigate the abundance and diversity of life on Earth, exploring the idea that a single-cell bacterium-like organism may be the common ancestor of all life-forms on our planet! PLUS: make some fantastic Arty Fossil imprints and have fun with a simple experiment, imagining what species might look like in a post-human world.

What have you tried from our Reading Newsletter?

I'd love to know if you have tried anything out as a result of our 'Reading Newsletter'! Perhaps you've entered a competition or borrowed a book from the library? Come and chat to me on the playground, write a recommendation for our display and tell your friends about what you've been reading!

Happy reading,
Hls Royner

| Date | Event | Exciting Events and Competitions! | Website |
|--------------|---|---|--|
| January 2020 | Scholastic Lollies (Laugh our Loud) Book Awards Winners announced | The Laugh 'Out Loud' Book Awards (the Lollies) celebrates the best and funniest children's books in the UK and Ireland, voted for by children. Shortlisted entries for next year will be announced June 2020! | https://shop.scholastic.co.uk/ollies |
| January 2020 | Poll Lady Apples Writes It Young Food Writer (deadline April, winners announced in May) | The Write It competition is back for 2020, with your chance to be crowned Young Food Writer of the Year. The competition opens in January and closes at the end of April, with the winners announced in May. | www.pinkladyapples.co.uk/writeit |
| January 2020 | BBC Radio 2's 500 Words (series starts deadline March 2020) | 500 Words' is the UK's most successful short story-writing competition for children between the ages of 8 and 13. Deadline will be early March 2020. | https://www.bbc.co.uk/500words/2019/ |
| January 2020 | Write Night: Fiction and Poetry Competition | Our competitions are all year round with deadlines on 1st January, 1st April, 1st July, 1st October. Winners will be released within 3 weeks of the deadline. 7-11: 1000 word limit for fiction, 15 line max. for poetry 12-15: 1500 word limit for fiction, 20 line max. for poetry. Entry is FREE! | www.cranburyhillwriters.com |
| 31/01/20 | Cranbury Ties Writing Competition 2019-2020 (Hopea and Dreams) | The Chaucer Heritage is hosting its third annual writing competition for schools inspired by the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, considered by many to be the father of the English Language and England's greatest medieval poet. The specific theme of the competition, <i>Hope and Dreams</i> . The competition is open to all school students. The three age groups are: Junior - 5-10 years old, Intermediate - 11-14 years old and Senior - 15-18 years old. | www.chaucer.org.uk/the-chaucer-heritage-writing-competition-2019-20 hope-and-dreams@chaucer.org.uk |

Zoom in to take a closer look...

Outline (Continued...)



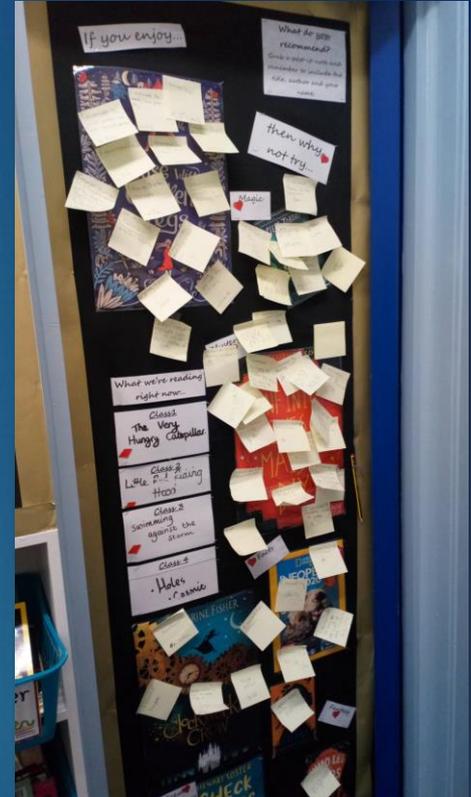
- ▶ The reading newsletter is displayed prominently for children to see, with an invitation for them to make their own recommendations. It proved to be even more popular than I had imagined!
- ▶ Children created 'match-BOOKS' where they collated miniature copies of the front covers of books they have read for pleasure so far (on the inside of the match-box.) This has enabled conversations about their choices between pupils and has highlighted if children are reading more broadly.

- ▶ A high quality display, relating to a whole-class book (to be read aloud to the class purely for enjoyment,) enabled children to access images that would support them in imagining the setting and highlight key vocabulary for us to discuss.
- ▶ I then set up a weekly 'Book Club' to provide a time and space for RfP.



Impact

- ▶ In a relatively short amount of time, children's knowledge of other authors (beyond 'celebrities') has increased dramatically.
- ▶ All members of staff are now more aware of what children are reading for pleasure and are embedding high quality texts across the curriculum.
- ▶ Children are not only reading fiction; high quality non-fiction and poetry are being read for pleasure for the first time.
- ▶ Parents have commented on how useful the 'Reading Newsletter' has proven to be, in supporting them to help make choices of books to borrow or buy.
- ▶ Evidence is clear in all teacher's observations of shifts in attitude, of the recommendations children have made on the whole-school 'Reading for Pleasure' display and through discussions with children. Pupils are often overheard discussing books at lunchtime and approach adults daily, to discuss books they are reading. The impact has been dramatic; particularly in Key Stage 2.



Impact (Continued)

A Wider Impact

I felt that the impact had been so positive, I had to share the 'Reading Newsletter' with other teachers, so I volunteered to hold a workshop for 'Reading Rocks North.'

Some of the teachers who had attended the workshop then used and adapted the format I shared, to bring the newsletter to their own schools, and shared it with me on Twitter:

You Retweeted

Emma D @Miss_D1994 · 16 Nov 2019
@thegiddyteacher Thank you for a brilliant workshop at Reading Rocks North! There's loads of idea I'm very excited to try. Could you send me some ideas for what you do for your book club when you get the chance? 📖📚 #RR_North

Michaela N @Michaela_Noble · 9 Nov 2019
@thegiddyteacher I really enjoyed your workshop this afternoon ans have a list of resources that I would love to borrow! Thanks again! #RR_North

Teacher @L_T_E_A_C_H · 10 Nov 2019
Tried a reading newsletter after @thegiddyteacher suggested them at @_Reading_Rocks_. Gave them out on parent's evening with a parent reading survey from @OpenUni_RfP adding the question 'Would you like a termly reading news letter?' 100% 🟢 yes. Already working on Spring's.

maria buckley @buckmk74 · 10 Nov 2019
Getting teachers to explore local libraries and children's books WOW, YES,YES,YES!! @thegiddyteacher @_Reading_Rocks_ @CAYPTeam @GatesheadLibs

marion s @mazst · 9 Nov 2019
Thank you for sharing I'll be begging for some resources !

Sophie Bee @MissieBee · 10 Nov 2019
Sent out our Christmas reading newsletter today! 📖📚 Started in September after being inspired by @MRBKing1988. Thank you so much @thegiddyteacher for sharing your template to adapt 📖📚 #readingrocks #PrimaryRocks

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

- ▶ The (TaRs) research really influenced me to think about the power of recommendations and how parent's knowledge of authors is limited; they need the recommendations, too!
- ▶ It made me consider the reading community; not just the children and the staff, but how the parents are so heavily involved in our community in taking their children to the library or buying books for their children. I needed to broaden their horizons, to enable the children to have a wider reading experience. It also made me consider the wider reading community and pushed me out of my comfort zone, to speak at 'Reading Rocks North' to share my ideas and resources.

Next Steps:

- ▶ I am planning a 'reading for pleasure' parents evening, inviting in a local, independent bookseller to showcase a wide range of genres and quality texts by authors they may not have come across before, with the children involved in sharing discussions with parents and carers, too.
- ▶ I will continue to monitor children's reading for pleasure habits more closely, using the reading for pleasure survey.
- ▶ Developing a social reading environment for the children to keep the momentum going for themselves will be hugely beneficial.