



I co-hosted #MorningBrewEd with Ed Finch and our theme was 'Reading for Pleasure'. Now we are both passionate about 'reading for pleasure' but what is it? Is it having a campfire and a tent in your reading corner or is it something that is deeper than the sparkle and glitz? We invited along Teresa Cremin (Professor of Education (Literacy) at the Open University), Ben Harris (a teacher of twenty years and English lead who is passionate about the power of reading), Sonia Thompson (Head @ St Matthew's C.E. Teaching and Research School) and Richard Charlesworth (a Year 6 teacher and Primary English Lead) to help us unpick this question.

'What is reading for pleasure?'

Teresa answered that it is:

choosing to read

which I thought was a fascinating answer. All too often I have to read but how often do I choose to read? I have to read policies and documentation, but I genuinely take no pleasure in doing so. I very much doubt, the children in my class are filled with pleasure when presented with maths questions they have to read or indeed a SATs booklet, so how do we ensure that they develop a love of reading, that they choose to read, that they take pleasure in reading? How do we even know if reading is pleasurable for them?

The Skill and the Will

Ben talked about the importance of balancing 'the skill' with 'the will'. We have a duty as educators to teach our children the technical aspects of reading - 'the skill', but in doing this, sometimes the fun is taken out of it with children seeing reading as merely a series of hurdles to overcome and not something to take pleasure in. Knowing our children and providing them with texts that link to their passions is clearly the way forward and develops 'the will'. Allowing children the freedom to choose comics, graphic novels, chapter books or indeed the Argos catalogue from a wide range of reading material available to them was agreed by all to be the way forward. Sonia passionately asserted the importance of this being driven from the top, being a whole school focus and recognising that it is journey and not a terribly fast one.

Finally, Rich defined 'reading for pleasure' as a personal relationship for a child with a book and advocated the use of picture books in Upper Key Stage 2. His advice was simple, find texts that tempt and model 'book chat'.

'Book Chat'

This led us seamlessly onto the project that Teresa, Ben and Rich have been collaborating on over lock-down - 'Book Chat'. On the [Research Rich Pedagogies](#) site, Book Chat is defined as:

the informal interaction that accompanies quality reading to and with children, developing children's language and comprehension and nurturing a love of reading.

Thankfully for educators, parents and anyone else keen to know more about what 'book chats' look like, they have created videos, posters and question guidance which can be found here -

The idea behind this is that 'book chats' enable children to relate to books on a personal level, which makes it all the more important for children to see themselves represented in the books that they are choosing to read. Thankfully, we are now able as educators, to select books from a wide-range of authors which means that no classroom, library or school should have a narrow selection of books.

To bling or not to bling?

We then moved on to discuss what 'book corners' should look like and Ben made the great point that we shouldn't have book corners but book classrooms. Our classrooms, whether in primary or secondary should be text rich and I say text as I refer back to my previous point - the Argos catalogue does have a place. I do have a book corner and it does have twinkly lights and a kaleidoscope of butterflies, but it also has a wide variety of texts. In fact, just as Ben's does, my classroom is littered with books.

There are books that cover all areas of the curriculum - display them around the classroom so that children realise that books don't just live in the book corner. Sonia made a great point at this juncture which is that it is so important for teachers to buy books they love and want in their classrooms, but it is equally important that schools invest in great quality, up-to-date books otherwise when the teacher leaves, all the books will too.

There is no doubt that we are all passionate about advocating 'reading for pleasure' but as Sonia so rightly said:

It is all teachers responsibility to show the beauty of reading within their subject area

she was talking specifically about secondary colleagues, but I wonder how many primary subject leaders (English aside) recommend books to their colleagues that will support the teaching of the subjects they lead.

There is no doubt that to embed 'reading for pleasure' across a school is not simple, but to only do so in a tokenistic fashion seems utterly futile. Why bother! So, what was their final advice? School leaders, Sonia wants you to put 'reading for pleasure' on the school improvement plan and lead from the front. She truly believes that 'reading for pleasure' and 'reading for progress' go hand in hand. Teresa wants you to ensure that this is child-led. You can do this by listening to your children, as this is the way to build reading communities. Ben develops Teresa's thought further and says 'know your children' - talk to them and respond to what they want. Rich says that if you need ideas the Research Rich Pedagogies website is filled with them. So, what are you waiting for?

And Finally...

If you want to see the full episode of '#MorningBrewEd Reading for Pleasure' then click on this link: <https://www.pscp.tv/w/1mnGelREvRNKX>

and if you want to know what books to put into your book corner or how to access the 'book talk' resources then just scroll through this padlet: <https://padlet.com/toriabono/MorningBrewEd>



Toria has had many roles in the primary sector – from class teacher to school leader and is currently a Year 4 teacher at Thomas A Becket Junior School and a Primary Evidence Lead Educator for Durrington Research School. She is passionate about developing children's love of reading and is keen to support others to do this too. Through her blog [Teaching Others & Learning All The Time](#), she shares her experiences, opinions and lessons learned in the classroom. She also empowers other educators on Twitter via the #TinyVoiceTuesday and #TinyVoiceTuesdayUnites hashtags.