

Book Babble and Branching Out

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Context



- I am a Year 2 teacher at Franche Community Primary School in Kidderminster, Wyre Forest.
- We are a large, four form entry primary school
- I have been teaching for 11 years and I am reading lead as part of the English team.
- In 2019, we identified 63% of pupils entering the school scored below Age Related Expectations (ARE) in the British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) test. Many pupils have limited life and cultural experiences, exacerbated during the recent pandemic, and limited access to high quality reading materials.
- Over the last few years, the profile of reading has been raised at Franche, with a move to whole class guided reading and an updated school library.

OU research inspiration and rationale

According to Cox and Guthrie, 2001, young people who are not motivated to read, fail to benefit from the teaching of reading. This is not a shock to any teacher of reading but it is something I felt I needed to try and change. As an avid reader myself, I want all children to enjoy reading and a large part of that, I feel, is being able to make choices about what they read and to be able to discuss them confidently with others. Therefore, my research inspiration is taken from the following findings from the Teachers as Readers (TARs) research (Cremin et al., 2014) in relation to reading for pleasure:

3. A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:

- Independent reading*
- Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*



Aims

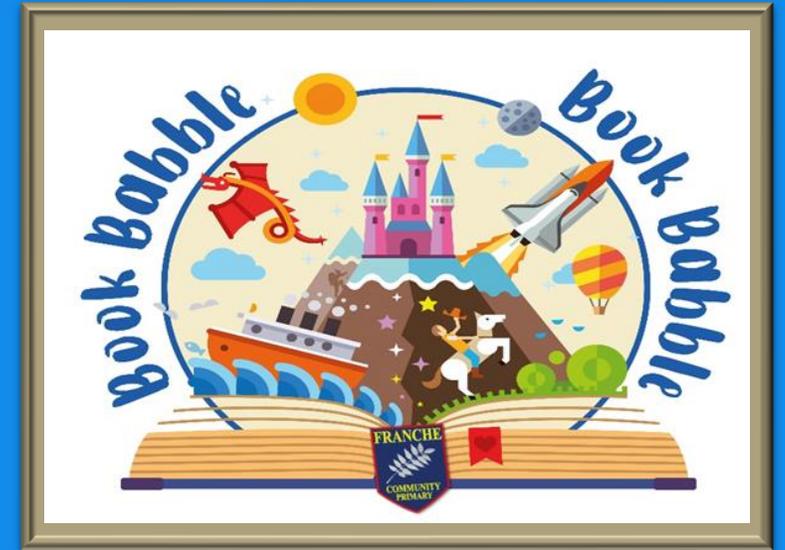
My initial aim was to increase independent reading across the school by providing all pupils with daily, timetabled sessions where they could read a range of high quality texts of their own choosing. This would include increasing the range of texts available to all pupils so that they could discover new genres and authors.

I identified that pupils across the school, even though they reported to enjoy reading, struggled to articulate their opinions of what they had read beyond words such as, “good” and “nice”. As such, my ultimate intention was to not only to provide time for pupils to read independently, but also the opportunity to discuss these texts with their peers and adults confidently, expressing their thoughts and opinions.

Book Babble

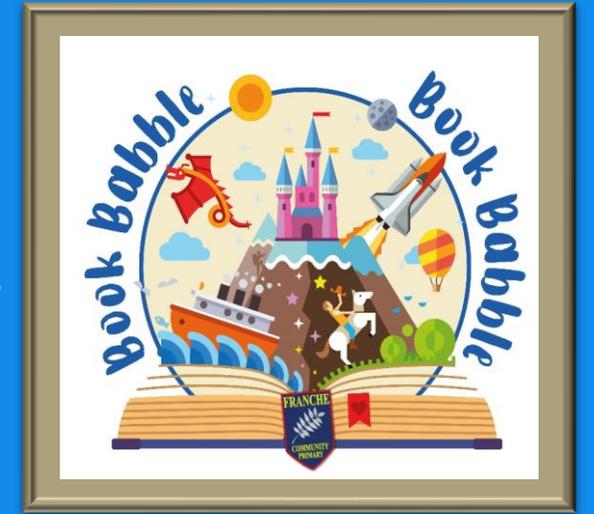
I introduced 'Book Babble' as part of the daily timetable in September 2020. In 'Book Babble' sessions, every child has time to independently read a book of their choice. For Key Stage 1, this means choosing from a selection of books from the class book corner and in Key Stage 2, pupils can choose from the class collection or their chosen loan from the school library.

'Book Babble' is intended to be more than a DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) session, with time being given for both independent reading and discussion. It is a platform in which pupils have the opportunity to explore texts they enjoy in more detail, guided by the class teacher.

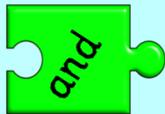
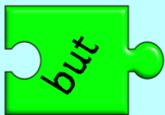


Book Babble

I provided staff with SMART Notebook scaffolds, including discussion formats and stimuli to use as guides for each session, as it was acknowledged that this would need to be guided in the first instance. These prompts were open enough so that they would work across a range of genres.



 ABC

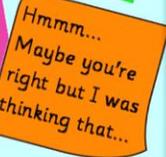
A	Agree	
B	Build on	
C	Challenge	

General Book Babble

Talk to your partners or your table groups about the books you are reading. Think carefully about the questions you could ask.





Making connections

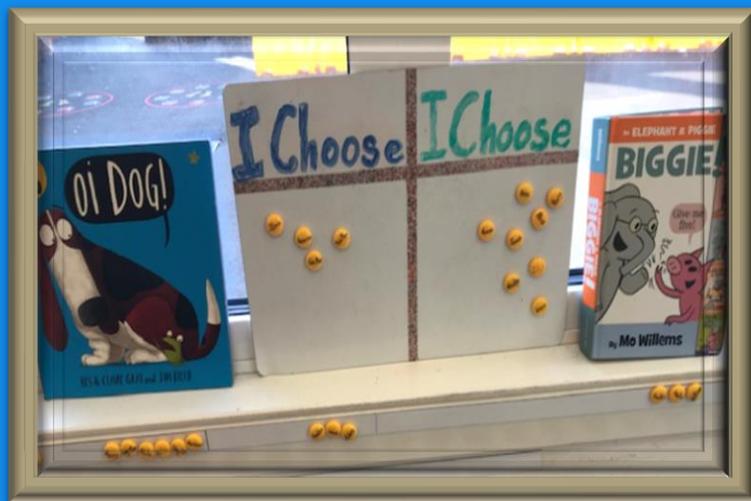
Can you make a connection?



Text to self 	Text to text 
Text to media 	Text to world 

Building Babble

As I am based in Year 2, I decided to trial new initiatives to encourage book talk and recommendations amongst pupils within this cohort. The first initiative was 'I Choose...', which allows pupils to choose from two books, the most popular of which is read at the end of the day. This is in addition to the class chapter book, read aloud at different intervals throughout the day. Before the 'I Choose' text is read, pupils are asked to explain why they have chosen one book over another.



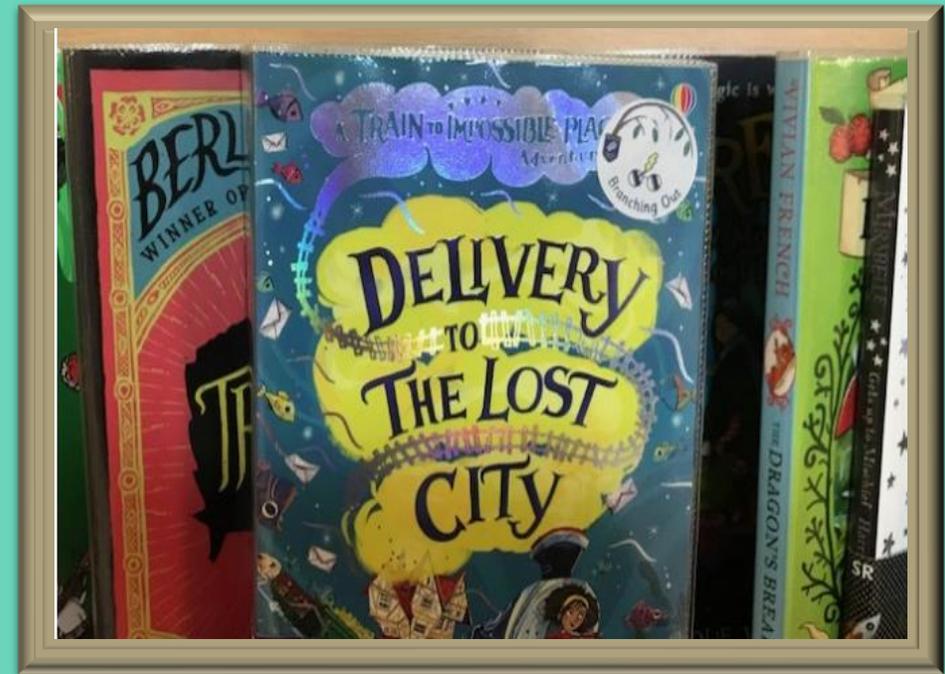
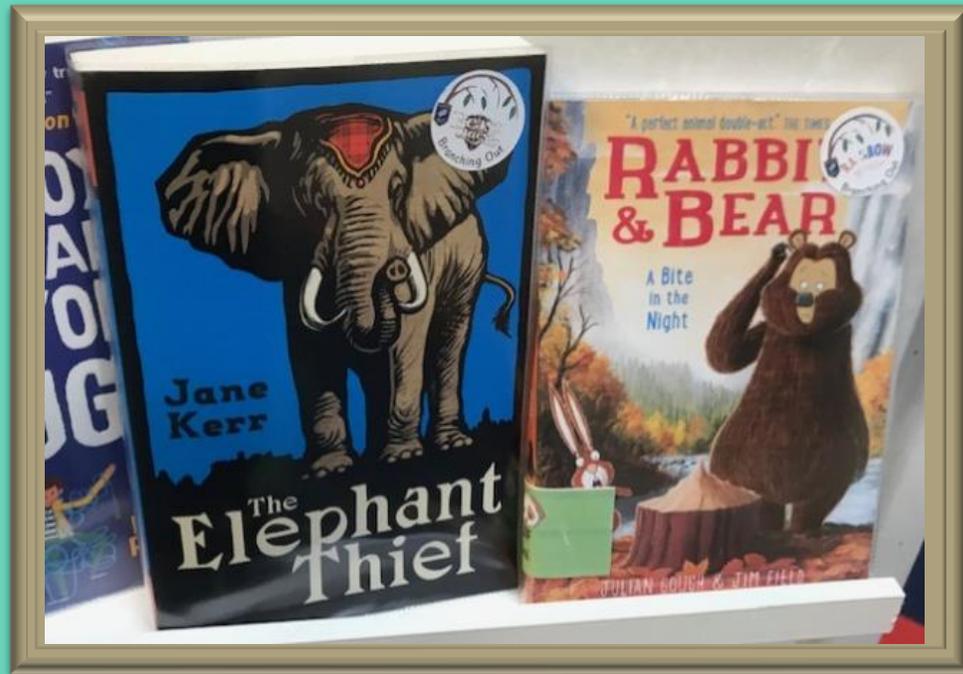
Building Babble

I conducted initial interviews with Year 2 pupils to establish how they described books and found that vague adjectives, such as 'good' and 'nice' were commonly used. Therefore, the second initiative was 'Just Three Words', where pupils are encouraged to describe the book they have read during 'Book Babble' using ... just three words! The intention was that this would eventually lead to more detailed peer recommendations.



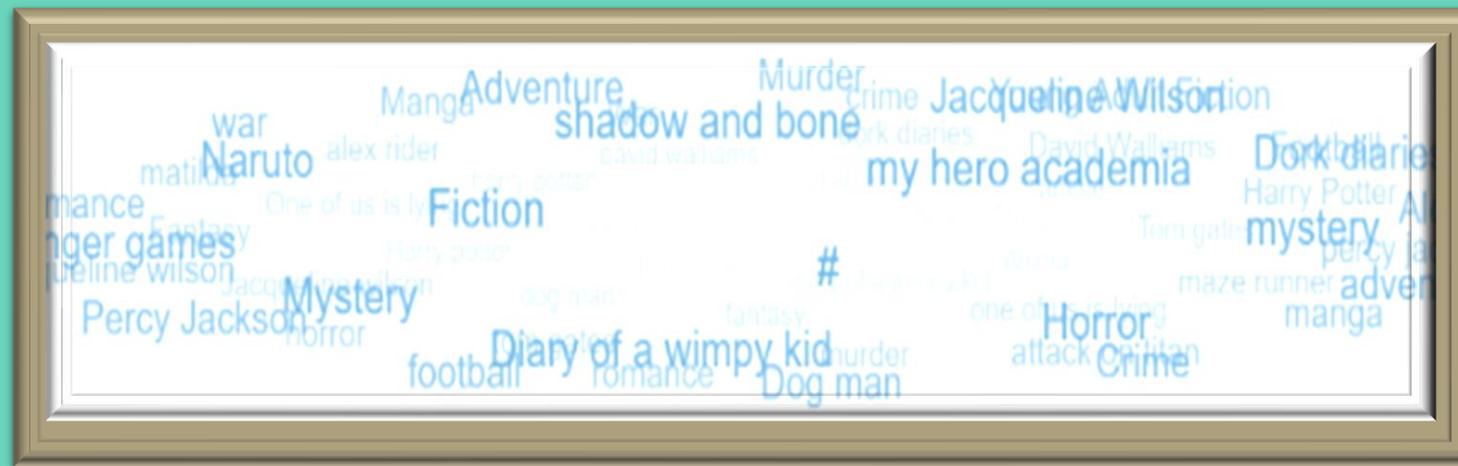
Impact : Branching Out

The buzz around the new 'Branching Out' books for the KS2 library was exciting, with pupils spotting the boxes of books while they were being catalogued. Before the books were displayed, I asked KS2 teachers to share information with the children, explaining the 'Branching Out' stickers and introducing a review writing competition.



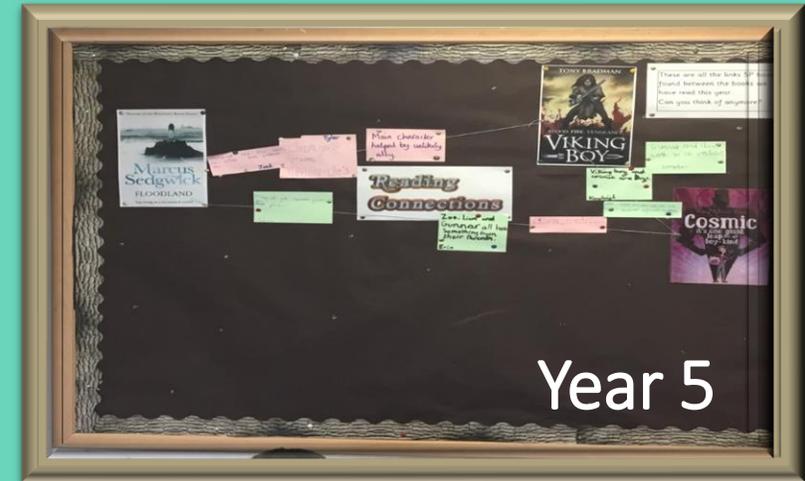
Impact : Branching Out

The books have been incredibly popular, with most of the newer stock flying off the shelves each week. Our library loan system includes a 'Trending' cloud that updates regularly. Slowly but surely, new genres, characters and authors have appeared beyond Walliams and Wimpy Kid. Feedback from the pupils through discussion and their competition entries showed that they had enjoyed reading new books and, indeed, 'branching out'!



Impact : Book Babble

Book Babble has been a success, with pupils across the school enjoying being given the time to read their chosen books independently. Initially, some pupils found this unstructured time challenging, but the sessions are now embedded in all year bands. Pupils are enthusiastic about this daily session, looking forward to a time when they can simply read for pleasure. Most effective is the 'Babble' aspect, with pupils gaining confidence in discussing their opinions of what they read, as well as making links between different texts. Key Stage 2 classrooms have started to develop their own reading displays where pupils can express their thoughts about books or the links they have made.

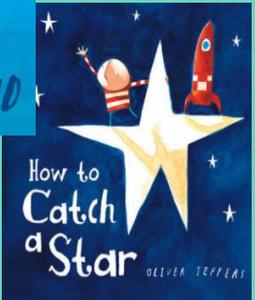
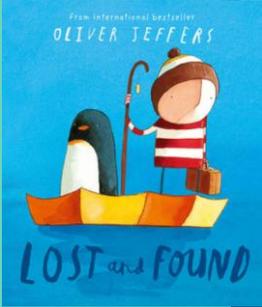
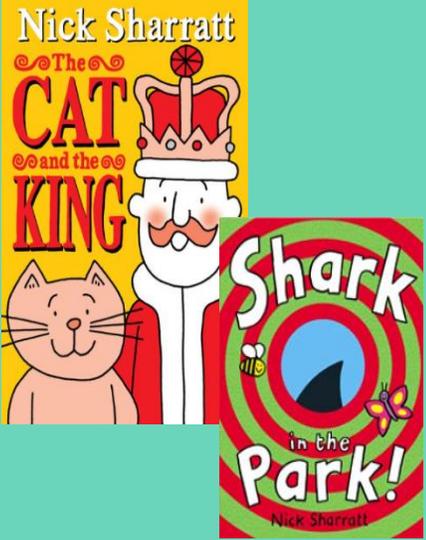


Impact: I Choose ...

The 'I Choose...' initiative in Year 2 has been very successful. Pupils enjoy making their choice, often ensuring it is the first thing they do as they walk through the door in the morning. Initially, when asked why they had chosen a particular book, pupils found it difficult to articulate reasons. However, after guided 'Babbles', pupils became more confident discussing their choices.

"I noticed that the pictures in these books look the same as Lost and Found. That's why I chose it."
Child B, Year 2

"I chose this book because it's the same author as The Cat and the King. I really enjoyed that one so I'll probably like this one too."
Child A, Year 2



Impact: Just Three Words

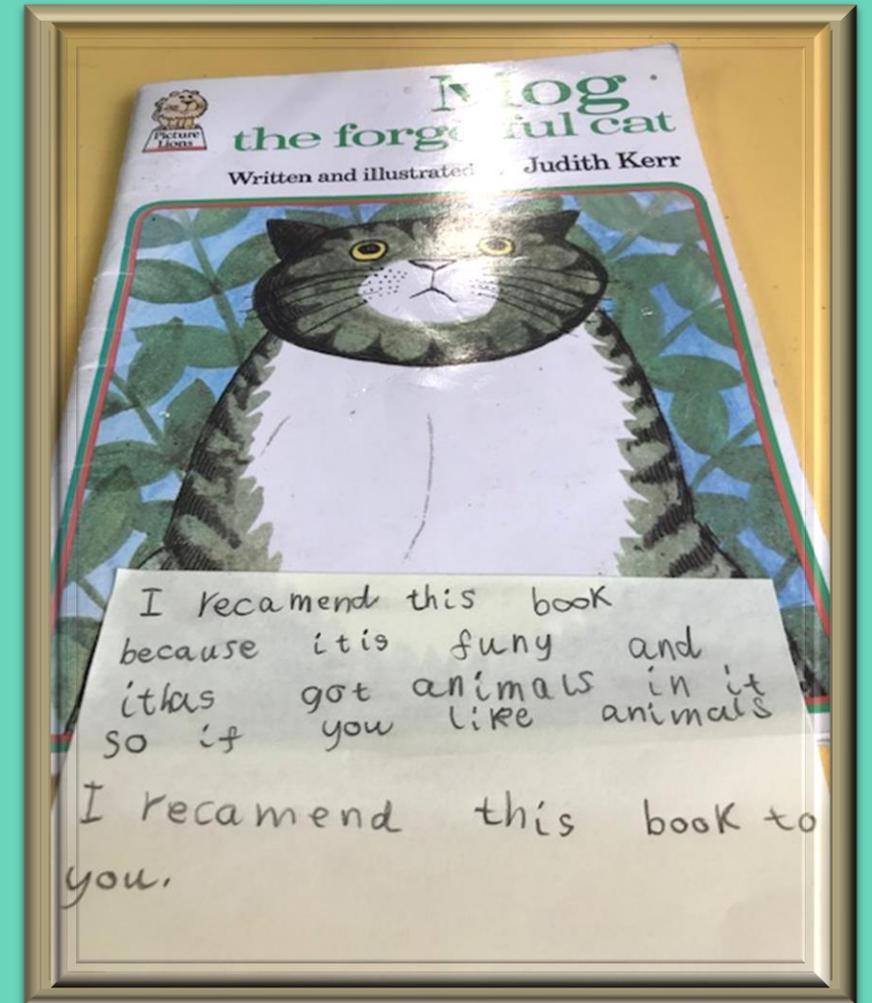
Just Three Words has also been a fun and simple way to improve pupils' vocabulary when describing books and has now been introduced across the school. Discussion and class displays have generated a wider range of vocabulary and helped to make these three word reviews much more informative. Pupils now consider the story and themes of the book and have moved beyond 'nice' and 'good' comments.



Year 2

Impact: Just Three Words

Pupils in Year 2 are now articulating their opinions of what they have read more confidently, both verbally and in writing. They are beginning to make recommendations to their peers and give mini reviews of their favourite books.



Reflections

This research project has strengthened my belief that reading, and, in particular, reading for pleasure, is the most important gift that teachers can bestow on children. During my study with Year 2 pupils, I have been overwhelmed by the improvement of the vocabulary they are now using to discuss and articulate their choices and opinions.

Being able to provide so many high quality texts through our school library has been invaluable, as it has helped to move children away from more familiar authors and book series. This 'Branching Out' has enriched pupils' views of the world by inviting them to meet more diverse characters than they would in their everyday lives.

Moving forwards, I would like to ensure that the quality of the 'Babble' of 'Book Babble' sessions remains high, and to start to build and inspire a wider community of readers.