

READING FOR PLEASURE



BOOK BUZZ: BOOKS, BISCUITS, BLETHER

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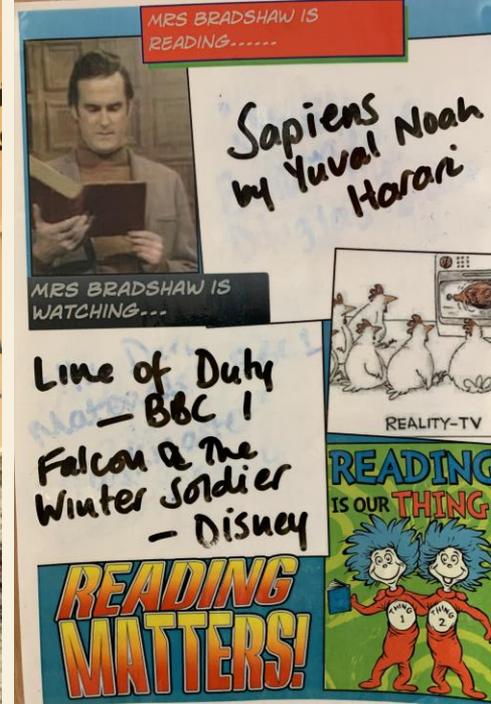
CONTEXT

I am an English teacher of 21 years and have been the Faculty Head of English and Literacy in Strathaven Academy in South Lanarkshire, a large authority in the south west of Scotland, for the last 7 years.

We are already a school that values reading for pleasure with many activities long embedded such as:

- All S1 to S4 pupils have reading registration twice a week
- All staff are provided with and encouraged to wear 'Ask Me What I'm Reading' badges and share what they are reading and watching on their door posters
- A RfP programme is the basis of our English S1/2 homework programme. All subject areas contribute a page of reading related homework
- All S1 to S3 classes begin each English lesson with 10 minutes of RfP

Over the last few years I have led several INSET activities on supporting reading skills and on embedding reading strategies in all classrooms. I am currently supporting colleagues with a 'Closing The Vocabulary Gap' project to enhance disciplinary literacy.



OU RESEARCH INSPIRATION AND RATIONALE

These practices are long embedded and have arguably, as a result, lost their force, their oomph, their impact. This has been compounded by the fact that we lost our part-time librarian in 2018 and were not able to recruit a new librarian until nearly a year later. Before she could really begin to help us refresh and rebuild our RfP work, the pandemic and lockdown hit, seriously disrupting our plans.

I am an avid reader and try to incorporate some (although never enough) YA fiction into my own RfP, especially now that my own daughter (also a keen reader) has turned twelve and is always looking for recommendations of what to read next.

On my timetable every session I have a large mixed ability S1 or S2 class and a small S3 set of our least literate pupils.

But while I have always advocated RfP in my own classroom, and valued reading aloud to my classes, my practice with regard to time spent with, and impact on, non-readers had waned and my class library had grown stale (as a result of the natural wastage of a class library in a secondary school but exacerbated by a lack of access to the school library and by classes other than my own using my room).

All S1 to S3 English classes read for pleasure for the first 10 minutes of each lesson but there is also one period a week dedicated to reading, visiting the library and carrying out reading related tasks. I had become guilty of seeing this period as an opportunity to sit at my desk and get on with some pressing tasks of my own.

I have found myself increasingly frustrated by my inability to engage readers who choose not to read and the number of pupils 'fake reading' or window gazing during independent reading time.

It was definitely time to get back amongst my readers during reading time, to get off my bum and get involved, to share my reading habits and get to know my pupils as readers.



OU RESEARCH INSPIRATION AND RATIONALE

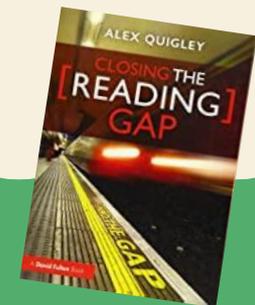
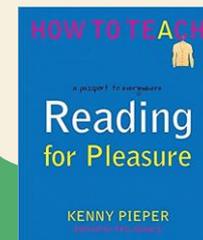
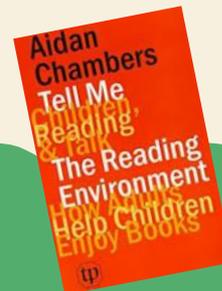
As part of my professional reflection on this I took the time to consider the impact book talk has had in my own classroom over recent years, for example –

- I see the enthusiasm for books (perhaps unsurprisingly) in my Advanced Higher class at the beginning of each session when I bring in a bag of my favourites and discuss them passionately focussing on how each could be used as a basis for a dissertation.
- When I talked enthusiastically about a specific chapter in Maggie O Farrell's *I Am, I Am, I Am* with my Higher class 3 of the girls bought the book and read it.
- After completing a read of our class novel several years ago, one of my non-readers requested the sequel and quietly got on with reading it, often oblivious to the other work going on in the classroom. Overjoyed, I let him read rather than engage in the work of the class.
- And last year in my S1 (now S2) class I saw the impact of pupils sharing their enjoyment of *Ready Player One* and *Me Mam, Me Dad, Me* with their peers when a waiting list formed of pupils keen to be next to read those books.

Lockdown was an opportunity to reflect on this further and upon whether this could inform not only where I would go next as a classroom teacher but where we could go next as a department, in terms of the use of our dedicated reading time, and as a school in terms of literacy and literacy recovery.

I was influenced in my thinking by a number of CPD books, namely *Reading for Pleasure* by Kenny Pieper, *Tell Me* by Aidan Chambers and Alex Quigley's *Closing The Reading Gap* as well as by a RfP webinar I attended during the second lockdown led by Teresa Cremin.

The opportunity to join the SLC OU Teachers' Reading Group and to engage in further professional reading and discussion came just at the right time, not least because I had been reading about the impact of RfP as a key factor in closing the attainment gap and in any COVID recovery plan. As literacy coordinator I need to think strategically about how we move forward as a school but I know that speaking from experience has the greatest impact and so I needed to start within my own classroom.



AIMS

This term I wanted to explore the impact of sharing my own habits as a reader to engage my readers who actively choose not to read, those who have become disengaged from reading, and endeavour to find books right for them. These are the pupils Donalyn Miller refers to as the 'alliterate: those who read perfectly well but who choose not to.' K Pieper flags these pupils up as the ones who need to be convinced of the importance of reading in their lives and therefore where I could perhaps have the greatest impact as a reading role model.

I am a reader but as my job has become more all-encompassing and demanding I have spent less and less time recommending books and chatting to pupils about what I and they are reading. I buy books for my class library and I read to pupils every day, enjoying reading aloud in accents and voices and can attest to the power of that especially with my 'bottom' set S3 who love nothing more than being read to, often watching me instead of following the words on the page. My classes know how much I enjoy this part of my job. Why was I not this to private reading for pleasure?

I also wanted to explore how to make more effective use of independent reading time. When I am able to, I read when my pupils are reading but increasingly, as a busy Faculty Head, I found I was using their reading time to get other jobs done. I needed to refresh my practice and concentrate my efforts on effective book talk with and between pupils.

In short I needed to get to know my pupils better as readers.

As FH I wanted to start in my own classroom but with a longer term aim of sharing my findings with my department colleagues and staff across the school and with the ultimate aim of achieving Reading Schools status.

Specifically, then, the aims of this research project were:

- a) To extend my knowledge of YA texts (and by extension the choice available in my classroom to engage all pupils)
- b) To make more effective use of independent reading time, specifically to include greater book chat to increase enthusiasm/desire to read

OUTLINE

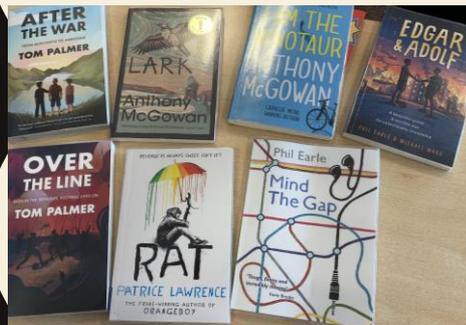
I. Class Library – Texts to Tempt

Having joined the SLC OU Teachers Reading group, I started my preparations for the project whilst still in lockdown in early March.

In order to refresh my class library I aimed to give over my own RfP time to the project – professional reading and a wider selection of YA fiction and non-fiction. I enlisted my 12 year old reader too – buying books for my class library and asking for her opinions. This way I got to know double the books while also expanding my class library.

Kenny Pieper writes that negative attitudes are created by lack of choice and a lack of good books when there is a choice so I knew this was where I wanted to start. He recommends books which pupils can judge by their covers – ‘never offer something you wouldn’t read yourself’.

Aidan Chambers’ pertinent advice when it comes to updating the class library is about accessibility of a large number of varied texts whilst the Scottish Book Trust recommends a mix of the ‘old but gold’ and the ‘new and bold’.



I intended to seek out, in particular, books with teen content but aimed at those with a lower reading age in order adequately to support and advise my lower ability readers, steering them towards books that would engage their interest.

And as part of their online learning I surveyed my S2 class about their reading attitudes and habits and about the books they would recommend for my class library or that they would read if they were on my shelves. The

results suggested some pupils needed to be shown reading is not something only clever children do.

Please give the title and author of any 'old but gold' novels or non-fiction texts you feel every

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Please give the title and author of any 'new but bold' novels or non-fiction texts you feel every

Strathaven S1 to S3 pupil should read. These should be from the last 20 years and be books you feel

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2. How would you describe your reading habits?

4. What influences the choices you make when you are looking for a new book to read? (tick all the boxes that you feel are true for you)

6. What is your ideal time of day to read?

8. What would be your ideal place to read?

I would read more if....

14 responses

Technology didn't exist

I was less busy

There were less distractions

I had motavtion

I wasn't distracted by my phone and Xbox.

If I wasn't playing football and my Xbox.

i had a wider selection of books

I found books that match my genre

I had more free time.

5.3%

an av...

OUTLINE

Class Library – Texts To Tempt

I spent a small fortune trawling charity shops and discount websites buying good condition second hand books, using pupil responses augmented by the Twitter community, the OU RfP newsletter, colleague, librarian and daughter recommendations as well as the Carnegie long and short lists. I purchased comics and added to my collection of highly prized (usually locked in a cupboard) graphic novels.

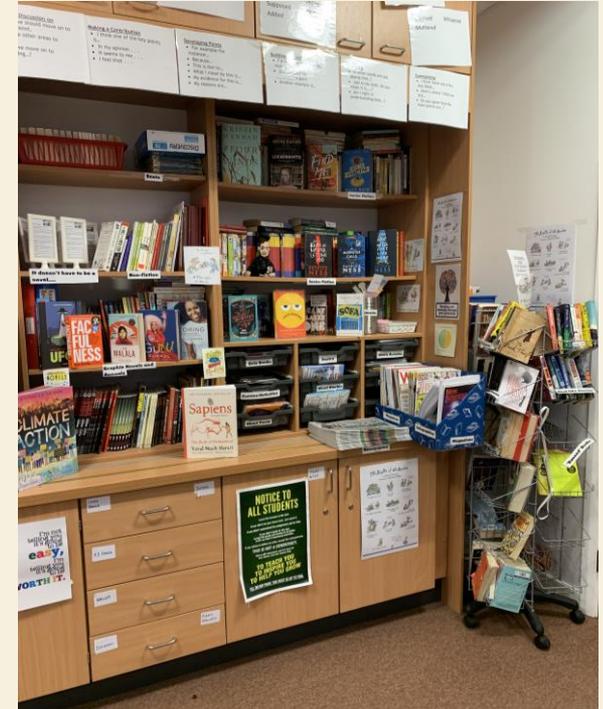
I also made a bid to the school's Pupil Equity Fund for the project (given that many non-engaged readers are also part of our PEF group) and was granted £200 which I spent mainly on small sets of highly recommended Barrington Stoke and OU Press books aimed at pupils with dyslexia/low reading age.

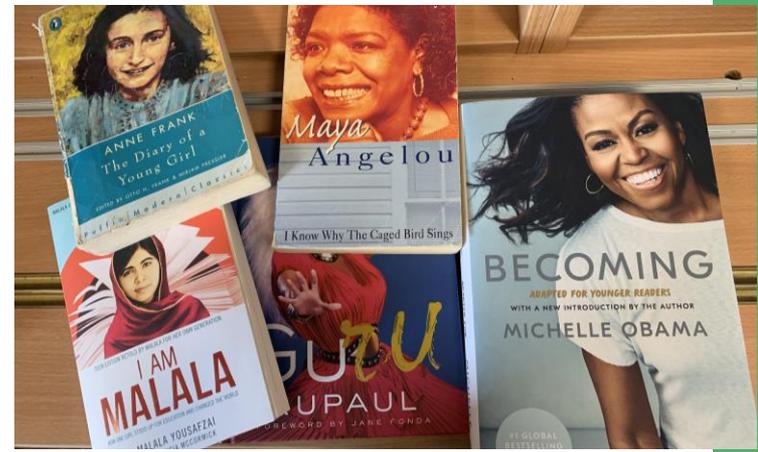


OUTLINE

Class Library – Texts to Tempt

Books purchased, I next thought about how best to present the library for the return of my S2 class post-lockdown. The display needed to be eye-catching and tempting— I turfed out tatty books, put books in different stands and levels with room to browse. I made use of the rights of the reader, inspirational ideas and posters and planned to regularly change the front displays by featured author or by the newest books, or by award winning books or by class favourites/ recommendations. Chambers notes that some pupils don't want the teacher to recommend or will actively avoid what the teacher recommends so this meant I was not in the way of pupils who want to browse alone.





2. Reading Reflections and Book Buzz

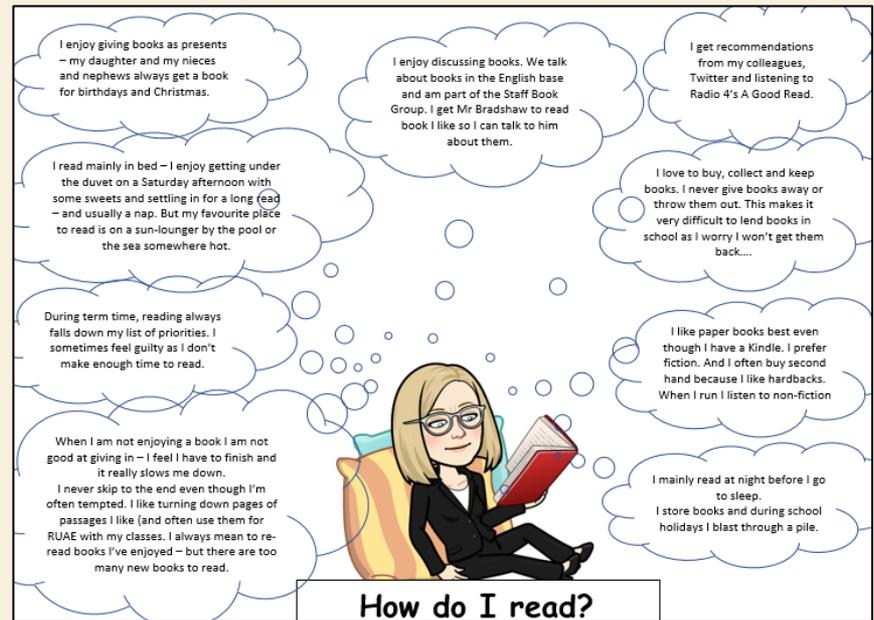
When the S2 pupils returned, the big reveal of the new class library got the desired effect and created the jumpstart required – the challenge for me was to maintain that initial buzz.

Rather than talk them through everything that was new, I initially positioned myself as librarian and guide, helping pupils to navigate the new layout and content, asking questions and using my knowledge about them as pupils to help them select books.

I also started with a series of reflective tasks on reading – a series of book blathers which led to some reflective homework tasks. Through increased chat and reflection over a period of that initial 3 weeks the status of reading in my classroom rose considerably.

The first task was a discussion around

‘How do I read?’ I shared my own preferences and discussed how much I like hoarding books and dislike lending books which they appreciated made having a class library challenging. This generated some rich, honest discussion amongst pupils about the other pulls on their time, what they like/dislike about reading in class and reading in general – pupils then completed their own for homework.



I also tend to keep books, even if they are too young for me. I have quite a lot of books that have sentimental value.

most of the time when I am settled down to read, my friends ask me to get on Xbox or go out to play, and I completely forget about reading.

I love to read fiction, as it brings me to my imagination, and I get to picture my own world. I also like to sometimes write my own fictional novels, but I need to learn more about writing my own stories before I put them on paper.

Sometimes I feel guilty when I don't read as I get distracted or I am busy with other things.

When I read, I really enjoy it, I can be in my own reality and it is a safe space if I ever feel sad.

I read at night, when it is dark, and use my lamp to read easier, this is a calm way for me to read books.

Camelion

Some of the books that I read are recommended to me by my Gran, a avid reader.

I enjoy reading whilst listening to classical music; I have a playlist full of classical pieces that I listen to when I read; it primarily contains Puccini, Bizet and Verdi compositions.

When I am not interested in a book that I am reading, I become demotivated, and do not often finish the book in hope that the ending will redeem it.

When I go on a walk, I will often listen to audiobooks, such as 'Stephen Fry's Victorian Secrets'.

I enjoy reading outside in the sun, when the weather is nice or on holidays.

I like to read in bed with a hot chocolate about 90 minutes.

I prefer Paper books rather than my phone or kindle as I often get distracted with social media.



In my Bed Before sleeping

When listening to music

Whimlow Light

my green glasses

Comics in Book + on like comics



We had some great discussions about favourite picture books and the pages we remembered most vividly and I was delighted by how many pupils chose the texts we had read together over our 2 years as their favourite secondary reads.

My Reading History

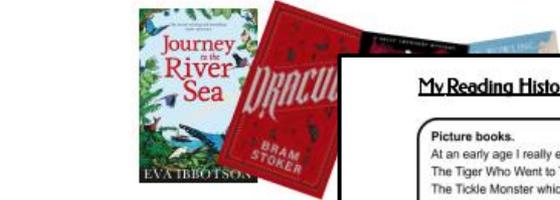


Picture books.
Which books did you enjoy looking at or being read to you before you could read/as you learned to read?



In primary school I remember reading Caterpillar, this was in my early Awful auntie, by david walliams first david walliams book i read

My First Independent Reads.
What were the first books you enjoyed reading by yourself?



I enjoyed reading Journey to the River Sea in class as well as Dracula and had fun doing the tasks. So far I am intrigued by The ruby in the smoke and i am eager to learn more about it. As a class reader/ personal book, Harry Potter And The Goblet of Fire has been a great read so far but there is always a part of me that wishes that I had read the books before watching all the movies a million times.



Magazines and newspapers I have loved throughout my life.
What magazines, comics or newspapers did you enjoy in the past and which ones do you enjoy now?

I would beg my mum loved the fact that ever read them as kids and made to this day. I also loved the Capital all of them twice. They they will always have a



At the moment I am reading Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire and I am enjoying it. I am on a goal to read all of the books. In class I am reading Sherlock Holmes and I am starting to get into it. I am going to start a word bank and I can discuss words that I am unsure of.

My Reading History

Picture books.
At an early age I really enjoyed The Tiger Who Went to Tea and The Tickle Monster which my mum and dad read to me regularly before bed.



Primary books.
In Primary School, I remember The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips being our class novel in P7. It was part of our topic on WW2. I also read Roald Dahl's book Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.



My First Independent Reads.
Books I first enjoyed reading myself included Diary of a Wimpy Kid and David Walliams books such as Demon Dentist. I got a new book every Christmas!

Secondary school reads.
I enjoyed studying Dracula in school. For personal reading I liked Divided City and Stephen King's book Misery.

Magazines and newspapers I have loved throughout my life.
I've always enjoyed magazines about football including Match of the Day. I used to get it every week and liked doing the quizzes.



Books I have hated.
I started a book called Someone is Lying but I gave up reading it as it was not hooking me in at all.

Recent reads.
Recently I have enjoyed reading Grasshopper Jungle and I would recommend it to people who like a humorous book.



To begin with I started every second period by reading the opening pages of one of my new books, purposely selecting a different genre every time. Not only was this a great way of publicising the new class library content but a great way to model and develop book chat skills. I used Aidan Chambers' 'Tell Me' grids to generate responses from everyone as I read. Discussing their effectiveness and our opinions generated a buzz (and sometimes heated debate) around what they wanted from their RfP books and which books they might want to read by themselves next. For example some pupils liked relatable characters and situations while others liked to read about characters with lives wholly different from their own.

Likes	Dislikes
Humorous It's set in Scotland Relatable character It's very casual The character is my age I like the way they repeat the words 'fact' and 'legend' Intriguing title	Some of the language is a bit repetitive I prefer books about people who are different from me
Cardboard Cowboys by Brian Conaghan	
Puzzles	Connections
Why is the house made of cardboard? What do cardboards have to do with the book?	They talk the same way we do I also live in Scotland

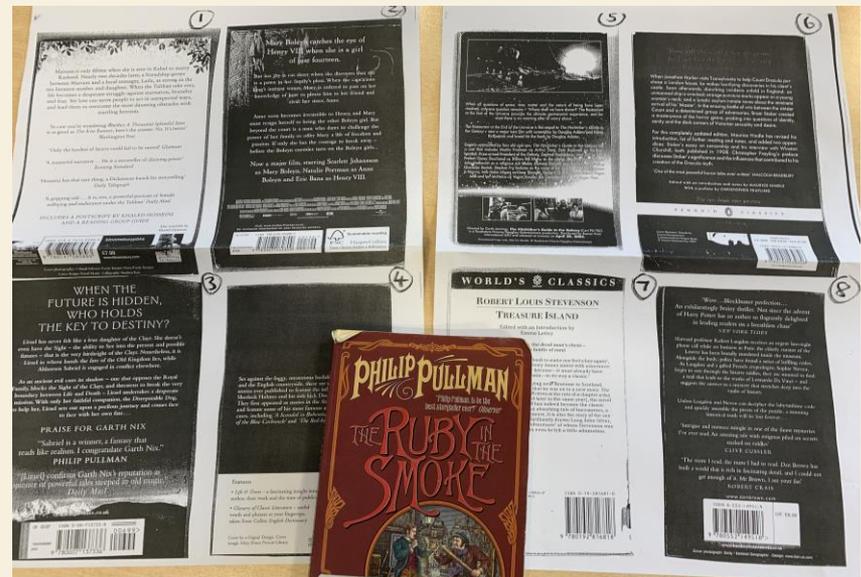
3. Using the Class Novel

A renewed focus on RfP worked well with the classwork I had planned for Term 3 and our return to school - reading a novel together - and based on pupil surveys I chose the challenging thriller 'The Ruby In The Smoke'. Rather than focus on working towards a writing piece on the text, I decided instead to read primarily for pleasure, using sections to build comprehension and analysis skills as well as using it to model informal book chat.

As we read we talked about genre markers we enjoyed such as cliffhangers and red herrings, the importance of openings and the experience of reading the book. This then led to discussing the same features in their own books – the genre markers, the effectiveness of the openings...

But I wanted to facilitate greater reader-to-reader chat, especially as they grew more adept at how to talk about their responses – their likes, dislikes, the puzzles and connections they were making.

Combining our class novel and chat about the book with their own RfP organically led to a decision to change the format of our Friday library period.



4. Changing Attitudes Through Book Blether

As Aidan Chambers notes, reading is a social activity and it is at its most social when we share our reading by talking about it. This means giving pupils 'time to chat informally together' about books.

Out of the informal book chat around the class novel came an understanding of how to talk about books, a shared exploration of understanding, discussion of bits they liked and disliked as well as enhanced summarising and prediction skills.

I decided to go further in my links between the class novel and RfP in an attempt to create a more lasting change in attitudes towards reading. Our fourth period of the week is independent reading time and it needed a fresh approach.

Given that readers are "made by readers" I decided to create a series of pupil-led mini book groups.

I set up a new structure for the lesson to incorporate more talking time – and called the dedicated library period 'a book, a blether and a biscuit'

Open your book and read silently.

Your Challenge:

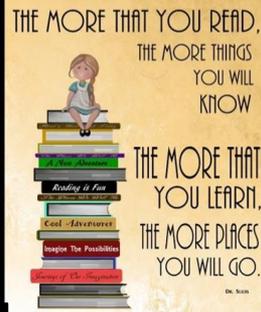
Look out for sections the whole class might enjoy hearing read out loud by you or your teacher.



Open your book and read silently.

Your Challenge:

Decide on the actor who would play the main character from your book if it was made in to a film or TV series.



Open your book and read silently.

Your Challenge:

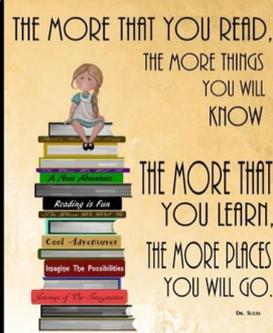
Think about one way you could persuade the others to want to read your book.



Open your book and read silently.

Your Challenge:

Think about one thing you disliked about what you read today.



Open your book and read silently.

Your Challenge:

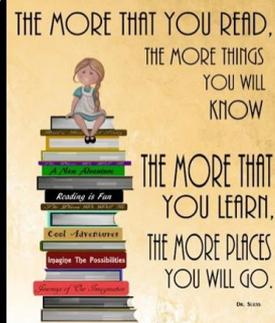
Make one prediction about what will happen in your book.



Open your book and read silently.

Your Challenge:

Decide on another book that this one reminds you of or is similar to.



A BOOK, A BISCUIT AND A BLETHER - STRUCTURE

Every Friday started with reading for pleasure to classical music with a starter slide on the board as food for thought.

Pupils then moved into their book groups to discuss the starter and then to discuss what they have read from their shared book, to read aloud to one another and to set reading targets for the following week.

They get a different biscuit each week to eat while they read and chat and we keep a scoreboard for best biccies to accompany reading.

I let the pupils choose their own groups, setting a maximum of 4 pupils in each group.

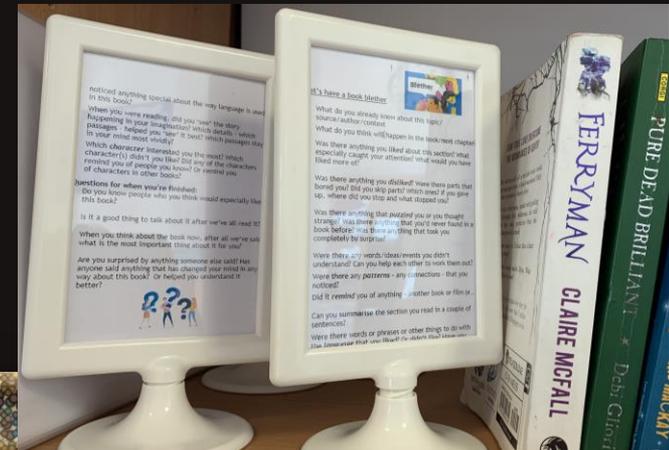
The group then chose the same book to read together from a wide selection of brand new books. I encouraged them (especially the most able) to continue with their own book too.

Each group got to discuss the cover, the blurb and the opening before deciding which one to stick with.

The structure of the time naturally evolved its own shape. The pupils were happy to engage in some reading aloud to one another as well as discussing their thoughts about the book using a 'book blether menu' of possible questions. At the end of the period pupils rated their biscuits and decided on an achievable target of pages for all group members to read before the next Friday.

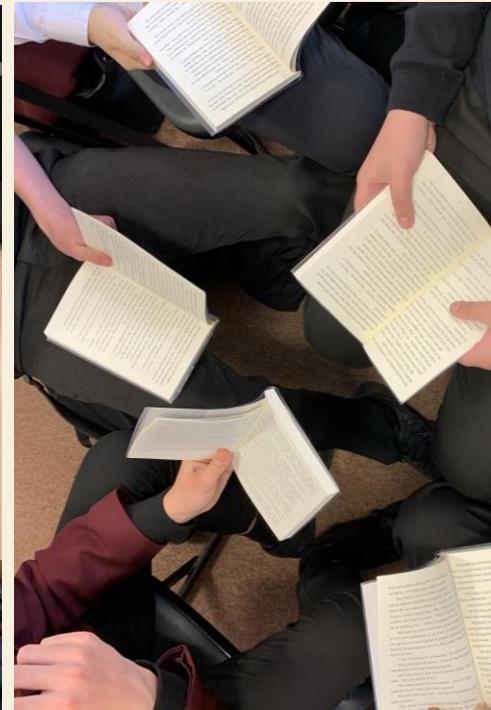
MINI BOOK GROUPS - A BOOK, A BLETHER AND A BISCUIT

Encouraging book blether between friends



The books the groups finally settled upon were a diverse selection:

- The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole
- A Handmaid's Tale
- Rat
- Rooftoppers
- I Am The Minotaur
- The Bunker Diary
- Grasshopper Jungle
- Lark
- The Sign of Four



IMPACT

1. The Class Novel
2. Independent Reading Time
3. Sharing the enthusiasm
4. Mini Book Groups – a book, a biscuit, a blether



I. The approach to the class novel

‘Good texts teach readers how to read.’ (‘Just reading’)

For our post-lockdown Term 3 work for our S1 and S2 classes the English department agreed a focus on a substantial text to read aloud for pleasure.

The surveys I did initially, during lockdown and then in week one of the return in early April, showed that the majority of pupils enjoyed murder/mystery/thriller novels. This shaped my choice of an old favourite *The Ruby In The Smoke* for the class novel to read aloud and use to model and build close reading and comprehension skills.

I gave up time each period to reading a chapter aloud and cut right back on chapter-related tasks. Before we started though I did give time to creating an enthusiasm about the text and on making connections to their own reading choices by looking at titles, blurbs and openings.

This all added to the enthusiasm the class had about the novel as they pieced together clues and made predictions, gasped at cliff-hangers and red herrings, blackmail, gruesome murders and brutal fistfights.

In their study, ‘Just reading’, Westbrook, Sutherland, Oakhill and Sullivan found that a fast read coupled with explicit teaching of comprehension benefitted poorer readers – and arguably this was what was needed post lockdown especially for those who had not engaged in online learning.

Knowing there was not going to be the obligatory critical essay at the end also freed up pupils to give themselves up to the story and to simply enjoy the masterful storytelling. They expressed their feelings more openly - perhaps because my questions changed as a result of not focusing on analysis of character, setting and style. I asked about how we might react/feel in Sally's position, about favourite events, about dislikes and pupils were keen to make comparisons about similarities and differences with their own books.

The 'Just reading' study also points to the importance of maintaining pace and fluency to sustain engagement and to improve recapping and predicting skills. I saw and heard strong textual understanding (which was reinforced in their own mini book groups).

'Are we reading the novel today?' and 'Can you read for the whole period?' became popular refrains. Pupils asked about the sequels and for similar book recommendations and the book even appeared in several pupils 'Reading History' homework tasks as their favourite secondary school read, despite the fact that, at that time, we were only a few chapters in.

2. The use of Independent Reading Time

Connecting the class novel to the new content in my class library exposed pupils to new novels and a wider variety of genres. Combining this with the 'Tell Me' grids led to pupils choosing a wider variety of texts – the differing opinions about each opening shaped reading choices and preferences. Positioning myself at the class library or in the vicinity more pupils asked me for recommendations and even more asked their peers, the acknowledged readers in the class. There was more trying out and exchanging of books, pupils unafraid to put back books they were not enjoying and more keen to find a book to connect with. Waiting lists arose for popular books like 'The Hate U Give' and 'Ready Player One'. Pupils who requested books in the initial surveys proudly devoured the books purchased just for them and pupils started donating books they had enjoyed to my library. Pupils were delighted when each one was stickered 'Donated by...'

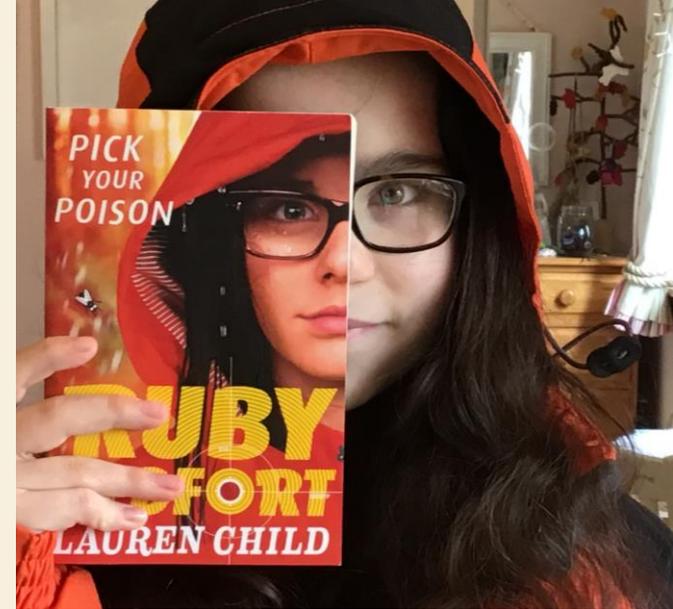
I feel that this has had the biggest impact on my avid readers who I realised had quietly got on with reading but who now had a voice, a validation of their identities as readers, who were being listened to as readers and their opinions valued. I have always recognised my readers but was guilty of only verbally recognising them in conversation with them and their parents on a Parents Evening.

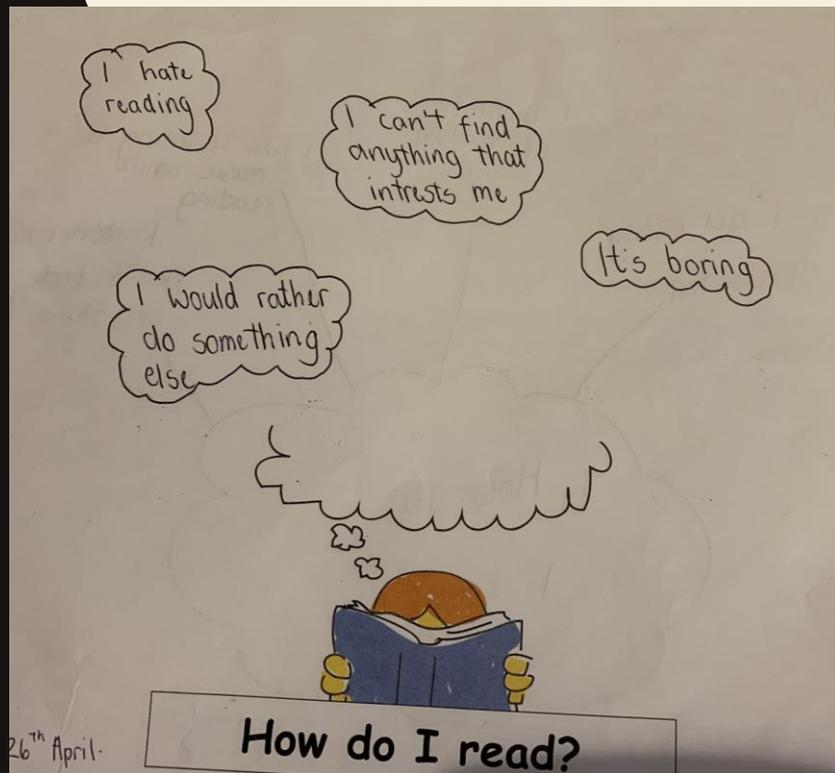
Some pupils enjoyed the fact that they had chosen books others were reading too. Two boys reading 'The Knife of Never Letting Go' were regularly heard asking one another – 'have you got to this bit yet...' or 'where are you in the book now?'

One of my non-readers asked me to recommend a 'zombie' book so I tried a different approach. I gave him 3 books and asked him to read the first few pages of each – he has since chosen one and stuck with it.

Within 3 weeks 'fake reading' had reduced significantly and no pupils were reading Walliams or Wimpy Kid. There is a zen-like calm as pupils filter in, get their books out and read while classical music plays quietly in the background. Occasionally I become aware of the noise or kerfuffle in the corridor outside and marvel at the complete contrast to the undisturbed book bliss in my room.

The biggest changes in attitude started to come through some of the written reflective homework tasks.

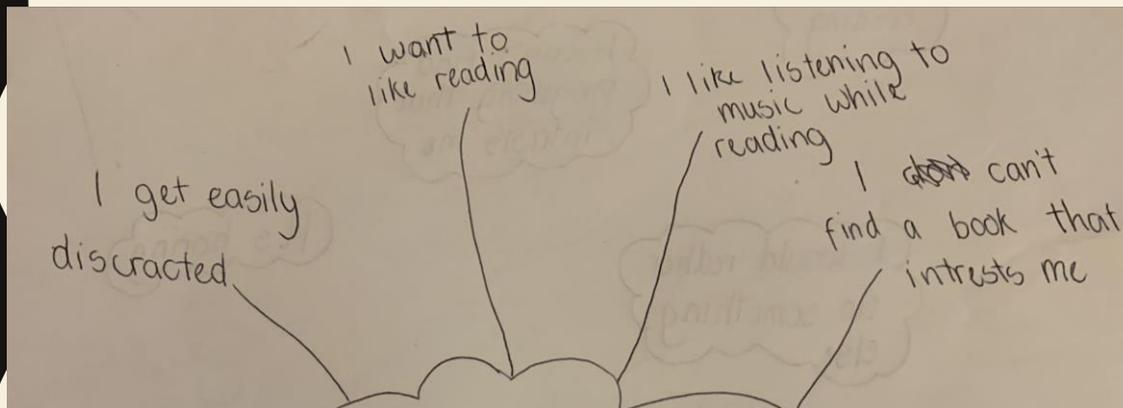




I encouraged a positive mindset about reading in pupil responses to reflective tasks, spending time with pupils who had a very fixed negative mindset encouraging them to think more deeply about why they 'hate reading' or 'find it boring'.

One pupil's response to the 'How do I read?' task was so disappointing that she was gently encouraged to have another go – I suggested she focus on how she feels when she is asked to read or given time to read.

It was so much easier to guide her towards a book when she was open to a more positive dialogue about reading. She has since chosen a book of short stories about women, written by women and is reading aloud / *Am The Minotaur* with another reluctant reader during mini book group time and proudly telling me how many pages they have read and what she thinks will happen next.



3. Desire to share recommendations

With so many new books in the class library, with pupils and mini book groups 'trying out' some of the new books I had not yet read myself and with a wide variety being recommended by the avid readers in the class, there was a desire to share what we were doing. Pupils stuck post-its and emojis to books they had finished and enjoyed, to alert others to a 'good read'. Some class favourites began to emerge and the idea for 'The Strathaven Reads' evolved.

In conjunction with the S3 Literacy Elective, another keen S2 class, a Google Form was set up requesting recommendations from pupils and staff across the school in order to create a list of the 30 essential books we, as a community, felt all S1 to S3 pupils should read. A small group of pupils and staff, including the librarian, then met to hone the suggestions down to 30 – a canon of books (fiction, non-fiction and graphic novels) we will launch in August and which we have already shared with the P7 classes in our associated primary schools.



Pupils were keen to help me publicise Reading for Pleasure and pleased to be a class trying something new. They suggested some posters featuring themselves so I sent them out to take photos of themselves reading in unusual poses/places to make captioned posters for around the school. There was much laughter when they got to see each other's photos and worked to come up with captions and puns.



4. The Impact of the mini book groups

Friday's 'A book, a biscuit and a blether' soon became the highlight of the week for all of us. Pupils got to sit and read and chat about their shared read with friends. Despite some potentially challenging groupings I decided to give it a go, albeit with a clear structure to the lesson. In the first period the groups took time to agree on the book they would all read. I did guide groups towards books I felt they would all enjoy, for example 3 boys who share a sense of humour were happy to read *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*. A group of 2 reluctant readers, a boy and girl, agreed to try out a new book I had purchased on recommendation but not read called *I Am The Minotaur* – they enjoyed the responsibility of reporting back to me their thoughts. Two more able girls who couldn't find a book that would challenge and interest them requested 'a feminist book' and are now powering through 'A Handmaid's Tale'. This is where my knowledge of this class (having had them for 2 years) really helped. There was only one off-task group who were guided towards *The Bunker Diary*. I was amazed by how quickly the rather shocking content managed to keep them on task and keen to make predictions.

I created 'Book Blether' menus with lists of questions to guide their discussions of the sections that they had all read. At first they did need this to shape their discussions and one group needed me to join them to model the use of the menu. But after only a few weeks the groups rarely referred to the menus. I noticed they were talking about their books in much the same way we were talking about *The Ruby In The Smoke*. I noticed that my quietest pupils were given confidence by discussing their opinions with supportive friends. And, while I enjoyed joining the groups to chat or to hear them read aloud I noticed that my presence in the groups was often an interruption to the very natural conversations taking place. The more they read and got into their books the more the groups were keen to simply read on, aloud, to one another – giggling at and reacting to the key moments together. My primary job became overseer and biscuit facilitator. I could only look on in pride at my 2 non-readers, listening to one another read *I Am The Minotaur* in order to be able to tell me how many pages they had read.



**REFLECTIONS ON
IMPACT THE TARS
RESEARCH HAD ON
PRACTICE**

Nancie Atwell -

“The job of adults who care about reading is to move heaven and earth to put that book into a child’s hands.”

Did my pupils read more and better? Did they want to read? The answer has been a resounding yes for the majority of pupils and it was the key OU advice that proved vital. It was a combination of:

- 1 High quality reading aloud of the class novel 'The Ruby In The Smoke' primarily for enjoyment;
- 2 Giving time for pupils to talk about texts reader to reader - about the class novel and about their book group books;
- 3 Giving pupils uninterrupted choice-led independent reading time;
- 4 Substantially increasing the choice, variety, accessibility of books through the purchase of texts to tempt for the class library.

As Faculty Head of English and Literacy for the last 7 years I am well known for my passion for reading in my attempts to raise the profile of reading across the school; perhaps I diverted too much attention on to this whole school focus and less on nurturing that love of reading in my own classroom. This project has shown me the benefits of sharing the books I love (and don't) with my pupils. I have seen, even in a short period of time, the impact of providing books, providing time, enthusiasm and knowledge, of modelling reading and reading chat/behaviour and most importantly of providing them with the time to read.

I know my pupils – we have enjoyed reading novels and plays together over the last 2 years (when we have been together) and it was clear quite quickly that they were well-prepared to talk about books by Chambers definition: they were surrounded by a 'knowledgeably chosen' stock of books, they were read aloud to every day and were expected to read for themselves daily. Launching this project for our last term together and immediately post-lockdown number time had the added benefit of creating a real sense of community lost as we worked in our own homes.

There is real power in pupils talking about books – without me. Yes, there needs to be guidance and modelling but it does not take long for pupils freshly enthused about reading to initiate and maintain this for themselves. The inclusion of pupil interests, pupil recommendations and pupil wishlists initiated that enthusiasm and mean I now have an impressive and inspiring class library (and I personally have a huge YA summer reading list.).

This project has been an important reminder that pupils have to want to read and that that can be shaped by an enthusiastic adult prepared to raise the level of challenge; that time and care and attention can pay dividends in terms of making enthusiastic readers of all pupils in our classes.

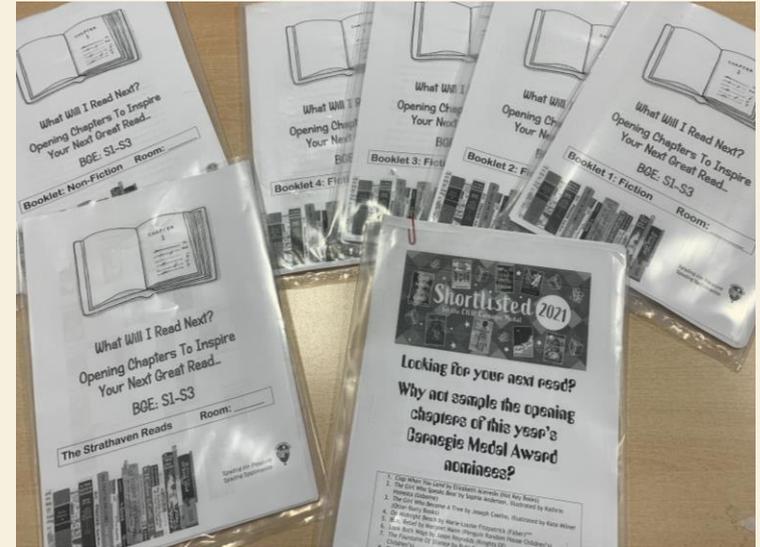
BIGGER PICTURE & NEXT STEPS

I plan to take (and sustain) the same approach in the new year with my new S1 and S3 classes. My new S3 will be a small (15) class of pupils who are poor or non-readers and this is a challenge I feel ready to tackle head on as a reader who teaches and a teacher who reads.

I also plan to use the project to rejuvenate my colleagues' enthusiasm and commitment to the value of RfP across the department and school-wide.

This month:

- I have secured money for class library updates (£250 per English classroom) so that all English classrooms will have a copy of each of the *The Strathaven Reads* canon of books and a selection of Barrington Stoke/OU Press books to augment their class libraries.
- There will be an opportunity for YA novel recommendations to be made at every English Faculty meeting.
- As part of our primary-secondary transition programme I created 2 PowerPoint video presentations – one for P7 parents and one for P7 pupils about RfP at Strathaven Academy



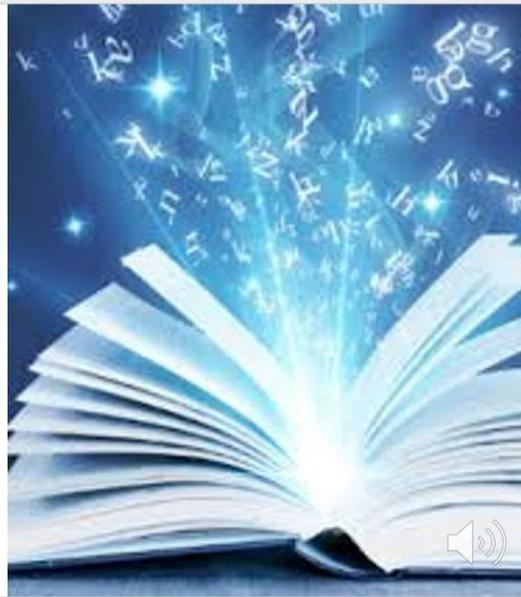
From August, Reading for Pleasure will be a central plank of the school's recovery plan:

- I am in the process of updating our S1,2 and 3 Literacy RfP Challenge booklets to include a wider range of reflective tasks and tasks designed to lead to better book choice.
- There will be CPD based on the result of this project both for my department colleagues and for all staff who have tutor groups.
- Every tutor group will continue to read for pleasure two mornings a week and I have just created 6 booklets of opening chapters to support pupils without books or who are looking for their next read during 'Reading Registration'
- We will begin our preparations to apply for the Scottish Book Trust's Reading School status.



READING FOR PLEASURE

Strathaven Academy
Literacy



P7 PARENT AND PUPIL PRESENTATIONS

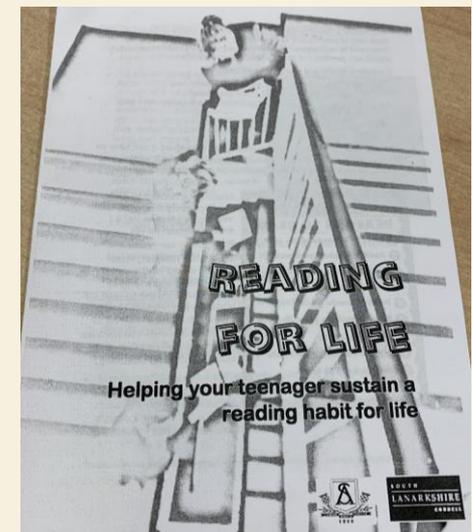
I created and recorded 2 PowerPoint presentations on RfP which have been shared, one with P7 pupils and another with the parents of our P7 pupils.

This goes along with our transition booklet aimed specifically at how to encourage teens to maintain a reading habit through the teenage years.

READING FOR PLEASURE



STRATHAVEN ACADEMY
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