

Lunchtime transition reading

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Context

Lickey Hills Primary School, Worcestershire. I was a student teacher in this placement school. I undertook this work as part of the Teachers Reading Challenge.



OU Research inspiration and rationale

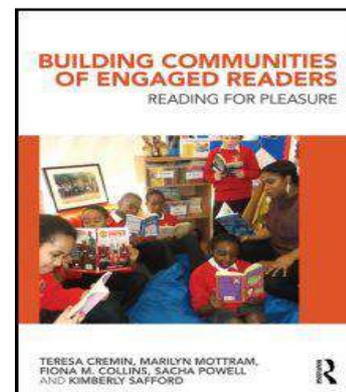
I focused on several aspects of the TaRs findings, namely:

3. *A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:*

- *Reading aloud*
- *Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*

5. *Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.*

(Cremin et al., 2014,)



Although one of the aims was to aid the transition between lunch time and afternoon learning in the classroom, another aim was to make the last 10 minutes of lunch time fun and interesting by reading a book aloud that would engage the children and allow them to interact with me as a reader and each other.

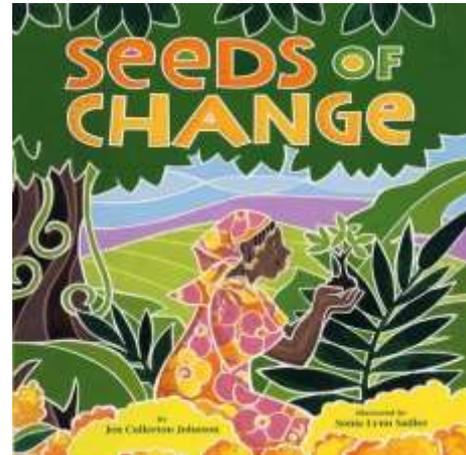
Aims

Due to year group bubbles being in place in schools, my placement school stopped hot lunches in the hall and all children ate their packed lunches in their classroom. This meant that for the first half of lunch time the children would go outside to play and they would spend the second half of lunch break eating their lunch in the classroom. This made the transition from lunch time where they were sitting in their assigned seats and chatting or watching something on the screen, to sitting in their assigned seats quietly whilst concentrating on the afternoon work very difficult.

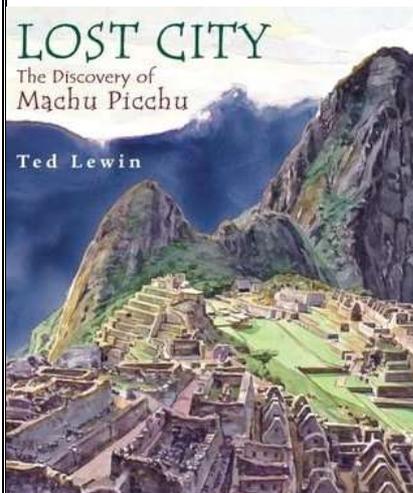
I therefore had the idea to start reading to the children during lunchtime for the last 10 minutes while they were finishing their lunch. This is connected to reading aloud, informal book talk and developing a reading community.

Outline

I started by reading *Seeds of Change* by Jen Cullerton Johnson, which told the true story of scientist Wangari Maathai who became the first African woman and environmentalist to win a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her work planting trees and protecting the environment in Kenya. The children seemed to really engage with this book and as it was an informal reading for pleasure session I let the session be guided by them. I therefore encouraged them when they asked questions as it opened up a conversation about the content of the book and the themes around it.



I particularly valued that they would ask questions such as “But why isn’t Wangari allowed to go to school?” “Why would girls not be allowed to go to school, it makes no sense?”. The story was important to show them how far we have come in providing equal opportunity for girls around the world and the discussion allowed us to explore how more could be done to ensure women and minorities are able to access those same opportunities.



The second book was chosen by the class teacher and was related to Peru, the theme of the term. This one was called *Lost City: The Discovery of Machu Picchu* by Ted Lewin. I would have preferred a book that wasn’t related to their learning, as I wanted the reading at lunch time to be disconnected from their lessons. Although the book was slightly less thought provoking than *Seeds of Change*, nonetheless it did calm them down a lot more. I noticed a less engagement with this book and fewer questions or comments about the content.

Impact

While the children definitely enjoyed the first book, I don’t think it could be said that it particularly calmed them down ready for learning again. The fact that they were allowed to ask questions and have a class discussion about the book may have led them to believe that they could continue to chat like they had been for the rest of lunch time.

Their response to reading also varied from day to day based on their general mood and any other external factors that impacted their day in school. Despite this, it did change the tone slightly as they knew that when I came in and picked up the book, they only had a couple of minutes to finish their lunch and settle down before learning resumed.

Although the second book achieved the goal of calming the children down ready for lessons again, it felt a lot less enjoyable than the previous book. The pupils didn’t seem as

excited about the reading time as they had been before and I noticed a lot more carried on with the colouring they had been given.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

From this experience I have learnt that it is possible to improve the transition between lunch time and learning time if the children have to spend it in the classroom by reading to them, but only with specific books that may perhaps lull them into a slight sense of quietness or boredom. However, if you want to promote reading for pleasure and 'book blether' by reading interesting books then this may not have the desired effect of calming the children down. I preferred reading a book that both I and the children found interesting, and in future if eating in the classroom continues, I will endeavour to introduce the children to a range of exciting and engaging books and find another way to prepare them for afternoon learning.

In my ECT class I will aim to take the children outside to read at least twice a week (weather permitting) as the classroom backs onto the school field. This will model that I am a Reading Teacher-a teacher who reads and a reader who teaches, as I will also encourage them to discuss the book with their peers and myself and involved them in the process of choosing a book to read as a class.