



Hagley
Primary School



Daniel Bate

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Context

I work at Hagley Primary School in the Worcestershire, where I am a year 1 teacher and Assistant Headteacher.

As a school, we have made many adjustments to the way we teach reading in school over the last few years and are now at a point where the 'skills' behind reading are well embedded across all phases. Reading for pleasure is an area we have started to focus on more, including most recently the purchase of new sets of books for key stage 2.

This year, I have moved from year 5 to year 1 so the importance of early reading has very much been part of my practice and professional development. The support from our families, both to help early reading acquisition, and also due to COVID-19, has been incredibly important this year and has shaped my own project.



OU Research Inspiration and Rationale – My Reflections

Being hugely passionate about education research and reading, the opportunity to take part in my own small research project was something I was really looking forward to doing. In addition, the focus on reading for pleasure aligns with my own personal enjoyment of reading.

Reviewing my own practice, as part of the initial TRG sessions, I identified that my knowledge of children's authors was a real strength as well as reading aloud and also promoting reading with my class. The areas for development included interactive reading communities and my knowledge of literature in terms of poetry. Although I could name 3 poets, after reading Cremin et al 'Building a Community of Engaged Readers' (an incredibly worthwhile read), I do feel as though my poetry knowledge falls into a stereotypical teacher response and poems which I was read to as child. This is something that I believe would be echoed across many of the staff in my own setting and an area I would like to explore further as I share my findings within my own school.



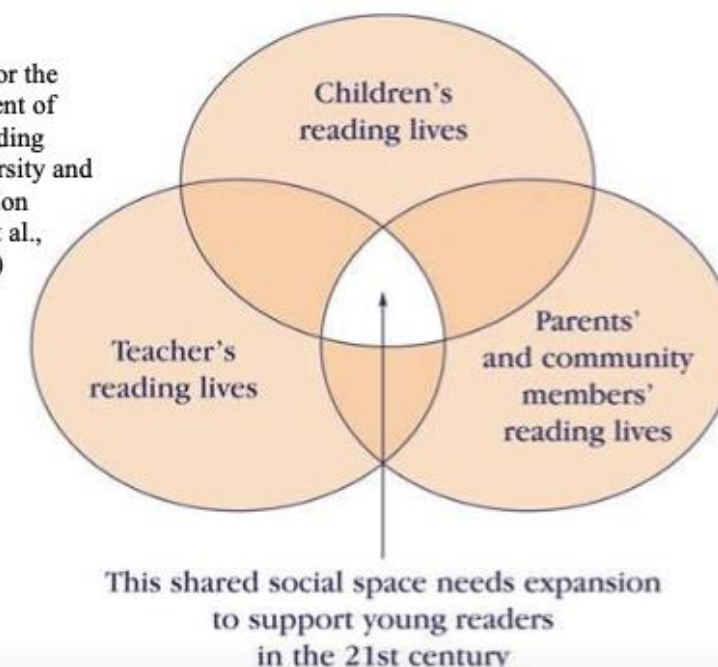
OU Research Inspiration and Rationale – Child and Parent Reflections

Following my own reflection and reading, I decided to proceed with poetry as my overall focus. The second stage of formulating my development plan involved gathering the views of children within the classes I had taught over the last 2 years (a year 6 class and my current year 1 class) and their parents. To do this, I used Microsoft Forms as this is a platform we have used to communicate with parents over the COVID-19 lockdown period.

Although I did not intend to work with my old Year 5 (now Year 6) class, I wanted to gather as much initial data as possible to support my reflections and the direction of my project. After reading the article, 'Reading Communities: why, what and how?' by Teresa Cremin, which included the model for development of shared reading, this emphasised the importance of the wider community in terms of reading for pleasure. As a result of this, some of my questions included responses about reading at home and within the family.

Figure 2:

A model for the development of shared reading lives: diversity and collaboration (Cremin et al., 2014: 159)



OU Research Inspiration and Rationale – Child and Parent Reflections

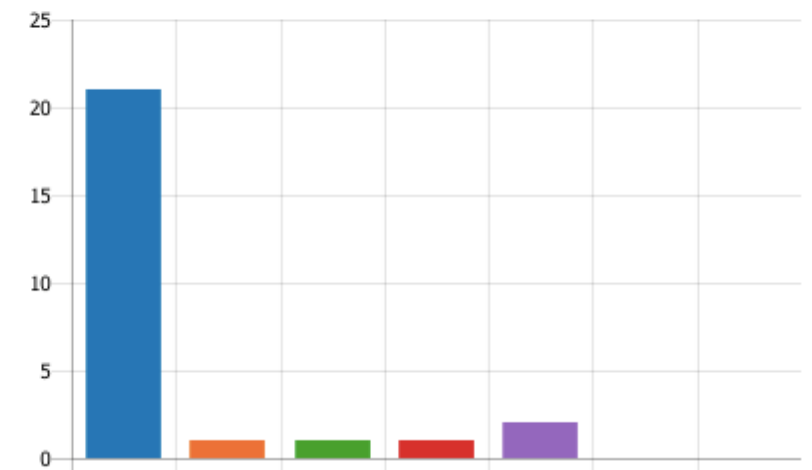
The responses

When asked to name a poet, out of 24 respondents, 20 said they were unsure. The only poets mentioned were Lewis Carroll, Michael Rosen and Adrian Henri. This highlighted for me the lack of knowledge of children's poets amongst both the Year 6 and Year 1 children.

Two further questions, highlighted for me the importance of focussing on poetry. The two bar charts opposite show all of the responses to what you most and least like to read. From this, poetry collections did not come out favourably.

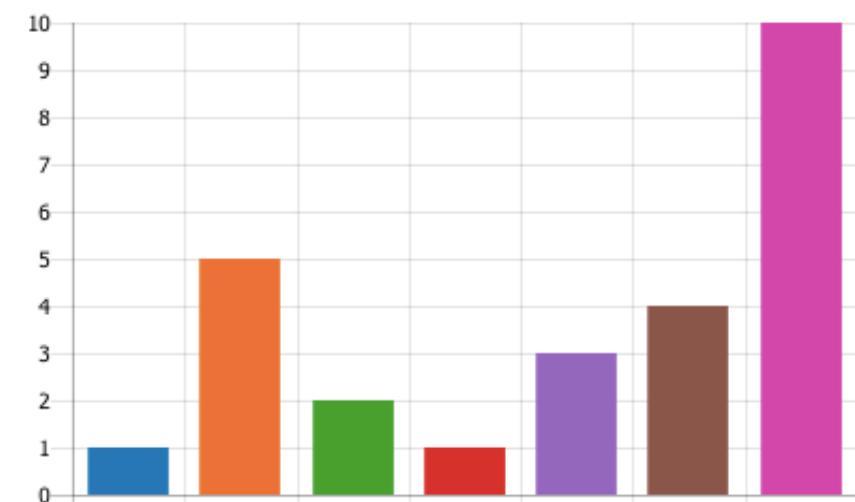
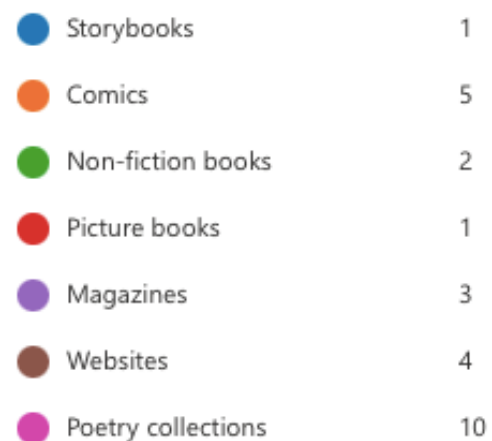
What do you MOST like to read?

[More Details](#)



What do you LEAST like to read?

[More Details](#)

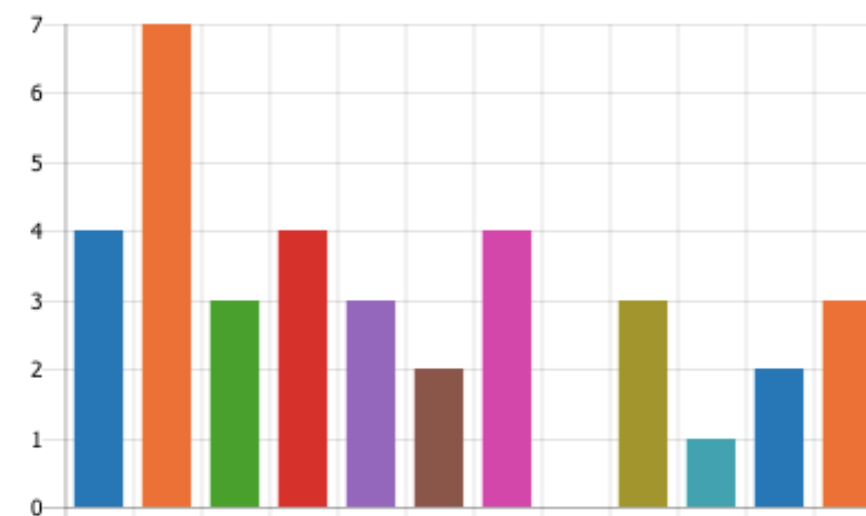
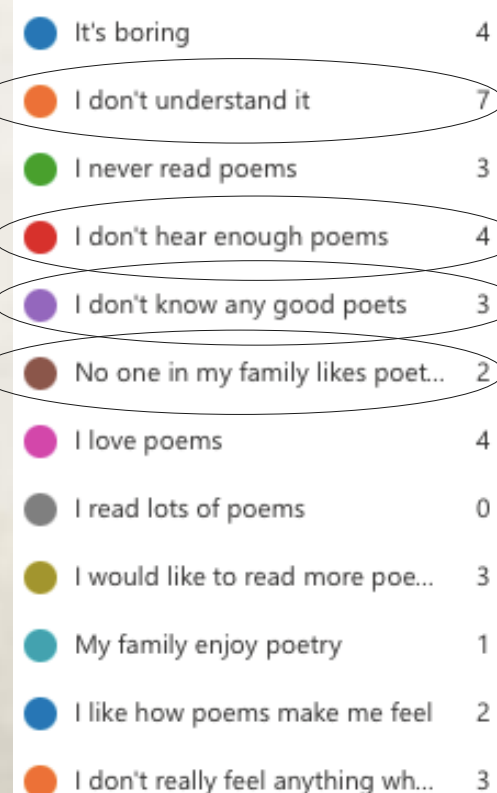


OU Research Inspiration and Rationale – Child and Parent Reflections

The next question was very interesting and I noticed that some of the responses included 'I love poems'. This helped to show that although poetry collections did not feature as the children's most favourite, there was an appetite for poetry amongst the respondents. Four stand out responses which shaped the rest of my project are circled in the chart. From these responses, I knew that I wanted to expose the children, and their parents, to lots of different poems and poets and provide the opportunity hear these poems being read aloud. The idea that poems are hard to understand is a perception that I used to hold myself; however, over the years I have come to realise that poems can be interpreted in many different ways and sometimes even when a poem is 'confusing' or even with a lack of understanding, they can still be enjoyed. This is a viewpoint I wanted to share with the children and would feature in my choice of poems

. How do you feel about poetry? (choose all that apply)

[More Details](#)



OU Research Inspiration and Rationale – TaRs Research

The TaRs research found that in order to foster Reading for Pleasure, teachers need to develop:

1. Considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts
2. Knowledge of children's reading practices
3. A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:
 - Social reading environments
 - Reading aloud
 - Independent reading
 - Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations
4. Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach
5. Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.

(Cremin et al., 2014)

With my initial development plan taking shape, I found it hard to distinguish exactly which areas I was focussing on. As you will see in my project outline, many of the strategies bridge across the 5 strands presented above from the research. Overall, the underlined areas are the strands which feature most prominently in my outline.



Aims

- To increase the profile and perception of poetry within my class
- To build children's knowledge of poets
- To develop a system where poetry is shared within the wider reading community with the purpose of developing aims 1 and 2




Outline

The main resource used throughout the project was a 'Poetry Café' resource. This featured a focus poem for the week which I shared with the class on a Monday. In school, I shared the name of the poet, a little bit about their life and then one of their poems. The poems ranged from more modern poetry to what could be considered as older 'classic poetry'. I tried to include a mixture of men and women and not always poems which were humorous. The theme for each poem varied each week and sometimes would support with our learning in school e.g. the weather.

The following poems were used across the 9 weeks of poetry cafés:

- From a Railway Carriage by Robert Louis Stevenson
 - The Jumblies by Edward Lear
- The Music of the Wind by Wes Magee
 - Snow Monster by John Foster
 - Butterfly by Spike Milligan
- Hearing the Earth, Feeling the Earth by Mandy Coe
 - The Cave by Tony Mitton
- Hippopotamus Dancing by Brian Moses
 - The Treasures by Clare Bevan



Poetry café

We have been enjoying listening to different poems in school and would like to continue this at home.

Each week we will be providing a poem which we have looked at.

Perhaps you would like to enter the poetry café at home?

You may like to grab a drink (tea, cocoa, squash) and a biscuit and enjoy the poem together as a family. Mr Bates has done a recording for you to watch but you can also read it together with the children joining in for familiar parts.

The questions aren't to test the children as the most important part of the poetry café is enjoying the poem; however, the questions may help to prompt some further discussion after reading. We would love to know what you think of this week's poem on Seesaw.

This week's poem is: The Cave by Tony Mitton

The Cave
Can you be daring?
Can you be brave?
Will you come down
to explore the cave?

We'll put on our boots
and carefully tramp
down through the darkness
all slimy and damp.

They say there's a chest
a hundred years old.
It's spilling over.
With jewels and gold.

The pirates left it
and never returned.
Their ship caught fire
and the map got burned.

So I'll take the torch
and you take the sack.
Let's go down there
and bring some back.

But hush! There's a dragon
Who just might waken,
If he hears any of it
being taken.

Questions for discussion

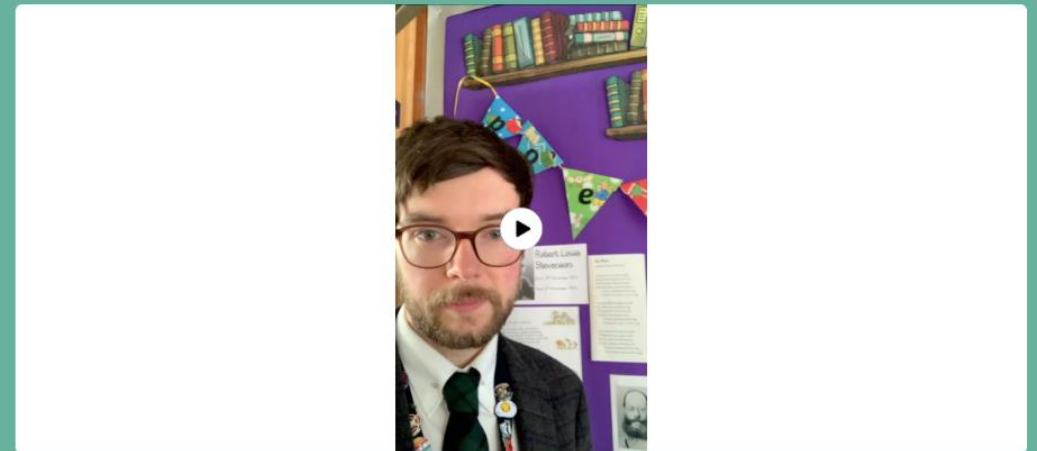
- Why do you need to be daring and brave?
- Why might we need boots on?
- Why do you think the pirates never returned?
- How would you take the gold without waking the dragon up?

Outline

Each sheet provided a copy of the poem as well as questions for discussion. In the information provided to parents, I emphasised that these were not test questions, but just prompts to start discussion with the children. The idea of a poetry café was intended to create a more informal activity as I did not want this to be seen as ‘homework’.

These were sent to families via Seesaw and included a video of me reading the poem out loud. The use of the platform was familiar to both the children and the parents as we have used this throughout the whole of this academic year for remote learning and also as a virtual reading diary. Although these were sent each Wednesday, the open access of the platform allowed families to access the resource at multiple points throughout the week.

And here's the recording of the poem being read aloud if you would like to listen to it.



April 24, 2021

Seen: Alfie Lambert, Amar Uppal, Annabelle Perry and 28 more

This week's poem is: From a Railway Carriage by Robert Louis Stevenson

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle,
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,
All by himself and gathering brambles;
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;
And there is the green for stringing the daisies!
Here is a cart run away in the road
Lumping along with man and load;
And here is a mill and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone for ever!



Questions for discussion

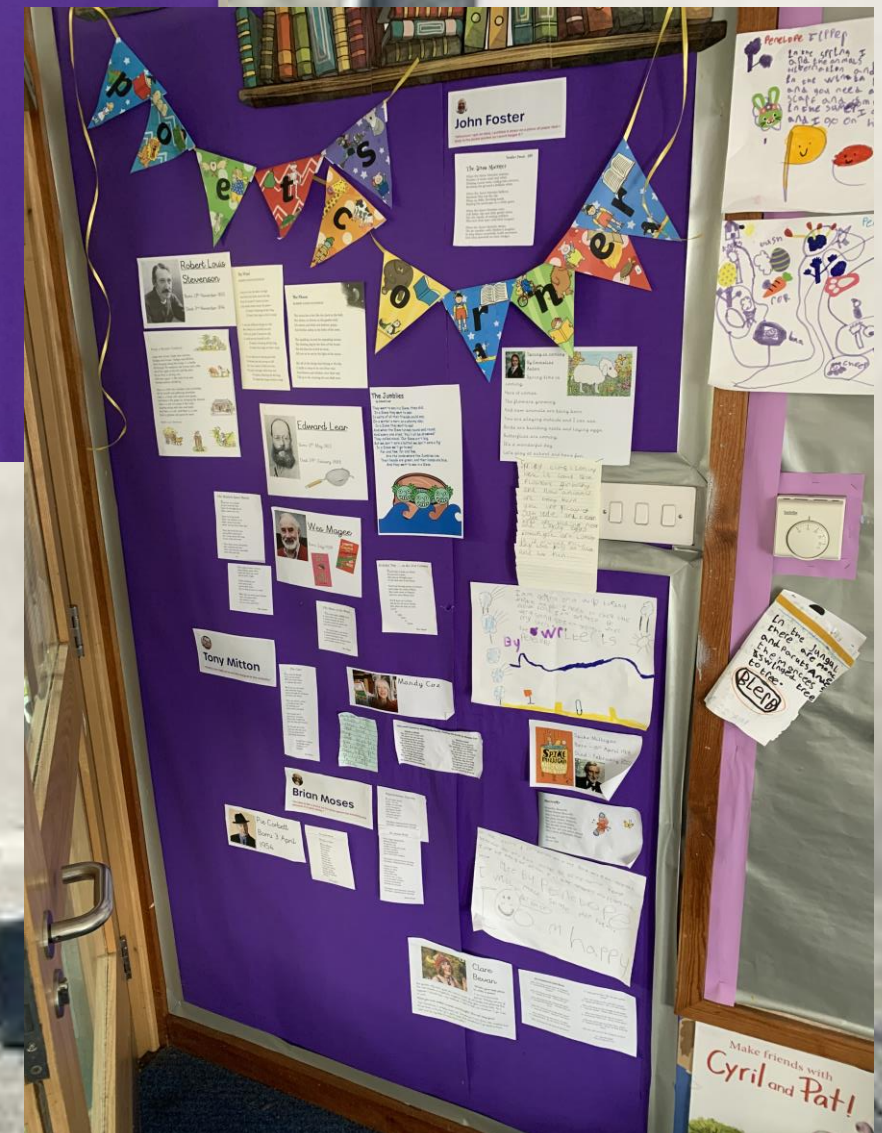
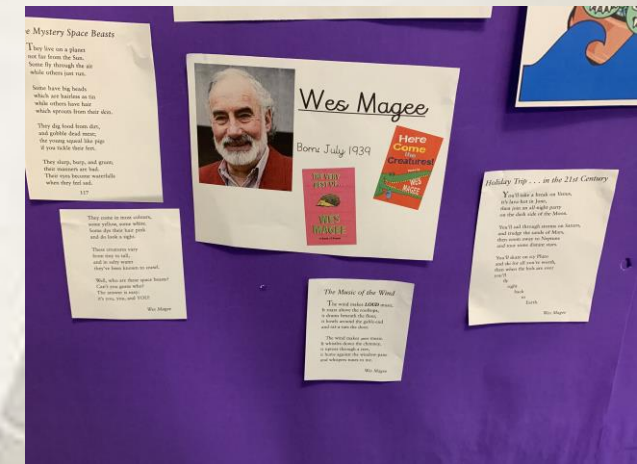
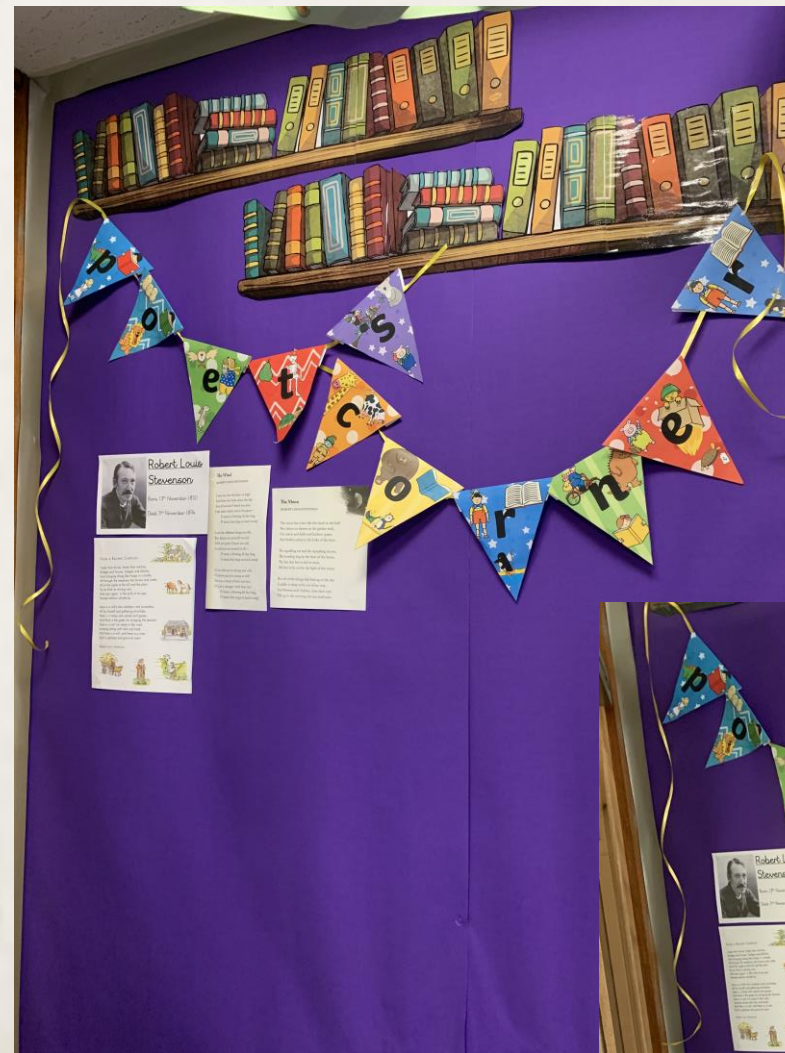
- Which parts of the poem can you see in the picture?
- Is the train moving fast or slow?
- Is Hagley station painted?
- Is the poem in Autumn or Winter?



Outline

Some of the poems, such as 'The Jumblies' were chosen due to their slightly nonsense nature. This allowed us to discuss that sometimes poems can be a little confusing but you can still enjoy them regardless. For this poem, although some of the verses were confusing for the children, they enjoyed the repetition of 'They went to sea in sieve they did...'

In addition to the 'Poetry Café' sheets, I also created a poet's corner in the classroom to display copies of all the poems we had read and the information about the poets. As the project developed, I also included poems written by the children at home. This included discussions around the fact that anyone can be a poet.



Impact – Successes

Overall, the impact of the project has had both successes and challenges. Firstly, the children responded brilliantly to the poetry and we enjoyed sharing the poems together.

On some occasions, I spotted some of the children going over to poet's corner and reading the new poem that I had displayed on the wall. In addition, one girl in my class, during the first few weeks, brought in a poem she had written at home. This prompted a read aloud session whereby we read her work and included her in poet's corner as a poet herself. After this, some other girls within the class also decided to write their own poems at home and bring them in. This moment highlighted for me the power of a reading community. Our shared discussions around poetry and also emphasising that the children too can be poets clearly made a positive impact on some of the children. This encouraged them not only to engage with the poetry but also to have a go themselves.

In my post project questionnaire (again via Microsoft Forms), I asked the children and parents to respond to questions similar to those found in the initial questionnaire. Some of these questions I amended or added due to the outline of my project. Interestingly when asked to name a poet, one of the respondents identified a child in the class whose work was on the wall. This was lovely to see as the idea that anyone can be a poet had clearly come through and had also been shared at home.



Impact – Successes

The post questionnaire feedback had 13 responses (43% of the class). 46% of the respondents felt that there had been a change with regards to poetry at home which was brilliant to see. The opportunity to provide additional comments emphasised some of these changes in habits such as reciting poetry and asking to buy more poetry collections.

A real success was the change in attitude towards poetry with none of the respondents stating that they didn't understand it. In this respect, I feel my aim to tackle this perception has been achieved and the conversations about enjoying poetry have had an impact. The fact that the most common response was 'I like the how poems make me feel' demonstrates the importance of sharing a wide selection of poetry with a range of emotional responses.

9. Do you feel that there has been a change in opinion with regards to poetry in your home? (This could be your child or another member of the family)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)



Responses

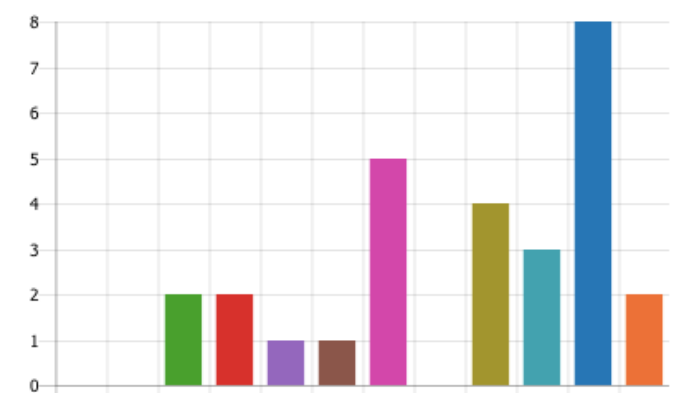
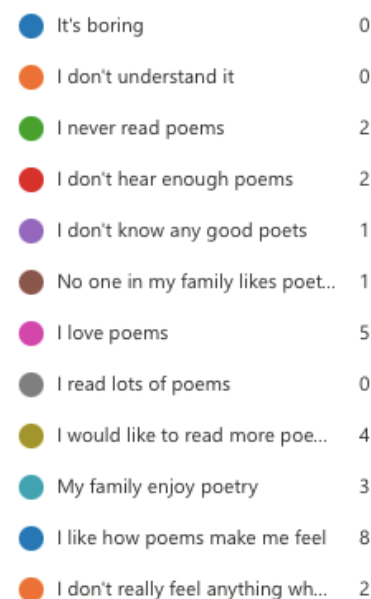
██████ has enjoyed the poems and has been able to answer the questions assigned to each poem

Reading even just a few lines of poetry has spiked an interest from ██████ and she has asked us to find some poetry books when we next go to the library.

██████ really enjoyed being introduced to more poetry. It was great when she came home and recited the seasons poetry to us.

5. How do you feel about poetry? (choose all that apply)

[More Details](#)



Impact – Successes

The number of children choosing poetry as their least favourite reading material declined in the post project questionnaire which again demonstrates the impact of sharing poetry regularly with the children.

Another success of the project has been my own awareness of poetry and poets. Through running the poetry café, I have increased my knowledge of a range of poets and poetry collections. I now feel more empowered to offer recommendations to other members of staff as well as to parents and the children.

The use of our online platform Seesaw was extremely beneficial throughout the project and has helped to engage the wider reading community. Through the project, I feel that the way the poetry café was designed enabled the resource to fit in the very centre of the model for the development of shared reading lives. The use of the poetry café sheet and videos has enabled families, children and me personally to connect over a shared reading experience. This is demonstrated in the Seesaw comment from a parent below.

4. What do you LEAST like to read?

[More Details](#)

Storybooks	0
Comics	1
Non-fiction books	2
Picture books	1
Magazines	3
Websites	5
Poetry collections	1

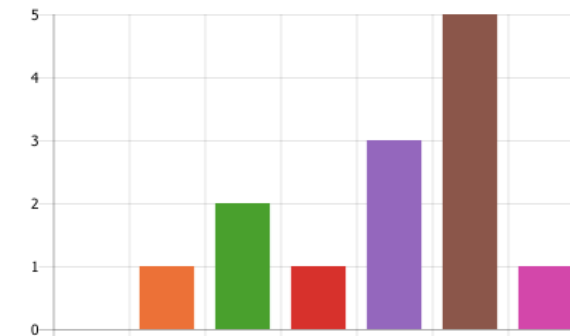
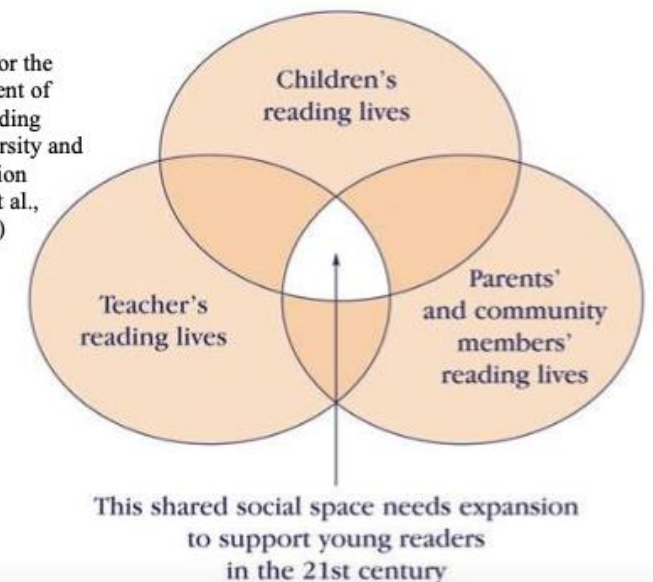


Figure 2:

A model for the development of shared reading lives: diversity and collaboration (Cremin et al., 2014: 159)



May 21, 2021, 6:29 PM

Reading record

likes this book and find Baby blob really funny..... came home today and loved the hippopotamus poetry and I had to play it a few times.... dad

Impact – Challenges

Although there have been a number of successes within the project, there have also been some challenges. One of these is the fact that only 43% of the class responded to the post project questionnaire. As a result, there is a proportion of the class whereby it is more difficult to evaluate how much they accessed the resource at home. However, the anecdotal evidence from my whole class when in school has emphasised the change in attitude towards poetry and also the enjoyment we have experienced in sharing poems.

Teaching in Year 1 brought the challenge of finding age-appropriate poems. Over the course of 9 weeks, as my subject knowledge improved, I did feel as though I found a useful selection of poetry collection books and websites to help facilitate my choices of poets.

Another challenge was ensuring that I had a diverse range of poets across the 9 weeks of poetry cafés. The use of collections sometimes limited this which is where I had to draw upon websites such as the children's poetry archive (<https://childrens.poetryarchive.org>) and poetry foundation (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/children>). I would highly recommend these free to access resources for anyone looking to increase their subject knowledge of children's poetry.

Welcome to

The Children's Poetry Archive

Listen to the world's best poetry read out loud.

Final Reflections

Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed finding out more about Reading for Pleasure and also some of the underpinning research behind it. The project has allowed me to engage in many fantastic conversations around reading with a group of like-minded colleagues and professionals. In addition, I have seen how useful platforms, such as Twitter, can be when looking for book recommendations. Although an active user of Twitter, I had previously not thought of using it for this purpose. The opportunity to engage with 'book blathers', through the group meetings and also through twitter has furthered my knowledge of a range of texts and how they can be used across the curriculum.

Going forward, I would like to introduce book blathers to our staff meetings and CPD sessions to help promote the sharing of high quality texts in my own setting and also to engage in conversations around reading for pleasure. In addition, my increased subject knowledge around poetry has already seen more poetry being included in assemblies for both KS1 and KS2. The short nature, and often thought provoking message, makes them an ideal resource for assemblies as well as promoting a shared community experience.

Additionally, I would like to ensure that all class reading areas have a range of poetry collections and that poetry is included within shared reading times. In some cases, if children are only exposed to poems when being 'taught' about them this can have an impact in the pleasure that they receive from it. My own project has revealed that discussing poems and enjoying them for the emotions they invoke can have an impact in changing the perception of poetry.

Finally, I feel that my engagement with the wider community has been extremely beneficial throughout the project and this is something I would like to look at incorporating more into the next academic year.

A huge thank you to both Rob and Tom as leaders of the OU/RfP group that I was part of. Their commitment, enthusiasm, support and organisation was incredible during some challenging and unusual circumstances.

