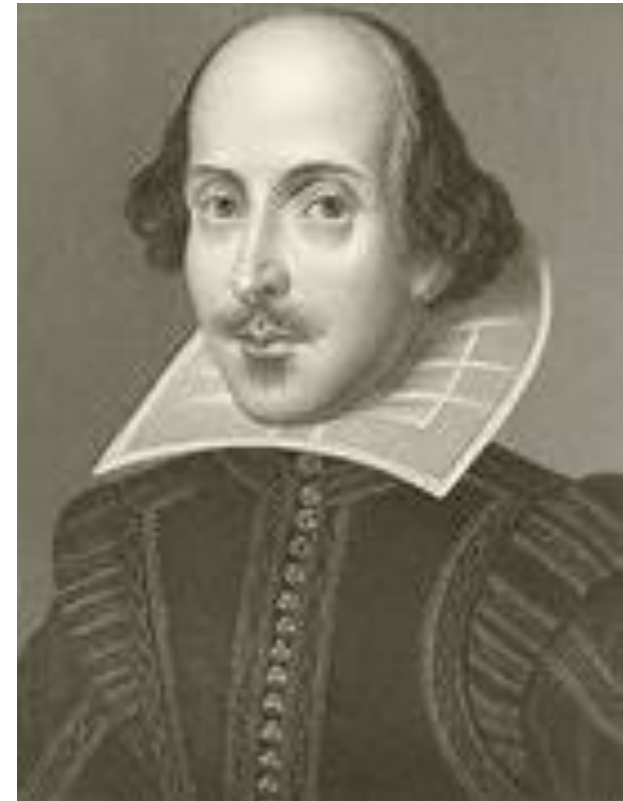


Prioritising Poetry

Rebecca Douglas



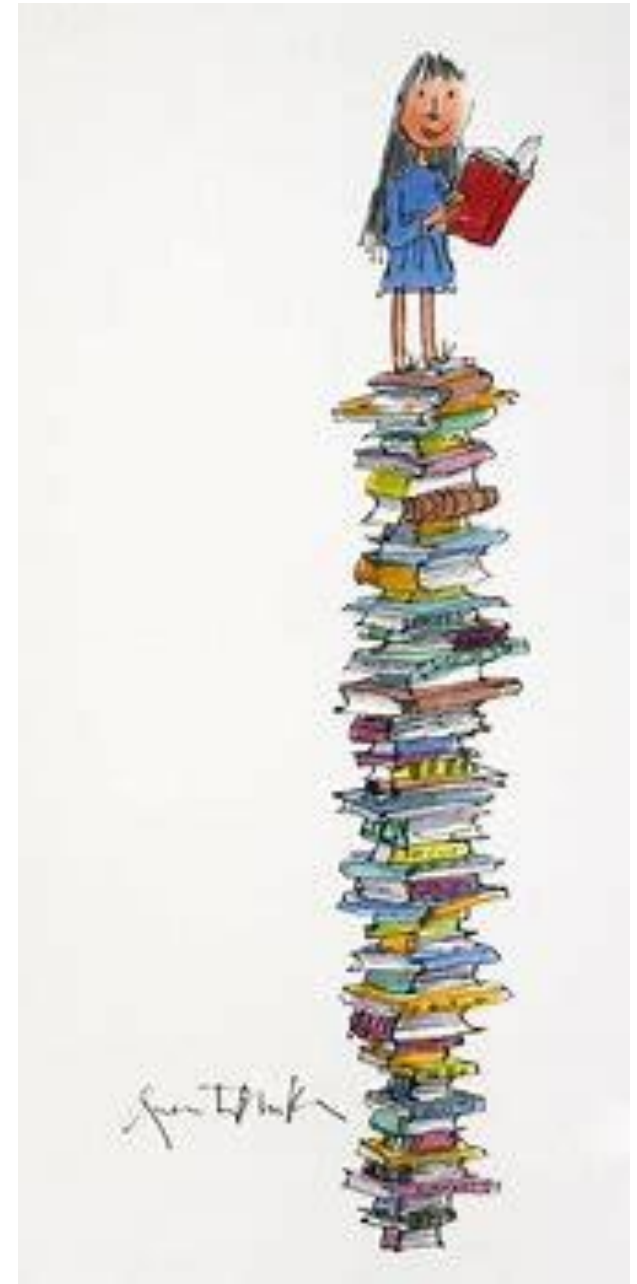
Context

I currently work at Mortimer Primary School in South Tyneside where I have taught for eight years. I teach Year 6 and was made English Lead earlier this year.

Our school ethos embodies the principal of ensuring every child is given the best opportunities to thrive in life.

Young people who enjoy reading are three times more likely to read above the level expected for their age than children who don't enjoy reading (30.1% vs 8.1%)

National Literacy Trust



Context

Reading for pleasure continues to be a huge focus across our school.

Fostering a love of reading is a priority on our School Development Plan and continues to be a whole-school target.

It was particularly important to us that, after a year of lockdowns and remote learning, all children were encouraged to find a love for reading again.



OU Research inspiration and rationale

1. *Considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts*

Teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts:

‘Whilst teachers do read for pleasure themselves, they have limited and limiting repertoires of children's authors, poets and picture fiction creators and rely upon childhood favourites and ‘celebrity’ authors.’

‘Only 10% of the teachers named 6 poets (22% named none at all). Michael Rosen (452) led the list, with Alan Ahlberg (207). Roger McGough (197), Roald Dahl (165) and Spike Milligan (159) receiving over 150 mentions’

(Cremin et al., 2008)



OU Research inspiration and rationale

Upon reflection of my own knowledge of children's literature, I knew that I was very familiar with classic poetry, but not particularly knowledgeable about more contemporary poets.

After auditing the reading curriculum, I found that there were missed opportunities to link core texts to classic poems and expand our pupils' repertoire of poetry.

I talked to my own class about their feelings towards poetry, and I was surprised to find how little knowledge and interest they had. Even my most capable and avid readers did not express any real enthusiasm or personal attachment towards particular poems.



Aims

To broaden staff's knowledge of literature and other texts (poetry).

After conducting a curriculum audit, I was aware that the teaching of poetry did not have the prominence it once did. When poetry was being taught, the work of the same few poets was used. Teacher knowledge of poetry to enjoy was low.

To provide opportunities for children to enjoy poetry for pleasure.

It was important to me that our pupils viewed poetry as something they could enjoy and explore for themselves. For me, the ultimate success would be when children were reading poems of their own accord and enjoying poetry in the same way they enjoy novels.

To introduce children to poets from diverse backgrounds.

Our school is less diverse than the average British school. Because of this, it is important to us to expose our children to people from all backgrounds and ethnicities and to promote equality and acceptance.



Outline



Poetry										
Do you have a favourite poet? _____										
If yes, what are they called? _____										
Write the names of as many poets you can think of.										

On a scale of 1 – 10, how much do you enjoy poetry?										
(1 – not at all, 10 – very much so)										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
How does poetry make you feel?										

Can you recite any poems off-by-heart? if yes, which ones?										

The Hope-o-potamus

By Greg James and Chris Smith



Every child in Years 5 and 6 completed a baseline poetry questionnaire.

I introduced '**Poet of the Week**' and shared biographical information with staff. I requested that staff replace 2 or 3 of their usual 'class novel' sessions with poetry from the poet of that week.

I delivered regular **poetry assemblies** to introduce new poets to the pupils. Pupils listened to performance poetry and recited poems they had been learning.



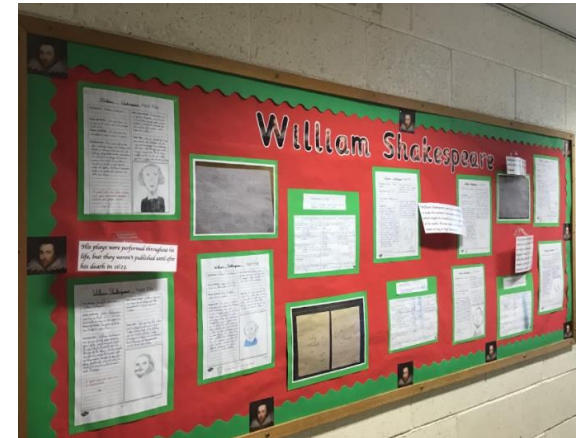
Outline

I organised an online **poetry workshop with Karl Nova** through Seven Stories.

I organised a whole-school themed **Shakespeare week**.

I **raised the profile** of events such as National Poetry Day by sharing information with staff.

I **revamped a bookshelf** in the staffroom and dedicated it to poetry anthologies to raise the profile of poetry amongst our staff.



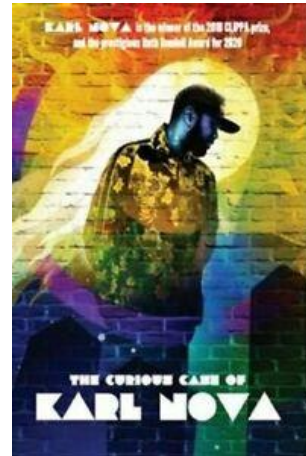
Impact

The results of the baseline questionnaire showed that, on average, children could recall the names of two poets. Only one child, who was asked, was able to name three.

By the end of the project, children were able to make a list of between **10 and 15 poets** when working in small groups.

Children were able to **recite poems** from poets they had learned about in previous months.

Teachers were incorporating poetry into their **daily practice of reading for pleasure**. They displayed portraits of poets, and their work, in classrooms.



Over 30 children **ordered poetry anthologies** from Karl Nova.

Teachers began **making links** between their core texts and **classic poetry** for their reading curriculum next year.



Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

To enthuse children and excite them about poetry, teachers also need to be enthusiastic. I believe this enthusiasm comes from being knowledgeable and confident about literature.

I intend to continue sharing the work of contemporary poets and supporting teachers to incorporate classic poetry into their planning.

The poetry bookshelf is a work-in-progress and I will continue to update this and encourage teachers to share these texts during their reading-for-pleasure sessions.

I will continue to raise the profile of poetry by highlighting events on the school calendar and, after the success of Shakespeare week, I intend to make this an annual event.

