

# Reading Aloud with *Enjoyment and Confidence*

Dave Colombi

## Context

I work at Thursby Primary School in a mixed Y5 / Y6 classroom with 32 children. We have over 110 children on role and are located 6 miles to the west of Carlisle. Our school has had a big push on Reading for Pleasure; aiming for all children to read with enjoyment. Children at our school show wide variation in reading skill and varied levels of enthusiasm.



## OU Research inspiration and rationale

The Teachers as Readers research project (Cremin et al., 2008, 2014) reveals that a robust RfP pedagogy encompasses four specific practices: **reading aloud, informal book talk and recommendations, independent reading time, and a highly social reading environment.**

Through observations, discussions and reviewing my own practise, **I wanted to address the perception that reading had always to be accompanied by answering questions**, especially when reading aloud to my class.

Reading aloud and discussion of shared texts was a crucial strand of the RfP pedagogy identified in the TaRs research. It enabled children to access rich and challenging texts, prompted the children's affective engagement. I want the children to enjoy listening and engaging with the texts in a more relaxed and confident way (especially, less able readers).

## Aims

I wanted to change the perception of reading held by some children. I wanted to encourage reluctant readers to be confident, enjoy *listening* to texts and informally chatting to each other about what they had heard - with no other objective. **I chose to develop Reading Aloud as a strand of RfP pedagogy.**

**I modelled reading aloud with confidence and enjoyment** including using expression to portray characters in books, for example. I also asked the class to consider how they thought characters might speak e.g. loudly, softly, with an accent etc. This has promoted good discussions between the children, **but my aim in this project**, was to use informal book talk **to develop Reading Aloud** for enjoyment, more significantly.

Specifically, the two aims of this research project, connected to the **reading pedagogy** strand of the OU Reading for Pleasure research (Cremin et al., 2014) are to develop:

- Older children's **enjoyment** when listening to books and texts read aloud
- The quality of children's responses to books read aloud, through **informal talk.**

## Outline

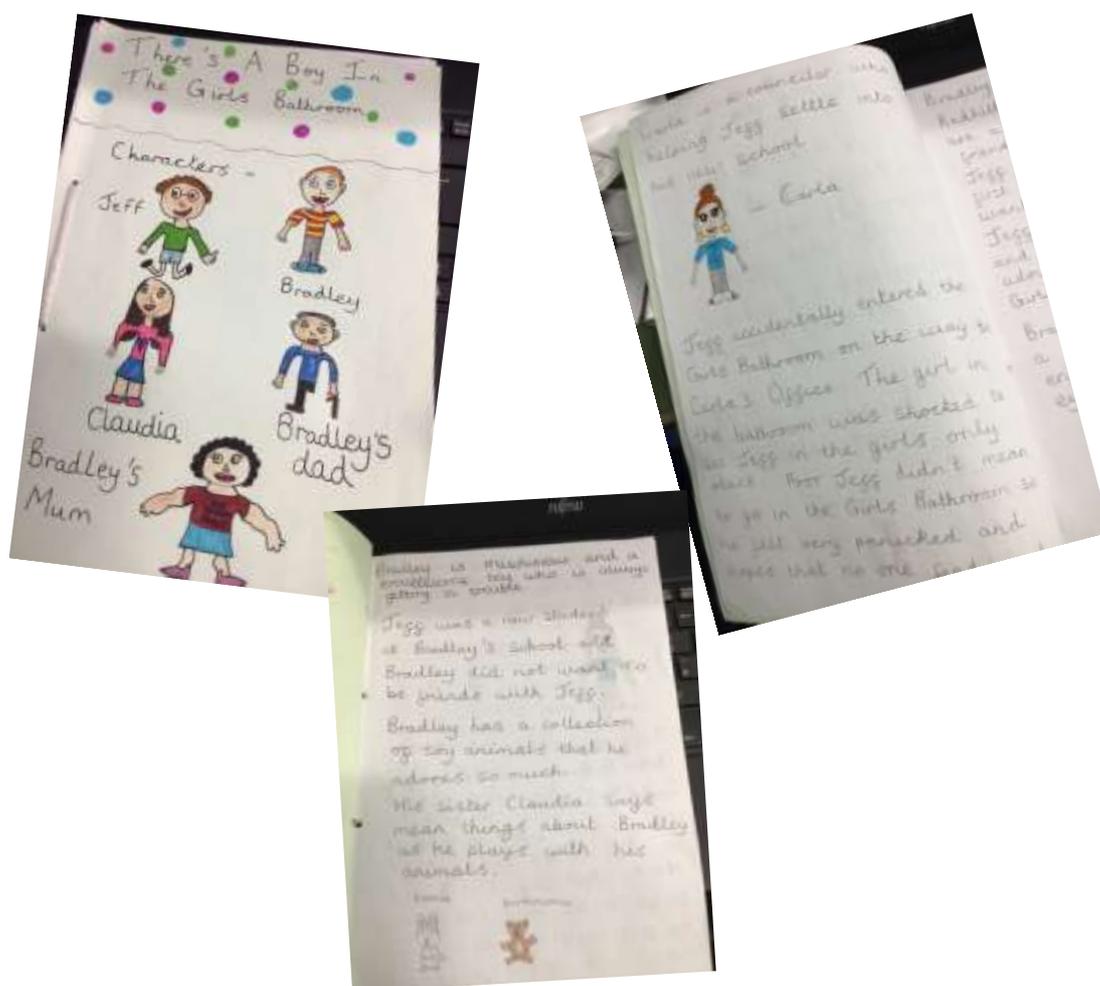
Initially I went about achieving the aims of the project by **giving the children a few suggestions for the class (read aloud) text and letting them make the final choice**. Straightaway the children were engaged, enthusiastic and even the reluctant readers were confident to take part in the discussion. Once the final choice was made and I began reading the book aloud, the children became active listeners, engaging fully. I felt this was due to their participation in the choice of book.

I read the first couple of chapters and then asked the children how I should portray each character. Again, the children thoroughly enjoyed explaining their reasons behind their thoughts. At one stage some of the children became animated and quite vocal. This was fantastic to see and showed the passion and enjoyment they felt.

Once I had read a few more pages, I asked if any children were confident enough to carry on reading aloud. Then they moved to using expressions as I had previously modelled.

The children were then given a coloured booklet and they were free to draw, write, make notes etc about what was read aloud. It could be anything and as much or as little as they felt like. They were a little unsure as tasks usually come with more instruction and structure.

Here are a few photos of one of the booklets children completed. It was their choice as to how to set it out, how much to do and how much to draw ...



## Impact

From engaging children in the selection of texts and then in the act of Reading Aloud, I noticed the following impact:

- Enjoyment from all children
- Engagement from reluctant readers
- Less formal tasks can achieve greater engagement in discussions
- Discussions were more in-depth
- Empowerment for children choosing the class texts
- Over time, more children volunteered to read aloud to the class
- Some children said that they have bought the book so they could read along at home
- Children made good use of their notebooks
- Children engaging with reading more regularly at home
- Improvement in comprehension

Children told me:

*"I'm really enjoying the notebook, I can do what I want in it."*

*"I was nervous reading aloud to the rest of the class in case I made a mistake but I'm used to it now so it does make me nervous now."*

*"I like I can draw pictures in English and it's ok."*

## Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The TARs research highlighted the importance that reading aloud can have in building positive reading habits. The research also put a spotlight on how important reading aloud can be for both adults and children to widen knowledge and increase self-awareness of reading practices. This project also really made me consider the importance of including children in decisions about what books were read aloud and who did the reading. Handing over that choice to the children had an immediate impact, as they felt empowered.

Despite curriculum restraints I believe the initiative has been a success for myself and the children in my class. I have appreciated and enjoyed the time spent reading aloud to my class for pleasure, and I have become more varied in my book choice. Reluctant readers are becoming involved in the stories read aloud, just as if reading them to themselves, and their confidence is improving; they review and discuss books with their peers without the pressures and struggles of reading the text on their own.