



Learning to be shelf-aware

**Reading Teachers: Teachers who read
and readers who teach**

By Abby Irons and Gemini Sim



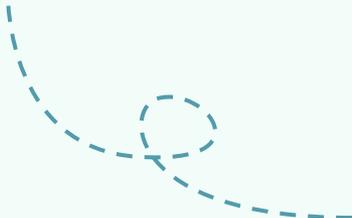
Context

We are third-year BA Primary Education students at the University of Greenwich. We are currently enjoying and thriving in a Children's Literature course, with the aim to develop a reading for pleasure pedagogy.

We have experience in whole-class teaching, and we both tutor students with English as an Additional Language. Our final placements will begin in January 2022.



OU Research Inspiration and Rationale



We have chosen to focus on becoming “Reading Teachers” (Reading Teachers: Teachers who read and readers who teach) because we want to be teachers who have a book for everything! Literature has the ability to reflect aspects of the human condition back to the reader (Cremin, 2015), and we believe that there is a book for every subject, every feeling, and every person.

We understand the positive impact that of reading and sharing our experiences of reading with our future classes. We want the children to see themselves reflected in our teaching and in the books we read; this will affect how they see themselves and their place in the world. The Teachers as Readers (TaRs) project (Cremin et al. 2014) notes that if teachers share their own reading experiences, this will have a positive impact on children’s own reading habits and ultimately inspire a love of reading.

We were also frustrated because we couldn’t name as many children’s authors and poets as we thought we could, and we remembered mainly the “celebrity authors”. We hope to gain a better understanding of children’s literature in general, and not just limited to the most well-known authors or books from our own childhood.



OU Research Inspiration and Rationale ctd.

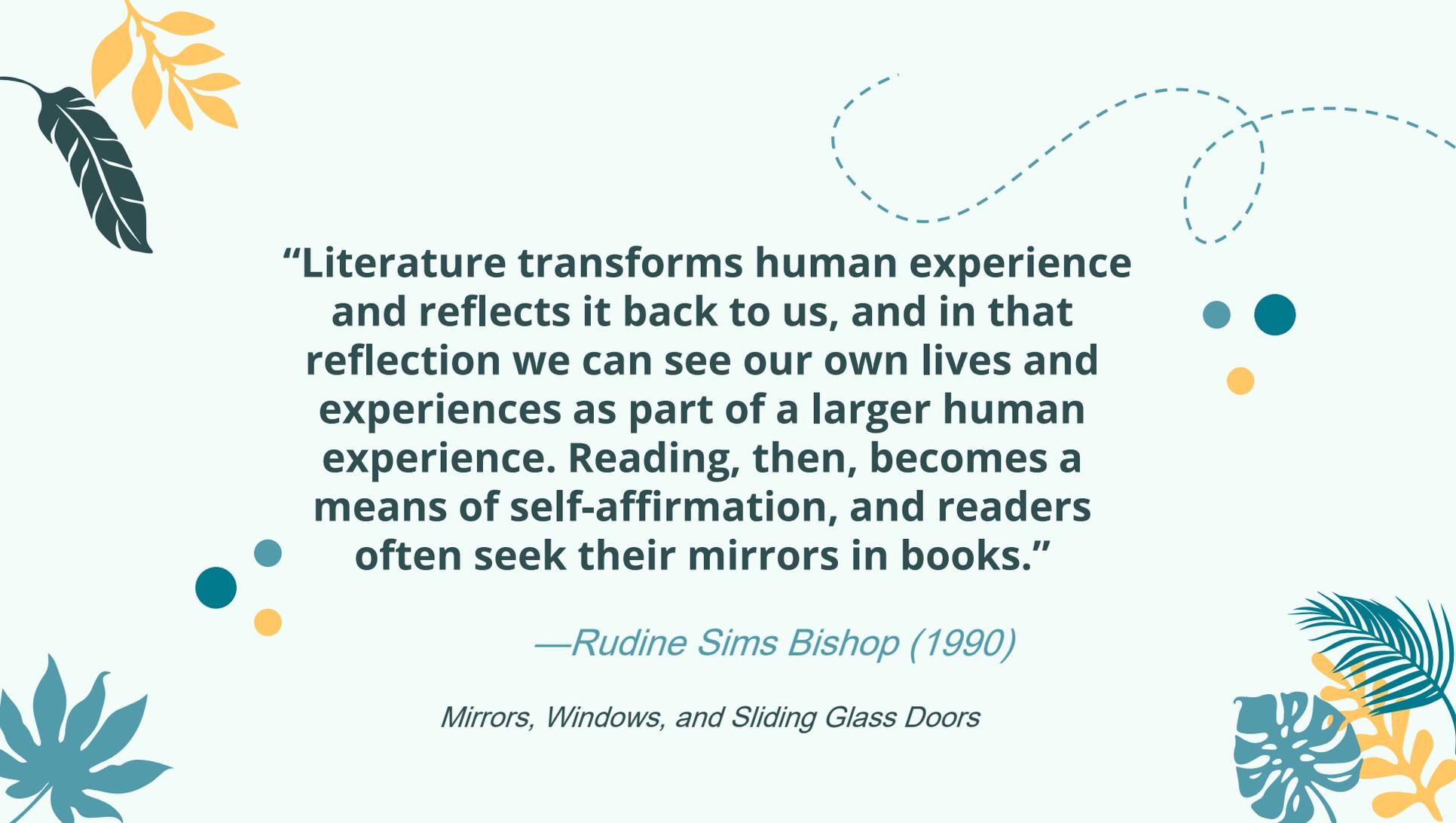
We wanted to focus a part of our presentation on poetry in order to address and improve our poetry subject knowledge. Reading poetry for pleasure may be an “easier” goal to stick to for the long-term, as poems are generally shorter and more accessible than books. For example, we could read one poem a day with our future class.

Before reading the TaRs research, we did not realise the importance of teachers sharing their own reading habits, in motivating children to read themselves, and having a positive impact on their development. Our initial surveys reflected this:

6. To what extent do you share your reading life with children in school?
Do you share:

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<input type="radio"/> Your interest in and attitude to reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> Aspects of your life history as a reader	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> The range of material you currently read for pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> Your practices and habits as an adult reader	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> Your views and emotional responses to the texts you read	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





“Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of a larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.”

—Rudine Sims Bishop (1990)

Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors



Aims



1

Review our own reading journeys

We both read for pleasure as children but then other activities started to take priority e.g. uni and work! Reviewing our reading journeys may inspire us to read for pleasure again.

2

Make time for RfP

Reading for pleasure, rather than for a set goal or purpose. This makes someone a **READER**. Someone who enjoys reading and will choose to read for pleasure. What motivates children to read?

3

Reflect on our development

Engage with friends/colleagues to create a community of readers, and improving our reading knowledge together - by sharing books, poetry and favourite authors. This will help us develop our identity as Reading Teachers and teachers of reading. Reflect on the impact of reading for pleasure on our teaching.

4

Poetry knowledge

We understand poetry as a medium where we can explore thoughts and express big feelings. We want to build our confidence in teaching and using poetry by firstly building upon our poetry subject knowledge.





● ● Reading for Pleasure (RfP)

Books can be valued for their potential in cross-curricular teaching (mapping the text) BUT books should also be valued in their own right and as future teachers, we will strive to incorporate reading for pleasure into the class routine every day.

This will help children view books as not just tools for learning, but enjoyed for what they are.

What immediately inspires someone to pick up a book?

DfE (2014) National Curriculum - children must be encouraged to “develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information.”

Teachers must provide a range of literature for children to read in their classrooms e.g. fiction, non-fiction, realism, fantasy, poetry, mystery, adventure.

Reading Teachers - why do we read?



The TaRs project research (Cremin et al. 2014) highlights reading teachers as having an “awareness of the significance of all readers’ personal preferences and practices; the importance of emotional engagement in reading; the social nature of reading, and the salience of readers’ rights and agency”

Sharing emotional connections to books - the power of books to make us feel something! Books can help to develop social and emotional skills such as empathy. We may also identify with certain characters or experiences portrayed in books - helping us to feel less alone.

Knowing your children and building a picture of your class as readers; giving your children freedom and choice in enabling a community of readers; why do we read anyway?

- **For knowledge**
- **For understanding**
- **For relaxation**
- ***For fun!***

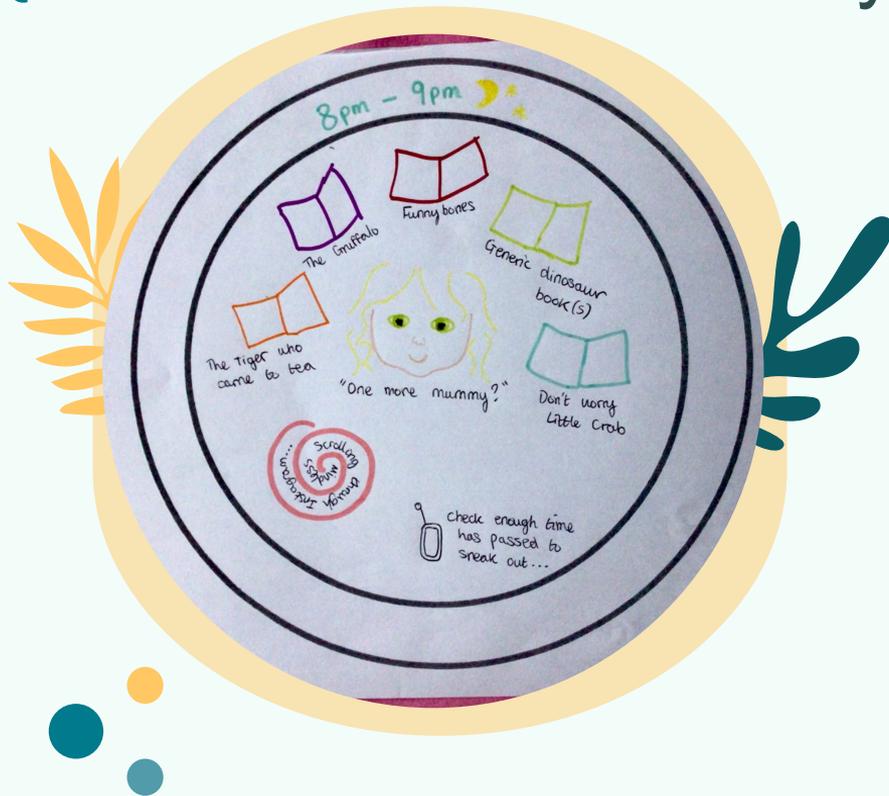


Outline

- Our reading rivers, surveys and “an hour from my day” activity have highlighted a gap in our knowledge - we were avid readers as children but this gradually got lost, and now we are mostly limited to those authors from our childhood.
- We noticed that we tend to use older books we know, rather than striving to discover newer books, which may be more relevant for the children in our future classrooms. Children’s experiences and interests are validated in the books we choose to use and display - children’s motivation to read will correlate with the books they have access to in their classroom and whether they are interested in them.
- We have broadened our knowledge of children’s literature (with a poetry focus) and have discovered the cross-curricular potential of children’s literature, and how books can be used to provide an insight or offer deeper understanding of a variety of topics.



An hour from my day (Gemini)...



This was a quick activity carried out at university. Not only did I realise we read for a variety of different purposes but we also cannot escape reading! I chose the “bedtime hour” because it is when I do my most purposeful reading, as well as my arguably least purposeful reading.

This would be a great activity to do with the class as a visual representation of how much reading we do per hour or per day. The TaRs project recommends asking children to document their reading within a 24 hour period and create collages in order to understand the depth and breadth of reading in the class. This activity could also help us to understand our children’s interests and reading preferences, as well as how much access they have to books at home.

An hour from my day (Abby)...



I focused this activity on the hour when I wake up. I realised that being able to read is a crucial part of my life and very important in helping me have a positive and productive start to my day; it allows me to choose my favourite songs whilst running, stay organised, keep in contact with friends. Without reading, I would not be able to fulfil my potential in this world.

According to UNESCO, almost a billion adults around the world are illiterate, and therefore they cannot even use reading to make the most of the world around them, let alone read for pleasure. Being able to read fluently is a real privilege so much so that most of the time we are not even aware that we are doing it, therefore we should make the most of those opportunities that we have been given by Reading for Pleasure whenever we can. This idea is something which we could also discuss with our pupils.

Reading Rivers

Reading teachers can influence and inspire their children to read for pleasure too! We believe that the best thing we can do is role-model reading to our future class, and invite children to reflect on their own reading rivers.



Why was I such an avid reader in primary school, but would lose interest later in life?

How do primary teachers ensure RfP is not lost when children leave primary school?



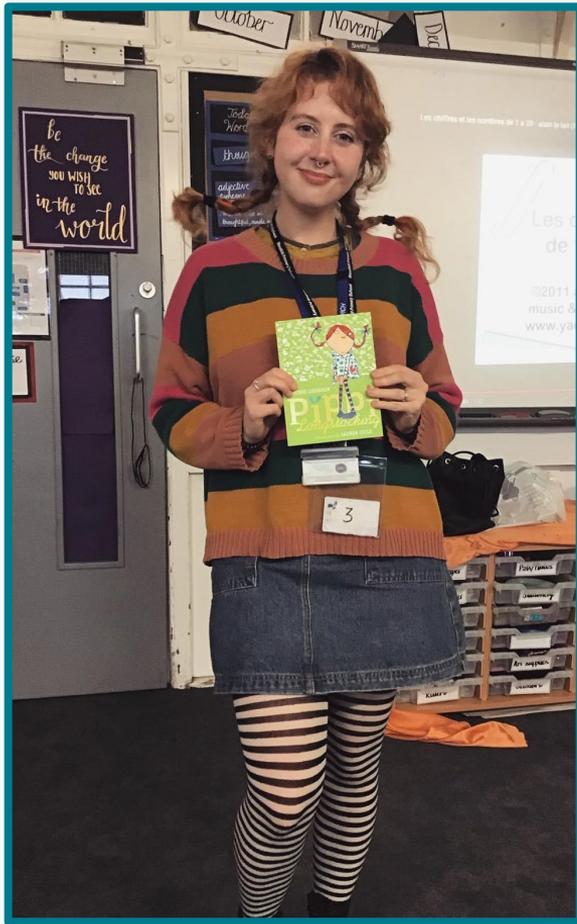
Reading Teachers "support the development of the children's positive reader identities" (TaRs).

Our Reading Habits



- Old but gold vs new and bold! We can use beloved books from our childhood in the classroom, but we must also discover and share newer books too. The main children's poet we could name was Michael Rosen. Older books and well-known writers can still be relevant, but newer books may tackle important themes in interesting, innovative and insightful ways.
- Reading for different purposes and making time for reading - yes, we technically read everyday (e.g. road signs, Facebook) but we mostly read whilst commuting rather than setting aside time for reading as a leisure activity. Or our reading mainly involves academic reading for university rather than true reading for pleasure.
- Emotional connection to books - discussing how a book made us feel. Reading teachers understand the feeling of being immersed in a good book! This feeling should be shared!
- Think about reading when we have free time vs watching a film, for example. Consider pressures of technology and what children do in their spare time. Try to exploit pockets of free time to read during the day.





Unlearning...

In March 2020 was World Book Day and I dressed as a beloved character from my childhood: Pippi Longstocking. Only after rereading the books and doing my own research, I found that some passages refer to colonial stereotypes. I think teachers must be prepared to revisit their “old but gold” favourite books and be wary of the fact that some books may not be appropriate and could potentially alienate the children in their class. I had always identified with Pippi as a strong female character who was also a bit different, but on this day I realised I desperately needed some newer books within my library of children’s literature.

I also think that embracing World Book Day is a great way for children (and teachers) to celebrate and showcase their favourite books.

- Gemini

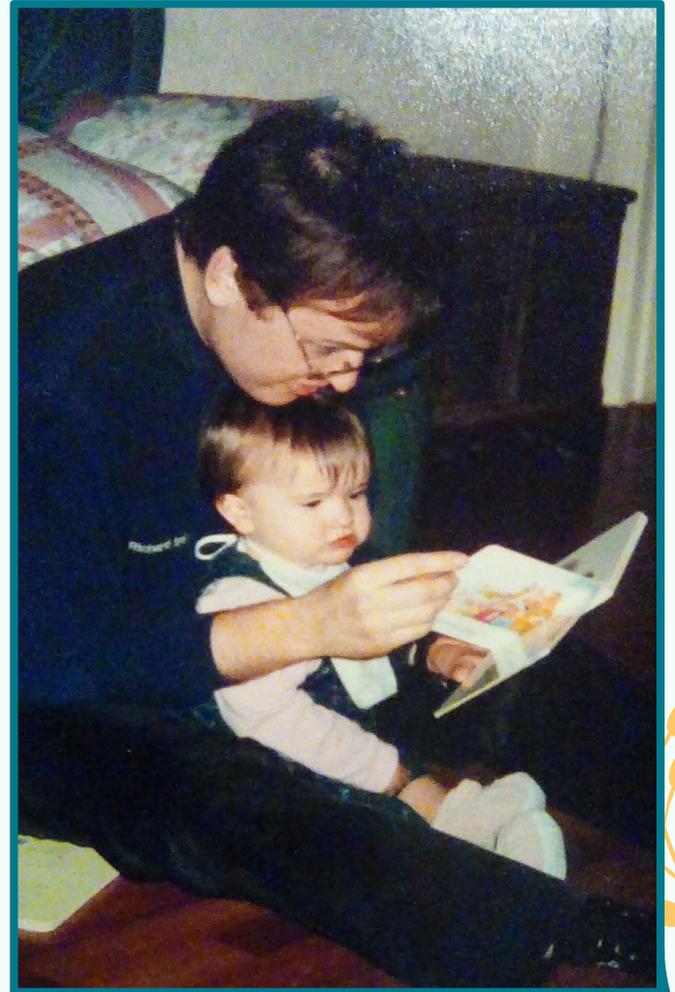


Unlearning...

I was very fortunate to have my dad read to me every single day when I was growing up, until I was about twelve years old. He read me his favourite books from his own childhood, which included authors such as Roald Dahl, Enid Blyton, Michael Rosen, C.S Lewis and Shirley Hughes. Whilst these authors are hugely talented and wrote stories which I still love to this day, our society has changed since my dad was growing up and those books no longer reflect the realities of a significant number of children in our classrooms.

I have come to realise that there are so many newer books that also need celebrating. In order to be a Reading Teacher who can make a real difference in the classroom, I need commit to exploring and reading children's books that were not read to me as a child.

- Abby



Reflections on Learning to Read

As well as having people read to me, I have been enjoying reading books independently from a very young age. Developing an enjoyment of what I read through being allowed to choose and explore books which were meaningful to me was a crucial part of me learning to read, and this part of my reading journey has helped me understand the importance of letting my students choose their own books.



The Big Dig

- 7 Pam and Fin dug in the mud.
- 12 Pam dug up a map.
- 18 Fin dug up a big pot.
- 24 Pam dug up a red peg.
- 32 Pam and Fin dug up a big log.
- 39 Fin did not pick up the log.



How important is phonics for reading?

It took me a very long time to grasp phonics when I started school, but I still loved reading! Phonetic knowledge is undoubtedly important for learning to read, and teachers who support their class in becoming confident in phonics should be proud of those accomplishments. However, they should not limit what their children are reading to what they are able to phonetically decode independently. Such texts are written with good intentions, but alone are not sufficient enough for teaching children to read for pleasure.

Reading Rights

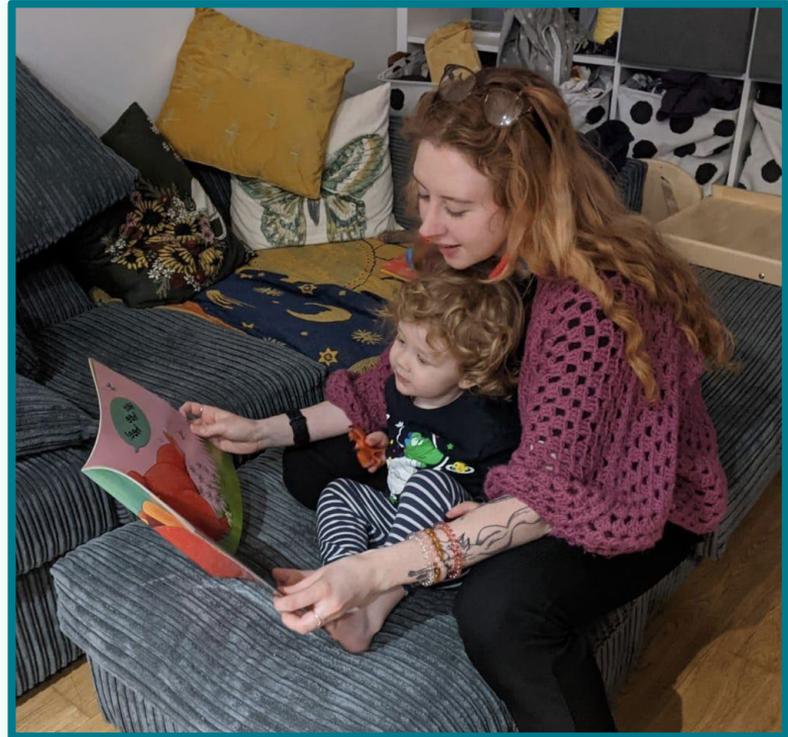
The conventions of reading can be understood before formal education and I have quickly realised that children copy what their parents and caregivers model to them! Reading shouldn't always be a formal activity with set rules - we have the right to skip ahead, or even abandon books completely. Strict rules could potentially deter children from reading for pleasure.

The TaRs (Cremin et al. 2014) research provides classroom strategies to help build a community of readers. One suggestion is to have an open dialogue with the class to discuss their reading habits.

Is it okay to break the reading rules?

For example, by reading the last page first, flicking through books quickly to get an idea of the book before reading it "properly", the right not to finish, or skipping passages (or pages) entirely! We believe that the reading rules can be bent and/or broken.

I was thinking about how my toddler enjoys being read to every night and how books must be inherently joyful!



See: Daniel Pennac's
"The Rights of the Reader"

PETRA

MARIANNA COPIC



Thomas & Hudson

CHITLI & RAUF
The
BOY
at the
BACK

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



Green
Eggs
and
Ham



Dr. Seuss

A selection of books I have read,
bought, revisited and looked at
this term!
- Gemini

WINNER
CIP FARNHAM MEDAL
A
MONSTER
CALLS

PATRICK
NESS

THORNHILL

Pam Smy

every day of the year



illustrated by
Fiona Waters

illustrated by
Franz Prenton-Gibson

Michael Rosen's
SAD BOOK



Michael Rosen · Quentin Blake

PETRA

MARIANNA COPPO



Thames & Hudson

OH TALI Q RAUF
The Boy
at the
Back
of the
Class

Winner of the Blue Peter Book Society Award 2014

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

Green
Eggs
and
Ham



By Dr. Seuss

WINNER
CIPF CARNegie Medal
A
MONSTER
CALLS

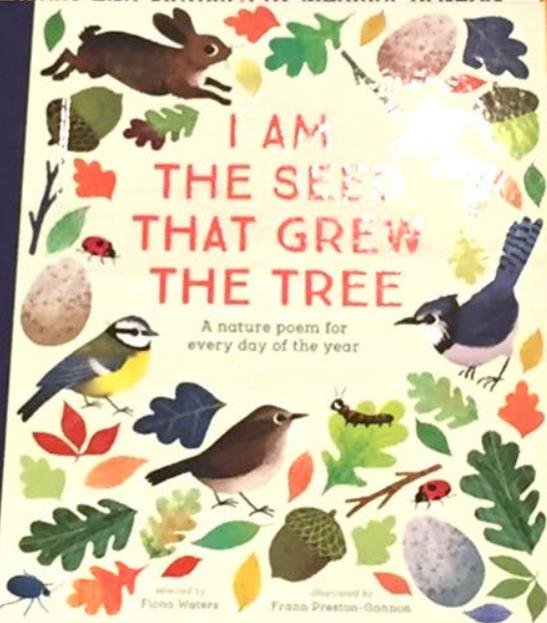
PATRICK
NESS

THORNHILL

Pam Smy

I AM
THE SEED
THAT GREW
THE TREE

A nature poem for
every day of the year



written by
Fiona Waters

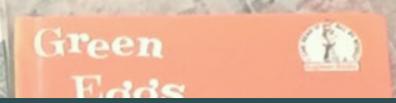
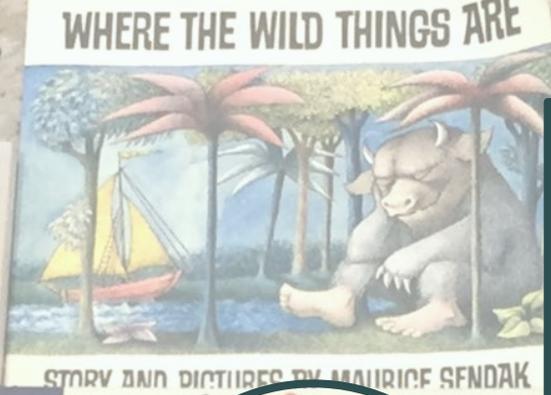
illustrated by
Franz Prenton-Gohson

Michael Rosen's
SAD BOOK

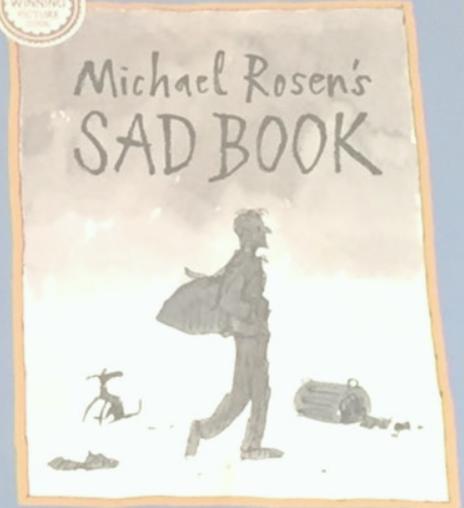
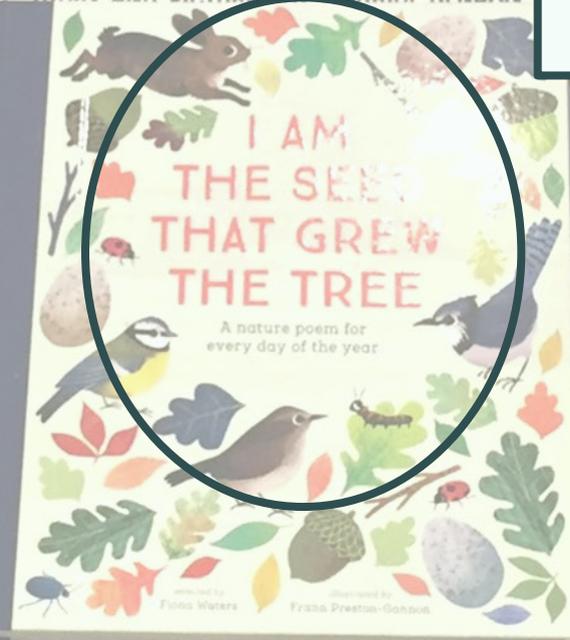


Michael Rosen · Quentin Blake

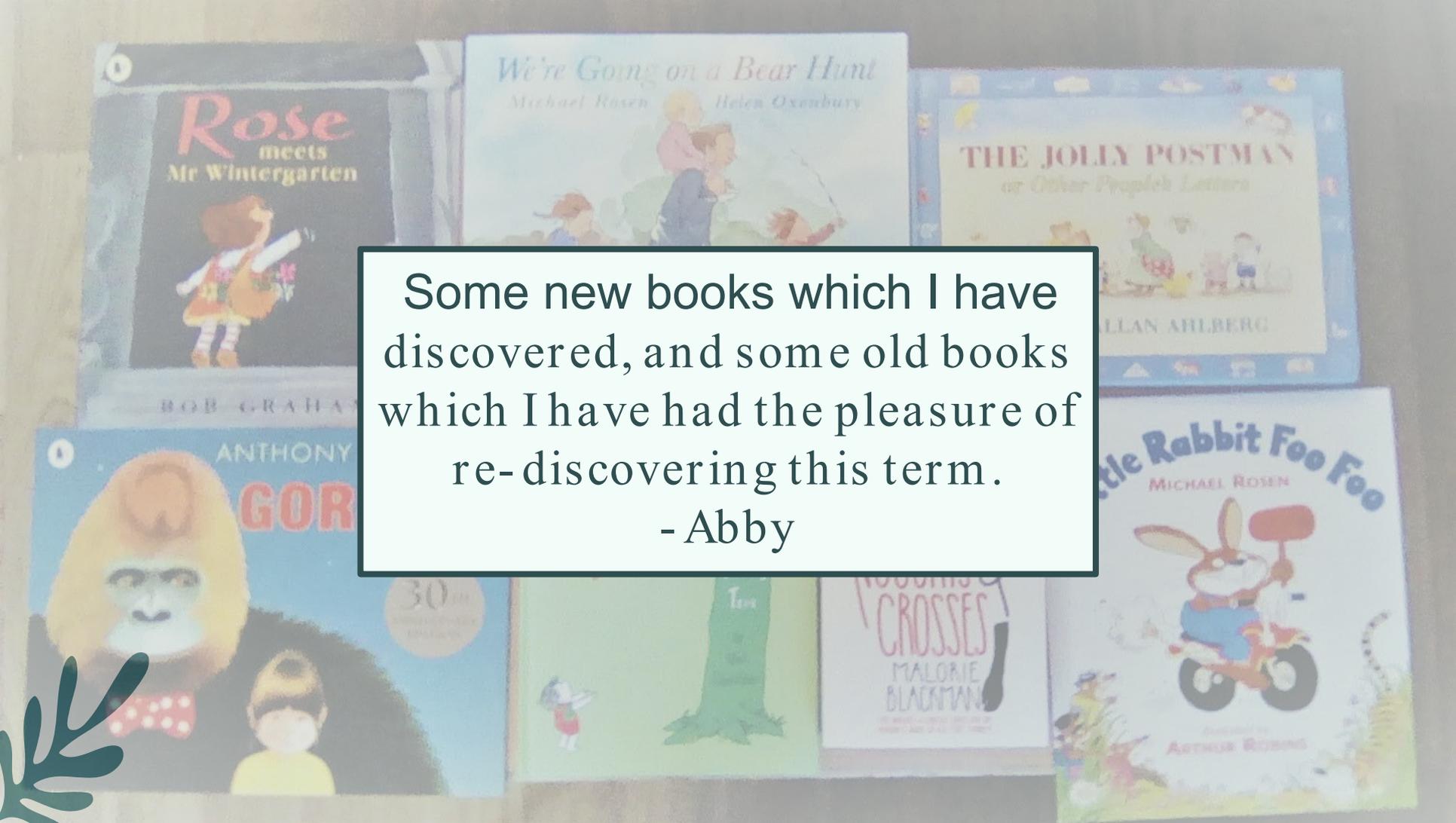
I hope to read this poetry book collection to my SE3 class - there is a poem for each day of the year!
- Gemini



By immersing children in poetry for 10 minutes everyday, in order for them to see the power of poetry as an effective communication tool, as well as an enjoyable art form!

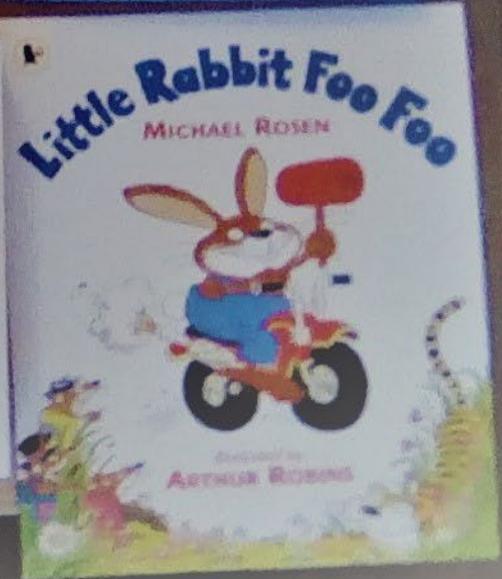
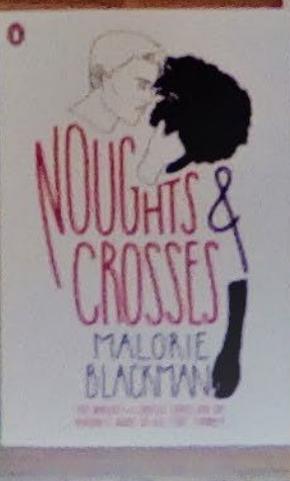
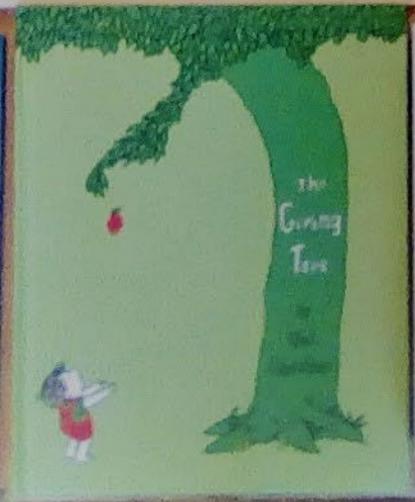
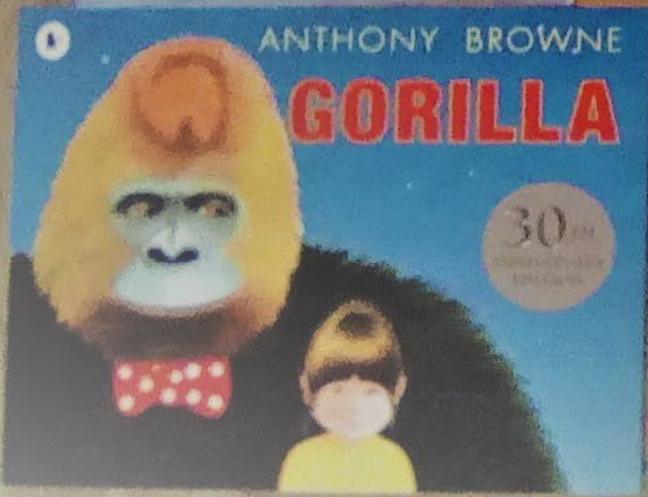
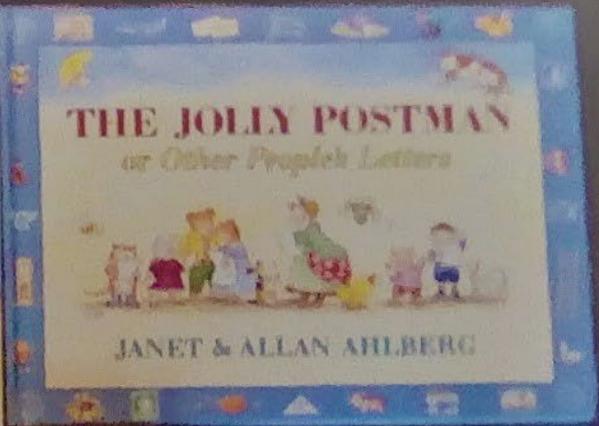
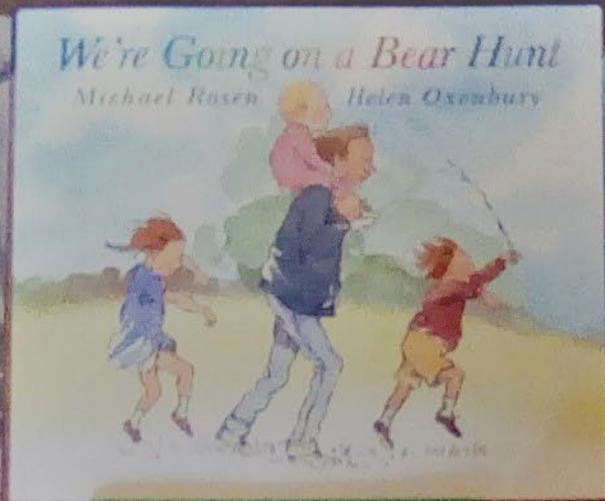
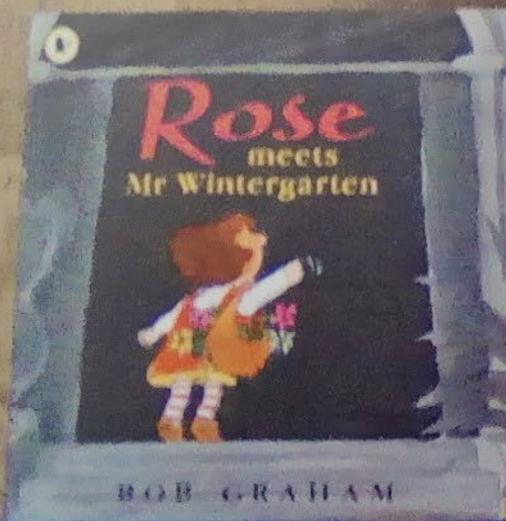


Michael Rosen · Quentin Blake



Some new books which I have discovered, and some old books which I have had the pleasure of re-discovering this term.

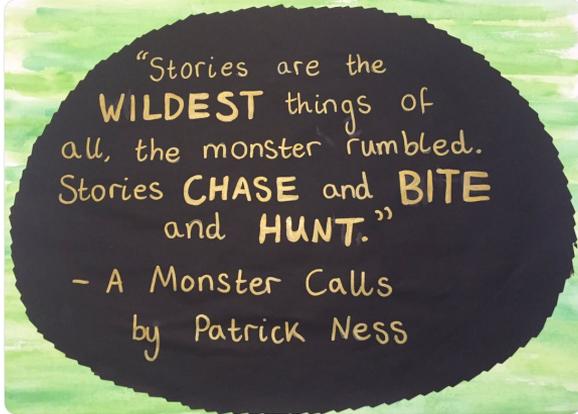
- Abby



Reading Community

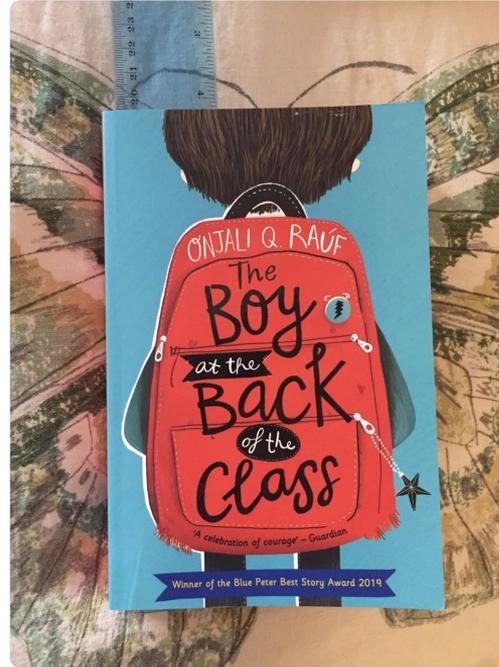


Gemini @geminieloise · 23/11/2021
One of many golden quotes in #AMonsterCalls ❤️ I need this in my future classroom!! (this mini “display” is for my reading journal) 📖



Social media is also a great way to discover new authors and poets!

Gemini @geminieloise · 5d
Started my @OnjaliRauf reading journey and what a beautiful book so far. I'm so happy my reading mojo is back, thanks to my Children's Literature module at uni! 📖 I actually read a part of this book to my class on placement - I needed to revisit it for myself! #readingteachers



I started a “professional twitter” in order to link with other Reading Teachers and create discussion about the books we are reading!



#readingteachers

Reading for Pleasure Book Club

Red: A Crayon's Story by Michael Hall

Sometimes I wonder if he's really red at all.

Don't be silly. It says red on his label.

He came that way from the factory.



A picture book about a blue crayon with a red label - could be interpreted in many different ways. The crayon tries his best to draw red strawberries, but of course they come out blue! Transgender awareness, identity and acceptance. Provokes discussion about labelling and mislabelling, as well as trying to adhere to society's expectations. I accessed this book on YouTube!



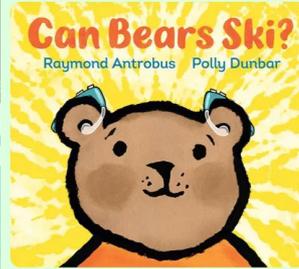
Don't Worry, Little Crab by Chris Haughton



Very Big Crab takes Little Crab to the sea for the first time and Little Crab is understandably nervous. The waves keep coming and Little Crab wants to give up and go home. I think the waves could be a metaphor for overcoming your fears even if the waves/problems/hurdles seem to be getting bigger each time. The book promotes perseverance and stepping out of your comfort zone.

I love the ending - "Can we go up this way?" asks Little Crab. "I think you can go anywhere." says Very Big Crab. And off they went.

Can Bears Ski? By Raymond Antrobus



A really beautiful book about hearing impairment and the challenges faced by those who are hearing impaired. The main character is a bear who thinks everyone is asking him "can bears ski?" but they are really asking "can you hear me?" I love how poetic the book is, as well as the emphasis on what the bear experiences with his other senses. I love how he likes his colours LOUD! The bear goes to an audiologist with his dad and gets hearing aids.

When it snows, "Everything feels still - no rumbling, no trembling. It's like everything is breathing quietly." Love that!

A group of us have started a "reading for pleasure book club" where we suggest themes and share children's books based on those themes (via Padlet).

This has been excellent for building our knowledge of children's books, as well as developing our identities as Reading Teachers.

Most books are extremely accessible as they can be experienced on YouTube.

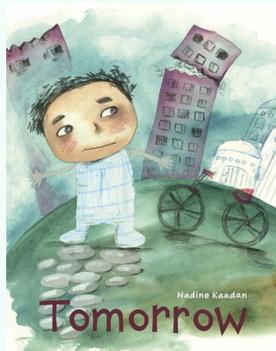
A few examples:

1. LGBTQ+ themes
2. Facing fears
3. SEND characters

Impact

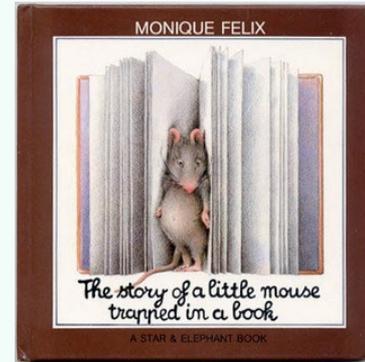
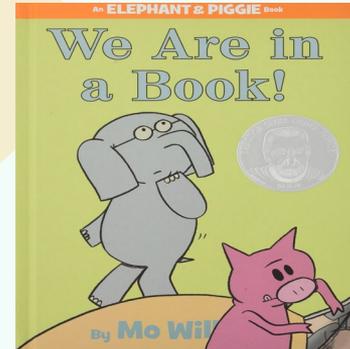
Discovering new texts to use in the classroom

We have made an effort to read books we may not usually reach for, and have developed our knowledge of books about refugees and asylum seekers especially, in order to have informed conversations with children about potentially difficult, yet important and relevant subjects. Books have the power to spark discussion!



Text potential

By spending time enjoying children's books, we have learnt to be more creative with how we can use books in the classroom. Some books might be best to just be read aloud to a class or to a group of children, whilst other books might be best to use to teach specific writing skills. All books are unique and should not all be used with the same approach in the classroom.



Impact

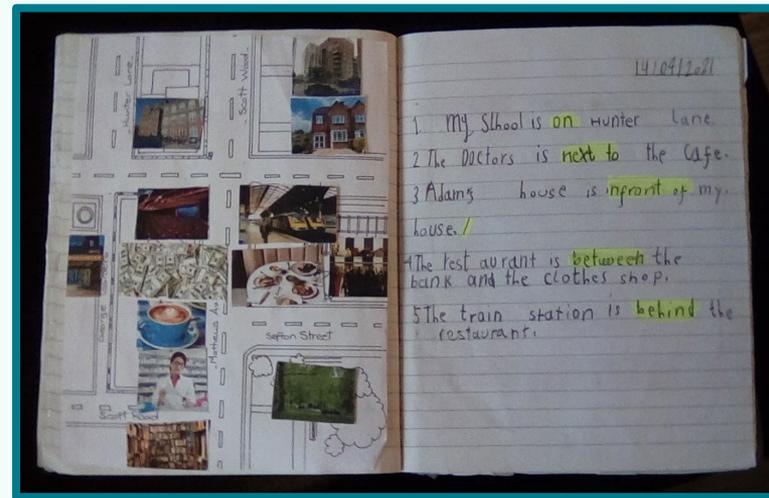
Teaching children with EAL

We both tutor students with English as an Additional Language who have recently moved to the country.

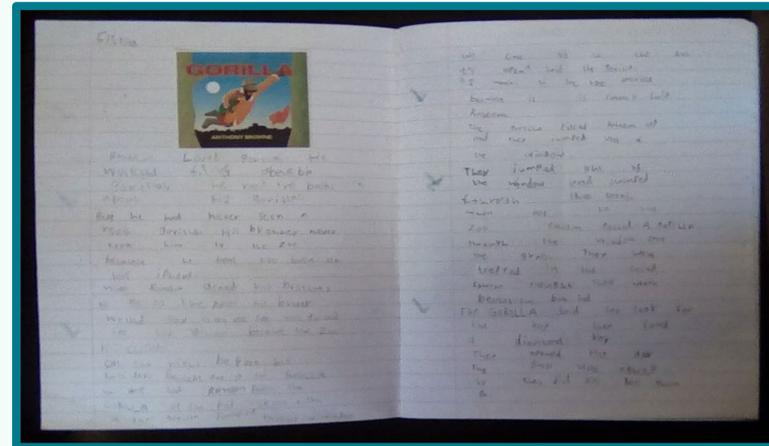
Whilst vocabulary learning and grammar-focused activities are important for learning English, reading books and writing about what you read is also crucial. We believe that it is important to read for pleasure even if you are a beginner reader.

As we plan and teach for our students independently, it is really important that we are Reading Teachers ourselves so that we are in a position where we can share the best books with our students to help them become confident in English.

Since committing to being Reading Teachers, we have both noticed a difference in the effectiveness of our teaching; when we share books that we love with our students. One of the students went to the library themselves to find more Dr Seuss books after discovering them from Gemini's lessons!



Improved learning outcomes for children.



Poetry - Who is it for?

Poetry = playing with words!



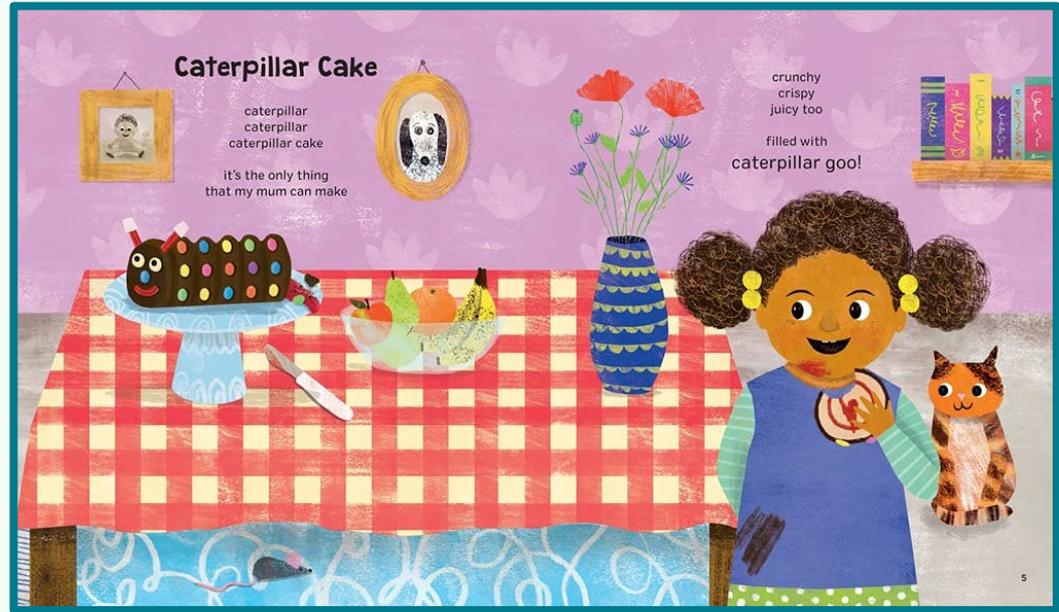
Charlotte Hacking from the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), introduced us to different poetry collections and highlighted the importance of poetry in the curriculum.

Existing poetry can be used as a gateway into poetry - but children must be encouraged to find their own voice and explore their own thoughts and feelings

Important to share poets who reflect children's identities

Authenticity of a poem - listening to it being read by the poet; inviting the poet into school

Using a broad range of poetry so children see that poetry is for them



Caterpillar Cake: Read-Aloud Poems to Brighten Your Day
Matt Goodfellow (author), Krina Patel-Sage (illustrator)



Our Favourite Poets - old and new!



Matt Goodfellow

I'm a special kind of badger
in a special badger den
writing special badger poems
with a special badger pen.



Kate Wakeling

O
telescOpe
telescOpe
shOw me
hOw
the mOon
glOws
shOw me



John Agard

My name my name
my name dearer to me
than winning the lottery
my name the core of me
the very soul of me



Dr Seuss

You have brains in your head
You have feet in your shoes
You can steer yourself any
Direction you choose.



Julia Donaldson

A Gruffalo? Why, didn't you
know?



Michael Rosen

I love chocolate cake.
And when I was a boy,
I loved it even more.



Immersing children in poetry...

Linking poetry to a half-term topic - (e.g. the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons).

The children could look at viking artifacts, dress up as vikings, create drama pieces and look at poetry about vikings! This will create the full viking experience!



SKIG THE WARRIOR

Skig the warrior was more of a worrier.

He didn't want to spear deer
or pillage villages
or hoot and toot when the crew looted somewhere new.

He'd rather play Scrabble than join the rack and rabble.

Yep, Skig was in no hurry to be a warrior.
It only made him worry (and sorrier).

By Kate Wakeling

The internal rhyme in this poem creates a tongue-twister effect! The children could try creating their own tongue-twisters and play with words. Poetry has no rules!

Immersing children in poetry is about bringing poetry to life.

Poetry can also be used for its cross-curricular potential. It can be used to develop understanding of foundation subjects.

For example, war poetry for learning about history (WW1, WW2).

Poetry about the environment and sustainability for geography and science learning.



Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Put it into practice:

We will strive to “support the development of the children’s reader identities” (Cremin et al. 2014) by continuing to share our personal reading habits, following children’s interests and making sure their experiences are reflected and validated in the books we use and read.

Becoming a Reading Teacher is a process of combining both identities - to be a teacher of reading, you must be a teacher who reads!



The TaRs research has also inspired us think about teachers as writers - we should also exercise writing for pleasure so that children can see the value of both reading and writing.

This is also important in poetry lessons - teachers should model and discuss their own sentences if asking children to share theirs!



We also need to set aside time to discuss the books we have read - transforming reading into a shared experience rather than an isolated activity.

If we regularly share our reading experiences with each other, our children not see reading as something they “just have to do”, but as an enjoyable activity.

Teachers must look for opportunities to invite children to share their experiences and interests - after reading time.



Next steps:

- Continue to develop as Reading Teachers - discovering books we can connect with emotionally, and which children can also connect with.
 - Always remind children that books and poetry are for them, that they are readers and writers too, and the power of literature as a reflection of our own experiences, or as a mirror into another world.
 - Make an effort to discover writers of different cultures and experiences. We can also invite authors and poets into school, which will help develop and broaden our perceptions of reading and writing.
 - Also making sure we read across a wide range of genres e.g. historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, poetry and non-fiction, in order to meet the needs of all children.
- ● ● We could begin by tracking our reading choices, and invite both children and fellow teachers to share and recommend favourite books in school.





Room on the Broom by Julia Donaldson
- for World Book Day 2021!



Thanks

We have really enjoyed becoming Reading Teachers this term.

It has been a pleasure to learn and grow with you all on this module. We wish you all the best for your final placements in January.

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