

JAMES CLEMENTS & MATHEW TOBIN

2ND EDITION

**UNDERSTANDING
& TEACHING
PRIMARY
ENGLISH**

S Sage



curriculum planning such as this can support those for whom English isn't their specialism or particular area of interest or those who are new to text-based teaching, without inhibiting the text selection of experienced or confident teachers.

CASE STUDY 9.2

One school chose to encourage teachers to go beyond their old favourites by introducing a 'Brand New Book Fortnight' across the school. Each class teacher would choose a book published in the last year that hadn't been taught by the teacher before. A staff meeting was run by a librarian from the local Schools Library Service who brought in a range of children's books and encouraged teachers to read and discuss them. A fortnight of work would then be taught around their newly chosen book. This had the effect of encouraging teachers to take a chance on an unfamiliar book, broadening their repertoire and knowledge of children's literature.

After three years of the initiative, a curriculum audit found that many books that had begun as 'Brand New Books' were now established in the curriculum.

Teachers Promoting Reading for Pleasure Alongside Effective Reading Instruction

Building on the influential *Building Communities of Readers* (2014) Cremin et al. (2023) advocate creating a responsive reading for pleasure pedagogy comprising several elements:

- adults reading aloud regularly
- informal booktalk, including adult and peer recommendations
- time to read
- sociable reading environments, reading together and sharing books

Rather than work in opposition to reading instruction, these elements should form a symbiotic relationship with learning to read: in order to read widely for pleasure, it is important to become a fluent reader. Conversely, as we have seen, wide independent reading is one of the most significant factors in supporting children's growing proficiency in reading. Reading for pleasure and learning to read are two sides of the same coin.

Regular Reading Aloud

Reading aloud turns enjoying a book into a communal activity that can be shared by everyone in the class. It allows everybody to share in the ideas and language of the same book, enabling conversation. Research suggests that listening to books being read aloud right through children's schooling is likely to be one of the most educationally useful things we can do as teachers, supporting language comprehension and vocabulary development (Westbrook et al., 2018).

Aside from the educational benefits, sharing a book as a class can be a joyful time of day where children have the opportunity to experience the pleasures books and reading can bring. Reading aloud can be a useful pedagogical tool, but if we are to use it as a catalyst for children becoming lifelong readers, making the time to listen to a story for pure enjoyment with no planned follow-up questions, analysis of language or written task is vital. While the ring-fencing of reading aloud for pleasure in an education system where reading is measured through performance in tests might seem like a luxury, it is in fact a form of 'advertising for literacy' (Leland et al., 2018). Embedding these pleasurable shared reading experiences could be the inspirational spark which starts a child on their own journey to becoming a reader themselves.

Reading aloud in class also offers opportunities to introduce children to authors and text types that they might not choose in their independent reading, as acknowledged in the 2014 National Curriculum for Years 5 and 6:

Even though pupils can now read independently, reading aloud to them should include whole books so that they meet books and authors that they might not choose to read themselves.

(DfE, 2013)

Time for Informal Booktalk and Recommendations

As discussed in Chapter 8, authentic booktalk is an integral part of good English teaching. In the context of reading for pleasure, booktalk allows children space to explore multiple interpretations of the same text and affords a way of sharing their opinions and listening to those of others, exploring meaning and preferences collaboratively. Drawing on the work of Chambers (1993), Maine (2015), Rosen (2018) and Roche (2015), McGonigle (2018) suggests some examples of questions and prompts to generate the type of booktalk that might encourage a thoughtful response to a text:

Reflecting

- Does anyone have something they want to say about the story?
- Tell me... was there anything you really liked or disliked about this book? Which character interested you the most?
- I really liked the part when...
- I thought... was an interesting character especially when...

Clarifying/speculating

- Does anyone have a question about the story? Tell me, did anything puzzle you or take you by surprise?
- Why do you suppose...?
- It confused me when...
- I'm not sure why... happened?

Connecting

- Tell me... have you read any other books like this, or has anything like this happened to you?
- It reminds me of...

Empathising

- What did we find out about how the characters were feeling?
- I understand how... felt, I would too because...

Evaluating

- What would you tell your friends about this book?

Analysing

- What is this story about?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?

(McGonigle, 2018)

Time to Read

Time spent reading and browsing independently is a crucial component of a well-planned reading curriculum. Educationally, sustained independent reading is vital for building fluency and reading stamina. When considering children's reading for pleasure, this is the space where children can follow their interests and reading enthusiasms. Children's choice of text is crucial to becoming a reader (Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Gambrell, 2011) and while it would be desirable for every child to have this free-choice reading at home, research suggests that this is often not the case (Clark, 2014). For some children, independent free-choice reading will only happen regularly at school. If children do not have specific time to read independently at school, they simply will not benefit from this vital experience.

CASE STUDY 9.3

A Year 6 teacher noticed that some children in her class were reluctant to take a chance on unfamiliar books, instead always choosing the same type of book or a book from the same narrow band of series or authors.

She created a book loyalty card for each child. Over the course of a month, each child was set the challenge of reading five different types of book, collecting a stamp for each. The categories were:

(Continued)

- a novel by an author you've never read before
- a picture book
- a book of poetry
- a non-fiction book about a topic you don't know much about
- a book recommended to you by someone else in the class

If the children collected all five stamps, they would win an Adventurous Reader certificate, presented in assembly.

The initiative worked well because it ran over a short period of time and it still allowed plenty of choice within the categories. Children could also choose not to take part (although they all did). At the end of the month, the children were free to return to the books they had read before if they wished. In fact, the teacher reported that many children became far more willing to take a chance on an unfamiliar book or try different genres of book.

Sociable Reading Environments

While this phrase is often used to describe the physical spaces where children read and where books are kept and displayed, the reading environment is far more than this. Chambers (1993) refers to 'the social context of reading': the choice of books available, the time allocated to reading in the classroom, the purpose(s) for reading, and even opportunities for experiences to reflect the mood of the reader. An attractive book corner or reading display may help the books look more appealing but the range of texts available is likely to be a more significant factor on children's reading for pleasure in the long run. This range should include texts that reflect children's interests as well as a breadth of genre and formats. Time to browse, discuss, choose and explore these texts are all significant factors when making the most of that reading space.

CASE STUDY 9.4

One teacher decided to make use of digital photoframes to display recommended reads from children in her book corners and bookshelves.

Once they had finished a book they had particularly enjoyed, children could be photographed holding up the book and a short one-line review written on a mini-whiteboard. These photographs were displayed on the photoframes for their classmates to see, encouraging others to seek out the books their friends had enjoyed.

Schools Forging Reading Relationships with Families and the Community

International reading studies suggest that children who are supported in their reading at home are much more likely to enjoy reading and tend to achieve more highly at school