

Raising the profile of reading for pleasure in the classroom through informal talk and reading aloud.

By: Tamar Butten



Context

I am a Year 1 teacher at Cherry Tree Primary School, Essex. Being in an area where many children come to the school with a limited experience of having been read books aloud to them, I thought that it was important to raise the profile of reading for pleasure within my classroom.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

My research has been greatly influenced by the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) project findings (Cremin et al., 2014). This research revealed that one of the most successful reading for pleasure pedagogy was through 'reading aloud and ensuring informal book-talk and recommendations' within the classroom. From this, I wanted to raise the profile of reading in my classroom by encouraging an environment for reading for pleasure to thrive. Subsequently, increasing children's excitement about reading and wanting to read at home more frequently. Cremin *et al.* (2008) revealed that 'reading aloud is the key to fostering reading for pleasure'. Furthermore, Cremin *et al.* (2008) also noted that 'only 32% of British children are read to daily by an adult'. Therefore, I wanted to ensure that reading aloud is not an optional activity within my classroom as it is crucial to promote an enjoyment of reading, which many of my pupils in my class lack. This would then allow reading aloud to occur in my class on a regular basis and discussions to be based around what we liked and disliked about each story. According to Brown (2008, p.3) reading can be a 'source of fulfilment and pleasure... reading fiction or non-fiction related to interest can bring satisfaction and enjoyment'. Therefore, I wanted to ensure that through an increase of reading aloud and informal book talks, children would come to understand that there are a thousands of books that can be read and it is important that they are reading books which interest them to continue to foster a love of reading.

Aims

The aims of this research project was to:

- Create an environment where reading is valued through reading aloud in the classroom and sharing books
- Increase informal book talk within my classroom
- Increase children's excitement and engagement with books
- Raise the profile of reading for pleasure within my classroom

Outline

With the aims in mind, I started to consider how I could raise the profile of reading for pleasure in my classroom and how I could engage children in reading through informal book talk and reading aloud. I started by continuing to read books aloud to the class each day. However, I ensured that I had greater emphasis on having a discussion afterwards, based on whether the children liked or disliked the book.

After this, I then decided to wrap books in my class and create a library, this was to engage the children and build the suspense and excitement to see which book would be unwrapped. The children enjoyed this activity. A child unwrapped a book and it was read aloud to the children. After a few months of this, the children started reading a page of the book to the class, which gave them opportunities to read aloud. Furthermore, it allowed the class to value reading and listen to their peers when sharing books.



Once we started unwrapping books, I created a reading display in the Year 1 corridor to raise the profile of reading through Year 1 and for visitors to be aware of which books were being read in class. The display was split into 3 sections – 'This month we have read', 'We recommend' and 'Book reviews'. Pupil voice was also included on the display.



From this, I created opportunities for the children to have informal book talks and share books between peers. I created a book blanket on the carpet of wrapped books. The children chose one and once unwrapped, they had time to look through the book. All children were able to access

this as some read the book, whilst others enjoyed looking through the pictures. After this, the children partnered up and spoke about their book and then swapped books. This enabled informal book talk to occur within the classroom and allowed children time to enjoy books. A week later, I invited Year 5 down to my classroom and read with the Year 1's in groups which encouraged the children to foster a love of reading and share books they love with each other. Furthermore, providing opportunities for Year 5's to access and engage with picture books.

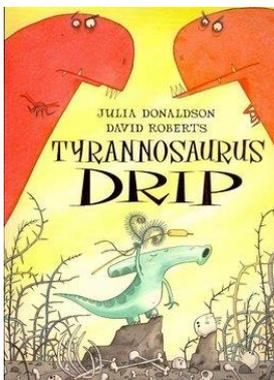
Lastly, I used a survey to gather children's opinion about reading. This survey will then repeated in a few months to be able to compare results. See below the results from the survey.

Do you like reading?	
I love reading	7
It's okay	17
I don't like reading	2
Are you a good reader?	
I'm good at reading	14
I'm okay at reading	11
I'm not good at reading yet	1
Do you read at home?	
Yes	22
No	4

From this, it is clear that the majority of my class found reading 'okay'. With putting the above strategies in place I am hoping that this will increase to the majority of children answering they love to read.

Impact

This research has had a positive impact on improving reading for pleasure in my



classroom and on the children's attitude towards reading. Before I began to implement these strategies, many of the children in my class felt they could not comment on the fact they disliked a book. Through discussions after reading and having conversations over how it is normal to dislike some books, the children in my class began to speak about books more confidently and felt they could give an opinion. From this, when asked 'Do you like this book?' later on in the week the children were able to articulate whether they liked the book or not and why. One child said 'I do not like this book because it is about dinosaurs. They are not my favourite

animal'. This then lead on to a discussion that we have choice in what we read and we all have different preferences about what we read. This is how we read for pleasure, choosing books that will interest the children and keep them hooked. I felt it was important to ensure this point was made clear to the children, as when in Year 1 children are given a book to match their phonics ability and it may not be a topic which they like to read about. Exposing the children to a variety of books through reading aloud, ensured children understood that choosing a book of interest is important to being able to enjoy reading.

Through the unwrapping of books, it increased the children's excitement and engagement with



books. I found that children were asking to read and open books more than usual. Through unwrapping books slowly, it built the children's anticipation of what the book was going to be about and it gave us as a class the opportunity to informally talk and predict about which book it could be about based on what they had seen through the illustrations. This also increased the children's knowledge of picture books and exposed them to a variety of stories they might not previously been able to access.

One aspect which I was not expecting to happen, was that children began to bring in their own story books to share with their friends. These books were read aloud to the class and again discussions occurred on whether they liked the book or not. The children who brought the books in were able to articulate why this was their favourite book and why they wanted to share it with their friends. Although I was not expecting this happen, I am glad it did happen because it shows that through reading aloud to the children and building the excitement of reading through wrapping the books has an impact on the children's view on reading and books.



Also the children started to talk to the other Year 1 class about which books we had been reading in class. This showed that there was an increased informal book talk within my classroom and across the year group. The fact that children began to bring in books to share with the class shows that the children have increased their love of reading and want to share what they read for pleasure. This can be supported by the results of the survey that I carried out again to see how the reading for pleasure strategies that I have implemented within my classroom have has an impact on my class.

Do you like reading?		
I love reading	7	22
It's okay	17	4
I don't like reading	2	0
Are you a good reader?		
I'm good at reading	14	19
I'm okay at reading	11	7
I'm not good at reading yet	1	0
Do you read at home?		
Yes	22	23
No	4	3

From this it is clear that these strategies that have been implemented into my classroom have had an impact on the children's opinion of reading. As seen above, with the question of 'Do you like reading', there has been an increase of 15 children who now feel they love reading and no child in the class does not like reading anymore. This is clear that spending time with the children discussing books, reading aloud and building the children's excitement through wrapping books can change the children's opinion of reading. To support this, I conducted a pupil voice with a focus on what the children in

my class now think about reading. This is what some children in my class had to say about reading:

'I like reading about pirates'.

'Miss Batten reads to us every day, which I love'.

'I like reading books about animals'.

'I bring my favourite books into school to share with my friends'.

'I read with my Mum and Dad each night'.

These views are displayed on the Year 1 reading display in the corridor to allow all visitors to read the children's opinion on reading and raise the profile of reading around the school.



Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The TaRs research has influenced my practice as my classroom ethos and environment now promotes a high value towards reading for pleasure. I ensure that each day I now make time to read aloud to the children as this is vital for children to have a love of reading, especially if they are not being read aloud to at home as according to Cremin *et al.* (2008). Furthermore, following reading aloud with a discussion to promote informal book talk. Children still bring in books to share with the class and I am sure this will continue until the end of the year whilst they are still in Year 1. Previous to this, I would choose a book to read to the children whilst they got ready for home time. However, I now make sure that the children choose the book to read out of a choice of 3 and that all children are sitting down and engaged with the story. This has definitely improved how children perceive reading and now it has more value within the classroom.

I will continue to improve my knowledge and understanding of how to successfully promote reading for pleasure in my classroom. I now have a clear understanding of how important reading for pleasure is and what the impact is once the children start to enjoy reading.

The next steps in my practice will be having three books displayed when the children walk into the classroom and allow the children to use a counter to vote for which book they would like to hear at some point during the day. This will allow the children to have a voice within the classroom. Furthermore, I will continue to promote reading for pleasure across the school through talking to teachers in both key stages and at staff meetings about the importance of reading aloud to the children, especially in our school where children are usually only read to at school. I also think it is important for classes to mix with different year groups and have opportunities to read together, so I would like to promote this around the school and perhaps team classes up together to read. As from pupil voice from Year 5 it was clear that they enjoyed reading with Year 1 and accessing a variety of books for pleasure.