

@ecawemma

Context



BISHOP
GROSSETESTE
UNIVERSITY

I am a senior lecturer at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln. As part of my role as English team lead, I am keen to ensure student teachers have a broad experience of children's books and love reading them.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

TaRs found that in order to foster RfP effectively, teachers need to develop:

1. **Considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts**
2. *Knowledge of children's reading practices*
3. *A reading for pleasure pedagogy*
4. **As Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach**
5. *Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.* (Cremin et al., 2014)

It is therefore essential that, whilst developing their understanding of pedagogy and child development, student teachers should also be given adequate opportunities to build their knowledge of children's books (TaRs 1) and develop their own love of reading to establish themselves as teachers who read and readers who teach (TaRs 4).

Aims

The aims of this project were;

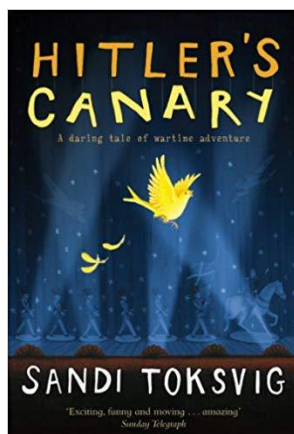
- to broaden student teachers' knowledge of children's books;
- to develop a reading for pleasure culture amongst student teachers;
- to enable student teachers to recognise the role RfP plays across the curriculum
- to increase their general subject knowledge and confidence in this.

Outline

When student teachers first arrive at university as first years on the three-year undergraduate programme, they are asked to bring along one of their favourite books to share with one another. The prevalence of Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, Jacqueline Wilson and J K Rowling would indicate that, much like the teachers in the TaRs research (Cremin et al., 2008), some of the students have had a limited experience of high-quality children's books from a range of authors. As a staff in the Primary Undergraduate department, we recognised the limits this would place on their ability to become Reading Teachers-teachers who read and readers who teach. It was also recognised the role a wide reading repertoire has on subject knowledge. As it says in the NC, reading widely develops a readers' '*knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live*' (DfE 2013, p4). Some of our students demonstrated a limited understanding of world history, geography and scientific concepts which we felt could be improved through a wider reading repertoire.

Each module in the 3 year BA Primary Education with QTS course carries an essential and recommended reading list containing the academic texts students would need to read to support their learning in each module. This year, we also developed a list for each module entitled “**Children’s books which will support your learning during this module**”. Module leaders, alongside the Teachers’ Resource librarian created lists of high quality children’s books to support the subject knowledge and students’ knowledge of the world in which they live. For example, in the module to introduce Year 1 student teachers to the content of the Foundation subjects in the NC, they were encouraged to read the following;

History



Gleitzman, M. (2006). *Once*. Puffin.

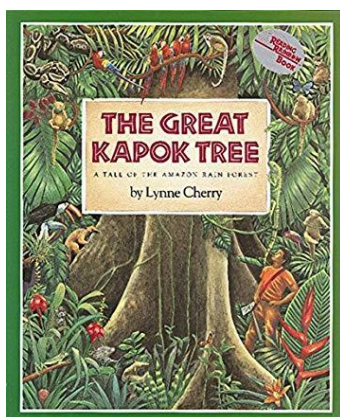
Hesse, K., & Watson, W. (2004). *The Cats in Krasinski Square*. Scholastic Press.

McEwan, I. (2004). *Rose Blanche*. Red Fox.

Toksvig, S. (2006). *Hitler's Canary*. Yearling; New Ed edition.

Williams, M. (2014). *My Secret War Diary, by Flossie Albright*. Walker Books.

Geography



Baker, J. (2002). *Window*. Walker Books.

Cherry, L. (2000). *The Great Kapok Tree*. San Diego: Harcourt, Inc.

Dowd, S. (2016). *The London Eye Mystery*. Puffin.

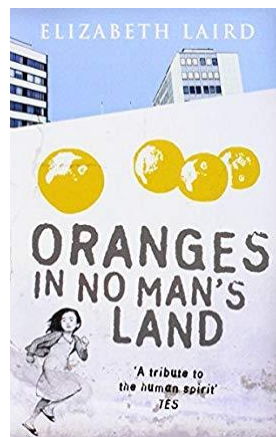
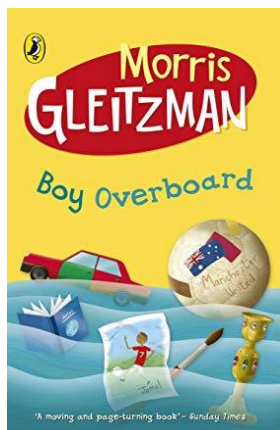
Litton, J. (2016). *HELLO WORLD*. 360 Degrees.

Ward, H. (2013). *The Tin Tree*. Templar Publishing.

PE

Andreae, G., Williams, B., & Mansfield, D. (2007). *Giraffes can't dance*. [Westport, CT]: Weston Woods Studio.

Citizenship/PSHE/British Values



Fleischman, P., & Ibatoulline, B. (2014). *The matchbox diary*. Walker Books.

Gleitzman, M. (2010). *Boy Overboard*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson.

Laird, E. (2016). *Oranges in no man's land*. Macmillan Children's Books; Main Market edition.

Morley, B., & Pearce, C. (2009). *The silence seeker*. London: Tamarind.

Impact

The teaching staff involved in creating the Module Reading Lists thoroughly enjoyed re-engaging with some old favourites and having the opportunity to acquaint themselves with new authors and books which shed new light on their areas of study. It led to some lecturers increasing the focus on stories within sessions and students were encouraged to undertake some small-scale research projects in the use of picture books in Science and Mathematics.

Students reported an increase in their repertoire of children's books and for many, reading children's books has improved their understanding of the world in an enjoyable and accessible way. When questioned, 80% of students who had read the books said they had supported their learning within each module and 72% of students agreed that having children's books on the module list was useful.

I believe having a knowledge of a range of children's books is vital for trainee teachers as children's books are not only useful to use in lessons but also enables you to encourage reading for pleasure. By providing a list of children's books helps to develop this knowledge.

Children's books are often completely overlooked yet, as I have found in this module, they have great value and are certainly important in the classroom.

It can be quite difficult to know where to start with high quality children's books. This reading list provided a great springboard.

However, despite finding the children's books useful, many students referred to them as being useful when they are on placement in Primary schools rather than useful to their own subject knowledge or personal reading pleasure. Many also noted that, whilst there were assignments to complete, the reading of children's books was not a priority.

I particularly liked the children's literature as this will be useful when I finish writing assignments and go to placement.

Found it hard to have time to look through them when we had so much other reading (academic). I feel like I am more likely to read books closer to placement.

The children's books will be useful after the assignments for future reference.

Children's books will be read when the assignments have been finished.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The inclusion of children's books on the Module Reading Lists helped to raise the profile of reading and develop a wider repertoire of texts and authors amongst some students. However, more needs to be done to focus students' attention to the importance of their own reading for pleasure. There still remains a number of students who don't enjoy reading and only see reading as directed task involved in working towards assignments rather than a pleasurable, volitional experience.

The focus on children's books helped to develop an interest amongst staff and students and, since the project, greater links have been made between reading children's books and learning in other modules. Future opportunities to continue this further include;

- **displays** on children's books relating to modules being studied in the teachers' resources library;
- an increase in the number of **children's information books** included in the Module Reading List;
- greater opportunities for **informal book talk** amongst students in taught sessions, workshops and seminars;
- the development of **Student Reading Ambassadors** to lead reading groups and book discussions.