

Cosy Reading by Sadie Phillips

Context

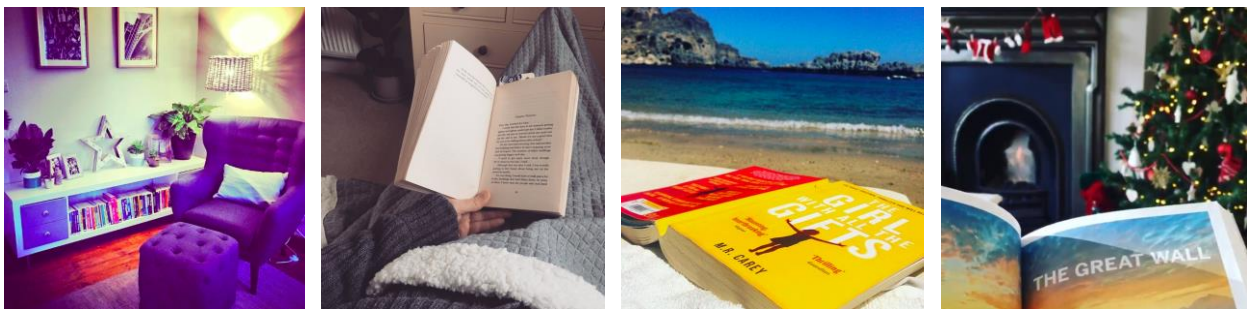
I am a Year 5 teacher in my fourth year of teaching at a free school in London. Last year, I was given responsibility for Writing within the school and I am also part of the Literacy Co-ordinator Team. Creating a reading for pleasure culture is an essential part of my role.



Research inspiration and rationale

The *Teachers as Readers* research (Cremin et al, 2008, 2009, 2014) talks about the need to create time and space for children to read and this was seen as central to building rich reading communities. The TaRs report noted that independent reading could easily become a routine procedure, void of authentic reader engagement and interaction.

I wanted to create an atmosphere in the classroom during independent reading time that would promote reading for pleasure and enjoyment. When I began to consider how and where I read for pleasure myself, the issue became apparent – I was not offering a cosy or comfortable space for reading!



I have never once sat at a desk upright reading a book (other than on a plane perhaps) and certainly wouldn't choose to read in this sort of 'upright' position. I began by reflecting upon where and how I read for pleasure myself – usually on the sofa, a sunbed, in a comfy armchair in front of the fire or curled up with a blanket in bed – and started thinking about how I could make the classroom spaces and environment a little more like these places.

Aims

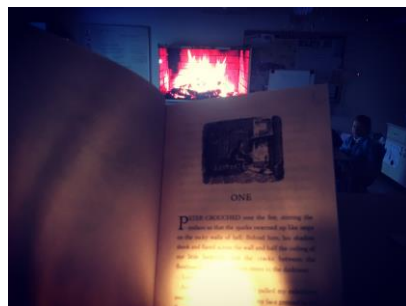
- 1. To seek out a variety of spaces and places for independent reading**
- 2. To encourage reading for pleasure by creating a comfortable, relaxing reading environment**
- 3. To raise the profile of Reading for Pleasure in my classroom**

Outline

I wanted to encourage reading for pleasure by creating a cosy space where the children would be comfortable and snug when curled up with a good book. I tried to create a calm, relaxing atmosphere in the classroom, allowing children to choose where and how to sit and read.

- I collected lots of blankets, cushions and throws from home and placed them in a bucket in the book corner

- I brought in some teddies which we called 'reading buddies' and placed them in the book corner too
- Sometimes, I gave out baskets of torches and dimmed the lights, with a roaring fire on the whiteboard (during winter afternoons this worked as it was quite dark already)
- We started calling it 'cosy reading' instead of 'independent reading'
- I put up some fairy lights and switched them on whenever it was cosy reading time and this became an instantly recognisable sign that it was happening
- I would often set the room up whilst they were out of the classroom (in another lesson or outside playing) so that they walked into 'cosy reading' and were excited by it
- I read for pleasure myself during cosy reading time (this was an important factor)
- I allowed the children to choose where and how they wanted to sit and read – some chose to pop their feet up on a chair, lay underneath a table, cosy up in the book corner or on the rug. They were encouraged to get cosy.
- Book talk was allowed.



We negotiated all of the options and discussed how we could manage the most popular areas (the sofa bed in the book corner) to make it fair for all. The children decided that if they had sat in the book corner last time, they would find somewhere new to sit this time. We have not had any arguments about reading spaces and the children are very considerate.

Impact

- The children's reaction to 'cosy reading' was incredible. They were clearly excited about it and enjoyed snuggling up with a blanket and a book
- Time and space was made for reading for pleasure within the classroom and this promoted reading for enjoyment
- Children could sustain independent reading for longer periods of time and we had much less movement/book swapping happening during cosy reading
- Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Quotes from children included: "Can we read today?", "Are we doing cosy reading today Miss Phillips?", "Yesssss... cosy reading, thank you Miss Phillips!"
- It has been so successful that we now have cosy reading every day!
- When the weather gets warmer, we'll also consider alternative spaces such as the top deck or the playground with beanbags and blankets.



Reflections on impact the TaRs research has had on practice

The cosy reading initiative had an immediate impact on reading for pleasure. It completely changed the atmosphere and enjoyment levels of independent reading in my classroom.

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