

## Encouraging discussion and recommendations

Alice Madigan

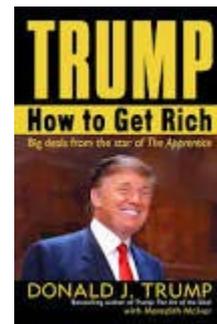


### Context

I am a student at Canterbury Christ Church University and worked in a Year Six class at a village school in Medway on this project. The children had a 30 minute guided reading block every day after lunch, but a number of children moaned and tried to get away without reading in this time frame. So I tried to make reading more accessible for these children by removing the 'big deal' associated with it, and making reading a common practice that classmates could discuss and carry out together.

### OU Research inspiration and rationale

During my time in school, I noticed that during the 'free reading' periods, the children in my class would much rather discuss the events of the day, or Donald Trump, than read the books in the book corner.



I also noted that when children were asked to pick a book from the book corner, children swapped books a couple of times during the 30minute lesson. This highlighted to me that they were not excited by the books on the bookshelf, and were picking up 'random' ones, and then putting them back almost immediately.

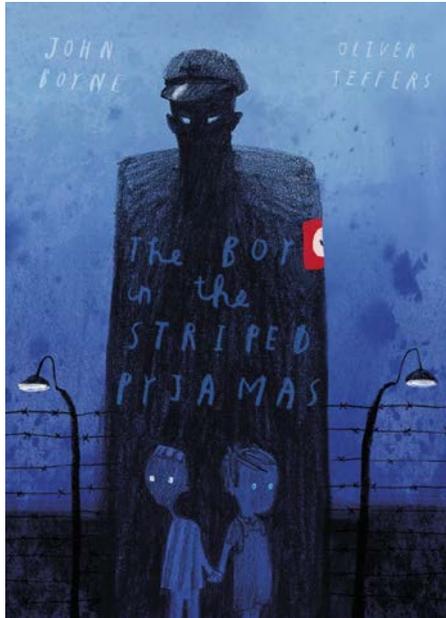
I needed to understand why children were failing to be interested and excited in reading, and try to create an atmosphere where children were encouraged to read by their peers, not only by the adults in the school. I knew the OU *Teachers as Readers* research in 43 schools had highlighted text talk was critical in developing reading for pleasure, so I introduced the idea of discussion about books and reading in the classroom, because children love having the chance to talk about something they're passionate about.

### Aims

I needed to find a way to encourage the children to take an interest in the books that were on offer to them, and create a more exciting free reading time every day. I wanted to create an environment where children were constantly discussing books and aware of the books being read in the classroom, enabling thoughtful and inclusive discussion. I also hoped this would enable reading to become a common

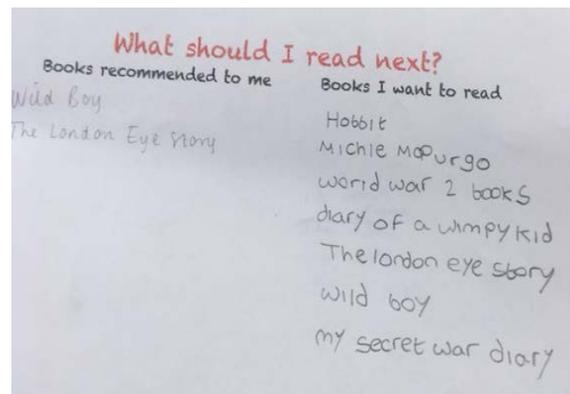
conversation point, without making it a big deal.

## Outline



My first step was to create a time where we could discuss books that we were reading, and children could talk about a book they had recently enjoyed reading. I started by discussing a book I'd recently enjoyed, '*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*.' I had read this in preparation to teach WW2 as a theme, and knew it would interest the children.

A couple of children then volunteered to discuss books that they were currently reading, or had read. This task was successful, as I noticed that throughout the day, children were overheard discussing the books with each other and during lunchtime club, children were seen sat together reading one of the books that had been discussed earlier that day.



Once the discussion had been held and an interest in reading had begun to be reinstated, I adapted one of the guided reading tasks. Children were asked to recommend a book they'd recently read to another class member. This was in order to encourage them to choose a book that they might enjoy, rather than just read a couple of pages and put it back. Children kept a note of the books recommended to them and the books they 'd like to read in their trays, so that when it was time to pick a new book, they had this resource to help them.



when choosing a book, as the texts had been recommended and outlined by their friends, whose opinion they could trust.

I noticed that overall the children were discussing what they were reading with each other a lot more than they were before I introduced the idea of discussion. Also, during lunchtime club, some children were choosing to read rather than play the computer games available.

The reading river activity helped particular children feel more confident about reading, as children who'd previously admitted that they did very little reading outside of school, were shocked to discover that they read a lot more than they thought. This helped make them more positive about their ability to read, and thus they were happier to engage in the reading discussions.

### **Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice**

To reflect, I feel that by creating discussion in the class about the books that were currently being read and on the book shelf, children became much more excited to read these books. The research made me realise this talk about texts is crucial and it became a normal occurrence for children to discuss books they were reading, or planning to read. This helped create an environment which fostered a more positive outlook on reading and was reflected through the children's actions.