

Northampton OU/UKLA Group 2018

UKLA



Context

Northampton OU/UKLA Teachers Reading Group was formed in early 2018. Our group was made up from a combination of class teachers, school librarians, senior leaders and literacy consultants from 28 different schools across Northamptonshire. We met 4 times during the 17/18 academic year.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

At our second meeting we reflected on the 5 Open University's Teachers as Readers (TaRs) findings, and selected "4. *As Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach*" as a focus for all our members to develop in our own settings.

Aims

Group members were all very keen readers of children's literature and our favourite parts of our meetings were when we had the opportunity to "Book Blether" – to discuss and share the children's books we have recently read. However not all our colleagues in our own schools feel the same way, and we all felt it was a challenge to persuade teachers who are overworked and stressed to take on reading children's books in addition to their workload, particularly in the context of decreasing school budgets with limited funds for new books.

So we aimed to do just this!

Outline

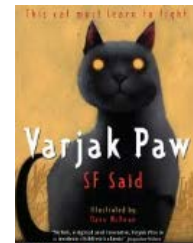
In meetings we explored research on the RRP website and shared our own ideas & our own passion for "the Golden Age of Children's Literature" (to quote Pie Corbett), and then went back to our own schools to put this into practice and shared our experiences at meetings 3 and 4.

Here are some of the examples we shared:

- *Set up a Mystery Readers competition* and a teachers' reading challenge – all bar 2 teachers read a book as part of the challenge (13-14 teachers did)



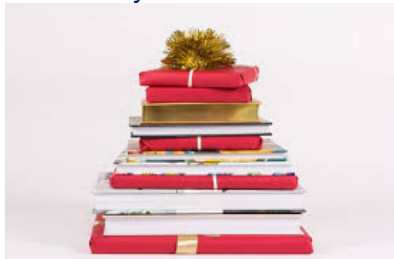
- *Started a staff book club* with the first meeting as a staff meeting. Shared research and ordered new books asking staff to choose one. As for the school above, most teachers were enthusiastic apart from one year group. Subject lead met with this year group and planned a unit of work using *Varjak Paw* with them to show them how valuable it is to know the book you are going to use to teach from.



- In another school they set up a *staff book swap* on a table in the staff room, so teachers could read books recommended by other teachers



- Another teacher ran 2 *staff meetings on Teachers as Readers* – one for teachers and one for TAs. Both were successful, in particular the one for TAs was met with bags of enthusiasm, and TAs have now set up book clubs for children with small sets of books. 2 of the TAs had been on a course with Kat Pennington (literacy consultant and meeting member) in advance of the meeting, so had lots of expertise and passion to share from that experience and it sounds like it was contagious!
- One school *bought all the staff children's books for Christmas* to read over the holidays and review on the school blog and share with their class.



- A Reception teacher made *books more visual in the classroom* – using IKEA spice racks to display special books around the IWB, and make it a special

experience to bring the book down for children to read.



- A number of our members *used Twitter* to share children's book reviews with the author, show them author's responses on Twitter



Impact

Most members reported back positive experiences at their schools, converting most of their colleagues to read more children's books – although most of us agreed there were often 2-3 teachers at each school who were harder to win over than others.

One factor that we found difficult to overcome was money – most of us at the meeting spend a great deal of our own money buying children's books (many of us set challenges to read a certain amount of books over the school year, we had a 50 book challenge, a 75 book challenge and a new school librarian read over 100 children's books). However, this was our choice and it is hard to expect colleagues who are not as passionate about reading to spend their own money.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The majority of meeting members felt that the website and meetings contributed to their own practice as well as reading for pleasure in their schools and were keen to continue with meetings into next academic year. So that's what we're doing!

Please note that all the pictures are Google Images not the classrooms referred to in this upload.