

# English 4-11

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**Trainee teachers' experiences of using  
picture books with the Philosophy for  
Children pedagogy**

**Do contrasting curricula lead to  
contrasting pedagogies?**

**Storytime: interpreting the past**

**Reading for Pleasure: the beating heart  
of the school**

**Building a European community through  
responses to books and films**

**Reading Teachers: what's occurring over  
the bridge?**

**Author interview: Onjali Q. Raúf**

**Academic Book Review: *Word Power* by  
Kelly Ashley**

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# Editorial

Sally Wilkinson

I hope that, as this issue is published, schools are settling into the autumn term with as many children as possible joining their classmates for the beginning of a new school year.

When we are looking for how to approach topics with a new class of children stories and factual accounts can help. Not only do they offer a window on the world, but they help children develop the essential life skill of empathy. Last year, I had the pleasure of meeting Onjali Q. Raúf, an English author whose books, as you will see in her interview, help children in Key Stage 2 do just that.

Fiona Maine shares the experiences of UK teachers engaged in the DIALLS project working with children in seven European countries to develop their shared values and thoughts about what it means to be European in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The books and films they have used will be available to all from spring 2021. As well as helping us understand the present, stories can develop children's understanding of history as Alf Wilkinson shows in his article focused on the power of storytelling.

Through her research, Rachel Gronin reminds us that ensuring children learn to read requires teachers to have a wide range of pedagogical knowledge as well as knowing each child as an individual. This is equally true when promoting reading for pleasure with children. It is good to have three articles focusing on this important area from different perspectives. Firstly, Fufy Demissie and Cara Doxey show how trainee teachers adopted the Philosophy for Children approach, using picture books to encourage deeper reflection and response to texts. Next, Julie Doyle, Reading Lead at Sneinton C of E Primary School, describes how her school has used the Reading for Pleasure research to inform her school's mission to attract all children into reading. Lastly, Jo Bowers and Simon Fisher share how they have supported teachers' knowledge of children's literature set in Wales by authors and illustrators living in Wales through the Open University/UKLA Teachers' Reading Groups in Wales.

Reading widely is known to support children's vocabulary development. Jon Biddle's review of Kelly Ashley's book *Word Power* highlights how Ashley has drawn on children's literature to provide a context for teaching vocabulary. Ashley's book provides practical strategies for supporting children's vocabulary development that can be used in school and at home.



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Cover: a display of books by Welsh authors





# Building a European community through responses to books and films

Fiona Maine, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

In celebration of World Literacy Day, this article shares the experiences of UK teachers engaged in the DIALLS project, a three-year project working with children in seven different European countries to develop their cultural literacy

What better way to build a community than to get talking! The DIALLS project ([www.dialls2020.eu](http://www.dialls2020.eu)) is a three-year project aiming to map and understand the ‘cultural literacy’ of young people in Europe. The project has developed learning materials for children to talk together (in and across classes, across and beyond Europe) to explore their shared values and thoughts about what it means to be European in the 21st century.

‘Cultural literacy’ is a term that has resurfaced to become much used in our current education system. Often linked with the American educator Hirsch (1988) it is used to describe a set of knowledge that is assumed to be desirable for children to learn about ‘culture’. In his book Hirsch even created a list of the 5000 things he felt all Americans should know. There have been many debates about what should and shouldn’t be on the list, but few people have challenged the idea of having a list at all (Maine et al. 2019).

The DIALLS project (Dialogue and Argumentation for cultural Literacy Learning) takes a different approach. Rather than seeing cultural literacy as a set of knowledge, we view it as a set of skills and dispositions that equip us to ‘get along’ with each other in our societies, recognising and celebrating our cultural differences and sometimes unexpected similarities.

The project is now in its third year and has been funded by the European Commission as part of the Horizon 2020 scheme. It includes nine different countries in and around Europe with seven of them working in schools of all ages. The project has created a set of resources for teachers to use that can support children to develop key dispositions around living together, being socially responsible and exploring cultural identities and heritages. Central to the project is the idea that dialogue is fundamental in promoting attitudes of tolerance, empathy and inclusion, and that we can usefully teach children the skills of dialogue (coming together, sharing and acknowledging ideas and opinions) and argumentation (being able to justify reasons, and engage critically and positively with

alternative viewpoints) to help them to enact these attitudes.

The power of picture books and other visual texts such as short films is well researched (Arizpe *et al.*, 2014; Maine, 2015) and the project uses these stimulating and exciting resources as the lynchpin for discussions. Arizpe and colleagues highlight this power arguing that their use, ‘demands a heightened co-authoring role that requires taking risks with imagination, activating intertextual and cultural knowledge and trusting in the readers’ ability to make sense of the story’ (Arizpe *et al.*, 2014 p. 37). An added icing on the cake is that as the resources that DIALLS uses are all wordless, they can be used in all countries without translation!

Teachers in the UK started the project with a day of professional development exploring the themes included in the DIALLS project, and also reflecting on the power of talk in the classroom and how to build dialogic classrooms. They discussed how to support children’s talk through focusing on clear objectives for talk such as:

- I can build on ideas and explain them
- I can encourage everyone to contribute
- We can work together to agree.

We focused on the importance of rules for talk that reflect carefully how people share ideas, and how we can build on and, sometimes, challenge these. The teachers then took their bags of books and resources and headed off to their classes to get talking. We have met regularly throughout the year to deepen discussions about what a dialogic classroom looks and sounds like (Alexander 2008), and to explore the DIALLS resources. A Key Stage 2 teacher Laura notes:

*My class have absolutely loved every book and film that we have explored through DIALLS, what has been great is that it is truly accessible to all children within your class. Children that often don’t offer ideas or their opinions feel more freedom to do so and are beginning to use the dialogic language alongside of this.*

### Living together

The first book that the five and six year-olds shared was *Naar de Markt* (2017), a Dutch book by Noelle Smit telling the story of a little girl's trip to her local market and the exciting range of produce to be found there. Cecilia's class were enthralled by the book, and quickly invented stories to explain what was happening. It was fascinating listening to them as they co-constructed a narrative, which they were keen to find within the pages. Spontaneously, one child started the story as Cecilia opened the book and shared the first double spread, and then the others joined in...

- Arthur: Once upon a time, there was, there was  
 Hannah: [a man...]  
 Arthur: A big city full of people  
 Tch: Arthur's sharing his version of the story. Once upon a time there was... what did you say Arthur?  
 A city?  
 Sally: A big city  
 Arthur: Full of lots of people  
 Violet: And there was a market  
 Tch: Violet said, 'and there was a market'  
 Sally: And people were all very busy and it was noisy and not very peaceful only at night  
 Tch: Sally said that only at night it's peaceful. Give me your reason Sally.  
 Sally: [stands up] Because lots of people, cos like lots of people are off to their way to market [marches on the spot]. It's like people can't get much rest in the morning because people are waking them all up, or they're interrupting things...  
 Hannah: ... or they're making a big noise  
 Sally: Or they are making a big noise. Only at night when people go home...

The children continued to co-construct the story together before having a wider class discussion about diversity, the cultural theme for the lesson. The class shared ideas for special food that each child might like to buy from the market to take to a celebration and created a shopping list for the market. In addition to the discussions, one of the outcomes of each DIALLS lesson is an opportunity for the children to produce their own cultural artefact expressing a key theme from the project (Note 1). In England, Cecilia's class created soundscapes for their market scenes, in Israel children drew the fruits and vegetables they might expect to see in their local market. Jude's class from an English market town took the opportunity to compare the book with their own town market and created a display to celebrate the variety of produce on offer (Figure 1).

These gentle discussions were geared to promote the idea that we are all different, and might live our lives differently, and it is interesting to find out about other children and their lives too.

Cecilia reflected on the session:

*The children really enjoyed looking at the detail on every page and inventing their own story language to tell the story. It just came naturally to the children to start*

*verbalising "Once upon a time... They then started to see other little stories within the text, such as a dog trying to steal the sausages, and an old lady with her trolley.*



Figure 1: Jude's class display about their market

*The children made a soundscape of a page showing a fishmonger that they had chosen as their favourite. We worked in groups and each group made a specific noise related to the scene. As we moved around the classroom, each group added their noise one by one, reaching a crescendo, then each group stopped, one by one. In our first attempt we recorded the sounds of walking (tapping feet), wrapping items in plastic, crumpled paper, slicing fish (with rulers on the table), talking, and jingling of money while paying. Listening to our soundscape and looking at the pictures, we then realised we forgot to add the animal sounds (birds, dogs and cats). We made a second soundscape with the animal sounds included this time. After listening to the second soundscape, the children came up with another idea; to create a soundscape in words, describing the action. The children used the words, walking, selling, wrapping, talking, putting, resulting in a soundscape poem.*

### Social responsibility

In classes with children from 7–11, the children were considering themes around 'social responsibility'. Together, they watched the film *The Elephant and the Bicycle* (*Le Velo d'Elephant*, Shchukina, 2014) which shows an elephant as a street cleaner who sees a billboard advertising a bike and decides to save up and buy it. Unfortunately, whilst the bike on the billboard seems huge, when it arrives it is by no means big enough for the elephant, and he retreats to his house depressed. It is only when he is gone that the community begin to realise his impact. Rubbish piles up on the pavements, the streets get dirtier. The story resolves



with the elephant donating his tiny bike to a small girl and cheered by the exchange, resumes his duties.

The theme for discussion for this film (and there could have been many themes) was to consider the impact of people who are key workers in our society, a strangely prophetic discussion given the societal context that emerged in the Spring of 2020. The children debated whose responsibility it was to keep the community clean and how this responsibility was shared. Artefacts created from this DIALLS resource included a wonderful 3D street scene of community workers from Herdeep's class (Figure 2) and beautiful plasticine scenes showing different roles that keep society ticking along (Figure 3) from Katie's class. Children from Katie's class wrote captions for why they had chosen each role.



Figure 2: 3D street scene of community workers

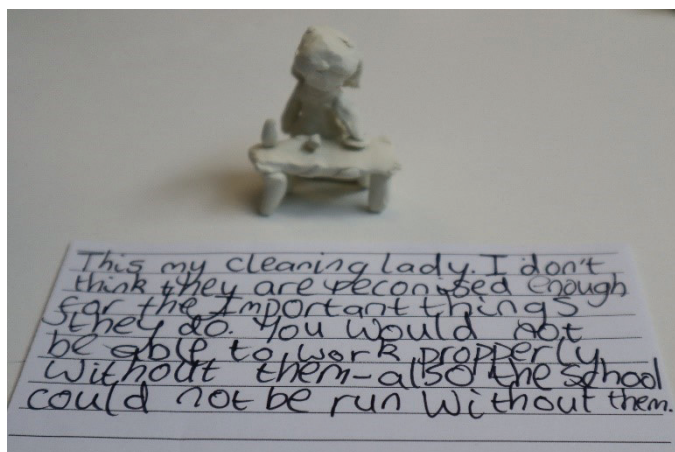


Figure 3: Plasticine cleaner and caption

Katie reflected:

*I found the session based around the short film 'The Elephant and the Bicycle' particularly insightful for both myself and my understanding of the children in my class, and for the pupils themselves and their understanding of society. The pupils were hooked by the film and it prompted a lot of discussion from a range of pupils – both those who often shared their opinions and those who rarely did so. Using the plasticine to create different parts*

*of society was particularly impressionable for us all. Not only did it allow children to use a different and unusual medium from which to develop their discussion; but it also allowed children who struggled to voice their thoughts to express themselves. Working as self-chosen groups, a regular occurrence in the class, was also affected as different characters spoke up and made decisions in this particular task. Since then, several children have reached out to members of our school community linked to the video. Cards have been made and left for cleaners, children have offered to help support staff with their work and more thought has been given in discussions about how different areas of our community are affected by things.*

Although the impact of school closures across Europe in the Spring of 2020 has had a significant impact on the progress of the project, resources from DIALLS (full access short films and discussion ideas with some online professional development) will be available from Spring 2021 on the DIALLS website. They will be there to be shared and we very much hope that you enjoy using them. Each film comes with a discussion prompt card that can be used as a starter for engaging children in authentic discussions about cultural values and expression. Thinking and talking about how we can live together purposefully and kindly has never felt more important.

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### Notes

Find more artwork and the texts that inspired it on our website [www.DIALLS2020.eu](http://www.DIALLS2020.eu)

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