English 4-11

Published by The English Association and the United Kingdom Literacy Association

Number 69
Summer 2020



Creating a *Writing for Pleasure* pedagogy

Using graphic novels to improve writing and comprehension skills

Why multilingual pupils need to encounter books in their language in formal education contexts

Literacy School of the Year

What's in it for the child-tutor?

Exploring Children's Literature

In brief

Reviews

Contents

Creating a *Writing for Pleasure* pedagogy: one teacher's practice
Felicity Ferguson and Ross Young **2**

Using graphic novels to improve writing and comprehension skills
Richard Ruddick **6**

Why multilingual pupils need to encounter books in their language in formal education contexts: stories from a multilingual library
Sabine Little **10**

Literacy School of the Year
Lucy Timmons **14**

What's in it for the child-tutor? Findings from a study of a cross-age, peer reading programme
Fiona Curtis **17**

Exploring Children's Literature: Reading for Knowledge, Understanding and Pleasure by Nikki Gamble
Reviewed by Jo Bowers **20**

In brief … **21**

Reviews
Brenda Marshall **22**

Apologies: in the Spring 2020 issue, the author of the author interview was Eve Bearne not Hannah Rodriques.

Editorial

Sally Wilkinson

As I write this, schools continue to be closed for all children except those of key workers and those who are vulnerable. Everyone involved in the magazine sends their best wishes and thanks to teachers who are continuing to care for these children. I hope that by the time this issue is published schools are returning to some normality.

Books are at the heart of much English teaching. Lucy Timmons' school, Linton Mead Primary School, was a joint winner of the UKLA literacy School of the Year in 2019. She shares their English journey which is based on beginning with high quality texts that lead to excellent oral, written and cross-curricular work by the children. If you would like further ideas for working with texts, in her review Jo Bowers recommends looking no further than *Exploring Children's Literature* by Nikki Gamble.

We know how important it is that the breadth of texts used in our classrooms and those in school libraries reflect the diverse needs of all readers. Sabine Little's uplifting article shows how the seed of sharing and reading multilingual books grew into a multilingual children's library in Sheffield.

In his classroom, Richard Ruddick realised that, as well as offering a hook into reading for individuals in his class, graphic novels also increased the enjoyment and engagement of all the class in reading comprehension and writing. In their article, Felicity Ferguson and Ross Young provide further ways to engage children as writers as they share the practice of one teacher taking part in the *Writing For Pleasure* project. Working with others can be another way of increasing children's engagement in reading. Fiona Curtis shows how training older readers in the primary school as peer-tutors for younger tutees improved the confidence of the peer-tutors in themselves as readers.

As always, it is lovely to receive ideas for articles. Do get in touch at engassoc@le.ac.uk if you would like to share them in a future issue.

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English 4-11 is published three times a year by The English Association (EA) and the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA). Membership and subscription details are available from:

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Creating a Writing for Pleasure pedagogy: one teacher's practice

Felicity Ferguson and Ross Young

This article describes a classroom where a *Writing For Pleasure* approach enables children to gain personal satisfaction and enjoyment in their writing whilst making exceptional academic progress.

A Writing For Pleasure pedagogy works best when there is a dialogic, democratic space created and routinely promoted by the teacher, but it cannot happen by accident.
Mr Tobias Hayden (class teacher)

This article is based on a one-year research project entitled *What Is It Writing For Pleasure Teachers Do That Makes The Difference?* (Young 2019). The project investigated how *Writing For Pleasure* teachers achieve writing teaching which is highly effective (resulting in greater than average progress) and also *affective* (pertaining to positive dispositions and feelings). This research comes at a time where we are seeing under attainment in writing (Ofsted 2012, DfE 2012, 2017) coupled with some evidence of an increase in young people's indifference or dislike for writing (Clark, 2016, 2017).

Writing For Pleasure is a pedagogical approach recently developed in response to a wealth of research which shows that the most *effective* writing teaching emphasises the *affective* aspects of being a writer. Using classroom observations and interviews the research project explored what it is that *Writing For Pleasure* teachers do to enable their pupils to achieve accelerated progress and also to have a strong sense of enjoyment and satisfaction as writers.

The teachers selected to take part in the project had all self-identified as *Writing For Pleasure* teachers through an online audit of practice. It was a requirement for selection that their practices be based on what the studies have told us is the most effective writing teaching, associated with high levels of pupil motivation, self-efficacy, agency, self-regulation, volition, writer-identity and pleasure in writing. They were also required to provide evidence of exceptional or above expected academic progress among their pupils. The teachers taught children in key stage Two (7- to 11-year olds) and were working in a variety of settings in England.

The following account describes the practices of one of these teachers, Mr Hayden, as observed and recorded by the researchers. His class were achieving outstanding progress in writing, as testified by his school data. Our observations, together with quotes from the children interviewed, demonstrate the expertise with which he was enacting each of the principles of a *Writing For Pleasure* pedagogy, seeing them as highly and significantly interconnected. In this article the quotes (in blue font) are from children unless otherwise stated.

Creating a community of writers

When Mr. Hayden says 'time for writing,' I don't go errrr, I go ooo writing!

Sometimes you just write a story because your teacher has asked you to but he really wants us to enjoy our writing.

Mr Hayden teaches a class of 8- and 9-year olds in a large primary school with a diverse cultural and economic background in London. His young apprentice writers see him as positive, caring and interested in their lives and this undoubtedly contributes to his class' engagement in writing at a high level of achievement. He sees all children as writers and, from the first, teaches strategies that lead to greater independence and ensures that everyone remains part of the writing community.

They are a community of writers in which their teacher teaches and writes alongside his class and shares his own writing practices. The community of writers take part in meaningful practices and in writing projects they can identify with. For example, during the research observation week children were engaged in writing a memoir of something from their own lives, to be shared with peers and published in the class library for all to read. The teacher has shown them how to talk about and present their writing to others in positive and constructive way. Importantly, children are involved in actions, discussions and reflections that impact on how they are taught and undertake their writing. It is a shared and democratic space which feels like a writing workshop – industrious, purposeful, social and often collaborative.

Tobias: *A Writing For Pleasure pedagogy requires a carefully designed, considered and structured environment, which can only really create a space for writing to thrive if the teacher really believes that a community approach is desirable. I was given a piece of advice by one of my tutors when I was training to be a teacher which has stuck with me: when someone walks into your classroom, they should be able to tell fairly quickly what kind of teacher you are and what you believe teaching to be.*

So, what are the characteristics of this *Writing For Pleasure* classroom where a community of writers has developed?

Purposeful, authentic and personal writing projects

We don't have to write what the teacher says. It's actually better if you choose what you're going to write because you know what you're going to write about [laughs].

Mr Hayden knows how essential it is that children are given time to write for a sustained period every day and to work on both class and personal writing projects. The opportunities provided are viewed as meaningful by his class. This is because children are first taught about a particular genre (Figure 1) and are then given the opportunity to generate their own subject and purpose, write at their own pace, in their own way, and with a clear sense of a real reader. For example, his children have written on topics as varied as the hazards of asbestos, the trouble with mute brothers, the sun shining in December, the Chinese dynasty, creaking hallways and James teaching me to play drums. Given this freedom, his writers remain focused on a task, maintain a strong personal agency over and commitment to their writing, and so produce something significant for themselves and yet still in keeping with his expectations. Personal projects are the vehicle through which his children come to see writing as an essentially empowering and pleasurable activity which they can use now and in the future. This is surely the true function of writing? In short, his class care about their writing and want it to do well.

Not surprisingly, Mr Hayden also sees this as a social justice issue and therefore holds equally high expectations for both class and personal writing projects He is aware, too, that personal writing projects are advantageous to him as their teacher, because they offer an insight into children's personalities and help build relationships. He also appreciates their value in contributing to the assessment of children's development as independent writers.

Setting writing goals

There is a day where we do idea generation and we think of loads of ideas and then we pick one we want to write about. It's not really strict that you have to write about that one. You can choose.

To maintain children's commitment and motivation during a class writing project, Mr Hayden ensures that they are clear regarding the **distant goal** (the audience and purpose) for their writing. The class, as a community, also have a say in setting the **product goals** for their project (what they will have to do to ensure their writing is successful and meaningful.) They also discuss what not to do by looking at ineffective examples and deciding together what they need to avoid. The teacher sets loose **process goals** (e.g. generating an idea/ planning/ drafting/ revising/ editing/ publishing) which keep his class on track without forcing them to write at a certain pace or rush their work. For example, he will say "Remember that your pieces need to be published into the class library in three weeks' time, so plan your writing time with that in mind". This means children write responsibly, happily, in their own way and without negative pressure.

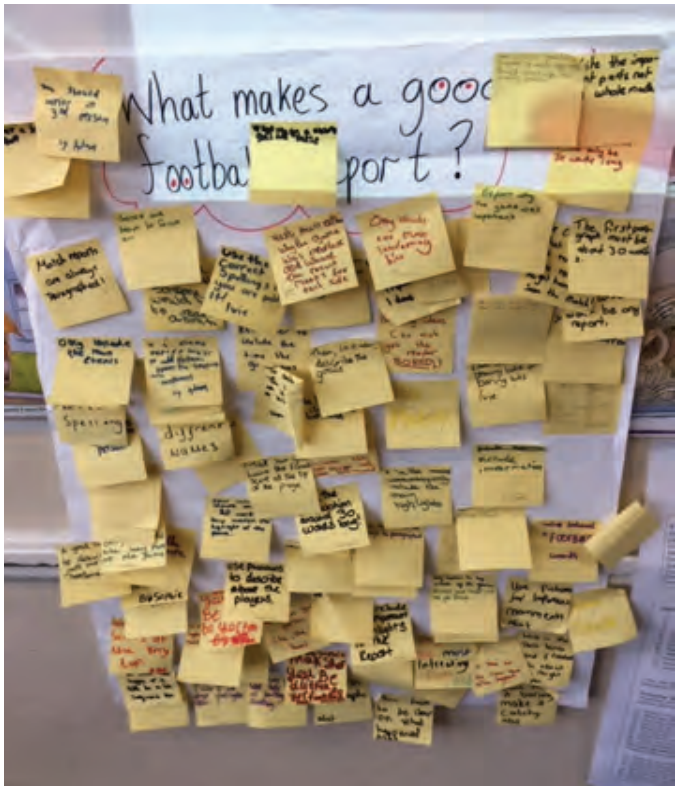


Figure 1: The class pool ideas about text features

Explicitly teaching the writing processes

He actually gives us fun tricks and tips of things you can do and how to do it.

Mr Hayden gives direct instruction in the different components of the writing process (how to generate an idea, plan/dabble, draft, revise, edit, publish). He supports children's understanding of these processes through demonstration, discussion, modelling and sharing exemplars which he has written himself. He is able to show them, through modelling and discussion that the writing process is not necessarily linear but discursive, and he encourages them over time to develop and use their own process. The writing posters he and his class produce collaboratively are always on display and are referred to by the children until they are able to relinquish their dependence on the scaffolding he provides.

Balancing composition with transcription

I like to write something that is really strong.

The children in Mr Hayden's class know that transcriptional issues can be attended to after the act of drafting and during the revision and editing stages. Spelling and punctuation are largely self-monitored; as they write, they mark their texts for items to be checked and corrected later. He promotes the idea that children's handwriting skills are best practised when publishing their completed pieces; children are motivated to attend to handwriting in the knowledge that their text must be 'reader-ready'.

Mr Hayden knows that if grammar is to be understood in a meaningful way, it must be taught functionally and examined and applied in the context of real composition. He teaches grammar through mini-lessons and invites the children to try and use a particular grammatical feature in their writing that day. De-contextualised grammar exercises do not feature in his classroom.

Teach self-regulation strategies

When we are writing, he sometimes puts something up on the board about it and how to do it and how we know we are doing it.

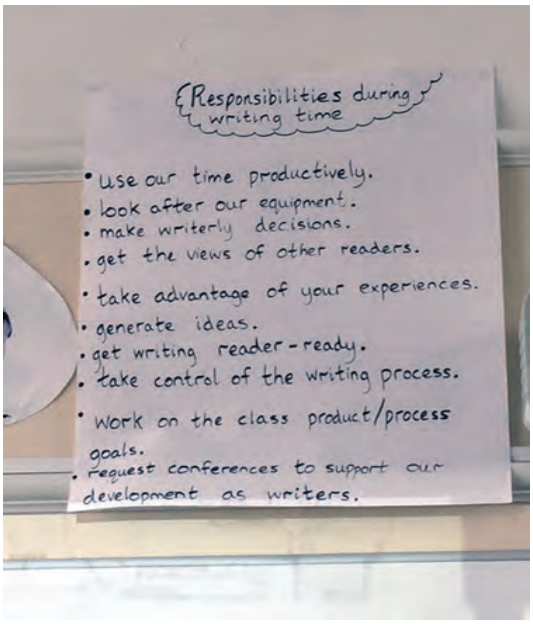


Figure 2: A class poster ensures children understand how to be productive

While Mr Hayden appreciates that children will often need guidance and advice, he also believes in the importance of self-regulation strategies and how these enable his class to write with confidence and independence. He has taught them techniques on how to generate ideas, use story maps, planners and checklists and how to revise their compositions. His class also have easy access to tools to support editing and publishing. Resources are visible and communicate enabling strategies clearly. He also discusses with the community their rights and responsibilities when producing their texts (Figure 2)

A consistent routine

I kind of had a plan before of what I wanted to do today.

Good classroom organisation is absolutely vital. It facilitates learning, ensures focus and builds writing confidence. Knowing the routines also saves time – time that he and his class use beneficially. Mr Hayden's class is reassured by the clear structure of his writing lessons. He has a set routine of mini-lesson, writing time and class sharing. His mini lessons take the form of short instruction on an aspect of writing which is likely to be useful to the children during that day's writing. During writing time, Mr Hayden writes amongst his children and then conferences with groups and individuals (Figure 3). A well-organised classroom ensures his class write largely independently. For example, children will know the routines for working on class writing projects and that, once finished, they may straightaway continue or begin writing their personal projects.

Being a writer-teacher

He doesn't really rush you. He helps. He makes it slow. Take your time with it and it will go smoothly.

It is impossible to underestimate just how much Mr. Hayden's class gain from knowing that their teacher faces the same writing challenges that they do. What the researchers found particularly impressive about his teaching was that he teaches from his own craft regularly, sharing his writing 'tricks, tips and secrets' and inviting the children to give them a try too. He writes in and out of the classroom and shares his writing regularly with the children in the spirit of seeking constructive criticism. He also shares his own pieces in relation to the projects he is asking the children to engage in. Consequently, he maintains genuine reciprocal relations when discussing texts. As a result, his class respect him as someone worth listening to; he has earned their respect and trust as a fellow writer.

Reading, sharing and talking about writing

I try to like draw and entertain with my writing. I normally share my writing and I want it to be reader-ready and really good for them.

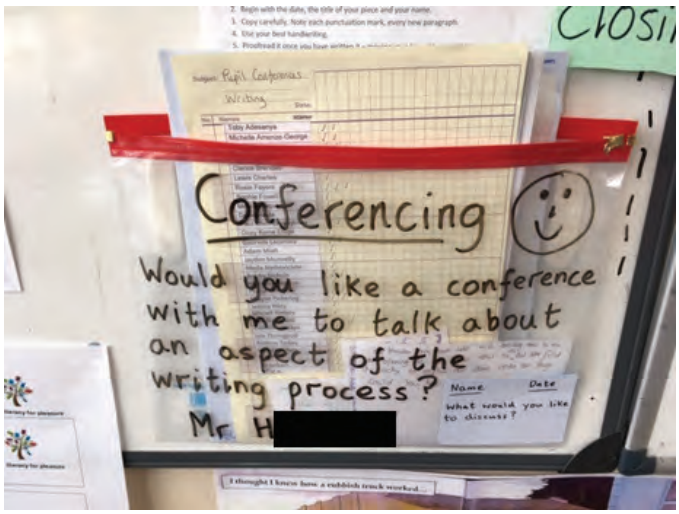


Figure 3: Systems support children in requesting a conference with the teacher

In this classroom, children are given ample opportunity to share and discuss writing in order to give and receive constructive criticism and celebrate achievement. The sophistication, maturity and commitment children showed in these discussions is striking. This writing community have developed their own ways of talking and thinking as writers. Throughout, Mr Hayden teaches, models and promotes the social aspects of writing and peer support, through his manner around the class and in his mini-lessons.

Pupil conferencing: meeting children where they are

I've shown it to Mr Hayden and he's shown me other things I could do and I'm like oh yeah… I think I will do that maybe tomorrow.

Sometimes he comes and prompts us and he gives us advice to pick and it's really fun.

Mr. Hayden's rich response to children's writing is crucial. During the planning and composition stages he conferences and provides immediate, relevant and non-judgmental feedback to individuals, drawing on his own experiences as a writer. He allows them time to reflect on his suggestions and to attend to learning points while they are still engaged in their writing. Because he is a writer-teacher, he is seen by his class to be well-placed to advise and give feedback; they know he understands the issues they encounter when he writes himself. Children feel that they can talk to him as writer to writer and that he reciprocates this feeling.

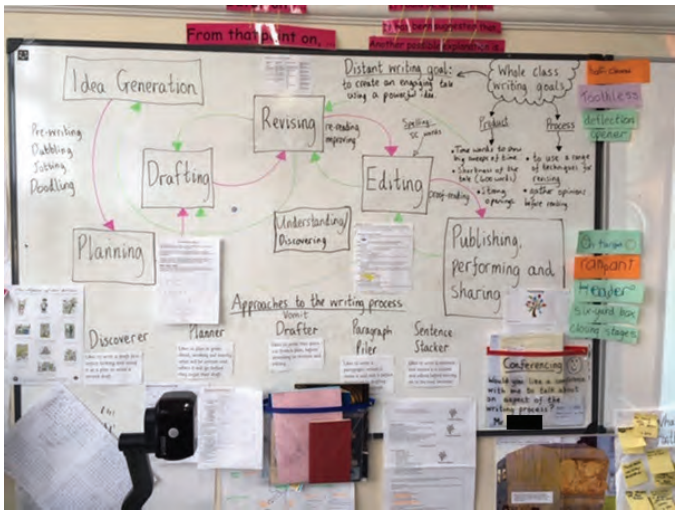


Figure 4: The writing journey is clearly displayed.

Mr. H: *I had one girl who was struggling to get going with a piece as she was stuck on the characters. I asked her to focus on what she wanted the characters to say rather than who they were initially and that seemed to do the trick… When I started out this year, I did not expect to be offering this kind of advice to one of the 8-year-old children in my class, but I have discovered that this is the power of pupil-conferencing.*

I have recently become a new father and, in this time, I have been reading a great deal about how a mother and a new born baby interact in the feeding process. This timely analogy is kind of how I see the teacher-pupil conference; as a symbiotic relationship, a live, context-centred discussion where advice can flow in either direction; where the teacher and the child can respond to each other's writing and provide solutions where previously there had been none. I have learned a great deal this year about how the different writers in my class work and how best to respond to their needs.

Conclusion

I feel like if I never wrote – life would be a bit boring wouldn't it – having loads of thoughts but never being able to show it.

When I know what to do and when I can write about what I feel inside kind of, I know I can write and I want to write.

I just write at school and forget about all the other lessons. Just love writing.

These are heartening, happy and confident words which sum up these children's experience of writing and becoming writers during their year with Mr. Hayden, where they gained autonomy, skill, self-belief, desire to write, and of course pleasure. Surely every child deserves the same.

Mr. H: *My pedagogical stance is best exemplified by a Writing For Pleasure pedagogy which is why I pursue it faithfully. One of the unexpected benefits of implementing this approach is that it has reignited my passion for learning about writing and the teaching of it and I am now a voracious reader of the literature which underpins the approach. From Ralph Fletcher to Lucy Calkins; from Donald Graves to Michael Rosen, I now have a small library's worth of wisdom to work my way through knowing that next year's teaching will surely be even better than this year's.*

The researchers were in no doubt that Mr Hayden's class wrote for pleasure and genuinely felt themselves to be writers and not simply producers of text – a rare thing in the current climate of children's writing at school. That he was able so successfully to create a *Writing For Pleasure* community together with the achievement of exceptionally high progress data in a very diverse class of children suggests that *Writing For Pleasure* as a pedagogy has huge potential. You can read more about the research project at www.writing4pleasure.com.

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Using graphic novels to improve writing and comprehension skills

Richard Ruddick, Year 6 teacher, Moorlands C of E Primary Academy, Great Yarmouth

Over the past two years I have been using graphic novels to encourage and engage less confident readers in the upper primary years. After seeing several children who would have been declared 'reluctant readers' become enthusiastic about the very few graphic novels I owned, it became clear that I needed to get more of them into the school environment. Since increasing the amount available in my class and subsequently the school library, I have seen an improved attitude to reading amongst those who were struggling to engage with it, whilst those children who were already enthusiastic readers have enjoyed being able to vary the formats of their reading books.

Increasing the range of graphic novels

Having seen the impact of graphic novels on readers I decided to try implementing them more frequently in my teaching to help improve the same children's enjoyment and engagement in English lessons. Initially I used them to help reinforce or develop skills that we had been working on but weren't at the highest standard I thought they could be. The class responded well to these lessons and commented on how enjoyable they found them, while I was delighted to see the quality of their work improve. I made sure that any lessons involving these books, benefitted specifically from the use of a graphic novel to avoid forcing them in just because I liked reading them. Identifying suitable opportunities helped to improve the accuracy of my teaching as I was forced to focus on the main goals of a task or a unit.

I was incredibly lucky to be part of a five-day reading and comprehension training program delivered by Wayne Tennent and Professor Teresa Cremin which looked at improving the way we engage readers and develop their comprehension skills. The work by Tennent on understanding and improving reading comprehension skills was inspiring and introduced several ways of teaching comprehension that I had never seen before. I decided to take the text marking approach he showed us but apply it to graphic novels instead of short stories or selected paragraphs.

> *You can use the pictures to give you clues and look back at the previous pages to help you work things out – Ella.*

The process involves giving children an extract and asking them to note down their ideas, questions and inferences. This encourages children to discuss a text and everything it can represent. I felt confident that the combination of images and text could work effectively with this approach and started to trial it with my class to explore language collaboratively in detail and understand how we can use clues in the text to help us establish the meaning.

One of the best discussions I had the pleasure of witnessing related to a page from the book *World War Hulk* which used the word *agoraphobia*.

As a class we had a long discussion about the meaning of this word and what this was, how the images backed up our thoughts, as well as a very mature discussion about the effects on people of struggles with their mental health. Originally, I was simply expecting children to use the images and text to make an educated guess about the meaning. However, the text proved to be perfect for stimulating broader discussion.

Getting children to work collaboratively helped ensure everyone was able to access the work and by using extracts that featured images along with text I noticed an increased effort from those children who struggle with reading. Offering them fewer words, and supportive

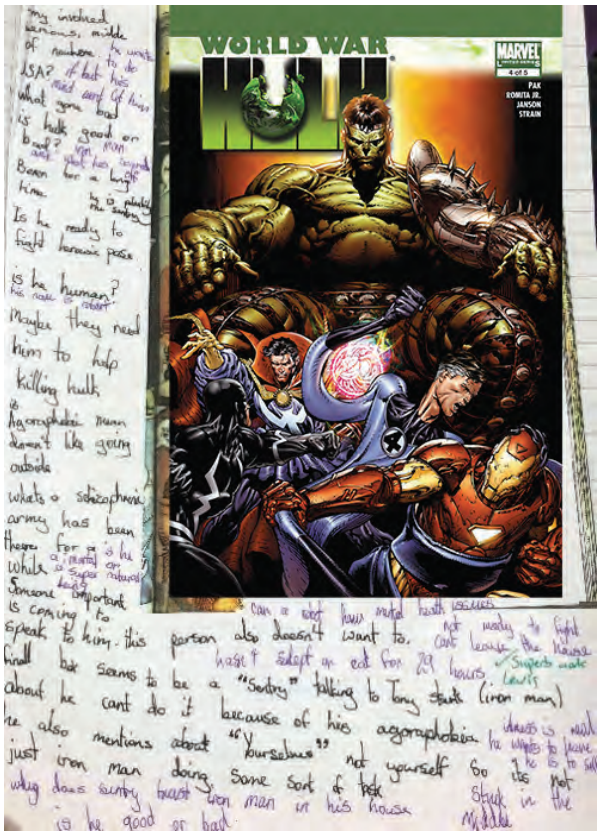


Figure 1: A pupil's response to World War Hulk

images meant they could make predictions about meanings when they were unsure (Figure 1). More often than not the images gave children confidence to draw conclusions or support their ideas. One girl in particular who found more formal comprehension daunting due to her dyslexia, flourished during any lesson that involved text marking with graphic novels.

It made it easier to figure out what was happening and that helped me to explain things in greater detail. – Maddox

Motivating contexts

Following the success of such lessons, my partner teacher and I started to look at combining text marking and graphic novels in both of our year six classes (10- and 11-year olds).

We decided to use extracts from the book *Mr Wolf's Class* as it had been incredibly popular with the pupils. Over the week the children worked on two different pages from the book which required them to look closely at body language as well as language choices (Figure 2). Both of the extracts featured scenarios that most of the pupils were familiar with which provided excellent discussion opportunities around what they would be thinking and feeling in that situation.

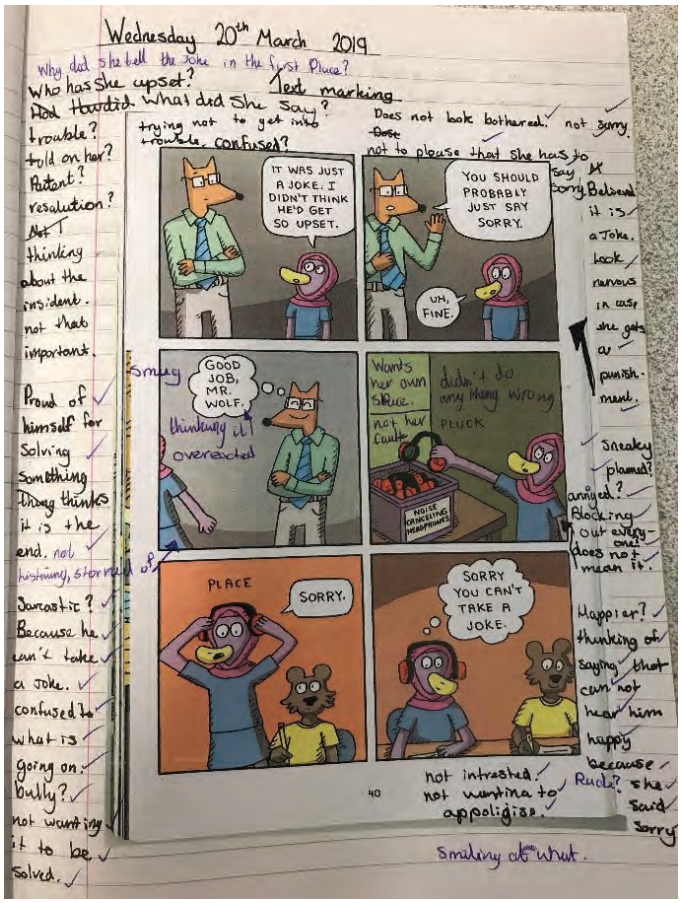


Figure 2: A page from Mr Wolf's Class that children marked collaboratively

Writing for different purposes

At the start of the year we had been learning about the journey of Captain Scott and his bid to reach the South Pole. Part of the unit involved writing a newspaper report about the failed mission and the discovery of the deceased crew. I was convinced that my class could produce better reports and felt the one spare day I had left before moving on should be used to address some common issues that had occurred in their work. Rather than use a different event in the timeline, I decided to give them a completely different context, which would need less background knowledge and could focus children's attention upon applying the necessary features. Each child was given two pages from *Spider-man: Miles Morales*, in which Spider-man is being chased by a missile before falling down onto a bus and being captured in front of a large crowd. We planned quotes to include and discussed the need for a speculative piece which could entice readers to come back the next day to read the continuing the story.

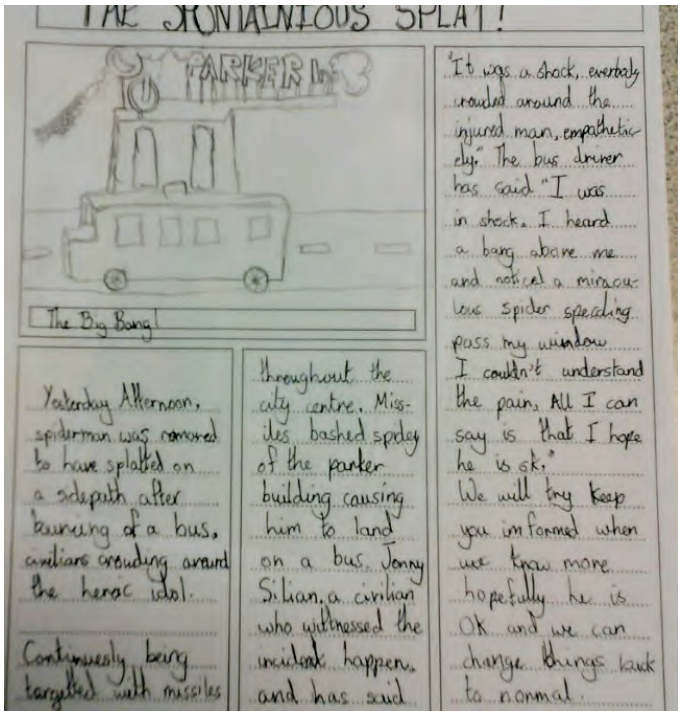


Figure 3: An example of a finished report

The rest of the task was completed independently by the class with the aim being to see how well children could apply all of the different elements we had been learning about. The end products were significantly better than the reports written previously and most importantly there was a noticeable improvement in pupils' confidence (Figures 3 and 4). Several remarked on how much they had enjoyed the lesson with one previously reluctant student declaring that he wanted to 'write newspaper reports every lesson if it's like that.' Although it was pleasing to see the class positive about the task, my main focus was whether using this resource had improved the quality of their writing.

Improved quality

Compared to their previous reports there was a clear improvement in the application of features, range of vocabulary and understanding of what makes an effective newspaper report.

One pupil wanted to 'write newspaper reports every lesson if it's like that'.

Being given the chance to repeat work and reinforce the features of a report undoubtedly played a role in improving

the quality of the class's work. However, using a graphic novel was also responsible for the improvement in quality. Having pictorial support helped those children who struggle to imagine a scenario or deal with abstract concepts. Being able to see exactly what happened, who saw it and how it ended meant they were able to focus on explaining these events in depth whereas previously they had to rely on their own knowledge about the events and then explain them, which was too much for some to manage. Again, I found the less confident writers in the class responded well to the visual support and had no issues getting started with the task or transferring ideas from their thoughts to the page.

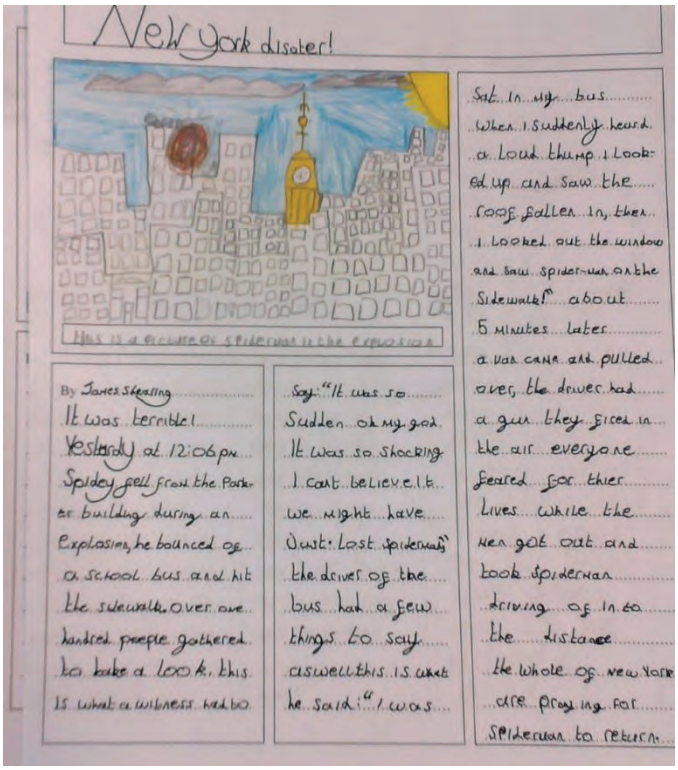


Figure 4: An example of a finished report

Writing dialogue

When moderating year six writing we noticed that dialogue was either missing completely from children's work or showed that children were struggling to punctuate it correctly. To ensure this core skill was embedded before they left our school we turned to the timeless Calvin and Hobbes cartoons to help us improve the quality and accuracy of dialogue across the year group.

The class were given several cartoon strips from a range of Calvin and Hobbes collections. Each strip started and ended on the same page. Each strip had been altered so only the first box or two had dialogue in, the rest of the speech bubbles had been blanked out. The first task was to fill in the speech bubbles with what they thought the characters might be saying. In order to do this, children needed to refer to speech that remained, facial expressions, body language and the context of the situation (Figure 5).

After completing several different comic strips from Calvin and Hobbes the children were given a blanked out strip from *Mr Wolf's Class*. The aim was to fill in the speech bubbles and then turn them into a passage of written dialogue.

Before writing them up, the features of written dialogue were recapped and modelled in order to address any misconceptions. After writing up their dialogue in the correct format we looked at how to improve the detail. Previously the dialogue in their work had been very static and often seemed to serve very little purpose instead of pushing the narrative forward like it should. Modelling this was imperative and afterwards the pupils were given the opportunity to go back and edit their work. Editing time allowed them to move away from relying on simple and basic structures such as 'he said', 'she said' and always using 'quietly' or 'loudly' to describe the volume of a speaker.

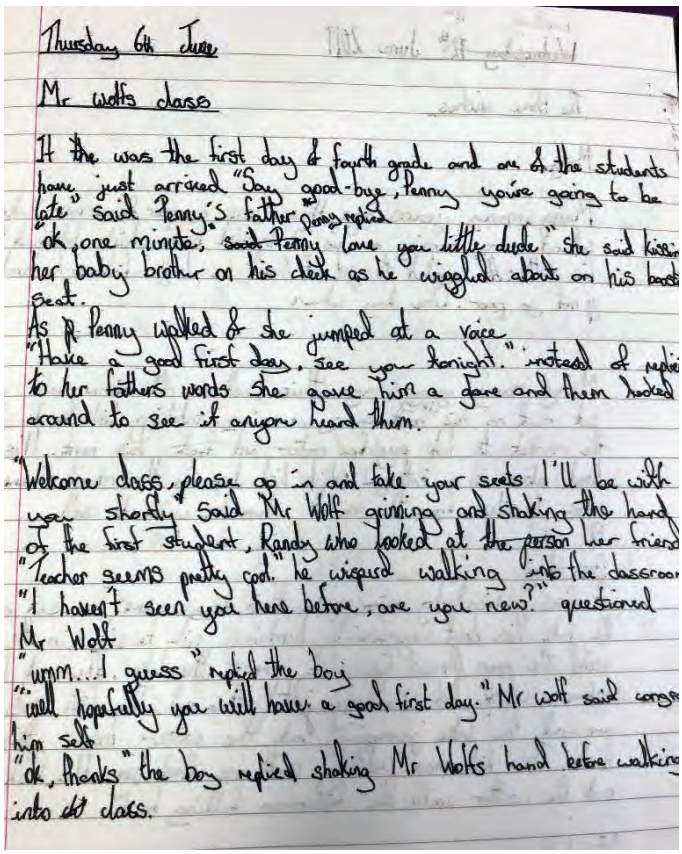


Figure 5: An example of a completed strip by a pupil, the first box was kept the same to help them start off the task.

Instead they began to use phrases such as '*said Mr Wolf grinning and shaking the hand of the first student*' and '*he whispered walking into the classroom*'. The expansion of their description created a more detailed passage of dialogue and allowed pupils to include actions that helped to progress their narrative (Figure 6).

By increasing the amount of description in their dialogue, the standard of vocabulary subconsciously improved as well with a number of pupils impressing themselves with the level of detail in their final version. The end product was a significant improvement for all pupils and many were able to identify exactly where and how they had noticeably improved the quality of their dialogue. Having the ability to physically see the transferral of speech to the written passage was empowering for the pupils as it allowed them to think about the full purpose of dialogue. Using images to support the work meant they didn't have to start imagining

how the characters were interacting as they could see it. This meant their job was simply to describe the interaction between characters as seen in the supporting images which many found significantly less challenging. Less confident writers were able to see the interaction between characters which in turn made it easier for them to focus on the quality of the conversation. The image of the conversation meant they were able to easily follow who was speaking, how they were speaking and what happened next.



Thursday 6th June

Mr Wolfs class

It the was the first day of fourth grade and one of the students have just arrived "Say good-bye, Penny you're going to be late" said Penny's father Penny replied "ok, one minute, said Penny love you little dude" she said kissing her baby brother on his cheek as he wiggled about on his back seat.

As Penny walked of she jumped at a voice "Have a good first day, see you tonight." instead of replying to her fathers words she gave him a glare and them looked around to see if anyone heard them.

"Welcome class, please go in and take your seats I'll be with you shortly said Mr Wolf grinning and shaking the hand of the first student, Randy who looked at the person her friend "Teacher seems pretty cool" he whisper walking into the classroom "I haven't seen you here before, are you new?" questioned Mr Wolf "umm... I guess" replied the boy "well hopefully you will have a good first day." Mr wolf said congratulating himself "ok, thanks" the boy replied shaking Mr Wolfs hand before walking into the class.

Figure 6: A finished example of dialogue converted from speech bubbles to a written passage.

Over the past academic year using graphic novels as part of my English teaching has been largely successful for me. There have been lessons where I have tried to force graphic novels into a topic or picked a text that doesn't have enough quality to extract everything I wanted from a task. However, on the whole, the lessons in which they have featured have been successful with regard to pupils' enjoyment and more importantly improvements in the quality of writing. Many pupils have found the combination of text and images incredibly supportive and the less confident or less enthusiastic writers have found themselves more enabled by the format.

Based on the success of using graphic novels over the past academic year, I intend to continue incorporating them on a frequent basis in my lessons, paying particular attention to their use in English. I look forward to experimenting with more group based tasks and collaborative opportunities that rely on graphic novels as a foundation.

Resources

Carter, B.C (2007) *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels: Page by Page, Panel by Panel.* Natl Council of Teachers of English

Gavigan, K (2011) *Connecting Comics to Curriculum: Strategies for grades 6-12*

McCloud, S (1994) *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art.* Harper Perennial

Moorman, G and Meyer, C (2013) *Wham! Teaching with Graphic Novels across the Curriculum.* Teachers College Press

Graphic novels for Children ages 7-11, from The School Reading list: https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/reading-lists-for-ks2-school-pupils/graphic-novels-for-ks2-children-aged-7-11/

Scott McCloud *Understanding Comics* https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0vtKqkt0q-bNTk1MzlhMmYtMmMyNS00Yzc3LTgzMDEtMjEzNDI3ZmZjMzAx/edit?pli=1

For more examples of how to use graphic novels in the classroom visit www.comicsonclass.school.blog or follow @RuddickRichard on Twitter.

English 4 – 11 published the following article in 2013 *The Comic art of the Imagination: Visual literacy in the classroom* by The Etherington Brothers

References

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Nels-Steinke.A, (2018) *Mr Wolf's Class,* Scholastic Graphix. ISBN 978-1338047684

Pak. G (2008) *World War Hulk,* Marvel. ISBN 978-1905239771

Watterson. B (1993) *The days are just packed: Calvin and Hobbes,* Sphere. ISBN 978-0751507614

NB. The photographs of children's writing in this article include illustrations from published works. As permission to reprint these images has not been successfully obtained, the author has taken steps to obscure images or substitute these with a photograph of the source publication's front cover. Such images are not subject to restrictions by copyright.

Figures 3 and 5: Thanks to Scholastic Inc. for kindly granting us permission to reproduce images from *Mr Wolf's Class*.

Why multilingual pupils need to encounter books in their language in formal education contexts: stories from a multilingual library

Sabine Little, University of Sheffield

A project which began by looking at the links between children and families' language and identity, grew into the development of a multilingual library, raising the status of children's home language and literacy experience.



Figure 1: A wealth of books in many languages

Over 20% of children in primary schools are now classed as having English as an additional language (gov.uk, 2019); however, this does not necessarily include all children who are multilingual. In my research, I have encountered 10- and 11-year-old children who told me nobody at school knows that they speak another language for considerable periods of time outside of school. I have spoken to a group of 8-year-old bilingual children who, it transpired, were editing out all non-English reading from their narrative, because, as one girl told me: "Why do you want to know about that? Nobody wants to know about that!" I spoke to parents who told me schools had asked them to kindly write only about English language books in home reading diaries. And I spoke to teachers who told me they felt completely unprepared to work with multilingual pupils, especially in a context where almost all policy is resolutely and unapologetically Anglo-centric. This article shares some of the insights gained from starting a multilingual children's library in Sheffield, and gives practical tips and ideas for encouraging the development of multiliteracies and multilingual reading.

Multilingual children at home and at school

As some of the examples above highlight, children readily adapt and edit their identities in ways that they consider most suitable for particular environments, and they do so from an early age. In the current English education policy context, multilingual children appear mainly from the perspective of being children with English as an additional language (EAL), creating a duality where English is on one side (specifically, the side of the curriculum, formal assessments and measures,

etc.), and all other languages (unspecified and unnamed) are on the other side. This is natural in a monolingual country, but this duality automatically leads to a deficit model, which essentially asks 'is their English good enough?', rather than 'what are the language skills of this child'? In some schools, the EAL policy seeks to incorporate multilingualism, and it is undoubtedly additional work to develop a holistic approach to multilingualism within the school. Languages are just one of several Funds of Knowledge (González, Moll and Amanti, 2009) children bring to school, and one of multiple ways in which children from minority backgrounds may be disadvantaged in formal education contexts. Understanding how children experience reading, language and literacy development at home is one core step towards creating a more holistically welcoming environment.

Through two UKLA research grants, I explored multilingual children's and families' links between language and identity (Little, 2017). For the second project, multilingual children aged 8-13 created a River of Reading (Cliff Hodges, 2010) which identified critical incidents linked to reading Figure 2). The Rivers of Reading and accompanying interviews gave a chronological overview of multilingual reading experiences and biliteracy development.



Figure 2: River of reading

Whereas the children's initial reading was typically dominated by the home or family language, this quickly changed to English as soon as formal education began. This was partially due to school expectations about reading at home and partially due to parental fears that children would fall behind if they remained focused on home languages. As children got older, social elements such as borrowing books from friends increasingly featured, too. The Rivers of Reading also illustrated how social experiences and expectations shaped children's perceptions of reading in their multiple languages. At the same time, however, the research showed how children thoughtfully navigated their multilingual identities, identifying opportunities for multilingual development, and offering ideas for giving their home languages a higher status. Access to resources was an issue for several of the families in my research, leading me to bring two aspects of my work together.

Creating a multilingual children's library

In November 2017, I found myself giving a talk at Sheffield Library, having responded to a call from the University which asked academics to 'tie their research to Harry Potter'. I had had more fun than should be legal preparing a talk on why multilingual people have more fun reading Harry Potter. Together with the audience, we explored the language roots of spells, and laughed and marvelled at the work translators faced in order to bring Harry Potter to life in other languages. The event was a huge success, and many children came up to me afterwards to tell me about how they were enjoying being able to celebrate their language skills. This led me to talk to the library about enhancing provision for multilingual children. A few months later, we ran a multilingual book-reading/storytelling event, staffed by volunteers from heritage language schools and the general public (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Sharing books and stories

The event was so successful that, on occasion, library staff surreptitiously tried to count heads to figure out whether we were still meeting health and safety regulations. There was obviously an appetite for multilingual reading – but would there be enough for a full multilingual children's section? During the event, I had tried to facilitate a 'multilingual book swap', but several people had just passed their books on to me, asking me to find a suitable new owner. Together with book donations from publishers, translators, authors, illustrators, and heritage language schools, these formed the basis of the new multilingual children's section, which launched in November 2018 (Figure 6).

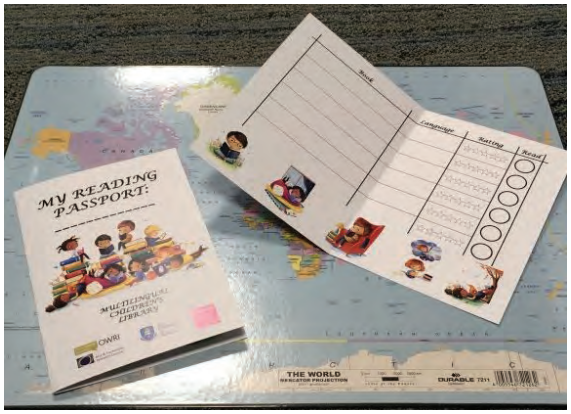


Figure 4: Reading passport

As well as books in 30+ languages, the project introduced a multilingual reading scheme, awarding children a 'passport' for reading books in a language other than English (Figure 4).

A full evaluation and research project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, ran alongside the first year of the library, which also allowed for the creation of custom illustrations by illustrator Lucy Fleming (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Lucy Fleming's illustrations for the Reading Passport

Creating the library was not without its challenges, cataloguing being one of them. New, simpler ways had to be found to enter information on books when library staff did not speak the language. This was easier when the work was translated from English and could be linked to an English version but was harder when the original publication was in another language – and of course, we were striving to ensure that both types of books were represented. Working with donated stock was another challenge – the number of books available in one language might greatly surpass or fail to meet the demand, as it is linked both to speakers of that language, and, within this, to library users.



Figure 6: Celebrating the library

What have we learnt?

The library has been an unmitigated success – multiple storytelling and book reading events have happened since the launch, and, increasingly, children as well as parents are having the confidence to take part in readings. We staged a 'multilingual readathon' with author Gill Aitchison, where parents, children, and Gill herself read as many translations of her picture book *Mungo makes new friends* as possible (we managed 14!). (Figure 7)



Figure 7: Gill Aitchison with Diane Elliott, Chris Wragg and Sabine Little

For a multilingual story writing event, children were presented with the scenario of an alien landing in Sheffield, seeking to gain as much 'input' on languages spoken as possible. They continued the story, whilst also incorporating their home languages. On multiple occasions for these events, random visitors to the library offered to read a book in their language, thus becoming part of the event and facilitating spontaneous engagement with multilingualism. Feedback from both multilingual and monolingual families has been immensely positive. Several parents comment that the library has been the first opportunity for their child to encounter their home language in a public space.

A German playgroup and a Lithuanian language school have started on the back of enthusiastic parents engaging with the library. Supplementary language schools in Sheffield have engaged with the library through donating stock, attending events, and facilitating library visits. Tying the reading scheme to a tangible award (a certificate and medal) has meant that children are using them for 'show and tell' in schools, giving teachers and friends an opportunity to engage with multilingualism from a position of strength, rather than from a deficit perspective. The work attracted the Brenda Eastwood Award for Diversity and Inclusion in 2019, and links have been made with other multilingual cafés and libraries around the world, encouraging an exchange of ideas. Above all, the fact that the multilingual children's section is located in the main children's library has raised the status of multilingualism in the city, and, at every event, members of the public who work in schools come to have a chat about what they can do to normalise multilingualism in their contexts.

Why do multilingual pupils need books in their own languages?

Putting together a multilingual children's library (or section) can be a lot of hard work, so how can it be justified? Any school stakeholders may rightfully ask this question, so below is a summary of key benefits, especially for those looking to put a case together:

Having a selection of multilingual children's books…

…normalises multilingualism around the school, representing the variety in the student body, and giving all

pupils the opportunity to explore different languages and scripts.
…raises the status of multilingualism, making a clear statement that other languages are valued, and 'worthy' of a space in school.
…gives children an opportunity to recognise themselves and their peers through books and languages represented.
…encourages children to play with language, drawing on their full linguistic repertoire.
…offers opportunity for language development in general, and multilingual language development specifically.
…maximises potential for parental engagement and reading at home.
…can give a sense of pride and belonging, especially if the library is created through the community.
…can support learning of English through discussion of plots based on imagery.
…can be used to explore aspects of citizenship and "British Values" in the curriculum.

What can schools do?

It is possible to support multilingualism without being a language expert, and without being multilingual yourself. The ideas below are some of the findings and recommendations that have come out of the project. All of them encourage children to share their full linguistic identities in a formal education context, raising the status of home languages and still contributing to curriculum goals around language engagement, cultural exploration, etc. Some ideas are immediately applicable, while others might take a bit more work:

- Acknowledge and encourage the inclusion of books in home languages into 'read at home' diaries
- Actively ask about multilingual reading and storytelling at home, encouraging children to share their multilingual identity, and normalising multilingualism within the school
- Have a display board around non-English books to celebrate multilingualism – ask children to bring in books in languages other than English, take a photograph and a comment on why the child likes the book, and openly display the multilingual riches present at school
- Embed multilingualism into storytelling and shared reading – ask children how you would say key words or phrases that are important in the book. This can be a great opportunity for children to explore languages together, discovering common roots, etc., and also gives pupils less confident in English an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution in class
- Start a multilingual section in the library – ask around families for donations of books that children have grown out of, encourage children to bring a book back from holidays abroad, and seek help from children or family members with cataloguing. This option can be as low key or as involved as you would like it to be, and can grow into inviting parents for multilingual book reading, running reward schemes, having space for children's book reviews in home languages – the sky is the limit. Start small, and see where it leads
- Run staff training or staff discussion groups to illustrate links between language and identity (see Get Involved below).

Suppliers

A list of suppliers can be difficult to provide, bearing in mind the complexities around the many languages that are potentially represented within a school. Online outlets may be starting points, but the following may also be useful, especially for bilingual picture books. The list below is by no means exhaustive, and language specific searches can often be fruitful.

- MantraLingua: A publisher of bilingual picture books, supported by a 'reading pen' and recorded readings in multiple languages. https://uk.mantralingua.com/
- Little Linguist: Supplier of books in many languages, some single language, some dual language: https://www.little-linguist.co.uk/
- World Kid Lit: Not a supplier, but a wonderful blog, which has lots of links both for books from other languages that have been translated into English, as well as bilingual books, and books in other languages. A great blog for both multilingual books, and diversifying the library: https://worldkidlit.wordpress.com/

Get involved

If you want to know more, are planning to use any of the tips and ideas in this article, are thinking about CPD on multilingualism for your school, or are interested in joining the UKLA Literacy and Multilingualism Special Interest Group, do email Sabine at s.little@sheffield.ac.uk.

Acknowledgements

The evaluation of Sheffield's multilingual children's library's first year is partially funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council Other Worlds Research Initiative grant.

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Literacy School of the Year

Lucy Timmons, Deputy Head teacher at Linton Mead Primary School, UKLA Literacy School of the Year 2019

In this article, Lucy Timmons, shares where Linton Mead Primary School, Thamesmead, London are in their English journey that led to their nomination and subsequent award of the UKLA Literacy School of the Year 2019 and shares the places they hope to go this year.

Our teaching and learning ethos

At Linton Mead, we believe in providing a creative, stimulating and challenging curriculum where our children feel safe to take risks. We believe in helping children develop their resilience and preparing them for a successful, happy life. We believe in our children becoming higher order thinkers and problem solvers who have strong autonomy and control over their actions and choices. Our curriculum reflects this: we use an investigative approach to maths learning with mastery and depth of understanding being paramount.

We plan high quality English Learning Journeys including teaching reading based on use of high quality texts, talk, higher order questioning, modelling and scaffolding and principles from 'Let's Think'; our science is focused around enquiry; our concept-based curriculum is based on challenge and quality learning experiences; we invest in quality learning in music, drama, art and PE. We believe we are part of a 'Professional Learning Community' where professional dialogue and research-based development will inform and challenge our practice.

Teaching and learning of English at Linton Mead

At the heart of everything we do is always a desire to create learning experiences which enrich the lives of children, challenge them and give them opportunities to explore the complexities of the world around them. For a number of years we have developed and embedded our pedagogy, which is rooted in social constructivism where children construct their knowledge through their interactions with each other and the adults who work with them.

Our teachers work tirelessly to create dialogic, exploratory classrooms where high quality talk and interaction enable the children to engage with complex thought processes and questioning designed to deepen their responses, interpretations of and access to different texts. The result has been a significant and notable shift in the quality of talk, expression and, indeed, writing outcomes our children are able to create. Having a real purpose, authentic approaches, high stakes questioning, use of high-quality texts and engagement strategies are fundamental in our approach to teaching and learning of English.

In my dual role as a professionally trained actress and educationalist, I have worked closely with a number of our teachers on developing 'Rehearsal Room Pedagogy', essentially doing the work of professional actors in a rehearsal room with children, which has had a significant impact not only on the forums for interpretation being designed for our children but also on our team working together as a professional learning community or as an ensemble of educators.

Our annual spring term whole school projects

For the past three years, we have developed a tradition of an annual whole school project. The outcome of the project is an exhibition of the children's achievements in our school atrium.

The purpose of our projects

To display as beautifully as possible the learning journeys our children, from 3- to11-years old, have been on for the spring term. The exhibition is then shared with parents and carers and members of our community including esteemed guests and the local authority during an exhibition evening. The children present to our guests through dramatic performance what the learning demonstrates and how it came to be.

The rationale behind the projects

Like all schools, we want to aim for quality purpose and depth of learning experiences. By presenting their learning in this way the children are able to explore the beauty behind learning and their creations. What is more, we are committed to creative partnerships so our projects are always rooted in collaboration with an inspiring creative partner.



Figure 1: From the exhibition

The projects

'Polar Worlds: Extreme Survival'

Our first project (Figure 1) was inspired by a visit from the National Maritime museum in Greenwich. The Heritage Trust were looking for a primary school to collaborate with as the museum had secured funding for four new galleries: one of which is a 'Polar Worlds' gallery. They wanted the school to contribute to their 'Extreme Survival' project whereby our 6-and 7-year old children worked with an artist to create a polar landscape and our 8-and 9-year old children worked with a storyteller to create labels for artefacts. Their creations are now permanently exhibited in the gallery (Figure 2).

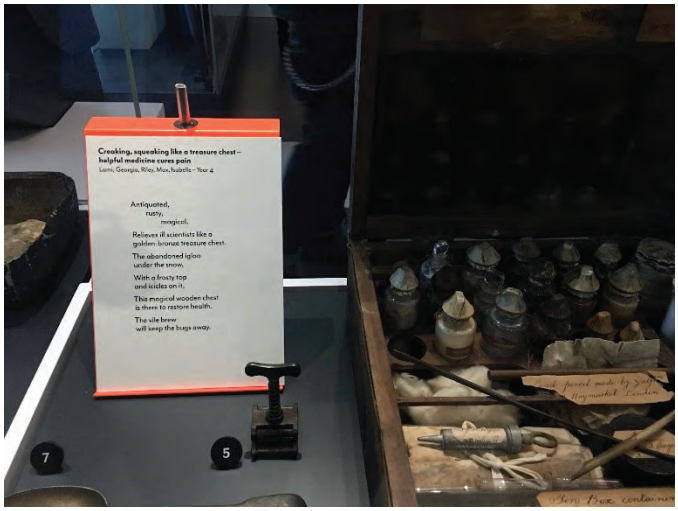


Figure 2: A label for medical equipment excavated from an expedition on permanent exhibition at the 'Polar Worlds' Gallery in the National Maritime Museum

We were inspired to create a whole school project around this whereby the entire school, which has children aged from 3 to 11, transformed into a polar world. Across the school, the great book *365 Penguins* by Jean-Luc Fromental stimulated our maths teaching (Figure 3) and learning and our teachers designed high quality learning across the curriculum related to the 'Extreme Survival' polar theme.



Figure 3: Learning from work based on 365 Penguins.

Being at the museum to see David Attenborough open the gallery was definitely a highlight.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Three years ago, I carried out my research on 'Rehearsal Room Pedagogy' a term coined by the Royal Shakespeare Company whereby I worked with groups of children and then groups of teachers on designing learning around this pedagogy rooted in the work of professional actors in a rehearsal room. Following this and INSET with the Royal Shakespeare Company, our next project was around Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Again, the school was transformed (Figure 4). Our five-year-olds went on a 'Fairy Hunt', Puck infiltrated the nursery class of our 3-year olds and children aged 9 and 10 created discursive pieces on the arguable parallel between Titania and Queen Elizabeth I.



Figure 4: Whole school exhibition of learning from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

'Leon and the Place Between and the Library of Everything'

Last year, we collaborated with Punchdrunk Theatre Company on their 'Library of Everything' Project. This was transformative in our school in terms of the experiences it gave the children. This collaboration inspired last year's exhibition where the teachers also used the stunning book *Leon and the Place Between* to design our spring term learning.

The impact of the training and projects on the teaching of literacy at our school

The impact of both exploring rehearsal room pedagogy and our spring term projects have been significant on the teaching and learning of literacy in our school. Our teachers plan quality-learning experiences through drama. Teachers have commented and shown that they use drama to enable children to inform their understanding of text. Children have shown a deeper understanding of text and retention of key plots, themes and ideas around texts. Our current children aged ten and eleven who studied *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare for our spring term project two years ago were very fluent and confident in a recent discussion of the themes around this play.

Our teachers are actively seeking out high quality texts to analyse and interpret with the children. Teachers have commented how they now focus on the potential of text

to explore life and the impact a text has on the reader and society, as opposed to arbitrary technical unpicking (Figures 5 and 6).





Figure 5 and 6: Artwork and writing by 8-and 9-year old children inspired from the text

As a result of the training we have done with 'Let's Think' and 'Just imagine Story Centre' our teachers design questions to enable children to delve deeper in text, justifying their responses and taking ownership of their opinions. The learning is now child led. The whole school projects have raised the motivation of the teachers. They are keen to provide the children with every opportunity to be successful and plan outcomes that showcase the children's potential which raises the stakes in terms of purpose and audience.

As a result, publishing the learning has more value, is of greater quality and has directly impacted on the children's presentation and basic skills. On a national level, in 2018 78% of our children achieved the expected standard in writing and 13% achieved the Greater Depth Standard. In 2019, both these figures augmented to 86% of our children achieving the Expected Standard in writing and 23% achieving the Greater Depth Standard. Most importantly, our children are excited and inspired by their English learning and the parents and carers love coming to see the exhibitions and sharing in that pride with them (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Learning and examples of home learning from 6- and 7-year-olds

The impact of receiving the UKLA Literacy School of the Year award

The impact of this award has been vast. Our teachers and children feel such a sense of pride and confirmation that amongst our daily challenges we are striving as best we can to seize opportunities to create deep, meaningful learning experiences. We have forged amazing partnerships with Just Imagine Story Centre, 'Let's Think' and Punchdrunk, all incredibly inspirational professional bodies who keep our thinking fresh and new and encourage us to keep exploring and challenging our practice. For our school, in a very challenging area of South East London, where issues surrounding high deprivation, low aspiration, and low social mobility can impact on the children's attitudes to learning, quite the opposite is happening for us.

Our parents and carers have the highest of hopes for their children and most importantly our children have the highest of hopes and dreams for themselves. Thank you UKLA for acknowledging this. Our next steps are to keep exploring, learning and challenging ourselves around the potential of texts in all forms to transform lives and life chances for our school community.

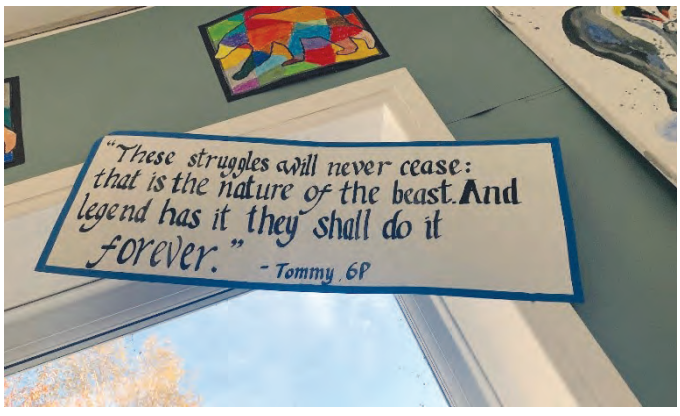


Figure 8: A quote from a 10-year-old child's writing.

What's in it for the child-tutor? Findings from a study of a cross-age, peer reading programme

Fiona Curtis, Lecturer in Primary Education at the University of Leicester

A school project carried out in a Leicestershire primary school, looking at the effects of being a peer-tutor on children's perceptions of themselves as readers.

Until recently I taught in a Leicestershire primary school that had embraced 'talk for learning' as the dominant pedagogical approach. In this approach, peer tutoring had already become part of the daily routine for most of the children. Reciprocal peer tutoring on the spelling of common exception words was successfully introduced in with children aged 6 to 11. The results were positive in terms of both the children's ability to learn, retain and apply spelling knowledge and also with respect to how much they enjoyed working together and taking responsibility for their own learning.

As the English lead in the school, I was excited about the prospect of extending the use of peer tutoring to support learning in other areas, such as reading. I was keen to find out if being a reading tutor for a younger child might encourage more positive attitudes to reading and promote reading for pleasure amongst some of the more reluctant readers at the end of the primary phase. However, not everyone shared my enthusiasm for peer tutoring. Some families began to voice concerns about the approach, worried that their children were being used as 'free teaching assistants' and gaining nothing from the time they spent working with other children. I wanted to explore further whether their fears were justified, and discover what benefits there were for the child-tutor, when they worked with a younger child.

If I start reading, it will help too

Research into cross-age peer tutoring programmes has found that, in terms of measures of attainment, tutors gain more than their tutees (Galbraith and Winterbottom, 2011). This may seem counter-intuitive if the tutor is supporting their tutee with material that is well below their own cognitive level. However, a child taking on a tutoring role and being actively engaged in asking questions and giving explanations, gains a great deal from the cognitive challenge involved in the process.

But attainment may not give the whole picture. The more I read, the more I wanted to know how being a peer tutor might also impact on a child's self-esteem and self-perception as a reader. These socio-emotional effects of the role did not seem to have been investigated as fully as the effects on academic outcomes and attainment. I was keen to explore if being a peer tutor might also help reluctant readers to develop greater confidence in their reading skills and to see themselves as effective readers. Therefore, I planned a small-scale study, to research the effects that being a peer reading tutor could have in developing a positive reading self-concept.

Breaking the ice

10-year-old children were matched with 7-year-olds, as research suggested that a 2 – 3 year age gap was the most appropriate and efficacious for cross age peer tutoring. The children were paired with great care to try to ensure that they would be able to work harmoniously together. Some 'R-Time' activities were used during two 'getting to know you' sessions in order to break the ice between tutor and tutee and to allow me to judge how successful the pairing was and make any necessary changes.

The four peer-tutors invited to join the study had all been assessed by their teacher as being in line with age-related expectations in reading, but their responses to a questionnaire – the Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk and Melnick, 1995) – completed before the programme began, suggested that they did not feel like successful readers, despite their attainment levels. The study began with training sessions to help the young tutors understand how to use the 'pause, prompt, praise' method (McNaughton, Glyn and Robinson, 1981) for providing support in paired reading. I devised guidelines (Figure 1) to share with the tutors, and they referred to these during their tutoring sessions.

They're enjoying it because you are praising them

Training proved to be a vital component in the success of a range of tutoring programmes. In this programme, it made it clear to the tutors how important their role was and how much the skills they were learning would benefit their younger 'reading buddies'. Role play helped them to overcome their shyness and feel more comfortable about knowing what to say to their partners.

The reading sessions took place once a week in the school library, each lasting for 30 minutes. They were informal affairs, with the children encouraged to make themselves comfortable together on bean-bags, cushions or at tables. The younger readers bought along an unfamiliar book from their current 'book band' box, but this could be supplemented by the pair choosing a library book together. The tutors were shown how to use a voice recorder and each pair would record their tutoring sessions every other week. Both children quickly became used to this process and would read and talk together, unhindered by it. The data collected, however, allowed me to find out if and how the interactions between the tutor and tutee changed and developed over the course of the programme. When the reading session was over and the tutees had returned to

class, the tutors and I would sit down together to debrief. To help the children to think about what they had achieved with their 'reading buddy' during the session, they were each given a simple drawing of a tutor and tutee at work together, with speech and thought bubbles to compete. This method of 'graphical elicitation', informed by the work of Wall and Higgins (2006) is well documented as a successful way of accessing a child's cognitive perceptions. It really helped the tutors to focus on how they had helped their 'buddies' to make progress.

1. Sit shoulder-to-shoulder with your partner, so that you can both see the book easily and share it comfortably. Encourage your partner to choose the place to sit and enjoy the book.
2. Begin by looking at the front and back of the book and talking about what you think it will be about and what you will enjoy about reading it.
3. Ask your partner to begin reading. If they are confident and reading well, praise them. If they are really struggling, suggest that you read together. Go at their speed and tell them to give you a sign (e.g. tap your hand on the table) when they are ready for you to drop out so they can continue reading alone.
4. If your partner gets stuck, use PAUSE, PROMPT, PRAISE:

PAUSE: give them time to think. Wait and count slowly to 4 before you say anything.

PROMPT: don't just supply the word – help them get to it for themselves. Check our poster for ideas, e.g.:
- "Read that sentence again and then see if you can work out what the word is from the meaning."
- "Show me how you could use your phonics to sound that word out."
- "Look at the word again – does it look like any others you know? Have you looked carefully at the word ending?"

PRAISE: give them lots but make sure they know what it's for:
- "Brilliant! You used your phonics to sound that out perfectly – well done!"
- "What fantastic expression you used – you made it sound like he was really scared!"
- "That was amazing! You didn't need my help – you worked it out for yourself really quickly."

5. At the end of each page or section of a text, ask a question about what they have read. This could be about the story, the meaning of a tricky word or phrase, or their opinion of what they have read.

REMEMBER: PAUSE, PROMPT, PRAISE

Figure 1: How to work with your partner through peer reading

It was during these discussions that fascinating insights began to emerge about how this group of tutors were thinking about the process of learning to read and themselves as readers. Although this is very difficult to measure or assess, I began to see that an element of metacognition was suggested in the reflections, self-doubt and questioning that characterised their conversations. This appeared to be significant.

I was mind-blown

The Reader Self-Perception Scale questionnaire that the tutors completed before and after the peer reading programme, showed that working with their 'reading buddies' had a big impact on how all 4 children viewed themselves as readers, increasing their scores in all areas (Figure 2).

Combined scores for all 4 tutors on the Reading Self-Perception Scale			
	Pre peer tutoring	Post peer tutoring	% difference
Progress	149/180 83%	166/180 93%	+10%
Observational comparison	70/120 58%	90/120 75%	+17%
Social feedback	125/180 69%	148/180 82%	+13%
Physiological states	88/120 73%	107/120 89%	+16%

Figure 2: Self-perception scores

The most interesting aspect of these results was that, as a group, they had gained most in the area of 'observational comparison'. This area included questions which assessed how the children viewed themselves as readers compared to their classmates. The increase here suggests that being a peer reading tutor had a positive impact on self-concept and raised the child-tutors' status as readers in their own eyes. Analysing their written and spoken responses during our group discussions, I began to see how important this part of the programme was in helping the tutors to appreciate how their interventions, as more experienced readers, were having a positive impact on their 'reading buddies':

"I used my finger to cover up bits of the words. That was probably the easiest strategy for him and it worked."

"… there was this word and it was 'inhabitants' and she just got it straight away and I was mind blown!"

"I had to make her feel like no-one was judging her."

"I said, 'Well done! Great sounding out!' They're enjoying it because you're praising them."

It's helped me

It also became clear that the group discussions offered a safe space in which the tutors could reflect on their own reading skills and attitudes towards reading. As the weeks of the programme passed, they began to engage in increasingly thoughtful conversations, that focused on their own learning and thinking about reading, as much as that of their buddies:

"I had to keep thinking were my questions too hard for my partner?"

"Is ee the actual sound or is it eh? We didn't do phonics in my old school, so I'm not sure. He's got a better memory of it than me"

"It's helped me more because I'm not the most interested in reading in the whole world. I think it's helped me because you can see how far they've come reading and you think if I start reading, it will help too."

When we discussed how they had supported their buddies, the tutors started to probe and question their own thinking in an increasingly sophisticated way. After careful reflection, I put this down to the high status that they attached to these group discussions, where they were asked for their thoughts and opinions in a very 'grown-up' scenario. In order to answer fully, they drew on their own experience as readers and really thought about the process of learning to read. This extract from a conversation I had with one of the tutors is a good example of how he had recognised the kind of support he valued and had used this when teaching his 'reading buddy:

Tutor: Well he said 'trimble' so I let him read the rest of the page then I went back and put my finger on the letter e. What's the sound? So what's the word? And he said 'tremble'.

FC: So you were using your fingers to help him to spot the sounds. Why did you wait and then go back?

Tutor: I don't like it when people interrupt me. It's better if you read the whole thing. He also said 'blow' when it was 'below' so I went back and split the word in two when he'd finished the sentence, so he got it."

Returning to a miscue, after letting the reader complete the page, was not a strategy we had discussed in our training sessions. The tutor had revisited his own experience of learning to read and what worked for him. This had become part of his approach with his partner.

A focus on considering how reading develops, with the tutors starting to take ownership of the work they were doing to support their 'reading buddies', seemed to be a key factor in their improved perception of themselves as readers.

This suggestion was supported by the findings that emerged from the recorded observations of the reading sessions themselves. I had expected to find that as the programme progressed and the tutors grew in confidence, I would find evidence of them asking more questions, giving more explanations and opinions and generally showing that the quality of their interactions with their reading buddies improved. However, this was not the case. Initially, I was disappointed that I couldn't find an obvious pattern of growth and development in the way that the tutors interacted, but I came to realise that it was not important. The fact that the tutors had been chosen, trained and then had the opportunity to talk about the reading they had done with their partners, developing a meta-language about reading and so increasing meta-cognition, was what made a positive difference to them and had an impact on how they viewed themselves as readers.

You can see how far they've come

Although the tutees were not the focus of this study and I did not attempt to measure any effects of the peer reading programme on their attainment, it is worth noting that they did gain confidence and often talked about what they learnt with their 'buddy' when reading with adults. It was no surprise to me to discover that both parties in the peer-tutoring programme enjoyed the experience of working and reading together.

I was also pleased to find that my own results echoed those of previous studies into the effects of peer tutoring on the self-concept of the tutor, with the suggestion that the tutors had a stronger and more positive view of themselves as readers by the end of the programme. I hope other educators will be excited by the idea that implementing a simple idea – older children acting as reading tutors for younger – may have the power to engage and motivate pupils who are "not the most interested in reading in the whole world."

What this study has revealed to me is that in order to raise a child's confidence and feelings of self-efficacy as a reader, two simple things may help:

1) Allowing them to inhabit a role where they feel valued as a reader and are given a purposeful job to do and the authority to do it.

2) Giving them the time and space to think and talk about the learning and teaching of reading with adults who genuinely want to converse with them and will value their contributions.

While the tutors loved working with their partners and had a great sense of pride in the job they were doing, I feel that these two points were important factors in the development of a more positive reading self-concept and increased meta-cognition about the reading process. In my opinion, they should be an integral part of any planned peer-reading programme.

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Exploring Children's Literature:
Reading for Knowledge, Understanding and Pleasure

By Nikki Gamble

Review by Jo Bowers, Principal Lecturer in Literacy in Primary Education, Cardiff Metropolitan University.

The title of this excellent book by Nikki Gamble tells us exactly what it is about. This is the fourth edition and as I sit with all the other three editions side by side, it is clear that *Exploring Children's Literature* is more than just an updated version of the other three editions: it is almost like a new book in its own right. What it does share with the other three earlier editions is the interactive nature that each one has always invited from its readers. This is what makes it not only a fantastic book to read alone but one that will offer opportunities for schools and teachers for rich staff development sessions and for university lecturers to support interactive sessions with their students. I say this as someone who has used earlier editions of this text for these very reasons.

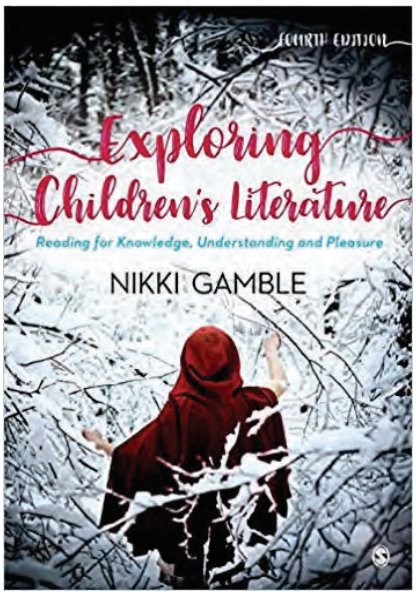
However, this new edition takes that element of interaction further. One of the core themes that Gamble addresses well is that knowledge is not something you acquire just from reading the right books but that it develops from how you interact and make sense of your reading and build reading communities to talk and share this with. At each stage and within each chapter the reader is often invited to reflect on their own knowledge and practice, become up-to-date with the most recent research, have opportunities to conduct research and take part in activities relating to aspects of the focus of the chapter. At many junctures there is also an 'Expert Voice' which I think is a strength of this new edition, in that it introduces a community of writers from both school and academic backgrounds who have a specialist area of interest to share within it.

The structure of the book supports this effectively with it being split into three parts:

Part I Children's Literature and Reading: What Counts as Knowledge? This section sets the context for the book, explores the role of the reading teacher and patterns of children's reading.

Part II Knowing Children's Literature: There are twelve brilliant chapters in this section, each one focusing on different genres of children's literature and exploring in depth the important aspects of each one: narrative fiction and story; traditional stories and fairy tales; fantasy; realism; historical; classics; picture books; comics; graphic novels; non-fiction; poetry and humour. So, in humour, we are asked to reflect on our own relationship with humour, read about theories of humour, explore humour in contemporary children's books, how to use this genre in the classroom and introduced to awards for funny books. In the chapter on non-fiction it asks us to think about the qualities of non-fiction, how fiction and non-fiction are connected and also different, delve deeper into different aspects of non-fiction and all the time being introduced to a range of contemporary non-fiction for children. The depth of our own knowledge that is developed by reading each chapter only serves to enhance our ability to inspire and enthuse the children we teach.

Part III Into Practice: This section focuses on the environments of the school and the classroom. It shares how to develop a reading culture and ways to support children's reading and use children's literature texts in the classroom.



This book will be informative and inspiring for all primary teachers, student teachers and lecturers of literacy in primary education and children's literature. It is a richly detailed book full of knowledge, information, children's literature texts, research informed practice that a one page review will not suffice to capture it all.

My recommendation is that, whether this is your first introduction to this excellent book or not, find yourself a copy from your library or bookshop. My hope is that this will be essential reading on the syllabus of every teacher training course across the country.

References

Gamble, N. (2019) *Exploring Children's Literature*: Reading for Knowledge, Understanding and Pleasure. SAGE

In brief...

The English 4-11 Children's Picture Book Awards

We're very pleased that we received a record number of entries to the Awards this year: 333 books in total. 38 books make up the longlist this year, in the categories of non-fiction 4 – 7, non-fiction 7 – 11, fiction 4 – 7, and fiction 7 – 11.

The shortlist will be announced slightly later than usual this year, as the pandemic created some delays in the judging process. Keep an eye out for the shortlist announcement in early June.

The English Association Awards Ceremony has been postponed until 25 November 2020, so you'll have to wait until then to find out who the winners are in each category (including the Margaret Mallett Prize for Children's Non-Fiction). We'd be delighted to see you at the Awards Ceremony: you can book your place now at https://2020awardsagm.eventbrite.co.uk.

Non-fiction 4-7

Curious Questions & Answers About Our Oceans by Camilla De la Bédoyère (illus. Tim Budgen) (Miles Kelly Publishing)
Michelle Obama by Anna Doherty (Hachette Children's Group)
The Spacesuit by Alison Donald (illus. Ariel Landy), (Maverick Arts Publishing)
Lifesize Dinosaurs by Sophy Henn (Egmont)
Curious Heroes Who Help Us from Around the World by Liz Gogerly (illus. Ryan Wheatcroft) (Hachette Children's Group)
A Planet Full of Plastic: and how you can help by Neal Layton (Hachette Children's Group)
The Sea Book by Charlotte Milner (Dorling Kindersley)
Questions & Answers About My Body by Anne Rooney (illus. Ana Gomez) (Miles Kelly Publishing)
If Polar Bears Disappeared by Lily Williams (Hachette Children's Group)
A Million Dots by Sven Völker (Cicada Books)

Non-fiction 7-11

Refugees by Brian Bilston (illus. José Sanabria) (Palazzo Editions Limited)
Lesser Spotted Animals 2 by Martin Brown (David Fickling Books)
The Big Beyond by James Carter (illus. Aaron Cushley) (Little Tiger Group)
Fanatical About Frogs by Owen Davey (Nobrow / Flying Eye Books)
Nose Knows by Emmanuelle Figueras (illus. Claire de Gastold) (What on Earth Books)
The Lost Book of Adventure by Teddy Keen (The Quarto Group)
The Undefeated Kwame Alexander by Kadir Nelson (Andersen Press)
Orchestra by Avalon Nuovo (illus. David Doran) (Nobrow/ Flying Eye Books)
Planetarium Junior by Raman Prinja (illus. Chris Wormell) (Bonnier Books UK)
Rise Up! The Art of Protest by Jo Rippon, with foreword by Chris Riddell (Palazzo Editions Limited)
The Bluest of Blues: Anna Atkins and the First Book of Photographs by Fiona Robinson (Abrams Books for Young Readers)
Language of the Universe by Colin Stuart (illus. Ximo Abadía) (Bonnier Books UK)
Life-Sized Bugs by John Townsend (illus. Isobel Lundie) (The Salariya Book Company)

Fiction 4-7

My First Animal Book: This is a Dog by Ross Collins (Nosy Crow)
Sneaky Beak by Tracey Corderoy (illus. Tony Neal) (Little Tiger Group)
Waiting for Wolf by Sandra Dieckman (Hachette Children's Group)
Quill Soup by Alan Durant (illus. Dale Blankenaar) (Tiny Owl Publishing)
Think Big by Kes Gray (illus. Nathan Reed) (Hachette Children's Group)
The Woods by Rob Hodgson (The Quarto Group)
The Hug by Eoin McLaughlin (illus. Polly Dunbar) (Faber & Faber)
Up and Down Mum by Summer Maçon (Child's Play)
The Suitcase by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros (Nosy Crow)
Ravi's Roar by Tom Percival (Bloomsbury Publishing)
A Stone Sat Still by Brendan Wenzel (Chronicle Books)

Fiction 7-11

Hicotea: A Nightlights Story by Lorena Alvarez (Nobrow/ Flying Eye Books)
The Golden Cage by Anna Castagnoll (illus. Carll Cneut) (Book Island)
Patience, Miyuki by Roxane Marie Galliez (illus. Seng Soun Ratanavanh) (Princeton Architectural Press)
Dear Mr President by Sophie Siers (Templar/Bonnier Books UK)
Through the Wall by Jonathan Standing (The Salariya Book Company)
Kai and the Monkey King by Joe Todd Stanton (Nobrow/ Flying Eye Books)
#Goldilocks by Jeanne Willis (illus. Tony Ross) (Andersen Press)

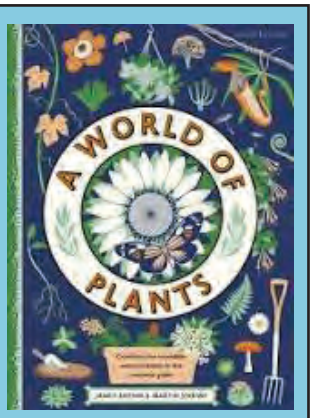
Reviews

Editor: Brenda Marshall,
SATIPS Council

The English Association website has more reviews of recent publications: see www2.le.ac.uk/offices/english-association/primary/ea-plus/book-reviews-1

A World of Plants by Martin Jenkins **Illustrated by James Brown**

Walker Books (www.walker.co.uk) ISBN 9781406388565 £15.00

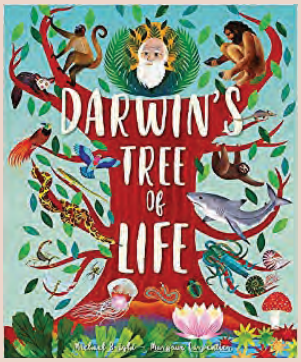


As our biosphere, (plants, animals, algae, fungi and microbes), comes under more and more pressure from an ever-growing population and climate change, this book will educate all about the importance of plants to the world we live in. Covering over twenty-five plant topics, there are plenty of facts which will inform the reader and provide a wow factor. There is something for all ages here. Martin Jenkins is a conservation biologist who worked for the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, WWF and with other UN bodies concerned with conservation and the environment. James Brown, whose wonderful illustrations illuminate the text, is an illustrator from London who has worked for the V&A and The Guardian. In the book the reader discovers incredible facts about the amazing plants of all colours, shapes and sizes that are so important for our planet today and for its future. Essential for both schools and families. Age range 9+

PB

Darwin's Tree of Life by Michael Bright **Illustrated by Margaux Carpentier**

Wayland (www.waylandbooks.co.uk) ISBN 9781623719197 £12.99

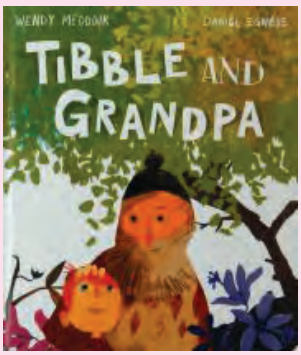


A fascinating introduction to the diversity of life on earth and how it came about. The book opens with a Geological Time Chart that explains eon, era, period, and epoch. Then we visit Charles Darwin's Tree of Life and go back to the dawn of life 6 billion years ago to see how different branches in the tree of life evolved, and how plants and animals have continued to adapt over time. The text is informative, and broken into bite-size chunks to make it accessible. Complex ideas are expressed in simple language. Did you know that water bears can survive nuclear radiation and the vacuum of outer space and can live for 30 years without eating? Or that scorpions can exist on just one insect a year? Or that the giant squid has the largest eyes in the animal kingdom? There is an excellent glossary and the text is enhanced by beautiful illustrations. This inspirational book encourages children to appreciate the wonders of the natural world that continues to evolve. Highly recommended for age 7 – 11.

BM

Tibble and Grandpa by Wendy Meddour **Illustrated by Daniel Egnéus**

Oxford University Press (www.oup.com) ISBN 9780192771957 £11.99



A lovely and moving story centred on themes of loss and grief. Tibble has noticed that his Grandpa is 'always gardening' and he finds it impossible to pull him out of his reverie. Early on, there is ample opportunity to ask children to think about why Grandpa might be behaving like this. The excellent illustrations, in soft and muted tones, portray the Grandpa's feelings with hunched shoulders, sad eyes and a look of someone very much lost in thought. After some inspiration from his mum, Tibble decides to make Grandpa his favourite sandwich to cheer him up. This act of kindness has a snowball effect as we find out some more of their favourite things, which include spending time together. Just as Grandpa's mood is brightened, so are the images and colours. By the end, we discover that both Tibble and Grandpa have lost someone dear to them – Tibble's Granny. The last few spreads are very moving and sensitively depict a sense of loss and healing from two very different perspectives. A beautiful and valuable book for children aged 4 – 7.

LD

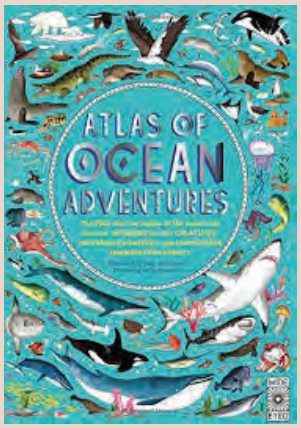
Brian Banana Duck Sunshine Yellow written and illustrated by Chris McKimmie
Allen and Unwin (www.allenandunwin.com) ISBN 9781911631224 £7.99



Brian Banana Duck Sunshine Yellow is a little boy who tells you he has five names. Somewhat unusual, you might think, until you realise that he was christened Brian but has a range of pet names, depending on which member of the family is addressing him. He lives with his grandparents at the weekend, and describes going to the shop with his Grandma, (Na-Na), getting lost, (twice) and watching football with his Grandpa, (Grumpy). So far so relatively straightforward. What actually sets this book apart, and deserving of its shortlisting for the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award, is the ability of Chris McKimmie to represent the world from the young child's point of view: the illustrations, the range of fonts, the choice of vocabulary and the events described. There are so many questions. Does he really believe those are his given names? Where are his parents? Why does he spend most weekends with his grandparents? Which events are true and which imaginary? There is humour: *a big prawn found me near the seafood and took me to the lost and found.* Young children will identify with the story, the illustrations and the situations that are described, triggering discussion of their own families, pet names and events in their own lives. Each reading delivers new insights, and children will spot very different elements in the illustrations. Highly recommended for EYFS.

EB

Atlas of Ocean Adventures by Emily Hawkins **Illustrated by Lucy Letherland**
Wide-Eyed Editions (www.qed-publishing.co.uk) ISBN 9780811245303 £20.00



A beautifully illustrated exploration book, this reminds me of coffee table books of old. It is a large A3 sized hard back, which takes you on a journey through the oceans of our blue planet. Emily Hawkins has picked a few interesting creatures to document from each ocean and each page is filled with the creature and associated habitat, wildlife and facts. A small nod to the anatomy of the selected creatures is given by a more detailed drawing, annotated with adaptations for the environment in which they live. This is a useful addition for KS2 animals and habitats topics in Science. Each page has a main blurb about the selected creature, its habitat and survival and then fun facts dotted around the illustrations, making the reader follow the leather back turtle swimming on its long-haul journey or the white bellied sea eagle of Indonesia soar. The book has a contents list and index which is very useful when wanting to look at all creatures it features from Australia for example, as they appear in different oceans and are, therefore, in different sections of the book. It also has a fun 'find me' game at the back, quizzing readers about particular creatures. The illustrations are beautiful; every time you re-read a page you notice another little detail, or seahorse in bow ties and skirt for extra amusement. It does briefly touch on the more serious topic of the dangers that the ocean and its inhabitants face at present, however this is not the main thrust of the book. This series includes many other 'Atlas of …. Adventures' which children aged 7-9 would enjoy. The Atlas of Ocean Adventures would make a beautiful enquiry table book for any KS2 library.

SS

Greta and the Giants by Zoe Tucker **Illustrated by Zoe Persico**
Frances Lincoln Children's Books (www.quartoknows.com) ISBN 9780711253759 £6.99



This picture story book, inspired by Greta Thunberg's stand to save the world, was written in consultation with Greta's team. Zoe Tucker has written an inspiring yet cautionary picture book which evokes the spirit and tenacity of the youth climate movement. Beautifully illustrated by Zoe Persico for children aged 4 to 7, it tells the story of Greta, a little girl who lives in a forest with animals, but giants threaten the forest by cutting down the trees to make houses, bigger homes, towns and cities. Climate change is the biggest crisis affecting our planet today and with an ever increasing problem for future generations this book allows young children to learn about the problem of deforestation through a story and to realise that 'no-one is too small to make a difference to the future of our planet'. They can be inspired by Greta Thunberg herself, who has engaged a world-wide audience with her protest Strike for Climate; it is a timely publication and a must for all primary schools The book is printed on 100% recycled paper, with 3% of the cover price donated to Greenpeace UK. This will help more of the young to appreciate Greta Thunberg's important message.

PB

Humanimal by Christopher Lloyd **Illustrated by Mark Ruffle**
What on Earth Books (www.whatonearthbooks.com) ISBN 9781912920006 £12.99



From the outset, this book grabs the imagination with its fabulous title and foreword challenging the theory of human as leader of all species. Although the vocabulary is quite mature, with support where necessary, this would be accessible to children of aged 7 and older. The book is cleverly spit up into different aspects of human life, constantly marking comparisons and similarities between humans and animals. The author uses Community, Feelings and Intelligence as the three areas to focus upon, with some very tangible examples for the reader to engage in. As a result, it can be quite emotive in parts. In the 'Feelings' section, the author gives examples of animals showing grief for fellow family or group members who have died, including elephants, monkeys and whales. A section on love shows Macaroni penguins with their 'ecstatic display' of affection and excitement, and the sharing of food with one another by the Bonobo apes. All are clever examples to engage and enlighten the younger reader. Finally, the section on 'Intelligence' is fascinating with octopuses showing puzzle solving ability in order to escape to freedom and chimpanzees modelling and using tools to feed themselves and scratch their backs. All through the book, the illustrations are vivid and informative, giving the reader extra food for thought. A fantastic book for any curious learner.

CT

Mustafa's Jumper by Coral Rumble **Illustrated by Charlotte Cooke**

Wacky Bee Books (wwww.wackybee.books.com) ISBN 9781999903350 £6.99

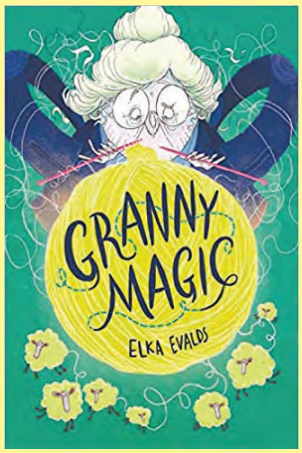


Milo is not particularly good at anything and isn't the kind of boy who gets chosen for special jobs. However, when a new boy called Mustafa joins the class, Milo finds he is good at helping him settle in. Mustafa is 'just a boy like us but with different words' and it's no problem finding games to play together, helping him learn English and being there when he is sad. Mustafa and Milo soon become good friends. Unfortunately, one day things change. Mustafa and his family are to be sent back to the country they came from and, in no time, all Milo has to remember Mustafa by is his jumper hanging in the school cloakroom..

Based on Coral Rumble's award-winning poem, this is a simply told but very affecting story showing the importance of being friendly when refugee children join a school. It introduces the precarious situation asylum seekers are in and how suddenly their attempts at a new life can come to an end. Information about refugees and asylum seekers is included at the back of the book together with the poem which is the basis for the story. This would be a great book to share with children of 7 or 8. An easy read and a slim volume with colour illustrations throughout, it could make a suitable text for group reading and may lead to discussions about the plight of asylum seekers and how we can all be welcoming to new arrivals.

SMcG

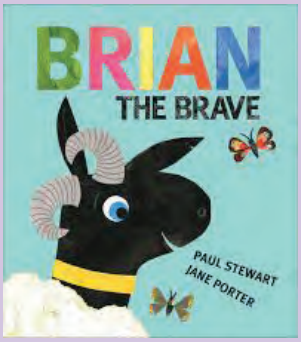
Granny Magic by Elka Evalds **Illustrated by Teemu Juhani**
Chicken House (www.doublecluck.com) ISBN 9781912626199 £6.99



This is a charming and magical story about the secret life of some knitters. Will's granny was always knitting and he thought that was all she did, but when she dies he finds that she had been at the centre of a small group who use knitting to bring a bit of magic into our world. Suddenly their town seems to be having problems, with the sinister Jasper Fitchet at the centre of the trouble. It is up to Will and the Knitting Club to thwart the evil plans; can they win or will Fitchet take over the whole town and spread dark magic among the citizens? What a lovely original story, it is full of humour and I particularly love the knitting club and their motor bikes. This tale is about finding the good in people even if they don't know it is there and also about the importance of family. There is plenty of adventure and a truly villainous villain who looks as if he wants nothing more than to destroy the happiness in the town. The story is aimed at younger, newly confident readers and will make a great class reader for children aged 7-9. There is great potential to link this to learning to knit, as well as a couple of other stories that feature knitting as a central theme.

MP

Brian the Brave by Paul Stewart **Illustrated by Jane Porter**



Otter Barry Books (www.otterbarrybooks.com) ISBN 9781910959404 £11.99

Brian the Brave is a super picture book and a must read for young readers from 3-7 years. At the heart of the story is a very simple insight and explanation of prejudice against others based on physical appearance and bullying by exclusion. This may sound a bit deep and not something parents want to tackle in a bedtime story but actually it is the perfect light-hearted vehicle for this. The story and engaging illustrations combine to tell of a rather lovely sheep called Brian who wants to play with everyone regardless of the colour of their wool, the length of their horns or the style of their outfits. He is an all-inclusive sheep! Unfortunately, the other sheep on the hillside are not so inclusive and preclude others from playing, based on their colour, their horns and, sadly for poor Brian, the colour of eyes. Although excluded from the fun and games, Brian does not wallow in self-pity for long. When a wolf threatens the safety of the others Brian steps up and shows them how, by working together, they can take on the wolf and scare him away. Hurray for Brian! The sheep see the error of their ways and all play happily together.

JMc

Respect, Consent, Boundaries and Being in Charge of You written and illustrated by Rachel Brian



Hachette Children's Books (www.hachettechildrens.co.uk) ISBN 9781526362216 £7.99

It's a sad reflection on society that a book such as this is needed, but well done to Rachel Brian for creating this accessible way of explaining to young people about bodily boundaries and consent. Presented in a comic-book style, each short chapter focuses on a different element of consent, with clear explanations about what might feel or be right and what might feel or be wrong, often depending upon circumstances or individuals. It constantly underlines the fact that each of us determines our own boundaries, that we are rulers of our own body – it's not for anyone else to tell us or try to persuade us otherwise. Equally, we must respect the boundaries of others. The book needs to be shared and discussed with our children, a short section at a time, helping them to find their own boundaries and teaching them how to recognise and respect the boundaries of others. The message is also given that there can be people who will pretend to be trustworthy or friendly, only to turn out to be the opposite – the term 'grooming' is introduced, and worth talking through. This is an excellent book, and would give confidence to any parent who wants to bring up the subject with their child but feels unsure how to go about it.

PD

The Kiss by Linda Sunderland **Illustrated by Jessica Courtney-Tickle**



Little Tiger Press (www.littletiger.co.uk) ISBN 9781788811033 £6.99

When Edwyn blew his kiss to Grandma, little did he know she would catch it, put it in her pocket and use it so productively throughout her day! She brought it out to cheer a sad old man at the bus stop which got everyone dancing. She then deployed it to defuse an angry, shouty mother and found that each time it was used it grew bigger and heavier. By now a rich, important man had heard about it and desperately wished to buy it, but Grandma would not sell – so he stole it. Imprisoned in a silver cage, the kiss faded and grew thinner and the man grew so sad he returned it to Grandma in abject misery. Luckily, kindly Grandma treated him to tea and a blown kiss of his own to keep which cheered him. On her next visit to Edwyn she was given a big hug which she put in her wardrobe to keep herself warm whenever she felt cold or lonely. A kind gesture, a warm smile or a little affection cost us nothing and yet the joy they bring to others is immeasurable, as this delightful story with its fairy tale quality shows. Jessica Courtney-Tickle has given life to the kiss and hug most imaginatively and depicts the rapture on the faces of those transformed by kindness perfectly. Text and magical illustration combine to make this a charming book to share, enjoy and discuss through Early Years and Y1. A future classic.

SB

The Ancient Olympic Games **Illustrated by Jhonny Nunez**

Wayland (www.waylandbooks.co.uk) ISBN 9781526310095 £12.99



This lovely book takes the reader through the development of the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece. We move from the original games in 776BC, with only one event – the Stade, or running race – through to later games when other sports, such as long jump, javelin, discuss, wrestling and chariot races were introduced. Each one is carefully explored and brought to life by the engaging illustrations. The Games are carefully put into context, and the story brought up to date with the modern Olympics starting in 1896 and carrying through to today. The only omission, in my view, is a timeline covering the whole of the Ancient Greek period which would have helped to make sense of the changes that took place in the structure and organisation of the Games. It is refreshing to see the Ancient Olympics portrayed as a living entity, changing and evolving over time, rather than as a fixed event that stayed the same. This book will be a useful addition to both the school library and an Ancient Greece resources collection at KS2 (7-11 years).

AW

Two Bears by Patricia Hegarty **Illustrated by Rotem Teplow**

Caterpillar Books (www.littletiger.co.uk) ISBN 9781848579446 £11.99



The best picture books do more than just tell a story – they give us something to think about too. This is just such a book. The two bears of the title are a polar and a grizzly – one white, one brown and each threatened by human overuse of the planet's resources. Both bears travel away from their usual habitats in search of food, one heading north, one heading south, until they finally meet. This leads to them making a life together, despite their differences. The result is a coffee coloured cub.

Information at the end of the book tells us that this has actually happened, and also explains how habitats are being destroyed by oil drilling, transport systems and global warming. There are some simple suggestions about what we can do to help. But there is more than one message in this lovely book – we see how different races can live peacefully together. It will also speak to any young multi-ethnic readers. The subtitle – 'An Epic Journey of Hope' – sums it up beautifully.

PD

Skeleton Keys: The Unimaginary Friend by Guy Bass **Illustrated by Pete Williamson**

Stripes Books (www.littletiger.co.uk/stripespublishing) ISBN 9781788950305 £6.99



Who hasn't wondered what a certain key in their set of keys might actually be for? A long-forgotten desk drawer, a cupboard, a gate, a long lost door? Well, the narrator and reader's companion in this story has 10 keys, (instead of fingers), and he knows exactly where they will take him – it might be places you'd rather not go! Keys open gateways to possibilities, and this story is full of them. The main protagonist, Ben, who is ten years old, struggles through life with no friends, apart from those of his imagination, (the Gorblimey and Daisy). The central theme of the book is friendship, one that all children will need to deal with at some point: Who should he trust? Will his friends come to his birthday party? Why does his dad struggle to believe him so much? What should you do about a friend who makes the wrong choices? Can he rescue his kidnapped friend?

This book would work well with children aged 7 or 8. It could be used to discuss loneliness and friendship. In DT lessons children could try building things out of matchsticks, like Ben's dad: this could be turned into a STEM challenge, (tallest tower, strongest bridge etc). As the Gorblimey never speaks, children could act out his scenes and create dialogue for him, based on his character traits hinted at throughout the story. Pete Williamson's wonderful illustrations will inspire children to try to create their own comic strip Gothic style art. The pictures help younger children with the key reading skill of visualising, helping bring the words to life, and give extra clues to work out what characters are feeling and thinking. Warning – some of the pictures of the 'baddies' might scare some children, but don't worry there is a happy ending.

JM

Where the River Runs Gold by Sita Brahmachari **Illustrated by Evan Hollingdale**

Orion Children's Books (www.hachettechildrens.co.uk) ISBN 9781510105416 £6.99



We live in a world where many people are concerned about climate change and about the impact on wildlife, especially the insects and bees, without whom we would not be able to grow our food. In this book the author has taken us to a future where the unthinkable has happened and there are no creatures to pollinate our plants naturally. This dystopian future has created a division of people; those who are wealthy and can have all the benefits that we enjoy and those who are poor and are exploited by the system. Children are chosen to go and work in farms run by the all-powerful 'Freedom Fields' organization; their task is to hand pollinate all of the plants, something that is exhausting and even dangerous. When Shifa and her twin brother Themba are sent to the farms she knows that he will not be able to cope and she must try and get them home again. How she goes about this and the obstacles they have to overcome, both human and natural, makes for a stunning and very thought provoking story for readers aged 9 – 11.

There are several layers to this story, some of which are less obvious than others. The name of the city that is home to Shifa is Kairos City, this is a Greek word meaning 'the appropriate time' or 'cosmic time' and it was used by Madeleine L'Engle in her classic story "A Wrinkle in Time"; the word also means 'weather' in Modern Greek, which is very appropriate given the weather issues that have helped create the ecological disaster. The story itself is full of struggles both for the children and also for the adults who have the duty of running the farms. The relationship between Shifa and her brother is the absolute centre of this book; Themba has problems coping with the world around him and it is his sister that helps him through the difficulties that he faces every day. This is a really uplifting and beautiful book that looks at friendship, families and the relationship that we all have with the world around us.

MP

EB **Elizabeth Broad, former Head of Primary ITT, University of Roehampton and UKLA National Council member.**
PB **Paul Baker, Chartered Geographer, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.**
SB **Sue Barrett, retired teacher and lecturer.**
LD **Laura Davies, writer**
PD **Pam Dowson, retired primary teacher and PGCE tutor.**
JM **Jamie Marshall, Primary Teacher, London.**
BM **Brenda Marshall, SATIPS Council**
JMc **Jane Macleod, Primary Teacher, Fairfield Primary, Penarth.**
SMcG **Sue McGonigle, Lecturer, Independent Consultant and Co Creator of www.lovemybooks.co.uk**
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CT **Charlotte Townsend, Head of Pre-Prep, Clayesmore School, Blandford Forum, Dorset.**
AW **Alf Wilkinson, The Historical Association.**

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