



# Children's texts

(see also Media and Multimodality)

*Enjoying reading is the right of all children.*

- Children benefit from hearing stories and non-fiction read aloud.
- Teachers who have a good knowledge of children's books provide rich reading experiences.
- Talking about texts is an important part of becoming a reader.

UKLA is committed to children having the fullest opportunities to learn what it is to be a reader. Evidence from the UKLA-initiated Teachers as Readers research (Cremin *et al.*, 2008) demonstrates that when teachers have a broad knowledge of children's books they:

- plan their teaching around high quality children's literature
- include children's books by authors and illustrators of colour as a matter of course
- motivate learners by modelling readerly behaviours (e.g. selection skills, response etc.)
- find engaging texts to support the teaching of literary features
- offer children outstanding children's books for independent reading
- read aloud to their classes from a range of outstanding texts
- encourage the use of libraries.

Many children will have already gained much understanding from listening to stories and sharing books at home. During schooling, it is hoped that all children will learn: how to read; about reading (its purposes and possibilities); and about the pleasure of becoming readers. Being truly absorbed in a text simultaneously combines the use of eyes, minds and feelings. Full engagement at such a personal level distinguishes a reader from someone who reads at a literal level.

It is not the quantity of resources that will indicate that a school values reading. It will be clear by how books feature in their daily activities – especially, how books are talked about. Teachers’ experience of being readers themselves and their knowledge of children’s books will influence literacy learning. Pupils demonstrate their attitudes and expectations about reading as they talk to each other about texts and during classroom ‘book talk’ (Chambers 1985). Teachers share their pleasure in reading alongside literacy teaching.

‘Which books?’ is always the first question colleagues ask about making children’s books integral to literacy learning. Gradually, teachers need to accumulate a collection of titles that ‘work’ for them; i.e., texts that can support their teaching, enable them to be role models and to motivate youngsters to engage with books independently. However, the demands of the curriculum mean teachers have little time to read children’s books. Help is available via:

<https://ukla.org/>

<https://ukla.org/resources/search?category=240>

<https://researchrichpedagogies.org>

<https://www.sla.org.uk>

## Sources

Booth, D. (2006) *Reading Doesn’t Matter Anymore*. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers

Chambers, A. (1993a) *Tell me: Children, reading and talk*. Stroud: Thimble Press

Cremin, T., Motttram, M., Collins, F. and Powell, S. (2008) *Building Communities of Readers*. Leicester: UKLA

Goodwin, P. (ed) (2018) *The Literate Classroom*. (4th edition) London: Routledge

Holdaway, D. (1980) *Independence in reading*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic

Meek, M. (1991) *On Being Literate*. London: The Bodley Head

## Classroom example

### Stories to inspire response

Responding to books is important from the start. Just asking ‘Did you like that story?’ begins the process of understanding beyond the literal. To help her class of 7 and 8 year olds to articulate their response, a teacher read them a story by Margaret Mahy entitled *The Great Piratical Rumbustification*. Following positive response, she prepared a week of English-related activities based on the story. The fictional pirates had names such as: Roving Tom; Wild Jack Clegg; and, Rambling Dick Rover. The children, motivated by Mahy’s imaginative language, invented their own pirate names. They collaborated to make up rhyming couplets which were put together to create a song.

*In we put a crunchy carrot  
And a piece of roasted parrot  
In we put a chocolate cake  
Then we add a rattle snake  
In it goes - cold or hot  
It all goes into the pirate pot!*

Lively discussion about possible meanings of unfamiliar words (e.g. *ill-gotten*, *ominously*, *delicacy*) was informed by each word’s context in the text. Dictionaries were used to check the meanings.

Artwork, music and dance and much discussion resulted from reading a short extract.

*Most of them put on their pirate raggle-taggle: their cheerful silk ‘kerchiefs, their gold earrings and their cutlasses. Parrots sat on their shoulders. They played mouth- organs and old brown fiddles as they came.*

### Reading Aloud

In a class of 10 and 11 year olds, the teacher (an avid reader himself) read aloud as often as possible. He chose books that he had enjoyed and his enthusiastic reading captivated the class. As a result, books became topics of conversation amongst the children. Many of them wanted the books for themselves and all were motivated to take part in related learning activities (e.g. writing, drama, artwork and more formal discussion).

### Use engaging texts to support literacy teaching

All the elements of language work – talking, reading and writing – are integrated. The enjoyment of a good story, poem or nonfiction text can be harnessed to support other requirements in the programmes of study for English, such as punctuation.

A class of 9 year olds had laughed as their teacher read them Anne Fine's short novel *Bill's New Frock*. Later, she introduced the idea of punctuating direct speech in their writing. She took an example of a short conversation from Fine's book and asked the children to consider the use of punctuation. Their previous enjoyment of the text motivated discussion. In small groups, they:

1. made up their own short conversation and acted it out
2. used their improvisation to create a comic-strip with speech bubbles
3. wrote their improvised words using conventional punctuation marks.

The impact of *Bill's New Frock* led to enjoyable literacy learning.

*Joy Court and Prue Goodwin on behalf of UKLA*

See also

**UKLA bookshop**    [www.ukla.org/shop](http://www.ukla.org/shop)

*Active Encounters: Inspiring your readers and writers of non-fiction*  
by Margaret Mallett

*Building Communities of Readers*  
by Teresa Cremin, Marilyn Mottram, Fiona Collins and Sacha Powell

*Making an Impact 1: Developing a Reading School*  
by Rebecca Kennedy and Eve Bearne: professional development materials  
accompanying *Building Communities of Readers*

*Creative Planning with Whole Texts* by Sue McGonigle

*Reading Motivation and Engagement in the Primary School Classroom*  
by Sarah McGeown

*Literature Circles: Better Talking, More Ideas*  
by Carole King and Jane Briggs

*Talk for Reading* by Claire Warner

*Making Reading Mean* by Vivienne Smith

**UKLA website**    [www.ukla.org/resources](http://www.ukla.org/resources)

*Reading Fact Cards* and *CLPE Reading and Writing Scales*  
both on: <https://ukla.org/resources/collection/professional-development>

Free resource: *Reading for Pleasure*  
[https://ukla.org/downloads/Reading\\_for\\_Pleasure.pdf](https://ukla.org/downloads/Reading_for_Pleasure.pdf)

For information on OU/UKLA Reading for Pleasure groups go to:  
<https://www.researchrichpedagogies.org/research/reading-for-pleasure>

Digital Literacies Special Interest Group  
<https://ukla.org/cpd/sig/details/digital-literacies-in-education>