



Teachers and reading

(see also Digital Literacies; Media and Multimodality)

Reading teachers are teachers who read and readers who teach.

Teachers who are committed readers and who model their enjoyment of reading to their classes, tend to:

- plan their teaching around a wide range of high quality texts reflecting the diversity of young readers and their communities
- motivate learners by modelling readerly behaviours
- find engaging texts which are more demanding than children and young adults might read on their own
- create opportunities to talk about reading
- read aloud to classes from a range of fiction, information, poetry, and from what children and young adults write themselves
- encourage reading of texts created by and about people of colour as a matter of course
- lead children and young adults to seek out further reading matter independently
- make informed choices of texts to recommend for school libraries and independent reading.

Reading across the whole age-range

From the outset of their education in Early Years settings to the final years of schooling at post-16, children and young adults learn what it means to be, and to develop as, readers. Some have already learnt a great deal from reading shared at home and beyond, from reading aloud with adults and older siblings or reading connected with social and cultural interests such as play, hobbies,

sport, films or political activism. However, *all* children and young adults need to learn, during formal schooling, not only how to read, but also the purposes, possibilities and pleasures of being committed readers. Being truly absorbed in a text requires eyes, bodies, feelings and minds to be simultaneously engaged – intellectually, imaginatively and emotionally; it is not simply a matter of decoding. Reading is always a complex process, one which – once developed – can deepen understanding and offer lifelong contentment.

Reading teachers

When teachers across all age groups have a wide knowledge of texts that engage different readers (including picturebooks, poetry, blogs, magazines, films, information texts, novels, plays), they make informed choices for classroom study, library selection and individual children or young adults' independent reading beyond the school. Such teachers do not use texts merely as a means to teach people how to read or succeed in exams; rather, they enable readers to learn that texts can do so much more. For example, teachers choose texts which teach about different worlds – real or imagined; diverse human beings – familiar or unknown; non-human life and its vital importance to the planet. Teachers also enable readers to understand and respond critically to information by selecting similar texts from different sources and different media to explore and reflect on alongside one another.

Reading research evidence

A great deal of research (see, for example, the sources listed below) has shown that teachers who are not only keen readers themselves but who model their enjoyment of reading to their classes are well-placed to make informed – and, indeed, often outstanding – choices of texts for classroom study or to recommend for school libraries and independent reading. In such teachers' classrooms, measurable reading standards can rise.

Reading and talk

No teacher can ever read everything. Happily, though, reading is far from being a solitary activity and the role of conversation is crucial. Discussion about reading happens all the time, not least in classrooms where reading really matters. In such classrooms, teachers talk about what they have read and make recommendations to children and young adults. Young people, in turn, who may well have read texts that their teachers haven't, are also well-placed to discuss what they have enjoyed and why. There are many other ways for both teachers and young people to conduct reading conversations, however, such as reading and responding to online book reviews; reading and contributing to school newsletters; participating in reading groups (e.g. shadowing the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Children's Book Awards); or joining teachers' reading groups. Making reading a regular item on unit or departmental meeting agendas is yet another way to ensure that talk about texts definitely happens, as well as any conversations that might take place more informally.

Reading and UKLA

UKLA encourages teachers to develop their knowledge about reading as a key facet of the Association's sole object which is the advancement of education in literacy, for example through:

- UKLA Awards which showcase some of the very best new texts for children and young people each year and ways of using them in class
- UKLA funding to support teacher-initiated reading research
- an open invitation to join teachers' reading groups
- UKLA publications: *Literacy*, *Journal of Research in Reading* and *English 4-11*, plus a wide range of other published material about reading
- participation in regional, national or international conferences e.g. to present research findings; to deepen understanding of others' research.

Sources

Arizpe, E., & Styles, M. (2003) *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Bearne, E., & Reedy, D. (2018) *Teaching Primary English: Subject Knowledge and Classroom Practice*. London: Routledge (especially Part Two: Reading, pp. 107-272).

Cliff Hodges, G. (2016) *Researching and Teaching Reading: Developing Pedagogy through Critical Enquiry*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Commeyras, M. Bisplinghoff, B.S. & Olson, J. (2003) *Teachers as Readers: Perspectives on the Importance of Reading in Teachers' Classrooms and Lives*. Newark: International Reading Association.

Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F., Powell, S. and Safford, K. (2014) *Building Communities of Readers: Reading for Pleasure*. London: Routledge.

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

Mackey, M. (2016) *One Child Reading: My Auto-Bibliography*. Alberta, CA: University of Alberta Press.

Meek, M. (1988) *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*. Stroud: Thimble Press.

Tennent, W., Reedy, D., Hobsbaum, A., & Gamble, N. (2016) *Guiding Readers – Layers of Meaning: A Handbook for Teaching Reading Comprehension to 7-11 Year-Olds*. London: UCL/IOE.

Yandell, J. (2014) *The Social Construction of Meaning. Reading Literature in Urban English Classrooms*. London: Routledge..

Classroom examples

Exploring children's perceptions of me as a reader: Claire

I'm a keen reader, but do my class see me as such? Do they know my likes and dislikes? Do they care? I wondered too if my enthusiasm for literature influences theirs. In order to explore these questions, I invited these 8 and 9 year old youngsters to draw me, annotating their pictures with the things that they considered were important to me. I deliberately left the room and assumed that if they thought books and/or reading had some significance for me they would surface. They did! Two thirds of the class included these in their pictures, a few offered details such as 'it makes her calm and laugh' and 'books help her imagination'.

Some weeks later, I asked them to offer me the evidence base for their opinions. Their responses revealed a far deeper understanding of my reading life than I expected; for example they included details about my favourite books and authors, they listed writers that I've met, noted my reading habits outside school and even drew my calendar (on which I record publication dates)! Interestingly, only novels and picturebooks were mentioned, this surprised me because I share a range of text types. This made me consider how and why I share the material that I enjoy? Maybe inadvertently I profile literature? Maybe I even imply that what counts as reading in my class is fiction?

In order to counteract this, I'm planning to display an illustration of an empty bookshelf on which I'll draw each book I read outside school. I also intend to make a class Home Reading Wall, for us all to display the multiplicity of texts (comics, newspapers, magazines, emails etc.) in our reading lives. I hope this will help to highlight the variety of texts that I tackle as a Reading Teacher and make clear to my class that while personal preferences and passions are important, diversity matters too.

Exploring the reading experience: Becky

Recently when observing my Year 4 class during reading time, I noticed that as soon as one of them realised I was watching, they would shuffle up their seat, hold their book upright and frown intently, presumably to look 'like readers'. This worried me and made me think carefully about what I really do when I read – what the experience really involves. Often I relax or slump, stop and think, make connections, revisit memories, and ask questions (in my head and of others). When I monitored my reading, I was surprised by how much I stop and start, pause to problem solve and 'cheat' – skimming ahead to the exciting bits for example. Doing this prompted me to really consider my reading habits and behaviours and how much they vary according to what I'm reading and where.

In turn, it made me appreciate how diverse my class must be as readers. When I shared my reflections with them, we explored what readers do and what 'real reading' might be. Some of their preconceptions were challenged (e.g. about skipping pages) and we concluded that readers can make their own choices, that these may be different for each of us at different times and that's okay. As a

result, the children's perception of reading has evolved too. We talk more about ourselves as readers and I'm trying to offer them more agency and volition.

Furthermore, when I read aloud to my class I actively model 'real reader' behaviours; we pause, ponder, question, connect and so forth. Most importantly we discuss any issues the children themselves raise. During independent reading time now, I see some children sitting together talking about books, some poring over their texts and others staring into middle distance – thinking. In essence, it looks and feels more like a class of engaged readers.

(These are extracts from: *Reading Teachers: Teachers who read and readers who teach* by Teresa Cremin, Stephanie Davis, Claire Williams and Becky Thomson, published in *English 4-11*, Spring 2018)

Gabrielle Cliff Hodges and Teresa Cremin on behalf of UKLA

See also

UKLA bookshop www.ukla.org/shop

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*

Planning for Innovation in English Teaching

by Gabrielle Cliff Hodges, Alison Binney and Emily Evans

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

Reading Fact Cards

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

For information on OU/UKLA Reading for Pleasure groups go to:

<https://www.researchrichpedagogies.org/research/reading-for-pleasure>