

CHOOSING & USING QUALITY CHILDREN'S TEXTS

What we know works

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

Research from the Power of Reading Project



CENTRE FOR LITERACY
IN PRIMARY EDUCATION



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Introduction

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education is an independent UK charity with a global reputation for the quality of our work. We exist to promote high standards in the teaching of literacy through our high quality, trusted teacher professional development and our renowned classroom based research. We particularly emphasise the importance of books and literature in enabling children to become confident, happy and enthusiastic readers and writers, with all the benefits this brings.

The Core Booklist has been published by CLPE since 1996. Since 2015 it has been available as a free, online resource which anyone can use to find the very best of current children's literature. Access Core Books Online at **www.clpe.org.uk/corebooks**. It is a selection of carefully chosen texts for teachers to use when they are developing collections for their classrooms and schools as part of their reading and literacy programmes. The list demonstrates the key role that children's literature can play across the curriculum, supporting children's progress as readers. The books are chosen because they support children learning to read and in their development as readers.

Core Books Online contains books that have been tried, tested and found to work successfully in classrooms, providing children with broad, memorable and positive reading experiences. The collection is curated and updated by our highly experienced librarian in partnership with our teaching staff.



What works?

At CLPE we believe that the use of high quality books within the reading curriculum is at the heart of a school's successful approach to engage and support children to become motivated and independent readers. If children enjoy reading, they read more frequently and become better readers. If teachers and those who work in schools know about the best children's literature available they will be able to share that with the children they teach and encourage them to be inspired as readers and motivated to read for themselves.

Each year at CLPE we work face to face with more than 1000 teachers from across the country and many thousands more use our resources. We use our knowledge about children's literature to choose quality texts to underpin all our training and courses. Our Power of Reading project gives teachers a unique perspective on the creative use of quality literature to support the development of a whole school approach to reading.

We collect data and case study evidence to help us to make sure that we are using the best and most appropriate practice and approaches to support teachers to help children. Our librarian Ann Lazim has been researching teachers' knowledge and understanding of children's literature using the data we collect from Power of Reading. In this booklet we are sharing with you the things that teachers have told us about choosing and using quality children's literature in their schools and classrooms. We hope you find it useful.

Louise Johns-Shepherd, **Chief Executive**, CLPE

This is the third in the series of these papers. To download the other papers 'Reading for Pleasure', 'Poetry in Primary Schools' and 'Writing in Primary Schools' please visit www.clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources/research

For more information about the CLPE visit www.clpe.org.uk

For more information about Power of Reading visit www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading

The quotes in this document come from the reflective evaluations of the 1109 teachers on Power of Reading 2014-16

1 Build a collection of books from a wide and diverse range of authors, illustrators and forms

In order to recommend appropriate books to children, to extend and develop their reading and continue to feed their interests, adults working in schools need to have an extensive knowledge of the full range of children's literature available.

At the start of our Power of Reading project most teachers were aware of a limited range of authors for children. Asked again at the end of the project which authors they would recommend for children they listed a much wider variety of names whose books they had encountered and enjoyed on the course and beyond. This knowledge helped them to support children's reading enjoyment and to build collections with wide appeal.

A range and breadth of texts allows children to hear and appreciate a wide range of voices and writing styles, investigating how language can be used for a variety of different purposes and audiences and to inspire them to read for purpose and pleasure.

Learn more:

Core Books Online
clpe.org.uk/corebooks

Explore thematic booklists
clpe.org.uk/library/booklists

Reviews in print format and online. Try these:

- Books for Keeps www.booksforkeeps.co.uk
- The School Librarian
www.sla.org.uk/the-school-librarian
- Booktrust www.booktrust.org.uk/books

"I'm constantly reading blogs and articles now on what's new or what's old and brilliant."

"I have learnt that there are far more genres and texts suited for my class than I previously thought. Books are relevant, refreshingly new and exciting."

"I am aware of so many more key texts that are a world away from some of the 'old-school' texts that I was brought up with!"



2 Become familiar with how different books can be used to support a variety of reading experiences

Build up a bank of books that you enjoy and that you know work. For example books which lend themselves to reading aloud, those that can be used to support teaching or those that are better for groups or for individuals. These can include short stories, folk and fairy tales, myths and legends, information texts, poetry, novels and picture books.

Reading aloud makes for an important shared experience, giving children access to a wider range of texts. Hearing a text read aloud often draws out elements that go unnoticed when you read inside your head. Group reading allows you to tailor books to more specific needs and to support progress in reading. A broader range of texts for individual choices supports children to self select and broaden their reading experiences.

Well chosen texts also expose children to a wider range of language and vocabulary in a supportive context. Take time to discuss new words and have rich discussions around texts shared to allow children to consolidate their understanding.

“ I love reading aloud with my class. It has brought me closer to my children and I have created bonds with them through themes and issues discussed. Everyone gets a chance to shine during reading aloud time. ”

“ Reading aloud daily has had a huge impact in KS2 and especially for “lower ability” readers who have been able to discuss/interpret really engaging, sophisticated texts. ”

Learn more:

Teaching Reading
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment

CLPE Reading and Writing Scales – free download
clpe.org.uk/readingandwritingscales

Core Books
clpe.org.uk/corebooks



3 Choose books and multimodal texts with quality artwork which complement, support or extend the story

Picture books are for all ages, not just for very young children. Many teachers on the Power of Reading project comment on how they now feel confident about using picture books with older children. Picture cues can be used to support less experienced readers but it goes way beyond this. Our Power of Pictures project, during which teachers work with an author/illustrator, has raised awareness and understanding of the process and thinking behind the creation of picture books and the importance of images.

Illustrations can complement text in a variety of ways such as telling a different or supplementary story from the written text. This extends to fiction, information books and online resources. Wordless books have an important place enabling a high level of interpretation and inference.

Teachers on CLPE's Power of Pictures programme were able to see how reading picturebooks developed pupils' language and vocabulary, comprehension, understanding of narrative structure and ideas for composition across the primary years.

“ The Power of Pictures project has challenged me to use new texts and to get more out of picture books. It has given me a new appreciation for the power of an image to teach inference skills. ”

“ It has opened my eyes to the quality of the texts for children, especially using picture books in upper KS2. ”

“ They know there is more to a picture book than just the words – the pictures also ‘speak’. ”

Learn more:

Power of Pictures
clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures

Planning the Curriculum Around a Quality Text
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment



4 Ensure there are texts that children can engage with in a variety of ways depending on their responses, maturity and choices

Many Power of Reading project teachers comment that slowly revealing the content of a book works well and captivates children; holding their interest. Our in depth teaching sequences encourage teachers to introduce a book gradually, talking with the children, anticipating and immersing everyone in the text and allowing children to use a wider range of reading skills and strategies, including visualising, predicting and questioning.

Reading a book together, engaging in book talk and providing creative activities around the text will enhance enjoyment, engagement and reader response.

Encouraging children to draw on their own life experiences and knowledge of other texts in a variety of media when discussing books will draw out meanings and a deeper level of understanding than children might otherwise have had.

“ I have enjoyed teaching The Princess and the White Bear King to my Y1 class – they relished discovering the story slowly and the anticipation was massive. ”

“ Power of Reading in the Early Years has really helped me understand the importance of choosing key texts and immersing children in each book for a long period of time. ”

Learn more:

Power of Reading
clpe.org.uk/powerofreading

Core Books Online
clpe.org.uk/corebooks

CLPE Reading and Writing Scales
clpe.org.uk/readingandwritingscales



5 Select texts that present information in a variety of interesting ways

Children need to meet information texts that represent their interests as well as those that are curriculum related, although these are not mutually exclusive. Start with a text that enthuses you rather than shoehorning in books to fit a topic.

A book created by an author with understanding of and enthusiasm for their subject can be the starting point for wider and more in depth exploration. It can help to develop children's knowledge and critical thinking, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Look out for books that don't always use conventional approaches to information in terms of text and design. Texts that employ narrative often work well as the human mind is inclined to find story an aid to understanding.

Recognise that texts need not always be books. This is the case across the full range of literature but perhaps has particular pertinence when it comes to information texts. Explore a variety of formats and approaches, including digital and film texts.

“ I love that reading a non-fiction text (William Grill's *Shackleton's Journey*) led to so much fiction writing. I feel unshackled (no pun!). ”

“ I love planning topics around an inspirational text – linking across curriculum areas and themes. ”

Learn more:

Raising Achievement in Writing
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment

Developing the Role of the English Subject Leader
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment



6 Allow children to see themselves reflected in what they read and to have the opportunity to investigate other perspectives

Seek out books that reflect diversity in terms of race and heritage, disability, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, religion and culture. Choose books that make children aware of the wider world beyond their immediate sphere.

It is particularly important to pay attention to authors who are writing from authentic personal experience and knowledge and to adults in the school community who know other languages or literatures. It is also vital that books chosen exemplify quality portrayals or presence of characters from a range of backgrounds. CLPE's Reflecting Realities research has been designed to highlight and emphasise what this looks like in practice.

Children's home languages should be valued right through education; bilingual texts and resources should be provided to meet the language needs of learners supporting proficiency in English and progress in their home language.

Learn more:

Meeting the Needs of Children with EAL
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment

Inclusive Minds
www.inclusiveminds.com

Letterbox Library
www.letterboxlibrary.com

Reflecting Realities – A survey of ethnic representation in children's books
clpe.org.uk/reflectingrealities

“ It's important to celebrate and appreciate the diversity in our school. ”

“ All children should feel valued, safe, secure and have opportunities to access the curriculum. ”

“ Parents have come in to sing nursery rhymes in home language and stories in home language. ”



7 Take risks with the books you read and introduce to children

The texts that adults choose to share with children need to support them to gain a breadth of reading experience. It is important to introduce authors and genres that they may not discover independently and take them beyond their own first hand understanding, widening their imaginative experience.

It is often tempting to avoid texts that deal with strong feelings and significant experiences. However, these can be significant in making connections with characters and situations; opening up children's awareness and understanding and helping them to empathise with others. For example, sharing the picture book *The Princess' Blankets* inspired some Year 6 boys to write romantic poetry.

Books that you may have thought would only have appeal for younger children will sometimes reveal hidden depths of meaning. Likewise some books that may appear on first sight to be too difficult can provide positive challenge and stimulus for imagination. Teachers have told us it is important not to underestimate children and the levels of understanding of which they may be capable.

“ I am now more confident to take risks and the children enjoy and achieve. ”

“ I realise that to be a reader you must enjoy reading. I want to inspire children to enjoy the books and reading. ”

Learn more:

Power of Reading
clpe.org.uk/powerofreading



8 Respect children's choices, ensuring that the texts you choose foster their experience of literature as well as supporting current interests

It is really important to listen to and respect children's choices while helping them to broaden their reading range. Don't automatically dismiss children's enjoyment of certain types of books such as books in popular series. These texts can draw children in, provide important reading practice and encourage them to read for pleasure.

Children can be easily put off when they feel adults are making judgements about their reading choices, so to help children move forward in their reading, teachers have found it helpful to allow children to have a say in the selection of books for the book corner and library. Teachers who have a wide knowledge of children's literature have found that they can use this knowledge to make recommendations about other books they might be inspired to try.

"I relish the reading time I have with my class and they now take ownership of what they want to read."

"Children know what teachers are reading what and ask teachers about their reading habits."

Learn more:

Power of Reading
clpe.org.uk/powerofreading

Core Books Online
clpe.org.uk/corebooks



9 Choose books that are worth re-reading and provide the opportunity to respond in a variety of cross-curricular ways

A rich reading diet will include a range of texts, some of which will be enjoyed but quickly forgotten. For a book to be suitable as a class text, around which teachers and children can develop discussion, writing and creative work, it needs to be worth revisiting. It should inspire thinking and creativity, provoke questions and lead to learning opportunities across the curriculum.

Deepen responses and encourage children to make connections by exploring other texts by the same author or on the same theme. A small detail or a real life experience may make a significant link in an individual's mind. Support children in reading more widely around themes introduced in text in other curriculum areas where links are rich and understanding of vocabulary and concepts can be extended.

Many teachers have told us how the Power of Reading course has given them more freedom to use creative approaches such as drama, art and music in their teaching. They comment on the effect this has on children's motivation to read more deeply and on the quality and stamina of their writing.

“Gone is the worry about using art, drama and ‘softer’ methods. The drier methods have been replaced with stimulating creative approaches which give children a way in.”

“Reading is more than text on a page. Its expression through art, drama, dance, creation and sharing. Now reading is taught with respect to all aspects of it and this has greatly impacted on our writing.”

Learn more:

Planning the Curriculum Around a Quality Text
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment



10 Select books that include rhythm and pattern, encouraging children to play with language so that they see reading as a meaningful and fun process

Core Book Collections in all year groups need to incorporate these criteria. These kinds of texts are particularly important for those children who are at the early stages of reading or English acquisition.

Books that are focused on introducing specific knowledge or vocabulary often don't present meaningful or memorable stories, a depth of meaning or emotional engagement. In sharing a high quality text teachers will be able to recognise a range of opportunities to consolidate children's knowledge of letter/sound relationships and word recognition.

Rhyme, song, poetry and traditional stories naturally ease the process of reading and introduce children to the rhythms, patterns and structures of language. Texts with rhythmic beats open up the tunes of words and support children's awareness of phonics and spelling. These types of texts should be part of classroom collections for every age group.

Learn more:

Poetryline
clpe.org.uk/poetryline

Phonics in a Rich Reading Curriculum
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment

Language and Grammar in a Rich Reading Curriculum
clpe.org.uk/professionaldevelopment

“ Exploring sounds, songs and rhyme has given me more confidence and something fresh to take back to the classroom ”

“ I feel inspired to use a greater range of books in my phonics teaching ”



CHOOSING & USING CHILDREN'S TEXTS

WHAT WE KNOW WORKS

1. **Build a collection of books from a wide and diverse range of authors, illustrators, genres and forms**
2. **Become familiar with the ways in which different books can be used to support a variety of reading experiences**
3. **Choose books and multimodal texts with high quality artwork and production values which complement, support or extend the text or story**
4. **Ensure there are texts that children can engage with in a variety of ways depending on their views, responses, maturity, tastes and choices**
5. **Select texts that present information in a variety of interesting ways**
6. **Allow children to see themselves reflected in what they read and to have the opportunity to investigate other lives, worlds and perspectives**
7. **Take risks with the books you read and introduce to children**
8. **Respect children's tastes and choices, ensuring that the texts you choose foster and increase their experience of literature as well as supporting current interests**
9. **Choose books that are worth revisiting, re-reading and provide the opportunity to respond in a variety of cross-curricular and creative ways**
10. **Select books that include rhyme, rhythm and pattern, encouraging children to play with language so that they see reading as a meaningful and fun process**





Power of Reading

A CLPE RESOURCE



CLPE

CENTRE FOR LITERACY
IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Power of Reading

**Reading for pleasure,
achievement for life**

"At a time of teacher crisis and with difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, CLPE bring back what teaching is about. My teachers are bursting with enthusiasm and creativity which they've passed on to the children and other teachers."

Head Teacher, Power of Reading School

www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading



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