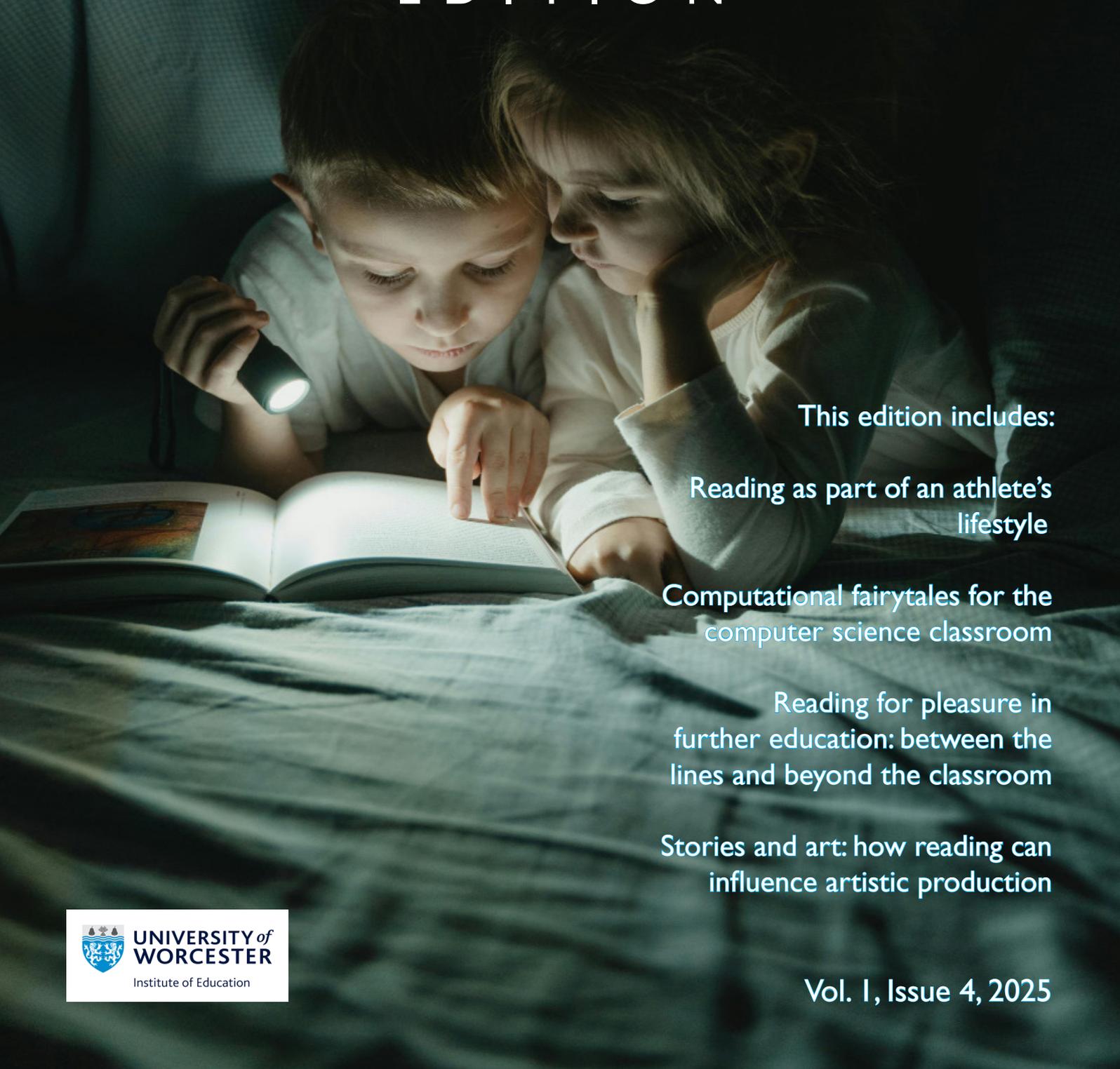


# UW SOURCE

THE PGCE SECONDARY AND POST-COMPULSORY  
EDUCATION MAGAZINE

## READING FOR PLEASURE EDITION



This edition includes:

Reading as part of an athlete's  
lifestyle

Computational fairytales for the  
computer science classroom

Reading for pleasure in  
further education: between the  
lines and beyond the classroom

Stories and art: how reading can  
influence artistic production

# The OU Reading Schools Programme

## *Building a Culture of Reading in KS3*



### **Evidence-informed**

Grounded in research exploring reading in adolescence



### **Strategic & Sustainable**

Designed to drive development across KS3 with the support of your RfP Implementation Team



### **Mentor-supported**

1:1 and group mentoring to help you embed lasting change

## **Why get involved?**

**Young people who read for pleasure benefit from:**

- Improved attainment
- Better emotional well-being
- Greater confidence and motivation

**This programme helps your school to:**

- Develop strategic leadership of reading for pleasure
- Build staff knowledge and practice
- Foster reading communities that demonstrate impact

## **What is included?**

- Dedicated online sessions that support participants to build understanding of RfP research and practice
- Bespoke mentoring
- Online author visits for pupils and staff
- Online conference for KS3 staff
- Tools to measure the impact of RfP development work
- Contemporary and diverse 'book box' which includes 12-14 titles
- Access to exclusive resources



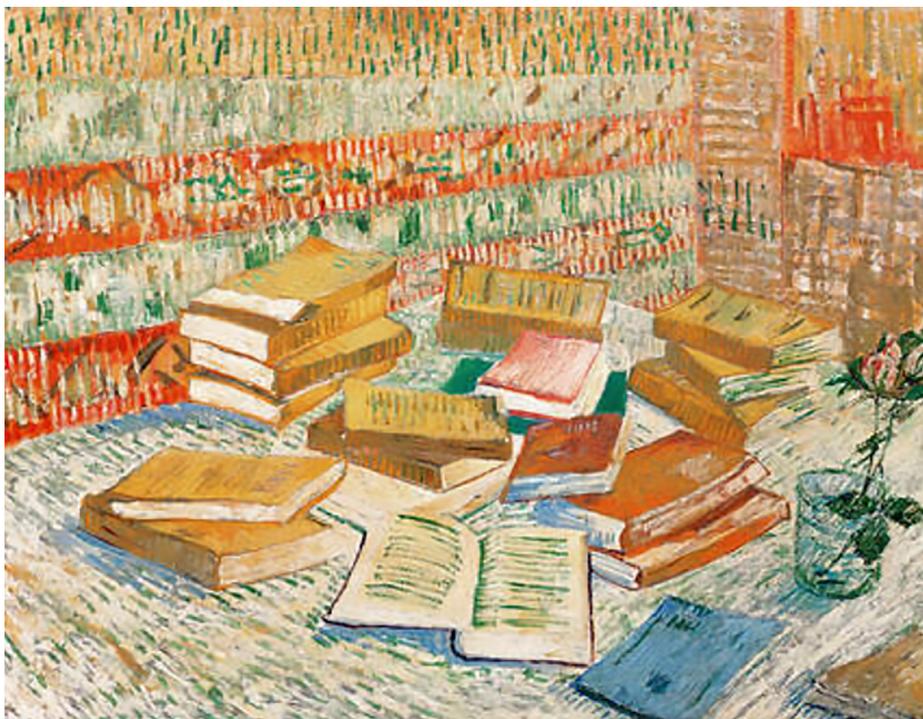
*To find out more, join us for a briefing event.*

[https://ourfp.org/@OpenUni\\_RfP](https://ourfp.org/@OpenUni_RfP)



**Reading  
for Pleasure**

**The Open  
University**



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# Reconnecting

# with reading

**Teresa Cremin** is Professor of Education (Literacy) at The Open University, UK, and co-Director of the Literacy and Social Justice Centre. An ex-teacher and teacher trainer, Teresa's research mainly focuses on young people's identities as readers and approaches to nurture volitional reading. A Fellow of the EA, AcSS and the RSA, Teresa is a Trustee of the Reading Agency, the UKLA, a Great School Libraries Champion and advises the DfE on reading for pleasure. Teresa has published over 30 books, most recently, the edited collection *Reading for Pleasure: International Perspectives with S. McGeown* (2025). Teresa leads an OU research and practice coalition to develop young people's volitional reading. Do visit the evidenced informed and practical website <https://ourfp.org/>.

**Kelly Ashley** is a Lecturer in Reading for Pleasure at The Open University and Programme Manager for the OU KS3 Reading Schools Programme. With 25 years of experience in the UK and US, Kelly has worked as a teacher, leader, professional development facilitator and mentor. She is a member of UKLA, the Chartered College of Teaching, a CollectivEd fellow and secondary school governor. Kelly's recent research involves

*reader engagement with magazines and is now heading into the third phase of study.*

Reading connects us to ourselves and to others. Through the prism of literature, poetry and nonfiction, we learn more about what it means to be human, about the past and present and about the world in all its fascinating manifestations. As CS Lewis purportedly said, 'We read to know that we are not alone'. Reading can change our lives, it can inform, inspire and elevate our understanding, but it must be reading we do for ourselves, at our own pace and in our own way. Keen readers do not read to satisfy the teacher or to pass exams, they read for their own pleasure.

*Reading for pleasure is volitional reading, driven by the reader's own goals and interests - which may include social and relational ones - in anticipation of some form of satisfaction* (Cremin and Scholes, 2024, p.537).

Over the past decade, the vital role of such reading has been evidenced in research, policy and practice. International studies from different

disciplinary perspectives reveal that volitional reading is associated with stronger academic outcomes (e.g. Sullivan and Brown, 2015; Torppa et al., 2020), greater engagement in learning (OECD, 2019) and enhanced psychological wellbeing (e.g. Mak and Fancourt, 2020; Sun et al., 2023). Being a teenage reader can help mediate the effects of socio-economic disadvantage and gender (OECD, 2021). This is a matter of social justice. The power and potential of the reading habit is recognised by the DfE, who assert that embedding a reading for pleasure (RfP) culture is the 'collective responsibility' of all staff (2023, 94).

Those young people who read for pleasure will fly further and faster through the secondary curriculum, so how can we plan to bridge opportunities and nurture frequent volitional reading within and beyond school?

## Connecting with ourselves as readers

The first step involves supporting adults to connect with themselves as readers. Reading Teachers – capital R, capital T – are those who read, reflect and



apply their understanding of being a reader to practice (Cremin, 2022). What is your reading history? Who or what influences your reading choices and how have these changed over time? Where and when do you choose to read and why? In this issue, educators from multiple subject departments offer rich advice and strategies, with one from DT (Food) reminding us that inside every child there should be a passion to spark joy for reading. This teacher’s reading fulfilment from cookery books strongly influenced her reading identity and, indeed, career choice. Whether for instance it’s science or historical fiction or nonfiction, manga or magazines that draw your interest, reconnecting with our own adult reading lives matters.



**Connecting with the young people as readers**

Next, seek opportunities to connect with the reading interests of the young people themselves. What are their motivations and preferences? The PE Department’s contribution identifies reading as an immersive experience akin to the process of building discipline through sporting habits. How might disaffected readers reconnect with reading via subject-specific enthusiasm? It is in these unique spaces that reading enjoyment intertwines with wider world interests. Tap into teenagers’ emerging

passions to invite new conversations, reader-to-reader, interest-to-interest. Teachers are ‘the best promoters’ (DfE, 2023: 96) and knowledge of individuals can spark recommendations and help nurture engagement.

**Connecting readers to the curriculum**

The next step is to connect readers to the curriculum. Consider how curriculum structures offer time and space for RfP pedagogies to flourish – social environments, reading aloud, book talk and choice-led reading time can be woven in to connect curriculum content to reading enjoyment. The RE Department developed Book Club as key to learning, deepening subject knowledge and reconnecting with relaxed time to talk. Enhancing the design of these evidence-informed practices builds strong, sustainable RfP cultures.

**Creating connected reading communities**

Finally, reading communities enable staff and pupils to come together as connected collectives. A sense of belonging and inclusion across multiple reading networks in school can support social, emotional and psychological wellbeing. The Geography Department reminds us that readers’ sense of place and their identities change over time. These shifting narratives and distinctive perspectives offer golden moments for reconnection through discussing ourselves as readers.

**In conclusion**

Restoring relationships in your reading community has a myriad benefits, however, this approach must be rigorous, with responsibility and relevance. Why not consider participating in the Open University’s online KS3 Reading Schools Programme? We’ve supported over 30 secondary schools to strengthen reading communities and cultures through measured, strategic action, building knowledge and practice across staff teams through the development of

bespoke action plans to navigate the journey of reconnecting with reading. By combining research evidence, rigour and tailored support, schools impact on pupils’ reading attitudes, engagement and attainment. To find out more, visit <https://ourfp.org/schools-teachers/reading-schools-programme-2025-26/> As this engaging document from the University of Worcester team highlights, it is time to reconnect through reading.



<https://ourfp.org/>

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COMPUTER SCIENCE

# Computational fairytales for the computer science classroom



**David Hunt** is the University of Worcester PGCE secondary subject lead for computer science. He spent 22 years in a range of teaching and management roles in UK and international secondary schools before moving into higher education. He established the computer science PGCE in 2013 and has research interests in Technology Enhanced Learning. In his spare time, he designs devices that can be used on the Internet of Things (IoT).

**Challenges**

Integrating Reading for Pleasure into the computer science curriculum presents some specific challenges. The format and style of computing materials used for instruction are often technical and analytical and can be process driven, such as step-by-step walkthroughs and graphical illustrations. Provision of these materials in a classroom setting might not readily lend themselves to reading for pleasure, compared to traditionally more narrative and imaginative reading resources. Pupils may not see the value in reading for pleasure when their subject expectations are to engage in practical activities. Teachers may struggle to cover the dense computer science curriculum, and reading for pleasure can be seen as an unobtainable luxury in lesson time. Furthermore, computer science teachers



may not have been trained to promote literacy and reading for pleasure within their subject and their professional development here may be non-existent. School libraries may not have ready access to appropriate reading materials associated with this technological subject. These significant barriers provide the challenge to create some appropriate reading materials that support learning in computer science. These can be found by scanning the QR code.

learners acquire knowledge at an accelerated rate compared to that which they might experience by chance, as they progress through their education. Zakis and Liljedahl (2009) suggest that

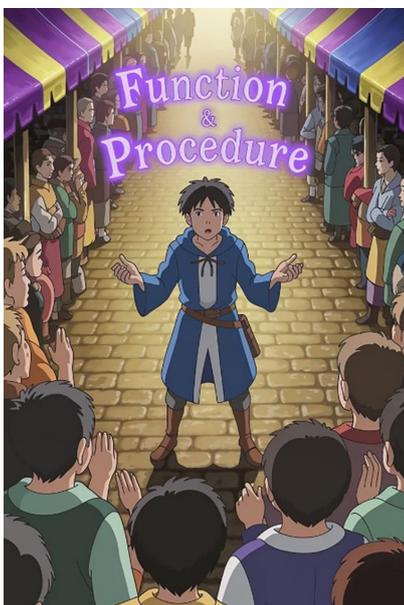


James Pennell

**Rationale**

Fairytales, fables and parables have traditionally been powerful tools for education as they provide memorable stories for learners. By carefully thinking about the deeper meaning behind the fairytale, the learner can understand the important principles that are being conveyed in the story. Indeed, this storytelling technique can be used to help inexperienced

storytelling provides a more inviting entry point to discuss complex subject concepts, as it can capture learners' interest and curiosity.



Kevin Brice



Amanda Ram

This point is easily illustrated in one of Aesop’s fables, ‘The Crow and the Pitcher’. A thirsty crow finds a pitcher with only a little water at the bottom. Unable to reach the water, the crow drops pebbles into the pitcher until the water rises high enough to drink. This fable highlights the importance of persistence and ingenuity, encouraging taking chances on creative solutions. The story is accessible, and a brief discussion provides a good understanding of the story’s meaning and the values we should derive from it.

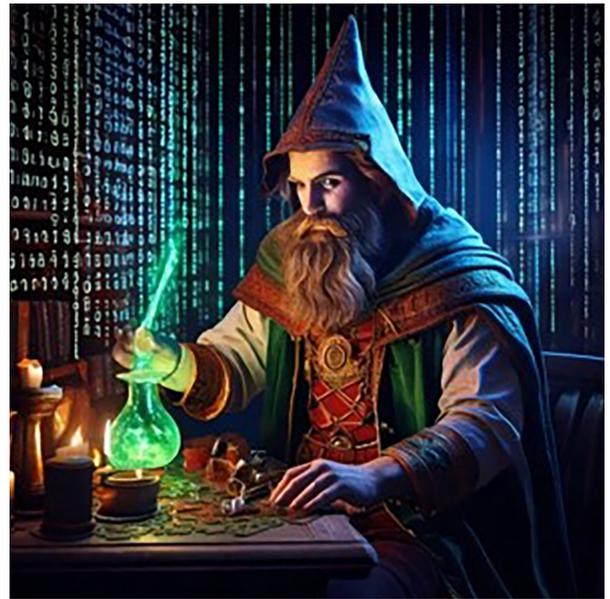
**Abstract Ideas**

Many of the topics in computer science rely upon conceptual understanding as the ideas are often abstract. An example of this includes writing computer code that will loop through a series of instructions that is known as a while loop. It is possible to make mistakes when writing this code and the program may get trapped in an infinite loop, preventing the computer from completing its task. Pupils often fear being caught in these types of situations where they are unable to write the correct code to solve the problem.



They may initially need reassurance they will not break the computer. Taking risks and experimenting when writing computer code are the exact skills we want our learners to adopt. It is these personal qualities of curiosity and tenacity that will help them develop into highly competent programmers.

Aesop may have provided us with a mechanism for learning about complex ideas, but as the fables were written approximately 2600 years ago, they need to be re-written to make them relevant to address the needs of our modern lives and curriculum. Kubica (2012) provides some modern inspiration with his Computational Fairy Tales although many of the computing topics he covers are quite advanced, and beginners might not benefit from them at the start of their programming education.



Connie Holmes

**Motivating Readers**

The Reading for Pleasure initiative initially presents a challenge for computer science teachers, as while the aims are laudable, forcing learners to read technically impenetrable texts is potentially counter-productive. To ease the learners into reading more about technical subjects, we have created a

series of fables, in the style of Aesop, to illustrate an underlying computer science concept. Humpherys and Babb (2022) note difficulties for teachers creating these resources in terms of both time and the teacher’s storytelling skills. To overcome these hurdles these resources were created with generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and subsequently edited by trainee computer science teachers to ensure that the computing principles were sound and the text accessible. For your interest, the



Salman Momen

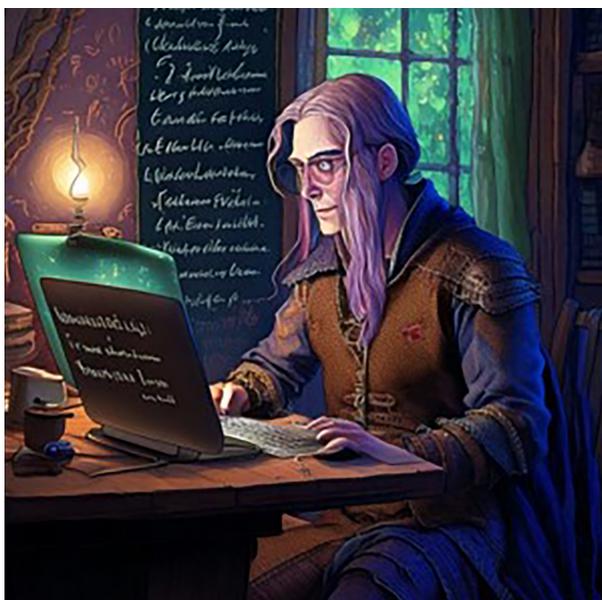
prompts that were used to generate the fables and pictures are also provided.

In computer science classrooms, pupils often have the advantage of one machine per pupil and this encourages them to focus on their own screen, and work in isolation. Perhaps these playful fables provide an opportunity for the teacher to discuss the ideas in a socially interactive and accessible way. The Reading for Pleasure initiative suggests

that pupils should have access to a diverse range of texts and in computer science, this is often provided with magazine style articles that cover a technical project. These can be quite focused on solving a specific problem. The aim when writing these fables, was to move away from instructional to narrative texts, to create a lasting memory hook that pupils can relate to. This provides a good reference point for the teacher to use when explaining the concept and hopefully aids simple

recall, rather than having to remember lots of technical facts. Using these texts can also support explanations and modelling in the classroom.

In designing a resource for children to 'read for pleasure', we set up a paradox between compulsion and enjoyment. Hopefully, these accessible resources will inspire pupils to explore further texts, thereby accessing the full range of benefits that reading for pleasure



Ben Robinson

provides. To support this, a suggested reading list has been provided that teachers may want to recommend to their pupils (or partake in themselves as good role models).

Clark and Rumbold (2006, p.6) defined reading for pleasure as 'reading that we do of our own free will, anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to the reading that having begun at someone else's request we continue because we are interested in it'. Perhaps these computational fairytales will inspire some of our next generation of computer science learners to read more widely and gain from the ideas they read about and the discussions that follow. Nurturing this skill might even inspire some of them to become authors themselves.



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#UWPGSEC



Hunt  
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# Stories and art



how reading  
can influence  
artistic  
production

**Simon Britton** is a current PGCE art and design trainee, at the University of Worcester. **Simon Huson** is a Senior Lecturer and leads the PGCE art and design programme.

Each child's journey into, and through, literature will be individual and very personal. They will come across some books as part of growing up, especially if they are lucky enough to come from families in which their cultural capital is considered to be important, and parents develop this capital in different ways, such as reading picture books to their children, or buying non-fiction books that they feel might interest them. These early encounters with stories are formative and vital. In their primary schools the journey continues, reading with the teacher or reading books of their own choice in the book corner with time allowed to just enjoy reading. Moving into secondary schools some pupils may maintain their engagement with reading on a personal level, but the evidence suggests that reading for pleasure declines during teenage years: *reading frequency is also at a historic low, with 20.5% of eight- to 18-year-olds reporting reading daily in their free time, compared with 28% last year* (National Literacy Trust, in *The Guardian*, 2024). One of the obstacles may be the increasing complexity of school based texts that pupils are made to read, such as novels, plays and poetry in English, and a range of texts in other subjects. Tutor time continues to offer pupils periods of time for reading their own choice of books, but is this going far enough to encourage reading for pleasure?

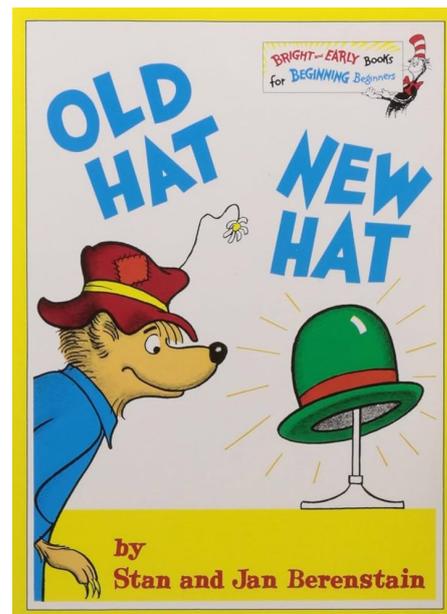
In art and design reading for pleasure should be encouraged and could be made central to the coursework of pupils in all years. The literacy practice that I see on my travels around the

county's art and design departments tends to be limited to worksheets, small sections of text to read as a class, or short written responses; extended reading is not evident, strange given that pupils at A level are required to write "a related study which explores the context in which their chosen practical area of study exists" (OCR, 2018). This writing needs to be of sufficient quality to demonstrate, at the highest level "sophisticated and sustained communication of ideas with thorough exploration, refinement and excellent critical and contextual understanding; extensive and sophisticated handling of specialist language and vocabulary in recording is demonstrated; an accomplished level of structured and reasoned knowledge and understanding is shown when presenting the study and realising intentions; connections, where appropriate, between visual and other elements are sophisticated" (OCR, 2018). This is complex stuff that demands a high level of language understanding and manipulation and that can be developed over time through the use of a range of literacy activities that are not the central focus of this article, but the judicious direction of pupils towards relevant texts can also support their literacy development.

What we would like to focus on here is the reading for pleasure aspect, outside of formal lessons, that we might



support, and how, over a child's school years, this may bring pupils into contact with the work of a range of artists. We are going to discuss our own childhoods,



and the books and artists that influenced our own artistic development, and hopefully this may inspire colleagues in schools to suggest reading lists for pupils in all years with the aim of developing pupils' language, and the breadth and depth of their understanding and knowledge related to our subject.

SH: Reading for pleasure as I was growing up allowed me to form relationships with stories and the artists that illustrated them, engaging me with both artforms. As a small child my dad would make up stories to tell me and my brother at bedtime, *The Ghost Train at Scarborough*, and *Pussycat Daffodil*, filling our heads with images. My parents bought me books with amazing illustrations that told me stories, such as Ladybird books (*Tootles the Taxi*, *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Three Billy Goats Gruff* and so on), or factual books such as *The Children's Book of Questions and Answers* (Chartwell). The pictures were the things that grabbed me, hooked me in, and this led naturally to reading the



Judge Dredd: Apocalypse War, 2000 AD Prog 245. Art by Carlos Ezquerra.

text to find out more. I read Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat*, in primary school, in the reading corner, and at home *Old Hat*, *New Hat*, and *Bears in the Night* (both Harper Collins), and did a project on soldiers supported by the Ladybird Book *Arms and Armour*, from which I copied many illustrations, building up my basic understanding and skills of line, tone, composition, and observation of detail.



Tom Adams: *The Hollow*

SB: It all began much earlier, and this is where I place the blame on the parents - or, in my case, the parent. Regardless of how busy my mum was, she would always find time to read to me as a toddler. It wasn't just *See Spot Run*, although there was certainly an element of this as I learned to convert those squiggles into language. Mum recognised the need to give me a bit of a head start in both literacy and numeracy, and even before I got to primary school my reading age was quite advanced. She also drilled the times tables into me, which was not as much fun but certainly gave me a solid background in numeracy. It was the reading which I loved, though. Even if I was too young to fully understand the big words, once we'd finished following Spot's progress with his ball, Mum would simply read whatever she was reading herself out loud, with me following along trying to pick up the words on the page.

It seemed to work. My primary school reports almost always reported I was a clever child, but "his head is always stuck in a book". I read voraciously, fiction and non-fiction, magazines, newspapers, instruction manuals. I almost always had a book in my hand. I am certain there is some form of psychological analysis that ties books and reading to comfort, love, nurture,

and close familial bonds. Maybe it's because I just love reading. Maybe, just maybe, the two things are related?

SH: I copied *Beano* comics and could spend hours reading and drawing *Minnie the Minx*, and this led to an interest in animation and the work of the Walt Disney Studios, drawing my own people and animals in their style. On my paper round I read the copies of *2000AD*, and *Judge*

*Dredd*, my first venture into fantasy and science fiction art and literature – the drawings were so inspiring, but second hand when delivered to the waiting customers! Later, this interest developed into the work of Dave McKean in the graphic novel *Batman – Arkham Asylum*; the story, the artist's skills – McKean is a master, and his techniques should inspire so many pupils.

SB: Born in the 1970s, I grew up with reading as my only escape into imaginary worlds through reading actual paper books, comics, and magazines. I developed a love for science fiction and fantasy from a very early age. It wasn't from a position of privilege, either. I had humble beginnings, slotted into the "single parent" family category with the associated stigma. I was often left with my grandparents whilst my hard-working mum worked several jobs to keep a roof over our head. My



grandparents were lovely, and ensured I was kept entertained by purchasing that week's comics: *Beano*, *Dandy*, *Whizzer & Chips*, and the new "comic" *2000AD*. It had pictures in it, like all the other comics, so it must therefore be suitable for primary school me. Those of you who are of a certain vintage might spot the odd one out. *2000AD* was not really designed for the same demographic as the other publications, aimed at an older audience (some would argue an adult one). There were themes of dystopia, political allegories, horror, and mystery within the pages of this classic British science fiction periodical. Even at the age of around six years old, I quickly learned to ignore the "kids comics", which were politely flicked through, and I would spend all my reading time absorbing the "grown-up" stories, language, and fantastic illustrations in the pages of *2000AD*. This seriously affected my reading habits and still does today. As an artist, *2000AD* had a huge influence on my illustration style.



SH: Other forms of literature at this time (early teens) included *Custom Car* magazine, both for reading about the cars and for the illustrations that I copied, now in pen and ink, developing media and line quality skills, and the books of Frank Frazetta's art, bought from Forbidden Planet in Bristol. Frazetta was an illustrator who worked on stories of *Tarzan*, *Conan the Barbarian* and sci-fi in pen and ink and paint, something I had yet to explore. Studying the detail in his drawings of human forms and landscapes took my work to the next level in quality. I used

sections of his work in my O level (because I am old!) final exam piece and gained an A grade! Other fantasy artists whose books gripped me included Alan Lee (*Castles, Faeries, The Mabinogion*), Arthur Rackham (*Alice in Wonderland, Cinderella, A Christmas Carol*), and Edmund Dulac (*Sinbad, The Arabian Nights*).

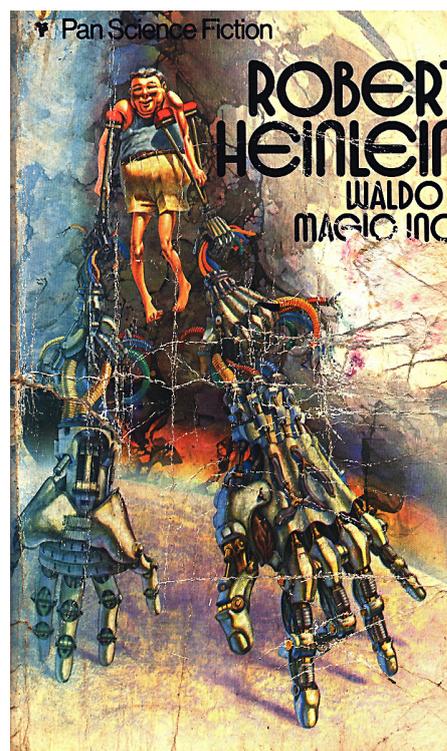
As a teenager I read a lot of novels, murder mysteries, horror and science fiction; the first categories included Agatha Christie books, many of which had cover paintings by Tom Adams. He was a skilled painter, using clues from the stories to create intriguing images. I made my own versions of some of these, learning processes of layering and developing confidence. Books by H.G. Wells, John Wyndham, Huxley and Orwell generated imagery for my own work, and I was inspired at this point by artists such as Partrick Woodroffe, a Cornwall based painter and printmaker of book jackets and album covers. His book, *A Closer Look*, describes his processes in great detail, and I was able to develop my own skills, now working in oil paints particularly. Alan Lee went on to later illustrate a version of *Lord of the Rings*, a book I read on the bus going to and from my Art Foundation course in Newport College of Art, which led to his being the conceptual designer on Peter Jackson's films. In one of my first serious attempts at using watercolour I copied one of his paintings in *Castles*, learning about the processes of painting, use of colour, and control of detail. This painting gained me a place in art college to study illustration at Falmouth.

I was now, in my early twenties,



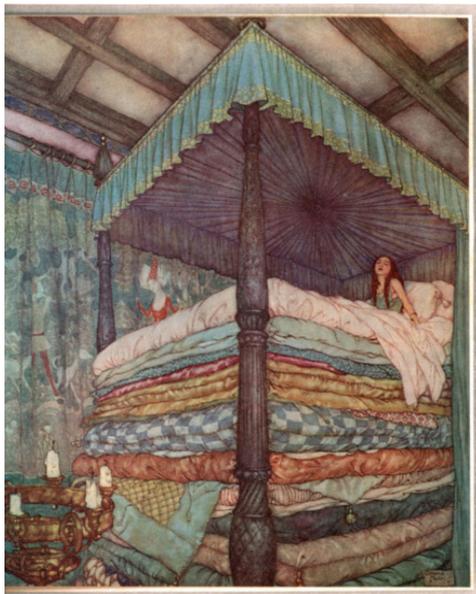
more interested in realism, looking at the work of the Pre-Raphaelites in particular, and their story inspired paintings. I have a love of poetry and Shakespeare, as they had, and the stories from the novels, plays and poems I read in school and later on, fuelled my artwork into adulthood.

SB: Let's jump forward five decades to now. I have always read and continue to do so. I usually have a couple of



books on the bedside table, one fiction, one non-fiction, and spend about an hour reading every day (currently it's *John Dies at the End* by David Wong and *The Man Who Invented the Twentieth Century* by Robert Lomas. There's another book in the lavatory, just in case I need to dip in for a quick chapter (*Medicine in the Middle Ages* by Ian Dawson).

I have a busy family life, a series of



ludicrous and time-consuming hobbies, and still there is time for reading. My point is, even though I am busy, I still have a love for - I'd go so far as an addiction to - reading. My partner and I still read to each other, often sitting together with our own books quoting particularly entertaining paragraphs out loud. In a bizarre twist of fate, my partner's parents, particularly her mum, also read to her regularly as a child. Reading for pleasure, apparently, really does begin at home. I blame the parents. Why am I blaming the parents? Admittedly, it's a sweeping generalisation with almost no basis in actual, quantifiable research, but as I travel around, I see many parents pushing their toddlers around. Clutched in their delightful, sticky little hands (the toddlers, that is, not the parents) is a chunky, brightly coloured little tablet computer, frequently playing *Frozen* or *Moana* on a seemingly endless loop. It makes me wonder just how many of these digital parents take the time to sit with their offspring and actually read with them or to them using actual



words. I don't know how many of them do. Maybe I'm wrong, but I am certain that a love of reading begins at home, before children can even actually read.

SH: So much for our journeys. How do we support our children and young adults in theirs? What can we offer as part of, and in addition to, our curriculum in art and design? We can make the curriculum relevant to their interests and consider making it broader, with a focus on how stories inspire art and can lead to fulfilling careers in the creative industries. We can offer suggestions for a wide range of literature (fiction, non-fiction, magazines, plays, poetry) that pupils may be interested in reading for themselves, but that link closely to the work of inspiring artists.

SB: Should we be looking to encourage the parents, rather than the children in our care? I think we should, and it's our job to find ways to encourage this activity in a digital age where time is a precious resource. As educators, we won't always have the time to instil a love of reading into our lessons, no matter how hard we try. We can absolutely run lunchtime or after-school book clubs, reading circles, and make sure our pupils know what we are currently reading. That message needs to filter back to families, and a love for reading should be normalised at home, not just in the classroom.

We have collected a range of links and other resources that you may find useful. You can access these through the QR code on this page. We hope this is helpful and would like to invite you to give us feedback on them, and to send us your own links and resources so that we can add them and share more widely.



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 UW Source, vol. 1  
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**Sparkling  
a love of  
reading  
through a  
child's own  
passion**



**Sue Parker-Morris** is the University of Worcester PGCE secondary subject leader for design and technology (food). She left the catering industry to train as a Food Technology teacher in 1991 before teaching in secondary schools across the UK and New Zealand. Her experience includes middle management roles, leading and developing Food Preparation & Nutrition and teaching both Food and Textiles.

“Just as the taste of a single bite can awaken long-dormant memories, it also has the power to nourish our souls and bridge the gap between past and present” (Apte,S.2024).

Writing this article on reading for pleasure has made me feel extremely nostalgic, as you will see later. But behind my reminiscing, I hope there is a clear message that inside every child, there should be a passion, and this alone can spark joy through the love of reading. This could be sport, art, science fiction or travel. For me, the context was always cooking!

My usual Sunday mornings are spent sat in a comfy chair surrounded by a mountain of cookery books, deciding what to bake; memories flood back of

trigger within my mind. The pictures of the recipes we baked together conjure up smiles of loved ones long passed and images of my nana’s hands rolling out the pastry, taking care with the crimping



around the edges of her apple pie. Whilst we cooked, (and even danced on occasions), my nana would play her Jim Reeves vinyls on her much-loved, mahogany record player in the dining room.

After the baking would come the best part - us sitting in the sunshine, drinking her homemade lemonade under her apple trees in the garden, whilst relishing the fruits of our labour; a delicious, homemade jam tart or apple pie! After one bite, I would already begin to contemplate on what I might create for my next joyful experience in the kitchen.

spent reading through the pages of her recipe books, would lead my career back teaching in the very same room at the university that she once worked. Whilst many children of my age would be reading the latest version of Enid Blyton, I would surround myself with the latest Delia Smith or Mary Berry Cookery book, or later be inspired by Gary Rhodes with his spiky hair! Spending hours looking at the pictures of the latest recipe and reading what I needed inspired me to practice, experiment, and on my occasions my poor family sometimes pretending they were enjoying my latest concoction of food! But for me, food was carefully intertwined with personal memories, this spark of family gatherings and holidays. This experience should be a cultural identity that should be celebrated within the classroom.

Being a food teacher, we have the greatest privilege of encouraging and seeing the pleasure a child can have when cooking or being creative. Sometimes this creative flair needs support and nurturing. Reading a recipe book can be the gateway to this education, a sense of wellbeing or a link to a nostalgic memory. What a joy would it be, that years later a student might say that reading the recipes with their food teacher encouraged a love of reading and cooking!

**Escaping in recipe books and cooking for positive mental well-being**

Unfortunately, with only 34.6% of children aged 8-18 years stating that they enjoyed reading in their free time (National Literacy Trust, 2024 ) it is important that within our subject we endeavour to provide a different opportunity for reading for pleasure; this provides an escape from screen time and electronic devices. To once again see the benefits of escaping in the pages of a magical recipe book, in the hunt for the next new recipe, rather than endlessly googling a recipe that ultimately comes back with American cup measurements! Evidence from the National Literacy Trust (2024) also reported that only 20.5% of children and young people aged 8-18 read something daily in their



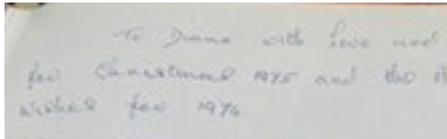
Betty Millis was completely my inspiration in becoming a food teacher. How strange that her journey through life and mine would intertwine so beautifully, that I often feel her watching me as I teach in my university classroom. Whilst together, we spent hours reading recipes books and as well as teaching me to cook, she was helping me to

cherished times and events in my life. These are not just prompted by the cake mixture stuck to some of the pages, or by the folded corners of the most baked and well-loved recipes, but by the sparks and glimpses that the words on the page

read, as well as mastering and refining her own cooking skills as the ‘domestic science’ technician at Worcester College of Higher Education, the forerunner of The University of Worcester. How proud she would be that the hours

free time; concerningly there has been a decrease in the enjoyment of reading in our 11-14 year olds, from 40.4% in 2023 to 30.7% in 2024. The key is how to encourage a child to enjoy reading; if we can achieve this, the evidence is there that they will read more frequently throughout their life.

**Finding a book to inspire or 'hook' us in**



For me this was easy - a recipe book, given as a Christmas present to my mum in 1975 (by my nana), was my inspiration and motivated me to cook.

According to my mum, I was cooking from the Hamlyn All Colour Cookbook when I was around 8 years old, which featured a very young Mary Berry. My repertoire at this age was limited, although inspired by the pictures, I endeavoured to make scones and chocolate brownies. The link between reading and cooking allowed me to escape and find joy in not just the pages of the book, but in the kitchen too!



A study through the University of Cambridge (2023) found that there is significant evidence linking reading for pleasure with positive mental health and well-being, including reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety. This should therefore be an incentive to



encourage reading for pleasure, a form of escapism, calm and relaxation. As young children, we awaken the joy of reading through pictures, illustrations or photos to support and help our understanding. As a food teacher, what better extension of this than a recipe book to help support reading and bring back the joy and nostalgic memories that might be associated with the foods they remember and hopefully continue to foster a love of reading. I believe there is no better gift to give someone than a recipe from the heart. These two recipes both provoke happiness, comfort, and security, as well as being truly delicious! The first - my nana's recipe - and maybe one for the less adventurous, jam tarts. It's all in the perfect pastry!

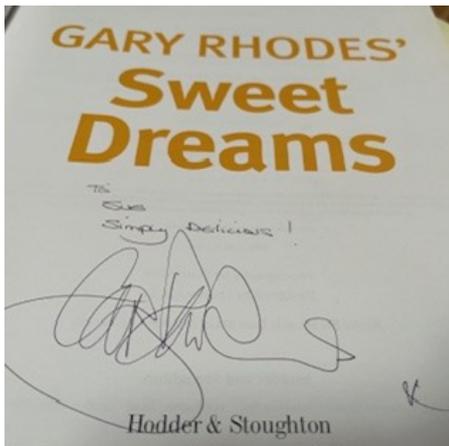
**Jam Tarts**

**Shortcrust Pastry**

- 225g plain flour
- Pinch of salt
- 150g butter
- 1 egg
- 25ml cold water
- Jam or lemon curd

**Method**

1. Sift the flour with the salt. Rub in the butter until the mixture resembles crumbs. Add the egg and water together and mix to a smooth dough. Wrap in cling film and place in the fridge for 30-60 minutes.
2. Roll out the pastry, cut into rounds and link a patty tin.
3. Put a little jam or lemon curd in each.
4. Bake at 200°C/Gas 6 for about 15 minutes.



The other is my version of a recipe from 'Sweet Dreams' by Gary Rhodes, whose books and recipes I enjoyed reading as a teenager and still do today! Almond and Plum Pizza (not really a pizza!)... I hope you enjoy!

### Almond & Plum Pizza

Pizza base – make shortcrust pastry (as for Jam Tarts)

For the frangipane filling

100g unsalted butter

100g caster sugar

2 eggs

75g ground almonds

Zest and juice of 2 lemons

Plums –

Knob of butter

8 plums, halved and stoned

1-2 tablespoons soft light brown sugar

few drops of water.

### Method

1. Preheat the oven at 200°C/Gas mark 6.
2. Line a pizza tin (or large flan dish) with the pastry and rest in the fridge for about 30 minutes. Then line the pastry with greaseproof paper and baking beans. Bake for 15 -20 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.
3. For the filling, cream together the butter and caster sugar. Beat in one egg at a time, adding in a little of the ground almonds with each. Add the grated lemon zest, flour and any remaining almonds. Lastly stir in the lemon juice. Spread the filling in the cooked pastry case.
4. For the plums, add the butter into a large frying pan, once bubbling, put in the plums, flesh side down. Increase the heat until the plums are golden. Add a 1–2 tablespoons of sugar and caramelise the plums (5-10 minutes) Add a little water to the pan, to make a caramel syrup that will coat the plums. Remove the pan from the heat, put the plums on a plate to cool slightly before adding on the top of the frangipane mixture (keep the syrup for later).
5. Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden brown.
6. Remove from the oven, lift out the tin and place on a pizza tray. Brush with the syrup and sprinkle with grated lemon zest.

The D&T trainees have developed a range of resources that they hope will inspire you to use in the classroom. One idea is to encourage students to create

their own recipe books, sharing in each other's experiences. This activity allows them to combine their love of cooking with their creativity and writing skills. They can document their favourite recipes, write about their cooking experiences, and even include photos and drawings. It could also celebrate the diversity within the classroom. The trainees have modelled this, and you can see their recipe collection via the QR code on this page. We hope this is helpful and would like to invite you to give us feedback on them, even share some of your recipes with us, we would love to see them, and maybe use them.



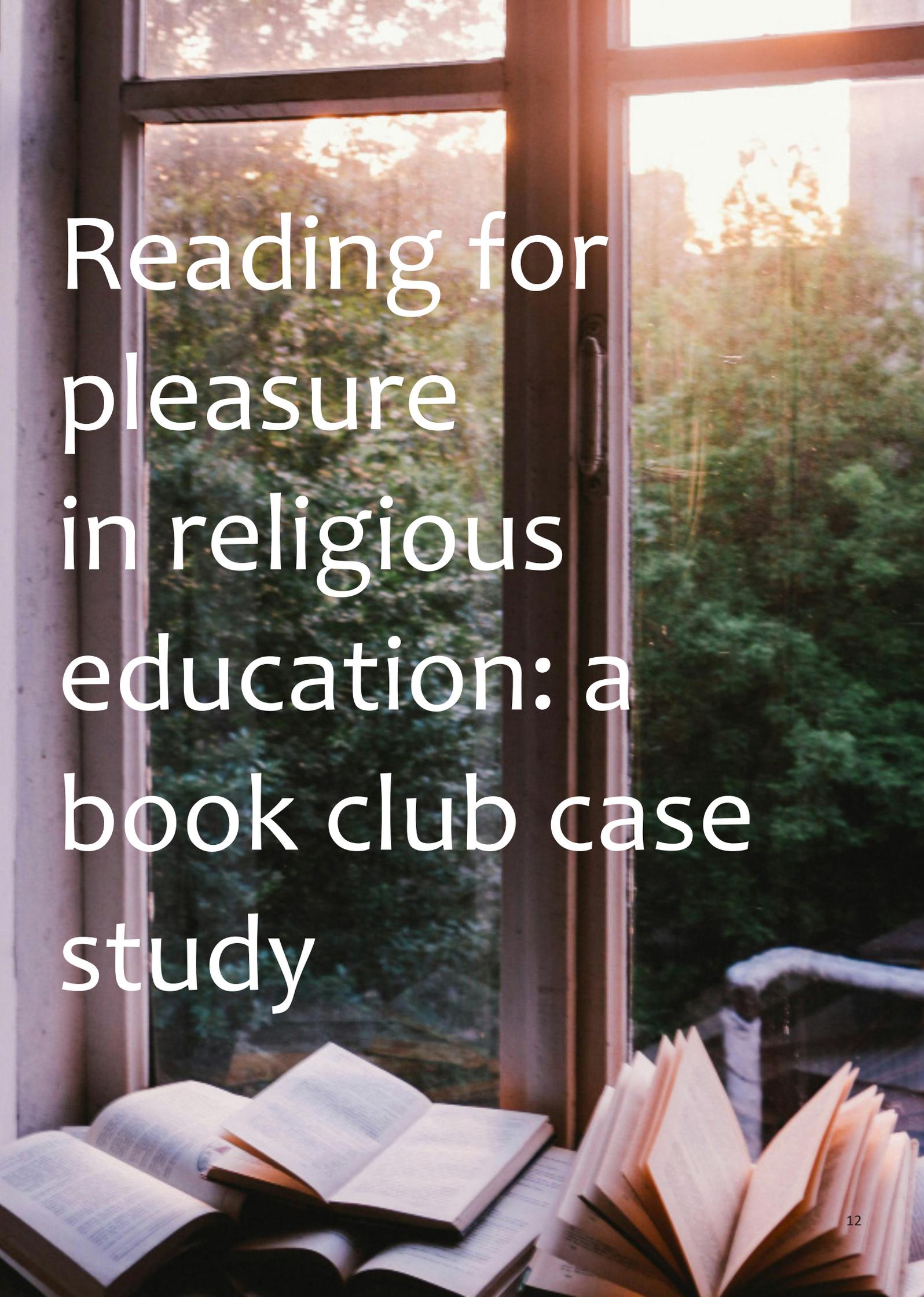
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Parker-Morris  
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A photograph of a window with a view of greenery and a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow. In the foreground, several open books are scattered on a surface, some with pages turned. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Reading for pleasure in religious education: a book club case study

**Karen Steele** is the University of Worcester PGCE secondary subject lead for Religious Education. She spent over 20 years in secondary education, and has a Masters in Religious Education from the University of Warwick. Karen is also a Farmington Fellow and a member of the National Association of RE Teachers (NATRE) Executive.

It's an unlikely scene at 4.15pm on a chilly Tuesday in February: a bunch of excited teenagers gathered voluntarily in a classroom at Hethersett Academy, Norwich, to discuss philosophy. But that's what I found when I joined Nikki McGee and her RP (religion & philosophy) book club. Their delight in talking about the club was impressive. And they had plenty to say about why other schools should set up clubs like this.

The number of children and young people who say they enjoy reading and read daily in their free time continues to decline, according to the 2024 National Literacy Trust survey. Yet we also know the benefits of reading are numerous (see the 2012 DfE report on reading for pleasure, which surveys a range of research), and RE has some of the best characters, stories and issues to be explored through literature.

Now in its third year, the club has been an important part of Nikki's efforts to build Religious Education in her school.

RE has its own challenges, including limits on curriculum time, teacher expertise and budgets, as well as misconceptions about the subject and its content. Nikki has hit upon an extremely effective way to tackle many of these problems and get kids reading. Here are just some of the benefits the Hethersett example displayed.

### Social and emotional benefits

This group of students from across year groups and genders have a bond. It was obvious at once: they talked about being part of a community and having 'found their people'. Older students welcomed newcomers and supported them.

### Developing confidence

One girl talked about 'bragging rights'; book club empowered her to share what she had learned beyond the group. She enjoyed the resulting kudos. Another boy said book club gave him confidence to speak in a debate in the Houses of Parliament.

### Developing deep subject knowledge and raising achievement

You don't hear pupils dropping Kant and Aquinas into conversation every day, but that's exactly what happened. Reading British philosopher author Nigel Warburton's *A Little History of Philosophy* equipped them to engage deeply with the philosophers and their ideas. Nikki talked of "lovely contextual information that comes out in their books or in discussions".

Here are a couple of things the pupils said: "you probably get taught more in here than you could in a second lesson a week, because . . . it gets so detailed"; "I think it's really helped, not just in terms of the depth of the learning, but also the breadth of the learning. . . what I've learned in the book club by having that extra hour every week really helped because you know about so many more philosophers".

### Status benefits

Nikki and the pupils are so proud of their book club and its success signalled to the whole school and SLT that RE is important and valued. It speaks volumes that teachers and pupils were willing to meet after school. And Nigel Warburton





To inspire you, you can access, via the QR code, some short book reviews with suggested discussion points written by the 2024/25 Worcester Secondary RE PGCE Trainees.

offered to meet club members after reading Nikki’s social media posts. How better to put RE on the map?

By reading along the teacher has developed her own subject knowledge which informs her teaching. She has introduced extracts from book club books into her lessons. Her enthusiasm and willingness to read and learn alongside the pupils is clearly important; she describes it as the highlight of her week.

Here is some advice from the Hethersett pupils and their teacher for setting up your own RE book club. Much of this aligns with research findings. For example, the importance of pupil choice and relationships between teachers and pupils (DfE, 2012 page 6):

- Create a relaxed atmosphere with sufficient time to read and talk together. Hethersett opted for after school, as the 30-minute lunchbreak was too rushed. Starting with hot chocolate was popular and a great way to welcome newcomers.
- Give pupils choice about what to read. At Hethersett pupils contribute to a shortlist and vote on their next reads. So far, the books have been non-fiction and philosophical in nature, but the pupils have plenty of ideas for future reads.
- Use the whiteboard. The pupils talked

animatedly about how the whiteboard was a useful tool to sketch out and analyse ideas that they encountered in their reading.

- The club is open to all, but Nikki also personally invites pupils she thinks are particularly suited. Pupils were encouraged by this.
- Teacher engagement and modelling has proven to be very effective. Nikki’s enthusiasm and willingness to read and learn alongside the pupils is clearly important; she describes it as the highlight of her week.
- The DfE research shows that owning books is a significant factor in reading for pleasure research shows. Nikki initially paid for the books from her department budget, but has now secured funding from the PTA. Here’s an opportunity to be creative.

For more practical advice, read Nikki’s blog. Other issues that may be considered are opportunities for parental involvement as well as working with other curriculum areas. There is so much potential.

I came away inspired; young people do love reading, and given the right encouragement, can benefit so much from it. It seems that an RE book club can create the circumstances to make reading very pleasurable.



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S

THEIR LOVE  
WILL SET THE  
STARS ALIGHT . . .

'GRIPPING'  
Wren James

'UNFORGETTABLE'  
Kathryn Evans

'EXTRAORDINARY'  
Jan Dunning

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OLIVIA LEVEZ

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS AS READERS AND READERS AS TEACHERS

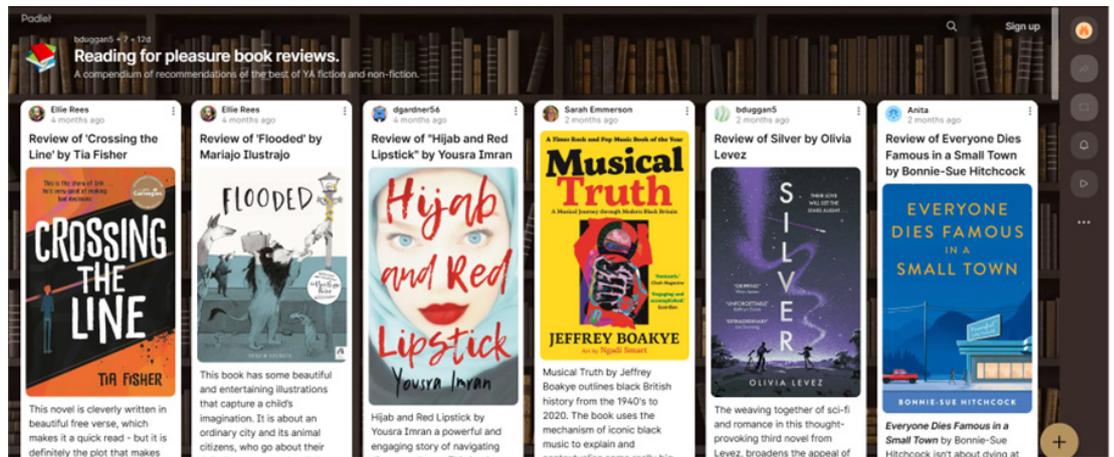


**Bronwen Duggan** is the subject lead for PGCE Secondary English, and **Anita Iddon** is a tutor and lead mentor in the PGCE secondary subject English team at the University of Worcester. She spent over 30 years in secondary education, before moving into a career in ITTE.

As a team of secondary teacher trainers offering a range of thirteen curriculum subjects, we are committed to modelling the importance and benefits of reading for pleasure (RfP). No matter the subject pathway of our trainees or the roles that they go on to fulfil as their careers progress, RfP has a vital role to play in establishing teacher identities and in cementing pupils' development and wellbeing. As future leaders and outstanding teachers, our trainees can become the reading role models that our secondary school young people need. However, in order to inspire and encourage pupils to become engaged and empathetic readers, teachers and teacher educators need to read widely themselves. A broad knowledge of the literature available to children and young adults is critical, alongside a passion for books that is regularly shared with their classes.

We know that reading widely and for pleasure is good for individuals and communities. It is not only linked to improved academic performance and a broad general knowledge but there is also growing evidence that RfP supports good mental health and emotional wellbeing. Empowering students to make their own choices in reading material is a key strategy for fostering a love of reading; teachers play a pivotal role in this. But how can we do this effectively if we're not readers ourselves? If we're not readers of children's literature and young adult (YA) fiction, how can we grow our classroom book nook corners or recommend the best texts to feed a newly forming or

established reading habit? This article explores the vital role of the form tutor, in promoting reading for pleasure by examining successful practical strategies, and exploring challenges, as underpinned by current research on the subject. In addition, our English trainees have created resources to support subject teachers and form tutors with promoting a RfP culture within their classrooms. Please use the QR code alongside this article to access these resources.



As a secondary ITT team, we have also started a Padlet for sharing, recommending and reviewing children's literature and YA fiction. A link to the Padlet can also be found alongside this article. We invite you and your teams to expand your own knowledge of this genre by reading and adding to this working document.

Subject teachers, the form tutor and school leaders play a crucial role in curating a diverse collection of books with stories that resonate and characters that pupils can identify with; books that cater to diverse interests, reading levels and lived experiences. By ensuring that students have access to and knowledge of books that they find engaging, teachers can remove barriers that may otherwise prevent reading for pleasure. According to

Kern (2017), providing students with a broad range of genres—from fiction to non-fiction, graphic novels to poetry—helps to develop their interests and promote self-directed reading.

The joy of reading plays a significant role in children's academic and personal development. Research has consistently shown that students who enjoy reading regularly have improved literacy skills, higher levels of empathy, and better overall cognitive development (Nell, 2019; Clark & Rumbold, 2006). While

parents and librarians often receive attention for their roles in fostering reading habits, teachers also play a pivotal role in encouraging and supporting reading for pleasure (Kern, 2017).

A whole school approach, supported by senior leaders can advocate for teachers as readers, allowing them to prioritise reading and to create a classroom culture that promotes the



enjoyment of books. A safe, literature-rich environment encourages students to engage with books outside the classroom setting. According to Clark and Rumbold (2006), teachers can influence students' attitudes toward reading by demonstrating a positive relationship with books, integrating reading into daily routines, modelling reading aloud

their students every day. The reality is that you cannot inspire others to do what you are not inspired to do yourself. Another aspect of a conducive reading environment is the physical surroundings. Tutor room displays of book recommendations and celebrations of favourite authors and genres can be used to signpost pupils to their

YA fiction cannot be overstated. Books like the graphic novel *Heartstopper* explore themes of identity and sexuality, offering solace and affirmation to readers experiencing similar challenges. By presenting stories that mirror their own journeys, young readers can feel validated and understood, fostering a sense of community and belonging.



and fostering a classroom ethos that values literature. Research by Sullivan and Brown (2015) further highlights the importance of teacher influence in creating a reading culture, stating that when teachers show enthusiasm for reading, students are more likely to mirror that enthusiasm. Whilst some pupils may have positive reading models at home and in their immediate communities, this will not be the case for all. As Miller (2009) reminds us, how are young people supposed to become readers if they don't have enthusiastic and inspirational reading models to emulate? As the best reader in the room, form tutors can learn to embrace their reading love proudly in front of

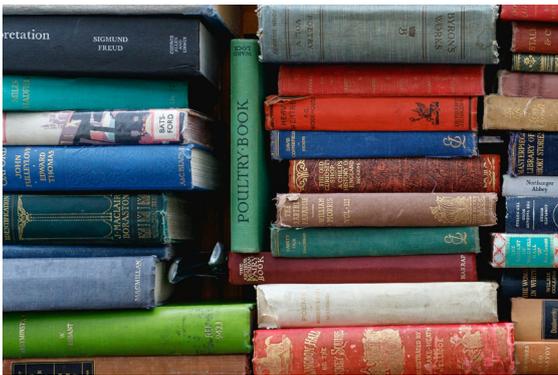
next book. Attractive, creative and interactive displays can be particularly helpful in directing pupils to the huge range of YA fiction titles available as well as increasing teacher knowledge of this genre. Why not create a similar display in the staffroom and encourage staff to start a YA fiction book club? YA fiction tackles issues and themes that are universally relevant to teenagers, such as forging of identity, navigating relationships, and personal growth. With its focus on characters who embody the struggles and aspirations of adolescents, YA provides readers with relatable narratives that can enhance their understanding of their own lives. Moreover, the representation found in

Where leaders offer support and encouragement, the environment itself can incorporate comfy spaces, bean bags, cushions and relaxed spaces to enjoy reading. We wouldn't generally choose to read a book for pleasure at our desk so why not explore other options in the school environment too?

As part of an increased focus on social reading and choice, giving students the autonomy to sometime select what they read encourages a sense of ownership over their learning. As noted by Clark (2019), students who are allowed to select their reading materials are more likely to read regularly and engage with texts on a deeper level. Tutors can

also guide students to make informed choices by recommending books based on their interests or by introducing new authors and genres. Visits to local and school libraries and bookshops as well as access book boxes and book donations plays an important part in broadening pupils' choices and access.

Autonomy in terms of the form of reading can be equally important. Recent findings from The National Literacy Trust highlight the growing engagement of children and young people with audiobooks. The research indicates that audio can serve as a complement to reading print books. Children are starting to recognise the value of audio storytelling, reinforcing the notion that stories have merit regardless of their presentation format.



Form tutors can support reading for pleasure by actively encouraging students to read regularly, talk about books (book blather), and offer positive reinforcement. Creating a system to recognise and celebrate reading achievements, whether through rewards, praise, or discussions about books, helps to keep students motivated. Research by Brindle (2019) supports this idea, showing that students who receive encouragement and support from their teachers are more likely to develop long-term reading habits. In addition, the form tutor can build opportunities for students to share their reading experiences with their peers. This can be done through regular "book chats" or informal discussions about books they are enjoying. Research indicates that peer discussions help students to deepen their understanding of texts and can encourage reluctant readers to

explore new materials (Swartz, 2018). Despite the benefits of reading for pleasure, many students, particularly in secondary schools, may be reluctant readers. The form tutor plays an important role in addressing these challenges by identifying underlying issues, such as lack of confidence, difficulty finding appealing books, or distractions from technology (Topping & Paul, 2020). In some cases, students may benefit from personalised reading strategies, such as scaffolding support or one-on-one reading sessions, to help them develop the necessary skills and confidence to enjoy reading.

Tackling reluctance to read involves creating an inclusive and non-judgmental space where students feel comfortable discussing their reading habits. According to the National Literacy Trust (2020), when form tutors take the time to connect with students individually about their reading, they are more likely to address students' specific barriers to reading and guide them toward books they will enjoy.

While the form tutor plays a central role in fostering reading for pleasure within the school setting, their influence can extend beyond the classroom. Form tutors can engage with parents to create a consistent approach to promoting reading at home, encouraging families to share reading experiences or participate in reading-related activities. The National Literacy Trust (2020) has emphasized the importance of this home-school partnership, noting that when parents and teachers work together, students are more likely to develop positive reading habits.

The role of the form tutor goes beyond academic support, making a lasting impact on students' literacy development and personal growth. By recognising the importance of reading for pleasure and actively encouraging it, form tutors contribute significantly to the overall well-being and academic success of their students.



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Duggan and Iddon  
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Reading for pleasure  
in further education:  
between the lines  
and beyond the  
classroom

**Phoebe Blackburn** is currently pursuing a PGCE in Further Education, specialising in English Literature. With a strong academic background in literary studies, they have a particular interest in Gothic and Dystopian fiction. In 2023, they completed their master's dissertation, 'The Body in Biopolitical Futures', exploring themes of power and control in speculative narratives. Upon qualifying as a teacher, Phoebe aims to further their academic and professional development by undertaking a PhD, with the ultimate goal of becoming a lecturer. **Mike Tyler** is a lecturer on the PGCE FES programme.

### The Status of 'Reading for Pleasure' in FES colleges

The status of Reading for Pleasure (RfP) in the Further Education and Skills (FES) sector is disheartening. Among children and young people, reading enjoyment decreases with age and reaches its lowest point between the ages of 16 and 34 (Clark et al. 2024). The Reading Agency (2024) reports that among 16-24-year-olds, 44% are "lapsed readers" and 24% have "never been regular readers."

The reasons for this are numerous:

- 26% of lapsed readers attributed this to spending too much time on social media (The Reading Agency 2024).
- Young adults (16-34) more than any other age range struggle to focus, have greater challenges finding relatable content, and cannot find things to read that interest them (The Reading Agency 2024).
- 15% of 16- to 24-year-olds cite bad past experiences of reading at home or at school as the reason they do not

enjoy reading (Cole et al. 2022). There is also a socioeconomic factor at play. Most FES colleges in England are General FE colleges that typically serve communities and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Lisauskaite et al. 2021), and literacy proficiency is linked to parental education levels (Jonas & Thorn 2018). Taylor (2013, 90) suggests that "being lower-SES can be

approach revolves around improving learner confidence, text accessibility, and ultimately re-sit results. Her specific strategies centre on campus-wide initiatives such as displaying engaging posters and staff sharing their own reading with learners. Webb also advocates for designated reading spaces away from the classroom and suggests inviting learners to decorate the room to



thought of as a 'risk factor' for stopping reading". 58% of 8 to 11-year-olds are encouraged to read by their parents but only 25% of 16- to 18-year-olds are similarly encouraged (Cole et al. 2022).

### The Importance of 'Reading for Pleasure' in FES colleges

In primary and secondary schools Reading for Pleasure has been shown to have an important role in improving learner outcomes and progress (Cremin and Scholes, 2024; Sullivan and Brown 2015). However, we found little research relating to Reading for Pleasure in the Further Education and Skills sector. Webb (2020) focuses on FES-specific strategies to close the literacy gap while supporting learners to re-sit their GCSE English. With a focus on RfP, Webb's

foster student ownership. Taylor (2013) identifies that the benefits of RfP at age 16 are not only limited to the emotional and affective domains. Regularly reading books at age 16 has been shown to give students a higher chance of going to university, and of getting a professional or managerial job later in life – more so than any other extracurricular activity. Strategies, Successes and Solutions: A Sixth Form Perspective From a survey of around 100 students studying A-Level English Literature at a local sixth form college, 80% stated that they either read for pleasure regularly or occasionally. Clearly this cohort is not representative of the wider FES sector, but identifying some of their RfP strategies may help in developing approaches for other college students of a similar age.

Common strategies learners self-employed to read for pleasure include carrying a book or an e-reader for spare moments and setting specific time aside during the week. Students identify the value in RfP as it 'benefits [their] understanding of literature' and they believe that their 'good grades are partially because [they] read'. Key attempts of the college to promote RfP include providing quiet study spaces conducive to reading, resources and book recommendations in the library,



encouragement from teachers and tutors, and through the college's Aspire programme – which targets 'high flying' students.

Despite all this, 42% of students stated that they do not feel the college supports their RfP due to the demanding nature of the curriculum. While the college offers book clubs, writing competitions, and programmes to support reading, literacy and oracy, the primary barrier for RfP in this sixth form setting is time. Members of staff within and outside the English department acknowledged the absence of RfP, also

consistently citing time constraints as a key factor.

Consequently, a plausible route into encouraging further RfP is to make use of college holidays. Along with providing optional non-academic reading lists, colleges could consider strategies looking at out-of-term-time reading support as an alternative to independent study. Finally, technology like Microsoft Teams could be further maximised as an optional virtual book club with scope

for incentive – thus supporting RfP while considering student and teacher workload.

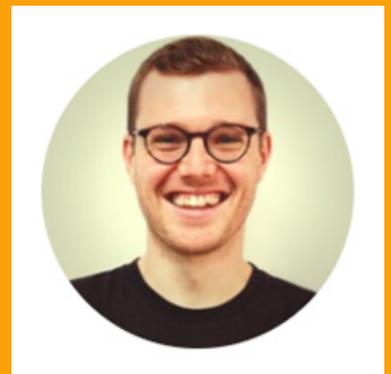
#### What does this mean for 'Reading for Pleasure' in the FES sector?

Colleges must start thinking 'around' the curriculum and could direct their attention to where some students are doing this already – such as in the holidays. They could also consider further the readily attainable successes Webb (2020) outlines using displays, rooms and reading statuses. The key question in FES is this: How can

teachers promote Reading for Pleasure without merely adding work to an already-packed curriculum?

#### Our Resources

The QR code will lead you to two resources. The first resource (a poster) provides strategies for teachers in FES to embed Reading for Pleasure into their students' college experience. The second resource (a PowerPoint) aims to persuade FES students of the benefits of Reading for Pleasure, before presenting them with strategies they may find helpful.



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Blackburn and Tyler  
UW Source, vol. 1  
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The



# ISLAND



Olivia Level

*All is not lost... but some things are hard to find.*

# Is reading for pleasure in a modern language as easy as pie?



Ce n'est pas de la tarte!  
Nicht kinderleicht!  
¡No es pan comido!  
...but it is possible.



*Isabelle Schäfer has been the PGCE Secondary Subject Lead Mentor for Modern Languages since 2008. She is also the International Coordinator for the Institute of Education. Her research focuses on cross-curricular collaboration, reading comprehension in modern languages and culturally responsive teaching.*

The percentage of young people (8-18) who read for pleasure has fallen to less than 50%, and reading enthusiasts strive to find texts that can broaden their knowledge about themselves, others, and the world as well support their well-being (Clarke, Picton & Galway 2023, pp. 3 and 9). Whilst one may assume that young people's inclination to read for pleasure reaches nearly 50% in a language that they can speak and read fluently, the percentage is likely to be lower for those who are studying a modern language (L2) at school. In a Webber et al. (2024, p.207) and Judge (2011, p.176), fifteen years apart, suggest that L2 learners need to connect emotionally to texts relevant to their preoccupations. One of the challenges in modern language lessons is that there is little space to dedicate time to reading for pleasure, as the texts chosen by teachers are typically supplemented with questions to help L2 learners develop their reading comprehension skills. This does not mean that answering questions

on a text cannot be enjoyable but reading in a formal educational setting and reading for pleasure are distinct activities. Endris (2022, p.69) and Yang, Chu, and Tseng, W.-T. (2021, p.95) support the idea of a low-stakes environment for reading for pleasure, in which pupils' comprehension is not systematically checked, at least formally. An emotional connection to a text, an element of choice, and the absence of testing will contribute to motivating L2 learners to read for pleasure, although this might still be insufficient to foster an incitement to read. Bahmani and Farvardin (2017), Yamashita (2015) and Ro (2013) suggest that L2 learners are likely to lose their motivation and feel anxious if the text that they are reading is not pitched at the correct level and if some textual

features are slightly beyond their levels of proficiency. They explain that anxiety increases if L2 learners are not in their comfort zone. Yang, Chu, and Tseng (2021, p.95) slightly qualify those views as they write that although texts need to be comprehensible, a healthy degree of challenge might have a positive impact on learners' self-efficacy, whereas a text that is too easy might damage it and lower levels of motivation. It is therefore a fine balance, and Webber et al. (2024, p.217) and Endris (2022, p.71) emphasize the importance of giving learners an element of choice to empower them to choose a suitable text. Challenges are not necessarily of a linguistic nature and Burgoyne, Whiteley, and Hutchinson (2013) warn that L2 learners may face additional barriers if they are not familiar with the cultural references of a text. This may be true of course but one may also argue that L2 learners' curiosity might be sparked as mentioned at the start of this article (Clarke, Picton & Galway 2023, pp. 9).

Another consideration to explore is the way young people might want to read, and interestingly, Endris (2022) Yang, Chu, and Tseng (2021) and Judge (2011) find that not all young people enjoy having a level of autonomy or prefer to read on their own. Some can feel isolated. Although some of the research

mentioned above was published about fifteen years ago, it is still current, as Clarke, Picton, and Galway (2023, p.10) also report that nearly a quarter of young people would like to discuss books with their relatives or their peers. Ro (2024), in a recent study that focuses on extensive reading, makes the case for opportunities afforded by book clubs at school. Their conclusions are not directly applicable to a secondary school context in England, especially because KS3 and KS4 L2 learners do not engage in extensive reading but it might be worthwhile to explore what a modern language book club or reading club for L2 learners might look like.

To that end, PGCE modern language students used AI to create texts on a range of topics which may be of relevance, or which may appeal to KS3 and KS4 learners. They then edited those texts and included as many cognates as possible as well as a glossary to make language comprehensible. It is hoped that those texts can be used for reading for pleasure purposes in lessons, in a book club or a reading club.

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# Misleading reading



*Su O'Donohoe is the subject lead for PGCE Secondary mathematics at the University of Worcester.*

The ability to understand and interpret influence, bias and misrepresentation is an integral part of reading for pleasure, and the use of persuasion, whether honourable or otherwise is a crucial element in building understanding.

When the gathering, processing or presentation of data is misleading, the reading of statistical evidence and the interpretation of data display may feature anywhere on a continuum from amusing to downright dangerous. The resource accompanying this article presents some 'real' statistics that you may choose to use in the classroom to amuse, irritate or even shock students and readers alike and to demonstrate the varied ways in which such illustrative statistics are generated.

While reading, whether for pleasure or to gain further insight, it is important to be able to navigate the presentation of misleading information. In this article, I explore the ways in which statistics can be presented in a misleading manner.

**Small sample size**

The small sample size generates a difficulty through possible misrepresentation of the wider population. Let's imagine you want to promote a new sandwich filler (it is lunchtime at the time of writing!). If 10 people prefer the sandwich that you offer, this could be great news if your sample is of 10 people ~100% uptake.

Or it could be a less overwhelming result if your sample size is 20 ~ only 50% uptake. If your sample is of 10000 people, your preference by 10 people is significant in that your sandwich offering is clearly not very popular. The more the merrier seems a reasonable assertion here. Another factor to



consider is the likelihood of choosing the 10 people who do like your sandwich as your sample elements. What are the chances?

**Biased samples**

Bias has been on the curriculum for years and it represents the unequal distribution of probability against a fixed set of outcomes. In terms of sampling, if you were to pitch your sandwich filler on a Thursday afternoon at a garden centre, your sample is unlikely to be representative of a wider population. The people in your sample are unlikely to be school children, working full time, or live in accommodation without a garden!

**Loaded/biased questions**

One of the funniest examples of persuasive questioning that I recall occurs in "The Ministerial Broadcast", an episode of the 1986 classic "Yes Prime

Minister" where Sir Humphrey Appleby convinces Bernard, his rather naïve yet well-intentioned aide, that he both supports and opposes the reintroduction of National Service.

In the first instance Humphry leads Bernard to approve of National Service

through leading him down a path of securing employment and preventing crime. In the next instance Bernard is horrified at the prospect of "giving young people guns and teaching them how to kill" (Lynn and Jay1986).

**The use of averages**

"On average..." suggests a measure of

central tendency which most would presume to be the mean. However, mean calculations can lead to very misleading outcomes when there are outliers or notable skew. One disreputable example is from the makers of Colgate toothpaste who claimed that 80% of dentists recommend their product. However, dentists could choose multiple items from a selection of toothpastes. Therefore, maybe it is a little concerning that 20% didn't pick Colgate?

**Simpsons paradox**

Simpsons paradox refers to the occurrence of seemingly contradictory trends when groups are combined. The paradox is frequently encountered in social and medical science statistics when causality is inferred from frequency data.

Example:  
School A has 60 students taking History,

## MATHEMATICS

of which 60% pass. They have 40 taking Geography, of which 80% pass. School B has 20 taking History and 50% pass, whilst 80 take Geography and 75% pass. Looking at the data this way, it appears that students in school A perform better in both subjects. If we look at the

full range of data is given; the examples of truncated or ‘missing’ data and the occasional blatant disregard for the truth!

How about the claim that a product increases your chances of a positive

only 43% of 8-18 year olds actively engaging in reading for pleasure. The impact of reading attitudes on maths attainment has been well documented and it should come as no surprise that a child who reads well will have a wider vocabulary, a greater capacity for comprehension and is more likely to approach scholarly tasks with a positive attitude. Data from The National Literacy Trust, the DfE, and BookTrust all illustrate the decline of the popularity – whichever way they present the data!

School	History class	%	Number passed	Geography class	%	Number passed
A	60	60	36	40	80	32
B	20	50	10	80	75	60

pass rates weighted by the number of students taking the subject across both schools: school A has 100 exam entries, of which 68 pass (68%); school B has 100 students of which 70 pass (70%).

Therefore, it would appear reasonable to claim that students in school B perform better....

Further to these examples, there are those artifices which are much more straightforward to spot. These include those pesky truncated axes which exacerbate and magnify differences, which are much less discernible if the

outcome by 80%. This does not mean that your chance would increase from say 10% to 90%. If the original chance of the positive outcome was 10%, an 80% increase would give a new chance of 18%. If your original chance was only 1%, your new chances remain at less than 2%!

And the bleach that kills up to 100% of germs...up to 100% could be any percentage at all.

The accompanying resource gives examples of some of these types of misleading graphs for you to use to illustrate the various means by which the presentation of data can manipulate our interpretation of that which we read! There are then links to further websites where you can find some ‘fascinating’(!) examples of graphical misrepresentation. Should you be interested in a phenomenal miscarriage of justice fuelled by the misrepresentation of probabilities, take a look at the tragic case of Sally Clark who was wrongly convicted of the double murder of her own children (<https://evidencebasedjustice.exeter.ac.uk/case/sally-clark/>).

Research by Clark, Picton & Galway for the National Literacy Trust 2023 suggests that 2023 marks the lowest incidence of reading enjoyment levels in the history of the survey with



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# The Open University/UKLA *Reading for Pleasure* Student Ambassador Scheme, with University of Worcester

## Do you

- love reading?
- enjoy sharing your passion for reading?
- want to impact on children as readers?

## Would you like to

- enhance your knowledge and practice in developing RfP?
  - take a role during your PGCE year to promote RfP?
- become involved in a wider RfP evidence informed movement?

## Are you prepared to

- join UKLA?
  - work in a pair/ three with others from your institution?
- offer year-long commitment to fostering your own and your peers' ability to nurture the habit of reading in childhood?

*It helped me to feel more confident when talking to fellow teachers about reading and the approaches they can take to really support their class to love reading (RfP ambassador)*

*It has given me a real specialist knowledge that I otherwise would not have had. (RfP ambassador)*



**READING  
FOR PLEASURE**



The appointment is for UW secondary PGCE students and is from  
1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026

Building  
a whole-  
school  
reading

community



*Ellie Rees is a subject tutor for the PGCE Secondary English course, and Kerrie Tinson is a Lead Practitioner for English at Windsor High School and Sixth Form.*

for concern. Schools across the country are thus working to enrich their reading cultures, and to evaluate their reading pedagogy. Many are looking for effective

Reading is high on our list of priorities at Windsor High School and Sixth Form. We know that reading for pleasure is the single biggest indicator of success in a student's life and this is a message delivered to staff and students frequently through CPD sessions, lessons, tutor times and assemblies. Our journey started with questions about reading: the importance of it, when we encourage students to do it and what type of reading we expect students to do. We did know that reading is important, we did know that reading is useful, and we did know that reading encourages creativity, accuracy and independence. What we didn't know was how effectively this was communicated to students.



According to evidence from the OECD (2002, 2010, 2021) reading for enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status. Therefore, finding ways to engage pupils in reading and developing the habit of reading has the potential to leverage social change. The International Literacy Association states: 'reading for pleasure is the right of every child' (ILA, 2019, Right 5). As a result, many primary and secondary school teachers in the UK work tirelessly with limited resources to provide positive reading environments and experiences for their pupils.

However, the recent National Literacy Trust survey of 8–18-year-olds reported the lowest levels of reading for pleasure since their records began in 2005 (Cole et al., 2024), with only 1 in 5 children reading something daily in their free time, and boys' reading habits continuing to present particular cause

evidence-informed approaches to shape their reading provision, and this is the starting point that Kerrie Tinson, Lead Practitioner for English at Windsor High School, found herself at in 2019. Here she explains some of the strategies that have been implemented at Windsor as part of their journey to establishing a strong reading culture.

The evolution of 'Reading for Pleasure' lessons started with our library lessons, where we observed 'policing' of the reading and ensured silent reading was undertaken as students completed quizzes on the books they had read so we could track their reading comprehension. We used a programme that limited students' book choices so that they were reading at their level. After evaluating evidence collated from staff and pupil voice, including research projects embarked on for an NPQSL, we moved away from 'tracking' and 'testing' reading to a more 'pleasurable' process that suited our setting and



seemed to support the research we, as a school, had explored and undertaken. Some of our members of staff joining the UKLA/OU 'Teachers' Reading Group' that encourages teachers to explore the pedagogy behind reading was an important moment as it gave status to reading for pleasure and the independent 'examples of practice' projects completed whilst part of the group also encouraged reflection and

in primary school when the teacher shared a story with you. We now read with students in Years 7-10 and Year 12, sharing texts which complement their form time activities, build perspectives and enhance their cultural capital. These sessions support relationship building with their tutor as well as the students' fluency as they listen to a fluent reader and have opportunities to emulate this, which in turn improves

a desire to be future educators, they like reading, or more recently they benefited from the reading support and would like to give back. The fluency of the younger student's reading is tested initially using a fluency rubric and they then follow a programme that includes extracts from a diverse range of texts with accompanying comprehension questions, as well as reading their own chosen books - encouraging reading for



pupil voice - all of which was in favour of embedding a reading for pleasure ethos in school.

A further step towards creating a strong reading for pleasure culture was taken when I approached the pastoral lead to implement the tutor time reading programme. I had observed, during my time as a teacher, many different attempts at reading during form time, many of which used DEAR - drop everything and read. I wanted our tutor reading to be collaborative, to be a shared process and perhaps remind staff and students of that magic time

their comprehension and supports their access to the whole curriculum.

The National Literacy Trust estimates that approximately one quarter of children left primary school in 2022 unable to read at the expected standard. To support the fluency and comprehension of students who enter our school below this standard, we use a variety of interventions, one of which is our Year 12 'Reading Coaches' programme. When applying to become a 'Reading Coach' for a younger student, the Year 12 students have to express their reason why. Reasons range from:

pleasure and increasing their volition for reading. The 'Reading Coaches' are trained using similar resources used to support staff; we explore the importance of reading, how to choose books, how to support pupils when reading and how to model fluent reading, using guidance from evidence-informed research sources such as the Education Endowment Foundation and the Institute of Education at the University of Worcester. The pastoral and academic benefits are vast; Year 7 and 8 students talk to the Year 12 students about their lessons, friendships and family, as well as the vocabulary they are learning and

how they feel about the text they are reading together.

Reading opens the door to our curriculum; allowing students to unlock their personal and academic potential. They can visit places in the world, understand other perspectives and learn new vocabulary; all through the pages of a book!

et. al, 2014). There is further research evidence to support the idea that both structured, formal opportunities for reading aloud and explicitly teaching the skill of reading, as well as more informal, unstructured moments for pupils and teachers to talk or 'blether' about books are equally as valuable (Cremin et al. 2022). Both enable pupils to see the value and importance of reading and help them to become active



The approach to building a whole school reading community taken at Windsor is rooted in a wealth of research evidence. Cremin (2014) reminds us that children's pleasure in reading is strongly influenced by reading networks and relationships: between teachers; between teachers and children; between children and children; and in some cases, between children, teachers, families and communities. A sense of community can be engendered in schools where staff and senior leaders share their reading lives and 'blether' about books (Cremin

participants in their reading community. Lastly, McGeown and Wilkinson (2021) suggest that teachers reading aloud in class increases children's access to a wide range of books, exposing pupils to more diverse books and authors than they would naturally encounter. Thus, teachers not only support students to develop their own reading fluency but also facilitate opportunities for them to broaden their knowledge of the wider world.



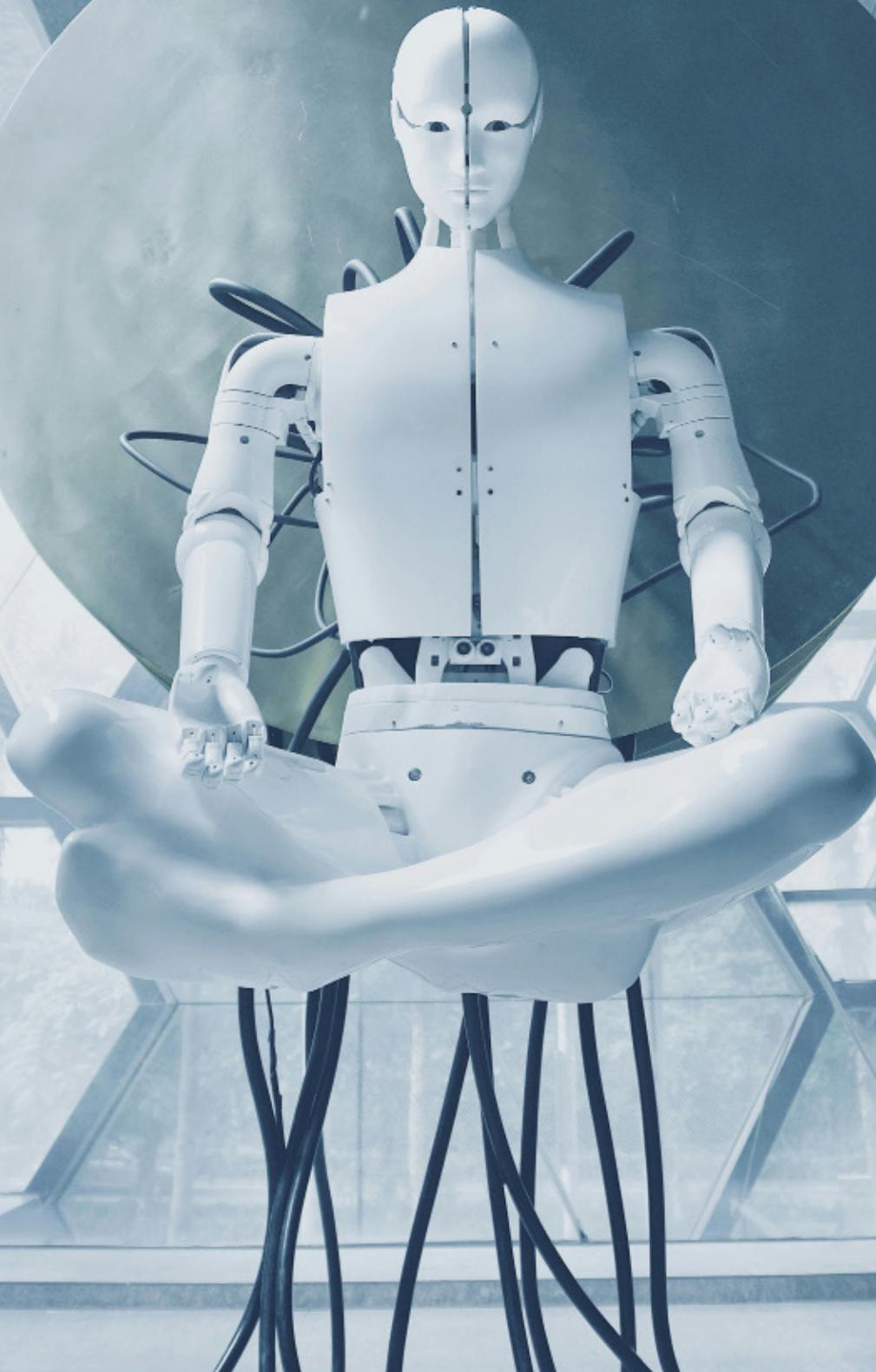
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Rees and Tinson  
UW Source, vol. 1  
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*Can science fiction  
act as a gateway to  
scientific literacy?*



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### Introduction

In this article, we explore how science fiction has the potential to break down barriers to science education and inspire more pupils, particularly girls, to engage with their learning in science. We will discuss how science fiction has long acted as a bridge between imagination and scientific inquiry and how it has the power to make complex ideas accessible and engaging. Through discussion, examples, and AI-generated recommendations, we highlight science fiction's potential as a powerful educational tool.

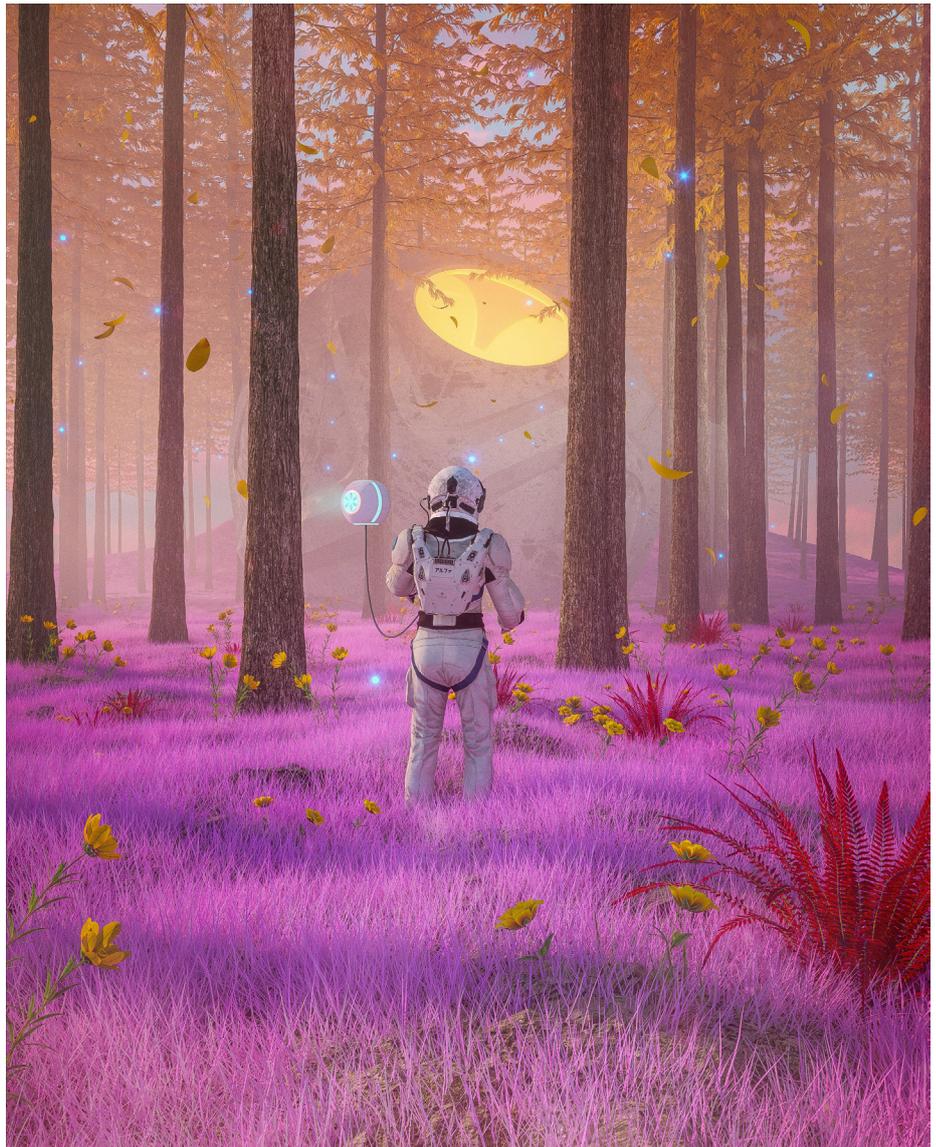
Pupils' disconnection from science  
As science educators, we are aware that for many pupils, science can be seen as a daunting subject. The introduction of abstract concepts, complex equations, and numerous facts to memorise has been shown to present a risk of decreased motivation and engagement due to cognitive overload (Sweller, van Merriënboer, & Paas, 1998). As with other STEM subjects, pupils sometimes label science as a 'hard' subject, which they deem as accessible only to pupils with high prior attainment. However, Pride (2024) argues that the underlying factors leading to pupils struggling with science is more likely due to a lack of willingness to engage, rather than being a result of prior academic outcomes. This suggests that if barriers to engage with science are broken down, pupils are more likely to achieve well, irrelevant of their prior achievements. One way to break down these barriers is by linking scientific concepts to tangible, real-world examples (Miller,

2011). However, some concepts are difficult to contextualise, so we are suggesting that science fiction can, at times, replace concrete examples to encourage active discussion. It is thought that science fiction also holds a transformative potential to spark curiosity. Once this is fostered, pupils are more likely to ask meaningful questions, thereby developing an understanding

through science fiction, we can help pupils build critical thinking skills, deepen their scientific understanding, and inspire their imagination.

### Connecting science fiction and scientific literacy

Scientific literacy is not just the capacity to know facts; it is the capacity to think



of the scientific concepts underpinning advancements (Wang et al., 2017). Ultimately, science is about curiosity, exploration, and an inquiry into the unknown. As science educators, we argue that fostering a love of reading can be a powerful tool for engaging pupils in science, reinforcing the idea that science is for everyone. It is hoped that by encouraging reading for pleasure

critically, question assumptions, and apply scientific principles to everyday situations (Hejnová, 2024). The great thing about science fiction, is its invitation for readers to consider the implications of scientific advancement, ethical issues, and boundaries of human knowledge by posing hypothetical situations that compel the reader. Reading science fiction encourages

pupils to not only consider the ‘what ifs’ of advancing technology and scientific understanding but also helps develop skills such as hypothesis formulation

### Engaging girls

With less than 31% of STEM pupils being female in higher education (HESA 2024),

for reading and direct it towards science fiction, it could help to develop girls’ scientific literacy with the hopes of encouraging more girls to study natural science subjects both in secondary education and beyond.

### Examples of using science fiction to promote scientific literacy

In a world where science is evolving rapidly, concepts that were once science fiction continue to move closer to becoming science reality. For example, Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot* presents a series of short stories that examine the relationship between humans and robots, raising relevant questions about artificial intelligence (AI), ethics, and the future of technology. This presents a valuable opportunity to prompt pupils to make connections between works of fiction and modern-day issues. These can include the rapid advancements in AI, where pupils could consider their potential to contribute to these advances. This would allow pupils to combine the sense of wonder brought about by reading fiction with the excitement of scientific discovery. Indeed, the recent developments in AI were once only thought of as possible in science fiction and not seen as a genuine prospect.

In recognition of its increasingly prominent role today, we have honoured the move of AI from fiction to reality, by testing its ability to generate age-appropriate book recommendations for secondary school pupils. We asked the AI tool to suggest some recommendations which promote the link between reading science fiction for pleasure and scientific literacy. This resulted in several thought-provoking book recommendations; we have shared two of these in this article.

#### AI recommendation one

The ethical impact of scientific discovery is at the core of the majority of science fiction novels. Novels such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley or *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro address genetic engineering and cloning, prompting questions of scientific responsibility and the moral limits of experiments. These matters are invaluable in getting



and can encourage learning through debate and discussion. By engaging with speculative scenarios, pupils can explore the implications of scientific progress, which promotes a deeper understanding of science and critical thinking.

it is important that girls’ engagement in science is fostered at a young age. We believe that science fiction can be used as a tool to help address this. For example, it has been shown that school-aged girls read more than boys (Clark et al., 2024). This means that if science educators leverage this passion



pupils to argue the role of science within society.

**AI recommendation two**

Many science fiction stories incorporate accurate scientific principles or plausible extrapolations of current knowledge. Teachers can use short stories or excerpts from novels to introduce topics such as relativity (The Forever War by Joe Haldeman), evolution (Darwin’s Radio by Greg Bear), or ecological systems (Dune by Frank Herbert). This contextual learning helps pupils see the relevance of scientific principles in a broader narrative.

**Reflections on AI recommendations**

These suggested novels offer the opportunity for pupils to think critically regarding the ethics of genetic technologies. For example, Brave New World depicts a world where embryos are subjected to modifications and grown entirely in-vitro. When studying genetic engineering and cloning, pupils often ask if this process can be applied to humans. Brave New World offers a world where genetic manipulation is the norm, providing an opportunity to discuss where fiction ends, and current scientific abilities begin. The discussion could be further enhanced by another example suggested by AI, Never Let Me Go. This novel tells the story of three school children who learn that they

are clones, created to become organ donors for others. The opportunities provided by these books would allow for an in-depth discussion about both the science and the ethics of organ donation and genetic engineering. For some pupils, the subject content can get a bit dark, so they might not always be suitable. An alternative – Pig Heart Boy by Malorie Blackman follows the story of a young boy who receives a genetically engineered pig heart transplant. This book also offers an opportunity to consider genetic engineering and organ donation, whilst presenting less sensitive content.

**Conclusion**

We have written this article with an awareness of the challenges faced when encouraging secondary school pupils to read fiction. However, we hope that by sharing the knowledge of the potential benefits this approach can bring, at least some pupils will benefit from the scientific gains reading science fiction can bring.



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# Cultivating a culture of reading in business and economics education



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In this article, we consider the role of reading in Business and Economics education, examine the reading strategies in the classroom and look at the practices in one Business department. From the perspective of an awarding body, we consider the importance of reading case studies for exam success, and we conclude with citing how we can promote reading for pleasure in our own classrooms. Using the QR code you can access a set of posters to use as display materials promoting suitable books for GCSE and A

Level Business and Economics pupils.

Reading a range of diverse materials, such as newspaper articles, books and case studies, helps pupils to keep abreast of current issues along with developing critical thinking skills, understanding biases and evaluating arguments from different perspectives, all of which are essential in both Business and Economics. Pupils who read regularly and widely outperform peers academically regardless of socio-economic background. The ability to

understand and absorb new information is impacted by reading, with those who read for pleasure being linked to greater intellectual capacity, particularly in spelling and vocabulary (OECD, 2002; Sullivan and Brown, 2013).

Critical for success in Business and Economics, reading widely enables pupils to gain understanding of a broader perspective with access to diverse viewpoints in different cultural and economic

contexts, and can enhance understanding of complex concepts and real-world applications.

Exposure to subject specific terminology - Tier 3 vocabulary - benefits pupils through encountering new words in context, a strategy posited by Quigley (2018) to close the vocabulary gap. We know that terms like 'market segmentation', 'cash flow' and 'elasticity' have

specific meanings that are essential to understand the subjects. Building familiarity with subject terminology gives pupils greater understanding and confidence to participate in class discussions and prepare for future academic success.

### Reading strategies in the classroom: a case study of one department

In England, the percentage of secondary school pupils eligible for the pupil premium is around 27.1%. Ark St Alban's Academy has a Pupil Premium rate that is significantly above the average for all mainstream secondary schools in England. The proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals is more than twice the national average and the majority of pupils have English as an additional language. Despite these factors, pupils often achieve above average, with an increasing number

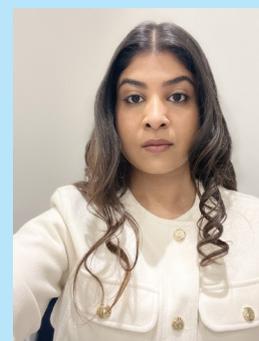


of pupils achieving the grades they need to continue their education at the university of their choice.

Pupils remember what they think about, this is what we as teachers know and adhere to but enabling pupils to truly think deeply about a subject can be difficult due to engagement stemming from motivation (Willingham, 2009). It can be questioned how we, in Business and Economics, can motivate pupils. The easy answer would be to use relevant businesses in case studies, but if pupils struggle to

comprehend then we are setting up an environment for failure. With the support of a reading strategy shared throughout our academy network we have been able to implement common approaches to increase levels of comprehension, so pupils have the tools needed to access the selected case studies in order to bring the 'stickiness' of a concept to life when applying this to their own lives (Sweller et al, 2011). One of our solutions was to select case studies relevant to the cohort to make it meaningful to them in both application and in syntax.

Many of our lessons, specifically in Key Stage 4, include a reading extract with short answer comprehension questions to follow. The teacher then guides the pupils through the reading, either under the visualiser, or via PowerPoint slides to clarify the new knowledge, using assessment for learning to check understanding. Pupils self-mark their comprehension questions using a different colour pen, cross checking with answers displayed on the board. We discovered that this increased the level of self-regulation later in the sequence when checking and correcting their own work and the pupils began to hold themselves accountable, showing a level of reflection aiding in steps towards mastery. For working with case studies in the classroom, the visualiser is integral. It allows teachers to demonstrate techniques such as 'inside outside beyond', which supports pupils to unpick words they don't understand and to comprehend sentences they have not seen before (Lemov et al, 2016). Reading out loud using the visualiser,



modelling the thought processes you go through when reading a new text, allows teachers to demonstrate to pupils what strategies they can use if they come across a word they don't know. We start by reading forwards and then reading backwards, using words we do know to help unpick the missing word and make sense of the sentence. If that doesn't work, we can start to unpick the root of the word, for example if it has a prefix or a suffix, discussing what it means when we see these words. After this we try to model finding the root of the word. When pupils have an armoury of different techniques they can fall back on, it is easier for them not to panic in a summative assessment situation.

When working with new business case studies in the classroom, guided annotation can lay the foundations for effortful thinking. With pupils being able to see a thinking model and process of what a specialist may do when reading new text, it becomes easier to manage cognitive load in a classroom and choose moments when deeper thinking is required. It is always useful to introduce the model to pupils with prompts in mind, as using a common approach allows the process to stick

and become second nature for pupils when tackling texts independently. In Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 we use the visualiser for case studies to model the process of guided annotation, not only using 'inside outside beyond', but also guided annotation to support the action of self-regulation in future lessons and to address literacy gaps. These strategies have been of benefit within the department, not only ensuring pupils are better readers, but also leading to improved exam results, most notably at Key Stage 5, in the BTEC exams where pupils are given case studies.

**Effective reading of case studies for exams: an approach for assessment**

In Business and Economics assessments, case studies provide a contextual framework for pupils to apply subject-specific theories and concepts. Whitehouse (2009) explores the features of a well written case study, citing case studies as a useful tool to assess higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, selection, evaluation, judgment, and decision-making. Context-based questions activate prior knowledge and require pupils to extract relevant information, integrate theoretical

concepts, and construct well-reasoned arguments. Therefore, effective reading and interpretation of case studies are crucial for exam success.

Surridge (2022) posits that context questions, used well, can support pupils in applying their learning. Before analysing a case study in detail, pupils should first review the exam questions to guide their reading. In some cases, question stems direct pupils to specific sections of the case study which should be used, or referred to, in the response. Additionally, pupils must consider how the provided context aligns with the assessment demands of the question, including the knowledge and skills required. Highlighting key information relevant to the question, and linking to relevant theories, models, or concepts helps structure analysis and develop coherent arguments in context. This question-driven approach facilitates focused and relevant reading of the case study and encourages critical engagement.

A strategic reading process involves identifying key sections, subheadings, and paragraph divisions to enhance efficiency and thematic comprehension.





Numerical data, tables, and graphs should be carefully analysed, as they often provide essential insights for

argument development. Interpreting quantitative data involves recognising trends, making comparisons, and identifying limitations, all while relating findings to Business or Economic concepts, the specific question requirements and the context.

A high-quality written response in an exam extends beyond description to incorporate analysis and evaluation within the given context. Pupils must critically assess the implications of their analysis; form reasoned judgments and justify their conclusions using evidence from the case study. Engaging critically with contextual material strengthens comprehension, analytical reasoning, and evaluative skills, ultimately enhancing exam performance.

By adopting a systematic approach to reading and interpreting case studies, pupils can effectively apply theoretical knowledge, construct logical arguments, and demonstrate a deeper understanding of business and economic

principles in an applied setting.

### **Promoting Reading for Pleasure in the Business and Economics Classroom**

Encouraging pupils to read for pleasure in Business and Economics classes can greatly improve their personal and cognitive growth. Reading a variety of books develops communication skills, critical thinking, and perspective-broadening - qualities that are crucial for Business and Economics, as well as wider life.

Teachers can integrate reading for pleasure opportunities into the Business classroom in a variety of ways. Some strategies to foster a culture of reading include establishing an atmosphere that encourages reading,

providing a wide variety of reading materials, and introducing book-related conversations. According to Lockwood (2008), teachers' literary expertise is crucial in encouraging their pupils to appreciate reading. Although the focus of his research is primary education, the idea applies to all educational levels.

Teachers can also effectively promote reading for pleasure by acting as role models. Teachers can display the name of the books they are currently reading, talk about their opinions of them, and recommend leadership and business-related texts. According to research by Cremin et al. (2014), when teachers discuss their own reading experiences, pupils are more likely to develop intrinsic reading motivation. Reading literature exposes people to a range of perspectives, which fosters empathy - a critical skill in the workplace, according to Cremin and Scholes (2024).

Despite the well-established benefits, recent evidence indicates a fall in young people's reading for pleasure habits in the UK. 34.6% of children and young adults aged 8 to 18 say they enjoy

reading in their free time, the lowest percentage since polls began in 2005, according to the National Literacy Trust (2024). This trend must be reversed. By promoting reading in the Business classroom, teachers can enhance pupils' academic abilities while supporting their personal growth and well-being.

### **Conclusion**

To quote Malala Yousafzai (2017), "One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world." This article highlights the value of utilising reading strategies in Business and Economics education in order to enhance pupils' comprehension through tools such as visualisers and guided annotation. Case studies are a fundamental part of teaching and assessment in these subjects, providing essential context for learning. Teachers should cultivate a strong reading culture to assist pupils in examining case studies as they enable pupils to interact critically and develop their analytical abilities. The QR link provided gives access to a set of posters created by trainees for use as a classroom display promoting reading for pleasure in Business and Economics education.

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**Cashmore, Castle,  
Harper, Crumpton  
and Alexander**

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# Beyond the pages: the psychological benefits of reading for pleasure

*Deborah Gardner is the subject lead for Psychology at the University of Worcester; she spent 15 years in secondary education before moving to a career in ITTE. Deborah has worked with the current PGCE Psychology trainees in the development of this article: Bryonie Conlan, Asarla Dib, Charlotte Harward, Daniel James, Oliver James, Rachel Oldham and Zopa Palmo.*

Within research there is a plethora of evidence available that suggests reading for pleasure has a significant positive impact on our psychological development. This article explores the concept of reading for pleasure through a psychological lens. Throughout this article, it is the authors' intention to outline some of the principal psychological benefits of reading for pleasure, with the intention of providing useful insights to teachers and educators.

## Academic benefits

Reading regularly influences academic success and also helps with professional success, social engagement and personal development (Howard, 2011). Furthermore, there is research that suggests that reading for pleasure can have a greater influence on overall academic performance than socio economic background (Pearson and Cervett, 2015).

Readers find more pleasure in recreational books as opposed to academic texts. However, this can still have a positive impact in terms of academic reading. The neurons in our brains have 'plasticity' which accept change and reorganise itself for new skills. This indicates that reading for pleasure reorganises the brain to experience the higher-level academic



language. Thus, serving as a 'bridge' to academic language (Wolf, 2018) and helps learners deal with the cognitive demands of a curriculum (Cremin and Scholes, 2024). It is argued that reading for pleasure gives a distinct cognitive advantage and helps to develop 'information capital' that is essential for successful learning in all curriculum subjects (Neuman Susan and Celano, 2012). Research has also shown that

regular reading for pleasure is linked to higher levels of wellbeing, social emotional development and 'academic grit' (Bozgun and Akin Kosterelioglu, 2020).

It is no surprise to ascertain that students who read for pleasure, either in or outside a school setting, can bring feed into positive academic performance and subsequent associated benefits.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Habitually reading for pleasure has been evidenced as having numerous benefits regarding a student’s mental health and wellbeing. One such benefit is improving a person’s capacity for social interaction and collaboration (Corcoran and Oatley, 2019). This is because experiencing other people’s emotions and perspectives via literary characters develops the reader’s Theory of Mind (cognitive ability to understand others), bettering their capacity for empathy and cooperation. As low social interaction has been identified as a risk factor for poor mental wellbeing in young adolescents (Pachuki et al., 2015), the social implications of reading for pleasure can serve as a crucial agent in preventing this. Reading for pleasure can also aid emotional regulation, which has been identified as vitally important to psychological wellbeing (Chervonsky and Hunt, 2019). Specifically, the ability to reappraise or suppress emotions to foster positive social outcomes. Research shows that reading for pleasure is positively associated with socio-emotional constructs universally across readers (Batini et al., 2020). Thus, the emotive language and consideration given to people in books can support individual emotional capacity, allowing for conflict avoidance, harmonious interaction, and introspection, encouraging healthier personal wellbeing.

Reading for pleasure has been negatively correlated with psychiatric problems in adolescents ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Sun et al., 2022). Namely, 12-hours-per-week of reading for pleasure was found to be optimal for adolescents as it nurtured cognitive growth, self-regulation of emotions and exhibited a release of dopamine. In turn, readers are left with a biological sense of pleasure as well emotional, which has been linked to lower levels of depressive conditions and reduced ADHD

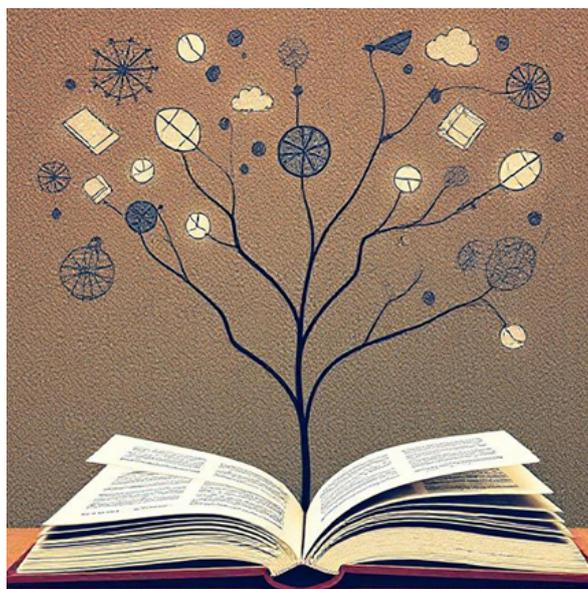
symptoms. Moreover, reading for pleasure has even been associated with increased life expectancy (Corcoran and Oatley, 2019).

**Developing identity**

Whilst 55% of 11–18-year-olds stated that books helped them understand different people and cultures (Nestle



Family Monitor, 2003), research has shown reading for pleasure supports the development of understanding oneself. From exploring the characters within the stories we read, a ‘mirror’ is provided towards our own lives and experiences (Bishop, 1990). We search



for ourselves in literature and find the more that we read, the more likely we are to identify with characters we come across (McCarthy, 2011). This occurs in all ranges of reading material, be it fiction, novels, factual, digital sources such as blogs or fanzines. Finding a ‘window onto reality’ (Bishop, 1990), the cultural background, family set up, or environment within the reading material supports an identity developing through our agreeing or disagreeing views. Highlighting not only the importance of reading stories that match our current lived experience but also allowing the exploration of potential changes we could make in our own lives. We often think of identity as something which is experienced but in fact it is constructed (Sarup, 1996), and the books that we read will support or hinder this process through the internal dialogues that occur whilst absorbing the words on the page (McCarthy, 2011).

**The importance of multicultural reading**

It is widely acknowledged that there is an importance for students from minority and ethnic backgrounds to consume literature that contains positive representations of their own culture (Agosto, 2007; Roethler, 1990). However, it is also vital for all students to read about a culture outside their own, and to develop positive representations of all cultures.

Grasso (2016) highlighted some of the many benefits for students for reading multicultural literature: Understanding of real-world issues: Norton (2001) demonstrated the importance of reading multicultural literature with a specific focus on conflict and themes relating to real-world issues. If multicultural literature that students consume contains these elements, Norton found that this led to greater understanding of real, current world issues. They also led to students developing greater critical evaluation skills, as students learn to apply the

themes learnt in novels read to conflicts. Monobe & Son (2014) further supported this concept by suggesting that when students experience the feelings of others through reading, they look at the world more critically and gain understanding of the global community.

Encourages the development of identity: reading broadly is crucial for identity formation. However, considering how multicultural reading is vital for identity formation, it can give the sense of belonging and acceptance in society. Inclusion of diverse literature

experiences at the core.

**Neuroscience of Reading for Pleasure**

Approaching reading for pleasure through a neuroscientific lens its profound impact on the brain is



Promoting empathy and unity, leading to cross-cultural friendship: Steiner et al (2008), found that reading multicultural literature fosters positive self-esteem and has the ability to nurture acceptance and respect among all students. Students reading a novel that contains a character from a culture different from their own, may increase their understanding of the cultures of their peers and increase their interpersonal relationships with those peers.

being discussed in schools or being present in libraries can confirm that the experiences of minority students are valued (Steiner, 1998). Therefore, for minority students, this can be a validating experience and bolster confidence.

It is vital that when encouraging students to read for pleasure, we encourage them to expand their collection of novels to include those with multicultural characters or multicultural

revealed. Reading stimulates the brain's reward system, enhances neuroplasticity, and improves cognitive functions like memory and attention. As educators, understanding these aspects empowers us to create more effective teaching and learning experiences. When you read for pleasure, your brain processes the activity as rewarding, triggering the release of dopamine (Berns et al., 2013). Dopamine is released from the ventral tegmental area and travels to the nucleus accumbens, a key region

for reward and reinforcement. The prefrontal cortex is also engaged, enhancing focus and cognitive functions (Vogrinčič Čepič et al., 2024).

Long-term dopamine release increases neuroplasticity (Sun et al., 2024). Engaging in pleasurable activities, like reading, secures a reward response from the brain. By encouraging reading for pleasure, we can directly impact the flexibility of our students' developing brains, a powerful tool for educators. Higher levels of neuroplasticity provide more room for development and growth, highlighting the importance of reading for pleasure in cognitive success. Increased engagement with reading stimulates dopamine receptors more frequently, enhancing their sensitivity (Berns et al., 2013). This makes the brain more efficient at utilizing dopamine, aiding in mood regulation and motivation.

For students with ADHD, reading can be particularly beneficial. ADHD is characterised by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, which can interfere with learning. Reading for pleasure can help manage these symptoms by increasing activation in the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for executive functions like attention and impulse control. In these instances, having a higher capability for neuroplasticity is extremely beneficial.

Choice is crucial when considering the effects of reading on students. Providing choice creates agency, which improves comprehension and attention compared to assigned readings. Research by Kakoulidou (2021) emphasizes that student choice is vital for engagement and attention, especially significant given the rising prevalence of ADHD diagnoses in young people.

### Neurodiversity

There is a dependence on the Western conceptions of literacy which have a clear neurotypical focus (Liebel, 2021). Research has found that for many neurodivergent (ND) people, reading has a profound impact on various aspects of their lives. For example, the rewards that

can be reaped from deep character and relationship analysis are not only about developing emotional intelligence but also forming connections in a world that can be otherwise lonely. Narratives and storylines can provide ND individuals with a relational sense of the world that they may not have considered prior. With neurodivergence, it is important to consider the idea of 'special interests' or hyperfixations. The connection to these 'special interests' is often so intense that it will quite literally become entangled with their identities and can give a strong sense of purpose. Considering how strong the engagement of a hyperfixation is to a ND individual, it seems to be the perfect tool to boost academic enjoyment and encourage learning.

Incorporating opportunities for ND individuals to engage in their 'special interests' in the classroom has been found to have a profound impact on a ND child's experience of school, and so it is imperative that teachers try to harness this deep engagement and enjoyment by using strategies that allow ND students to bring their interests into class (Bailey, 2023). For example, providing students with books that develop these interests allows for a huge scope of literacy teaching where students may otherwise be uninterested. Considering their interests in safe and supportive environments will help to build confidence in the neurodiverse classroom population and this sharing can encourage emotional connections between pupils.

Many ND students report feeling alienated at school and use characters and stories to inform their understanding of connection and the world around them (Fielding et al., 2024). Therefore, books in school could support ND students to develop their understanding of personality, motive and relationships. Schools and teachers should consider having texts available that accurately reflect the (neuro) diversity of the classroom, meaning books written by ND authors with ND protagonists. The importance of offering texts that depict racial diversity in school is recognised, and neurodiversity

should be no different. It's important to remember that there is no downside of providing a range of texts to students, as all children get the opportunity to learn about difference and disability.

This article highlights just some of the psychological benefits that reading for pleasure can bring to everyone, making it clear that this should be part of all our daily lives enabling us to understand more, do more and be more. Please use the QR code to access a range of resources to link reading for pleasure to classwork and activities in the Psychology classroom.



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# Reading for pleasure: a pastoral lens



Can reading  
for pleasure  
make a  
difference to  
students  
in need?

*Elesia Hays and Georgia Endacott are both current core PGCE English trainees at the University of Worcester. In this article they investigate if books can make a difference to students in need.*

There are as many reasons that people have to read - as there are avid readers, in the world. Some seek to gain factual information; some look to be transported to another universe; and others hope to have elements of

well-thumbed novel of choice as they are their well-loved, threadbare teddy, in times of need. We consider what makes reading for pleasure so powerful and how viewing this from a pastoral perspective can support pupils facing challenges in life.

A 'sanctuary' is a place where people can seek refuge from difficulties and immerse themselves in other worlds. Fiction books, in particular, offer a safe

knowledge and vocabulary", as well as "emotional well-being". Prior to teacher training, Georgia worked in an inpatient unit for ladies with personality disorders and there was a time when it seemed every patient was reading Susanna Kaysen's *Girl Interrupted*. Colleagues worried that reading this particular book might have a negative impact; the book centres around a girl with a personality disorder, living in a psychiatric ward, but when staff spoke to patients about



their reality reflected back to them. Reading for pleasure (OUFP, 2025) is not a new concept and although 87.4% of people aged 15 and above were literate in 2023 (World Bank, 2024), we believe the 'comfort' provided by storytelling can be evidenced as far back as The Dreamtime creation stories from Australian Aboriginal culture (one of the oldest surviving cultures in the world (Yarn, 2025); the hieroglyphic writings of the Ancient Egyptians (Daley; Wilkinson, 2016); and Homer's Ancient Greek classics of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (Collins, 2019). Anecdotally, people are just as likely to reach for their

space for pupils to experience their own emotions through a character or storyline that they can identify with. Reading texts that pupils connect to can help them process experiences of stress, anxiety, or depression, in a safe and structured way. Pupils may use the characters as "social surrogates", fulfilling the human need for social interaction whilst being protected from the risk of "rejection" (Gabriel et al., 2017). Cremin and Scholes (2024) state that there are positive associations between reading for pleasure and "cognitive development, academic attainment, comprehension, general

it, they were surprised. They simply answered, 'We like it, because no one like us is ever portrayed in books'. The importance of readers being able to recognise themselves and identity with familiar narratives cannot be underestimated.

Teachers are often worried they don't have the expertise to help with certain problems. An example of this, could be a teenager struggling with their sexuality or gender identity. Books like *Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman, have brought LGBTQIA+ fiction into the mainstream and this can only be a

positive advancement for those feeling alone in their struggles. A sixth form student spoke candidly to Georgia about how books helped her to come to terms with the loss of her mother. 'A lot of adults didn't really know what to say to



me, or how to handle how I was feeling. I think it would've been helpful if a teacher had acknowledged they weren't sure what to say and directed me to some books that made me see I wasn't the only one going through the loss of a parent.' This discussion prompted us to determine how teachers could best apply a pastoral lens, to reading for pleasure.

Reading stories from diverse perspectives allows students to walk in the shoes of another, developing their empathy and understanding of the world around them - and the people inhabiting it. For pupils experiencing isolation, books can provide a "sense of belonging, self-acceptance, and self-understanding" (Webber et al., 2024). Thankfully, there are dedicated websites, and book lists that champion stories specifically by authors of diverse origin (South Asian Heritage, 2024; Afrori Books, 2025),

neurodiverse character representation (BookTrust, 2024; SEN Books, 2023) and those written by or featuring LGBTQIA+ communities (Words for Life, 2025; Tolkien, 2024; Stonewall, 2025). It is worth noting that all pupils benefit

from expanding their reading choices and developing their social awareness.

Pupils can only access these benefits in environments which seek to support and encourage their reading journey. Firstly, schools must ensure that they have a library on-premises and that it is well stocked with diverse, engaging and age-appropriate books which reflect the range of experiences and cultures around the world. Establishing a reading culture featuring reading clubs and book-swapping initiatives can help to encourage the positive habit of reading and lead to a reading 'community' or support system (Cremin and Scholes, 2024; Cosme-Cruz et al., 2022). Teachers and staff should model positive behaviours by actively sharing their own 'book of the month' and offering

book recommendations that connect to individual interests (Cremin et al., 2014, pp. 35-52). This promotes the continuation of reading as they mature and is a positive demonstration of reading outside of the set academic texts prescribed by the curriculum. Examining reading for pleasure through a pastoral lens, reveals its capacity to transform text on a page into emotional support, life-long lessons and social development. Choosing a book of their own volition is beneficial to all students but for those in need, books offer a depth of companionship and understanding difficult to find elsewhere. Educators that encourage the pedagogy of reading for pleasure can empower pupils to be resilient, to seek support from those around them and ultimately, to know that they are not alone.



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Haye and Endacott  
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## Worcester OU/ UKLA Secondary Teachers' Reading Group at The Hive



**Do you want to develop students' pleasure in reading?**

**Then join us to enrich your knowledge and practice!**

The English PGCE Secondary Team at the University of Worcester invites anyone committed to developing students' desire, delight and engagement as readers to join our OU/UKLA Reading Group. Informal, friendly and supportive we welcome teachers, librarians, student teachers and support staff to join us and commit to attending all five face-to-face CPD sessions.

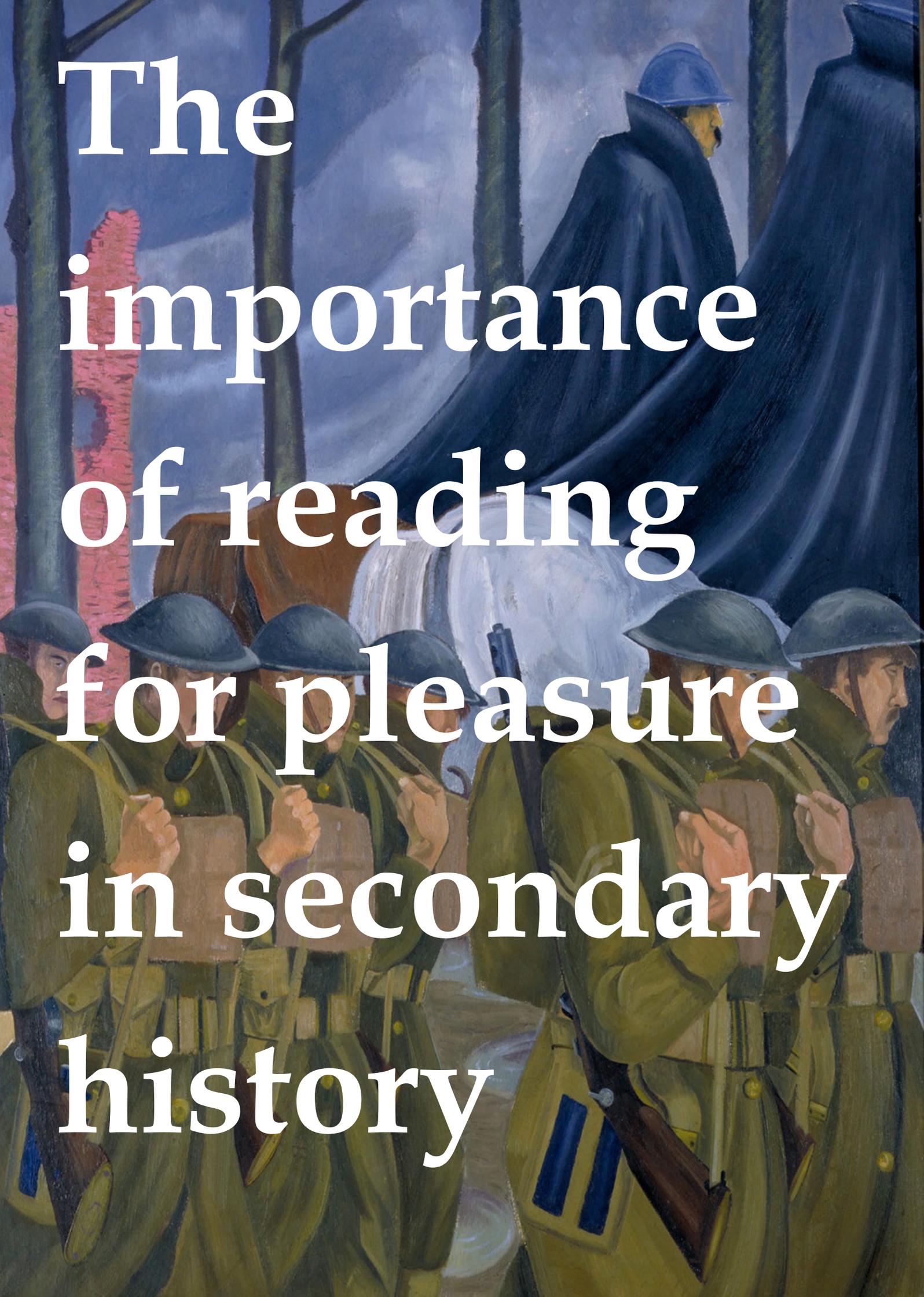
We will be developing evidence-informed practice, widening our knowledge of YA literature and other texts, enriching our RfP pedagogy and documenting the impact on the young people as readers.

**Dates for 2025-26: October 16<sup>th</sup> January 11<sup>th</sup> March 4<sup>th</sup> May 12<sup>th</sup> June 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Time and place: 17.00-18.30 at The Hive library, Worcester.**

**Form: Free face to face workshop and a space to share and discuss good practice.**

**To book a place email: Bronwen Duggan – [b.duggan@worc.ac.uk](mailto:b.duggan@worc.ac.uk)**



The  
importance  
of reading  
for pleasure  
in secondary  
history

**Rachael Moore** is the University of Worcester PGCE secondary subject lead for history. She spent over 17 years in secondary education, before moving into a career in ITTE. **Emily Burroughs, Faith Chingwena, Callum Craig, Philippa Green, Isabelle Hardisty, Lara Hill, Georgia Howard, Mollie Mason, Harriet Parsons, Lucy Powell, Jessica Prior-Smith, Imogen Roff, Molly Weatherley, and Emma Wilford** are current trainees on the PGCE history programme at the University of Worcester.

From the epic tales of the Crusades to the contemporary struggles of the Covid era, historical fiction promotes academic development in young people, when reading for pleasure. A form of entertainment, historical fiction fosters language development by introducing tier three terminology outside of the classroom, and by placing it within its wider contexts. Literacy is a fundamental skill, and this can be developed in and out of the classroom, by reading historical fiction. Positive links have also been made between reading and students' mental wellbeing. Accessing texts which represent reality when reading for pleasure immerses readers and further supports their wellbeing. When reading for pleasure, students can recognise themselves through the stories of people of the past. In today's world, that has never been more important as we strive to give agency to marginalised groups, whose voices were previously silenced. History involves telling the stories of the past, and a natural progression from its study directs pupils to historical fiction and reading for pleasure.

**'The Tattooist of Auschwitz' - Heather Morris**

When reading for pleasure it is easy to fall into familiar topics that don't cover difficult or controversial periods in history. However, not exploring these topics through literature limits pupils' understanding of the past and how it has shaped the modern world. As the only statutory History topic within the KS3 national curriculum, it is vital that students have a clear understanding of the Holocaust. Studying it through



historical literature offers an insight into the roles and responsibilities of individuals, which highlights the multi-dimensional nature of the Holocaust.

Historical fiction surrounding this area of history is vast, with many authors giving agency to the unsung voices of its victims. *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris is a powerful example of this. Based on the true story of Lale Sokolov, Morris writes from a new perspective, challenging misconceptions around the role of individuals within the camps. The book begins with Lale, a Slovakian Jew, who is transported inside cattle cars to Auschwitz. Readers follow his story and time within the camp. Lale's role as 'The Tattooist' depicts the difficult and emotional choices he makes to ensure his survival. Over the course of the book, Lale meets Gita, and the struggle between hope and survival emerges.

When reading for pleasure, especially in History, grand narratives are broken down into smaller micro-histories, which are more accessible for secondary students. Books such as Morris' provide historical testimony, which in turn blurs the line between reality and fiction. A key example of this in *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* is Lale's journey to the camp. The detailed description of the journey develops students' understanding of the conditions and the uncertainty that people faced.

Using the 'story, source, scholarship' template, which can utilise extracts from historical fiction, students can gain a deeper understanding of more difficult concepts. Providing that extracts are rooted in facts, reading for pleasure can offer students a clearer insight into the past, making history more accessible and engaging.

**'The Shadow King' - Maaza Mengiste**

Ethiopia, one of only two independent African nations in the early twentieth century, was invaded in 1935 by the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. The emperor, Haile Selassie, was forced into exile when his country was plunged into turmoil. His people were subjected to torture in concentration



camps, decimated by poison gas, and his country faced constant bombings. Little was done to help Ethiopia (known contemporarily as Abyssinia) fight against an aggressive, expansionist country. The League of Nations did little to halt Italy in its conquest, mainly due

to the lack of support from Britain and France. Ethiopia was left to fight alone. However, this struggle, resistance and eventual victory were heavily supported by women soldiers who broke tradition and took up arms to save their country. Their stories, unfortunately, have been largely forgotten.

The Shadow King is a historical fiction novel by Maaza Mengiste that gracefully explores what it means to be patriotic, brave, feminine, and a woman in a society that does not value their contributions. It is a story of women at war, and as the title does not outright imply, 'the shadow kings' is the name given to the women who fought and died to protect their home. The novel tells the story of the Italian invasion from the perspective of the oppressed, not the oppressor — a viewpoint that is sorely lacking in the national curriculum. British history, along with some American and European narratives, are the common stories taught in schools. While these histories are important, The Shadow King is an invaluable resource for illuminating to pupils that history is diverse and complicated. It expands students' horizons beyond the typical histories and allows them to understand black and women's history, in an event that is sadly a footnote at best in their studies. Part of what makes this novel such a valuable resource is the duty of educators to push students, challenge them, and expand their thinking. This novel explores themes that students would not typically get to fully investigate. Maaza Mengiste confronts why these women's stories have been forgotten even though they were crucial in winning the war, an unfortunate rhetoric that rings true in British history as well. Such a powerful story as this is likely to make pupils question the history they are given, but it also resonates with black students and girls that their histories matter.



### 'A Medal for Leroy' – Michael Morpurgo

Reading for pleasure is also a way of ensuring the forgotten stories and voices of minorities are prioritised and brought back into full focus, particularly if these figures and groups helped to build the foundations of our freedom

today. Michael Morpurgo's A Medal for Leroy reveals, in a letter to a grandson, the story of a black soldier in World War I that saves his fellow comrades from battle and returns them to safety at the risk of his own life. Such a feat today would induce a recommendation for a military cross, which is what his friends suggest in the novel; however, due to the colour of Leroy's skin, his contributions remain forgotten to the rest of Britain. Morpurgo bases his character on a real soldier – Walter Tull – who was the first black officer to command white troops and bring back an entire battalion from a night raid with no casualties. However, because he was black, he was denied the honour of a medal and was instead sent back to the frontlines after a shorter recuperation where he was sadly killed in France, unrecognised and unknown to the rest of the world.

Often wars in this period are white-washed and soldiers from black or mixed backgrounds are forgotten, but by reading novels and texts about these soldiers we can bring their legacies back to life and restoring the honour

they deserve as fighters for our nation. Narratives like A Medal for Leroy do not just serve as entertainment for new generations but are a way of exploring the social and cultural inequalities of the period and the links to systemic racism today, whilst encouraging new learners to feel empathy and understanding

for those in our society. Comparing and contrasting the stories of Walter and Leroy is a good way of underlining the prejudice faced by black soldiers, particularly if specific extracts are explored in greater detail, like Auntie Snow's letter, which highlights examples of racism, such as being evicted for being black in a white village, derogatory name-calling and being given extra beatings at school. By highlighting these examples to students in literature it shows authors challenging

traditional stereotypes of minorities and therefore, they can transfer it to their contextual knowledge of the time period, helping them to understand why black history is so important.

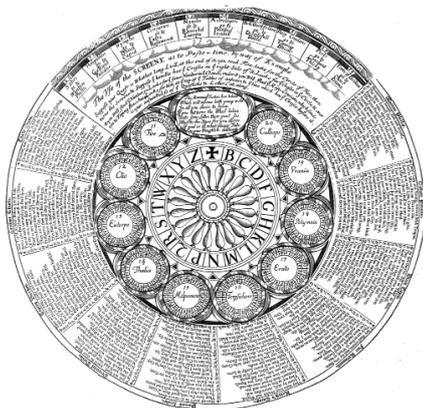
### How can magazines be used in the History Classroom?

Magazines are a highly engaging resource to use by design. They are created to entice the reader and can provide a contemporary voice for historical events and figures. Magazines are designed to draw you in, entertain and put a fun spin on history. By using them in the classroom, the students can better engage with the historical events and source material. The visuals in magazines allow students to have better context for events such as WW1 or Women's suffrage because the images. The students also able to engage better because of how information is broken down in magazines. They have limited word count, so they break down the information into digestible chunks which helps students' cognitive load. They use informal language in comparison to textbooks which make

history less intimidating and relevant to their everyday life. Historical magazines are also highly accessible and available, they can be bought in shops or through subscriptions so even after the lesson students are able to do further research. Historical magazines provide up to date scholarship for students that they will not find overwhelming. They also improve source analysis and scholarship skills.

**BBC History Magazine ‘Fingers, Frogs and Fairies’ by Martha McGill**

BBC History Magazine’s article ‘Fingers, frogs and fairies’ gives an overview of fortune telling in the 16th and 17th centuries. The article provides a number of opportunities to be used in the classroom and provides a useful insight into the pastimes and social life those living in Stuart and Tudor England. This particular article could be used within a sequence of lessons about either the Stuarts or the Tudors. Within the classroom this article could be used as a hook to engage students and increase their interest, there is a range of primary sources featured in the article that could be used for a guessing activity ‘what do you think this was used for?’. The article could also be the basis of a role play activity giving students different characters they could play to explain the role of the supernatural in Stuart and Tudor England. Articles such as this one which take a fun topic such as fortune telling allow students to interact with scholarship without the use of formal language. The article provides context to several events throughout the 16th and 17th centuries making it useful for a plethora of topics, this could also



encourage students to research events mentioned such as the reformation that may not be the focus of the lesson but something they are interested in.

**‘The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper’, by Hallie Rubenhold**

The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper, by Hallie Rubenhold, is a groundbreaking work of social history that reveals the true stories of the lives of the women killed by Jack the Ripper in the late nineteenth century, bringing to light the women whose lives were cut short instead of focusing on the man who killed them. Rubenhold’s sense of justice for these five women is the thread that brings this book together, and students reading it will see the well-known story of Jack the Ripper from a new perspective that challenges the idea that the mysterious murderer is the most important person in this tragic tale. Appropriate for students at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, The Five not only debunks the common belief that all of Jack the Ripper’s victims were prostitutes (in fact, only one of them is known to have been involved in the sex trade), it also explores the roles women played in Victorian society, the highs and lows that this could bring, and the options available to them when their lives fell apart through no fault of their own. Three of the women whose stories are told in The Five were at one point married, two of whom had children, and another had children with a long-term partner. The Five delves into their lives, and in doing so also provides facts, figures, and detailed information on what Victorian life was like for ordinary people. The themes explored include social housing, workhouses, industrial employment, and more. While some of the issues explored in The Five are, unsurprisingly, emotive and at times upsetting, the way in which Rubenhold has weaved storytelling and fact together enables her to handle the topic sensitively and in a manner that places the victims’ dignity and memory at the forefront. The Five is Rubenhold’s protest against the countless books that indulge in speculation and fascination around the killer, instead restoring

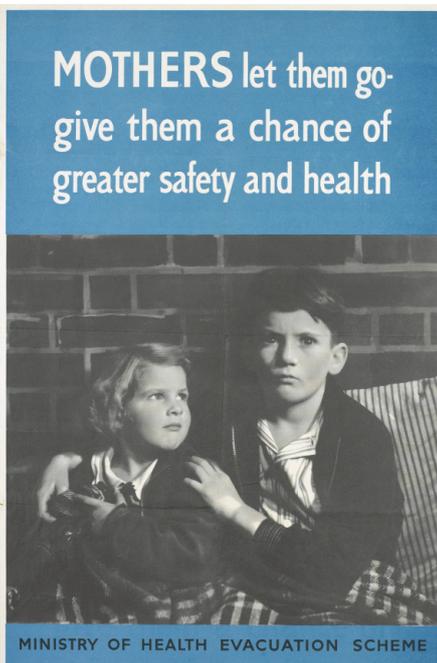


individuality and justice to the five women he killed. By its very nature, this book can provoke discussion around why certain histories are told over others. It can be used in the classroom to engage young people in topics from across a vast spectrum of Victorian society and to introduce them to debates surrounding why the history we tell matters.

**Goodnight, Mister Tom - Michelle Magorian**

The novel is aimed at children at the age of 9 and above. The book is an incredibly heartwarming tale depicting the life of a young boy named William. William is evacuated away from London in September 1939 following the outbreak of World War 2. Because the story explores the Evacuation, this represents to a modern audience what life was like for inner city children (London) at the outbreak of war. It can be suggested that a large proportion of modern-day children would struggle to imagine the harsh reality of the Evacuation. Evacuation is typically associated with uncertainty, loss of loved ones and considered an unimaginable process amongst many of our present young people. Because several children were sent away to live with complete strangers, the book provides pupils the opportunity to consider the harsh reality of World War 2 in Britain. As well as exploring evacuation the book covers other sensitive topics such as

friendship, coming of age, and personal growth. Demonstrating how our pupils may be able to identify important links



between the historical knowledge they already have on the disruptions caused by war. Alongside developing the ability to recognise how social attitudes, social interests and the way of life during World War 2 largely differs from life in the modern world. Goodnight Mister Tom is a remarkable book and despite read by many for pleasure, provides pupils the opportunity to critical analyse historical facts and explore the depths of how war impacted society on a wide scale.

**‘The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century’ - William H. Chafe**

This book examines women’s changing roles and experiences in 20th Century America. It highlights their struggles for equality and the impact of social and political movements on their lives. It provides a detailed analysis of key periods, such as the feminist movement of the 1960s and the rise of the New Right. The central argument of William H Chafe’s book is whether or not women ever actually achieve full freedom and equality. Chafe creates the idea of a ‘paradox’ when describing women’s journey in the 20th century, as despite

small progress, overall women were never truly given complete freedom politically, socially or economically.

In a classroom setting, this book allows for critical thinking. The concept of the ‘paradox’ encourages students to consider the questions about progress and equality. The themes of gender equality and rights continue to be prominent in discussions in today’s society. This book brings together themes of social hierarchies, politics and economics, providing a broader perspective of women’s history in the 20th century. The central argument of the book, whether women achieve full freedom, can provide an opportunity for students to discuss, defend and challenge perspectives. This book tracks through time the narrative of American women’s pursuit of freedom and equality, considering how far this actually was achieved. Students reading this book for pleasure will provide an opportunity to form their own opinions on the extent of women achieving both rights and freedom. These different opinions students may form create a more enriched discussion for debate. The book draws on a combination of history, politics and gender issues, allowing those students who enjoy these topics to gain a greater depth of subject knowledge.

This book can provide central points for a Socratic discussion in the classroom. This will help to engage students with subject knowledge and form their own opinions in an oracy-based activity. This reading would be given to the students before this classroom discussion, preloading them with the information to ensure a valuable debate of different opinions. It would be particularly suitable for Year 11 students and A-Level students, as the complexity of the content aligns well with their level of analytical thinking and critical engagement with challenging topics. Studying this text is highly insightful, deepening the understanding of women’s history and its relevance to broader societal changes, which will enhance the teaching of these themes in history lessons.

The History trainees have created a range of resources to go alongside their book reviews to use in the History classroom to encourage and engage history students with these books. Reading literature with a historical focus can not only further pupils’ understanding, empathy and engagement with the past, but also create the opportunity for interests and curiosity to be sparked. I hope the resources included via the QR code will be useful in highlighting the wonderful possibilities of reading for pleasure in your own history classrooms and beyond.



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Moore  
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The  
CIRCUS

Olivia Level



**What's in a  
place?  
The place of  
reading.**

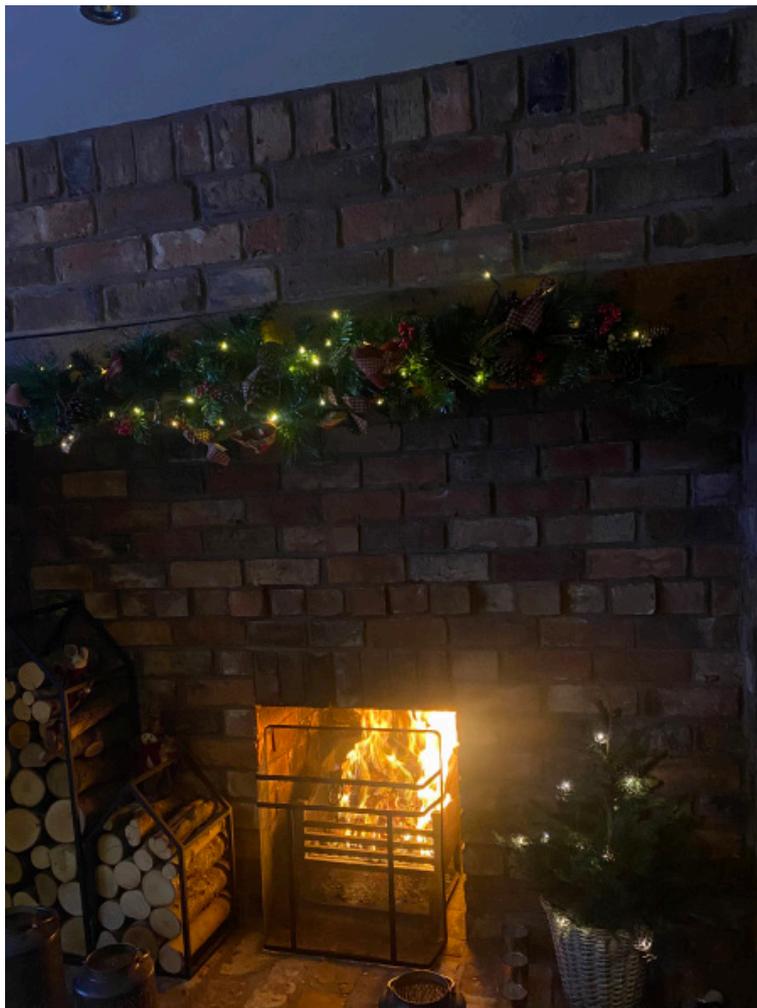
**Amy-Rose Bennett, Ellie Deehan and Fienga de Masi** are PGCE Secondary Geography students who have been exploring sense of place in reading. **Elena Lengthorn** is the University of Worcester Lead Mentor for Geography.

Place is a threshold concept in geography education, with several definitions, from that of place as a particular position, point or area in space, to place as a location, to the more complex and contextual ideas of the unique human and physical characteristics interconnected with other places. We can consider place as having three key components: location – point on the surface of our Earth, locale – the physical setting and environment and, finally, the sense of place – the emotions we attach to an area based on our lived experiences. Our sense of place changes over our lifetimes, influenced by both the physical setting and cultural change, as well as by who we are and what we do in the world e.g., our age, position in our families, our religion, gender and sexuality all influence our perceptions and sense of place. In this article we will explore the interconnections of reading and place and share a variety of resources for exploring reading in the geography classroom.

As PGCE trainees we have experienced some whole school strategies to try and encourage reading. In tutor periods we have seen the use of anchor charts for students to document what books they have finished or are currently reading, displayed on a tutor bulletin board. We have also seen staff members include the books they are currently reading on their email signatures, again modelling and normalising reading beyond the

classroom, tutorial reading time', (where students share a read as a class, each taking it in turns to read a minimum of a certain number of lines before passing the reading responsibility on to a peer) and 'DEAR' (Drop Everything And Read), a strategy that devotes classroom time to individual reading practice to subject specific reading within lessons.

Despite the aim of encouraging reading for pleasure, we have seen that sometimes the opposite is true



with these approaches: that reading has become a chore. It's encouraged us to think about how the place we are reading in influences our reading engagement, pleasure, retention and, in turn, our sense of place about the places in the texts we are reading!

We have a variety of our own favourite reading places in our lives, and we have a variety of reading places at

different stages in our lives. These places can influence our enjoyment and focus when reading. We encourage you to take a moment to reflect on the characteristics of your own favourite reading places from your life and share some of ours here:

**Elena's Mossy Tree Nook:** My current favourite place to read is in the inside of a beautiful moss-lined tree! It divides into four boughs, about a metre off the ground, to form a wonderful, sheltered, seat. You can step inside the tree, listening to the sounds of a babbling brook at its base, and be invisible to the woodland fauna. It allows me to be, simultaneously, absorbed in nature and the book that is in my hands.

**Ellie asks us:** Is there a best place to read? This is surely an individual preference, with some enjoying the comfort of being curled up in their bed, others enjoy a book as a moment of peace to be lost in whilst surrounded by the buzz of commuters on a train, and yet some enjoy the opposite, to hear only the sounds of nature around them as they sit in a sunny spot in the park (Penguin, 2023).

For me however, my favourite spot to read is in front of the fire at home, with a blanket around me on a cold, wet, and miserable day. In total honesty reading for pleasure does not always come naturally for me and so it is not just about finding the right book that matters, but also finding the right place that is comfortable, cosy, and quiet is essential!

**Amy's coastal reading retreat:** my favourite place to read is on any beach! Shingle or sand! I just love the smell of salt in the air and the sounds of the waves. One of my top favourite beaches

to read on, is Morecombe beach, which is a lovely spot to escape to during stressful times!

**Fienga shares:** My favourite place to read has changed over time. I find it changes depending on which country or city I am in. In London, I read when travelling, in Italy I enjoy reading in outside spaces in bars or cafes, while I enjoy my coffee. During Covid, my balcony in the West Midlands was where I read and connected to nature, now I read at home or when travelling.

All our reading experiences are situated! Therefore, the very act of reading, the where of it, has a geography of its own e.g., environment, location, climate, resources.

its own extensive vocabulary which needs to be mastered if students are to be able to understand and interpret what they are reading.'

To try and maximise reading engagement we have begun to explore our sense of place and its impact on reading.

#### Places for reading: what constitutes a good reading place?

What do we need to do 'good' reading? Is it about the lighting? Temperature? Nature? What can we do in our classrooms to encourage pupils to develop their sense of 'reading place'. In schools we encourage reading for pleasure, but do we have places that invite reading for pleasure? Some may

provide a little bit more oxygen when reading, creating a green natural nature environment that transports you to the jungle or outdoors, whilst in the comfort of indoors. Providing beautiful visual stimulus as you disappear into yourself, the wonderland of your book, for the pleasure of reading. Wouldn't that be a nice environment to have in schools where pupils and staff can go and read for pleasure at their own time, in school, surrounded by nature? We all know the benefits of plants in cleaning the air, providing oxygen, relieving stress, beautifying a place, reducing indoor pollution and most importantly connecting us back to nature.

Research shows that time in nature has many benefits to our mental health, positively affecting our moods, our pro-environmental behaviours and it has health benefits too. Might it be possible, by bringing nature into our classrooms and reading spaces, to create even more inviting places for our pupils to read for pleasure and benefit from nature connectedness?

#### How does reading shape sense of place?

Traditionally when considering how reading can impact our sense of place, we think of how what we are reading, whether it's a news article, an Instagram post, or a travel blog, influences our opinions and feelings associated to where we are reading about. However, here we instead consider how in reading anything it can alter our thoughts on the place we are reading in. Research has shown how negative experiences of reading, both in and outside of school, can significantly affect the attitudes children have towards reading and reduce their enthusiasm to read for pleasure (Webber, et al., 2024).

Compulsory reading within schools may lead to pupils associating reading with academic schoolwork and therefore conflicting the idea of simply reading for joy and pleasure. Cultivating these negative experiences of feeling forced to read in school may affect how children feel about the places they are reading in. Reading being imposed on students



Biddulph et al (2015) remind us of the importance of reading in geography: 'Learning geography requires students to read widely from a variety of texts and other sources of information. They need to select, compare, synthesise and evaluate information from different sources as well as use other skills to distinguish fact and opinion, and to recognise bias and objectivity in sources. Add to this the fact that geography has

say that this is the hub or the library. We invite you to explore your school's hub or library during break time, lunch time, or even out of timetable and consider its role as a reading space. How busy, loud and bustling was the hub or library? How much nature did you notice?

Now imagine a space specifically dedicated to reading for pleasure, surrounded by beautiful living plants to

whilst in their classrooms and form rooms may not only affect their attitudes to reading but also their sense of place of these spaces. There is a need for us to inspire positive reading experiences for students in a range of spaces across school. In doing this, students can feel part of a community of reading within school which will allow them to build a positive sense of place for their reading spaces. Furthermore, we need students to use metacognitive strategies to reflect on their reading. Not only the spaces they are reading in, but the

### How does place shape reading?

Geography is a subject that is all about connections, both in terms of people and place. Reading books and learning from stories is another way of accessing these connections which can be more engaging and relatable than an average textbook. A person's sense of place can influence what they are drawn to in terms of reading or interested in learning more about. Many recognise names from their local area and may have emotional connections with

that is described in the reading by playing sounds for a more immersive activity.

Of course, it is not just the display of reading or playing of sounds that create a reading rich environment but also the contexts that we choose to read. Schools often have dedicated reading zones usually in a school library so that students (and staff!) can read for pleasure, as well as gain confidence in their literacy skills in a peaceful environment. Using such spaces is



attitude around reading of students and teachers, what they are reading and the feelings and emotions it invokes. This allows students to find out what works for them, whether that be changing what they are reading about or changing where they choose to read: finding the place that can give them the most joy. As educators we need to encourage reading for pleasure, and this all begins by creating a positive, calm and happy atmosphere in our classrooms to provide a space for children and young people to develop positive reading experiences.

familiar landscapes and features or even local dialects. This recognition of place is something that I find inspires joy for all ages. It can also bring a sense of nostalgia perhaps in terms of setting. For example, when we read books that describe coastal landscapes, they can transport us back to the salty smell of the sea air, sounds of waves crashing and dragging pebbles along the shoreline. Sounds and smells that we associate with personal experiences in place. In a classroom setting, it might be appropriate to simulate the environment

crucial with some schools implementing dedicated library sessions whether that be in form time or across lessons. However, it is also about our attitude towards reading. Promoting students to read includes social practices (Guthrie et al, 2007), even choosing where to read for example on a school trip or during school assemblies normalises and models reading as a valued part of life. Similarly, as highlighted by Fisher and Frey 2018, 'book talk and book blessings' where recommendations are discussed between the students themselves and

teachers, increases in engagement. Within a classroom setting, encouraging a safe and positive environment for reading is equally as important as the content itself. Reading can be experienced as a punishment or chore if done in monotonous ways. Instead, by providing students with multiple spaces and normalising reading in different contexts, educators can work to increase student reading agency and attitudes through the consideration of suitable reading places.

As geographers we recognise how place and reading are interconnected. Furthermore, we are aware of the 'danger of a single story' of place and remind ourselves that we must consider the many other influences that will have an impact on our own and our pupils reading for pleasure.

**Resources**

We have been working on some resources to help build reading engagement in our geography classrooms and gift them to you here, via the QR code below:

**Metacognition resource**

This QR code will lead you to a resource to support pupils in reflecting on their reading for pleasure. It provides a selection of questions for students to consider about a range of elements of reading for pleasure including personal enjoyment, interest and engagement,



and reading environment. The resource encourages students to be metacognitive readers, thinking and reflecting on their experiences to allow them to adapt their reading to maximise enjoyment.

**Women in geography**

A wide range of books about women's stories who have been influenced by geographical actions. This can be used by teachers to help select a book to cover geographical themes.

**Water Poetry**

A collection of water-based poetry that can be used within the classroom to encourage student's oracy skills. These poems can be used as a hook or perhaps a class reset towards the end of a lesson, offering students a different way of connecting to the geography they are exploring.

**Glacial Lake outbursts Floods (GLOF)**

A collection of articles and accompanying questions for pupils to think about Glacial Lakes outburst floods, how climate change is impacting GLOF and communities.



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Bennett, Deehan, de Masi  
and Lengthorn  
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## Secondary Schools and Young People's Offer

The Hive hosts a wide range of school visits for Key Stage 3, all of which focus on developing the following skills:

- Literacy
- Critical thinking
- Justification of ideas with reasoning
- The evaluation of ideas
- Promotes the 'choice and choosing' aspect of Reading for Pleasure
- Encouragement of wider reading
- Ambitious expectations of reading
- Acquisition of knowledge
- The STEM agenda
- Increases the comprehension and knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live



These visits include the following:

**Fake News and AI** – Students learn about how to spot instances of Fake News and AI and why and how these appear in our daily lives. Students will learn to understand what generative AI is and how to use it safely and responsibly in work and at home.

**Book Blitz** – This is a lively, fast paced 45 - 60 minute session which encourages students to consider reading a wider range of books, authors and genres. Students work as teams discussing a variety of books before coming together to vote for their favourites.

**Poetry Visit** - This session allows students to engage with existing poetry to create something new. Children get the chance to learn a bit about poetry, look at some examples, then write a poem about something that makes them happy, with the chance to perform it at the end.

**Research Your Project** – This session helps students to use the library catalogue and resources to identify key sources for research for school and college projects.

### **Study Happy at The Hive:**

Our Study Happy initiative emphasises the importance of self-care and taking breaks while studying and The Hive host events that are designed to de-stress and support healthy studying. These include PAT therapy dog sessions, Mindful Colouring, free hot chocolate, and fruit snacks. Look out for our Study Happy sessions around A-Level and GCSE revision and examination periods



# Reading as part of an athlete's lifestyle

**Dave Woodward** is the University of Worcester PGCE secondary subject lead for physical education. He spent over 10 years in secondary teaching. He is an examiner and moderator for Edexcel/Pearson GCSE PE. Dave has presented at TEAN conferences and had several articles published in AfPE journal.

**Charlotte Ross** is a member of the University of Worcester PGCE secondary physical education tutor team. She spent over 16 years in secondary education, before moving into a career in ITTE in 2020. Charlotte leads the PSHE and Citizenship enhancement activity, and the Learning and Teaching Coordinator for the IoE. **Kimberley Hibbert-Mayne** is the coordinator of the University of Worcester PGCE secondary professional studies programme and a member of the PGCE secondary physical education tutor team. She has worked in education for the last 18 years as a physical education teacher in secondary schools before embarking on a career in teacher education in 2015. **Shanice Turner** is a current PGCE PE trainee.

As educators, we are in a privileged position to be able to influence students. This influence extends to 'reading for pleasure', in which the use of role models is advocated (National Literacy Trust, 2022). Books which teachers are 'currently reading' pepper corridors, classroom doors and email footnotes as schools attempt to promote a love of reading amongst their students. This article and the subsequent resource (a series of infographics for display boards available in PE departments) attempt to take that idea one step further, by bringing an enjoyment of reading, and physical performance in sport, together. We discuss why athletes make reading part of their lifestyles, normalising their enjoyment of reading and highlighting the benefits that different types of reading might have on general wellbeing and athletic performance. We hope the infographics that have been produced might inspire KS4 & KS5 students with an interest in sport and Physical Education (PE), to reconnect with the reading that many of them enjoyed in their younger childhood years.

It is well known that girls tend to enjoy reading more than boys but reading for pleasure (RfP) decreases for all teenagers with KS4 students RfP the least (Clark & Douglas, 2011, cited in DfE, 2012). The DfE's (2012) review of evidence around RfP list distractions, competing interests and other activities as reasons why time spent reading during leisure time decreases during adolescence. Clark & Osborne (2008, cited in DfE, 2012) give a more candid perspective providing findings from a quantitative study which suggest that a significant proportion of children in secondary schools think they will be perceived as 'geeky', 'nerdy' and 'boring' for reading (pp.15). There could also be a misconception that reading doesn't have the same thrill or purpose as partaking in sports or physical activity. Put simply, students, especially those studying PE or pursuing sporting activities might not see the relevance of reading to their everyday lives. We wonder whether role models, including PE teachers can help

**Just like sports and PE, reading is an immersive experience that builds discipline and provides a sense of achievement. In fact, Lever (2023) states explicitly that reading is not only good for the mind but also good for athletes.**

For generations books have been recognised as a tool for mental exercise and are increasingly becoming part of an elite athlete's daily training routine (Zanoguera, 2016). Lever (2023) suggests that people should be open to reading different types of books that may spark an interest. In preparation for this article and the accompanying infographics, we (all physical educators) thought about why we pick-up books in our spare time or look to role models in sport for inspiration.

Reading can motivate. Having the energy to train for sports and perform at a consistent level can depend on how motivated we are. Waking up early on a



break down existing stigmas around RfP. Firstly, we suggest that RfP may be more palatable if framed as voluntary, recreational or simply reading by free will (National Literacy Trust, 2006, Clark & Rumbold, 2006, cited in DfE, 2012). We then use benefits on performance as a means of engaging this specific group of students in relevant and interesting literature (DfE, 2012).

cold morning to attend an extra training session, missing out on social events to prepare for a competition, or balancing schoolwork with physical performance are just a few examples of situations where motivation is essential for success. Sometimes, the informed words and guidance of authors and sporting performers who have experienced motivation challenges can help guide us and push us to the next level in terms

of our intrinsic motivation. Cambria and Guthrie (2010) believe that lots of motivation may not always involve fun and excitement. We agree with the view that motivation for reading is centred on the values, beliefs and behaviours that Cambria and Guthrie allude to. We propose that by enabling students who enjoy PE to seek pleasure in reading by motivating themselves, the resultant motivation could lead to increasing the frequency and desire to read without direction, thus aligning with the focal point for reading for pleasure, volitional reading. It is this volitional reading, which Cremin and Scholes (2024) term as reading 'driven by the reader's own goals and interest' (p538) that is most desirable. We see the idea of reading to motivate as a PE student, as having a dual benefit. Firstly, to increase the motivation levels required to perform and secondly, to increase the volitional reading as a by-product of finding the delight in reading.

Reading can improve physical performance.

It can take athletes beyond their physical training by equipping them with information needed to improve. Books can provide technical or tactical understanding, information about

mindset and sporting knowledge to help them improve as an overall athlete and better prepare them for competition. Reading can be a crucial and effective way to improve and better prepare athletes for competition. Books surrounding topics such as sports psychology, goal setting, and



concentration techniques which enhance focus, are effective ways to help athletes improve their mental toughness and stress management. Additionally, reading about different techniques,

drills, and strategies can offer valuable insights into refining skills and optimizing performance. Harper (2024) is confident that sport can support young readers to grasp complex literacy skills through reading training programmes and tactics. Sports science topics, such as nutrition, biomechanics, and recovery, also play a significant role, helping athletes train smarter by understanding the science behind their practices. Biographies also allow individuals to learn through other athletes' experiences, helping inspire or provide guidance on how to face challenges and improve their craft.

Reading can help us 'get in the zone'. Of course, reading books about sport and physical activity can help athletes improve their game preparation, but world-renowned basketball player LeBron James suggests that reading any type of literature can benefit us all. Grunfield's (2012) article notes how LeBron James read *The Hunger Games* as part of his "pre-match ritual". Grunfield (2012) further suggests that an enjoyment of reading can offer a relaxing escapism that allows all athletes, irrespective of the level they play at,

to deal with pressure and attain pre-match focus. Scott (2016) explains the power of reading for pleasure as game preparation for footballers and the importance of encouraging an overhaul

in any archetypical stereotypes that allude to people who are involved in sport as non-readers. The National Literacy Trust (2022) acknowledges the decline in young people reading for pleasure and that sport and PE can play a positive role in encouraging “a real sense of community around sport and reading”.

Reading can help us unwind. Many people, including athletes, choose to pick up books because of the emotional benefits that reading can have. Clark & Rumbold (2006, cited in DfE, 2012) say that reading is relaxing and Headspace (2021), a leading online source of wellbeing advice, also talks about the distraction that reading can provide from day-to-day life which helps readers distress and prepare the body for sleep (e.g. it lowers the heart rate). Reading a book can also reduce screen time in bed which could in turn contribute to increased sleep duration (DfE, 2012). There are only a small number of studies

with sleep, especially in children. Quite recently Ricci et al. (2024) conducted a study which substituted 50% of its participants’ (children) screen time with the reading of a paperback book. Just 20 minutes of daily reading improved sleep quality. While this study was on preschoolers, a trial on adults in America, also found that reading a book in bed before going to sleep, improved sleep quality (Finucane et al. 2021). PE students will understand the importance of sleep on performance, and this provides further relevance of reading as part of an athlete’s lifestyle.

The infographics are ready to print for your display boards. They provide the above information in student-friendly bullet-points as well as reading suggestions. Please use the QR code alongside this article to access the resources. We hope you enjoy exploring this beneficial lifestyle habit with your students.



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## History

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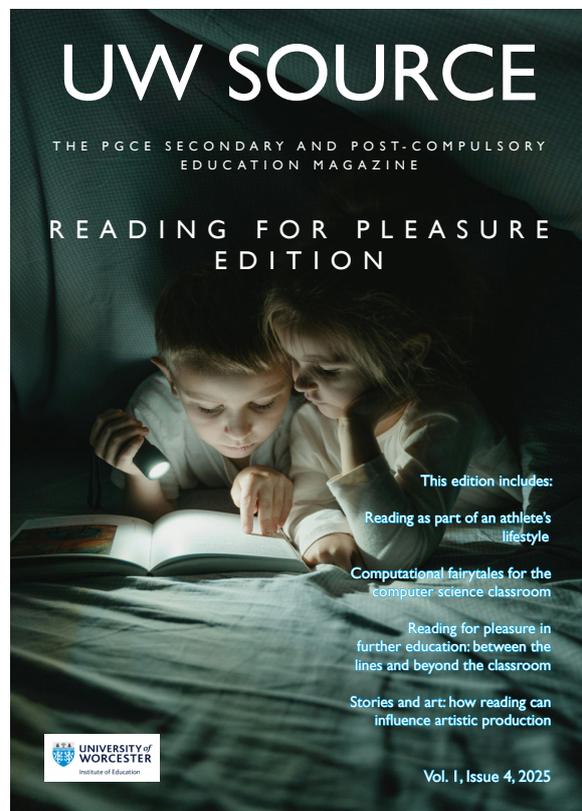
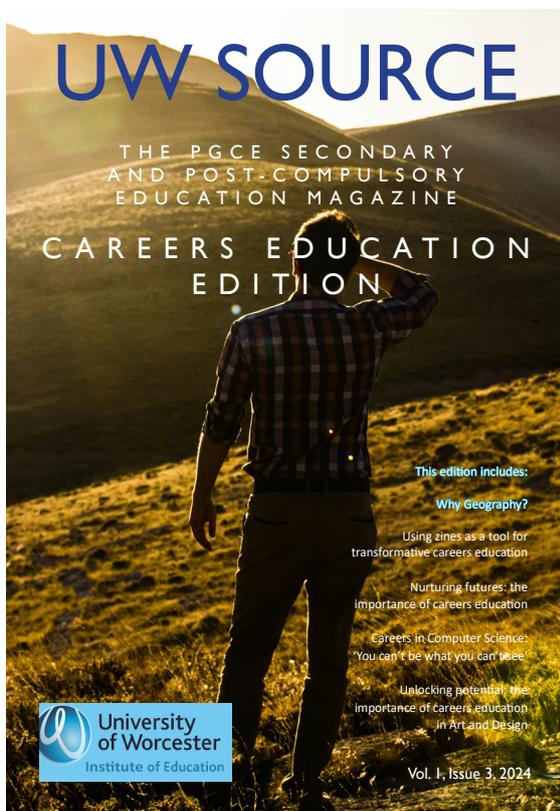
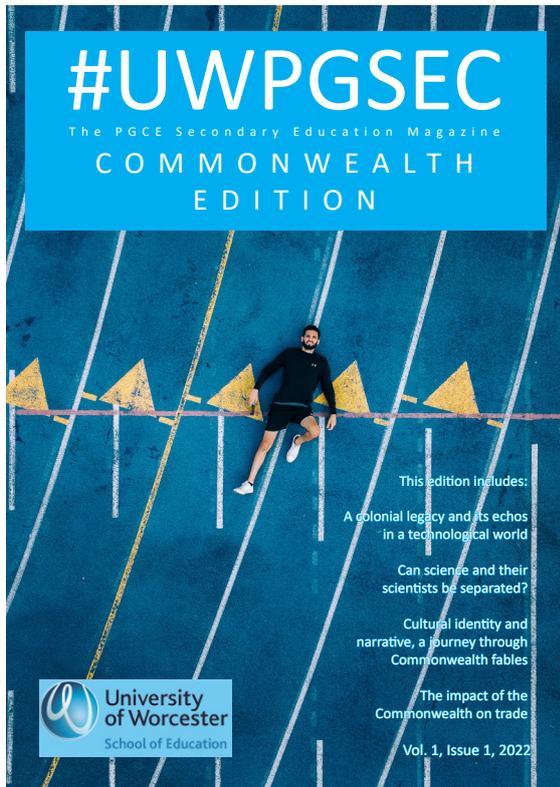
## Closing remarks

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# Closing remarks

**Olivia Levez** is a Midlands-based author. Her critically acclaimed YA novels include *Silver*, *The Island*, and *The Circus* and are available to buy online and in bookshops. A former English teacher, Olivia enjoys visiting schools as an author to speak about her books and deliver creative writing workshops. You can find out more by visiting her website: [olivialevez.com](http://olivialevez.com).

As a former English teacher and now a writer of Young Adult fiction, I've always been an advocate for carving out more time for reading in schools and discovering creative ways to engage students - especially in today's world of constant notifications, smartphones, and social media.

During my teaching days, I organised World Book Day celebrations, though I sometimes questioned whether dressing up as book characters was better suited to primary school. I needn't have worried - our sixth formers and staff embraced it wholeheartedly, parading enthusiastically as *Where's Wally*, *Alex de Large*, and *Luna Lovegood*.

At a recent school visit in Wolverhampton, I was greeted by a teacher dressed as the Narnia lamp post. I also had to keep asking an inflatable T-Rex (I'm still unsure about his book character) to deflate so he could sit at his desk. It was great fun - an inclusive celebration of story, with every year group involved.

Humans are perhaps the only species to create story. Even those that spurn or claim to hate books, watch them tell an anecdote with their friends. As it teases and hides and builds and reveals. A joke is a story. There is an order of events. Rarely do we want the ending first. Unlike scrolling, films and computer games, reading books is a long game. The expectation of authors and teachers is that the teenage reader will agree to

spend days if not weeks in the world and mind of a fictional character. That's a big ask.

For those who can access reading for pleasure, it is blissful escapism, distraction from the stresses of the world, travelling without leaving your desk or sofa. A chance to inhabit another's life, to fight monsters, take down a government, solve a mystery, fall in love. Reading allows students to



put aside ego and bias. Whether it's an LGBTQ+ love story, a high-stakes fantasy, or gritty realism, reading lets us become someone else - for a while. All through marks on a page.

But what if some children can't access the magic because they were never in the privileged circle of owning books or being read to?

The article, ***Building a Whole School Community*** begins with the compelling statement: 'According to evidence from the OECD (2002, 2010, 2021) reading for enjoyment is more important for

children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status. Therefore, finding ways to engage pupils in reading and developing the habit of reading has the potential to leverage social change.' Beyond the pages: the psychological benefits of reading for pleasure also explores the influence of reading for pleasure on overall academic performance (Pearson and Cervett, 2015).

In *Religious Education: a Book Club Case Study*, Nikki McGee explains how she secured funding from her department and PTA in order to buy books for her Religion and Philosophy book club. 'The DfE research shows that owning books is a significant factor in reading for pleasure.'

In one school author visit I made at a school where many students came from under-resourced backgrounds I saw this at first hand when the kindly librarian paid for my books out of his own pocket, confident the school would reimburse him - because the Year 8 students were wanting to buy a copy for themselves after my talk.

## Reading as Resilience

Reading is a mental workout. Like lifting weights, we don't expect a beginner to start with 50kg. The same goes for reading - it builds stamina, concentration, and perseverance. The satisfaction of reaching the end of a story is a powerful reward. These ideas are explored by the P.E. Department's article, which interestingly links reading for pleasure and motivation.

'It is this volitional reading, which Cremin and Scholes (2024) terms as 'driven by the reader's own goals and interest' (p538) that is most desirable'. These ideas are further examined in *Beyond the classroom: the psychological impact of reading for pleasure*: 'regular reading for pleasure is linked to higher levels of wellbeing, social emotional development

## CLOSING REMARKS

and 'academic grit' (Bozgun and Akin Kosteralioglu, 2020). Books are the opposite of outsourcing in an age when so much - research, proofreading, writing and ideas generation - is outsourced.

The Psychology department explores the importance of reading in the development of empathy: 'One such [mental health and wellbeing] benefit is improving a person's capacity for social interaction and collaboration (Corcoran and Oatley, 2019) This is because experiencing other people's emotions and perspectives via literary characters develops the reader's Theory of Mind (cognitive ability to understand others), bettering their capacity for empathy and cooperation.'

Former Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman put it this way: "Reading is an exercise in empathy—walking in someone else's shoes." Or as Atticus Finch says in *To Kill a Mockingbird*: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

### Representation Matters

The Psychology department explores the importance of identity, and students seeing themselves represented in literature. As McCarthy (2011) notes, 'We search for ourselves in literature.' The article moves on to argue that 'Promoting empathy and unity, leading to cross-cultural friendship: Steiner et al (2008), found that reading multicultural literature fosters positive self-esteem and has the ability to nurture acceptance and respect among all students.'

The Science department discusses how Science Fiction can also act as a gateway, bridging imagination and inquiry - especially encouraging girls in STEM subjects.

As teachers, how can you encourage this powerful habit? The English department makes the point that 'YA fiction tackles issues and themes that are universally relevant to teenagers, such as forging identity, navigating relationships, and

personal growth.'

Start by reading - yourself. If we're not reading YA or children's fiction, how can we recommend great books or build classroom libraries?

There are some great UK YA authors and books out there! Here are some for starters: check out Wren James for speculative LGBTQ+ romances; Sue Wallman for read-in-a-day high school thrillers; Jan Dunning for dark fairy tale retellings about the toxic fashion industry; Patrice Lawrence for thought-provoking contemporary fiction featuring characters with Black Caribbean heritage. Darren Charlton for his beautiful and heart-rending zombie apocalypse series.); Kathy Evans for speculative fiction with themes of family and friendship. All of these deserve a place on your classroom bookshelf (after you've read them first). My latest sci-fi romance, *Silver*, explores surveillance culture, belonging and what it is to be human, whereas *The Island* has been used at Queensbridge School as part of their PSHEC Literacy Across the Curriculum initiative for its themes of survival, perspective of a young carer and redemption.

Many of the articles recognise that teachers face a real challenge: *Building a Whole-School Reading Community* cites the National Literacy Trust (Cole et al., 2024) reporting the lowest levels of reading for pleasure since 2005, with only 1 in 5 children reading daily. But there is hope online. Book Tok is filled with young people finding creative ways to showcase their enjoyment of particular genres, be it romantasy, Manga or horromance. There's a whole community of readers out there colour-coding bookshelves, gifting each other blind book dates and matching socks to books.

English teachers are pivotal (Kern, 2017), but all staff can play a part. Reading aloud, recommending books, simply talking about stories - these things matter (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Form time is an ideal space for shared reading. Build trust, encourage curiosity. Let them hear you say: "I'm really

struggling to get into this book - but there's this amazing scene where..." Pitch a book - try the 2-minute elevator pitch challenge: can you or your students describe your favourite book / story? (include films and Netflix series for those who haven't got the reading bug yet). Find out who the readers are in your classroom; ask them for book recommendations, make them the expert. Stay informed about what students are actually reading. Visit your school library and bookshops. Follow BookTok.

And be honest about your own reading struggles. Let them know that reading can be hard - and that's OK.

Celebrate World Book Day - even if it's wearing a tie covered with Mockingjays. (just maybe leave the inflatable T-Rex at home).



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