

Reflecting choice: Reading for pleasure through focusing on a variety of texts in the Primary classroom

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Abstract

This research aims to demonstrate how lessons exploring a variety of texts can engage, interest and impact children's choice when reading for pleasure. Six children from a mainstream primary school took part in five lessons that presented four different types of text: picture books, poems, comics and plays. These texts were discussed, analysed and read before a writing task was conducted with each text. Two class teachers and the English subject leader took part in a questionnaire to acquire their views on Reading for Pleasure (RfP). After the lessons, children were observed in the classroom to monitor their reading choices and engagement with the four focus texts during free reading time. The findings suggest that lessons exploring different texts and reading strategies can advise children on actively choosing to engage with a variety of texts in reading for pleasure. The findings additionally suggest that teachers showed positive feelings towards reading for pleasure and its importance for children's development. However, these feelings appeared to have been inhibited by factors including limited resources, personal preferences regarding certain texts and continuous assessments on reading ultimately restricting the time to explore reading for pleasure.

Keywords: Reading for pleasure (RfP), choice, variety, texts, interest, engagement.

1. Introduction

Reading is a lifelong skill that provides opportunities to learn, be informed and be entertained. The Department for Education (DfE) believes reading allows children to "acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know" (DfE, 2013, p. 3). The Centre for Learning in Primary Education (CLPE, 2014) suggests that educators are key in promoting this skill among children. Educators, who immerse themselves in the

interests of young readers to create relationships with children around their reading habits, can greatly increase children's reading development (Cremin, 2009; Cremin et al, 2019).

However, *learning* to read is just the beginning. For children to become lifelong readers, teachers have to *nurture* their engagement in reading (Bearne and Reedy, 2018). With reading providing "a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually" (DfE, 2013, p. 3), teachers promoting an engagement in reading can ensure children are given this chance. Engagement in reading is also considered as reading enjoyment and reading for pleasure (RfP), due to a desire in choosing to read and the fulfilment obtained from reading (Cremin, 2014).

RfP has become a focus point in education over the last ten years, with RfP being labelled as an aim within the National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013). Since then, schools have attempted to become reading communities, aiming to demonstrate their commitment to government values on RfP (Cremin, 2019). Organisations such as the Summer Reading Challenge (2020) also aim to encourage children to read for pleasure during the holidays to promote reading enjoyment. This interaction between education and RfP is of no surprise, with research suggesting there is a correlation between RfP and increased attainment (NUT, 2016). However, with children's desire to read for pleasure being the lowest since 2013 (Clark, 2019), are schools misreading RfP by concentrating on the skill to read rather than inspiring a desire to read?

Evidence suggests this may be the case. While policies discuss the importance of RfP, high stake reading assessments and school inspections concentrate on reading skills (Bearne and Reedy, 2018). Consequently, research has found that teachers view reading as assessment oriented and therefore plan to teach the skill of reading rather than promote RfP strategies (Cremin, 2009). This does not promote RfP effectively, because schools need to balance on developing "the skill and the will to read" (Bearne and Reedy, 2018, p. 150) rather than just the skill, in order to develop RfP among students.

When schools prioritise developing the skill of reading, teachers may not be creating important reading relationships with children, therefore not connecting with their reading interests. Ofsted (2004) found a lack of richness in pupils' reading habits at school, with school's conceptions of English and reading still revolving around print and book-based texts (Cremin, 2011). The DfE (2013) acknowledged that RfP should be integrated through reading widely from a range of texts in order to reshape this conception, yet there has been little research to support this acknowledgement. The DfE (2012), Clark and Flowerday (2005) and Clark (2020) reported a wide range of texts that were read for pleasure at home, but there is no data suggesting these wide reading habits take place in school. While Ofsted has found teachers are reading more regularly to children with a range of texts (Ofsted, 2020), these observed texts in schools did not fully reflect the research in what children are interested in reading at home. As schools and teachers are to adopt the National Curriculum programme of study for English in their teaching, is RfP, reading choices, reading relationships and a will to read being diverted in schools to prioritise the skill and assessment aspect of reading?

This research aims to explore whether exposing children to a variety of texts in lessons can develop their reading choice preferences. This will include discussing texts with children, observing and talking about their reading habits, while ultimately assessing if choice of text and RfP can be influenced by a teacher. The study aims to further analyse teacher practices regarding RfP. This includes whether they construct a classroom environment that either accurately represents the government's curriculum on RfP, or if this is lacking within the classroom. Lastly, this study will highlight whether choice of text and RfP can be taught, and what changes may need to be made to allow RfP to be easily accessed by all students in line with government frameworks.

2. Literature Review

RfP is defined as having a free will to read, engaged by reading and developing a satisfaction from reading (Cremin, 2014; Clark and Rumbold, 2006). RfP is often interchangeable with many terms (reading engagement, reading enjoyment, reading independently) when defined in literature (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Within these terms, however, the concept of reading out of free will is always underpinned (Bearne and Reedy, 2018). This suggests that 'free will' is the focus of RfP. Bearne and Reedy (2018) also discuss that RfP is not the same as acquiring reading skills, therefore there needs to be a separation from learning to read (skills) and becoming a reader (free will). Learning to read has been possibly adopted as the definition of RfP by the government, schools and even teachers. Learning to read suggests that RfP is to be performed by teachers (Cremin, 2019) and focuses on reading for instruction at the expense of RfP (Cremin, 2011). For RfP to be effectively implemented in schools, it should not be 'taught' as a skill, but rather reading strategies should be implemented where RfP works in tandem with learning the skill of reading (NUT, 2016). If RfP is encouraged in class, children's will to read (RfP) can influence their reading skills (Cremin, 2019; Lockwood, 2012; NUT, 2016, p. 7).

To effectively foster RfP, research suggests that teachers need to act upon four key practices: rich reading environments, provisions to read aloud for pleasure, talk on books and recommended texts and quality independent reading time that provides a range of choice (Cremin, 2009; Cremin, 2014). These elements were identified based on research into teachers as readers, where teachers' reflections on reading influences and practices formed these constructs to foster RfP development (Cremin, 2009). The NUT (2016, p. 7) has analysed and given guidance surrounding these four practices for teachers to adopt, effectively develop and sustain RfP. However, studies also suggest that within this RfP pedagogy, there are many sub practices that are crucial in aiding the promotion of RfP such as: incorporating children's reading interests into the curriculum (Bearne and Reedy, 2018), explore reading through dramatic approaches (CLPE, 2018) and teachers simply enjoying reading themselves (NUT, 2016). Although RfP pedagogy through teacher practice is seen by researchers as positively impacting RfP, government research has focused on how children read for pleasure.

A document published by the DfE in 2012 assembled research papers on RfP, providing evidence on what works to promote pleasure from reading (DfE, 2012). The DfE (2012) use Clark and Rumbold's (2006) definition of RfP, where 'free will' and 'satisfaction' are mentioned in creating avid readers. However, in the document there was little research presented on how free will and satisfaction is fostered and on school strategies to increase RfP. The paper also presented a large number of studies that have only shown RfP to positively impact attainment and assessment (DfE, 2012, p. 3). With the document showcasing RfP's impact on enhancing attainment and limited research on RfP strategies in schools, this publication may have shaped the government's understanding of RfP in school. This may have also influenced the implementation of RfP in the DfE's policy on English in 2013.

The English programmes of study (DfE, 2013) document proposes that pupils should be taught to develop a pleasure of reading and motivation to read (DfE, 2013, p. 11), laying out an action plan on how to teach RfP. Word reading and comprehension are distinguished as the dimensions of reading that should be taught, emphasising the importance of reading skills. RfP is mentioned, but labelled as a comprehension skill, explained as 'reading widely', and its ability to increase curriculum knowledge and vocabulary (DfE, 2013, p. 4) is emphasised. RfP was also referenced as an issue that schools needed to focus on, by establishing a love of reading and improving children's imagination (DfE, 2013, p. 3), but information on how was not presented. As RfP in government policy was now primarily linked to the cognitive aspects of word recognition and comprehension (Clark and Rumbold, 2006), RfP was referenced as a tool to support higher standards of reading skill in schools.

In 2015, the DfE released a paper on the next steps in reading, where RfP in the National Curriculum was raising standards. RfP was seen as the most effective way to develop mature readers (DfE, 2015, p. 17) achieve higher scores in reading tests and achieve more across the whole curriculum due to its development of English skills (DfE, 2015, p. 18). Teachers are expected "to do everything they can to inspire a love of

reading” (DfE, 2015, p. 20), however, only references to book clubs and libraries are advised as ways to inspire children to read out of free will. The recent government papers have aimed to inspire a love of reading, but it could be said that word reading skills and comprehension strategies are not enough to nurture engaged and committed readers (Bearne and Reedy, 2018). Schools need to develop approaches in line with reading skills and comprehension strategies that support engagement and a love of reading (NUT, 2016), but reports have shown governing bodies have influenced schools to prioritise RfP around the skill of reading rather than reading engagement.

The 2019 Ofsted report found that rigorous approaches to teaching reading developed children’s enjoyment and that children read widely and often (Ofsted, 2019, p. 10), a finding that reflects the DfE’s (2013) expected approaches to RfP. Ofsted also identified that teachers were regularly reading to children to develop language, comprehension and reading for purpose and pleasure (Ofsted, 2020, p. 14). Although Ofsted mentions a balance in developing reading skills and the will to read with RfP, there is no explanation of the creative approach that is being undertaken by schools to foster children’s engagement with RfP (Dombey, 2015). This could be because schools are instead adhering to government priorities of raising standards and closing reading attainment gaps (DfE, 2015). However, it is teachers who have the key role in developing and inspiring children to read for pleasure (CLPE, 2018). Teachers can form relationships (Cremin, 2019), create opportunities to read for pleasure at school (Bearne and Reedy, 2018) and mould a generation of willing readers. Research into teacher views and practices to promote RfP, however, provide evidence that proposes this key role has been misused.

In the classroom, teachers have been found to focus heavily on reading as being based on proficiency and testing children’s reading level rather than discussing texts and children’s views of them (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2018; John, 2009). Furthermore, children felt demotivated to read due to internalised views of readers having to be smart and understanding a text rather than enjoying and discussing it (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2018). This emphasises that teachers use reading time to test children rather than engaging

with strategies suggested by national education frameworks (CLPE, 2018; NUT 2016) or adopting a pedagogy that fosters learners engagement (Cremin, 2011).

Hempel-Jorgensen (2018) discovered that teachers understood reading as a skill and an area of expertise, whilst pleasure was not seen as a central idea within reading, or seen as a social practice. Additionally, teachers have been found to focus on analysing texts and reading skills while sacrificing RfP and engagement (Lockwood, 2008; Cremin, 2014). This could be because England's "high-stakes national tests and school inspections concentrate almost exclusively upon skills" (Bearne and Reedy, 2018). Assessments such as SATs place teachers under pressure to produce positive results, further limiting elements of RfP practices and opportunities (Rijke, 2021). One practice hindered is choice, with research showing assessment on reading skills lead to an omission of children's free reading choice by teachers (Cremin, 2014). Although choice is just one aspect, its importance in fostering lifelong readers (Clark and Rumbold, 2006, p. 21) suggest its omission can restrict the impact of the RfP pedagogy on future readers.

Reading interests and choice have been heavily linked to RfP (Cremin, 2014; Schraw, 1998) and therefore "honouring children's reading choice is key" (Cremin, 2019, p. 6). The government expects that children "should have opportunities to exercise choice in selecting books and be taught how to do so" (DfE, 2013, p. 17) within school. Effective RfP pedagogy should allow for choices to be reader led (Cremin, 2019; NUT, 2016), where teachers have a wide knowledge of changing reading interests to support these choices (Mottram, 2015; CLPE, 2018). Research has found that children with the freedom to frequently choose texts become engaged readers due to being invested and motivated by an enjoyable text (Lloyd, 2017; Reynolds and Symons, 2001). RfP "involves material that reflects our own choice" (Clark, 2006, p. 6) therefore being a vital element within the RfP pedagogy, but studies have presented conflicts between how choice is constructed at home, within school and by teachers.

At home, Clark and Foster (2005, p. 20) found that an average of twenty-four different texts were read for pleasure at home. Clark (2020) recently reported fiction, non-fiction, poems, magazines, comics, news, song lyrics and a number of digital texts as being read at home. However, school concepts of text choice are limited to story books or heavily print based texts (Ofsted, 2004; Cremin, 2011; Mottram, 2015). “Schools and families need to ensure they tap into this richness in pupils’ reading, which is not necessarily print-based, in order to hook children into reading” (Clark and Rumbold, 2006, p. 15). There is limited research on what choice is available in class. Ofsted reports have observed stories, rhymes, poems and non-fiction being regularly read by teachers (Ofsted, 2020).

In regards to teacher influence on choice and fostering RfP, research has found that children who struggle to read are given less control and choice over what they can read in school (Lupton, 2012 and Schraw, 1998 in Cremin, 2014). Teachers have been found to offer texts in the classroom that were based on their own preferences (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2018) whilst not introducing texts or authors to the class that were not favourable, due to personal opinions (Marsh, 2000). When teachers interacted with RfP strategies, such as reading rivers, their understanding of choice altered because they could see a common popularity in certain texts, consequently encouraging teachers to provide more diversity in the classroom (Cremin, 2019).

Teachers who use strategies to engage with children’s reading preferences, will develop a pedagogy which allows children the freedom to choose texts based on topics of interest. It can allow deeper discussion and create “communities of engaged readers” (Cremin, 2019, p. 6). Within the literature, there is mention of the strategies needed to foster RfP, how the factor of choice creates a reader led approach to RfP and how teachers are restrained by assessment. However, there is also an omission of research that explores how the government and national organisations impact teacher’s RfP practice, how children are taught about different text styles in school and ultimately how this learning can inform text choice. Based on the research into RfP the aim of the study

is to explore how introducing a variety of texts in lessons can impact their choices during reading time and how teacher practices can have an affect on this choice.

3. Methodology

Two research questions arose, based on previous literature. Firstly, does exposing children to a variety of texts and discussing them promote a wider scope when reading for pleasure? Secondly, do teacher views and practice have an impact on children's RfP around a variety of texts in school?

From these questions, a small-scale research was designed in partnership with an English primary school. The study was conducted in a mainstream primary school in London over five weeks. The study focused on a year two class, with six children aged between six to seven. The two class teachers and English lead were asked to partake in the research, in order to obtain their views and observe their classroom practices regarding RfP.

To acquire participants that fairly and accurately represent the class, a stratified sampling method was used, as advised by McNeil (2005). Participants were split into boys and girls because the class had an equal number of both groups. For the small-scale intervention, three participants were chosen at random from each group to create a focus class of six. By using this method, it leads to greater accuracy in representation of constituents (McNeil, 2005) from the school and class.

The six participants were part of a withdrawal group. To minimise risks regarding learning, the lessons were conducted at the end of the week during a time period when there were no whole class activities. Five lessons took place, the first focusing on the participants reading preferences and how they felt about RfP in school. This involved attempting to make a reading river, bringing a book of their own to discuss their views, and talking about their reader preferences. By using a strategy involving reading rivers,

readers' interests could be obtained and widen understanding on the group's reading trends, further forming discussions around choice of text (Cremin, 2019).

The following four lessons focused on different types of text. The shared theme between each text was the story of Red Riding Hood, so that participants were exposed to the same stimulus and the focus revolved around types of text. The four texts studied in these four lessons, in order, were: picture books, poems, comics and playscripts.

Figure 1 shows the rationale for the selection of chosen texts.

Text type	Rationale for selection and links to literature
Picture book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common interaction with in KS1. • “various levels of language and literacy can thereby access the text and explore the meanings through reading the pictures” (John, 2009, p. 124). • By showing how pictures can be read, this would allow for children to independently interpret the text, decode easily and can extend text meaning (NUT, 2016).
Poem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research suggests primary schools read these texts the most (McGeown, 2016, p, 112). • Poems are a common material read by children out of school (Clark, 2020, p. 8). • Poems can create book talk around patterns and connections to other stories (NUT, 2016), while also exposing children to rich language and spelling patterns (Dombey, 2015).
Comic book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence suggests that children are increasingly reading this text (Twist, 2007, p. 44; McGeown, 2016, Clark, 2005), so participants may be familiar with this text in discussion. • Comics are increasingly becoming a multimodal text (Cremin, 2011; Clark, 2020), reflecting the texts children might read as technology becomes common with younger generations.

Playscript	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poems present a style of reading through spoken language, providing pleasure through reading aloud (Manna, 1984). • Poems initiate RfP as a social group interaction (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2018). • Reading aloud is an effective RfP strategy, so playscripts were additionally chosen because they are texts that can encourage reading aloud through role play, further challenging pupils ideas and perceptions (NUT, 2016).
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Figure 1: Rationale for the selection of chosen texts.

The lesson plan layout would entail:

- Reading the beginning of the text.
- Considering features and analysing a type of text (picture book, comic, poem, play).
- Reading the analysed type of text with the Red Riding Hood stimulus.
- Attempting to write a section of the text in order to further understand it.
- Reading the text again and debating likes and dislikes about that specific type of text.
- Rating the type of text out of five, one meaning it was unenjoyable and five being extremely enjoyable.

This enabled the participants to understand the features of the genre, when attempting to write in the style of the text. Opportunities to analyse, discuss and read the text allowed the writing activity to be scaffolded, ensuring all could access the task. Debating the features of the text allowed participants to brainstorm and share ideas with their peers (Gall, 1980), supporting the government's plan for teachers to promote a 'love' of RfP in the classroom (DfE, 2013). Worksheets were provided for the writing activity, reflecting the school's common practice in English. This aided participants in focusing more on engaging with the text and guiding their thought processes more easily (Nyamupangedengu, 2012).

Qualitative methods of data collection were adopted. Questionnaires with open ended questions were used to obtain a greater amount of information from teachers and the English subject leader regarding their views on RfP. Questionnaires were used to collect qualitative data because an insight into views, feelings and opinions are available when ended questions are incorporated (Denscombe, 2010). Although, ethical issues meant that the questionnaires could potentially provide inaccurate data due to concerns that participants may possibly write what they think would benefit the research more than their true beliefs (Denscombe, 2010).

Data was collected through written work and observations from lessons to provide a deeper understanding of children's views towards different texts. Further classroom observations following the lessons took place to detect changes in RfP habits. Participant observation would help to identify children's text choices in RfP and any impact relating to the questionnaire or lesson findings (Denscombe, 2010). Observing interactions between teachers and students could also inform behaviours and actions surrounding text choice.

To ensure ethical guidelines were appropriately adhered to, recommendations from the British Educational Research Association (BERA) were followed. Firstly, the headteacher became a gatekeeper for the study, which involved asking for permission to conduct the study and being a main contact in case of any implications (BERA, 2018, p. 10). Consent forms were sent to parents or acting guardians, asking for consent for their child to participate (BERA, 2018, p. 15). Teachers, guardians and students were provided with an information sheet and constantly reminded of their right to withdraw through use of the cover letter, information sheet and verbal reassurance (BERA, 2018, p. 9).

Thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the data because it could be coded into certain themes related to the nature of the study. Due to the large quantity of qualitative data that was collected, thematic analysis is a strategy largely favoured by researchers (Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis also identifies views, behaviour and practices between

participants (Clarke, 2017) which was a factor of importance for the questionnaires. As the research analyses opinions, views and choices, thematic analysis grouped similar language codes that represented a common theme within the research over a wide span of raw data.

4. Data analysis and findings

4.1 Teacher questionnaire on opinions of RfP

The thematic analysis of the data from the questionnaires showed three common themes on teacher's views of RfP and choice in the classroom. These three themes were: definitions of RfP, how RfP impacts children's development and opportunities to develop choice.

Teachers defined and understood RfP as independent reading based on choice, for example children choosing to read anything they want to. Codes surrounding location, such as a quiet comfy place was also an indicating factor of RfP. These views are reflective of Cremin's key practices in having an effective reading pedagogy (2014). Classroom observations focusing on these responses found that children were allowed to choose from a large selection of picture books, similar to Ofsted's findings of KS1 classrooms (2004) suggesting there was freedom of choice, but limited choice of texts. Children were allowed to read at their tables, but there was restricted classroom space for a quiet comfy place to be provided.

Notions of personal growth and academic progress were conveyed within the theme of RfP's links to child development. Teachers expressed personal growth through improving imagination, understanding a range of cultures and ultimately increasing their love for reading by reading for pleasure more frequently. However, there was no mention of how choice can help children personally develop their understanding of reading preferences, likes and dislikes.

Teachers also admitted that academic influences, including constant reading schemes, a focus on phonics and the demand for testing, had negatively impacted child development on RfP. Academic influences such as reading schemes in guided reading sessions, meant teachers felt they had to focus on reading skills and check understanding (comprehension). The views combined with the practices observed align with research that choice and RfP pedagogies are hindered by reading schemes (NUT, 2016), assessments and the government's focus on reading as a skill (Cremin, 2014; Rijke, 2021). Bearne and Reedy's Scale of Progression in Reading (2018, p. 239), suggests that reading skill, comprehension and engagement and response are important aspects in tracking reader progression.

The data found that teachers discussed reading skill and comprehension strategies in developing reading, but did not mention strategies that develop children's engagement and response within the Scale of Progression in Reading. Teachers may need effective training to inform them of how to incorporate such scales in reading practices. In doing so, engagement and response can be incorporated within guided reading sessions by letting children give their opinions, discuss preferences and choose texts effectively with teacher guidance.

Looking towards opportunities to develop choice, teachers expressed a need for schools to do more by utilising the library, having authors or poets visit and promoting reading clubs. A lack of time to provide independent reading opportunities was also mentioned, teachers reporting that reading time mostly took place once work was finished or at the end of the day. Observations found that children who finished work early were given the opportunity to independently read and left to make their own reading choices. This is a proven strategy to develop RfP and choice (NUT, 2016; Bearne and Reedy, 2018).

However, there was no designated reading time throughout the day, opportunities to read after work were inconsistent and many children missed out due to not finishing work. Those who finished skimmed through three or four books at a time, suggesting

they were not informed on how to make effective choices or did not know how to make effective use of reading time. This may provide insight into schools offering designated time where teachers can allow everyone to read together including themselves to create a sustained and frequent reading time (NUT, 2016).

4.2 First lesson on reading preferences

In the first lesson, participants felt negatively about classroom texts and guided reading texts, labelling them as 'boring' and having repeated characters, settings and storylines. Participants listed a variety of texts they read at home including information books, fiction, magazines and comics, replicating literature on reading preferences at home (DfE, 2012; Clark, 2020). These discussions allowed the children to compare similar reading preferences with each other, discussing texts they were equally familiar with. All children brought a book of their choice, speaking about the text's story, features and reason why they chose it. This discussion became reader led as children gave opinions on each text, the characters and made recommendations to others who had brought similar texts. Although the researcher was also able to inform book choice and recommendations to the participants, this book talk allowed more effective recommendations to be made by the participants because they could identify a shared connection to specifically relatable peer choices.

4.3 Second lesson on picture books

Participants suggested picture books had similar themes and features to fairy tales and Disney stories read at home (theme of location). However, they did not perceive picture books in class as picture books, possibly due to the choice of picture books in school not representing fairy tales or Disney characters which participants heavily associated with picture book texts. A teacher led discussion on a picture on the second page regarding setting, expression and prediction allowed participants to engage with the text in a different way compared to the first page. Their discussions on how characters were represented and their predictions made based on the pictures became more in depth with each page. Classroom observations following this showed one participant interacting with a challenging picture book. They were able to explain a character's

feelings using the pictures and retold the story to a friend accurately even though they did not read the words.

4.4 Third lesson on poems

Participants recalled reading poems in school (location) and compared them to songs (connection to text), but did not understand the features behind this text. By the researcher reading aloud the first lines of the text, participants could identify more features of the poem including rhyming words, rhythm and expression in how it is read. Participants read the poem aloud with the researcher, showing increased engagement by attempting to join in using the discussed features. Children also attempted to read the poem themselves, emphasising the rhythm and rhyming words as they became more confident in the features of the text.

When a teacher read several poems to the class in an observation, some participants identified the poem's characteristics mentioned in the focus lesson and were willing to volunteer to read a poem aloud to the class as well. They also asked for these poems to be available during free time, demonstrating that reading aloud and appreciating how texts are read can increase RfP and create developing readers (Bearne and Reedy, 2018).

4.5 Fourth lesson on comics

Participants had a wide knowledge on comics through reading them at home and mentioned the similarities of comics to television cartoons, due to features and characters (themes of location and connection to the text). After discussing the structure of the text, children were given a comic template and created the end of the comic themselves. Children were keen to read their own work to the group and engaged with the text by swapping work with one another, choosing texts from their peers that had more preferable endings and relatable character perceptions. The girls within the group engaged with the texts that ended with Red Riding Hood being friends with the wolf. However, the boys engaged with their peer's texts that showed the wolf fighting the woodcutter and the onomatopoeia with 'pow' and 'slam'.

Observations witnessed participants asking the teacher if there were comics available to read in class. The teacher provided a set of comics in the reading area following this interaction and the participants showed enjoyment through emphasising the onomatopoeia words. The teacher had not provided these texts initially, possibly because of personal opinions (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2018; Marsh, 2000). However, this shows that choice of text should reflect home reading and that children possibly reflect their preferences through their work, where this work could be made available for others to read in reading corners.

4.6 Fifth lesson on playscripts

Lastly, playscripts were linked to school plays and reading together (connection to the text), participants identifying assigned roles, stage directions and voice acting for different characters. The lesson became reader led as participants discussed and assigned character roles from the text voluntarily, reading the playscript through performance. Role play was an effective strategy to connect with this text because participants read aloud using stage directions for effect, could explain about their character's feelings in depth and argued about character representation. This further demonstrates that children were becoming fluent and independent readers (Bearne and Reedy, 2018).

Three participants asked the researcher for this text during reading time, reassigning parts with peers and reading the playscript aloud. Children may choose to read for pleasure if it is seen as a social experience with friends, as the participants chose this text because it was seen as play, not reading. RfP is a social interaction with others (NUT, 2016; CLPE, 2018) and therefore social interaction should be encouraged as well as independent reading time.

5. Discussions and conclusions for practice

This study aimed to explore whether exposing children to a variety of texts in lessons would develop their reading choice preferences. The findings suggested that lessons on different texts had widened their reading choices. This is because children chose to engage with at least one of the focus texts when presented with the opportunity in free reading time. Additionally, the research presents evidence that teachers may need to employ specific strategies that can develop children's understanding of a text's features, further fostering engagement with an unfamiliar text. This was demonstrated when using role play in playscripts to understand the portrayal of characters and analysing pictures in picture books to link the storyline within the text. Reading aloud in poems allowed children to identify text structure and rhythm. These strategies were then taken by the children into the class where they chose to engage with these texts because they felt comfortable in knowing how to interact with them, ultimately fostering RfP choices.

This study also aimed to identify how teacher views and practices may impact free reading choice. Evidence suggested that teachers understand the importance of key practices research has underlined (Cremin, 2014) as effectively fostering RfP. Specific key practices teachers found important included independent, free choice reading time and a comfortable reading environment, both positively reflected by research in engaging RfP (NUT 2016, Bearne and Reedy, 2018). However, teachers need support to promote strategies, support and guide reading choices and provide adequate time for children to read throughout the day. As children's reading has declined in recent years (Clark, 2020) and teachers are struggling to incorporate RfP into a saturated school day (NUT, 2016), the evidence from this study suggests schools and governing bodies may need to rethink how reading is implemented within the curriculum and provide whole school RfP opportunities.

Ultimately, the evidence within this study may suggest that RfP and text choice could be more effective in the form of a regular lesson. The lessons guided readers in effectively interacting with new texts in different ways and provided them with the strategies to further interact with these texts when choosing to read in their free time. Teachers could introduce different texts to the class where strategies are employed around reading the

text and children can discuss preferences, recent reading and recommendations, similarly to the focus lessons conducted in this research. With research acknowledging that independent reading, RfP and engagement can positively influence attainment (Cremin, 2014) and the findings from this research evidencing that reading strategies on how to read a text can inform choice, RfP could be used as a tool that academically benefits children without the need for reading to be centred around skill and assessment, but more on the will and skill to read being a partnered relationship.

6. Limitations and next steps

The study represented a year two class consisting of children from six to seven years old and views from a small number of teachers within the school setting. The limitations that occur from this study would involve being unable to generalise the findings because of the sample size. The sample itself represented the school population, however it is not valid in representing all schools across the United Kingdom. Teacher views in this study were also from a small sample size that could not represent the differences in individuality of opinion on RfP across all schools (Chapman, 2005). Further research may aim to embed the identified benefits of different text types, focusing on the children's preferences and strategies schools could adopt to foster these preferences.

The four texts focused on did not reflect the wide variety of texts that children may have had a better connection with in relation to: choice, personal preference and home reading. This was mainly impacted due to time constraints for the study to take place. The number of texts highlighted in other research (DfE, 2012; Clark, 2005) may suggest a larger scale study with more time would provide more accurate results on what text variety can do to influence choice in RfP.

Additional research may include what texts are incorporated into lessons and how time is allocated in schools to reading. Previous literature on how time is used within schools

to provide reading opportunities was minimal, suggesting research may be valued in identifying how teachers and schools can develop time for reading. Exploring how technology in classrooms may play a role in fostering choice and RfP could also prove beneficial, as there is a rise in the number of online formats (multimodal texts) now read at home (Cremin, 2011; Clark, 2020).

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Appendix:

Appendix 1 – questionnaire