

Independent reading

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Children are not really readers until they choose what to read and develop their own tastes.

Provide your class with:

- a garage box of great poetry anthologies and collections
- a range of non-fiction books about things that might interest children beyond the curriculum
- the children's newspaper *First News*
- a comic box stuffed with everything from *Batman* to the *Beano*
- quick reads such as annuals, *Where's Wally?*, puzzle books
- graphic books such as *Tintin*, *Asterix*, graphic novels
- a range of novels from *Captain Underpants* to *Morpurgo*.

Hold weekly 'recommendation' sessions. Put the children onto a rota and have a regular slot in which several children 'recommend' a favourite book. They should introduce the class to the book, provide a brief outline and read aloud a

short, riveting passage for a several minutes. This is a great way to spread the buzz about books, helping children to become familiar with the range available.

You should also recommend a few books each week, modelling the process and broadening the possibilities. A third of children say that they are often uncertain what to read and almost 70% of children say that they would read more if they could find the sort of books that they like! Few children will accidentally stumble across Katherine Rundell's wonderful *The Wolf Wilder* (Bloomsbury), Ross MacKenzie's fantastical *The Nowhere Emporium* (Kelpies), Tonke Dragt's spell-binding adventure *The Letter for the King* (Pushkin), let alone the humour and richness of Maz Evan's *Who Let the Gods Out?* (Chicken House). Rich reading does not happen by chance.

Developing reading routines

While the daily 20-minute slot for the class reader is crucial, children also need time for their own personal reading as a fixed routine. This could be:

- during guided reading
- a useful way to start the day quietly
- a strategy for settling a class after lunchtime
- a silent reading session such as ERIC (Everyone Reads In Class) or USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading).

Children who read frequently believe that reading for fun is important; they enjoy their reading and have found 'the right books' for them. They also have parents who are readers and are involved in their reading. Where parents cannot play this role, it is vital that the teacher is an enthusiastic role model who shows interest in each child's growth as a reader.

As teachers we need to know the children as readers. This means that while most guided reading will be based around group oral comprehension, some sessions should involve one-to-one reading where the child discusses and reads a short section from their current book. This might then involve some feedback or brief teaching and enables you to keep in touch with every child as a reader. ■

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