

Pie Corbett's Reading Spine

Imagine a primary school where over 7 or 8 years, children are read to, enjoy, discuss and work with around 82 core books. These 'essential reads' would be a store of classics, creating a living library inside a child's mind. This is the 'Reading Spine'.

Great Books

Great books build the imagination. The more we read aloud expressively, and the more children are able to savour, discuss and reinterpret literature through the arts, the more memorable the characters, places and events become, building an inner world. A child who is read to will have an inner kingdom of unicorns, talking spiders and a knife that cuts into other worlds. The mind is like a 'tardis'; it may seem small but inside there are many mansions. Each great book develops the imagination and equips the reader with language.

Great Stories

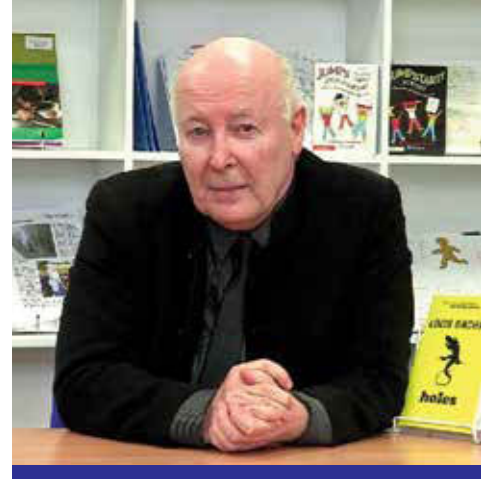
Great stories speak to us as individuals and some children will return to certain books again and again. Great stories also build our language because around 75 per cent of our vocabulary comes from our reading. Reading develops the ability to think in the abstract; to follow lines of thought. Schools that have a reading spine, build a common bank of stories that bind the community together. These are shared and deeply imagined common experiences.

What is the Reading Spine?

The Reading Spine should be central to every school's book stock, but should also be supplemented by many other books. In the Foundation Stage and Year 1, I have suggested a spine of 12 great picture books with which children should build a strong acquaintance.

Year 2 is a transition year, with both great picture books and 'chapter stories' included. The daily read-aloud programme is supplemented by guided, shared and independent reading.

In the Reading Spine at Key Stage 2, I have selected six novels in each year with a focus on one core picture book. This leaves enough space for teachers to add their own enthusiasms and new finds.



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