



Teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts

Practical classroom strategies



“The project had a massive impact on my knowledge of children’s books which was previously over-reliant on Dahl! Now I’m using a range, including picture books, poetry, Choose your Own Adventure types, comedy, mystery and multicultural literature and have a large bank of books I can use and recommend.”

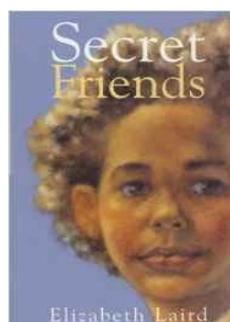
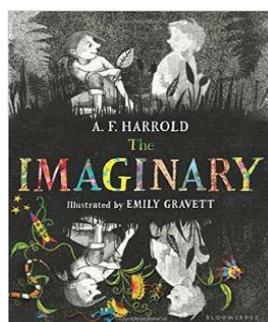
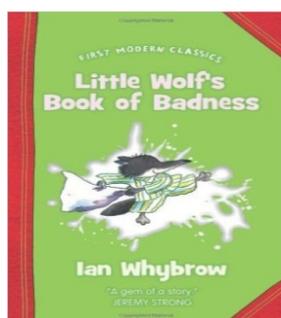
(TaRs teacher, Birmingham)

1. Adopt an author or ten!

Focus on getting to know the work of one writer really well or even a pair. Stuck on who to choose? Are you familiar with, for example, the work of Mini Grey; Patrick Ness; Berlie Doherty; Frank Cottrell Boyce or the partnership between Jeanne Willis and Korky Paul?

Check out the school library. BookMatch in Oxford Owl offers good summaries.

<https://global.oup.com/education/content/primary/series/oxford-owl/oxford-bookmatch/>



2. Inspirational illustrators: select your top five

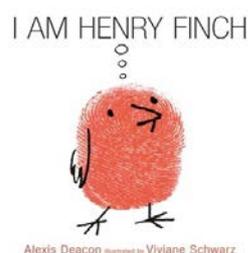
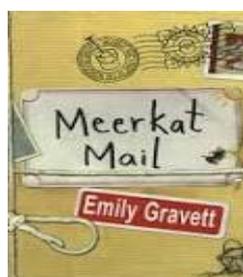
Find ten picture books in school and choose the 5 you like best, then look up the creators of these books on the web, either alone, as a class or with staff. Find out about them and share your top five with others.

Matt Tobin's padlet will help:

<https://padlet.com/p0077346/PictureBookPlan>

or try Letterpress:

<http://www.letterpressproject.co.uk/inspiring-young-readers/category/i-love-this-illustrator>



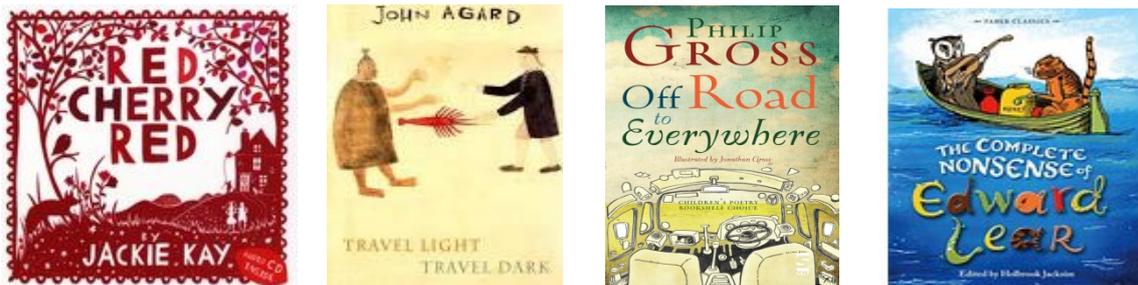
Teachers can never know enough children's books to recommend the right book to the right child. Enriching your repertoire is not a one-off activity, but an ongoing professional responsibility (and a pleasure!)

3. Playful poets: widen your repertoire

Set yourself the challenge of getting to know the work of a new poet each term. Read their work to the children and focus on their style, themes and voice. Some will suit performances and prompt the class to join in. Many poets have their own websites and YouTube also offers audio readings to enjoy.

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education runs an annual Poetry Award and schools shadowing scheme:

<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetry/clippa-centre-literacy-primary-poetry-award>



4. Comic capers, magazine malarkey and the news

Ask children to bring favourite comics to share with you and /or visit the local newsagent to see the range. What are the most popular in your school?

Check out sites which offer support for using newspapers, magazines and comics and read, share and enjoy. See for example:

<http://scottishbooktrust.com/blog/teachers-librarians/2016/08/comics-and-literacy-part-3-using-comics-in-the-classroom>



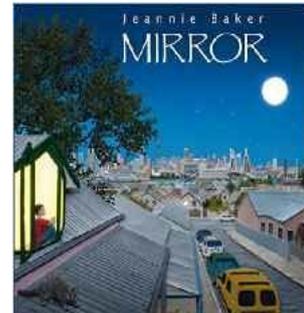
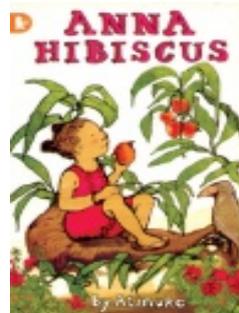
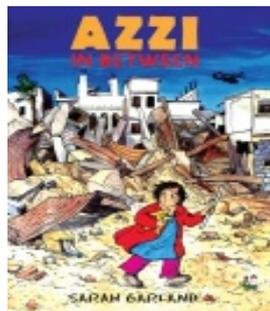
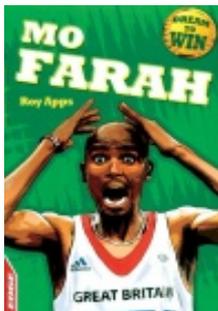
5. Take the world literature challenge

Get to know authors who include a focus on diversity and write tales set in other countries. Investigate authors writing in other countries/languages. Examine the texts in your classroom; do they reflect the diversity of the children and encompass world literature?

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Explore the texts at Letterbox library:

<http://www.letterboxlibrary.com/>

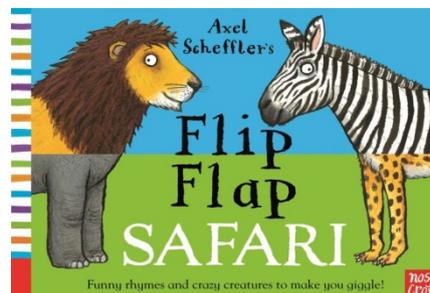


6. Explore digital book apps

Digital books are growing in popularity. Have a look at recent award winners, such as those from Nosy Crow below. Flip Flap Safari won the 2015 UKLA Digital Book Award and Goldilocks and Little Bear won the 2016 Award.

Check out the guidance for selecting literacy apps on the NLT site to help you choose and share these with parents:

<http://literacyapps.literacytrust.org.uk/>



7. Read award winners

Annually librarians select brilliant new books for the Carnegie (novelists) and the Kate Greenaway (illustrators) Medals are awarded in June and there is an excellent shadowing scheme:

<http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk>

The shortlists of both are well worth reading, as are the shortlists for the UKLA Children's Book Awards, chosen by teachers for teachers:

<https://ukla.org/awards/ukla-book-award>

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8. Invite your class to set you a reading challenge

Dare yourself to step outside your comfort zone and invite your class to set you a challenge - a genre, an author or a particular book that you are invited to read and respond to. You might offer challenges back too when you've completed yours!



9. Create an Alphabet of Authors

Try creating an A-Z of authors (or poets/picture fiction creators) with or without a related book title. Try this as a snowball in class or in the staffroom. Start alone, and then add to it in pairs, groups and as a whole class. You could create a wall display with visuals in a corridor.

- A is for Ahlberg and his Jolly Postman
- B is for Birmingham who lost his Grandpa
- C is for Creech who Loves that Dog
- D is for Doherty whose Granny was a Buffer Girl
- E is for...

10. Visit a brilliant bookshop

Some high street bookshops have specialist knowledge of children's literature, but if you seek local specialist stores or online booksellers you'll find much more diversity.

We rate the Norfolk Children's Book Centre:

<http://www.ncbc.co.uk/new/index.htm>

And Just Imagine Story Centre:

<http://justimaginstorycentre.co.uk/> amongst many others.

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