

Enablers of and barriers to reading in Key
Stage 3 English (ages 11 – 14): a
participatory case study using Reader
Response to explore reader interaction
with fiction

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Abstract

This thesis presents the findings of a participatory case study investigating the enablers of, and barriers to reading in Key Stage 3 English (ages 11 – 14) in England's state education sector. A highly nuanced picture emerged: what is engaging for one reader may act as a barrier for another. Significantly, reader agency emerged as key to facilitating engagement, as a precursor to deriving pleasure from fiction.

The researcher, a university-based teacher educator with extensive experience as a secondary English teacher, investigated the phenomenon of 'reading for pleasure' using a participatory approach to generate knowledge collaboratively while foregrounding readers' experience and perspective. This 'case' was explored through scrutiny of one particular class of Year 8 (13 – 14 year olds) readers at a state comprehensive school in the southeast of England. The study was supported by the class teacher's collaboration and the researcher's participation in their English lessons across the 2018 autumn term. Several data sets were elicited and analysed: textual analysis of the implied reader of two novels read by the Year 8 English class followed by actual reader response; interviews with pupils from this class; interviews with English teachers with Year 8 classes.

A conceptual lens was constructed from Reader Response, part of the discipline of literary theory, to analyse text and explore interaction between reader and text. This approach, not utilised in extant research, revealed agency as central to reading engagement and as a prerequisite to 'reading for pleasure'. Four key strands were identified: readers must feel agency with selection; readers need opportunity to respond as children; fiction must satisfy affectively *and* critically; talking about books must be dialogic.

The key finding, reader agency was a significant facilitator of engagement and a precursor to pleasure, indicated supporting reading in Key Stage 3 requires pupil-centred pedagogy to empower individuals. If teachers predicated practice upon their own reading experiences, greater trust in text and pupils to make meaning would result. While policy includes the requirement that pupils are taught a love of reading, this study suggested English teachers' practices did not target this directly or systematically. With growing evidence that independent reading makes a valuable contribution to personal and academic development, a shift to pedagogy which supports and encourages individual agency would facilitate reading engagement thus assist 'reading for pleasure' fulfil its potential to transform outcomes.

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List of Abbreviations

BERA	British Education Research Association
DEAR	Drop Everything and Read
DfE	Department for Education also previously DES, DfEE, DfES, DCSF
FWE	The National Strategies: Secondary Framework for English
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education: qualification completed typically at the end of KS4
HE	Higher Education, tertiary level usually leading to an academic degree
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
KS3	Key Stage 3: 11 – 14 year olds
KS4	Key Stage 4: 14 – 16 year olds
MWD	The mirrors, windows, doors conceptual model (see 2.8)
NATE	National Association for the Teaching of English
NC	National Curriculum for England: Programme of Study for English
NLS	The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for Teaching
NLT	National Literacy Trust
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RR	Reader Response theory
RfP	Reading for Pleasure
SEND	Special educational needs and disability
UKLA	United Kingdom Literacy Association formerly United Kingdom Reading Association
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WO	The Welsh Office
YA / YAL	Young adult / Young adult literature

Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed 

Dated 22nd July 2021

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Chapter 1 – Rationale and Context

I am an English specialist with two decades' experience teaching the subject at secondary level. My current post at Rockwell University, a pseudonym, is senior lecturer in Education, working with pre- and in-service teachers. My research interests emerged primarily from professional preoccupation with the pedagogy and practice of English teaching. However, my first degree in English Literature and my lifelong commitment to reading also exerted considerable influence.

This study built on preliminary work undertaken during the first stage of my EdD whereby secondary English teachers' personal and professional perspectives about "reading for pleasure" were examined. I set out to develop further insight, in particular, exploring enablers of, and barriers to, 'reading for pleasure' in the Key Stage 3 English curriculum, hereafter KS3 (see 1.4). Iser's implied reader (1974, 1976) and Bishop's mirrors/windows/sliding glass doors (1990) models, from the 'Reader Response' literary theory discipline, were employed to gain understanding of interaction between reader and text. I hoped to develop knowledge about what makes reading pleasurable, subsequently identifying pedagogy supportive of 'reading for pleasure', particularly important as research has shown increased frequency and volume of reading enhances pupils' academic and personal outcomes (Sullivan & Brown, 2015; see 2.7).

1.1 Introduction

The research reported in this thesis was prompted by requirement in the most recent *English programmes of study: key stage 3* (Department for Education, 2013), commonly known as the *National Curriculum*, that pupils are taught "a love of reading" (p.4). Possessing many years' experience as a secondary English teacher, I welcomed this broader view of reading while simultaneously feeling concern about this stipulation. As a lifelong reader, I would claim to 'love' it but the concept of teaching this was paradoxical. The dichotomous conception of reading within the curriculum, for the purposes of pleasure or literary appreciation was similarly problematic. I set out to investigate how this affective dimension of reading sat within the wider English curriculum and how teachers could overcome the pedagogical challenge inherent in satisfying its requirement. To do so, I chose to interrogate interaction between reader and fictional text, both in theory and practice. Examination of this process has not been often juxtaposed in research as studies typically focus on either cognitive and/or emotional response to reading or follow more conventional literary analysis considering text alone. I hoped exploration of the two key strands of reader and text would garner new understanding about how 'a love or reading' could be taught, benefitting readers and teachers.

1.2 Defining 'Reading for Pleasure'

During my time teaching secondary English, the phrase 'reading for pleasure', hereafter RfP, was embedded in professional discourse, noted by Chapman (2020) as part of the vernacular. While the current *National Curriculum*, hereafter NC, referred to "love" of reading (DfE, 2013), the term RfP originates from its first incarnation, known as the *Cox curriculum* (Department for Education and

Skills & Welsh Office, 1989) where reading “as a source of pleasure” (p.22) was mandated. The phrase RfP has endured changes of government and education policy, being typically found in the literature and teachers’ lexicon, and is used throughout the thesis rather than “love of reading”. Such ubiquity can lead to assumptions about meaning or lack of critical scrutiny. As a key term in this thesis, clarity of definition was a necessary precursor.

A prosaic definition of the phrase could either relate to action or as a noun phrase: a reading event which results in pleasure; a deliberate pursuit of reading (and reading material) to engender pleasure. There exists no predictable cause and effect as the reading act does not guarantee pleasure thus providing a rationale for research to illuminate the process. Both senses of the term were pertinent to this study, encompassing the empirical as well as its intentional pursuit. Some exploration of ‘reading’ and ‘pleasure’ separately is included in Chapter 2.

The verb was a late fourteenth century coinage from the Old French ‘plesir’ meaning the “condition of enjoyment” (Etymology Online, 2020). This definition located pleasure in the experiential domain, important when considering the NC expectation for pupils to be *taught* “a love of reading” (DfE, 2013). The use of “love” in its noun form implied a transmission model of teaching but, as ‘love’ is an abstract construct which can be pleasurable or painful, a contradiction was present: how can feelings be taught? This tension was considerably more problematic in the wider educational climate which prioritised content, knowledge and skills (see 2.3) over the affective (Chapman, 2020). Additionally, the common usage ‘to take pleasure’ suggested active participation and engagement, emphasising its experiential nature, which the conceptual framework rooted in ‘Reader Response’ theory (RR) devised for this study (see 2.6) complements.

1.3 Rationale

Interest in this particular aspect of the curriculum emerged from my own love of reading and the professional experience of teaching English, noted above. During the two decades spent in schools and colleges, I witnessed plenty of reading activity but little focused on developing enjoyment or exploring the pleasure reading can bring. The Office for Standards in Education, hereafter Ofsted, (2009) overview of primary and secondary English practice found this aspect either not visible to inspectors or not well developed. The school visits I make to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) trainees in my current role as a Higher Education (HE) lecturer suggest little has changed in practice since the launch of the latest NC (DfE, 2013) with its “love” requirement.

The obligation to teach a love of reading could be interpreted as ratification of the growing research base indicating the valuable contribution independent reading can make to young people’s personal and academic development (see 2.7). However, I wished to examine the pedagogical tension inherent in developing pupils’ personal, emotional response to text alongside teaching analytical skills for the purposes of external assessment.

My own gratification from reading fiction over the decades led to surprise at an evidence base primarily concerned with young people’s reading habits (see 2.7) rather than exploring their

perspectives and experiences. This study was designed to address this gap, developing understanding of what enables pleasure by talking to readers. Readers' *interaction with text*, a relatively novel approach to developing new knowledge about RfP, was the lens selected to do so, subsequently identifying supportive pedagogy.

1.4 Study Overview

The decision to explore readers' views about RfP, previously underrepresented in research, was stimulated by my professional interest in curricular change but influenced by the pleasure I derive from reading. I wanted to determine how teachers could help young people to experience this richness and the overarching research question was shaped accordingly:

'What are the enablers of, and barriers to, 'reading for pleasure' in Key Stage 3 English?'

At the outset of the study I was interested in exploring reader/text interaction to identify aspects which contributed to pleasure, spontaneous and deliberately orchestrated, both within and beyond the classroom, to extrapolate recommendations for practice. The term 'enablers' in the research question referred to factors conducive to RfP while 'barriers' related to those impinging, impairing or preventing pleasure. However, the project's findings identify facilitators of reading engagement as precursors to pleasure rather than direct stimuli of pleasure. Indicators of pleasure proved elusive and consequential to engagement hence the focus shifting to engagement.

A participatory case study approach was adopted to foreground the human experience, positioning participants centrally and actively (see 3.3). The 'case' of RfP was delimited through scrutiny of one particular class of Year 8 (12 – 13 year olds) at a state comprehensive school in the southeast of England (see 3.3). These readers were midway through KS3, familiar with secondary practices but not yet immersed in a curriculum dominated by General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) content and skills. Accordingly, I judged this year group most useful for generating knowledge about what enabled or hindered RfP.

The conceptual framework, devised from the literary discipline of RR (see 2.6), emerged from the gap in existing research about RfP and my academic background. This aligned research design with the theoretical lens as participatory case study and RR both position human subjects in active, central roles. This preliminary work informed the study's threefold aims:

- to interrogate Y8 readers' interaction with fiction using Reader Response principles;
- to conceptualise Y8 readers' response to fiction;
- to evaluate how Iser's implied reader and Bishop's mirrors/windows/doors models can inform English teachers' practice to enable 'Reading for Pleasure'.

The idiographic focus on interaction between reader and text I hoped would illuminate the individual transaction, developing understanding of how pleasure was engendered. Employing RR to systematically consider the phenomenon of RfP rooted the study theoretically and provided a strong

foundation from which to develop knowledge, and subsequent recommendations for professional practice.

The study was supported by the researcher's participation in the Year 8 class's English lessons across the 2018 autumn term, with several data sets elicited and analysed. Textual analysis of implied and actual reader response to two novels read by the Year 8 English class was compared (see Chapter 4). Pupils and text were essential components in illuminating the processes involved in the phenomenon of RfP. This activity was devised and led jointly by my school-based research partner, the Y8 class teacher (see 3.4), reflecting my methodological stance (see 3.1), commitment to collaborative practice and respect for colleagues' expertise and agency. Additionally, interview data was elicited from pupils of this class and English teachers with Year 8 classes.

The participatory case study approach produced several data sets facilitating examination of RfP from different perspectives while considering the specific context of this one instance (see 3.3). Acknowledging these particularities was important to extrapolate findings potentially useful elsewhere. Indeed, I hoped developing understanding of RfP from examination of one particular case would have wider relevance as the topic transcended one single year group and institutional setting.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. This opening chapter has established the rationale and aims of the project, including consideration of the key phrase, RfP and its relationship to reading engagement. Chapter 2 explores the literature regarding policy, theory and practice of RfP. Chapter 3 explicates the methodology. Chapters 4 – 6 present the various data sets, offering analysis of each in turn. Chapter 7 discusses the findings in light of the overarching research question, extrapolating claims to knowledge. Chapter 8 reflects on the professional learning gained from this study including recommendations for practice and the thesis concludes in Chapter 9.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter presents literature pertinent to the initial research question: what are the enablers of, and barriers to, ‘reading for pleasure’ (RfP) in KS3 English? The strategy used for literature searching is outlined first, then the place of RfP in the secondary English curriculum is discussed. How conceptualisations of literacy relate to RfP comes next, followed by exploration of theoretical perspectives. In particular, key principles of Reader Response (RR) are utilised to examine interaction between reader and text, hitherto not harnessed to develop understanding of RfP. Development of the conceptual framework for the study is then outlined before some discussion of children’s literature and research into RfP, which includes consideration of the relationship between RfP and reading engagement to reflect the study’s findings (1.4).

2.1 Search Strategy

As “reviews are driven by the questions that they are seeking to answer” (EPPI, 2010, p.1), before attempting to identify any literature, it was necessary to clarify the focus of my research. From the outset, the aims of the investigation were pedagogical with the initial research question, what enables or presents barriers to RfP, rooted in the secondary English curriculum (age 11 – 16). However, as reading is not exclusive to the educational domain, literature from a range of disciplines was considered. In addition to educational policy, theory and pedagogical research, work from the fields of literary theory, psychology, cognitive science, philosophy and sociology were included.

One key knowledge base drawn upon was RR, from the discipline of literary theory. While I possessed knowledge of this area from my academic and professional background, I set about refreshing my understanding, returning to the major works of Iser (1974, 1976), Rosenblatt (1968, 1976) and Barthes (1975, 1977). Seminal texts relating to the development of English as a secondary school subject were investigated (i.e. Dixon, 1967; Gibbons, 2017; Holbrook, 1979; Marshall, 2000) in addition to government policy spanning the *Newbolt Report* (Board of Education, 1921) to the latest NC (DfE, 2013).

Theory and research relating to RfP was the chief avenue to pursue, however. Anticipating the phrase itself would yield limited results in database searches, other phrases and vocabulary were employed such as ‘love of reading’, ‘reading enjoyment’, ‘reading motivation’ and ‘independent reading’. A range of relevant studies both printed and electronic were located and then narrowed using filters such as rationale, methodology, participants, date and setting. Lack of direct correspondence between the literature and my study did not preclude works’ inclusion but rather was used to prioritise, assessing value and significance.

As my study was based in England, research from this country was of particular interest (i.e. Cliff Hodges, 2012; Williams, 2015), but as RfP transcends national borders, studies from further afield were also explored (i.e. Appel & Richter, 2007; Hall *et al.*, 2010; Merga, 2017). At the outset, most research papers focused on the upper primary sector (age 7 – 11) (e.g. NLT & Clark, 2014;

Cremin *et al.*, 2009) but were relevant to my lower secondary interest (age 11 – 14). The range of work cited in secondary grew as the project progressed (e.g. Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2018; Dressman & Rao, 2020; Westbrook, Sutherland, Oakhill & Sullivan, 2018), contributing to my discussion.

Previous reading from earlier stages of the EdD was revisited (e.g. Alsup, 2013; Bousted, 2000; Goodwyn, 2012; Meek, 1988, 1991; Stanovich, 1986) and supplemented by work relating to literacy (e.g. Cook-Gumperz, 1986, Christie and Misson, 1998) and children's literature (e.g. Chambers, 1993; Hollindale, 1997). New searches within journals such as *English in Education*, *English Practice and Critique*, *Literacy*, *Changing English* proved valuable, too. Other publications related to official conceptualisations of reading were considered (e.g. DfEE, 1999; QCA 2007, 2004; DfE, 2012; Ofsted, 2011, 2009). Additionally, my search parameters were extended by pursuing texts listed in bibliographies or recommended by my supervisors and later supplemented by work exploring reading engagement.

While the search process undertaken was purposeful, methodical and wide-ranging, it cannot be deemed exhaustive. However, the explication of research decisions across every stage of the process are offered to imbue confidence in the study's value.

An interpretative stance as recommended by MacLure (2004) was adopted in searching for, and analysing, the literature. Wanting a more dialogic process (Bakhtin, 1981) when researching and interacting with literature, a critical reading framework was used, adapted from Wallace and Wray (2011). This enabled me to identify contradictions and omissions in the material, identifying key strands in the academic discussion relevant to my specific context and later informing my data analysis. The first section of the literature review explores the place of RfP in the secondary English curriculum.

2.2 'Reading for Pleasure' and the English Curriculum

Debate about the composition of the English school curriculum has existed since its inception as a discrete part of educational provision (Eaglestone, 2000; Marshall, 2000; Pike, 2004) in the light of the *Newbolt Report* (Board of Education, 1921). Gibbons (2017) noted fifty years of "intense argument, debate and dispute" about "the content and nature of secondary English, its curriculum, its teaching and its assessment" (p.1). Doubtless its highly contested nature has much to do with the importance of English as well as the committed nature of its teachers, willing to champion and challenge different conceptualisations of the subject. Additionally, the boundaries of its subject knowledge are hard to define and not fixed. Dixon (1967) described English as "a quicksilver among metals - mobile, living and elusive" (p.1) but reading's centrality in it has not been contested.

Across the C20th, the subject gradually moved away from its classical and philological roots, influenced by a range of factors including the desire to promote literature for its humanising effects in the wake of the World Wars, the 'Cambridge' and 'Progressive' Schools, and the Dartmouth seminar dubbed "infamous" by Ball (1985). Documenting all the various policies falls beyond the remit of this study but outlining some key developments provides useful context for understanding current policy.

Among the major influences on the subject in the post-war years was the so-called 'progressive', child-centred pedagogy of the 1960s and 1970s. Focusing on pupils' own uses of language, it "emphasised the expression of personal experience" (Gibbons, 2017, p.16). The Bullock Report *Language for Life* (DES, 1975), a response to concerns about decline in reading, advocated child-centred teaching. Peim (2003) noted it officially enshrined a liberal model of English, with emphasis placed on oracy and non-canonical reading. It was not universally applauded, however. Holbrook (1979) recognised its good intentions while dismissing it as 'bad and boring' because children were positioned as passive recipients rather than the meaning-makers. The 'rules of language' were learnt in abstract rather than through development of pupils' own linguistic practices. Whatever its respective merits and shortcomings, the report did acknowledge that pupils bring experiences and language with them (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007), offering much potentially valuable underpinning for teaching.

Gibbons (2017) viewed English of the 1970s and 1980s positively as it was "still very much in the hands of teachers themselves" (p.40). Educators were relatively autonomous, free to experiment and collaborate without direct state intervention into curriculum or pedagogy (*ibid.*). These seemingly halcyon days were not to last as laudable concerns about entitlement and equity led to the Educational Reform Act (1988) which paved the way for the first *National Curriculum*, officially titled *English Programmes of Study: National Curriculum* (DES & WO, 1989), hereafter NC.

Despite the major changes ushered in by the introduction of the NC, the *Bullock Report* (DES, 1975) continued to exert influence over conceptualisations of the subject. Yandell (2014) noted it signalled an agenda for education which continued to dominate, leaving "little space [for] more nuanced considerations of curriculum and pedagogy" (p.78). This skills-based curriculum model narrowed English as a whole (NATE Management Committee, 2020) including its conceptualisation of reading. While RfP does not fit well into the contemporary standards and skills agenda (see 2.3), it featured in the most recent NC (DfE, 2013). Exploration of its curricular provenance follows by reviewing the various NC iterations.

2.3 'Reading for Pleasure' and the National Curriculum for English

Reading has been a central part of the English curriculum since it emerged as a discrete school subject in the wake of the *Newbolt Report* (Board of Education, 1921). While every incarnation of the KS3 NC since inception (DES & WO, 1989; DfEE, 1999; QCA, 2004, 2007; DfE, 2013) has included reading as one of its core strands, its constitution and primary purpose have shifted with each publication as underlying ideologies shaped the curriculum to deliver different educational aims. The history of RfP within the NC is presented to problematise its inclusion in the latest version (DfE, 2013).

Across the decades, various factors influenced the subject of English's content and pedagogy but, in the post-war years, the introduction of a curriculum for every state school in England (DES & WO, 1989), constructed at the behest of the government, proved pivotal. The original document, *English for ages 5 to 16*, known as the *Cox Report* (DES & WO, 1989), initially mandatory for all state

schools, placed the pleasure of reading centrally. The section related to reading begins with an epigraph from psycholinguist, Frank Smith

Watch children engrossed in a book from which they are learning about reading, and there will be no need to ask where the fundamental satisfaction lies (*ibid.*, p.21).

As a key player in the 'whole language' movement, Smith advocated children learn to read by reading (Smith, 1978). Proficiency improved through practice, fuelled by motivation, a powerful driving force of which is pleasure.

As the *Cox Report (ibid.)* unfolded, the underpinning conceptualisation of reading was explained: reading "as a source of pleasure, remains crucial, whatever the total curriculum demands" (DES & WO, 1989, p.21). The reader was positioned as an active participant involved in "a quest for meaning" (*ibid.*). Regular reading taught reading but its potential benefits were wider and stated explicitly: "pupils can be helped to develop emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually" (*ibid.*). Although the specific phrase "reading for pleasure" did not appear in this document, through these references it was mandated.

The introduction of the *National Literacy Strategy (NLS)* (DfEE, 1998) marginalised RfP, downgrading it to an additional activity. With a tightly defined corpus of subject knowledge (Westbrook, Bryan, Cooper, Hawking & O'Malley, 2011) and very narrow assessment objectives (Goodwyn, 2012), the NLS was a significant extension of state intervention in the subject, albeit initially aimed at the primary phase, turning the subject of English into Literacy (see 2.4.2). The NLS's expansion into KS3 and KS4, the *Secondary Framework (FWE)* (DfES, 2001), was judged similarly: a reductive curriculum, focused on measurable skills and outcomes with subject pedagogy serving assessment-driven directives (McIntyre & Jones, 2014). Gibbons (2016) critiqued the NC as dictating *what* should be taught with NLS defining *how* the subject should be taught. Reading remained important but texts were resources supporting literacy development at word, sentence or text level. Many policy and inspection documents of the period eschewed references to the joys of reading, concentrating instead on efficiency, skills and accuracy (Lambirth, 2011), a far cry from the Cox curriculum (DES & WO, 1989).

While the FWE (DfES, 2001) only possessed advisory status (Gibbons, 2017), few departments ignored its guidance about how and what to teach as it was used to "form a basis for how teachers [were] to be judged" (Goodwyn, 2004, p.18). A key concept of the NLS (DfEE, 1998) was 'Guided Reading' whereby the teacher focused on independent reading. Pupils were placed in ability groups with texts "carefully selected to match the reading level of the group" (*ibid.*), in itself problematic assessment requiring dynamic knowledge of pupils and texts. As readers' confidence and skill developed, progression across the primary phase would be embodied by

silent reading with questions to direct or check up on the reading, points to note, problems to solve etc., to meet the text level objectives in the Framework (*ibid.*).

The introduction of *Assessing Pupil Progress* (DCSF & QCA, 2008) with its compartmentalised approach to the curriculum, confirmed this functional approach. Texts were inferred or deduced from, information retrieved, writers' craft evaluated, intended effects commented on, with social and

historical contexts identified (*ibid.*). This legacy was apparent in the current GCSE Literature focus to read in depth, critically and evaluatively (DfE, 2013b) rather than for aesthetic or affective response.

During this period when the subject of English became literacy (see 2.4.2), its purpose shifted. Literacy, as defined by the NLS (DfEE, 1998) and later FWE (DfES, 2001), became the chief remit of the subject of English and its curriculum. Goodwyn (2004) noted

Somewhat ironically the revisions to the statutory *National Curriculum for English*, completed and implemented in 2000, were barely noticed as departments prepared themselves for the *Framework for English*, the purely advisory status of which would be in place from September, 2001 (p.22).

Although now widely discredited (Westbrook *et al.*, 2011) its legacy endured in the form of objectives and four-part lessons including starter, introduction to main teaching points, development and plenary (DfEE, 1998). It also marked increased importance of data for the new Labour administration (Gibbons, 2017), used to assess pupil progress *and* the quality of teaching. With an emphasis chiefly linguistic rather than literary (Goodwyn, 2004), the NLS diminished the value of personal response to reading and, indeed, the reading of whole texts was no longer deemed central to the subject.

The next revision (QCA, 2004) retained RfP which, in light of the NLS and FWE, seems inconsistent or disingenuous depending on one's political standpoint. At KS3 pupils

read a wide range of texts independently, both for pleasure and for study. They become enthusiastic, discriminating and responsive readers, understanding layers of meaning and appreciating what they read on a critical level (QCA, 2004, p.47).

However, this was the single reference to RfP and did not align with curriculum content presented as "Knowledge, Skills and Understanding" (*ibid.*). Appreciation of literature did feature but this was not synonymous with RfP. Further questions about consistency and coherence were raised by the inclusion of a prescribed set of texts (*ibid.*) purported to ensure range but not necessarily conducive to pleasure. The listed authors were typically canonical indicating literary appreciation was foregrounded rather than RfP or wider personal growth as espoused by Cox (DES & WO, 1989).

Revisions three years later (QCA, 2007) conveyed a more decisive focus on knowledge, skills and understanding. One of the three aims of English was produce "citizens who make a positive contribution to society" (p.61), indicating the emergent neo-liberal agenda. Under the heading, *The Importance of English*, the primary driver outlined was functional: "communicating with others" (*ibid.*). In this era, pupils were expected to "learn to become enthusiastic and critical readers" (*ibid.*) but the "Key Concepts" of Competence, Creativity, Cultural Understanding and Critical Understanding (*ibid.*) made no reference, direct or implied, to pleasure. Likewise, the "Key Processes" divided into "Reading for Meaning" and "The Author's Craft" (*ibid.*) were bereft. Literary texts were conceptualised as repositories of information from which to extract, sift information, assess for usefulness and provide linguistic models (*ibid.*) somewhat removed from the active, affective participation espoused by Cox (DES & WO, 1989).

NC level descriptors (QCA, 2007), published supplementary to this version of the curriculum, contained no mention of pleasure. While perhaps understandable as the affective is hard to track, its omission served to devalue its importance. In the era of accountability, the curriculum must enable

teachers' work to be judged, rewarded or challenged. This highlights one of the contradictions inherent in the most recent NC: how can *love* of reading be taught and assessed?

The most recent KS3 NC (DfE, 2013) preserved the three core strands of English introduced by Cox (DES & WO, 1989): spoken language (previously known as speaking and listening), reading and writing. It required pupils develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information. The first bullet point of the reading strand went further by stating pupils develop an appreciation and love of reading.

The inclusion and prominence of the affective aspects of reading seemed well-intentioned, rooted in the growing body of evidence demonstrating pupils who were frequent readers achieve better outcomes at school (DfE, 2012; NLT *et al.*, 2017; Godsman, 2017). However, the basic premise of teaching a love of reading seemed somewhat antithetical. It was also potentially problematic when viewed within assessment-driven culture (Laurenson, McDermott, Sadlier & Meade, 2015) which encouraged teachers and school managers to prioritise numerical data and written evidence of progress.

This curriculum appeared to advocate a balance struck between analytical approaches to text, 'literary appreciation', and more personal interaction with texts which can bring pleasure. This binary presentation of purpose suggested these types of reading were distinct, with little overlap, potentially problematic for teachers tasked with fulfilling these contrasting aims.

As the current NC (DfE, 2013) for English was the slimmest and least prescriptive version to date, teachers seemed to have been empowered to exercise their professional judgement about content and pedagogy to an extent not seen for nearly thirty years. However, this flexibility appeared to be under threat as the expanded content of the new GCSE specifications (DfE, 2013a; DfE, 2013b) resulted in exam preparation beginning well before Year 10 (ages 14 – 15), squeezing the entire Key Stage and its curriculum (Hazell, 2018), and marginalising elements not externally assessed like RfP (Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020). Additionally, RfP could well be a 'taken for granted' by teachers of older students, something left behind at primary school, despite evidence underlining its ongoing significance to personal and academic success (NLT, 2014).

The accountability measures (see 2.4.2) faced by teachers (Gibbons, 2017) encouraged widespread assessment-driven reading practice in KS3 (Laurenson *et al.*, 2015; Goodwyn, 2012; Cremin *et al.*, 2009): an issue more significant than failing to follow the NC. This combination of factors meant it is perhaps unsurprising that RfP demands less curriculum time and appears to be a neglected aspect of English. The ideological shaping of the curriculum, in theory and practice, includes shifting conceptualisations of literacy and this chapter continues with some exploration of the relationship between RfP and literacy.

2.4 Literacy and 'Reading for Pleasure'

The mandated curriculum for secondary school English has changed across the decades since its establishment via the *Newbolt Report* (Board of Education, 1921) but the subject emerged from

and continues to be shaped by views of what constitutes literacy. RfP, as part of the English curriculum is influenced likewise. Cambridge (2013) explained

Literacy can be regarded as being a subset of English but also a concept that is broader than English (p.20).

While acknowledging the interrelatedness of literacy and English, the idea of a “subset” was rather too neat and compartmentalised to aptly capture its symbiotic and ideological nature. With different conceptions of reading existing (Cliff Hodges, 2016), those codified in the curriculum have been influenced by the ‘literacy’ espoused by policymakers, sometimes including RfP.

Literacy was viewed by some as an ideological construct involving power (Street, 1997; Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Stordy, 2015). It was also culturally specific (Misson & Morgan, 2006). Janks (2010) noted many languages did not have a word for this set of practices illustrating the concept’s situated and localised quality.

Additionally, literacy was deemed a dynamic phenomenon (Barton and Woolley, 2017; see also Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Kress, 1997) and a highly contested term (Street & Lefstein, 2007). As conceptions of literacy shifted, this permeated educational policy. Indeed, the most recent incarnation of the NC (DfE, 2013), literacy was cited alongside language as its central driver, comprising a ‘set of skills’ fundamental to education as a whole (Ofsted, 2013; see also UNESCO, 2005). This connection necessitated some examination of what constitutes literacy, both past and present, and its impact on current curriculum and pedagogy of secondary school English. Below, the changing definitions of literacy and what constitutes schooled literacy are discussed.

2.4.1 Defining Literacy

The noun ‘literacy’, coined in England in the late nineteenth century (OED, 2018), derived from the idea of being ‘literate’. Until the eighteenth century, ‘literate’ described the small proportion of the population who could read and write: those with access to written texts such as the nobility, religious leaders, high-ranking state employees and specialised guildsmen (UNESCO, 2005). As the reading of religious and sacred texts dominated, this conferred a moral status on those judged literate (Christie & Misson, 1998), valuing purposes other than pleasure. A literate person could read the Christian Bible and, therefore, was deemed virtuous and able to exercise sound judgement (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). This connection between reading material, readers and morality contributed to class division whereby the literate, the ‘good’ people, were typically judged inherently more valuable members of society (Edwards & Potts, 2008) than the illiterate. This idea still resonates in contemporary debate about literacy and education underpinning another deficit model, ‘cultural capital’, relevant to RfP (see 2.7.3) and current in professional discourse (see 6.2.2).

The dual imperatives of industrialisation and empire-building in the nineteenth century demanded skills distinct from preceding generations: the workforce required ‘literacy’ to further the economic goals of the nation (Christie & Misson, 1998). At this time, the term related to the basic skills of reading and writing (UNESCO, 2005), originally coined in opposition to ‘illiteracy’ (Janks, 2010). The etymology of ‘illiteracy’ was already at least two centuries old but, as language is

dynamic (Kress, 1997), neologisms enter the lexicon as need arises. The term 'literacy' identified economically desirable skills, reflecting the emerging national priority of the period: moving the working class from illiteracy to 'literacy' (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Economic needs took precedence over emancipatory compulsion or personal gratification.

Victorian Britain could maintain its world-leader status in manufacturing (Christie & Misson, 1998) if the workforce possessed the 'literacy' essential to serve the economy (Lambirth, 2011). Consequently, a powerful group of industrialists lobbied for the introduction of free, universal education, resulting in the 1870 Education Act. This was the first legislation to deal specifically with the provision of education in Britain, ushering in a state-run elementary school system: a relatively late development compared to other countries (Meek, 1991). What comprises schooled literacy is outlined next, illustrating the changing educational context within which RfP is sited or overlooked.

2.4.2 Schooled Literacy

Literacy as outlined in the Act was utilitarian in theory and practice, viewed as a technology (Christie & Misson, 1998) enabling others to develop (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Thus, 'schooled' practices were based a conception of literacy as a functional, efficient tool, and this became the predominant metaphor (Edwards & Potts, 2008): a deficit model was established that endured (Barton & Woolley, 2017), undergoing recent resurgence (e.g. Quigley, 2020; Webb, 2019).

The newly formed education system, and the teaching of literacy within it, reproduced dominant ideologies (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Friere & Macedo, 1987; Street, 1997), privileging institutional practices and devaluing commonplace literacy acquired across a range of informal settings (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Formal education could be viewed as an instrument of capitalism, preserving a stratified population (Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Lambirth, 2011) with policy deliberately shaped to maintain the prevailing order, perpetuating class differences (Lambirth, 2011; Garcia, 2015). Originally shaped to meet the economic ends of the ruling class, schooled literacy was promoted to the proletariat as a means of self-improvement (Christie & Misson, 1998), morally necessary. This placed higher value on schooled literacy serving economic ends, debasing 'popular' literacy where communication was paramount (Long, 2000). These standards underpin today's curriculum in its selection of material worthy of study and cultural division of high and low-brow pursuits and practices.

A key instrument of schooled literacy was, and remains, the written text. The emergent curriculum in the early days of the C20th, based around the written primer (Street, 1997), served to codify the direct link between literacy and the written text: to be literate was to be familiar with literature (UNESCO, 2005). Consequently, the modern sense of literacy, being well educated or learned (*ibid.*), was inextricably bound up with literature, and a particular type of literature: Shakespeare rather than slam poetry. This divide implied canonical reading as work not pleasure with 'popular' fiction antithetically placed and of lesser status.

The privileging of canonical literature in the curriculum expanded during the early twentieth century as university-based literature study developed (Eagleton, 2000). Then, in the wake of the

Second World War, improving literacy rates was posited as a vehicle for much needed social change (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). A better, more just world could be established through 'functional' literacy (Christie & Misson, 1998). While this vision retained the utilitarian sense from the previous century, the aim was promoted as social rather than economic, matching the zeitgeist. The 'literacy myth' whereby improved literacy rates would solve social ills was established and retains currency (Graff, 2013; Meek, 1991).

Stordy (2015) noted new inevitably becomes old in the taxonomy of literacies and by the 1960s the functional view was deemed insufficient (Christie & Misson, *ibid.*) to usher in necessary social change (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) so recast as emancipatory practice, exposing political and ideological power behind state mechanisms (Christie & Misson, 1998). The politicisation of schooling and curriculum continued through the 1970s (Cambourne & Turbill, 1998). Literacy became 'critical', more focused on the processes of meaning-making (Kress, 1997), both individual and social, essential for personal development rather than economic or utilitarian purposes (Friere & Macedo, 1987).

Although hindsight depicted teachers in the C20th facing a stark choice between preparing pupils to be factory fodder or attempting their empowerment through a focus on personal development (Cambourne & Turbill, 1998), the reality was probably not so clear-cut. The NLS (DfEE, 1998) conceptualised literacy as skill acquisition (2.3). School-based literacy was repositioned as the main aim of formal educational processes in primary school settings, rather than "an essential tool for accessing other learning" (Lambirth, 2011, p.13). This genre-based approach to the teaching of literacy (Gibbons, 2017) was extended to the secondary phase (DfES, 2001). Literacy teaching now focused on a narrow range of skills (Barton & Woolley, 2017), "distorting the teaching of English" (Cambridge, 2013, p.6). Literature no longer played a meaningful part (Gibbons, 2017) as reading became centred on proficiency (Hempel-Jorgensen, Cremin, Harris & Chamberlain, 2018) with pleasure absent. Despite English existing as a subject for nearly a century, it now became subordinate to Literacy.

While literacy had often been equated directly with 'standards' (Cambridge, 2013), Lambirth (2011) noted during the period of the NLS greater structures of surveillance were introduced to ensure teacher compliance. The attendant national testing, league tables and a threatening inspection regime (*ibid.*) was heavy-handed but the reality of being judged on the levels achieved by their pupils meant teachers would do all they could to prepare for external assessment, inevitably shaping practice (Barton & Woolley, 2017). As teachers focused on the prescribed skills, the curriculum narrowed. Cambridge (2013) noted the paradox

measures to improve and assess literacy have themselves narrowed definitions of literacy and led to impoverished enactments of literacy practice and distorted outcomes (p.20).

With high-stakes testing driving practice (Cliff Hodges, 2016) teachers were not encouraged to embrace a wider range focused on vital C21st skills (Barton & Woolley, 2017) or innovate by

developing effective literacy practices, culturally relevant to their pupils (Garcia, 2015) or promote pleasure in their pedagogy.

The complete overhaul of the NC conducted under the aegis of the UK coalition government (2010 – 2015) repositioned the literary canon centrally in the school subject of English (Christie & Misson, 1998) as opposed to the decontextualized extracts favoured by the NLS (DfEE, 1998) and FWE (DfES, 2001) (2.3). However, the constructed nature of literacy practices endorsed by the curriculum reflected historical, social and ideological realities of the day (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Stordy, 2015). For example, Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, harnessed canonical texts to promote “British Values” as part of the *Prevent Strategy* (Home Office, 2011; see also Doecke, 2017) as a means of combating perceived threats of radicalisation and terrorism.

Literacy and the English curriculum have been imbricated across the C20th, continuing today. For Freire and Macedo (1987) literacy was a creative act, one requiring action, but became decontextualized knowledge (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) validated through tests. Cambridge (2013) highlighted the impact on professional identity

High-pressure systems which focus on targets can reduce teachers to ‘technicians’ who ‘deliver results’ rather than focusing on principles of learning (p.20).

This process of deskilling diminished teachers’ autonomy and expertise and did little to improve literacy as it was predicated on the dichotomy of school and home practices, with RfP having no place in the classroom. The skills developed in school, codified by the extensive assessment and standardized testing, were not necessarily compatible with the needs of the current generation of pupils, reflecting Cook-Gumperz’s (1986) observation that while definitions of literacy shift to reflect changing needs, the process lags.

The changing definition of literacy was reflected in the various iterations of the NC (DES & WO, 1989; DfEE, 1999; QCA, 2004, 2007; DfE, 2013) whereby the purpose of reading moved from utilitarian to pleasure, to information retrieval, to the indoctrination of “love”. The well-established divide between ‘high’ literature and popular culture was visible in the narrow range of set texts prescribed or recommended at KS3 and for GCSE examination. Ofsted (2011) noted texts set for examination were fast becoming the only reading material pupils experienced in secondary school: canonical literature possessing little relevance for today’s readers, impairing pleasure. The privileging of certain content through assessment including licensed readings, limited the literacy diet still further (Kress, 1997), doing little to encourage RfP. This was compounded by the popularity of deficit models, from cognitive science (e.g. Willingham 2017) and ‘expert practitioners’ (e.g. Quigley, 2020; Webb, 2019), encouraging teacher-led, skills-based pedagogy apparently eclipsing official endorsement of RfP. The chapter continues by exploring how RR’s focus on reader/text interaction represents a hitherto underutilised and valuable tool for developing understanding of RfP and engagement.

2.5 Theoretical Perspectives

All research requires theoretical underpinning to conceptualise, problematize and provide a foundation for its design and data analysis. As this project focused on an aspect of education, several knowledge bases were relevant. Exploration of the phenomenon of RfP at the heart of this investigation employed the lens of RR, from the discipline of literary theory. However, selected works from the related fields of children's literature, psychology and cognitive science also feature. After examination of theory, the conceptual framework will be outlined before exploration of the extant research literature and some theoretical discussion of children's literature.

RR theory is outlined below: its main ideas, key proponents, distinctiveness from other literary approaches and value in examining RfP. After this introduction, Iser's (1974) concept of the 'implied reader' is explored across themes pertinent to RfP: reading as active, dynamic, creative, discovery and interpretation. Bishop's mirrors/windows/sliding glass doors model (1990), also derived from RR, is discussed alongside. It is important to acknowledge that RR is not primarily concerned with reading pleasure. Rather, it is a theoretical model explaining the process of reading via examination of reader and text interaction which has been utilised for this study of reading engagement. Iser and Bishop's models were selected, applied and juxtaposed to generate understanding of pleasure, thereafter, illuminating pedagogy supportive of RfP (see 2.6).

2.5.1 Literary Studies and Reader Response

During the early days of literary studies, the role of reader was acknowledged but cast typically as a passive recipient of the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore, examination of pleasure was unwarranted, superfluous to the emerging discourse. Even after the rise of RR theory in the 1960s, the affective domain remained somewhat elusive and relatively unexamined: "the position of pleasure in a theory of the text is not certain" (Barthes, 1975, p.64). Exploration of reading processes did emerge as cognitive and psychological elements attracted interest, moving the reader 'out of the shadows', no longer taken for granted or invisible (Rosenblatt, *ibid.*). This paradigm shift, concerning where textual meaning resided, was encapsulated by Barthes' (1977) now infamous statement, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (p.148). Reading became viewed as an event (Rosenblatt, *ibid.*), an individual experience with meaning created by reader, not author. However, the "ways the text affects the reader, and indeed, what produces such effects" (Bruner, 1986, p.4) remained under-examined aspects of the reading process. RR offered a hybrid model, resurrecting the author without negating reader agency: reader and text create meaning dialogically.

RR had many contributors over the decades but its chief proponents, Iser and Rosenblatt were my focus, alongside the later work of Bishop. Other voices relevant to RR and RfP were explored including Barthes, Chambers, Dewey, Dixon and Meek. Additionally, two other major theorists from outside literary studies, Bruner and Bourdieu, influenced this study. These key thinkers' work was reviewed, compared and critiqued to provide theoretical underpinning for the study, conceptualising RfP. The key concepts of theory are explored for relevance to RfP, presented under five key headings: reading as active, dynamic, creative, discovery and interpretation.

2.5.2 Reading as Active

The view that meaning resides in the reader rather than the text, introduced by the theorists now recognised under the RR banner, represented a fundamental shift in the way reading was conceptualised. The idea of reading being an active process was pivotal. Instead of meaning being created by the writer and transmitted to the reader through the text, RR proposed the reader made meaning and was not simply receiving someone else's preformed ideas.

Rosenblatt (1968) described the reading process as "the live circuit set up between reader and text" (p.25) suggesting a vital, immediate and powerful connection, a complex network of inter-relationships rather than "a linear process" (1985, p.100). She asserted an "active relationship between reader and text" (1978, p.10). Iser (1974) conveyed a similar stance when referring to reading as the process whereby "text activates our own faculties" (p.279). This seemed akin to a switch being thrown, whether psychological, emotional or otherwise was not specified but likely to involve all to varying degrees.

In his later work, Iser (1976) used a similar analogy to Rosenblatt's "live circuit" (*ibid.*) but located it within the prevailing orthodoxy of reading as passive: "the message [of the text] is transmitted in two ways, in that the reader 'receives' it by composing it" (p.21). Utilising this imagery emphasised the shift in conceptualisation. Beginning with the idea of reader as receiver, an inherently passive stance, he illustrated the new concept of reader's participation as crucial. As a 'composer', the reader exerted control over the work by adding their own arrangement. Implicit in this analogy was reader agency, the unique nature of reading and its creative basis (see 2.5.4). Also notable is the text as foundation for the 'arrangement' or interpretation: while the author may be dead, their work is crucial to the meaning-making process.

Interestingly, Barthes (1977), writing in the same decade, also conveyed reading as a mixture of passive and active: "The reader is a space, a blank page to inscribe meaning made by the author" (p.148). Barthes presented the reader passively as an empty entity awaiting filling by the writer. While the author may be 'dead', the text has enduring influence, prompting the reader to be active in seeking then absorbing texts: a finely-balanced oscillation. Elsewhere, he located pleasure in the physical realm (1975), a direct result of 'abrasions' readers impose on the text. The word 'abrasions' has starkly different connotations to composing. Indicating reader agency and effort, even discomfort, with the action resulting in changes to the text, and perhaps the reader (see Figure 2.6.4).

Explicit about the active engagement reading required, Iser (1974) referred to a two-way process. Rosenblatt (1968) echoed this principle, describing a to-and-fro exchange whereby "selection and synthesis become fundamental activities in the making of meaning" (p.123). More recent writers have found credibility in the view of reading as an active event. Bishop's (1990) mirrors/windows/sliding glass doors model, hereafter MWD, employed in this study's conceptual framework (see 2.6), was devised to examine young readers' interaction with cultural representations in fiction. She posited personal and social affirmation derived from readers' lives and cultures reflected in the text (mirrors) with experience enriched by 'seeing' diverse characters and situations

(windows). Texts could also invite readers to activate imagination, stepping into fictional worlds (doors).

Chambers' work (1985) represented a significant development in RR as he applied Iser's principles to children's literature, hitherto unexamined. He stressed the dialogic: "it takes two to say a thing" (p.35). Readers were actively involved in pattern finding or, if this proved impossible, constructed their own (1993), a fundamentally creative act (see 2.5.4).

Chambers (1985) observed "literature offers us images to think with" (p.2), a view of reading as cerebral and a vehicle for developing understanding. Both Meek (1991) and Alsup (2013) regarded reading as a 'kind of thinking'. Arizpe and Cliff Hodges (2018) judged it a quest for meaning with active involvement essential. If readers generate their own meanings, the benefit was potentially twofold

the texts they encounter can help them understand the situations in which they find themselves living; they may, equally, turn them away from what they face on a day-to-day basis and lead them to want to look in an altogether different direction (p.188).

Thus, the interaction of reader and text births new knowledge. This could be self-knowledge when fiction acts as a mirror or by consideration of different views through the 'window' of the text, enlarging readers' experience, extending knowledge of the world. When fiction acts as a doorway, vicarious opportunities are offered, allowing for understanding to develop via speculation and escapism (Bishop, 1990; see 2.6). Bruner (1986) asserted reading endured as stories act as models for 'redescription of the world', recognising their potential to affect change in readers (see also Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2018).

Hollindale (1997), exploring children's literature, explained readers enter into an 'exchange' with text. The noun "exchange" suggested active involvement from both reader and text with reciprocal benefit. The metaphor of reading as a journey was also employed by Hollindale (*ibid.*) conveying a sense of forward movement, requiring readers' willingness to follow the metaphorical path offered by the text but also the direction preordained by writer. Reader agency was necessary but cannot alone make meaning. The concept of reading as a dynamic event is explored next.

2.5.3 Reading as Dynamic Interaction

While reading as an active process was the central tenet of RR, theorists also proposed it as dynamic thus incorporating change, ongoing activity and development (Iser, 1976; Meek, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978). This concept was useful when exploring ways in which reading engagement prompted pleasure.

For Iser (1974), dynamism was a productive form of meaning-making. He hypothesised that, during the reading act, the reader created a virtual text - a product of the writer's words and the reader's interpretation of them. The writer invited the reader to engage actively with the text by presenting gaps which need filling. As this was dynamic and creative, pleasure ensued. Therefore, in Iser's theory (*ibid.*), pleasure derived from combined efforts of reader and writer. The writer crafted text with an 'implied' reader in mind, containing gaps to activate the individual's prior experience and imagination. If the gaps presented were too opaque or frequent, the reader was not able to fulfil the

pre-intentions of the writer. Consequently, proximity of 'implied' and actual reader could enable pleasure.

Sharing Iser's view of reading as dynamic interaction, Rosenblatt (1978), referred to the special and peculiar activities in which readers engage: a symbiotic relationship whereby the text acted on the reader and *vice versa*, reflected in Bishop's MWD model (1990). Rosenblatt (*ibid.*) outlined two stances a reader adopts: the efferent and the aesthetic. This dichotomy related to the primary concern or purpose of reading. She defined the efferent mode as when the reader focused on extraction of information whereas the aesthetic was rooted in the moment, what was being experienced during the reading (*ibid.*). As stance was selected at a subconscious level, with frequent switches between modes, choice cannot be exerted. Rosenblatt (*ibid.*) posited efferent reading stimulated pleasure from problem-solving and task fulfilment – an entirely practical endeavour. Pleasure from the aesthetic stance, however, derived from the affective, drawing on experience (*ibid.*) and exploring alternative or future possibilities (1968); Bishop's (1990) MWD model has this basis. Readers reflecting on experience would testify these stances and pleasures necessitate engagement yet are not mutually exclusive as reading rarely serves a single purpose.

While other thinkers have embraced Iser's idea of the implied reader's gap-filling (e.g. Chambers, 1985; Williams, 2008; Castleman, 2011), the constructed nature of this model must be remembered (Haertling & Sulzer, 2015) and scrutinized for its validity in 'real' world settings. Elsewhere in Iser's opus (1974), there exists reference to dynamism as the 'entanglement' of the reader, "vital to any kind of text" (p.290). The state of flux was captured by the image of an optical toy

the act of reading can be characterized as a sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives, preintentions, recollections (*ibid.*, p.279).

Choosing this metaphor, Iser drew attention to the reader's active role – an 'operator' was necessary. The kaleidoscope appears to produce infinitely random results, supporting the idea of every reading act as unique (see also Rosenblatt, 1978; 1985) as it emerged from the reader's combined past, present and future. However, as the kaleidoscope's viewfinder can only present preselected parts re-ordered, there exists inherent contradiction. Iser (1976) later employed the image of composer (Iser, 1976; 2.5.2), presenting interaction more sensually with reader playing a more significant role.

Bourdieu's view of books as knowledge machines (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002), value-laden mechanisms reproducing dominant hegemony, can be usefully juxtaposed. While the reader's response to text was highly personalised, it was shaped by their 'habitus' which conferred specific views and beliefs (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Thus, a Bourdieusian perspective would conceive the reading act as containing little scope for originality within its dynamism: both text and reader were inculcated with values and dispositions from the cultural fields in which they existed. Within these constraints, the reader exerted individualism by constructing meaning from selection or rejection, prioritising or minimising aspects of the text.

Rosenblatt (1985) developed the idea of 'transaction' as central to theoretical understanding of reading. This emerged from a perceived contradiction: Iser's

theoretical phrasings at times seem transactional nevertheless concentrate primarily on analyses of the text and see the reader's contribution as only filling in "the gaps" rather than transactionally creating meaning through the aesthetic stance and the triadic relationship with all verbal signs (p.103).

For Rosenblatt (*ibid.*), transaction "designates an ongoing process" encompassing several elements (p.98). This was dynamic and fluid, a "reciprocal interplay" (1968, p.101) rather than the modern sense of the word which has commercial, functional connotations. She emphasised the distinction between 'transaction' and 'interaction' to highlight the change in the reader brought about through the reading event while recognising that, in practice, this type of reading was "overwhelmed by preoccupations with whatever can be systematically taught and tested" (p.62). Despite the systemic and curricular change across the C20th, this situation endured.

While conceptualisation of reading as a dynamic happening became widely accepted (Iser, 1976; Meek, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978), this vitality did not fully account for the pleasure gained. Iser's view that the text activated the reader's "perceiving and processing" (*ibid.* p.107) faculties seems somewhat mechanistic and anodyne, side-stepping questions about what precisely stimulated and shaped the reader's reaction. However, Iser (1976) recognised pleasure could stem directly from this dynamic interaction as it involved creativity. Bishop's model (1990) developed this taxonomically, and utilised in this study to describe different types of pleasure possible (see 2.5.2 & 2.6) from increasing engagement. The next section discusses reading as a creative act in more detail.

2.5.4 Reading as a Creative Act

Underlying RR's view of reading as a dynamic event is the concept that productivity is creative. Iser's (1974) view of the reading transaction producing a 'virtual text', outlined above, is the pre-eminent example. Iser (1976) asserted pleasure was gained from construction

the reader's enjoyment begins when he himself becomes productive, i.e. when the text allows him to bring his own faculties into play (p.108).

The idea of the text 'activating' the reader was inherent. The writer, in shaping the text, provided triggers for the reader's imagination. This dialogic interaction occurred when "author and reader [are to] share the game of the imagination" (p.108). Reading was again positioned as dynamic: an "oscillation between the building and breaking of illusions" (Iser, 1976, p.288). Thus, the "creative act" of reading (Waller, 2019, p.20) was not without risk. While "the pleasure of the text is not certain" (Barthes, 1975, p.52), texts invite readers to explore possibilities and uncertainties (Iser, 1974) and by so doing re-create experience (Meek, 1991). Bishop's (1990) model represented this through the metaphor of text as a 'window' whereby the reader considered different prospects or as a 'door' to step through imaginatively. Readers must surrender to the text to achieve this, consciously or otherwise. If a reader's imagination cannot grasp alternatives, tolerate uncertainty or speculate about "what ifs", this type of pleasure will be denied.

Chambers (1985) presented a version of Iser's virtual text though his concept of a reader's second self (see also 2.5.7). Instead of an implied reader constructing a virtual text from the writer's work (Iser, 1974), Chambers conceptualised the reader projecting themselves into the narrative,

resonating with Bishop's idea of fiction acting as a doorway (1990; see 2.6) through which readers can step. Chambers referred to this 'reader-in-the-book' as

a certain persona, created by techniques and devices which help form the narrative. And this persona is guided by the author towards the book's potential meanings (p.36).

This appeared to echo Iser's concept (1974) in all but name. The idea of the writer as guide is notable, suggesting trust between reader and writer, as well as the reader's willingness to embark on the 'journey', mentioned above (2.5.3).

The metaphor of imagination being a game (Iser, 1976) implied reading as a form of play, to be found elsewhere in the literature (e.g. Chambers, 1985). Hollindale (1997), referring to the child reader specifically, talked about 'playing' when stories are told or read "no matter how complex or mature or painful they may be" (p.47). Mackey (2006) posited reading as 'fooling around with texts', exploring possibilities, commitment-free. Opening oneself to experiences presented in the text as well as reading itself appear prerequisite to reading pleasure. Both Rosenblatt (1978) and Chambers (1985; 1993) saw reading as performance. For Rosenblatt (1978)

who evokes a literary work of art is, above all, a performer, in the same sense that a pianist performs a sonata (p.28).

Chambers (1985) agreed: the reader brings the text alive – a thoroughly creative endeavour echoing Iser's (1976) view of reader as composer (2.5.2). This was also evident in Rosenblatt's (1986) comment about efferent and aesthetic reading modes

Someone else can read a text efferently for us, and report or summarize the results. No one else can read a text aesthetically for us; no one else can experience the aesthetic evocation for us (p.125).

She distinguished reading to extract information as a dispassionate functional pursuit – an outcome driven process. However, the aesthetic mode was highly personal, something experienced as sensory, emotional and subjective. This dichotomy appears in current policy (2.3), impacting perceptions of RfP's status. Viewing reading as a creative process emphasised its individualised nature, complementing the view of it as active and dynamic. The links between these ideas and reading as discovery are considered next.

2.5.5 Reading as Discovery

The idea that reading takes us on a journey, mentioned above (2.5.3), indicated pleasure can derive from the sense of exploration. Meek (1988) viewed texts as teaching "a process of discovery" (p.19) with the writer acting as guide (Chambers, 1985). While the concept of pleasure from reading as discovery remained relevant to C21st (Waller, 2019) and was reflected in Bishop's model (1990), its roots can be identified early in RR.

Iser (1974) stated "discovery is one form of esthetic pleasure" (p.xiii), grounded in negation (*ibid.*). The reader compared lived experiences with that presented in the fictional world, engaging critical and imaginative faculties. Thus, texts offered a rich stimulus and endless possibilities

no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled (*ibid.*, p.280).

Reading was, therefore, a source of ideas and experiences, a starting point for discovery but requiring active participation by the reader (2.5.2). During the reading, although the reader was in control (Chambers, 2001) filling textual 'gaps' uniquely, these spaces were pre-formed by the writer, like the pre-filled kaleidoscope (2.5.3).

Bourdieu's (1993) concept of 'habitus' (2.5.3) can be used to explain the forces which shape these gaps or, in this analogy, the vista presented by the kaleidoscope's viewfinder. While acknowledging each student was different, with a combination of experiences shaping their attitudes and values (Webb *et al.*, 2002, p.115), Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) recognised this was not arbitrary: we occupy a series of overlapping 'cultural fields', each with a distinct set of practices and values. Habitus was the process by which these attitudes and beliefs were assimilated (*ibid.*). Therefore, every student, or reader, was 'pre-formed' as well as the text and its gaps: discovery had limits.

As a 'cultural field', the education system served to reproduce social relations by conferring value, or 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1977), to those aspects deemed desirable by dominant groups. School-based reading as part of this field does so, privileging and promoting particular types of texts, authors and reading practices. Application of Bourdieu's concepts positions discovery through reading as less about exploration and expansion of the self but rather exposure to and assimilation of existing social relations (see also 2.5.6).

Tarpey (2017) viewed discovery more politically, critiquing the use of the canon to fill pupils' cultural gaps, asserting instead reading should be premised on

an exploration of [pupils'] own social realities and consider how language might be oppressive or liberating (p.163).

For this writer, reading should develop self-awareness and uncover ideology – acts of growth and empowerment. This echoed RR's origins whereby the individual's reaction to the text was held as paramount and where meaning resided. Pleasure from discovery thus generates new understanding of self or the world.

Iser's premise that interaction between reader and text was dynamic and infinite readings possible (1974; see also Rosenblatt, 1968; Meek, 1991) could be, therefore, challenged (2.5.3). It signals potential tensions for teachers encouraging young readers develop a love of reading with limited stock. The narrow range available will comprise primarily those texts authorised by the state, through NC and GCSE specifications, promulgating cultural norms that will not necessarily complement or align with pupils' personal cultural fields. If texts do not present MWD (Bishop, 1990; 2.5.2), readers may be reluctant to experience the 'journey' of discovery. However, Dressman and Rao (2020) suggested supporting readers to be "savvy travellers" rather than tourists, employing a bespoke combined approach to literature, can mitigate, offering alternative connection points thus not precluding pleasure (see 2.7.1).

Within RR the concept of reading as discovery falls into two broad categories: discovery of self and the world (Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2018), aligning with Bishop's MWD model (1990) (2.5.2). Both Meek (1988) and Barrs (2000) referred to young readers as apprentices, learning the craft of storying and stories from experienced practitioners. Rosenblatt (1968), explicit about the link to self,

“the human experience that literature presents is primary” (p.7), expanded how engagement, central in this study’s findings, aided discovery

The reader seeks to participate in another’s vision - to recap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that will make his own life more comprehensible (*ibid.*).

The concept of literature stimulating prior knowledge of the world *and* human experience by looking through other’s eyes resonated with Iser’s (1974) conceptualisation of text as kaleidoscope (2.5.3) and Bishop’s (1990) of text as mirror (2.5.2). Coats’ observation (2011) that YAL engages its readers in cultural dialogue, contextualising their experience, provides further reinforcement of the importance of engagement.

Bruner (1986) saw something fundamentally social, therefore essential, in the reading of literature

our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us (p.69).

Rosenblatt (1968) echoed this sense of expansion, “literature contributes to the enlargement of experience” (p.37), but linked this to social reality and aspiration: “If we only do justice to the potentialities inherent in literature itself, we can make a vital social contribution” (p.274). Meek (1991) described reading as a fully social activity as “engaging with others’ reading, I discover more of what is in the text; I add their meanings to mine” (p.41). This comment highlighted the importance of booktalk, an idea prevalent in research literature (see 2.7.3).

Iser (1974) raised an interesting point regarding literature’s role in helping individuals to discover something new about themselves. He noted

the apparently paradoxical situation in which the reader is forced to reveal aspects of himself in order to experience a reality which is different from his own (pp.280 - 1).

To create interpretation, or the ‘virtual’ text, the reader drew upon their lived experience, making meaning through comparison. This process required some degree of introspection, perhaps pleasurable and affirming but potentially exposing, imbuing feelings of vulnerability. Thus, discovery had potential to engender or prevent pleasure as fiction offers both contact zones and safe houses (Applebee, 1996). Being able to tolerate this uncertainty gives scope for personal development through increased self-awareness.

Texts offer other possible realities providing pleasure through stimulation of the imagination but also via escapism. Iser (1974) captured both in the preface to his first book, setting out discovery

offers the reader two distinct possibilities: first, to free himself – even if only temporarily – from what he is and to escape from the restriction of his own social life; second, actively to exercise his faculties – generally the emotional and the cognitive (p.xiii).

The vocabulary choices here reinforced the RR tenet of reader as active participant (2.5.2). The reader can experience freedom through imaginative licence.

Rosenblatt (1968) also drew attention to the escapism reading can offer, providing readers “release from the circumstances and pressures of their everyday lives” (p.39). Pleasure emerged from a temporary suspension of the outside world (see also Hollindale, 1997), via the text presenting

windows onto different worlds or inviting the reader to step through its doorway (Bishop, 1990) into an imaginary realm where possibilities are endless. Thus, reading builds schemas useful in making sense of lived experience and nourish existence – our lifelong work. Reading as an act of interpretation is the final area to be discussed in relation to RfP.

2.5.6 Reading as Interpretation

The last key area of RR theory to be explored is reading as an act of interpretation. This constructive process, while apposite to each proceeding section, complements particularly the discussion of creativity and pleasure (2.5.4). As interpretation is predicated on, and shaped by, what the reader brings to the text, it can contribute to pleasure.

Bakhtin (1981) coined the phrase “double-voiced discourse” (p.324) to articulate the idea that the narrative voice of a literary text, whether presented as character or narrator, expressed two different intentions: “the direct intentions of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (p.324). From a RR view, it can be posited a third ‘voice’, that of the reader mediates, producing unique interpretation.

Rosenblatt (1978) explicated the connection: “The reader, we can say interprets the text” (p.16), an idea more memorably captured in her earlier work

A novel or poem or play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols (1968, p.25).

This transformative process was influenced by and bound up in the reader’s identity, upbringing and predilections: Rabinowitz (1987) described interpretation as “a recovery of meaning” (p.19). During our lifetimes, we assimilate values and beliefs of the ‘cultural fields’ to which we belong: a process Bourdieu called ‘habitus’ (1993; see also 2.5.3). Each reading event involved “a particular reader and a particular text at a particular time, and under particular circumstances” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p.123) implying uniqueness. However, just as with Iser’s kaleidoscope (1974) (2.5.3), each constituent element was shaped and influenced by cultural practices, constructed rather than innate. The situated nature of reading, at a specific time and place in the “life history of the reader” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.20), was infused with value-laden cultural discourses thereby unique interpretation was impossible. Bishop’s MWD model (1990) foregrounding the cultural and personal, thus represented a useful explanatory vehicle.

Significantly, Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural capital’ (1977) illuminated a potential barrier to interpretation specifically and RfP generally (2.5.3). As a ‘cultural field’, the education system reproduces dominant social relations and structures (Webb *et al.*, 2002), conferring status or ‘cultural capital’ on certain practices, objects and attitudes. From this perspective, teachers were imbricated in a deficit model whereby they transmit ‘cultural capital’ to reduce the disadvantage gap (Cliff Hodges, 2012). While well-intentioned, this serves to perpetuate differences and inequalities and, as Kucirkova and Cremin (2020) noted, narrows the curriculum and reading to practices and texts possessing such capital.

At the affective level, response to text includes preference and dislikes, culturally determined so, if RfP requires connection between reader and text (see 2.7) fiction must offer some appeal to individuals. Texts taught in school while validated (Bleiman, 2020), imbued with 'cultural capital', are potentially mismatched with the cultural fields of the readers, impacting subsequently on pleasure. Assimilation of dominant values could overcome this problem but this is akin to transforming into another person, rejecting one's own background.

Meek (1988) acknowledged the unique interplay of factors influencing reader's response: "all readers bring different things to the text" (p.36). Likewise, Chambers (1985) recognised the mutability of interpretation: meanings "shift according to the context of the readers' own lives and their needs at a particular time" (p.17). Young readers' interpretation will be constructed from the perspective of childhood or adolescence, not to be overlooked as integral to meaning-making. Pleasure arises from the reader's agency in creating interpretation, enjoying control and decision-making with 'selection and synthesis fundamental activities in meaning-making' (Rosenblatt, 1985). Thus, while RR positioned reading as active, dynamic, productive and creative, this reference to 'selection and synthesis' indicated analytical faculties were involved alongside the affective.

Rosenblatt (1968) earlier used the analogy of a detective to capture the reader's role and efforts

He must be alert to the clues concerning character and motive present in the text. But he does more than that: he seeks to organize or interpret such clues. His own assumptions will provide the tentative framework for such an interpretation (pp.11 - 12).

The reader was vital, directing the process with pleasure gained from direct engagement by 'solving' the puzzle of the narrative. By constructing interpretation, the reader successfully traverses the quest for meaning (Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2018).

While interpretation draws upon the known and familiar to make meaning, it is a complex and tendentious process. Bruner (1986) identified pleasure arising from writers making the familiar strange and Iser (1974) emphasised this need as readers were bored by the familiar. Readers' ability to tolerate uncertainty influenced the extent to which the interpretive act imbued or prevented pleasure. Dewey (1913) recognised the delicate balance of the familiar and new in literature to prevent reading from becoming 'work'. Writing a century later, cognitive psychologist Willingham (2017) concurred. As constructing interpretation is part of literary criticism (Chambers, 1985), supporting readers to develop both affective and analytical response has potential to enable RfP *and* improve GCSE grades.

2.5.7 Reading Children's Literature

Academic discourse about children's literature, a branch of literary criticism, is the final theoretical perspective to be considered. Key debates regarding conceptualisations of childhood in fiction were useful to the exploration of RfP by illuminating influences on writer, text and reader which impinge on interaction.

Hunt (1994) acknowledged the term 'children's literature' as highly problematic. An apparently simple definition, 'books written for children' was contentious as "both "written for" and "children" are slippery terms" (p.5). Nonetheless, discussion of literary representations of childhood and the ways these replicate underlying social and historical contexts is apposite to RfP. For Iser (1974) pleasure stems from alignment of 'implied' and actual reader whereby the reader fills 'gaps' in the text (2.5.3). Prevailing attitudes about children from the writer's era will seep into fiction, impacting subsequently on the dynamic between actual and represented child. While not all fiction experienced in the contemporary KS3 English classroom could be classed as "children's literature", whatever definition was employed, some scrutiny of this relationship was necessary to study of RfP. The term was taken to encompass literature written for and marketed at 'young adults', hereafter YAL.

As RR theory foregrounds the reader's role in the meaning-making process (2.5.1), it assisted exploration of a particular type of reader, in this case, 13 – 14 year olds (see 3.3). Meek (1988) noted "all readers bring different things to the text" (p.36), and part of this distinctiveness relates to maturity. Hollindale (1997), encapsulating the child's state as "dynamic, imaginative, experimental, interactive and unstable" (p.46), emphasising its singularity. Thus, while response was always individualised, difference was exacerbated for young readers: reaction to and interpretation of fiction would not be that of an adult. Consequently, if readers were not given agency over response, encouraged instead to assimilate adults' interpretation, connection between reader and text was undermined, impacting negatively on pleasure.

Hollindale (1997) described binary representation in what he termed "the politics of childhood" in children's literature. In some fiction, childhood was presented as a developmental state, a preparation for adulthood. Literature depicting childhood as a provisional state could be educative, offering readers instruction on growing up. Other books depicted childhood as an autonomous part of life, a phase of experience (*ibid.*). Fiction drawing upon this underlying conceptualisation typically foregrounded what it was to be a child (*ibid.*). It reflected the "presentness of childhood" (p.16) although the varied, fluid nature of literary depictions was recognised

childhood is not a fixed concept . . . but rather one that fluctuates with historical process and will continue to do so (p.60; see also Grenby & Immel, 2009).

This suggested whatever views of childhood appear in fiction read in school, young readers needed opportunity to respond from their "presentness", drawing upon their lives to forge independent connections if pleasure is to result (2.5).

Chambers (1985), adopted a RR stance, but eschewed the 'implied reader' term, instead referring to "the reader's second self – the reader-in-the-book" (p.36; see also 2.5.4). Essentially the same concept, Chambers' description characterised the reading event as more personal than production of a 'virtual text' (2.5). He suggested an intimate relationship between reader and writer whereby the reader's 'second self' was "guided by the author towards the book's potential meanings" (*ibid.*). Chambers (*ibid.*) presented writers also possessing a second self, manifested in the narrator. He exemplified this, characterising Dahl's voice as "a friendly adult storyteller who knows how to

entertain children” while “keeping them in their place” (p.46). The writer adopted a particular position in relation to the intended audience. This could be inferred as paternalistic but Hollindale (1997) stressed children were not passive in the relationship

Children take from a story what they want and need. In doing so, they may through vicarious experiences be filling up pockets of hitherto un-lived childhood in themselves (p.75).

Agency was exercised to satisfy current requirements and desires, echoing the RR view that reading acts were unique (2.5.1). This conceptualisation complemented my adaptation of Bishop’s (1990) model (see 2.6) whereby readers derive pleasure variously with the process expansive, contributing to personal growth. The image of ‘filling pockets’ evokes richness, a pleasing surfeit resulting from the ‘presentness’ of childhood.

Interestingly, Chambers (1985) recognised younger readers could present barriers to pleasure by being “unyielding” (p.36), unable to “shift the gears of their personality according to the invitations offered by the book” (p.37). There was unwillingness to surrender to the book, primarily as limited experience meant they had not learnt how to do so. These child readers were inflexible, “want[ing] the book to suit them” (p.37). Modelling imaginative processes, ‘yielding’ to fiction, could support engagement.

Hollindale (1997) asserted literary depiction of both ‘child-being’ and ‘adult-becoming’ were “necessary” for young readers. While the child reader was receptive to depictions of other children, fiction served other purposes, to

reinforce the constant work of storying our own lives: we need stories as we need food, and we need stories most of all in childhood as we need food then, in order to grow (*ibid.*, p.70).

Books offered a rich diet to the young reader, showing both the known and the unfamiliar, inviting consideration of possibilities and alternatives, inherent in Bishop’s MWD model (1990). New understandings resulted as writers “engage young readers in the present with an eye to influencing their future selves” (Grenby & Immel, 2009, p.34), a combination of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. This resonated with Iser’s (1974) assertion of reading as an oscillation between the building and breaking of illusions (2.5.4) and Hollindale (1997) characterising childhood as an experimental and unstable state. Enabling pleasure when reading ‘children’s literature’ could be supported by pedagogy helping readers negotiate these inherent uncertainties.

Chambers (1993) also referred to a form of oscillation but related this to different stances a reader could occupy. He asserted teachers should help pupils

become dramatist (rewriter of the text), director (interpreter of the text), actor (performer of the text), audience (actively responsive recipient of the text), even critic (commentator and explicator and scholarly student of the text) (p.12).

The reader’s ‘presentness’ (Hollindale, 1997) was foregrounded and activated through fulfilling these roles. If pedagogy allowed, the diversity and fluidity of these stances would provide valuable experience for young readers dealing with the uncertainties of the ‘state of becoming’ (*ibid.*), rehearsing and navigating the mental and emotional journey.

Gavin (2012) asserted childhood remains an enduring literary topic because it “raise[s] for writers and readers more questions ... than it can ever, even symbolically, answer” (p.17). Prioritising literary appreciation focused on assessment objectives (2.3) privileges finding ‘answers’, promoting transmissive pedagogy, underpinned by conceptualisation of childhood as preparation for adulthood. This type of reading endorsed acquisition of content and skill required for success in external assessment, the gateway to employment, negating engagement and pleasure.

Understanding reading through the lens of RR emphasised the need for pupil-centred practice, promoting interpretation from the ‘presentness’ of childhood. When ‘children’s literature’ such as *Maggot Moon* (Gardner 2012) and *Noughts and Crosses* (Blackman, 2001) is read in class, the reader’s perspective needs foregrounding, giving agency and opportunity to respond as children, Doing so supports the forging of connections, bringing reader and text in closer proximity thus stimulating pleasure (see Chapter 4 & 5.3). Additionally, when texts with exclusively adult casts, such as *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) are read, adopting a RR approach has potential to result in more authentic and pleasurable reading experience as it is rooted in the experiential rather than an attempt to adopt another, usually adult, interpretation. The chapter continues with explanation of the conceptual framework devised from RR for this study.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The topic of reading can be explored through a variety of disciplinary lenses but my focus on education foregrounded the social, cultural and affective perspectives encompassed by the discipline of literary theory known as RR (2.5.1). Consideration of Iser’s (1974; 1976) key works in particular influenced construction of my conceptual frame for the study, itself forming part of its contribution to knowledge: readers’ interaction *with text* has been underrepresented in extant research about RfP (see 2.7).

RR understands the phenomena of the reading act through examination of the reader’s reaction to, and interaction with, printed text (2.5.1). The essential precursor to any personal response is the ‘work’ of reading at a decoding level (Willingham, 2017) generating comprehension of single words, phrases and whole texts. Beyond this cognitive level, theorists present different conceptions of how pleasure is derived from reading (2.5).

In his ‘implied reader’ theory Iser (1974) hypothesised pleasure came from a reader filling ‘gaps’ in the text, whereby ‘implied’ and actual reader align (2.5.3). My abstraction posited different yet interrelated types of pleasure (i.e. from reader’s active stance, dynamic interaction, creativity, discovery and interpretation) providing a lens through which to view the data.

This theoretical underpinning, developed from Iser (1974), was complemented by Bishop’s tripartite model (1990) conceptualising readers’ interaction as fiction functioning as mirror or window or sliding glass door (2.5.2). With a primary interest in cultural identity, she asserted readers find affirmation through having their culture reflected in text (*ibid.*). Fiction can also offer windows on the ‘reality’ of other worlds (*ibid.*), contributing to a sense of identity and awareness of readers’ position in relation to other cultural groups. The sliding glass door metaphor Bishop used to emphasise fiction

not only shows different worlds but can also offer readers access to them. The reader can open the 'door', imaginatively stepping into the fictional realm.

Bishop's model (1990) was modified, retaining the original concept of text function but applied as a taxonomy of separate yet overlapping stimuli enabling pleasure (Figure 2.6.1). A Venn diagram was chosen to represent my hypothesis that pleasure emerges from a single stimulus or a combination and is not linear or sequential. This framework complemented Iser's theory (1974), foregrounding interaction between actual reader and text, proving valuable in exploration of the enablers of and barriers to RfP related to engagement in KS3 English while not precluding fiction's ability to offer other stimuli for pleasure.

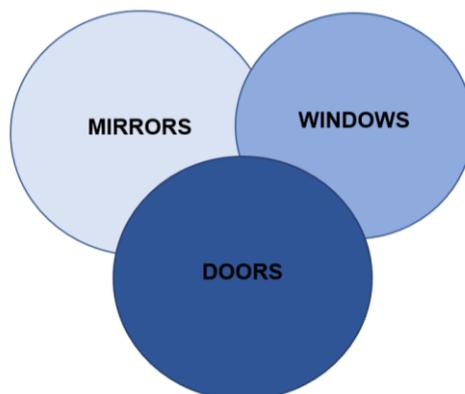


Figure 2.6.1: Model of reading pleasure adapted from Bishop

The complementary relationship of these two models derived from RR is demonstrated by mapping Bishop's model (1990) against RR principles (Figure 2.6.2), explored above (2.5). Fiction, when acting as a mirror prompts positive, affective reaction as the reader recognises aspects of themselves or their experience within the text (see Rosenblatt, 1968; Iser, 1974; Hollindale, 1997). Readers' experience complements the text and is utilised to fill the 'gaps': 'implied' and actual reader align. Engagement is stimulated from a sense of the familiar, imbuing feelings of affirmation, belonging and relevance. Considering of our own reading, however, we would recognise that seeing our everyday world represented in fiction offers only one, limited type of pleasure.

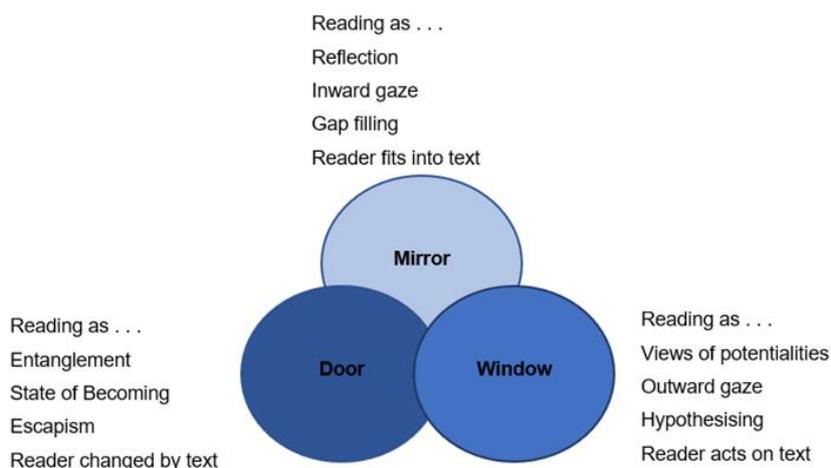


Figure 2.6.2 Mapping Reader Response and MWD

The analogy of a mirror when applied to pleasure from engagement could suggest a passive encounter whereby readers observe themselves or some aspect of their experience in the text. Engagement derives from the reader 'seeing' a two-dimensional representation of life. The reflection is as unique as the reader within their specific temporal, social and historical context. Therefore, pleasure emerges from the text offering a recognisable yet incomplete vision of the world which the reader realises using their experience to fill the gaps (Iser, 1974). The reader is active, using imaginative and evaluative skill, comparing their present, past and text to make meaning. Pleasure derives from feelings of agency but also creativity and discovery (2.5). Looking in the 'mirror' of the text while pleasurable in its own right, could accentuate self-awareness, a pre-condition to growth (Iser, 1974) and precursor to other, potentially richer pleasures, represented diagrammatically:

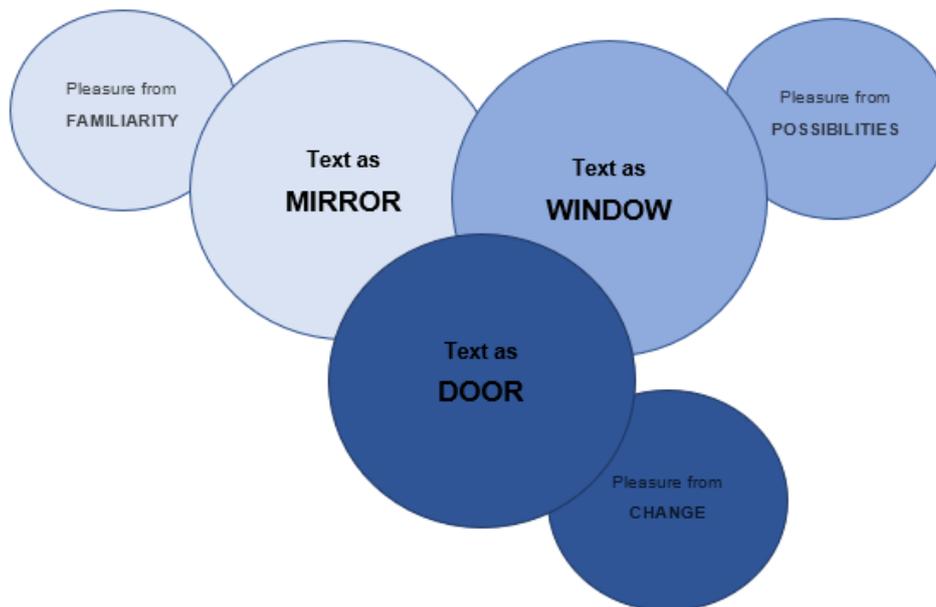


Figure 2.6.3 Linking Bishop's text functions to pleasure

It is worth noting access to texts in school that act as 'mirrors' for readers should not be assumed (see 2.7.2). Availability of relevant material is dependent on factors beyond the reader's control: budgetary constraints; purchasing decisions; gatekeepers' value judgements about 'quality' and suitability; peer influence (see 5.2). Any of these factors could reduce access to texts functioning as mirrors, thereby impinging on pleasure.

In the model, engagement can be stimulated also by text serving as 'windows' for readers to look through (Figure 2.6.3). Interaction between reader and text leads to the creation of new 'virtual' text (Iser, 1974; 2.5.3) and when fiction functions as a window, it presents worlds distinct from readers' experience, expanding horizons and offering new landscapes (Figure 2.6.4), contributing to knowledge of the self and world. By presenting previously unimagined possibilities, pleasure emerges from a more dynamic interaction (Iser, *ibid.*). Rosenblatt (1978) referred to readers "acting on the text" (p.16), not merely fitting themselves into the prepared framework of the 'mirror' (2.5.2).

Being an onlooker *could* be a passive endeavour, but the reader must exercise agency to create interpretation. Whether labelled 'interaction' (Iser, 1976) or 'transaction' (Rosenblatt, 1978),

the reader synthesises the known and unknown, an uncertain and shifting process (Barthes, 1975). Speculation about possibilities and potentialities (Iser, 1974) stimulates engagement (Figure 2.6.4), resulting in an ‘enlargement of experience’ (Rosenblatt, 1968; Meek, 1991). This hypothesising is highly individualised as it draws upon experiences, values and aspirations accrued over a lifetime. However, there are questions to be raised about the extent of otherness. Some common experience is prerequisite to interaction or the experience would be simply alienating.

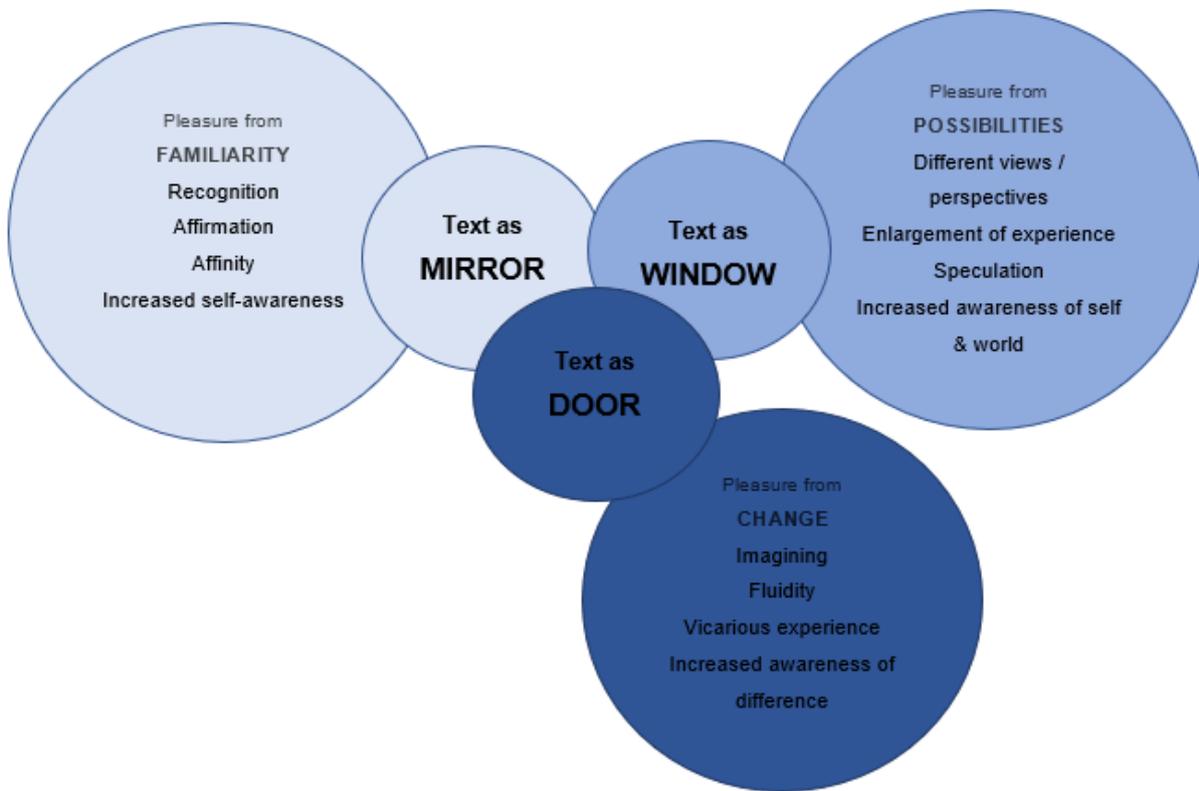


Figure 2.6.4: Mapping MWD and Implied Reader to pleasure

When the text functions as a ‘door’, the reader does not just ‘see’ the text world but acts on the invitation to step in, exercising imagination to transport themselves imaginatively elsewhere (Figure 2.6.4). By opening the ‘door’ of the text readers become ‘entangled’ (Iser, 1974) with pleasure derived from interaction becoming a form of play (Hollindale, 1997) or an act of discovery (Meek, 1988; Iser, *ibid.*) (2.5.5). the reader embarks on a journey from their world to another (Iser, *ibid.*; Rosenblatt, 1968; Hollindale, *ibid.*), transformational (Rosenblatt, 1978) through the vicarious experience offered: the reader’s life extends into the text and the text extends into life (Meek, 1991).

Escape can never be all encompassing, however, as the reader cannot leave behind their individual persona and history entirely. Readers may imaginatively occupy the text world but their identity, an accumulation of complex, interrelated factors, cannot be shrugged off. Here, not only does the reader ‘act on the text’ but also the text acts on reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). The reader’s past and present are in play, shaping the interpretation but, instead of offering a glimpse of alternatives, the text entices the reader and incites action. Thus, the reader occupies a state of becoming, particularly resonant for children (2.5.7), with mutability and freedom creating pleasure. Ultimately, both text and reader are seen as changed by the encounter.

This original conceptual framework (Figure 2.6.4), developed from my reading of literary theory and educational research, was utilised to compare implied and actual reader response, a hitherto underexamined avenue for RfP. It informed the research plan, influenced study design (see Chapter 3), data analysis (Chapters 4 - 6) and findings (see Chapter 7). It was instrumental in identifying the enablers of, and barriers to, RfP related to engagement in KS3 English by generating new knowledge about the interaction *between* pupil and text. This chapter continues with an overview of research into RfP, outlining extant literature and offering justification for this study.

2.7 Research into ‘Reading for Pleasure’

Contemporary UK-based research provides evidence to support the government priority of increasing RfP to improve educational outcomes (e.g. DfE, 2012; Ofsted 2012), a message repeated across recent Ofsted publications (2015, 2011, 2011a, 2004). NLT and Clark (2014) reviewing its surveys since 2005, documented a clear link between reading pleasure and attainment

children aged 8 to 11 who do not enjoy reading at all are ten times as likely to be reading below the expected level for their age compared with children who enjoy reading very much (p.11).

These findings, based on comparisons of assessment data and pupil attitudinal surveys, highlighted the ‘virtuous circle’ between enjoying reading and being a good reader (Save the Children, 2014; OECD, 2011; Hall & Coles, 1999). Meta-analysis conducted by Mol and Bus (2011) echoed this, highlighting the primacy of print exposure in developing reading proficiency. Combined, this evidence indicated frequent reading as prerequisite to RfP. While making a compelling case for school-based initiatives focusing on engendering a love of reading, it revealed little beyond frequency as effective pedagogy.

The role of RfP in educational and personal development, emphasised by the DfE (2012; see also Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, 2021; Godsman, 2017) was supported by research from Save the Children (with Read, 2016; with Lawton & Warren, 2015), the Sutton Trust (Sammons, Toth & Sylva, 2016) and NLT *et al.* (2017). Not fostering a love of childhood reading, thereby retarding literacy development, has consequences reaching far beyond school days: the NLT (2014) report low levels of literacy contribute to health inequalities, drive poverty and narrow opportunities for young people. The links between literacy rates and health, unemployment and crime were documented elsewhere (Save the Children *et al.*, 2015; NLT, Clark & Foster, 2005). The DfE (2012) highlighted the academic dimension by asserting enjoyment was “more important for children’s educational success than socio-economic status” (p.3). The two phrases ‘reading enjoyment’ and ‘reading for pleasure’ are not synonymous as the former indicates a positive consequence of reading while the latter suggests motivation for a type of reading activity. However, these differences aside, the assertion that reading can contribute to reducing the attainment gap was significant.

Five years after the publication of this DfE report, NLT *et al.* (2017) reported pupils’ socioeconomic background, defined by free school meal (FSM) uptake, was not associated with enjoyment of reading (p.6). This suggested RfP was not just a middle-class disposition: it was

possible for all yet needed explicit support. While frequent reading supports RfP through developing proficiency, it requires reader motivation and engagement. Unrau and Quirk (2014) defined motivation as internal processes giving impetus for reading, prerequisite to engaged reading. Engagement they characterised as actions, observable and unobservable, associated with reading activities. Thus, although both represent further precursors to RfP, this study's focus on reader/text interaction explored facilitators of reading engagement in particular.

It is worth noting the majority of research regarding RfP has been focused on quantitative data such as pupil surveys and questionnaires (e.g. McGeown, Osborne, Warhurst, Norgate & Duncan, 2016; NLT, 2014, 2017; Save the Children *et al.*, 2015). Where a more qualitative approach was taken, participants were typically teachers (e.g. Hopper, 2006; Cremin *et al.*, 2009; Laurenson *et al.*, 2015; Westbrook *et al.*, 2018). As interest in this area has grown, recent studies focused on the experience and perception of the young reader have emerged (e.g. Merga, 2016, 2017; Cliff Hodges, 2016; Williams, 2015).

The diverse recommendations made in response to the growing evidence body, from more specialist training for Early Years teachers (Save the Children & Read, 2016) to encouraging more reading (Sammons *et al.*, 2016), indicated diagnosing the problem was more straightforward than finding effective solutions. However, review of the extant research base revealed some key themes about potential enablers of, and barriers to, RfP related to engagement which I framed using the conceptual lens of this study (2.6). Research findings are described below under four broad categories rooted in RR: increasing potentialities; aligning implied and actual reader; social pedagogies; modelling affective response.

2.7.1 Increasing Potentialities

A key method of enabling RfP was identified as encouraging young people to read more. The concept of a 'virtuous circle' whereby frequency and proficiency interplay was found across the literature (e.g. Save the Children, 2014; OECD, 2018; Hall & Coles, 1999; Jerrim & Moss, 2019; Sullivan & Brown, 2015). Frequent reading develops skill

they become even more competent at reading and develop larger vocabularies and a greater understanding of the world (Dombey & UKLA, 2010, p.3).

The increased ability to decode minimises reading as work, removing a significant barrier to RfP. Children benefit consequently from the "cumulative advantage phenomenon" or 'Matthew effect' (Stanovich, 1986, p.381; see also Mol & Bus, 2011) whereby those who read more make greater progress.

The UKLA study into children's attitudes to reading (McGeown *et al.*, 2016) reported connection between reading pleasure and attainment, echoing the NLT, above, but the authors went further by claiming reading frequency predicted reading skill and this relationship was reciprocal. Assertion of a causal link between volume and proficiency was apparent elsewhere in research (e.g. Jerrim & Moss, 2019; NLT & Clark, 2014; Save the Children, 2014; OECD, 2011, 2018). Merga

(2017) suggested lack of frequent reading could lead to “delayed advancement across literacy outcomes” (p.207) as

fostering and maintaining the will to develop a life-long reading habit is central to their continued development across the literacy continuum, which does not end upon independent reading skill acquisition (*ibid.*).

Therefore, encouraging frequent reading through school-based initiatives like ‘Drop Everything and Read’ (DEAR) was well supported by the literature (see 3.3.1). Hall and Coles’ (1999) finding that young people read less as they age but their range increased suggested it may be beneficial also to support widening repertoires and informed selection.

Some studies asserted more frequent reading led to increased levels of pleasure (NLT & Clark, 2014; Hall & Coles, 1999; Laurenson *et al.*, 2015), and it was irrelevant whether this occurred at school or home (Save the Children & Read, 2016). The regularity of RfP was key

Not only do more children who enjoy reading read daily, read more books and think more positively about reading, they also tend to be better readers (NLT & Clark, 2014, p.15).

While this is an appealing idea, echoing the ‘Matthew effect’ (Stanovich, 1986), questions could be raised about how positive experiences with books are initially engendered, particularly relevant for pupils’ whose home life does not include a reading culture. Devoting school time to reading is one way to counter this but it may have limited or negative impact.

Some schools attempt to encourage reading through DEAR, alternatively known as silent reading or free voluntary reading (FVR), on a daily or weekly basis. The importance of reading is validated by its presence in the school day. However, Laurenson *et al.* (2015) exploring how to promote RfP in schools, concluded increasing frequency of reading through DEAR was not in itself sufficient to improve reading pleasure: a variety of activities was required in school. Teachers experiencing the battle of wills that is DEAR time in all but the most well motivated classes, would evaluate the activity as neither enjoyable nor conducive to pleasure. Indeed, Ofsted’s *English at the Crossroads* (2009) presented evidence that while schools devoted large amounts of time to reading, this has not led to more favourable pupil attitudes, stymying increased engagement. There was a lack of integrated and coherent action directed at producing enthusiastic, independent readers rather than a dearth of reading.

The new NC (DfE, 2013) with its expanded reading requirements (2.3), could signal the need for more reading but teachers and readers may question a causal link exists between volume and pleasure. Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove’s introduction (2011) of a ‘fifty book challenge’ for primary aged pupils attracted a negative response from high profile writers, including Phillip Pullman, Frank Cottrell Boyce and Alan Garner, indicating not all agree (Page, 2011). Of course, this could reflect dissatisfaction at the perennial government intervention in education rather than the initiative itself.

The National Literacy Trust report (NLT, Clark & Poulton, 2011) investigated the value of Gove’s strategy. Surveying upper primary pupils, aged 9 – 11, from 148 English schools, it found “increases in enjoyment going hand-in-hand with the number of books read” (p.7). Careful

interpretation was needed, however, as this could reflect prolific readers' predisposition to pleasure from reading rather than volume causing pleasure. Finding more reading seemed to change individuals' self-perceptions was notable: an example perhaps of texts contributing to personal growth by developing self-awareness. If young people can be supported to develop a view of themselves as good readers, potential is provided for further engagement, thus the benefits of regular reading outlined above. Indeed, research into 'quick reads' by Westbrook *et al.* (2018) supported this

Simply reading challenging, complex novels aloud and at a fast pace in each lesson repositioned 'poorer readers' as 'good' readers, giving them a more engaged uninterrupted reading experience over a sustained period (p.1).

Not only did pupils' views seem changed, but also the teachers: it "heighten[ed] teachers' expectations of [pupils'] reading capacity" (p.7). While reading more can increase the potential for engagement and thus RfP, this shift in perspective could have greater impact by overturning current orthodoxies about text suitability so widening choice of material, supporting connection between reader and text found to be so important by this study (see 5.3). The role access to texts where implied and actual reader align in RfP is explored next.

2.7.2 Aligning Implied and Actual Reader

Research revealed selection of reading matter was another key factor in supporting engagement with freedom of choice particularly significant (Boustead, 2000; DfE, 2012; Laurenson *et al.*, 2015). Pupils with access to a broad range of text types were likely to be more motivated readers (Laurenson *et al.*, 2015; McGeown *et al.*, 2016). This correlated with principles of RR (2.3) whereby if readers' interests were met, pleasure was possible (Iser, 1974; Rosenblatt, 1978). Readers needed to find material relevant and accessible. Bishop (1990) suggested texts could act as MWD, offering different types of pleasure (2.5.2). Lack of connection with fiction prevented occupation of the implied reader stance (2.5.3), impairing pleasure. Better access can have a positive impact on other factors

[it's] likely to increase children's involvement in different reading activities and may have consequences for their reading motivation (McGeown *et al.*, 2016, p.122).

However, budgetary constraints may make the provision of well-stocked libraries and varied, high quality book boxes for classroom reading challenging.

Even if money was no object, some pupils have difficulty choosing (Merga, 2017). This issue was identified in other research including this study (see 5.2). It appeared to prevent some young people engaging in reading

over half of young people who have not read a book in the past month agree that they cannot find things to read that interest them (NLT, Clark & Poulton, 2011, p.12).

Those involved in teaching secondary English may be surprised by this given the time devoted library lessons, silent reading and DEAR. Merga's (2013) project had similar findings: students had difficulty finding engaging material because of the non-availability of their preferred books.

Readers need opportunity to act with agency and availability can impede this. Hopper (2006) articulated the complexity and subjectivity of resourcing by querying “what may comprise an appropriate canon of quality literature for adolescents in the twenty first century” (p.57). Even if teachers have a clear vision, ideology influences

students may be limited to certain choices about their literate identities because of the power of social positioning in language. They can take on the identities presented by their teachers, and receive praise, or opt for ones less valued and risk marginalization (Hall *et al.*, 2010, p.242).

Some educational professionals have fixed ideas about what is appropriate or acceptable material. Cliff Hodges (2016) noted this can impact purchasing decisions: who decides what can be read? Her interviews with Y8 (2009) revealed pupils’ concerns about not measuring up to teachers’ expectations as what “they do enjoy is different to what they feel they ought to read” (p.167). Series fiction, for example, has been dismissed as readerly self-indulgence or childish laziness but was more subtly effective at capturing the experience of childhood (Watson, 2000). Perceptions about the relative merits of different genres can be mitigated by selecting fiction offering readers MWD (Bishop, 1990) and teachers sharing their recreational book reading (Cremin *et al.*, 2009; Merga, 2016), acting as reading role models (see 2.7.4).

Richards-Kamal (2008) researched secondary pupil response to canonical literature in racially diverse London schools. She explored the influence of teacher approval shaped by GCSE assessment criteria

The power differential involved in reading is clear – if you read ‘incorrectly’, the authority of the teacher and the examining board will penalise you (p.58).

If personal interpretation is not valued, why encourage it? However, as literary appreciation is predicated on affective, subjective response, it is an essential foundation. This can also act as a corollary to the narrowing of the curriculum as a result of the skills-based agenda and the preoccupation with canonical literature (2.3). It is important, too, if social justice and developing critical readers is part of the English curriculum. Richards-Kamal (2008) concluded with a stark judgement that in today’s climate, becoming ‘informed’ readers requires a transformation tantamount to assimilation and brainwashing. This raises legitimate questions about the current popularity for bestowing ‘cultural capital’ (2.5.5), the relevance of the set texts as well as underlining the need for access to, and validation of, texts more culturally relevant to today’s youth.

Research suggested one solution was peer to peer book recommendations. For example, Merga, McRae and Rutherford (2018) reported this as efficacious as it was “likely to increase reading frequency by mitigating the requirement of choice and alleviating resourcing constraints” (p.49).

More fundamentally, teachers needed to drive a paradigm shift whereby they

resist traditional practices in which teachers control text selection, and push for greater access to reading materials, as well as time and spaces for pleasure reading (Thompson & McInay, 2019, p.73).

It could be argued the new NC provided teachers with official justification to do so but when combined with the increased content of GCSEs and performance-related pay, this was not

straightforward (2.3). What research revealed about how social pedagogies support RfP through increased engagement is discussed next.

2.7.3 Social Pedagogies

Research literature revealed giving pupils opportunity to talk about reading supported engagement. Young readers could share responses, develop interpretation and rehearse the language of literary appreciation. This ‘booktalk’ is distinct from generalised discussion due to its dialogic nature. The scarcity of this practice has been noted (Ofsted 2012; Hempel-Jorgensen *et al.*, 2018). The mandate in the NC (DfE, 2013), pupils are to be taught a love of reading, encouraged teachers

to create pedagogical spaces where children can develop volition and skill as readers
(and therefore as learners who actively engage in meaning-making through talk)
(Hempel-Jorgenson *et al.*, 2018, p.93).

Teachers were effective in developing reading skills for assessment purposes (Goodwyn & Findlay, 2003) and conveying its importance but not so proficient at demonstrating pleasure (Merga, 2016).

Other contemporary research (Laurenson *et al.*, 2015; Merga, *ibid.*) echoed Chambers (1993) assertion that ‘booktalk’ was essential for modelling the *how* (Cremin *et al.*, 2009) and *what* of reading (Commeyras, Shockley Bisplinghoff & Olsen, 2003) signalling conversations about reading count (Cremin *et al.*, *ibid.*). However, Cliff Hodges (2016) noted educational priorities have been distorted by the current high stakes testing regime and focus on written outcomes (2.3). This could also explain the dissonance noted between English teachers’ rhetoric about reading and their practice: personal response and RfP was espoused but observations and inspections identified little activity focused on enabling pleasure (Laurenson *et al.*, *ibid.*; Ofsted, 2009; Goodwyn, 2012).

Research suggested one way of countering practice prioritising reading for examination purposes over pleasure was for teachers to talk about their reading and encourage pupils to share their own. Merga (2016) highlighted the need for RfP to be visible

teachers need to talk about books in the context of pleasure, be seen to read
independently whenever they can, and read to the class with expression and emotional
connection (p.265).

Increasing the profile of reading may make it a more attractive option. Teachers’ reading aloud could engender connection with fiction as MWD (Bishop, 1990), promoting affective response. Indeed, Laurenson *et al.* (2015) noted when teachers did read aloud, pupils saw them as readers, building a sense of community. Cremin *et al.* (2009) found if more time was made for reading aloud and talking about books, “more spontaneous child-led text talk emerged” (p.14).

Other research highlighted teachers’ reading aloud assisted children’s meaning-making (King, & Briggs, 2012), contributing to the wider remit of education

to enable students to become better users of language as a tool for thinking, both
collectively and on their own (Mercer, 2000, p.55).

As language was acquired not in the role of spectator but through use (Bruner, 1990), talk was vital as children “talk themselves into a better understanding” (Barnes, 1976, p.60). Nikolajeva (2014) asserted this link

The cognitive process of understanding the actual world around us implies structuring and restructuring, understanding and reconfiguring information (p.24).

Booktalk gave readers opportunity to think out loud (see also Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2018) and this research was particularly striking as primary age participants were committed to these conversations, answering at length which “often confounded teacher expectation” (p.245), echoing the findings of Westbrook *et al.* (2018), noted above, and this study (see Chapter 4).

Engaging in booktalk involved intellectual effort whereby existing information was converted into new understanding to solve problems in a way not possible for individuals alone, something Mercer calls “interthinking” (2000). King *et al.* (2012) explained it

helps children to stretch their understanding in ways that may not happen in quiet reading on their own. The group discussion prompts them to ask new questions, to wonder and to make connections with their own experiences and with the experiences of the others in the group (p.4).

Other research indicated something of a ‘Matthew effect’ (Stanovich, 1986) with booktalk: the more frequent the discussion opportunities, the more children made “time to talk to each other about their own reading” (Cremin *et al.*, 2009, p.14).

Williams and Willis (2017) noted “the importance of dialogic talk in concept development” yet “how little opportunity for this exists in the classroom” (p.340). This intimated the prevalence of top-down teaching, increased testing with a concomitant sense of what is right and wrong, has led to educational focus “on decoding skills rather than enjoyment” (*ibid.*) regardless of the relative freedoms of the new NC (DfE, 2013) (2.3).

Booktalk could also fill ‘cultural capital’ gaps, a “complex and slippery term” (Bleiman, 2020), topical in education and given attention by teachers (see 6.2.2)

For some children, the intellectual and social development brought about by widening talk repertoires is nothing less than a lifeline and could help by opening access to opportunities denied by domestic circumstances (Alexander, 2004, p.19).

The potential richness at stake does not relate solely to expansion. The co-construction of interpretation, or ‘interthinking’ (Mercer, *ibid.*) creates new ways of looking at the text and themselves

Individual accounts often tell even richer stories about the interrelation between reading and being in time and space (Waller, 2019, p.88).

The creation of the ‘virtual text’ (Iser, 1974) would be enhanced as discussion provides opportunities for understanding and connection development (2.5) whether related to MWD (Bishop, 1990).

Booktalk can assist with access and choice (2.7.2) when incorporating peer-to-peer recommendations. Laurenson *et al.* (2015), researching teacher attitudes, saw endorsement of this practice

all the teachers felt it was important to give students the opportunity to talk about books with each other and to recommend books to each other (p.15).

Not only does this partially compensate for teachers’ “restricted repertoires” of children’s literature (Cremin *et al.*, 2009), peer recommendations are likely to possess more kudos and target others’ interests more effectively, whether through MW or D (Bishop, 1990). Indeed, Merga *et al.* (2018)

found peer recommendations “provided exposure to a broader range of books and genres, supporting future book choices” (p.44), an issue raised by readers in this study (see 5.2).

The metalanguage of booktalk has been researched. Arizpe & Styles (2003) categorised types of language used by primary school pupils, finding an impressive range of questioning, exploratory and speculative talk. In a more recent collaboration with Cliff Hodges, Arizpe (2018) reported “adolescents often do not know how to apply literary metalanguage” (p.131), finding a strong correspondence between those with vast, diverse reading experience and ability to articulate the most sophisticated arguments. Those with a paucity of reading and booktalk experience tended towards assessment of fiction based on criteria of realism or empathy, revealing a lack of ability to transfer literary learning from school reading to personal reading. The researchers claimed tangible gain for their participants as “greater metaliteracy understanding” was developed through oral rehearsal (*ibid.*, p.188).

Researchers have identified potential barriers to social pedagogies. There could be reluctance to participate in discussion as “some adolescents preferred to talk to siblings or parents, rather than peers” (Merga *et al.*, 2018, p.50). Additionally, displaying disinterest was seen to be closely associated with the concern for maintenance of social status (*ibid.*). However, as booktalk is “a learned rather than innate skill” (*ibid.*, p.49), explicit scaffolding and modelling could mitigate these potential challenges.

Interestingly, differences in perspective or predilection was not seen as a barrier to social pedagogies (Merga *et al.*, 2018). Discussion and debate could engage participants when used “to provoke, to explore, to comprehend” (*ibid.*, p.50), fostering increased engagement in recreational reading. As a counterpoint, these researchers noted

Without opportunity, students did not develop enjoyment of book discussion, and generally presented themselves as negative or neutral based on this inexperience (Merga *et al.*, 2018, p.46).

The potential pitfalls to social pedagogies do not seem outweigh the possible gains but even with policy change (2.3), it is challenging to find curriculum time (Arizpe & Styles, 2003). Merga *et al.* (2018) stressed the importance of doing so

Affording time for such discussions in class within the crowded curriculum also powerfully communicates the continued importance of reading and book discussion beyond the early years. By promoting a book-supportive culture that privileges student interests and preferences, the social status of books within the classroom might be potentially enhanced (p.48).

The conferred value was significant, creating a sense of community wherein individual interests were respected, encouraged and promoted. It also provided modelling, particularly valuable to pupils who don't talk about reading at home. Other benefits of modelling are outlined next.

2.7.4 Modelling Affective Response

Research literature suggested teachers modelling RfP encouraged and supported its pursuit. Demonstrating they are readers, teachers' enactment of engagement with texts was found to motivate independent reading and impact positively on pupil-teacher relationships.

The study conducted by Laurenson *et al.* (2015), teachers being reading role models was recommended as one of six actions to encourage RfP. Focusing on the transition between primary and secondary phases, the research revealed teachers and pupils viewed reading in binary terms: RfP and teacher-led activity. This dichotomous view could reinforce perceptions of RfP as less valuable than that endorsed by external assessment and prioritised by teachers.

One way to address this is teachers placing RfP more centrally in the classroom, particularly in the early years of the secondary phase. Merga (2016) noted

While many teachers were successful in communicating that reading was important, fewer successfully communicated that it is enjoyable (p.262).

As an Australian study, its educational context is different from England. However, the pressures of GCSE grades, league table and performance-related pay within the English system can only serve to exacerbate this situation.

If teachers' connection with fiction was visible, it provided powerful encouragement for RfP (Merga, 2016). Laurenson *et al.* (2015) report pupils' perceptions influenced by teachers talking about reading for personal gratification rather than assessment

These teachers were seen to be reading with frequency and enthusiasm, prioritising independent reading over other possible uses of time (p.264).

Teachers who were readers appeared better placed to provide specific book recommendations to pupils (*ibid.*; see also Merga, 2016). They were also judged as consistently encouraging and passionate about reading, highlighting key features that engaged them. This combination of factors served to develop a community of readers and an environment conducive to RfP and personal response, including rehearsing associated metalanguage.

Laurenson *et al.* (2015) also found children did still like reading despite teachers reporting little explicit encouragement

English teachers in our project told us that, before the project, they did not necessarily see the promotion of reading among their students as part of their role, even though they valued reading on a personal level (p.13).

The inclusion of "before our project" suggested participation in the research changed perceptions, something echoed in work by Westbrook *et al.* (2018) and this study (see 8.1). This signals the potential for practice change through teachers' involvement in research, whether as participants or subjects of studies or as practitioner-researchers.

Another example of the impact of research participation impacting on pedagogy comes from the "Teachers as Readers" project (Cremin *et al.*, 2009) which focused on developing the personal reading practices of primary teachers. By inviting educators to re-connect with their reader identities, it aimed to influence classroom practice more focused on pleasure than assessment. The project identified a coherent strategy to develop children's reading for pleasure by enhancing teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogic practice (p.18).

At the outset, adults commonly perceived reading as "task-related, involving work on decoding or comprehension" (p.14) but across the year-long project, views changed with subject knowledge broadening and interest in, and attitude to, pupils' reading becoming more positive. Additionally, as

teachers developed the habit of sharing their reading discoveries with each other, a reader community evolved. Opportunity to reflect on their reading preferences led to increased consciousness of “the influence of purpose and context” on reading (p.15), resulting in pedagogical shift whereby teachers began inviting children to consider their reading in this way.

Significantly, this represented a move from assessment-driven to more affective practice. Merga (2016) highlighted the importance of teachers modelling emotional connection with books, providing motivation and validation of RfP whether responding to texts as mirrors, windows or doors (Bishop, 1990). By talking about their own reading, teachers “began to share their emotional responses to texts” (Cremin *et al.*, 2009, p.15) which “prompt[ed] new connections and more personal responses” from children (*ibid.*). The most recent OECD (2021) found only one in four students reported teachers encouraging pupils to make connections between fiction and their own lives.

The view that teachers can be powerful change agents through modelling, appeared in other studies. A practitioner-researcher (Robbins, 2003) commented

While talking about my experiences as a reader, both intellectual and emotional doors have opened that allow my students to know me. They, in turn, seem to be sharing more of themselves with me (p.93).

Engaging in this type of booktalk signalled RfP was important, changing the discourse to value personal, emotional response rather than narrow dialogue about ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ interpretations. The idea of pupils “sharing” themselves suggested a more equitable classroom where all are readers. There was an underlying moral principle

I want them to know that “reading for pleasure” is not a sly misnomer used for required reading. I want them to read whatever their hearts desire, just as I am doing now (Robbins, 2003, p.129).

She strove to reconcile the conflicts inherent in English teaching (2.3): teachers must go beyond saying this type of reading matters by endorsing it through action, devoting time to its shared pursuit, building a community of readers.

The re-positioning of teachers as fellow readers (Cremin *et al.*, 2009) changed the discourse of reading and allowed teachers develop “genuine reciprocal reading relationships with students” (Commeyras *et al.*, 2003, p.163) which

may be far more significant and long lasting in regard to quality of life than reading performance reported through test scores (*ibid.*).

Given the weight of evidence about the benefits of RfP (2.7.1), this requires urgent attention. The new NC (DfE, 2013) represented a step in the right direction but significant change can emerge only by teachers drawing upon the research base, developing understanding and practice, to create, justify and implement supportive pedagogy. The binary view of reading in policy needs overturning through acknowledgement that non-assessment-led reading activity is not frivolous or irrelevant but rather the foundation of lifelong reading and literary appreciation.

The curricular and subject demands faced by secondary school English teachers makes shifting to RfP pedagogy not easy. Hopper (2006) captured the dilemma in her research into teachers' perceptions

there appeared to be a degree of tension between their own role as English teacher and as enthusiast of literature. On the one hand was the need to promote development in reading skills and appreciation in line with curriculum requirements, and on the other hand the desire to encourage enjoyment, excitement, daring even, in private reading (p.65).

While the NC (DfE, 2013) provided validation of RfP, teachers need to be empowered further, encouraged to act as subject specialists, mitigating other pressures faced (2.3).

Teachers can face a dilemma when fulfilling professional duties yet stay aligned with their own views of reading. As subject experts, English teachers must deal with this duality, recognising they too are readers in their own right who should make their pupils lifelong readers (Garces-Bacsal Tupas, Kaur, Paculdar & Baja, 2018). NLT *et al.* (2005) went further, stating "reconciling this professional tension is key to the successful promotion of 'reading for pleasure' " (p.8). Teachers need to remember what readers know, "the text can do its own talking" (Bleiman, 2020, p.70), devising pedagogy which imbues pupils with confidence and metalanguage for response.

The NLT *et al.* (2005) paper also endorsed a higher profile for RfP the responsibility for which "goes beyond that of English teachers" and needs "embedding across the whole school community" (p.6) and forming part of School Development Plans (*ibid.*, p.8)

creating a culture that promotes reading for pleasure helps young people to enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and, consequently, to achieve economic wellbeing later in life (p.12).

Many parents, educators and young people would subscribe to this view of the important and vital function of the education system as a whole.

2.8 Overview of Key Issues

Review of the literature provided a strong base for the research, supporting its three aims (1.4). Consideration of the conceptualisation and curriculum of secondary school English over the decades demonstrated how policy has positioned RfP differently while illuminating barriers to its promotion in the current classroom. Most significant was the narrowing of the curriculum, and definitions of reading, via the skills-based agenda, rooted in the NLS (DfEE, 1998) and exacerbated by the heightened accountability measures of the performativity culture teachers face: topics explored by the teachers' interviewed.

Exploration of RR and theory relating to children's literature underpinned the conceptual framework devised for this study: Iser's implied reader (1974) juxtaposed with Bishop's MWD (1990). This lens represents a contribution to knowledge in its own right as it has not been used previously in researching RfP related to engagement. Placing the reader central in meaning-making, reading is conceived as a dynamic, creative process involving discovery and interpretation. This view of reading informed the participatory case study design (see 3.3) and findings presented as a development of existing RR theory, adapted to illuminate the phenomenon of RfP (see Chapter 7).

Surveying extant research literature provided a rationale for the study while also identifying potential enablers of engagement: increasing potentialities, aligning implied and actual reader, employing social pedagogies as well as modelling. While these themes informed the fieldwork and analysis, they emphasised the gap in the research base: pupils views were underrepresented in investigations of RfP (2.7). My study was designed to address this (see 3.2) and the next chapter details its methodology and method in detail.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The initial research question driving this study was “What are the enablers of, and barriers to, ‘reading for pleasure’ in Key Stage 3 English?”. This chapter demonstrates understanding of appropriate research methodology, beginning with explication of my researcher stance, then evaluation of my position as an ‘insider’ and description of the study design. How interpretivism underpins methodology and method is described and rationalised, with particular attention given to how participatory case study was designed to investigate reader/text interaction. The case and its boundaries are defined, participants and context described, and the purpose of each data set explained. The theory and process of research is engaged with critically, including consideration of ethics and limitations of the study.

3.1 Methodological Stance

The ‘problem’ underpinning this study was how teachers can enable KS3 pupils to RfP as required by the NC through increasing engagement. This pedagogical focus was in keeping with the professional doctorate’s remit to produce contributions to knowledge relating to practice (University of Rockwell, 2019). While “good social science is problem driven and not methodology driven” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.242), the research question and aims (1.4) were predicated on understanding individual experience, dictating a qualitative approach focused on “words rather than numbers” (Bryman, 2016, p.375). Qualitative researchers are obliged to practise axiology (Creswell, 2013), acknowledging the value-laden nature of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as well as establishing where they stand and what they believe as this affects what they want to know and understand (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013): my articulation of this follows.

I endorse Denscombe’s interpretivist view (2014) of the world as subjectively constructed. Consequently, I share Crotty’s (2003) perspective that individuals experience and interpret this world and its ‘phenomena’ in different ways; a belief underpinning all qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). My belief that reality is “multi-layered and complex” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.17) influenced my study’s focus on interaction between individual readers and text to develop understanding of RfP through increasing engagement. As interpretivism eschews ‘cause and effect’ explanations (Danermark, Ekstrom & Karisson, 2018; Tikly, 2015) endorsing experience as individual, interpretative and influenced by context, it aligned with my conceptualisation of RfP as phenomenon emergent rather than a predictable outcome of a process. Interaction of reader and text has the *potential* to result in pleasure but is not an inevitable consequence of the reading act or increased engagement.

Interpretivism also complemented my conceptualisation of RfP rooted in the central principles of RR whereby every reading event is unique and influenced by a wide range of factors (2.5). The conceptual framework devised for the study derived from this discipline, developed, in particular, from the theoretical work of Iser (1974) and Bishop (1990). Both models embrace the view of reader/text

interaction as highly personalised, dynamic and mutable (2.6), resonant with a qualitative approach and interpretivist stance, as outlined above.

To ensure a nuanced view of the phenomenon, case study was utilised as it could elicit a range of data from different perspectives. While this aligned with my aims (1.4), I believed that greater insight about how to enable RfP through increased engagement could be gained through a participatory design (3.3) whereby knowledge was generated collaboratively. To align the study's theoretical underpinnings based in RR (2.5) and pedagogical aims, I chose a design allowing readers, texts, teachers and myself as researcher to be positioned as active participants.

Aligning with interpretivism, I assert knowledge emerges from exploration of "how the actors, the people being studied, see things" (Stake, 1995, p.12). However, this can be only reported subjectively by the researcher. Thus, my role in the research endeavour shaped and influenced its focus, process and outcomes: my agency as researcher was important (Tikly, 2015). My presence in the classroom prior to formal data gathering changed dynamics and relationships as did my collaboration with the class teacher in planning and delivering the actual reader textual analysis (see 3.4). While facilitating the generation of verbal data in the interviews, I was part of the co-construction of a social reality, affecting experiences and discussion through my presence, status and contributions. The data analysis and development of findings were interpretative acts.

Crotty (2003) described meaning-making as a process of construction rather than discovery. This analogy illustrates my influence on the study: I sourced the raw materials (the data), acted as the project's architect (research design) and laboured, building the thesis. Thus, my values and beliefs were inextricably bound up with the whole project from design to the fieldwork and writing up of findings. The construction metaphor, while useful, underplays the dynamic interpretation involved in participatory case study and its collaborative nature. As a conduit channelling and directing, with my background, beliefs and intentions inevitably shaping interpretation of the raw data and subsequent findings (see 3.7), I am construing rather than simply constructing (Sayer, 2000). However, interactions between reader, text, teacher and researcher were crucial, and not diminished or taken-for-granted. The impact of my 'insider' stance is explored next.

3.2 Insider Research

Flick (2009) claimed the social interchange of research as the genesis of knowledge. In this case, the 'interchange' was affected by both my personal and professional background (see Chapter 1 & 8). As a qualified English teacher with many years of classroom experience, I considered myself to be an insider researcher possessing "experience or insight into the worlds in which the research is being undertaken" (Drake & Heath, 2011, p.1). For Brannick and Coghlan (2007) this closeness facilitates research with potential to generate new knowledge more nuanced than that conducted by researchers dissociated from the context. In particular, my understanding of, and experience in, secondary settings and the English classroom bestowed insight, shaping and generating explanations of phenomenon. This included "pre-understanding" (*ibid*, p. 69) of current educational policy, conceptualisation of the secondary school subject of English across its history, the place of

reading within the curriculum and the neo-liberal accountability measures faced currently by teachers. Undoubtedly, this closeness could result in assumptions and limited critique, addressed elsewhere (see 3.7) but my transparency in method, and systematic approach, incorporating the original conceptual framework, acted as correctives.

As Drake (2010) noted, the researcher is unable to “adopt a neutral or non-committal persona” (p.86). As insider research is always political (*ibid.*), impartiality on my part was unachievable but also not desirable as this subjectivity was instrumental in establishing rapport and trust with the pupil participants (see 3.3.2) while I was embedded in the class. It also facilitated professional dialogue with the teachers (see 3.3.3), and, crucially, enabled reciprocal working with my school-based research partner, the Y8 class teacher, co-designing the actual reader task (see 3.3). This collaboration and my understanding of the educational setting enriched the knowledge generated (see Chapter 7). The potential limitations of ‘insider’ research are considered below (see 3.7). The next section, explains decisions made about research design, illustrating the rationale for data collection and its relevance to the research question.

3.3 Research Design

Case study was chosen as it allowed the phenomenon of RfP to be explored through the complex, multifaceted attitudes and experiences of human subjects within a specific context. It aligned also with my idiographic and professional focus (3.1), providing scope for participatory elements, not only ‘foregrounding the particular and individual’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2011) but also positioning readers, texts, teachers and myself as co-constructors of knowledge.

There exists ongoing debate about how case study is characterized (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). Stake (1995) asserted this as a choice about what is to be studied whereas Creswell (2013) viewed it as a methodology. Others deemed it a research genre (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). However, there was broad agreement it investigates “a single phenomenon, instance, or example” (Gerring, 2004, p.342), a “bounded system, bounded by time and place” (Creswell, 2013, p.97; see also Yin, 2014). RfP was the phenomenon comprising my case, with its parameters pertaining to the specifics and peculiarities of its ‘unit of analysis’ (Yin, 2014; Baxter & Jack, 2008): one Year 8 class.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted case studies can serve different purposes but identified by Yin (2014) as “the preferred method” when asking ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions (p.2; see also Thomas, 2016, p.4). Although my research question included neither interrogative (1.4), the rationale for this study was in this realm. I aimed to research *how* RfP can be enabled or discouraged and justify *why* practices supporting it need more prominence.

Viewing RfP as social practice, I agreed with Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) assertion that phenomena “take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves” (p.189). The ‘real-life’ phenomenon (Yin, 2014) of RfP was examined through investigation of a single institutional community (see 3.3.1), necessitating a methodology which could take account of its conditions. The holistic approach case study takes to its subject (Thomas, 2016) was appropriate as

it recognises social phenomena cannot be understood in isolation from its context (Swinburne, 2010). Case study then was particularly apposite for investigation of one aspect of educational provision stemming from curriculum reform and increasing research evidence (2.3 & 2.7).

I set out to explore one instance of the case delimited temporally and contextually: a class of Year 8 pupils (12 – 13 year olds) in a local school (see 3.3.1 & 3.3.2). The study, sited in one academic year and prompted by recent curricular change (2.3), was temporally bounded. It was geographically specific, involving participants occupying “a specific social context” (Harland, 2014, p.1116): one secondary school in a coastal town in the south east of England.

Case study’s consideration of context imbues potential to produce ‘rich descriptions’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.9), prerequisite to research of social phenomena and aligned to this study’s underlying lens of analysis, RR. This distinct discipline perceives each reading act as unique, influenced by a complex web of factors. I believed developing insight into the phenomenon of RfP required data capturing different perspectives of this dynamic and individualised process. I wished this study to be empowering rather than a reductive prescription, anodyne from lack of context so undermining the expertise, professionalism and agency of teachers.

A participatory case study was developed whereby teachers’ expertise was valued (Cober, Tan, Slotta, So & Köning, 2015) and utilised in its design. This approach, predicated on knowledge generation as a collaborative process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), aligned with my methodological stance (3.1) recognising its intentional incorporation could “expand the fruits and span” of investigation (Osterhold, Huserl Rubiano & Nicol, 2007, p.228). Collaboration involved the co-design and delivery of the actual reader task (see 3.4.2) and my participation in the class’s English lessons across the 2018 autumn term (see 3.4.3).

Heron and Reason (1997) view research collaboration, what they call ‘co-operative inquiry’, to be complementary to constructivism as, conceptually, “final or absolute accounts of reality are impossible” (p.276). They assert participatory research practices can lead to different types of knowing including practical and experiential: apposite to research about professional practice like this study. Additionally, Cober *et al.* (2015) highlighted co-design involving teachers as participants yields “more ecologically appropriate, viable, and resonant materials and activities” (p.203), important to me and the remit of the professional doctorate (University of Rockwell, 2019). While teachers were not involved in design from the beginning of the study, the Y8 class teacher made “important pedagogical contributions” (Cober *et al.*, 2015, p.223) with this collaboration critical to the study (see 3.4.2).

The democratic roots of participatory case study were important, demonstrating my respect for teachers’ expertise, also influencing my positioning of pupil participants. As my study focused on the phenomenon of RfP experienced by readers, I wished to foreground their experiences, giving them a more significant role than simply interviewees. The class teacher and I, as adults, did ‘position’ children (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett & Bottrell, 2015) in the research but ‘child-friendly’ methods (*ibid.*) were chosen for the actual reader task (see 3.4.2) and interview arrangements (see 3.4.4). While the curricular and conceptual framing of the study meant I did not feel it appropriate for

pupils to contribute to questions or design, I endeavoured to encourage autonomy of response elsewhere. The power imbalance inherent in researcher/researched dynamic can never be eliminated but adopting participatory design represents a positive step (see also 3.6).

The participatory elements grounded my case study in 'real-life situations in progress' (Creswell, 2013; see also Yin, 2014, Robson, 2002) further endorsing this approach to fulfil the study's aims (1.4). As a field study within a specific local setting, in Swanborn's topology (2010) this constitutes 'intensive' rather than 'extensive'. Thomas (2016), using the analogy of a searchlight beam, explained case study as 'illuminating' a small, clearly defined area. With both descriptions pertinent, this project could also be described as an 'instrumental' study (Stake, 1995) as I aimed to understand more than a particular individual (p.3), providing insight into one particular "puzzlement" (*ibid.*; see also Creswell, 2013), RfP, through examination of a single instance, thereafter, attempting to extrapolate enabling practices.

Case study has attracted criticism for its limited external validity: a victim of its success at capturing the individual and particular (see 3.7). However, while generalizability is not a key driver of case study research (Thomas, 2016), I hope that, by exploring experiences of this particular case, "features of a larger class of similar phenomena" (Gerring, 2004, p.341) will be illuminated thus possessing potential for "situational adaptation" (Eraut, 2009, p.14) whereby findings prove useful to other contexts (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; see also Denscombe, 2014). This transferability relates equally to professional practice across the secondary and upper primary phase, as well as subsequent research, my own and that of others (see Chapter 9).

Bryman (2016) observed internal reliability and validity can be established in case study through transparency and clarity. Findings should emerge demonstrably from a series of informed, justifiable steps, progressive and coherent. I have endeavoured to accomplish internal cohesion and conceptual unity across the study through rationale, literature review, conceptual framework, axiology, methodology and method (see also Yin, 2014, Flyvbjerg, 2006) to the final chapters discussing findings and claiming new knowledge. My explication in this chapter, I hope, imbues the methodology, method and thus the entire thesis, with 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Next, I define the case and its parameters.

3.3.1 Institutional Context

With just over 1,000 pupils on roll, Waldren School, a pseudonym, was an average-sized (Ofsted, 2017), mixed comprehensive situated in a town in southeast England. The intake was predominantly white British heritage with a higher than the national average number of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) (*ibid.*). The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those with English as an additional language (EAL) was below the national average (*ibid.*). It was a community school which in 2019 saw 64% of Year 11 pupils achieve 5+ passes at Level 9 – 4 including English and Maths (Waldren School, 2019), below the national average of 69.9%. However, in the same year, 78% of their pupils achieved Level 9 – 4 in English and 82% in English Literature (*ibid.*), considerably higher than the national averages of 70.4% and 74.1% respectively

(Ofqual, 2019). These results were endorsed by Ofsted (2017) recognising English as one of the “strongest subjects” (p.5) in the school with pupils making “good progress”. Also noted was a “strong culture of reading” (*ibid.*).

The school operated daily ‘Drop Everything and Read’ (DEAR) as part of its commitment to literacy (Waldren School, 2019), offering justification from the “proven link between sustained daily reading and improved academic performance and wellbeing” (*ibid.*). The educational practice of DEAR began as spontaneous reading activity predicated on the idea that temporary suspension of the curriculum was justified as reading was important and deserved time. At the time of data collection, Waldren’s DEAR was fifteen minutes silent reading in form bases rather than as part of English curriculum time with specialist teachers.

The Y8 autumn term curriculum in English was described as ‘back to back reading’, informed by the “quick reads” research (Westbrook *et al.*, 2018; 2.7.1) whereby immersive, uninterrupted and sustained reading was undertaken. However, the practice reported by teachers (see Chapter 6) and witnessed while embedded in the Y8 class (3.2) seemed somewhat at odds with the research recommendations. Whole texts were experienced but framed by literary appreciation (see 6.3) with “starter” activities and assessment focused on writer’s craft (journal, pp. 33, 36, 41, etc.) rather than reader response.

Formal preparation for GCSE began in Year 9 English lessons, in common with many other schools (Hazell, 2018). In the two-year KS3, groups were organised with a mix of abilities. However, setting was used thereafter, informed by formal achievement data and teacher perceptions. The following two sections give further information about the pupil and teacher participants.

3.3.2 Pupil Participants

The phenomenon of RfP was explored through investigation of one Y8 English class (12 – 13 year olds) in the academic year 2018 – 2019, as described above (3.3.1). To address the research question and aims (1.4), the most substantial data set comprised pupil interviews (see 3.4.4). Questions explored attitudes to reading in and outside school, what pupils found enjoyable or otherwise (see Appendix E) in fiction. This age group was chosen as they were midway through the Key Stage, familiar with secondary practices but should not be yet immersed in a curriculum dominated by GCSE content and skills. Therefore, it was my assumption, based on extensive professional practice, the Y8 English curriculum offered maximum potential for activity relating to RfP. An additional, overlapping data set was elicited from pupils: actual reader textual analysis (see 3.4.2). A fieldwork journal supported this research activity (see 3.4.3).

At the project’s outset I emailed professional contacts with an outline of the content and scope of my study, requesting a school-based research partner. An English teacher in a local school, Jack, a pseudonym, volunteered (see 3.3.3); pupil participants were his Y8 English class. This was a mixed ability group with reading ages evaluated at the beginning of Y8 by the *Accelerated Reader* software as ranging from 8.5 to 16.6 years. Although this type of assessment can be very crude, as it was used by the school, it will be referred to in this study when appropriate. The group included

several individuals on the Pupil Premium register. This label identifies pupils whose parent/s receive state benefits, attracting additional government funding for the school (DfE, 2018). There were two learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and three identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The fieldwork journal recorded my observations and thoughts during the time I was embedded in the class (see 3.4.3). The actual reader task (see 3.4.2) was conducted in lesson time so involved the whole class, except Lanika, who was absent from school when it ran. In the interests of cohesion and clarity, only the work of those pupils interviewed later was included in the analysis (see Chapter 5).

The final sample for the semi-structured interviews comprised nine pupils from this class (see 3.5.2). The sample was partly convenience as participants were selected from Jack’s class, but also purposive (Bryman, 2016) as I planned to capture the widest range of participants from those who volunteered. While this would not have been entirely representative, it was pragmatic, supported by my knowledge of the class. However, I actually interviewed all those who volunteered (see 3.5.2) and this did provide participants across the spectrum of prior achievement as evaluated by in-school English assessments and *Accelerated Reader* diagnosed reading age (ranging from 8 years 5 months to 16 years 6 months) (see Figure 3.3.2 below). As contemporary educational debate frequently focuses on the gender gap and provision for the disadvantaged, it is important the sample included two males and one Pupil Premium learner. Pseudonyms appropriate to gender, race and culture are used throughout and any direct references potentially identifying specific individuals or institutions have been omitted (see 3.6).

Pupil	Gender	Reading Age* (years/months)	Prior Attainment**	Ethnicity Data***	Additional Information****
Ellie	F	11.8	Middle	White British	
Georgia	F	13.3	Upper	White British	
Lanika	F	15	Upper	Pakistani	trilingual, Muslim
Matilde	F	16.6	Upper	White British	bilingual, lived in Germany until 12
Mason	M	14	Upper	White Eastern European	
Natalie	F	12.8	Upper	White and Black Caribbean	
Willow	F	13.7	Upper	White British	
Rory	M	8.5	Lower	White British	Pupil Premium, SEN
Rose	F	13.3	Middle	White British	

Figure 3.3.2: Pupil Participants

* Reading age from Accelerated Reader diagnostic assessment

** Prior Attainment data from KS2 SATs results and Y7 teacher assessment

*** Parents' self-reported ethnicity

**** Knowledge gained from my work with the class

3.3.3 Teacher Participants

As the instance of the case chosen to examine RfP was located in one comprehensive school (3.3.1), selecting English teachers working at the school as my adult participants was convenient and purposive. The department was aware of my study and known to me (see 3.7). Interviewing practitioners involved in teaching Y8 within the same institutional context would generate a more detailed picture of context, contributing to internal validity and the development of a coherent analysis of the whole study. Three teacher participants were recruited.

Jack was in his third year of teaching full-time was a graduate of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Secondary English course at the university where I work, but prior to my time as Route Leader. At the time he was second in the English department and keen to participate in research that could inform practice to benefit pupils. His undergraduate degree was Politics, Philosophy and Ethics.

My school-based research partner, Jack's, Y8 English class formed the single instance examined in this case study. We collaborated to develop the actual reader task but he was also one of the interviewees. The two other teacher participants were also early in their careers (see 3.7), possessing different personalities, backgrounds and approaches to teaching, aiding understanding of Y8 experience of RfP as they also taught this age group.

Ruby had an English Literature background, completing her NQT year in a London school before moving to the southeast. She was in her fourth year of teaching when the interviews took place. Just like Jack, Cindy completed the PGCE at my institution before taking up her first post at the current school. She was in her second year of teaching and had an English undergraduate degree which included drama.

Jack was a participant in a project I completed in Stage 1 of the EdD, whereas the two other teachers were only known to me through the visits I had made to the school as ITE tutor. Ruby had been a mentor for a PGCE student in the previous year, but I had no existing professional relationship with Cindy. This chapter continues with an overview of the data gathered for this study.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

In keeping with participatory case study, several types of data were elicited, analysed and compared (Bassegy, 1999; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Creswell, 2013). However, as noted above, the interactions of pupils, text, their teacher and I contributed to the findings as understanding of the phenomenon was developed by viewing it from different perspectives. Figure 3.4 details the range of data collated, followed by more detailed explanation of the composition and purpose of each.

	Curriculum Audit	Implied Reader Response	Actual Reader Response	Fieldwork Journal	Pupil Interviews	Teacher Interviews
Data form	List of Y8 novels taught	Written analysis of Y8 novel openings	Annotation of Y8 novel opening	Researcher's notes and observations	Written transcript	Written transcript
Participant/s	PGCE trainees	Researcher	Y8 class teacher Y8 English class	Researcher, Y8 teacher, Y8 class	Y8 pupils (9)	Y8 English Teachers (3)
Timing	Before fieldwork	Before fieldwork	October 2018	Autumn Term 2018	December 2018	June 2019
Purpose	Contextual information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify novels taught locally in Y8. To assist selection of extracts for Implied Reader analysis. To inform conversations about reading with Y8 pupils. 	Research Aims 2 & 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the implied reader of Y8 texts. To compare with actual reader response in other data sets. To inform pupil interview schedule. 	Research Aims 1 & 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore Y8 pupils' response to fiction. To inform pupil interview schedule. <p>To develop implied reader theory.</p>	Research Aim 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To record observations about pedagogy To record and speculate about actual readers' response to fiction. 	Research Aims 1, 2 & 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To probe further reading response. To evaluate RfP* via conceptual framework. To inform teacher interview schedule. 	Research Aims 2 & 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To garner teachers' perspective on RfP. To compare with pupil views. To identify perceived & systemic enablers of & barriers to RfP.

Figure 3.4: Forms of Data comprising the Case Study

* RfP = Reading for Pleasure

3.4.1 Curriculum Audit

Prior to fieldwork, a list of novels typically taught in Y8 was compiled to provide wider contextual detail about fiction in KS3 English, informing my discussions with child and adult participants. As part of the PGCE Secondary English university-based sessions, trainees during the academic year 2018 – 2019, were asked to report novels used in Y8 English. Across the training year, individuals are placed in a range of settings across the university partnership, incorporating academies and community schools, independent and state, non-denominational and faith, co-ed and single gender, some 11 – 16 others with sixth form, across four counties. This information was useful to trainees for compiling reading lists to extend knowledge of KS3 fiction while giving me insight into popular texts locally.

The range reported was interesting when considering reading engagement due to the selection and frequency of titles. Out of the fifteen trainees, a third reported Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) with *Great Expectations* (1861) also appearing but less often. Contemporary fiction such as *Wonder* (Palacio, 2012), *Once* (Gleitzman, 2006) and *Holes* (Sachar, 2000) also had several mentions. *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) was used in three schools. However, as trainees had not experienced the whole academic year in one school, the information was not comprehensive.

When this audit was repeated in the academic year 2019 – 2020, it revealed nearly half the trainees, ten out of twenty-one, experienced the Steinbeck novel but there was no change in the proportion reporting C19th fiction with Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) the most prevalent. The popularity of fiction seemingly distant from Y8 pupils' lives reinforced investigation of implied and actual reader as valuable. It also indicated these novels as potentially useful for a pedagogical intervention. The choice of Steinbeck was confirmed on discovering it was read by the Y8 class chosen for this participatory case study (see 3.4.2).

3.4.2 Implied and Actual Reader Response

To develop understanding about the enablers of, and barriers to, RfP related to engagement, the conceptual framework (2.6) was used to explore reader/text interaction (see Chapter 4), addressing a gap in the extant research base (2.7). The data comprised two strands: implied and actual reader textual analysis of the openings of two novels read by the Y8 class (see 3.5.1), chosen by the class teacher. The former contributed the design of the latter, influencing formulation of prompts likely to stimulate readers' affective response (see 3.5.1). Both strands informed interview practice as discussion of texts read by Y8 continued (see 3.5.2). Additionally, it influenced the interview data analysis wherein proximity of actual and implied reader was examined (see Chapter 6), thus contributing to findings (see Chapter 7).

One novel appearing frequently in local Y8 English classrooms (3.4.1) and read by the Y8 participants, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, was analysed using the conceptual framework (2.6) alongside *Maggot Moon* by Sally Gardner. Gardner's novel was included, despite not being prevalent in the list, as it was the first novel read in the autumn term by the Y8 class (3.3.2).

Iser's model (1974) was applied to the opening section of each novel (see Appendix L), with textual analysis identifying the reader implied. This process served to expose gaps and contradictions, alerting me to areas of interest in relation to my research question and aims. This exercise helped develop a greater understanding of theory, consideration of which assisted development of the conceptual framework to map different types of pleasure incorporating the MWD model (Bishop, 1990) (2.6) while also providing comparison for the latter actual reader response (4.1.2; 4.2.2).

Actual readers were then asked to interact with the Steinbeck opening with a task designed in collaboration with the class teacher (see 3.5.1). We devised prompts giving pupils freedom over response, endorsing and encouraging participation and agency (Aggleton, 2019) contrasting typical classroom practices (3.3.1). This focus on process was aimed at exposing underlying influences on readers' interaction with text, supporting analysis of data beyond reportage of the empirical.

Despite no longer being a secondary teacher, my commitment to practitioner-research for the purposes of curriculum reform (Elliot, 1991) were foremost. The phenomenon under investigation emerged from reflection on professional practice with intention to develop "practical wisdom" (*ibid.*, p.53). Originally formulated as a written task, I had planned to ask the Y8 class to describe their reader identity in past, present and imagined future. However, the finalised version of the task was quite different, with fieldwork and collaboration of the class teacher influencing its design. This resulted in a tool more effective for generating understanding of readers' interaction with fiction and thus enablers and barriers to RfP related to engagement (see 3.5.1).

3.4.3 Fieldwork Journal

A research journal was used to capture my ideas and queries from inception to completion of the study, later becoming a fieldwork notebook, documenting events and dialogue in the Y8 classroom during the autumn term of 2018 when I was embedded in the school. I recorded observations about classroom realities and interactions, drawn upon when analysing data (see 3.5.1).

Brinkman and Kvale (2015) present qualitative research as a journey into hitherto unknown territory and reflection on it results in "new ways of self-understanding, as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs in the [researcher's] home country" (p.58). Thus, this journal charted the research 'expedition' while also facilitating reflexive practice. It chronicled the evolution of my research strategy and design, helping me develop understanding by allowing progress to be reviewed, revisiting and connecting concepts, with contradictions becoming visible.

3.4.4 Semi-structured Interviews

Interview was chosen as the substantial research tool as it enabled me to 'get closer' to the subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and "let the voices of participants speak" (Creswell, 2013, p.55). As my interest lay primarily in developing professional practice through generating understanding about what enabled or presented barriers to RfP, it was important to hear views of pupils *and*

teachers. Utilising a tool allowing social interaction was prerequisite: talking to participants garners understanding of their world and lives (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

An interview is never just a conversation (Rapley, 2006; Oppenheim, 1966) and I felt it necessary to establish trust, respect and promote openness with participants. I did not want or feel it appropriate to my teacher-researcher stance to simply arrive at the school, conduct interviews then leave. From the inception of this study, its design required collaborative working: a research partner in school to be involved in professional dialogue and joint planning of the actual reader task (3.3). I believed strongly spending time 'in the field' would not only be more ethical (see 3.6) but also allow for richer data to be gathered. The more detailed and nuanced understanding of the context would also benefit both my data analysis and findings. Consequently, I arranged to spend time in school, working alongside the class teacher (3.3), becoming familiar with pupils, establishing trust and dialogue.

I choose a semi-structured approach, one of three broad styles of interviews (Elliott, 1991; see also Cohen *et al.*, 2011), to employ pre-set questions, generated from the literature (see Appendix E), but also providing participants freedom to digress and raise their own topics (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Oppenheim, 1966). This emergent design (Gillham, 2000) required an initially deductive approach but thereafter gave scope to proceed "inductively from what's there in the research" (*ibid.*, p.12), prioritising my subjects' concerns rather than a fixed, pre-prepared set of issues. Pupils were to be interviewed in pairs, to offer peer support, provide opportunity for discussion and sharing of views rather than operating as question and answer.

I devised a schedule, "interview protocol" or "guide" (Creswell, 2013) for pupils (see Appendix E) to maximize my chance of gathering relevant information and making the most profitable use of the limited time available (see 3.5.2). In doing so, I was careful to include different types of questions to elicit both factual and opinion-based answers (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Oppenheim, 1966) (i.e. Q6 and Q2). Exploratory questions were used (i.e. Q1 & Q8) to discover more about respondents' attitudes and values (Robson, 2002). Most were consciously open-ended (Oppenheim, 1966) to allow probing, encourage co-operation and establish rapport (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

The "Tell me" approach advocated by Chambers (1993) when talking to children about books was adopted for some questions (see also Oppenheim, 1966). I agreed this signalled adults "truly want to hear about the reader's experience - pleasure or lack of it, thoughts, feelings, memories" (p.45). Using this stem also avoided children's responses being dismissed and reduced to guessing what's in the teacher (or researcher's) head (*ibid.*).

Alongside consideration of content and procedural matters, I determined the best order of questions. I sequenced them using a more unstructured "Tell me" question to start, indicating an interest in the subject and an openness to new ideas (Elliott, 1991). This was deliberate as having "easier and less threatening, non-controversial questions" addressed early in the interview can put respondents at their ease (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.423; see also Oppenheim, 1966). The more probing questions were left until later then concluded giving respondents opportunity to raise any further

issues before the interview ended. A pilot interview was conducted to ensure the efficacy of the final version, and subsequently, further revisions were made (see 3.5.2).

Three teachers of Y8 were interviewed in addition to pupils to garner professional perspectives about RfP. I hoped this data would reveal perceived and systemic enablers of and barriers to RfP related to engagement. Further insight into the case would be generated through the comparison of the two sets of interviews, extrapolating key issues to inform practice recommendations.

The process of developing the interview schedule for teachers mirrored that for the pupils but with some differences. I planned to take steps to forge professional dialogue at the outset of these interviews. The teachers were aware of my interest in RfP and so I intended to engage them in conversation about their recent reading before the formal questions began, serving as an ice-breaker, hoping also to establish a sense of shared interests between us, potentially mitigating feelings of anxiety stemming from my status as PGCE Route Leader (see 3.6).

The interviews were scheduled to allow the final format to be informed by the preliminary analysis of pupil interviews (Appendix F). Questions concerning curriculum were essential inclusion for teachers to elicit data pertaining to perceived barriers and enablers within secondary education and the school. A secondary English teacher colleague read the protocol to check for clarity and accessibility before interviews were conducted. A formal pilot interview was not undertaken as the combination of my professional background fieldwork and the pupil interview schedule development imbued confidence that rich data could be elicited and interviews conducted ethically. The data collection process is detailed in the next section of this chapter.

3.5 Data Collection Process

As my investigation focused on an educational setting different from the one in which I worked, obtaining a willing school-based research partner was crucial. Once in place, the fieldwork began. Throughout the autumn term of 2018, I was embedded in a Y8 English class, becoming familiar with pupils, the Y8 English curriculum and the school's values and ethos: valuable in terms of forging relationships to facilitate participation and data collection as well as providing contextual information vital in case study research (3.3). Although my university work schedule did not allow me to attend all three timetabled slots per week, I did manage at least two for the entire term (September – December). I supported the class teacher by assisting individual and small group tasks, monitoring pupil progress, participating in discussion and reading aloud from the class novels. At the outset, I was introduced as a teacher, interesting in reading.

As the term progressed, I worked collaboratively with the class teacher to develop the actual reader intervention (3.4.2). This was conducted in October, after the reading of the first novel had been completed (see 3.5.1), with the pupil interviews in December. The teacher interviews occurred in June, deliberately chosen as a time when workloads were lightened due to Y11's departure. This also allowed time for the completion of two coding cycles of the pupil interviews, informing the

teacher schedule. Below, I outline the specifics of each data gathering tool comprising this participatory case study, starting with the actual reader task.

3.5.1 Actual Reader Response: A Pedagogical Intervention

The classroom task was designed to allow actual readers to respond to the opening of one novel, *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). Its purpose was to employ the principles of RR to explore Y8 pupils' interaction with fiction, considering the proximity of implied and actual reader (3.4.2) through comparison with the text-based analysis (3.4.2). Conducted in late October, this activity was prior to the reading of the novel and before pupils were told anything about the next unit of work. The class was given an overview of the research project and aims beforehand.

The intervention was designed in collaboration with the class teacher, Jack (3.3.3). This co-construction was vital to ensure its format and language were familiar to pupils, complemented the existing Y8 curriculum (3.4.2), was age and ability appropriate. This reciprocal working was an important dimension of the research, enacting professional respect for a colleague as well as adhering to teachers' creed of prioritising pupils' learning and the pedagogical spirit of the professional doctorate.

The opening of the novel was broken down into discrete sections with one depicting setting, and the other introducing the protagonists (Appendix L). This kept the amount of reading manageable for pupils, encouraging close attention of a small section. The text was presented on A4 sheets using double-spacing and wide margins allowing room for annotation. The two extracts were copied on different coloured paper to assist class management and discussion. Collaborative construction of the task (3.4.2) ensured it was valid and relevant to the existing scheme of work and the entire class completed the activity.

Pupils were invited to respond to the fiction by annotating the sheets freely in whatever way they wished, encouraging agency. This dialogic approach was chosen to use children's own 'communication culture' (Wall, 2019) while making the active process of reading visible. Prompts provided verbally and on PowerPoint slides (see Figures 3.5.1. a, b and c), were designed to be as open as possible yet succinct, ensuring accessibility and scope for individual interpretation, contrasting typical classroom practices (3.3.1).

Pupils were given the extract describing the characters' entrance first (Appendix L). As young readers typically relate to characters more readily than setting, later validated by interview data (see 5.3.1), we judged this order would imbue confidence when responding to the more descriptive paragraphs opening the novel (see 4.4). We chose to give no information about the relationship of the extracts as we wanted readers to deal with each in its own right, anticipating that comparison of response might be valuable. The teacher and I circulated, conversing with pupils about their annotations, recorded retrospectively in my fieldwork journal (3.4.3) and referred to during analysis (see 4.1.2; 4.2.2).

Passage 1

As we read the passage, write your thoughts about it.

You could:

- underline a bit you like (or don't like)
- use a ? or ! or a quick *doodle* to show your feelings
- circle any unfamiliar words or phrases.

Figure 3.5.1 a: Pupil Prompts 1

After the initial annotation (Figure 3.5.1 a), readers were asked for some explanation (Figure 3.5.1 b) to illuminate the process of 'discovery' (Iser, 1974). The question in red was added in class as pupils began forging connections independently. It seemed valuable to pursue this, as it provided additional insight into interaction between text and reader.

Passage 1

Look back at your notes and add to them.

You should:

- add **explanation** about why you like (or don't like) a bit
 - add a *word or phrase* to **explain** your feelings
 - write a **question** you'd like answered.
- Do any parts of the passage remind you of another book or film?

Figure 3.5.1 b: Pupils Prompts 2

The final part of the task (Figure 3.5.1 c) was to capture the individual reader's reflection about their interaction with text. It was hoped this would reveal additional insight on the readers' affective engagement with text and how connections were made, followed up in the pupil interviews, if appropriate.

Passage 1 – Overview

Complete the two sentences on the sheet:

- This passage makes me feel because
- This passage makes me think about because

Figure 3.5.1 c: Pupil Prompts 3

While the whole class participated in the activity, the responses of those pupils interviewed were included in the formal analysis (3.6; Chapter 4). The interview process is explained next.

3.5.2 Pupil Interviews

After the interview schedule was drafted (3.4.4), I checked to ensure correspondence with the key themes from the literature and my conceptual frameworks (Chapter 2). Interview questions were mapped broadly onto research aims and themes from literature. A pilot was conducted with two pupils (journal p.58) and their feedback led to a reworking of the schedule (Appendix E). The qualification “outside school” was added to the opening question. The pilot interview and actual reader textual analysis, indicated the second question, “Think of something you really enjoyed or not enjoyed reading. Tell me about it” was too broad. It was re-written, breaking it down into several discrete questions to support more detailed, focused answers. Contrastingly, the original question focused on booktalk led to limited contributions in the pilot. Also, the actual reader task illustrated the nuanced responses of which pupils were capable. Accordingly, the question was made more open. The question about class reading was also made more open, adopting the “Tell me” stem.

After these revisions, I proceeded recruiting pupil participants. The purpose and nature of the research was explained to the class. Every pupil was viewed as a potential subject and invited to participate. Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms were distributed (Appendix A & C) and those interested in taking part were asked to return the completed consent to a box on the class teacher’s desk, thereby reducing any pressure to comply. All those willing to take part were interviewed. This did result in the sample including more female participants labelled as Upper prior attainment (3.3.2) than planned, but ethically, I felt it was appropriate to interview all volunteers (see 3.6). After analysis, I decided to retain all this data as it offered a wider pool of comments to draw upon in discussion and from which to extrapolate conclusions.

The interviews took place after the Steinbeck novel had been read so pupils had another novel in addition to *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) to discuss should they wish. Across several weeks in November and December, I interviewed pupils in pairs, as planned. There was one exception: one pupil, Natalie, had heard about the content of the interviews and asked to join her two friends, resulting in nine pupils interviewed.

The interviews were conducted in the English classroom, ensuring a familiar and convenient environment to ease the process and relax participants (Bulmer, 2006). The interviews took place at the end of the school day, with parental consent (see 3.6), minimising the possibility of interruption. I had little control over the environment, but I took a position at 90 degrees to the participants, allowing for eye contact without the potentially confrontational atmosphere arising from sitting directly opposite (Denscombe, 2014).

A digital voice recorder, typical in qualitative interviews (Wellington, 2015), was used to capture the discussion allowing interaction and prevent spending “a lot of my time head-down and writing” (Rapley, 2006, p.18). I could concentrate on the discussion and dynamics of the interview, creating a dialogic atmosphere. However, some field notes were made as a back-up (Creswell, 2013) in case of failure of recording equipment and to assist with transcription and data analysis by summoning later “a reasonably vivid picture” (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.300).

Before recording began, the aims of the research were explained with reassurance given about anonymity (see 3.6). I stated all opinions would be valued (Flick, 2009) and there were no 'correct' responses as I wanted to hear about their views. When concluding, individuals were thanked for their time and contributions, given opportunity to ask questions about the research and reminded about the steps taken to protect participants' identity through anonymity. Transcripts were produced within a week of each interview to assist recall and accuracy (see Chapter 5; Appendix H), using conventions adapted from Silverman (2013) (see Appendix G). The procedure for the teacher interviews is described next.

3.5.3 Teacher Interviews

Three Y8 English teachers were interviewed to provide professional perspective (3.3.3). While the readers themselves were the chief subjects of the study, case study design was adopted to create a nuanced picture of the phenomenon through consideration of different viewpoints and data sets (3.3). As the professional doctorate generally, and this study particularly, aims to generate knowledge about practice, teachers' perspectives were an essential facet.

The teacher interview schedule was finalised (Appendix F) after coding of the pupil transcripts. The same protocols as pupil interviews were followed with regards to gaining informed consent (see 3.6) and recording. The interviews took place in the summer term when timetables were lightened due to the departure of Y11. They were conducted after school in the teachers' classrooms, sitting at pupil desks, usually facing each other across two desks. Just as the pupil interviews, prior to recording, teachers were reminded of the aims of the research and reassurance given about anonymity (see 3.6).

I opened with some discussion of recent reading to establish common ground (3.4.4) before moving on to the formal questions. Mindful of Denscombe's (1983) observation that if teachers feel threatened by the interview situation, they can give inauthentic accounts, I emphasised my chief interest was their opinions and experiences, in line with the research question and aims (1.4). Although I anticipated teachers would refer to their practice, it was important they did not feel the interview was evaluation of their expertise.

The interview was closed with teachers being thanked for their time and contributions, given opportunity to ask questions about the research and reminded about the steps taken to protect participants' identity through anonymity (see 3.6).

As with the pupil interviews, described above, these interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed within a week of taking place to aid the transcription process with the conversation still fresh in my mind. Additionally, I felt it advantageous to review the data before the next interview was conducted to inform my practice. The next section of this chapter outlines the ethical issues relevant to this study and how they were addressed.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

While being an insider researcher has advantages (Wellington, 2015), I was aware of the “complex ethical and methodological issues” which can arise from this type of study (Wallace, Atkins & BERA, 2012, p.48). Hence, deliberation about ethics ran across the investigation. When formulating the research question and designing the study, I was mindful of the ethical standards and procedures of my institution and the need to adhere to these (University of Rockwell, 2016) and in accordance with British Education Research Association (BERA) guidance (2018).

Before any fieldwork could begin, I had to obtain Tier 1 approval from the Research Ethics Panel. Accompanying documentation included an ethical risk assessment incorporating explanation of how potential risks would be addressed. This verification was to demonstrate that, in my role as a lecturer-researcher, I had given due consideration to ethical aspects, ensuring potential harm was minimised (Gibson & Brown, 2009) with participants able to give informed consent. Although I planned to work with pupil participants deemed vulnerable due to their age, my preparation and proposal were judged sufficient for the project to be deemed low risk, thus approval granted.

A Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form were produced for the pupil and teacher participants (Appendix A, B, C & D), informed by the BERA guidelines (2018). As “ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others” (Bulmer, 2006, p.45), these materials needed to outline the purpose, scope and methods of the project with the text undergoing a readability test to ensure clarity and accessibility. It was made explicit participation was voluntary and data gathered would be kept confidential (Yin, 2014) with names anonymized in final report (Denscombe, 2014). Transcripts and digital recordings would be destroyed at end of project.

As the study involved participation of a teacher research partner and his pupils, fieldwork took place on school premises. This required consent of gatekeepers (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013) and permission was sought from the relevant senior leader. Although teachers are typically involved in discussion of pedagogy and the English curriculum, participation in this study would include conversations forming part of the formal collection of data for later analysis. Therefore, as a courtesy, the lead English practitioner was also approached for approval. Parental consent was obtained for those pupils volunteering to be interviewed (Appendix C). The actual reader task, formulated jointly with the class teacher as part of the curriculum, did not require specific consent. However, those pupils whose work was included in the analysis (see Chapter 4) were given an adapted consent form and parental permission obtained.

I was aware my history of English teaching and knowledge of the curriculum bestowed some of the advantages of an insider researcher (Wellington, 2015). This background was instrumental in the design as it led to participatory case study, whereby pupils and teachers’ contribution exceeded that of interviewees (3.3). The design was also impacted by my ability to ‘talk the same language’ as the teachers, allowing me to gain further insight than possible for an outsider. This necessitated sensitivity, not exploiting the confidence and trust imbued: professional boundaries were respected. The teacher interview dialogue began with discussion of personal reading and teaching generally to

establish common ground with my adult participants, aiming to reduce the power imbalance inherent in interviewing (3.5.3).

My approach to fieldwork, embedding myself in the classroom across the autumn term (3.5.1) was deliberate, exercising care and respect for the pupil participants and enacting commitment to practice-based research (3.2). My presence in the classroom allowed pupils to become familiar with me, viewing me as a collaborating teacher (Cober *et al.*, 2015). Undoubtedly, this assisted the recruitment of participants, but it also served to facilitate discussion – some trust and confidence had been established. While the ethical issues raised by insider research can never be eradicated, these actions provided some mitigation.

Digital recordings of interviews and the subsequent transcripts treated as confidential (Denscombe, 2014), stored in password protected files. Despite these safeguards, participants were made aware complete confidentiality could not be guaranteed as contextual information included in the report may allow identification of schools and individuals (King & Horrocks, 2010). Transcripts were shared with the teacher participants, demonstrating a respect for the truth and dignity of the subjects (Bassey, 1999) while acting with transparency and honesty (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

The timing of the actual reader task and pupil interviews was agreed with the class teacher to ensure my research activity was not detrimental to the pupils or disruptive to their learning (3.5). Indeed, I hoped my work alongside the teacher benefitted pupils in a number of ways: another teacher in the lesson; opportunity to express their opinions and reflect on their reading; encouragement to engage in group discussion; contributing to classroom practice. The teacher interviews were also deliberately scheduled to minimise inconvenience (3.5.3).

3.7 Limitations

The participatory case study approach employed for this small-scale research project aligned with my methodological stance (3.1) and desire to create ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973, p.6) about a specific phenomenon. I wished to investigate RfP empirically through the lens of RR, generating understanding of the individual and particular, imbuing validity (Swanborn, 2010). However, I recognise limitations in the study’s methodology and method.

From exploration of one instance of the case, detailed understanding can emerge (Thomas, 2016) but as investigation of a single instance, findings can only be indicative rather than widely representative or generalizable. Pedagogically, what “works” in one context, does not mean it will do so elsewhere. However, Denscombe (2014) explained

The possibility of transferable findings stems from the fact that although each case is in some respects unique, it is also a single example of a broader class of things (p.62).

Therefore, I assert internal validity and claims to knowledge (see Chapter 7) extrapolated from this one case, are transferable with practice recommendations (see 8.3) relevant to all secondary English teachers and others interested in RfP and reading engagement.

Acknowledgement is required that findings identify facilitators of reading engagement, as precursors to pleasure, rather than direct stimuli of pleasure. Indicators of pleasure proved elusive and consequential to engagement leading to this shift in emphasis (1.4; Chapter 9).

My research method incorporated several data sets, characteristic of case study (Creswell, 2013; Gillham, 2000) allowing the phenomena to be viewed from various angles (Thomas, 2016). All the data was qualitative, however, and results were not evaluated via cross-checking with quantitative data. The chief data sets were elicited from semi-structured interviews and this method has inherent limitations as interaction between researcher and interviewee is dynamic and unique. Construction of the schedule and interview practice could also impact. Even with the other data (3.4) providing different perspectives, findings were exiguous and tentative, expressed as propositions to be explored further (see Chapter 9) but still represent a valuable contribution to discussion of RfP.

Other constraints included my identity which played a part in shaping research practice (3.2), the small, geographically limited sample, the identity and background of participants (3.3). As the sample comprised volunteers, motivation for involvement in the study could have influenced the data. The teachers interviewed were all in the early years of their careers and another sample could yield different findings. As they were aware I was an experienced English practitioner they may have given less explicit explanations of their conceptualisation of the subject and pedagogy. Despite my attempts to reassure participants about the purpose of the interviews (3.5.3), my status as a university tutor could also have influenced responses. Additionally, as the interviews took place towards the end of the academic year (3.5.3), retrospection could have resulted in more partial accounts of practice. In an attempt to mitigate these potential issues, methods of coding and analysis were documented in detail (Chapter 5).

Explication of methodology and method coupled with axiology supports replication and validates the study's findings. It is questionable whether any research into the complex and dynamic realm of education could produce generalisable results and I defend my findings as transferable, despite its limitations.

Chapter 4 – Analysis of Implied and Actual Reader Response

To explore the enablers of, and barriers to, RfP related to engagement in KS3 English, my investigation focused on the interaction between reader and text, addressing a gap in the extant literature (2.7). This chapter presents textual analysis of the opening of the two novels read by the Y8 class (3.4) utilising the conceptual framework derived from the work of Iser (1974; 1976) and Bishop (1990) (2.6) juxtaposed with actual reader response. This targeted the study's first two aims, to interrogate Y8 readers' interaction with fiction using RR principles and conceptualise Y8 pupils' response to fiction (1.4).

The textual analysis, completed prior to the fieldwork, examined the openings to *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) and *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) (Appendix L & M): two novels chosen by the teacher to be read by Y8 in the autumn term (3.5.1). The fiction was evaluated using Iser's implied reader (1974) and Bishop's MWD (1990) models (3.4.2), providing not an authoritative reading but rather a foundation for the comparative evaluation of actual readers' response, exposed via the pedagogical intervention. Consideration of implied and actual reader interaction with fiction presented here, supported by fieldwork journal observations (3.4.3), also informed interview schedules (see Chapter 5 & 6; Appendix E & F) and underpinned analysis of the data sets (3.5) therefore was significant to the findings.

The chapter begins by outlining the extracts given to pupils from the opening to *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). The reader implied is then identified through textual analysis to compare with actual readers' response during the pedagogical intervention (3.4.2 & 3.5.1). Consideration of *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) comes next, adopting the same order. The chapter culminates with a summary of what has been revealed about RfP and engagement from the juxtaposition of implied and actual reader response.

4.1 Of Mice and Men Setting

Overview of Extracts

This adult novel, exploring life in California during the Great Depression, opens with two paragraphs providing a detailed description of a rural setting, "a few miles south of Soledad" (Appendix L). The natural world is documented but previous human presence is evident from a path, an ash pile from fires and a sycamore branch worn from sitting. The second extract, comprising the next three paragraphs, emphasises the tranquil mood and, as evening falls, two men enter and drink water from the still pool. This action, presented chronologically, reveals something of their respective personalities before any dialogue is uttered.

4.1.1 Analysis of Implied Reader – Extract One

The first two paragraphs opening Steinbeck's novel (Appendix L) imply a reader with prior knowledge of a setting perhaps unfamiliar to contemporary Y8 pupils. While implied is a reader who recognises the proper nouns as real places (i.e. Soledad, Salinas River, Weed), anyone with

experience of the countryside could visualise the rural landscape depicted through the 'window' of the text, as indicated by the actual reader analysis (see 4.1.2).

A picturesque scene is described with a deep river that "slipped twinkling over yellow sands", the personification evoking richness and dynamism. Implied is a reader who understands the verb choice "slipped" evokes nature's effortless and fluidity. The greenness of the pool suggested stillness, reflecting the tree canopy above. It is an inviting landscape with "warm" waters and sunlight illuminating its gentle undulations.

Other visual details capture a sense of containment. The river "drops in close" cupping the bank, the pool is narrow, the slopes "curve up" and "the leaves lie so deep". Combined, these images connote nature's embrace, safe, gentle and comforting. This is accentuated by the reference to "the winter's flooding" whereby the reader implied imagines how the scene would have looked then, appreciating the beauty and stillness of its current state.

The "green" warm river water, its fast flow and the willows "fresh and green with every spring" provide clues to season and climate while reinforcing the power of nature and its cycles. Steinbeck depicts a pastoral idyll implying a reader who recognises it as Edenic, safe, nurturing and innocent, with all the necessities for life provided. This allusion is complemented by the wider panorama. The composition of the scene is 'picture perfect' with its restless, meandering river, lush vegetation around a calm pool with a mountain backdrop.

This opening passage acts as a window showing a particular place implying a reader who possesses knowledge of specific places in California and its climate to allow it to act as a mirror, reflecting some aspects of their lived experience. The sycamores and willows are discerned, with readers' vocabulary sufficient to comprehend "lower leaf junctures" and "recumbent limbs of trees". The abbreviated "coons" is understood with the animals visualised alongside the deer in this non-British location. Steinbeck's reader is invited to step through the door presented by the novel, imaginatively transporting themselves into that world.

The opening two paragraphs establish an idyllic environment and contain frequent references to animals but no human characters. The reader implied by the text infers the human subjects of the novel live and work close to nature, and perhaps anticipate a juxtaposition of this paradise with the harsh reality of life in this setting. Implied is a reader whose interpretation could also be enriched through speculation about how Steinbeck will explore the concept of the 'American Dream'.

4.1.2 Analysis of Actual Reader Response

The discussion of readers' interaction with extract containing the first two paragraphs of the novel (Appendix L) follows. However, this was the second L extract given to pupils (3.5.1). Their annotations are explored, grouped under four sub-headings: sensory imagery, readers' feelings, location and context. Pseudonyms are used throughout (3.6).

Sensory Imagery

As the opening paragraphs depict a rural landscape, it was perhaps inevitable all pupils in the sample identified aspects of the location as interesting. The image producing most reaction related

to colour, evoking a richness identified by the reader implied in the text (4.1.1). Two readers, Natalie and Rory, sketched the “golden foothills” (see 4.1.2 a) providing a visualisation of the vista. While this indicated imaginative engagement, the drawings and dialogue (journal, p.48) did not reveal whether this was prompted by a memory, desire to travel or imagination. However, the direct references to the adjective “golden” did provide insight.

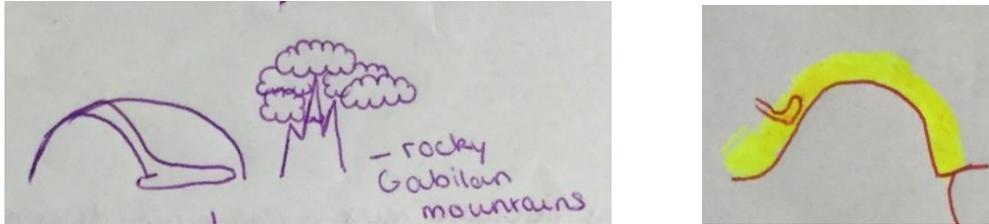


Figure 4.1.2 a: Sketches of the foothills by Natalie and Rory, respectively

Rory used highlighter to show this descriptive detail (see 4.1.2 a), revealing comprehension and literal interpretation in imaginatively recreating the scene. He could have been interacting with the detail as a mirror, translating the words on the page into visual representation from the triggering of memory, activating prior knowledge of hills or the way light changes across the day and seasons. Alternatively, he could be taking in and appreciating the ‘view’ presented through the text acting as a window. The evidence suggested he experienced the text as an onlooker rather than imagining being part of the landscape itself. Nevertheless, the drawing of this detail implied positive affective response, albeit from literal interpretation.

Natalie’s location sketch (see 4.1.2 a) demonstrated visual interpretation and evaluation. Labelling golden as “definitely not in Europe”, Natalie displayed prior knowledge which allowed comparison of text with her idea of that environment. This response illustrated simultaneously a more *and* less ‘entangled’ reader stance than Rory. Natalie was able to conceptualise non-English landscapes in a way not possible for Rory, appearing more aligned with the reader Steinbeck’s text implies. This evaluation could stem from direct or indirect experience with pleasure emerging from the text acting as a mirror. However, undertaking comparison suggested Natalie also adopted a critical stance, appraising the setting as if she were a detached onlooker, gazing through a window. Pleasure could stem from problem-solving to make meaning as well as expansion of experience gained by viewing a different landscape. This suggested a reader whose wider experience had potential to increase pleasure as she could occupy affective and analytical stances simultaneously.

Another colour related image recognised by the reader implied in the text (4.1.1), “twinkling yellow sands”, prompted appreciation from three pupils (Mason, Natalie and Ellie). Whether these readers were drawn to the colour, the poetic ‘twinkling’ or thoughts of beaches was not certain. Natalie underlined the phrase and added 😊. Mason indicated a preference for “twinkling”, drawing ★ next to it. This differentiated it from “yellow” which was only awarded + (see Figure 4.1.2 b, below)

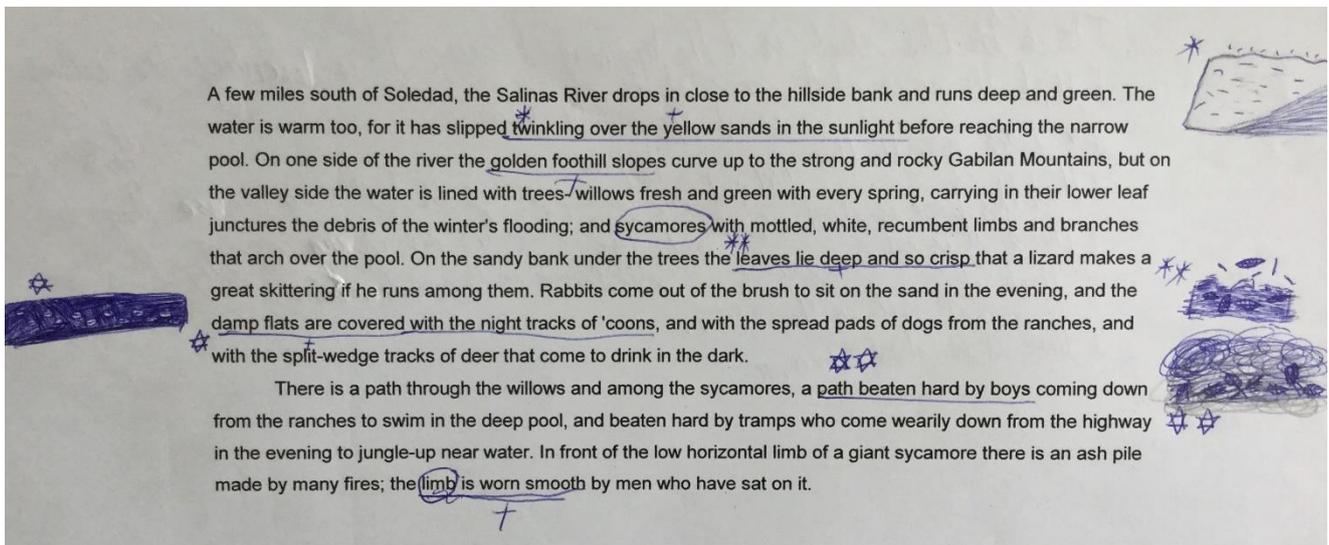


Figure 4.1.2 b: Mason's sketches of the twinkling sands

Additionally, he sketched sand and water in both the left and right margins, demonstrating imaginative engagement, 'seeing' the view. Steinbeck's vocabulary choice triggered connection for Mason, suggesting some alignment with the reader implied in the text. As the word 'twinkling' is unnecessary for understanding the phrase, Mason made an aesthetic yet comparative judgement.

A fourth pupil, Matilde, identified the same phrase (see Figure 4.1.2 c), not because she liked it but by judging the adjective yellow "boring". With the highest reading age (3.3.2) in the class (16.6), Matilde was responding affectively and analytically, like Natalie. Matilde appeared able to visualise the scene but the writer's choice of "yellow" did not engage her or instigate further

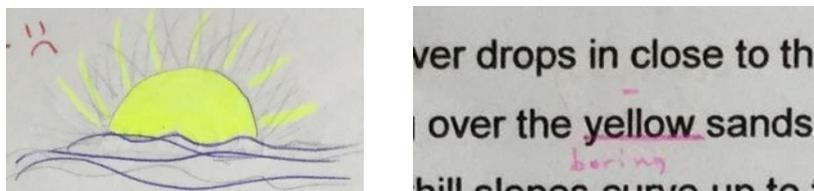
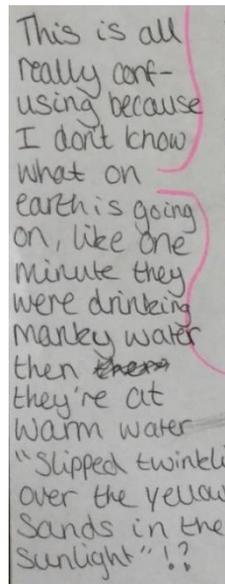


Figure 4.1.2 c: Ellie's sun and Matilde's "boring" comment

connections. Matilde's critical evaluation involved re-writing as she read, considering alternative vocabulary. Therefore, despite not being aligned with the implied reader (4.1.1), pleasure was possible from through creative and re-creative action, overcoming her pejorative view that the writer's vocabulary choice was mundane and mediocre. Credibility was compromised but served to invite a different type of connection. Drawing upon prior experience of reading and writing, Matilde became author. Pleasure could have emerged, not from the text acting as mirror, window or door, but rather the reader cast in the role of writer (2.5.4). This required self-confidence, a sense of agency and varied reading experience from which to draw. Matilde's act of re-writing indicated a wide vocabulary and expectations of writers' skill, not fulfilled in this instance but also, significantly, not appearing to prevent engagement or pleasure.

Ellie underlined the longer phrase, "slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight", adding a sketch of a vibrant half sun (see Figure 4.1.2 c, above). This understanding and appreciation suggested some alignment with the implied reader (4.1.1) and ability to respond to the

text as a window and perhaps a mirror. However, her extended comment underneath (see Figure 4.1.2 d, below) indicated, while the physical location was imagined and enjoyed, she struggled to connect the different parts of the text to forge a coherent interpretation. She displayed exasperation.



This is all really confusing because I don't know what on earth is going on, like one minute they were drinking manky water then ~~there~~ they're at warm water "Slipped twinkli over the yellow Sands in the sunlight" !?

Figure 4.1.2 d: Ellie's confusion

The decision to give the extracts in reverse order to support pupil response appeared to present a barrier to Ellie's comprehension (3.5.1). Comments elsewhere on the sheet revealed her efforts to make sense of the relationship between the two extracts, despite not being told there was connection, but confusion at a sequence which appeared illogical. Her recognition of narrative structure, novels opening typically with a description of the setting before introducing characters, was implicit but not supported by pedagogy. She appeared unable to reconcile her interpretation of "green" water as "manky" with this phrase she inferred as a positive depiction of sand and sunlight. While this was a valid alternative interpretation, she seemed troubled by the apparent contradiction of colour imagery (4.1.1). In contrast to Matilde's heightened engagement stemming from a negative response, Ellie's perception of the text's credibility was compromised, leading to dissatisfaction. The dissonance led to her feeling "annoyed because I don't get it". Inability to resolve this tension became a barrier to engagement and pleasure; she could not sustain her interaction with the text as window or mirror. Lack of understanding led to uncertainty which she could not tolerate. Connection was impeded and problem-solving thwarted, undermining possible pleasure.

With a reading age slightly below her chronological age (11.8) Ellie could be viewed as representative of Y8 pupils in this institution (3.3). Feeling confused belied lack of alignment with the reader implied by Steinbeck and lack of confidence in her own interpretation creating barriers to engagement and pleasure, potentially colouring future reading experiences. Ellie needed help to make sense of what she read - to allow her to "get it" by narrowing the gap between her and the implied reader. While Matilde was able to overcome the negativity arising from perceived poor writing and resolve tensions within the passage alone, Ellie required guidance to develop problem-solving skills and confidence, giving potential for pleasure from discovery (2.5.5).

Some pupils' closer alignment with the reader implied in the text was shown by their positive reception of other examples of sensory imagery (4.1.1). Natalie, Matilde and Mason liked the description of leaves which "lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them". While Natalie drew ☺ next to the phrase, Matilde sketched a leaf (see Figure 4.1.2 e, below), adding "I can hear the crunching".

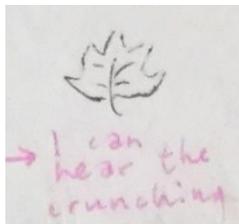


Figure 4.1.2 e: Matilde's leaf sketch and comment

This onomatopoeic description showed she was transported through the door of the text, feeling present in the environment. She was not just imagining the scene but seemingly experienced vicarious pleasure, walking through the leaves. These affective reactions appear powerful and engaging for readers, reflecting proximity to the reader implied by the text.

Mason sketched the forest floor with leaves clearly visible, noting the passage relaxed him as "you can almost feel the water and nature". This indicated, like Matilde, he was attuned somewhat to the reader stance implied by the text, not a passive onlooker but experiencing vicarious pleasure: he had transported himself imaginatively into the setting. The narrative hook of sensory imagery appeared effective at stimulating pleasure for these actual readers, regardless of whether feelings were positive or not. Failure to be consistently aligned with the implied reader (4.1.1) did not prevent engagement or pleasure.

Georgia was also attracted to this phrase, drawing a lizard walking on leaves (see Figure 4.1.2 f, below), suggesting connection with the reptile but whether from familiarity or exoticism was unclear. The lizard description prompted comments the verb "skittering" was reminiscent of the sweets *Skittles*.

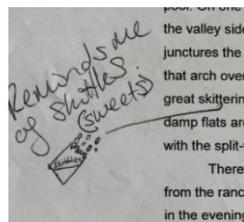


Figure 4.1.2 f: Georgia's lizard and Willow's sweets

Despite sitting apart in the classroom during the activity, Georgia and Willow both noted this, triggered by the unfamiliar verb or their liking for the sweets. Alternatively, it could reflect classwork on *Maggot Moon* which included examination of writer's verb choices (journal p.46). The end of module assessment, completed the previous week, was description of a scene. Verb choice appeared on the success criteria and prompts. Whatever the reason for the response, readers made connections unanticipated by the reader implied in the text between the text and their experiences, seemingly stimulating engagement.

Implied is a reader who understands the word “skittering” and these pupils’ responses suggested some unfamiliarity in this English classroom. However, there was no evidence this impeded understanding, engagement or pleasure. Readers responded to the text as a mirror, making connections between their lived experience and the text, aiding meaning-making and pleasure. Today’s adult readers may appreciate *Skittles*, first made in the UK in 1974, as anachronistic to the novel’s context, but these readers forged a valid connection, however incongruous. The link to sweets did not appear to threaten the texts’ credibility but rather enhance as it related to a tangible aspect of the readers’ lives. It is interesting Georgia moved from thinking about the sweets back to the passage, seemingly using the connection to understand the meaning of the verb: “that weird lizard run (wobbling from side to side)”. This was an oblique link but showed problem-solving in action. Of course, she could also be drawing upon memory of watching nature documentary. Whichever explanation, Georgia’s recall was triggered, enabling connection, albeit unexpected, enriching the reading of Steinbeck’s writing, potentially contributing to engagement despite not closely aligned to the reader implied in the text (4.1.1).

Readers’ Feelings

This extract prompted more explicit comments about readers’ feelings than the section where characters are introduced (see 4.2.2). Mason used the word “relaxed” to describe how the passage made him feel. Natalie did too, adding she was “intrigued”. An unusual combination of emotions was also reported by Rose: she felt “happy and calm” yet the passage “confused”. It was evident the setting established by Steinbeck did engage these readers affectively, despite its geographical and temporal distance. Natalie and Rose’s comments indicated interest beyond a detached view through the window of the text. Natalie’s intrigue suggested a keenness to step into its world, embarking on a journey of discovery to unravel its mysteries. Rose was not as positively disposed.

Her annotations (see Figure 4.1.2 g, below) showed insight and understanding which her claim of confusion contradicted. Bewilderment had not hampered comprehension but seemed to present a barrier to engagement, perhaps a result of the content offering insufficient appeal, reflecting distance between implied and actual reader. Highly motivated and confident, in class Rose displayed ambition and ability to offer intelligent analysis of fiction but this extract challenged her. Her annotations (see Figure 4.1. 2 g, below) suggested she attempted textual analysis, identifying personification and descriptive techniques, but this failed to clarify meaning sufficiently.

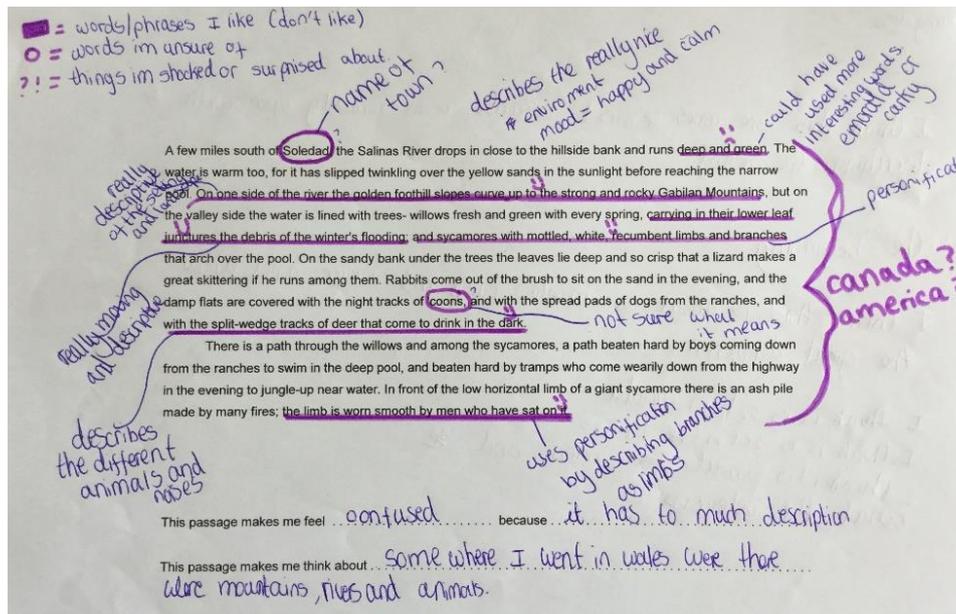


Figure 4.1.2 g: Rose's annotations

It could be inferred Rose was dissatisfied by her inability to make sense of the passage, prioritising analytical skill over affective response. Perhaps Steinbeck's sparse prose style and the brevity of the passage offered too few examples of the features typically identified and evaluated in KS3. Rose's adoption of a critical stance at the outset appeared to prevent engagement arising from connection to the extract as a mirror, window or door. Her inability to compose a coherent interpretation also could have impaired engagement with the intellectual challenge of literary analysis which appeared to put further distance between actual and implied reader (4.1.1).

Georgia conveyed an affective response implicitly via description of the extract as "calm" and "beautiful". Her interpretation of the adjective "green" (see Figure 4.1.2 h, below), as describing the water in a pejorative way (see also 4.2.2) while not implied by the text (4.1.1) was valid.

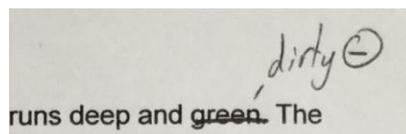


Figure 4.1.2 h: Georgia's substitution

Georgia reconciled the inferred peaceful mood with the unpleasant water. The apparent contradiction, demonstrating distance between implied and actual reader, did not seem to confuse or impede engagement or pleasure by undermining credibility. Instead, it stimulated an insightful, more sophisticated interpretation than Rose: she noted how the "beautiful, calm scene in the first paragraph" contrasted with the second which was "violent and angry". Affective and analytical response were integrated here and also when noting contrast of new and old in the juxtaposition of the willow trees with connotations of vitality and spring and the site of many fires associated with ashes and the past; an interpretation not identified in the textual analysis (4.1.1) but valid and insightful.

Rory also reacted affectively to the passage, referring to one specific aspect. He felt “sad because the boys get beaten”. This misreading stemmed from the path description. “beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool”. Rory was the only pupil to write a

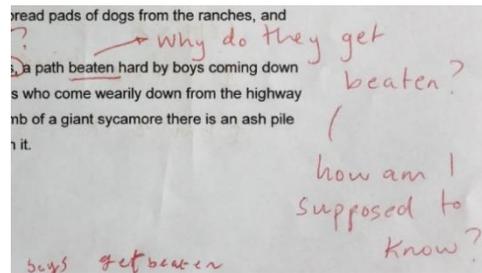


Figure 4.1.2 i: Rory's question

question on this extract. His interpretation of the metaphor literally and out of context indicated mismatch between implied and actual reader but an attempt at meaning-making through questioning (see Figure 4.1.2.i above). This demonstrated emergent analytical skill which could be developed, prompting further engagement. Rory was the only reader to query the other extract (see 4.2.2), suggesting exploration of possible answers would benefit comprehension, interpretation and, potentially, pleasure. While Rory sketched the “golden foothills” (see Figure 4.1.2 i, above), circled “deep and green” and “sycamores” his written comments related solely to these imaginary boys. In making sense of the passage, Rory’s interpretation focalised on the familiar, reading as a mirror: the experience of boys. This invention was potentially pleasurable as a creative act, albeit from a rather unexpected source. In expressing sympathy for these boys, he seemed able to overlook the lack of textual evidence of physical harm, reframing the passage using his own terms of reference. However, Rory’s question, “How am I supposed to know?” (see Figure 4.1.2 i, above), indicated that, overall, the distance between implied and actual reader was too great. The gaps were too much for him to fill, leading to curtailed engagement: he appeared ready to give up reading despite seeming inquisitive.

Willow dismissed the whole extract as “meh”, a colloquial term for something mediocre or unimpressive. She commented “it doesn’t really do anything for me” but the 😊 across the extract revealed a positive affective response despite not appearing aligned with the reader implied by the text (4.1.1). This contradiction, similar to Rose’s, would be valuable to unpick, illuminating criteria for her negative judgement overall. Willow also identified the mood of the other extract as “peaceful and calm” and felt intrigued, emphasising how small the space is between disinterest and captivation. As the chief difference between the extracts was the introduction of the characters, perhaps the lack of human-interest impaired Willow’s engagement. Perhaps, at this time, her interest was fiction presenting a mirror to her life or a window on a different human experience but this extract offered neither. Inability to picture the setting could well be a result of distance between implied and actual reader (4.1.1), posing another barrier to pleasure. The fact Natalie was nevertheless intrigued by the description of setting demonstrated the highly individualised nature of reader response, varying considerably due to a complex mix of prior experiences with memory playing a crucial role.

Location

Some readers referred to specific locations not implied by the text, indicating interaction with text as mirror, stimulating connections with past experiences. Natalie noted the passage reminded her of the South Downs as “it’s beautiful”, belying engagement and pleasure despite not reflecting the reader implied by the text (4.1.1). The writer’s depiction of setting provoked her comment “it’s so descriptive and relaxing to read”. Memory, as well as aesthetic judgement, influenced this response. It could be inferred these sensibilities had been instilled through her childhood: her family perhaps appreciated and experienced the natural beauty of the local environment. A reader with a different background may not have such positive connotations, consequently, pleasure from these associations would not emerge.

Ellie was reminded of “a sunny holiday” but it was not clear whether she was thinking of a particular trip or more generally. The lack of specific detail suggested the latter and could explain why, despite the positive connotations of a “sunny holiday”, Ellie’s comment about feeling “annoyed and confused” by the extract demonstrated her response was not enhanced by real or imagined vacation. While the holiday reference suggested she could imagine being in this location, she could not become immersed sufficiently in this fictional world to bring further pleasure. The wider narrative could be too far removed from her own experiences or the limited amount of detail might present a barrier.

Rose also referred to a holiday but this was specific: she thought about “somewhere I went in Wales”. Here, the actual and implied reader were not aligned but the text acted as a mirror, reflecting one memory. However, like Natalie, this personal connection provoked a negative interpretation. Rose’s criticism of the passage for having “too much description”, could be a result of this evaluation. The amount of detail was deemed unnecessary, undermining credibility, as she seemed impatient to move on. The imprecise “somewhere” in Wales could indicate either limited geographical knowledge, poor memory or a rather detached stance. As the passage offered many clues about the particularities of novel’s setting emphasising its difference to Wales, it could be extrapolated the detail impaired engagement with the mismatch between the reader’s own memories and the description impeding connection and emphasising the distance between implied and actual reader.

The passage evoked an area of natural beauty for Georgia but one tainted as it was “being ruined by stupid humans”. The reference to the beaten path and ash pile from fires show human impact but it seemed excessive to judge this as ruination suggesting Georgia, like Rory, picked up on small details then responded emotively, mentally embellishing the text. Despite having quite different reading ages (13.3 & 8.5 respectively), their interpretations were equally valid and creative. Although somewhat removed from the reader implied by the text (4.1.1), these pupils seemingly found pleasure elsewhere.

Other pupils’ comments suggested the passage prompted imaginative response, suggesting readers engaged with and derived pleasure from being able to ‘see’ easily this environment. Willow thought about “a forest with animals in it” showing appreciation of the vista presented. Mason felt as

if he was walking through a forest, feeling calm and relaxed. He followed a path and heard water nearby evidencing vicarious experience whereby he imagined being there. He was able to suspend disbelief, projecting himself into this different time and space, just as he did with the leaves. While these pupils appeared to be less geographically aware than those implied by the text (4.1.1), imaginations were triggered in powerful ways. The lack of specific connection perhaps imbued freedom to embellish and invent.

Matilde did not articulate connection to any memory but offered analysis. She asserted the extracts were from one book, set in the same context as they were written in a similar style. Pleasure from problem-solving was implicit. This appraisal could indicate a detached stance and little imaginative engagement. However, her previous comments about the leaves and imagery suggested this was not the case. She was responding affectively and analytically simultaneously, like Natalie, above. While Matilde had the highest reading age of the sample (16.6), Natalie's was significantly lower (12.8), closer to her chronological age. This illustrated how oscillation between personal and evaluative response was not a preserve of the most able: perceptive links appeared possible regardless of ability.

Rory appeared to allude to contemporary events and media coverage when labelling the "many fires" as a reference to California. At this time, raging fires across the state and devastating loss of life were being reported daily in the English press. Rory was connecting with the extract, interpreting it as a mirror of these events and as a window on this geographical setting. While his sad feelings, explored earlier, related directly to his misreading of the path description, these events could have contributed. Despite having the lowest reading age in the class (8.5) and not appearing closely aligned with the reader implied by the text (4.1.1), Rory was clearly capable of identifying important detail, making valid connections to extend interpretation and, therefore, potential for pleasure.

Context

While Rory connected contemporary events and the Californian location, there was little other comment about the geographical context which featured strongly in the implied reader response (4.1.1). Natalie, Willow and Rose circled "Soledad" noting it was a proper noun, a town name and not in England. This could indicate how readers approach fiction with open minds about location and period. Not recognising the references to context did not appear to be barrier to understanding but could impair engagement with interpretation less informed and detailed than Steinbeck intended for his readership. However, as established above, textual pleasures were still possible for these readers.

There was some evidence readers could identify thematic concerns from even short extracts like this regardless of implied and actual reader proximity. Rose predicted the book would be about "the men and what they believe" while Mason commented it was about "trying to survive". Matilde, with the highest reading age, was not certain about the period but sketched a cowboy and lasso (see Figure 4.1.2 j, below). While not strictly accurate, this demonstrated understanding of relevant

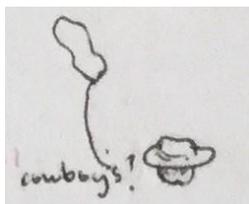


Figure 4.1.2 j: Matilde's cowboy sketch

contextual themes. These responses displayed strong independent inference skills with short pieces of text (Appendix L). More important pedagogically, it provided evidence readers do not need input about context before reading. Indeed, having a session devoted to context could limit or close down opportunities for personal, affective response and connection forging, so vital to the development of confidence and the foundation of the type of analytical approach perceived to be required at GCSE (Bleiman, 2020).

While pupils made fewer annotations on this extract than the one concerning character (see 4.2.2), more affective comments were included. The reduced volume could indicate location held less interest for these readers but as this was the second extract pupils worked with, enthusiasm for the activity could have waned. However, the more personal, aesthetic nature of the responses was surprising, suggesting a more complex explanation and our reservations about order underestimated readers' ability (see 3.5.1).

4.2 Of Mice and Men Character

This extract comprised the third, fourth and fifth paragraphs of the opening chapter (Appendix L). Here, two men enter the idyllic environment described in the first two paragraphs. The reader implied is identified through textual analysis of the extract, building on points already established relating to imagery, location and context (4.1.1). The actual readers' response follows.

4.2.1 Analysis of Implied Reader – Extract Two

If the order of the classroom application was echoed and this extract read first, the reader implied by the text would notice Steinbeck's narrational style. Third person address is employed but this is not an "adult storyteller" voice (Chambers, 1985) entertaining children. Instead, the present tense description of the location gives a filmic quality to the opening, unusual in fiction of the era. The implied reader would recognise this as a device imbuing a sense of immediacy yet distance, positioning the reader as onlooker, watching the unfolding action. The grammatically inaccurate opening sentence compounds this while establishing an informal tone akin to stage direction.

Implied is a reader who interprets the arrival of the characters theatrically. It is reminiscent of a stage entrance with the setting shrinking to the backdrop for action and the reader positioned initially as an onlooker. Focussing on the protagonists, the implied reader identifies them as itinerant working-class, inferring a picaresque tale with survival dependent on wits. Steinbeck implies a reader who anticipates characters who are likeable rogues whose adventures expose hypocrisy and corruption of the society in which they live, albeit on the fringes. This allusion enriches characterisation valuable particularly within a sparse prose style like that employed by Steinbeck. Implied is a reader who appreciates the thumbnail sketch while still finding characters convincing and

potentially complex. The two men could resonate with the reader as mirrors, reflecting themselves or other people, real or fictional or could stimulate interaction as windows, depicting a world distinct from readers' own but realistic and credible.

Additional visual devices of contrast and imagery would be recognised by the implied reader as conveying character. It is evident the two men are opposites: the first is small, dark and alert; the other large, heavy and lumbering like a bear. Adverbs are employed to underline difference and intimate their respective personalities: George acts nervously, gently and morosely while Lennie smiles happily, imitates George exactly and, later, looks timidly. Implied is a reader who would recognise these character types even if not identifying personally with either. Steinbeck's implied reader moves beyond comprehension, speculating about the circumstances which caused this unlikely pairing and led to their journey, provoking a more nuanced interpretation and motivation to read on, discovering more about them.

Implied is a reader familiar with the geographical and temporal setting, noted above (4.1.1) which is also drawn on by mention of "ranches" and the denim worn by the men. Steinbeck, writing for adults, implies a readership cognisant these clothes represent the utilitarian uniform of unskilled labourers. The carrying of blanket rolls or "bindles" indicates itinerant lifestyles, with men travelling to secure work. The proximity of the Great Depression and the novel's 1937 publication would resonate with an original readership whose lives overlapped with the period: the text had potential to act variously as mirror, window and door, maximising possibility for pleasure.

While the book's themes of poverty, unemployment and friendship remain current, direct experience and appreciation of the social and historical context would evoke a more powerful response from the reader implied by the text than those removed from it. Providing contextual information to actual readers could mitigate by developing understanding of content. However, exposure to facts, compensating for knowledge deficiency, would do little to increase engagement with and pleasure from fiction as connection to text is unlikely to be enhanced by these means.

Implied is a reader able to grasp Steinbeck's ironic juxtaposition of Edenic setting and harsh reality of life for ranch-workers during this period. Perhaps also, they would infer a critique of the romanticised notion of the cowboy prevalent in popular culture. Implied is a reader who would sympathise, investing in character, wishing to read on to discover their fate.

4.2.2 Analysis of Actual Reader Response

Exploration of eight readers' annotation of the extract follows (3.5.1), grouping ideas about the human characters, rabbits and green pool.

The Humans

The central focus of this section is the two male characters entering the calm, rural setting established earlier (4.1). This novel was the teacher's choice but my experience of teaching this novel was that pupils did not initially feel strong affinity or antipathy to these men: readers' experiences are not reflected. As the story unfolds, sympathy for Lennie often emerged but there

was limited appreciation of George. However, these Y8 readers engaged with the physical appearance of the men, connecting with them and making some insightful inference.

Three pupils sketched both the men: Willow, Matilde and Natalie (see Figure 4.2.2 a). Willow’s depiction captured the different size of the men and featured the “shapeless hats”. Matilde drew the pair twice: one version placed the men in the location with the other using stick men to illustrate their differing stature. Natalie showed similarity of clothing as well as size difference.

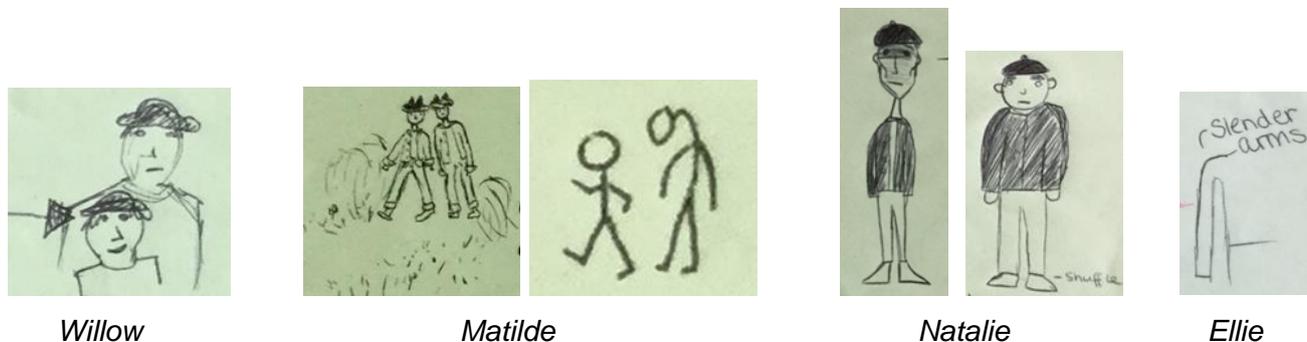


Figure 4.2.2 a: Character Sketches

She employed heavier shading around George’s eyes, indicating awareness of this detail despite not drawing attention to the phrase in the text. Ellie provided an illustration of George’s “slender arms”. Mason drew only one man, presumably George as there was heavy shading under one eye. The allusion to “restless eyes” was noted by Georgia and Mason.



Figure 4.2.2 b: Mason’s sketch of George and eye details by Mason and Georgia, respectively

These drawings suggest some alignment with the reader implied by the text (see 4.2.1) as at least five of the eight pupils found sufficient interest in the depiction of the human characters to capture them visually: the text providing a window on the fictional world and its inhabitants. However, the initial connection seemed superficial, replicating the physical characteristics described. This appeared to support my implied reader analysis (see 4.2.1) wherein I speculated the third person, present tense narrational style invited the reader to adopt the stance of detached observer. The narrator records, like a camera capturing setting and action. Despite these actual readers inhabiting a markedly different context than those implied, the annotations also revealed ability to produce perceptive interpretation.

Natalie displayed inference skill by adding a label “shuffle” to the sketch of Lennie’s legs (see Figure 4.2.2 a). This indicated connection with, and inference from, the description “walking heavily, dragging his feet a little”, going beyond taking in the ‘view’ passively. She demonstrated insight about the characters’ differences by adding

This passage makes me feel confused and intrigued because the men are so different and the smaller man seems to be nervous so maybe they don't like each other.

Speculation about their relationship from the physical detail indicated ability to identify and fill gaps presented by the writer. Responding to the narrative hook, she was aligned somewhat with the reader implied by the text, with individual interpretation emerging. Despite being “confused”, Natalie’s connection, feeling intrigued, motivated reading, implying some engagement and pleasure. She could accept being in a confused state, trusting herself (and/or the writer) to resolve this. Implicit was judgement about credibility: the writer would unravel the mystery. Natalie’s speculation about George’s nervousness presented a nuanced reading of his situation, hinting his need for Lennie’s companionship and protection was so pronounced he had to exercise self-control to overcome his antipathy for the other man. Steinbeck’s later action and dialogue intimated this but never makes it explicit. Despite the text’s brevity and its unfamiliar context, Natalie’s observations through the ‘window’ of the text demonstrated relatively sophisticated connection with adult character, implying pleasure from inference and problem-solving.

Demonstrating insight into other aspects of Steinbeck’s characterisation, Georgia, Rory and Mason recognised the men were described using animalistic vocabulary. Georgia underlined the

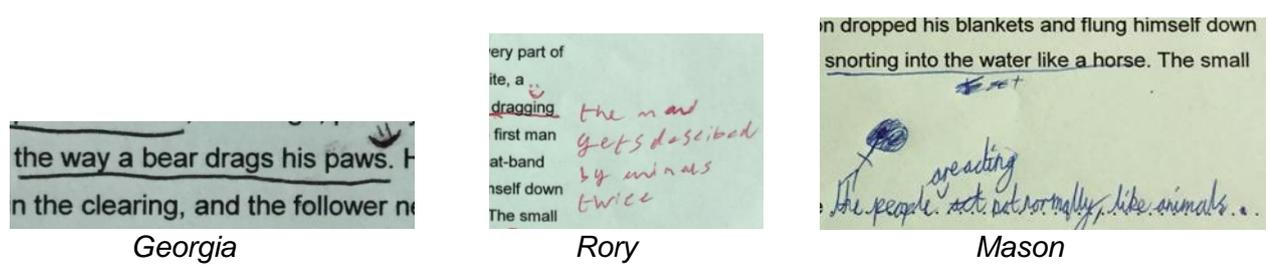


Figure 4.2.2 c: Identifying animal imagery

bear image, adding 😊 to indicate her appreciation (see Figure 4.2.2 c) and noted animal imagery appeared twice. She commented the comparison intrigued her: “I want to find out more”, suggesting some alignment with reader implied by the text (see 4.2.1). A connection between reader and text was formed, either from the text acting as a mirror, reflecting an existing enthusiasm for or memory of bears, or as a window with imagery piquing interest in the fictional character or setting, encouraging speculation about personality and plot.

Rory also underlined the description, adding 😊 (see Figure 4.2.2 c), spotting the repetition of imagery. Mason interpreted the comparison between Lennie and a horse as sign of the character’s difference as this was “not acting normally”, explaining this made him feel “uneasy”. Others inferred mood from characterisation, demonstrating ‘entanglement’ (2.5.3) and inferential acuity. Matilde felt the men would “do something bad” while Ellie said they made her feel uncomfortable. Despite not being wholly aligned with the reader implied by the text, these pupils connected with text by forging comparisons between characters and their own experiences. Pleasure gained from the text acting as mirror was a possible stimulus, however tangential the link. The narrative could be compelling also as it offered a window through which to observe character and action distinct from their experience.

The possible oscillation between the known and unfamiliar was fascinating, illustrating the reader as architect of engagement and pleasure.

The Rabbits

When conducting the implied reader analysis of the novel's opening, little attention was given to the rabbits (see 4.2.1). They were simply part of the set dressing: one element of the pastoral idyll Steinbeck presented. However, some readers drew attention to them either with a sketch or underlining their description in the passage or both.

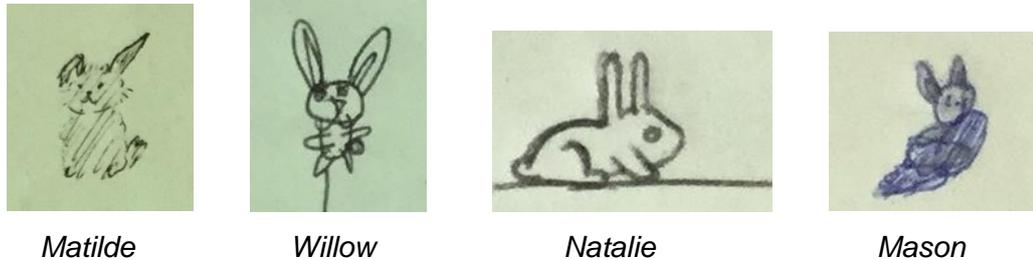


Figure 4.2.2 d: Rabbit Sketches

Drawings by four pupils indicated the appeal of the creatures perhaps influenced by memories of their own pets, visits to petting zoos or childhood stories involving rabbits such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865), *Watership Down* (Adams, 1972) and Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902). The relative proximity of these readers' childhoods could explain the animals' attraction, with the text acting as a mirror to their lived experience. While Steinbeck's implied reader might see the creatures as vermin or a food source, this lack of alignment between implied and actual reader did not appear to prevent engagement or pleasure. Instead, readers actively built other connections, credible due to their personal nature.

Seven of the eight readers in this sample identified the phrase "sculptured stones" as interesting, detail not singled out for implied reader attention (see 4.2.1). Six indicated liking it by a + or ☺; Mason simply underlined the longer phrase "the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray sculptured stones" adding no sign or comment. Natalie, not highlighting the phrase, added a rabbit drawing (see Figure 4.2.2 d, above). The reasons for these apparently positive responses could stem from the childhood associations already mentioned but perhaps other pleasures. The stillness evokes tranquillity and safety which the reader implied by the text infers will soon be shattered, creating anticipation. The alliterative sibilance could be satisfying, serving to engender affective reaction. The aural dimension of the juxtaposed vocabulary is more striking due to the fricative consonant blends ('sc' and 'st'), perhaps adding appeal. Whatever the reason, the annotations illustrated readers evaluated as they read. Textual detail with affective or aesthetic appeal was identified, demonstrating evaluative skill, the foundation on which literary appreciation is built.

Conclusions about engagement and pleasure engendered by childhood memories can only be tentative as there was little evidence to suggest these readers made an explicit connection between "sculptured stones" and the rabbits themselves. Only Mason and Matilde highlighted the simile as well as the subject of the sentence. Ellie's dislike of the stone imagery as "it was irrelevant

description” suggested weak inference and lack of alignment with the reader implied by the text. While her critique led to dismissal of the detail and expression of antipathy, it illustrated simultaneous affective and analytical response. Matilde displayed stronger inference, making the link between rabbits and stones, empathising with the animals to the extent she felt uncomfortable as people were invading their space. This comment demonstrated the potential for readers not aligned with those implied to develop rich, unique interpretations of text, far beyond the level of comment typically made during KS3 literary analysis rooted in feature spotting such as “the writer uses a simile to show the rabbits are still”.

Rory did not draw a rabbit but instead sketched an upright stone with a smile (see Figure 4.2.2 e). As the class were working, I noticed this and asked why he drew it. His reply, he liked stones, elicited amusement and recognition from other members of the class: his interest was well known (journal, p.44). This highly individual response demonstrated distance between implied and actual reader but also the uniqueness of reader/text interaction. For Rory, this image reflected his

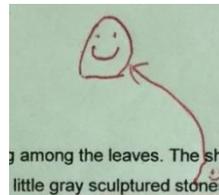


Figure 4.2.2 e: Rory’s stone

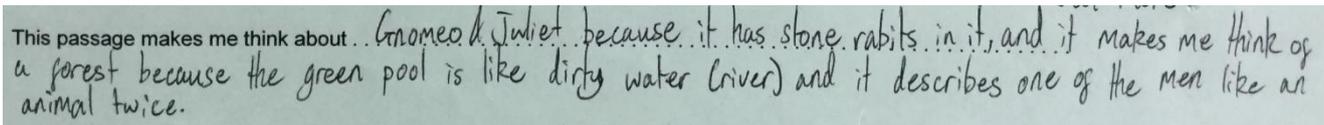
predilection, however unlikely it seemed, and helped connection with the text with engagement and pleasure indicated. This aspect served as a mirror, reflecting something familiar, but not implied by the writer. This was his only drawing, suggesting the imagined stones were more interesting than the rabbits or men, perhaps bestowing credibility through connection, sufficient to sustain his interest.

During our conversation, I mentioned Jizo stone souvenirs from my trip to Japan and we talked about this for some time (journal, p.43). He wanted to see them so the following lesson I shared a photograph of them. Willow joined in as she had an interest in Japanese culture. Although these discussions may seem tangential to the text, they illustrate how ‘booktalk’ contributes to pleasure. Discussion can consolidate and extend perceptions of lives reflected in fiction or enhance the ‘windows’ presented by sharing and exploring details and opinions, bestowing a sense of community (see 5.5).

Willow and Georgia noted the spelling of “gray” was American and linked this to the “state highway”. These textual details, probably taken-for-granted by the reader implied by the text (see 4.2.1), appeared to assist the readers identify setting in a way that the opening two paragraphs of the novel did not (4.1.2). Despite the text depicting a geographically distant location, they could envision it. Memory, either from direct experience or consumption of popular media, helped readers to understand these references as mirrors or windows, so connecting with the text, prerequisite to RfP (see 6.3).

However, two pupils’ annotation provided evidence this extract text did more than offer a mirror or window of location. Imaginative connection was such that they were transported away from

their lives, speculating about other worlds. Georgia read the simile literally, remembering the stone rabbits in the film, *Gnomeo and Juliet* (2011).

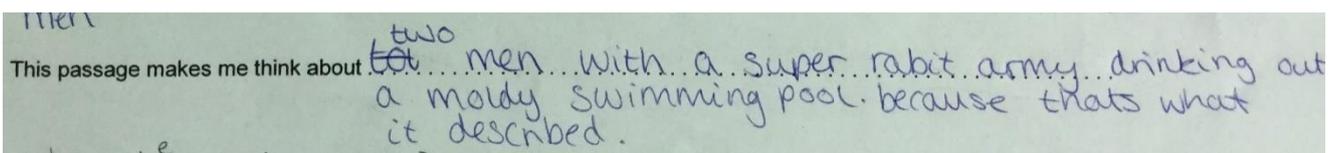


This passage makes me think about *Gnomeo & Juliet* because it has stone rabbits in it, and it makes me think of a forest because the green pool is like dirty water (river) and it describes one of the men like an animal twice.

Figure 4.2.2 f: Georgia's comment

Intertextuality was evident from the reader's connection of disparate stimuli and suspension of genre knowledge. Georgia could ignore the rules of fiction and reality to build interpretation.

Ellie also engaged creatively by inventing her own world with two men and a super rabbit army drinking out of a pool (see Figure 4.2.2 g), interpretation not implied by the text (see 4.2.1). Although she did not give any clues about the origins of this fantasy, and may not be conscious of this, it is easy to imagine it emerged from other textual experiences, written or filmic, which move the audience into a fantasy realm where logic is irrelevant and the laws of physics ignored. The text presented a credible depiction to act as a springboard for the reader's rewriting of the episode, with pleasure possible through creativity.



This passage makes me think about ~~two~~ two men with a super rabbit army drinking out of a moldy swimming pool because that's what it described.

Figure 4.2.2 g: Ellie's comment

While there were an equal number of doodles of rabbits and men, the wider evidence from the annotation task showed the rabbits and related simile stimulated more affective, imaginative responses than the humans. Although not implied in the text, this could result from the actual readers' ability to connect with rabbits more than adult males in 1930s California. The limited amount of text, coupled with the sparse details of the characters and lack of dialogue, could have also impeded engagement. However, these annotations indicated despite actual readers not being aligned to those implied, they engaged actively in Steinbeck's narrative (2.5.2), a precursor to pleasure.

The Green Pool

Pupils appeared drawn to the image of the "green pool", another detail not given prominence in identifying the reader implied in the text (see 4.2.1). Six of the eight participants made some reference to it and with more varied interpretation than that relating to the rabbits or humans. Some circled or underlined the description, which appeared twice in this extract, adding + or -, ☺ or ☹, while others wrote comments alongside the text or below as part of the sentence completion (3.5.1). The two readers not drawing attention to the image in this extract, did so on the other: Willow underlined the river running "deep and green" and sketched a ☺; Matilde drew a picture of the two men in the location (see Figure 4.2.2 a, above).

Readers evaluated Steinbeck's use of the adjective "green". It was interpreted as a reference to the water being contaminated by Georgia, Ellie and Rory. Georgia noted it was dirty water while Ellie reported dislike as it was "gross and rank like a mouldy swimming pool". Rory added a label "dirty and frogs". The text implies a reader who would consider this setting as idyllic, almost Edenic with the colour green indicating the freshness of the water with allusions to spring, verdancy and optimism, raised in analysis of the first extract (4.1.1). However, the more negative interpretation by the actual readers was equally valid and logical, reflecting their experience or associations of this water colour. Although not implied in the text, these individuals were filling the 'gaps', making-meaning and forging connections engaging as rooted in their lived experience. Their responses also demonstrate evaluation in action. Their interpretation has not undermined comprehension of the passage but added richness by stimulating strong emotion prompted by memory.

Two readers, Rose and Natalie, criticised Steinbeck's choice of the adjective describing the pool indicating preference for more evocative vocabulary. Rose placed a ☹ next to it, suggesting "slimy" to make it "more descriptive", reinforcing the unpleasant associations of dirtiness noted above. However, like Natalie, she offered "emerald" as a substitute, creating a more positive image of the pool, perhaps more aligned with the reader stance implied by the text (see 4.2.1). The evaluation of vocabulary choice shows pupils' critiquing the writer's craft. This could have been influenced by the *Maggot Moon* assessment completed the week before, which required pupils to make ambitious vocabulary choices (journal p.46). However, instead of undermining the credibility of Steinbeck's writing, the readers' criticism led to virtual reworking of the text, enhancing connection. Rewriting text in this way offers pleasure from creativity and productivity (2.5.4), an alternative to that derived from occupying the stance implied by the text

Where "green pool" was mentioned again towards the end of the extract, Rose drew ☺ noting the repetition. While the reader seemed able to reconcile the apparent contradiction with "slimy", noted above, it appeared to impact on her engagement. She employed "descriptive" or "description" as a label on five separate occasions but summed up her feelings overall as "confused because there is no real description". (see Figure 4.2.2 h). This anomalous stance could reflect Rose's lack of connection with the descriptive detail in the extract. She was not able to comprehend the wider significance of the setting: while she could "see" the view, she could not connect with it. This puzzlement appeared to be a barrier to engagement as the credibility of the text was undermined. Rose was unable to fill the gaps presented: her stance was too far removed from that of the reader implied by the text. Alternatively, however, it could represent her desire for description of characters or action beyond that in the short extract.

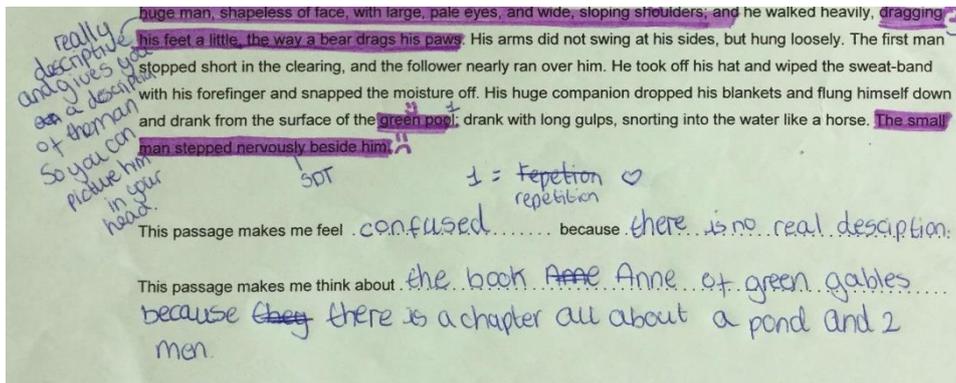


Figure 4.2.2 h : Rose's description comment

As well as the adjective, the noun “pool” elicited comment. For Rose, another book was reflected: in *Anne of Green Gables* (Montgomery, 1908) “there is a chapter all about a pond and 2 men” (see Figure 4.2.2 h). Mason also re-interpreted “pool” as “pond”, linking to a memory of his sister almost falling into one. He commented that “green pool” sounded like it is a pond, speculating that the man who is drinking might fall in. Willow thought about her trip to Canada and the film, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954). These examples provided further evidence of how significant memory was to reader engagement and pleasure. Recollection helped reader connect with text, composing a personalised interpretation, constructing the virtual text complementary to their lives, experiences and interests without requiring close alignment with the reader implied by the text.

Ellie equated “pool” with a swimming pool as did Rory, who was reminded of his friend’s pool, dirty and containing frogs. During the activity he was animated about this comparison, clearly enjoying sharing his disgust (journal, p.47), emphasising the power of social interaction and affective response (2.7.3 & 2.7.4). This memory prompted the sole question written by anyone about the extract: “why is he drinking from it?”. Rory’s admission of confusion showed evaluation from experiential knowledge: he perceived this as illogical action. Questions such as this exposed the distance between implied and actual reader yet were valid and valuable, taking readers back to the text, prompting discussion and collaborative problem-solving, potentially engendering further engagement.

4.3 *Maggot Moon* by Sally Gardner

This dystopian novel, set in an England re-imagined after defeat in WWII, was the first read by Y8 in the autumn term. Textual analysis which follows identifies the reader implied in the first three chapters (Appendix L). This extract is 100 words longer than that from *Of Mice and Men* (Appendix L) to allow sufficient coherent narrative to support textual analysis.

The content of the novel’s opening is outlined before identification of the reader implied across each chapter is explored. Actual readers’ response to this novel was not elicited for this study and explanation is offered before discussion of what has been learnt about RfP through this analysis.

Overview of Novel Opening

This YA novel opens with three short chapters which switch tenses. In the first chapter is in the present with the first-person narrator speculating about a series of “what ifs”. The second shifts to the past depicting a bittersweet memory of school. The narrator, Standish, had a high regard for his former teacher, Miss Connolly, but the childish rhyme cited suggests he was bullied. The third chapter recounts Standish’s classroom daydream of driving his best friend, Hector, in a Cadillac but moves to evaluation of the present. Mr Gunnell, his current teacher, strikes Standish’s hand with a cane, halting the reverie: he is wanted by the Headmaster.

4.3.1 Analysis of Implied Reader

Chapter One

The novel opens in a somewhat unconventional manner with a series of speculative “what ifs”, with immediacy conveyed through the present tense. Implied is a reader who understands the “what ifs” are not fanciful but reflect events which have occurred. The repeated suppositions convey a sense of disappointment and resignation about the yet unnamed narrator’s current situation and anticipate a narrative offering explanation of this.

The speculations provide the reader implied by the text with clues to the novel’s setting. Reference to the lost football and “Hector” attempting its retrieval locate the narrative in a familiar, apparently contemporary world. While the diction is relatively uncomplicated, Gardner evokes a sense of unease through juxtaposition of an innocent kickabout, a “dark secret” and the repeated speculations, expressing regret events did not unfold differently.

Unlike Steinbeck (4.2.1), Gardner uses a first person narrational style which the reader implied by the text recognises as conversational and informal. Direct address complements this. Standish utters the filler “You see” in each of the three opening chapters creating a confessional and intimate tone. The final sentence of this chapter conveys further information about the character. The simile “as boundless as the stars”, the first of several cosmic references across the three opening chapters, is a wistful, ruminative utterance suggesting a philosophical bent.

Chapter Two

The verisimilitude of the setting appears confirmed in Chapter Two as the narrator is revealed as a schoolboy with teachers both loved and loathed. Implied is a reader who has experience of schooldays and the text acts as a mirror, allowing connection through this commonality. However, when setting is considered alongside the stars imagery of the first chapter, the implied reader would recognise the narrator as no ordinary schoolboy.

The opening of Chapter Two also implies a reader able to connect Miss Connolly’s guidance to “start your story at the beginning” with the narrator’s reference to ‘telling a story’ in the preceding chapter. By mixing concepts of fiction and reality in this way, the narrator could be dismissed as unreliable, but the reader implied by the text is endeared to Standish, warming to this colloquial address, accepting the dialogic trope.

The credibility of the voice is stretched further when the narrator admits to not writing this story; he confesses, "I can't spell my name" but it is written in full immediately afterwards. Implied is a reader who suspends disbelief, accepting the illusion of oral recount which is accurately spelled despite the revelation of limited literacy skills. The inclusion of the childish rhyme indicates he is a figure of fun, bullied for learning difficulties, serves to distract readers from lingering over any perceived contradiction while also evoking sympathy.

Other aspects of voice help the reader implied by the text infer Standish's personality. The colloquialisms give the impression of an ordinary schoolboy, despite hints to the contrary. Phrases like "I would never be so daft", Hector "clocked that one straight away" and the reference to "dog shit" imply a reader who occupies or recognises this milieu. Additionally, the opening pages contain incomplete constructions and short sentences adding to this informal tone reminiscent of speech (e.g. "Even if I could, I couldn't", "Frick-fracking hell!" in Chapter Three) to further personalise the narrative and make the character relatable.

The coming of age genre is suggested in Chapter Two with the shift to the past tense recounting school memories. The reader implied by the text empathises with Standish's mixed feelings about his schooldays, with the text holding a mirror to their own experiences. The reported speech of the teachers and playground bullies creates verisimilitude, inviting further identification with the protagonist as the text also provides a window on recognisable scenarios. The implied reader could also be engaged by and gain pleasure from imaginatively transporting themselves into the text world, sharing Standish's experiences vicariously.

This school setting, with reference to daydreaming and friendship, is familiar to the reader implied by the text who would also identify clues it is dystopic. The implied reader is provided with a literal window to look through but prepared for an unpleasant view. Standish observes "No one, not even Miss Connolly, dares write about what we see through that smeared glass." People live in fear, afraid to speak out: the reader implied by the text would see, through the 'window' of the text, a repressive regime with state control and censorship. Recognising these details as dystopian aids the implied reader's comprehension and inference, offering further hooks to interest.

Standish's advice, "Best not to look out. If you have to, then best to keep quiet.", reinforces the danger awaiting the protagonist, transcending the threat from bullies. If citizens are compelled to ignore events outside and keep quiet, there is suggestion any deviation would bring trouble. The image of "train-track" thinkers emphasises the need to act conventionally but also Standish's distinctiveness. The reader implied by the text perceives Standish's independence of imagination as important, likely to bring him into conflict with the authorities.

Chapter Three

So far, the novel appears to be set in contemporary England due to the school references and absence of any contrary information. In the third chapter, Standish's daydream about being "in the city across the water", a place with skyscrapers, Technicolor and singing in the rain, evoke America to the reader implied by the text. His imagination conjures a utopia including driving a "huge, ice-

cream-coloured Cadillac”, a shiny kitchen and a garden with hoovered grass: a ‘window’ on a very different world to that seen through the “smeared glass” of his classroom. The detail provided implies a reader who recognises Standish’s desire to escape to this bright and shiny alternative world, away from his dirty and dangerous present. To the implied reader, Standish’s world is reminiscent of the decades after WWII when a drab England suffered continued privations and prolonged rationing. By contrast, America was perceived as hyper-real, akin to glossy photographs in magazines: dazzlingly colourful and implausibly perfect.

Implied is a reader prepared to find these daydreams credible as Standish’s imaginative capabilities have been established earlier in the narrative. The “what ifs” and star imagery in the opening chapter are supported by Miss Connolly’s evaluation in Chapter Two of Standish as “an original” and Hector’s comment, his “imagination that breezes through the park”. The implied reader comprehends these traits as significant and Standish’s individuality a key factor in the novel’s plot.

Cosmic references evoke the space race of the mid C20th: Standish’s imaginary world is conceived as a planet, christened Juniper; the novel title includes a lunar reference; the simile in Chapter One, “as boundless as stars”. Additionally, the Cadillac, Croca Cola and checked tablecloths are reminiscent of 1950s US post war affluence. However, the reader implied by the text comprehends these retrospective cultural references do not necessarily indicate Standish is living during this period but could reflect society’s regression, evocative detail which contributes to the implied reader’s interpretation.

As the description of school continues, other elements evoke the past for the reader implied by the text. Standish is summoned to the “Headmaster’s office” and Mr Gunnell uses corporal punishment, striking Standish on the back of his hand to gain attention. Implied is a reader alert to the Dickensian ring to the protagonist’s name, Standish Treadwell, making inferences accordingly, enriching characterisation.

Chapter Three extends dystopian imagery included in the previous chapter. Standish’s dubbing this “the dark ages” suggests regression to barbaric feudal times to the reader implied by the text, when survival of the fittest was the norm and the welfare state non-existent: aspects shared with Steinbeck’s novel. Implied is a reader who makes connections between this regression and life in Communist and Fascist regimes with shortages of basic food stuffs and tightly controlled media. The depiction of disciplinarian Mr Gunnell as Hitler-like with a “small, dark snot-mark moustache”, the images of indoctrination and control further evoke fascism. Awareness of these details enrich reading, enhancing the depiction of setting and character, contributing to the development of an immersive text world offering pleasure through observation through its ‘window’ or by stepping imaginatively through its ‘door’.

Despite references to the past, the illusion of it being Standish’s present continues into the third chapter with the sequential account of events told first-hand. Gardner employs the “voice of speech” (Chambers, 1985) positioning the reader as confidant, hearing about a friend’s day: “I wasn’t listening to the lesson when the note arrived from the headmaster’s office”. Implied is a reader who

accepts the invitation into the text world, designed to strengthen empathetic connection with character.

The final image of the third chapter, “Here the sky fell in long ago”, evokes the nursery tale of Chicken Licken – a doom-laden prophecy with themes of falsehood and misunderstanding leading to danger. Implied is a reader who understands the significance of this allusion, connecting it to the dystopian theme introduced earlier. Inference provides a hook to character and plot.

4.3.2 Analysis of Actual Reader Response

Superficially, the teenage protagonist and coming of age theme of *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) suggests actual readers would be more engaged with and derive greater pleasure from it than Steinbeck’s work: it is more likely to act as a mirror and offer possibilities as window and door, maximising potential for pleasure. However, in many ways the novel implies a more sophisticated reader, one able to engage with shifting tenses and make sense of a range of cultural and historical allusions. If readers don’t grasp the references in *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) to California and the 1930s, the chronological events can be followed with relative ease. Despite the themes of school and friendship, the use of metaphor and allusion makes *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) a more challenging read.

These assertions remain hypothetical as actual reader response to this novel was not conducted. While pupil participation was planned as part of the study from the outset, its design evolved as the autumn term progressed, and, therefore, not finalised before pupils began their reading (3.5). Comparison would have enabled further discussion of reader/text interaction but does not feature here (see Chapter 9).

4.4 Overview of Findings

Using RR to analyse the novel openings revealed texts implying readers somewhat different from the actual Y8 reader. Works may be accessible and comprehensible but lack of proximity between implied and actual reader could impinge on engagement and pleasure. While the literal meaning of texts would be understood by the actual reader, it is not clear how many of the writer’s ‘gaps’ (Iser, 1976) would be recognised and filled by today’s KS3 readership. The level of knowledge required, spanning geography, history, culture and literature, appeared considerable. Without it, inferential, interpretative and evaluative modes of reading would be curtailed leading to an impoverished ‘virtual text’ (Iser, 1974), lacking nuance and offering less for readers to connection to their experiences, thus reducing potential for engagement and pleasure.

However, the range of response made by actual readers during the textual analysis task demonstrated lack of alignment with the reader implied by the text did *not* preclude engagement or pleasure. Instead, readers made valid personalised connections, drawing upon the raw material of their own lives (see 5.3). This emphasised our underestimation of pupils’ ability to interact with the passages in the correct order (3.5.1), also pre-empting findings (see 7.2).

Engagement and pleasure had potential stimulation through the text acting variously as mirror, window or door. This unique interaction between reader and text (Barthes, 1975; Meek, 1991) was revealed as combining affective and analytical response simultaneously (see 5.4). Pleasure appeared not dependent on proximity between implied and actual reader but rather the reader's active, creative and re-creative role (Benton, 1982; Meek, 1991) in the interaction. In some cases, narratives were re-written, creating the virtual text (Iser, 1974) far removed from that implied. The readers utilised existing schemas, in turn expanding these networks: what Rosenblatt (1968) dubbed "enlargement of experience" (p.37) (see 5.4).

Comparison of implied and actual reader response revealed connection with text is vital to RfP (see 5.3). Readers benefit from opportunity to act with agency, articulating and sharing response to fiction, developing individual interpretation. The current climate of heightened accountability and dominance of written outcomes (2.3) may require English teachers to resist pressure to begin explicit exam preparation in KS3. Indeed, Jack, the class teacher, commented on the difference between his typical practice and the annotation task: "We usually use very scaffolded and directed response for the opening pages of a novel" adding "This directs students towards an 'accepted' response/reading" (email correspondence, 18/11/18). This also highlighted the difference between this pedagogy and that advocated in the "fast read" research (Westbrook *et al.*, 2018; 2.7.1). He noted working with the extracts "relied much more on independent reader response" than usual but it led to "more variety in student responses". Significantly, he became aware he could be unwittingly limiting interpretation: "students independently reached some deeper readings than I would have assumed they would". If this richness attracted wider recognition, practice would change to better support RfP *and* literary analysis for examination (see 8.3).

Application of the conceptual framework (2.6) has highlighted interaction with fiction as individual as the readers themselves (see 5.3). More considered text selection could facilitate closer alignment between implied and actual reader (see 5.2), an essential precursor to engagement and thus pleasure (2.5). Given limitations of the stock cupboard, this could be deemed idealistic, however. Nevertheless, pedagogy based on RR principles would support RfP as it values and builds upon readers' existing knowledge, trusting individual connection-forging will lead to valid interpretation (see 8.3). Giving readers agency to develop individual response should be fundamental to secondary English. This insight influenced the subsequent pupil interview schedule (3.4.4), and the next chapter presents this data.

Chapter 5 – Pupil Interview Data

This study into enablers of, and barriers to, 'reading for pleasure' related to engagement in KS3 English employed a participatory case study approach whereby several data sets were elicited to explore the 'phenomenon' of RfP from different perspectives. The previous chapter analysed implied and actual reader interaction with text; this presents the chief data set, pupil interviews. Gaining understanding of reader/text interaction necessitated exploration of those best placed to explain - the readers.

Nine Y8 pupils were interviewed in the 2018 Autumn Term (3.3.2, 3.4.4) when two novels were read consecutively, *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) and *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). The interviews took place afterwards. I describe my approach to analysis, followed by presentation of data under the key themes identified in coding: choice, connection, credibility and conversation.

5.1 Approach to Interview Data Analysis

The transcripts were produced within a week of the interview, assisting recall and accuracy. This brought me "closer to the data" (Denscombe, 2014), beginning the iterative process that is qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Wishing to capture the spirit of original conversations, I prepared the data using conventions adapted from Silverman (2013), inserting only elements illuminating aspects relating to the research questions such as significant pauses and emphasis (Appendix G & H). Pseudonyms were used throughout; line numbers and double spacing employed to aid reading.

The "data preparation" (Denscombe, 2014), translating the verbal into written form, included decisions about "what is and what is not noteworthy" (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2005). Embracing a hermeneutic stance whereby social reality is understood through interpretation (Danermark *et al.*, 2018), inevitably subjective and shaped by my perspective (Creswell, 2013), I also viewed this as construction and construal (3.1). My researcher role was akin to a storyteller (Drake, 2010), creating a narrative. Indeed, my methodological stance espoused conceptualisation of researcher as traveller not miner (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Rather than excavating objects, my 'treasure' was knowledge generated from interaction with the researched and their contexts. I was inextricably bound up in this construction with the final report like an account of my journey. My efforts to forge and explicate "epistemological integrity" (King & Horrocks, 2010) across the different facets of the study (3.3) demonstrate methodological foundations underpinning the investigation.

The formal data analysis began after the transcriptions were completed. I engaged in careful reading, developing familiarity with the data (Denscombe, 2014). Research literature provided a "provisional 'start list' of codes" (Miles *et al.*, 2014) about RfP, relevant to engagement: frequency of reading; access to material; autonomy of choice; awareness of reader identity; book talk; reader communities; teachers as reading role models (see 2.7) . The first cycle of coding involved sifting the data, identifying the main empirical findings correspondent to these broad areas. A transcript extract illustrating the process is included (Appendix J).

Highlighting and analytical memos (Saldana, 2016) were used to label instances of the initial codes and links to my conceptual framework (2.6). Although the pre-selected codes were valuable for the initially deductive, “lumping of the data” (Saldana, 2016), I remained open to emergent themes. The choice of semi-structured interview supported this stance (3.4.4) as did the use of a research journal during and after coding to record impressions (3.4.3), summarise key ideas and note participant comments warranting further consideration.

A second analytical cycle was conducted whereby some initial codes were “subsumed, relabelled, or dropped altogether” (Saldana, 2016). This process of inference or theoretical redescription assisted development and synthesis of concepts, filtering and refining interpretation (Appendix I). An Excel spreadsheet was used to compile and sort comments significant to each heading (Appendix K), proving invaluable in forming connections and spotting contrasts. This “disentangling” (Flick, 2009) allowed me to see the data afresh, re-describing phenomena to develop concepts from its irreducible properties.

The initial codes from the literature (2.7) were developed, mapped in table form (Appendix I). For example, frequency of pupils’ reading was removed as a discrete code as no data relating to RfP emerged despite its presence in research literature. Retaining the distinction between access and choice became unnecessary and unhelpful, so conflated to explore readers’ freedom and ability to choose material. As the data indicated choice could be a negative or positive element, plus or minus signs were added, flagging difference.

The reader identity theme required stratification: further “splitting” (Saldana, 2016) proved necessary. Analysis was designed deliberately to be inductive: flexible, adaptive and responsive to the data reflecting participants’ opinions. This led to three new codes replacing the original identity label: making connections with texts; self-awareness of reading preferences and processes; judgements about credibility of texts, authors or writing. The separate code of reader community, not represented strongly in the data, was subsumed within book talk.

After the second coding cycle, four themes were established to present and discuss this data. The first, choice, relates to reader’s agency and ability to select engaging material. Connection explores how pupils make links with fiction, stimulating pleasure through engagement. The third theme, credibility, focuses on how analysis forms part of reader response, contributing to engagement. The final theme, conversation, explores how ‘book talk’ supports RfP. The chapter presents data thematically with subdivision where appropriate.

5.2 Choice

“at first I didn’t really like reading books because I didn’t like any of them that I read”
(Mason, interviewed 18/12/18, lines 270 - 271)

A theme common in research literature concerning RfP was exercising choice over reading material (2.7.1): if readers can choose freely from a wide range, individual interests and tastes can be satisfied, engaging and imbuing pleasure. The pupil interviews suggested the situation was not so clear: only some participants expressed dissatisfaction with lack of choice; others enjoyed texts

chosen for them. Being able to connect with fiction trumped choice in enabling RfP (see 5.3). However, readers' widespread comments about difficulty selecting enjoyable books indicated choice was problematic. Data relating to choice is presented under two key headings emerging during coding: attitudes to fiction read in class and pupils' independent reading.

5.2.1 Fiction Read in Class

Research indicated exercising choice of fiction as a significant enabler of RfP (2.7.1) but teachers' perceived curricular priorities, pedagogy and stock availability constrained: these readers had no choice over the selection of novels read in class. Interviews revealed differing attitudes to this.

Willow and Georgia (interviewed 4/12/18) expressed positivity about the two class readers chosen for them in the autumn term. Georgia commented "Oh, I really like them", stressing "really", echoing her positive response to location and character depicted in the Steinbeck extracts (4.1.2). Willow was more enthusiastic about *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) liking it "a lot" but only "quite liked" *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937), indicating her initial imagination engagement with the latter (4.1.2) was not sustained. Lack of choice did not seem to prevent engagement or pleasure suggesting readers aligned somewhat with the implied reader. Gardner's novel offered a mirror via the protagonist's age and adolescent concerns but also a window on a recognisable yet different world, an imaginary England after WWII defeat, potentially inviting readers into this alternative reality (4.3). While Steinbeck's work could also stimulate pleasure from acting as a window, the adult cast reduced its effectiveness as a mirror. The distance between implied and actual reader may prove too large for readers to step through the novel's 'door'. These more limited functions could explain Willow's less favourable reaction.

Natalie, Lanika and Matilde (interviewed 19/12/18) criticised unanimously the limited diet of novels read in class. Natalie wanted "a variety of genres" indicating she was not aligned with the selection. The fiction did not reflect her life, offer a window expanding her experience or invite her to step into their worlds. Connections were not forged. Lanika concurred

I definitely agree with Natalie cos last year and this year so far we've only had one book I've read in the class that wasn't historic at all (Lanika, interviewed 19/12/18, line 374).

It can be assumed "historic" referred to novels set in the past and, despite this representing windows, these were not appealing, possibly perceived irrelevant. The non-contemporary settings did not reflect Lanika's life, contributing to lack of connection, engagement and pleasure.

Matilde echoed the sentiments of her classmates, adding "I'd like to see a range of books – about a wider range of cultures", as this would be "more interesting". As this pupil was of mixed-race heritage (3.3.2), this implied desire for texts acting as mirrors, depicting lives other than white male European in the current selection. It is worth noting choice emerged towards the end of the interview when participants were invited to share other ideas, suggesting this was less of a concern here than for others, explored below. However, strong opinions were evident: they desired choice.

Despite this critique, these pupils (interviewed 19/12/18) found *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) enjoyable, implying other connections were made. The textual analysis task (4.2.2) suggested affinity with character and the natural world, discussed further below (see 5.3). The text acted as a mirror and window to childhood experience rather than alignment between implied and actual reader. Matilde and Lanika's positive comments about *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) endorsed the potential for it to function as MWDs, noted above. While lack of choice was not an insurmountable barrier to engagement, it was desirable, imbuing a sense of agency and widening selection, thus potential for MWDs to be found. During the fieldwork these readers were impeccably behaved and highly engaged, appearing to enjoy English, perhaps explaining the apparent contradiction in attitude as reluctance to criticise their teacher. As the interview data evidenced all read widely outside school, experience and competence could fuel critique, developing awareness of possibilities, leading to recognition of school's limited offer.

The interview with Rory and Mason (18/12/18) also illustrated lack of choice as not necessarily a barrier to engagement and pleasure. When evaluating the novels, Mason responded positively yet succinctly, "I really like them", reinforcing his favourable comments about the extracts (4.1.2). Rory was more thoughtful, seemingly developing interpretation involving comparison as he talked

Rory They do sort of connect because like in *Maggot Moon* they went – they go to school and stuff happens but . . . in *Of Mice and Men* . . . they – the book we're like reading it's not these boys and girls going to school but it's like adults going to work

Int. Yes so it's still about the story of their lives

Rory yes – that's what I like about them

Int. I hadn't thought of them like that before

Rory and they sort of link cos like Lennie – no George looked out for Lennie and then Standish looked out for Hector and Hector looked out for Standish (interviewed 18/12/18, lines 347 – 353).

Rory, despite little alignment with the reader implied in the text (4.1.1), found pleasure through active engagement, interpreting the books as mirrors, making meaning from his perspective. His limited comprehension of the extracts (4.1.2) was either resolved through more extended reading or did not preclude other types of pleasure emerging. As the interview question did not require comparison (Appendix E) this unprompted connection revealed insight and inference. Rory's interpretation involved the affective, recognition of friendship issues, and analytical, conceptualising comparison of the two different worlds presented. His comments contradict the lack of inference seen in the textual analysis (4.1.2), confounding somewhat expectations of a pupil diagnosed with a reading age of 8 years 5 months (3.3.3; see also 4.4), highlighting the limitations of such assessments and the value of talk in developing response to fiction (see 5.5).

Rose and Ellie conveyed contrasting opinions about choice (interviewed 11/12/18). Rose judged *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) “a good book”, inevitable as it’s “almost like it’s a tradition” in the school. Its position in the curriculum and school acted to confer status, perhaps predisposing Rose to it, initially appearing more important than MWD. Its limited appeal was evident in her reservation and comments about its suitability for her age group as well as her textual analysis (4.1.2). She recognised aspects of its quality but failed to connect with it

if you were like Year 11 or Year 10 you were actually a bit older so they could understand the language that the writer uses because some of the time we’re really confused as to what’s going on as it’s like such old language (Rose, interviewed 11/12/18, lines 321 – 324).

There was a lack of alignment between implied and actual reader: the problem-solving required for comprehension was too great, impeding engagement. Her evaluation of the language was perplexing as Steinbeck’s prose style is pared down, relatively straightforward. As Rose’s comment was followed immediately by Elle referring to dialogue, implying she was also talking about this aspect rather than the narrational style. The “old” language impeded Rose’s understanding, curtailing connection with character and ability to follow the narrative. This impaired the text functioning as mirror and window, impeding engagement and pleasure. Nonetheless, Rose judged *Of Mice and Men* positively despite these issues suggesting pleasure emerged from the analytical domain, appreciation of its curricular status, rather than from affective response.

Ellie was clear she would have found pleasure exerting agency over selection: “we should have an option” (interviewed 11/12/18). She felt the novels chosen for class did not reflect her interests, borne out by her lukewarm response to the extracts (4.2.2). The textual analysis did reveal some imaginative engagement with location but only limited (4.1.2). Her current preference was books as windows, providing “insight into someone’s life” and, in particular, those with a WWII setting

I’ve always been interested in stuff like that - I’ve always wanted to live in the war - there’s something about it (Ellie, interviewed 11/12/18, lines 30 - 32).

Interest in this specific context was perhaps an unusual predilection for a pre-pubescent girl but, as it followed on from her friend Rose’s comments about *The Diary of a Young Girl* (Frank, 1947), perhaps not. The shared interests and subsequent conversation supported engagement, enabling further pleasure (see 5.5). For Ellie, desire to experience this period first-hand could lead to further pleasure whereby the text presents a doorway through which the reader can step, imaginatively transporting herself into that world.

Bearing in mind Ellie’s preferences, *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012), should have been enjoyable, an alternative history with a WWII setting exploring the challenges of wartime life. However, she was unequivocal in her judgement of the novel: “I find it so boring because it’s not – not a real story” (interviewed 11/12/18). Despite providing a window on her preferred WWII setting, Ellie was unimpressed by its fictional nature, judging this undermining credibility, impairing engagement. As she enjoyed *The Immortals* (Lister, 2016) which the blurb describes it as a time travelling fantasy, expectations appeared important. Ellie’s dislike of one book as it’s “not a real story” and enjoyment from another with characters reincarnated multiple times, suggested

engagement and pleasure limited by simplistic genre expectations. She appeared to be reading Gardner's novel analytically, judging its documentary veracity rather than responding affectively: the lack of simultaneity of these modes impaired engagement.

Comments by pupils about fiction read in class indicated exerting choice was secondary to experiencing material readers could connect with. For pleasure to result, implied and actual reader do not need to be aligned and engagement could be stimulated by fiction acting as mirror or window or door. Connection rooted in readers' lived experience, was an essential precursor and involved affective and analytical domains.

5.2.2 Pupils' Independent Reading

A second strand, choice of independent reading material, emerged from the data. Exercising choice over fiction consumed independently impacted significantly on engagement. An overview of books pupils referred to specifically is included (Appendix M). Book selection was influenced by familiarity with authors and alignment with individual interest, reflecting the importance of connection whether from function as mirror, window or door. Pupils also reported making selection challenging.

Willow and Georgia (interviewed 4/12/18) noted writers were key when selecting independent reading. Willow chose her most recent novel by "a famous author" as she had "read other books by him". Expectations of interest in and connection with this writer's opus were established, and repeated pleasure anticipated.

Similarly, Georgia chose a book "because I really liked her first book" (interviewed 4/12/18). She sought further pleasure in pursuing the familiar but an evaluative element was also at work

because I liked how she connected with the characters and stuff and I wanted to see if she did that in other books (Georgia, interviewed 4/12/18, lines 206 - 207).

Engagement was stimulated by emotional reaction to character, but also critique of the writer's craft. Implicit was the novel reflecting her experience and she sought another 'window', to 'enlarge experience' (2.5.5) demonstrating entwining of affective and analytical response, explored further below (see 5.4). Freedom to follow interests did not always locate engaging books. Previously, she tried to widen her repertoire, explaining, "I kept telling myself that I liked different types of books" but this led to "very boring" reading. Her choices were not aligned to her interests and failed to offer any MWD. However, while engagement and pleasure was impaired, Georgia's perseverance with 'trial and error' selection developed a more confident, assured understanding of preferences. She acknowledged retrospectively it would have been better to embrace "actually liking the genre I did" but her enhanced reader awareness resulted in subsequent success in selection, stimulating pleasure.

Matilde reported no problem in finding independent reading, reflecting reader self-awareness. She referred to "just finishing the eighth book of the *Series of Unfortunate Events*" (interviewed 19/12/18). Continued engagement with the series indicated enduring engagement stimulated by some mirroring of the reader's life through characters of a similar age. The realistic yet Gothic setting

offered a window on the familiar and fantastic, as well as potential for vicarious adventures, battling dastardly villains.

Across the interview, Matilde's comments indicated she was a prolific reader who enjoyed a wide range of fiction but was currently following a series. Every other pupil interviewed mentioned series fiction; its popularity with this age group explored below.

In contrast, Lanika and Natalie appeared less confident, confessing difficulty selecting appealing material (interviewed 19/12/18). Natalie talked about being "a bit stuck on finding a book", describing revisiting works previously enjoyed: "I like to read and re-read [the] books". Lanika, aware choice had become problematic, sounded mournful: "I don't really find books that I like any more" (interviewed 19/12/18). Part of the problem, it transpired, was the local library's introduction of a fifty pence charge for book requests. This restricted Lanika's access and choice: "I ordered a lot of books – ten books at a time or so". It is hard to believe existing stock in both public and school libraries held no appeal. Therefore, it could be extrapolated autonomy and freedom were the issue rather than range.

Characterising her current reading as "the basic sort of teen books" (Lanika, interviewed 19/12/18), she spoke enthusiastically about a novel "so weird and wonderful", Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2014). This modern fable was far from basic, defying traditional genre conventions to weave a dark, mythic and enigmatic fantasy. The apparent disparity between Lanika's description of her interests and this novel highlight the nuanced nature of alignment and diverse connections possible. Narrated by an adult, its recount of events could be engaging through its reflection of childhood. The text world is captured with verisimilitude but contains magic and paradox, offering potentially both a window and door. Lanika's comments also revealed the challenge of articulating reading preferences. Readers of all ages may not have the vocabulary to explain adequately but younger readers do not have the accumulated reading history of adults nor the self-awareness that could help selecting books they would enjoy, impinging on engagement.

Lanika (interviewed 19/12/18) offered critique of the school library's use of the *Accelerated Reader* program, colour coding books according to reading age. Pupils were tasked with reading books in their colour category which dissatisfied Lanika: "I think you should just read what you like". With a reading age of 15 years, Lanika had the second highest score of the participants with access all categories: accessibility was not the key objection but the principle. As this echoed her feelings about the public library, Lanika's sense of agency played a role in RfP even before covers were opened. It is a pity a program designed to stimulate reading appeared to neither support reader development nor selection leading to engagement and pleasure.

The interview with Rory and Mason (18/12/18) illustrated deliberate choices made about independent reading material. Both pupils were sufficiently well read to be able to identify preferred genres. Rory defined his fiction preferences initially via a negative "I don't like any books about dragons or like – I like stuff that's realistic". Alignment was predicated on familiarity with engagement and pleasure emerging from fiction acting as a mirror. Awareness of preference belied his

confession at the outset of the interview, “I don’t really like books”. He didn’t see himself as a reader but comments across the interview indicated otherwise. The dissonance between Rory’s self-image and that of a reader could result in a less participation in reading activity, inhibiting his development.

Rory (interviewed 18/12/18) engaged with and gained pleasure from the many books in *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series (Kinney, 2004), not only as they reflected his lived experience, but also as they aligned with his ability, not making reading “work”. He followed the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series (Kinney, 2004) as “they’re not too hard for me and not too easy” indicating awareness of his capabilities as a reader. He seemed unwilling to risk moving onto more challenging material. Currently, he gained pleasure from a ‘comfortable’ level of reading along with the familiarity offered by series fiction. Further encouragement and support to choose suitably interesting and challenging material would help widen his repertoire, enlarging experience and opening possibilities for future pleasure.

Mason expressed genre preference (interviewed 18/12/18): “crime books and science fiction”. Like Lanika, Mason was clear about the link between choice and pleasure

I didn’t really like reading books because I didn’t like any of them that I read (Mason, interviewed 18/12/18, lines 270 - 271).

This problem diminished when he followed series, discovering several to his taste including *Scarlet Traces* (Edington, 2003), *Northern Lights* (Pullman, 1998) and the Alex Rider books (Horowitz, 2003). These books could act as mirrors with protagonists of Mason’s age, but also stimulate engagement from presenting views of familiar worlds where unexpected events occur. All were quest narratives offering vicarious experience of danger, excitement and adventure. Anticipation of repeated pleasures motivated him to continue reading but the challenge of choice was only temporarily solved.

Like Lanika and Natalie, Ellie and Rose (interviewed 11/12/18) reported having difficulty choosing material. Rose described adult assistance: her aunt gifted a book she enjoyed; her mother had bought others from a series begun. Adults’ knowledge of the reader resulted in books chosen which aligned with her interests, supporting RfP temporarily but not developing autonomy with choice.

Ellie (interviewed 11/12/18) was aware discovering a series was appealing as it provided a solution to the challenges of selecting material

I always find it hard to find books in the library because . . . I like reading series – a series of books because it’s like then you have the next one planned out (Ellie, interviewed 11/12/18, lines 356 - 357).

That every pupil referred to reading series fiction was significant. While some of the appeal can be accounted for in terms of alignment and familiarity of character and setting, its solution to the problem of selecting the next book needs recognition. The data provided evidence that most readers needed help exercising choice: it is limited in value if readers do not possess skills to select fiction they can connect with, supporting engagement. Ellie made it clear what difference finding the right book can make

I love my book so much I don't want to put it down and I've never done this before where I get my book out at the end of the day I never do that but because I've got this book . . . I feel that I've matured (Ellie, interviewed 11/12/18, lines 656 - 660).

Her quick delivery coupled with the use of verb "love" conveyed enthusiasm for reading. Ellie saw becoming immersed in reading as developmental and was pleased to have reached this stage.

The data suggested pupils were open-minded and receptive towards the novels chosen for them to read with only some dissatisfied with the lack of choice. Readers' ability to connect with the reading emerged as more important than choice. While freedom appeared somewhat desirable, young readers found exercising choice challenging and needed further support. The data emphasised reading widely helped pupils to develop critical judgement, subsequently supporting future selection more likely to engage (see 5.4). How connection with fiction influences pleasure is considered next.

5.3 Connection

"but I want to know what's going on in his head"
(Ellie, interviewed 11/12/18, line 587)

While research literature established a link between choice and pleasure (2.7.1), my data indicated more significant was fiction selected *must* facilitate connection between reader and text. The pupil interviews evidenced connection rooted in readers' own experiences, echoing the textual analysis (4.1.2; 4.2.2), but stimulated in various ways. Pupils referenced a range of core elements of fictional texts (i.e. plot, character, setting and genre) but the frequent, affective comment about character indicated this was central to RfP. However, there was further evidence of analysis integrated with affective in reader response.

5.3.1 Character and Engagement

Rory (interviewed 18/12/18) stated early on "I don't really like books" proceeding to talk in some detail about several he had read. In particular, he discussed, and displayed detailed knowledge of, the series *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2004). While its appeal lay partially in the humour of the writing, "I just like [it] because it's like . . . funny" (line 65), Rory talked about the protagonist

it's not really a hero – it's just like a normal kid . . . that goes to school every day and like . . . he doesn't like going outdoors. He likes staying in playing games (interviewed 18/12/18, lines 113 – 114).

Whether consciously or not, Rory described the character in self-referential terms. The central character in the series reflected Rory: "a normal kid" who "goes to school". Rory offered other comparison

I feel that a lot of the books that I read . . . they're always like . . . a boy – a boy or a girl who has a friend who goes to school (Rory interviewed 18/12/18, line 184).

Opportunity to talk about reading appeared to increase his awareness of preferences, and how fiction reflected his experience (see 5.5). Inference leading to this type of connection was also evident in the textual analysis (4.1.2). Comparison enabled connection, imbuing engagement from presentation

of the familiar, motivating more reading of the series (see 5.2.2). Rory's assertion to not like books was contradicted by the data but, for whatever reason, he did not identify as a reader. While this was not a barrier to RfP without some redress, this lack of alignment may result in future reduction of reading, diminishing engagement, further reinforcing Rory's view that he was not a reader.

Mason, interviewed with Rory (18/12/18), was also negative about reading: "I don't actually do reading outside of school". However, like Rory, Mason's comments revealed frequent fiction reading in and outside school. Mason referred to connecting with characters but his engagement emerged from a different source. Rather than seeing the protagonist as a reflection of himself and his life, Mason referred to stepping into the protagonist's shoes: "I tend to imagine just like what's it's like as the character" (interviewed 18/12/18). For Mason, fiction appealed as it presented windows on different worlds, inviting reader to imaginatively step into the book through its 'door'. This interaction was also evident in the textual analysis (4.1.2). He referred to particular series: a sci-fi gothic graphic novel series, *Scarlet Traces* (Edington, 2003), and the Alex Rider thrillers (Horowitz, 2000). The first could be described as a Victorian/Martian mash-up with adult characters and a world quite distinct from Mason's own. The protagonist in the latter series reflected more closely Mason's age and context but the plots like James Bond adventures, present unfamiliar, dangerous and often exotic locations. The familiar aspects enabled connection through verisimilitude with the unknown stimulated pleasure from offering a door, shown in his bold claim "I can be any character I want to be pretty much". While connection with character enabled engagement for both Mason and Rory, it had different stimuli.

Georgia, like Rory, referred to a protagonist reflecting her age and gender but not favourably (interviewed 4/12/18): the main character in *Ketchup Clouds* (Pilcher, 2013a) was "boring". The contemporary setting and murder plot did not compensate by offering pleasure as window or door: "It was just err not very exciting". Georgia's choice was deliberate as "I really liked her first book", but engagement was not stimulated, indicating that, on this occasion, the mirror aspect alone was not sufficient. However, she was engaged by connection with character in *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) despite its historical and geographical distance

I really liked how you know the author sort of emphasised like . . . the way their relationship was. Like it was kind of like – I just – I know this sounds weird but I kind of like how complicated it was because then you thought about it a lot and I like books that make you think about stuff (Georgia, interviewed 4/12/18, line 296).

The novel did not act directly as a mirror or door but prompted a connection by offering a window on complex adult relationships: a level of maturity Rory, perhaps, had yet to reach. Her intrigue at Steinbeck's use of animal imagery in the textual analysis (4.2.2) displayed similar appreciation of characterisation. Thus, while not aligned with the reader implied in the text, Georgia found pleasure in affective engagement with relationships and the intellectual stimulation presented. Her later comment, "I like books to be different to real life", indicated comparison influenced this reader's response, with new 'views' desirable. As the murder plot in Pilcher's novel did not fulfil this, other

connections were necessary to engage but not found. What constitutes 'difference' was revealed as highly nuanced and personalised.

Willow shared Georgia's interest in the characters' relationship (interviewed 4/12/18): "I did quite like . . . the way George acted with Lennie". The addition of the adverb "quite" indicated a less enthusiastic view, perhaps a sign of peer agreement rather than genuine positivity, supported by her "meh" response to the extracts (4.1.2). Overall, she had less to say about the novel than Georgia, lending weight to this interpretation. However, forging connection with character appeared significant in Willow's choice of independent reading. Discussing *Release* (Ness, 2017) she noted

his books involve LGBTQ characters cos I've read like a few others because I think he really supports that stuff (interviewed 4/12/18, line 63).

Willow sought other texts by this author anticipating a similar cast representing the appeal of windows onto diverse experience

I just thought it was different because not many people – not many books have characters that are actually . . . part of that like thing (Willow, interviewed 4/12/18, line 398).

The relative novelty of these representations was enjoyable but the challenge to heteronormativity could offer another connection. Whether derived from Ness's books acting as mirror, window or door, it was clear Georgia's engagement emerged from character.

Natalie and Matilde, interviewed together (19/12/18), revealed connecting with characters engaged but also vexed. Natalie enjoyed *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Snicket, 2012), "I like how you can get to know the characters", but this connection led to disappointment. She commented, "I kind of wish we'd got to know more about the villain's backstory". The text acted as a window but lack of detail meant this was not enjoyable, failing to satisfy her current needs. The connection was not sufficient for her to fill the gaps.

Matilde talked about *The Bunker Diary* (Brooks, 2013) initially in terms of plot: "I enjoy not knowing what's going to happen" (interviewed 19/12/18) but moved on to character. Like Natalie, Matilde seemed to desire further connection: "I sort of wanted to see at least one of the characters survive"; "see what would happen if the characters went in the elevator". The reader connected with character, developing empathy and desire to follow their story, enjoying speculation and anticipating revelation. This connection appeared absent from her interaction with the Steinbeck extracts (4.2.2), due to limited amount of text or perhaps lack of alignment with the reader implied in the text (4.1.1). When Brooks' narrative arc curtailed this engagement, pleasure was impaired with her needs not satisfied. Comments about the class novel, *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) echoed this

Matilde I enjoyed Maggot Moon. Everyone says Standish dies but I think maybe he didn't

Int. and why do you think that?

Matilde because he was just . . . about to die and he was just hallucinating and that other stuff but he might have still gotten back afterwards (Matilde, interviewed 19/12/18, lines 287 – 290).

Matilde appeared immersed in the world presented through the window of the text, connected via the protagonist and not achieved in Steinbeck's novel (4.2.2). This led to an invented continuation of the story, demonstrating imagination, engagement and understanding of narrative construction. The pause in her comment could indicate, in the process of articulating her reasoning, hitherto unconscious knowledge was activated. Engagement resulted from her stepping into the text but not positioning herself as a character within it but by becoming author. This creativity was evidence of problem-solving in action: she liked "the way you sort of have to figure out", resolving tensions and building individual interpretation. Matilde shifted from pleasure prompted by character connection to the analytical and creative work of writing. Other readers may not be able to make sense of the conundrum, circumventing frustration by re-writing the text. What imbued pleasure for Matilde might alienate another reader, leading to a sense of failure.

In the same interview (19/12/18), Lanika commented on the unclear ending to Gaiman's dark fable, relating this to character: "I didn't really know what happened to Lottie". Like Matilde, her connection with character led to dissatisfaction with lack of detail with anticipation not fulfilled

I felt like there was a second book. Definitely that would be better if he wanted to end it like that to have a second book but I don't think there is a second book (Lanika, interviewed 19/12/18, lines 119 – 121).

While Lanika, to some extent aligned with the reader implied in the text, forging strong connection with character, this provoked limited engagement. Shifting from affective response, wishing to know Lottie's fate, to evaluative whereby she speculated about reasons for the perceived omissions appeared to contribute other pleasures. Her forgiving demeanour suggesting strong connection can compensate for perceived shortcomings. While frustration about the ending remained, it was not an insurmountable barrier to engagement. The repetition of "second book" implied Lanika was keen to read a sequel, anticipating future enjoyment.

Across Rose's interview (11/12/18), she mentioned "connecting" with characters seven times, underlining its significance to her. The textual analysis indicated she forged little initial connection with Steinbeck's character perhaps explaining her analytical critique (4.1.2). Both novels read in class had a relatively small number of characters but this did not seem to encourage affinity despite her applauding this in *River of Ink* (Dennis, 2014). She commented negatively on Gardner's novel

I didn't feel that I really connected with any of the characters. I think the one that I connected to most was Gramps because it reminded me of my grandad but that was about it (Rose interviewed 11/12/18, lines 435 – 437).

This novel was Young Adult Literature (YAL), written for and marketed at teenagers. The implied reader relates to the protagonist, Standish Treadwell and he mirrored Rose in age and adolescent concerns but, she couldn't connect with him, perhaps needing closer alignment from character and setting. However, she established a link between Standish's grandfather and her own but this was insufficient to result in fulfilment. Alignment between implied and actual reader did not engage.

Rose's inability to connect with Standish could result from her current preference for non-fiction (5.2.2) but her comment, "we didn't really see inside Standish's head" (interviewed 11/12/18), suggested narrational style also mattered. Perhaps Gardner employed Brechtian alienation,

distancing protagonist and reader, to encourage a more critical stance towards character. In this case, however, it appeared to have just alienated. Rose compared *Wonder* (Palacio, 2013) where “you get an insight into every single person’s way of thinking”, implying increased engagement. This implicit criticism of *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) indicated Rose was unable or unwilling to exercise her imagination, developing these perspectives for herself: she expected the writer to do this work for her. The lack of connection prevented her from embarking on a rewriting like *Matilde* or forgiving shortcomings like *Lanika*.

Rose and Ellie (interviewed 11/12/18) exchanged ideas about the limitations of the narrational style in *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). Their many positive comments about the novel across the interview indicated engagement and pleasure overall despite these perceived flaws

Ellie Umm I think what would have been better for *Of Mice and Men* was if they did parts from George’s point of view, from Lennie’s, like from Curley. I think that would have been so much more interesting.

Rose yes

Ellie because you get to think what Curley’s wife was thinking the moment when Lennie did that thing and when Lennie – what was going through Lennie’s head because obviously he did have a mental issue . . . so . . .

Int. You didn’t hear enough about George’s view either

Ellie No, and I feel that I needed to know what he was thinking

Int. Why do you think you needed to know?

Ellie because we can’t really judge on why she – why he did it if you weren’t inside his head when he did it because . . . obviously we know that George told him not to get into trouble and stuff like that but we didn’t know what was going on in his head saying – what he was telling himself – like why he decided to carry on like touching her hair and we need George’s point of view – what – why he felt so angry so we assume it’s because he was smaller than other people weaker . . . but I wanted to know

Rose maybe there’s something in the past that

Ellie yeah

Rose maybe like Lennie didn’t know this but he’s done something that’s hurt his family or hurt him or something as well (Rose and Ellie interviewed 11/12/18, lines 538 – 557).

Ellie connected with character but conveyed frustration at the limited details, like *Natalie* and *Matilde*: the window did not provide a satisfying depiction. Inability to align with the novel’s implied reader meant she could not fill the gaps with the confusion experienced in the textual analysis continuing (4.1.2). However, analytical response was evident alongside affective. Evaluation of George’s character led to recognition his anger was important but not explained to her satisfaction: she desired more information to support her interpretation. While connection existed, it was not sufficiently strong to provoke rewriting of the text, like *Matilde* and *Lanika*. However, Rose’s

speculation about George's past illustrated she was beginning to. Pleasure prompted by this creativity perhaps influenced Rose's judgement this was "a good book" overall. There was a delicate balance between being told and having space to imagine which impacted on engagement. Rose's later annoyance at the lack of focus on Candy after the shooting of his dog emphasised this.

Rose and Ellie's exchange (interviewed 11/12/18) indicated different connections with character, resulting in dissimilar levels of engagement. Ellie's observations about the narrational style of *Wonder* (Palacio, 2013) added further complexity. She stated the multiple perspectives

annoyed me because it was like I didn't know what was happening properly. Like I understood it's from his sister's point of view I understand that she found it hard with her brother cos he always had the attention but – I'm just like . . . the book was about him (Ellie interviewed 11/12/18, lines 574 – 577).

The detailed perspectives found wanting in Steinbeck's writing, although present in this book, did not result in engagement. Here, they detracted from the character Ellie perceived as the protagonist, inhibiting connection thus impairing pleasure. Narrational style could help or hinder connection, but these readers appeared to require a trustworthy guide through the text. Multiple or refracted storylines and unreliable narrators seemed difficult for these readers, bringing too much uncertainty and undermining engagement.

The extent to which lack of connection impacted on pleasure was illustrated by Ellie's repeated desire to "know" more about Steinbeck's characters (interviewed 11/12/18) expressed four times in quick succession

I needed to know what he [George] was thinking
I wanted to know [about George's feelings]
I want to know how Candy feels
I want to know what's going on in his [Candy's] head.

This affective connection suggested some alignment between implied and actual reader, with Ellie keen to see more from characters' perspective, developing understanding, but it was insufficient to engage. Response moved into analysis, identifying narrational style as probable cause of her inability to understand, connect and enjoy. The repetition of "I want to know" indicated frustration about the dearth of detail, impinging on pleasure. For Ellie, the problem-solving required to fill the gaps was too challenging, thus off-putting. She could not, like Matilde, find pleasure in uncertainty or by creating an alternative version.

5.4 Credibility

"I was definitely enjoying the book because it was definitely well written"
(Lanika interviewed 19/12/18, line 310).

The interview data indicated readers' sense of connection with text had potential to engage with character revealed as significant, and not prevalent in existing research (2.7). Forging connection incorporated affective and evaluative response with this was emphasised by another strand in the data: readers' judgement about the credibility of fiction. They articulated perceptions of the quality of writing and the 'authenticity' of setting, also raised in the textual analysis (4.2.2). If fiction was deemed credible, engagement was more likely to follow. Most interesting was the

suggestion that, where text was judged credible, readers would continue reading, despite confusion or perceived shortcomings of the narrative, with pleasure possible. Comments are divided into the writer's craft and setting.

5.4.1 Writer's Craft

Most participants shared judgements about the credibility of fiction based on the quality of the writing. Matilde (interviewed 19/12/18) conveyed reservations about characterisation in *The Bunker Diary* (Brooks, 2013) but enjoyed it as "the ending was still written quite well". *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) was evaluated similarly: it was "written really well" as Steinbeck "did a lot of show don't tell". This could reflect recent classwork focused on descriptive writing but, as this critique was not mentioned by others, individual evaluation was indicated. Inferential appraisal was also evident in the textual analysis, where she predicted plot (4.2.2). The perceived quality of the writing allowed Matilde to be immersed in the narrative, responding affectively to the view 'shown' through the window of the text. The writer's depiction was deemed convincing by Matilde, indicating alignment between implied and actual reader, despite the temporal and cultural distance. The critical awareness involved in the interaction could have occurred during reading or retrospectively, but regardless, it appeared to contribute to engagement.

Rory (interviewed 18/12/18) articulated independent judgements about credibility, displaying confidence and sufficiently wide reading to enable comparison between books. This evaluative skill was evident in the questions posed about the extracts (4.1.2). Here, his recommendation of *Wonder* (Palacio, 2013) to Mason, demonstrated critical appraisal, initially endorsing it as "quite a good book" then a more positive "It's a good book. You should [read it]". It was not clear whether this judgement was rooted in the quality of the writing or something else but Rory's growing enthusiasm was shown through more acclaim: "it's brilliant"; "I just think it's a really good book". It is important to note this pupil claimed to not like books (5.3) but here displayed affective and evaluative response, indicating engagement and pleasure. These two pupils were not friends and so the recommendation displayed unexpected confidence.

Natalie (interviewed 19/12/18) expressed desire to make her own judgements about credibility. She recounted conversations about the films of the Harry Potter books (Rowling, 1997)

my mum was always moaning that they took so much out of the book so I was like 'what did they take out of the book?' so then I decided to start reading them (Natalie, interviewed 19/12/18, lines 221 - 2).

She was motivated to read, experiencing books first-hand, enabling comparison with film version. Natalie appeared to anticipate engagement from exercising analytical, comparative judgement with the affective reduced in priority or taken for granted. Criticism of Steinbeck's vocabulary in the textual analysis (4.2.2) provided another example. This evaluative purpose encouraged Natalie to extend her reading repertoire and practise independent response, with other pleasures possible.

Georgia's judgements about credibility appeared to impact engagement. Plot elements were raised as unconvincing (interviewed 4/12/18). The protagonist in *Ketchup Clouds* (Pilcher, 2013a) serving a prison sentence, writes to an inmate in another institution, perplexing Georgia

writing to someone in prison you know surely the police would start tracking her because she was confessing stuff (Georgia interviewed 4/12/18, line 164 - 5).

She employed logic to analyse the plot, comparing the fictional representation to her experience, finding it not entirely plausible as a mirror or window. Georgia proceeded to give more detail about what she deemed flawed

and the fact that prisoners had pen pals in the first place was a little bit odd [laughs] but you know it was a good story (Georgia interviewed 4/12/18, lines 169 – 170).

The appraisal of overall quality allowed her to put doubts aside, forgiving or overlooking these issues, not negatively impacting engagement or pleasure. Interpreting “green” pejoratively in the textual analysis (4.1.2) displayed this ability, too.

Mason (interviewed 18/12/18), like Georgia, raised doubts about plot. He queried an episode in *Eagle Strike* (Horowitz, 2003)

one of the characters like made a game and then they – they made a giant version of it in real life (Mason interviewed 18/12/18, line 93).

He continued, “I just don’t know how they would have done that”. Asking ‘how’ rather than ‘why’, indicated his puzzlement related to logic. The building of the life-size maze seemed unlikely and impractical. Nonetheless, the pleasure reported suggested this was not insurmountable. The perceived credibility was sufficiently strong to allow suspension of disbelief.

Lanika (interviewed 19/12/18) made an explicit link between evaluation of the writing quality and engagement

I was definitely enjoying [Maggot Moon] because it was definitely well written but I was also so confused about what was happening (Lanika, interviewed 19/12/18, lines 308 - 9).

The repetition of “definitely” indicated confidence about judgement and feelings. The perceived quality of the writing superseded imbuing pleasure despite confusion. The comprehension problem indicated implied and actual reader were not aligned but Lanika’s evaluation the book was well written led to her putting this to one side, not preventing engagement. Lanika made similar comments about *The Bunker Diary* (Brooks, 2013): “I think the whole book was puzzling – that’s the whole point of the book”. Perhaps convincing and immersive fictional worlds allowed Lanika to compartmentalise lack of understanding rather than finding this alienating. Complexity seemed to bestow credibility, too. Lanika expected to enjoy quality writing, predisposing her to the work however challenging. The confusion suggested implied and actual reader were not aligned but this did not prevent engagement, with the interplay of affective and analytical response acting as an enabler. Although Rose and Ellie made no reference to credibility when interviewed, their textual analysis did demonstrate evaluation in action (4.1.2; 4.2.2). When considered alongside the evidence from the other participants that favourable judgements about quality contribute to pleasure, this represents an important finding.

5.4.2 Settings

Pupils also talked about credibility of settings. Readers made judgements about the veracity of fictional worlds against empirical evidence or known facts, regardless of verisimilitude.

Lanika, Matilde and Natalie (interviewed 19/12/18) saw fictional settings bringing new understanding to readers as credible. Lanika placed high value on books exploring “how to deal with situations”, either by acting as mirrors, reflecting their situation or more implicitly by presenting windows on experiences yet to come. Having recently moved into the area (3.3.2), she talked about *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece* (Pilcher, 2013b) begun at her previous school

Lanika and the dad was really racist against Muslims and stuff and obviously because I’m a Muslim I thought that maybe – I hadn’t read the whole book but I thought – I was pretty sure that something would happen with the Muslim person and the people who were like ‘hey Muslims are bad’ and I felt like that definitely be better as a class reader

Int. because it deals with contemporary themes? Your life?

Lanika Yes. I haven’t had anyone be deliberately racist to me but I’ve seen people say racist stuff but they don’t even realise they’re being racist but a book like that can help you understand ‘hey like I’m being a bit racist and it should stop’. Yeah. (interviewed 19/12/18, lines 384 – 391).

The setting of the book reflected some aspects of Lanika’s experience, imbuing credibility while supporting connection (5.3). It operated also as a window showing new scenarios such as direct racism, inviting speculation about possibilities. Through comparing her experiences to that depicted, Lanika was engaged by developing knowledge. Awareness of narrative conventions was illustrated by Lanika’s prediction and moral extrapolation. Her generous and tolerant observation, people “don’t even realise they’re being racist”, implied underlying belief that fiction can assist personal development (2.4).

Matilde (interviewed 19/12/18) deemed fictional settings distinct from her own credible: “It’s just more interesting to know about other cultures”. Like Lanika, Matilde valued fiction which widened her experience, providing windows on different worlds with the textual analysis extracts appearing to do so (4.1.2). As Matilde was bilingual, not English by birth and educated partly in another European country (3.3.2), she could be seeking representation of her cosmopolitan background in fiction. Comparative evaluation of her life and that presented in fiction had engaged previously and underpinned recognition of the narrow reading diet offered by her English school.

Natalie (interviewed 19/12/18) echoed Matilde’s view that credible texts employed settings other than England, and more diverse than Steinbeck’s America

I think we should do like an adventure story like someone travelling around a certain continent or area of the world . . . and erm yeah I think it’s interesting to read a book where it’s not just one environment really. It’s in multiple environments so see how they can cope with that (Natalie interviewed 19/12/18, lines 403 – 406).

Wishing to ‘see how they cope’ indicated she also valued texts that led to new understanding with the adventure genre engaging the reader by acting as a window, inviting speculation and prediction, as

well as vicariously imagined being in the action. The intrigue and inference evident in the textual analysis task (4.1.2; 4.2.2) offers further exemplification.

For Willow (interviewed 4/12/18), credibility appeared influenced by the endorsement of other readers rather than setting. She followed others' recommendations, widening her repertoire

sometimes if people tell me 'oh this is a good book' that I will read it and even if I don't like it, I'll carry on reading it cos like they told me it was good (Willow interviewed 4/12/18, lines 332 - 3).

Endorsement bestowed credibility and motivated reading "even if I don't like it". Willow seemed able to overlook her affective reaction, instead reading to complete her own appraisal. As this prioritised evaluation, pleasure appeared stimulated by comparison, critique and completion.

Ellie and Rose (interviewed 11/12/18) assessed by veracity, finding autobiography and non-fiction more credible than fiction. Ellie noted a negative aspect of *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) was "it wasn't factual. It was a made up Germany – an alternative". Her judgement, dissonant with the genre, suggested an 'unyielding' stance with misattribution of location showing lack of alignment between implied and actual reader. Engagement with the text acting as a window was undermined by its fictitious nature

they've taken something that did happen and they've turned it around and that shows to me – it's like they're lying to me (Ellie interviewed 11/12/18, lines 86 - 7).

Ellie was employing analytical response but this demonstrated an undeveloped sense of genre, encompassing binary categorisation. Factual writing was considered to be "truth" and so more credible, favourably received, stimulating pleasure. The appraisal, "lying" (see also 5.3), a literal response to the novel, suggested blurred genre was challenging. The level of uncertainty posed by the novel was beyond what Ellie could tolerate. This was echoed by her earlier judgement of *The Diary of a Young Girl* (Frank, 1947): "that's what's interesting about it – because they've lived it. It's not made up". Ellie's assessment of text credibility impacted on engagement.

Rose (interviewed 11/12/18) shared Ellie's views, agreeing *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) lacked credibility as it's "by an author not by somebody there". She proceeded to critique its proximity to documented events

I feel that like with *Maggot Moon* a lot of the time you're really confused as to what's going on and also it's way too close to the actual history (Rose interviewed 11/12/18, lines 428 – 429).

It was not clear if Rose's confusion was directly related to the fictional plot's relationship with real events but the juxtaposition of ideas was suggestive. While in theory Y8 readers were most aligned to this novel (4.3.2) this was not the reality nor did it engage everyone.

These criticisms were not levelled at *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937), the other class reader. Like *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012), the novel is set in a specific historical period but neither Rose nor Ellie critiqued lack of veracity, perhaps reflecting knowledge insufficient to support such a judgement and its canonical status. This inconsistency demonstrated different evaluative frameworks being used to assess credibility and compounded by evidence of negative appraisal of Steinbeck's writing in the textual analysis (4.1.2; 4.2.2). However, Rose deemed it "a good book"

overall (see also 5.3), illustrating how individual, context dependent and mutable reader response can be. One text presenting a window on temporally and geographically distant situations was credible and engaging yet another contained ‘lies’ precluding pleasure.

Georgia appraised fiction as credible if it offered cognitive and imaginative stimuli. She valued books that

help you experience well you know imagine what it’s like to experience a different kind of life (Georgia interviewed 4/12/18, line 365 - 6).

Fiction acted as a window or a door, showing the reader alternatives, with engagement derived from imaginative speculation, considering possibilities and scenarios, or vicarious experience, echoing Lanika’s point about texts that teach, above. When discussing the appeal of alternative histories like *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012), Georgia was explicit about pleasure

I just love the fact that the writer’s just sat and thought ‘what if ’ you know – what if the world was completely different and you know I love thinking like that (Georgia interviewed 4/12/18, lines 271 - 3).

Credible fiction resonated with her, reflecting her experience. The importance of detail in credibility was demonstrated in Georgia’s textual analysis (4.2.2). Connection was evident in her subsequent comment: “When I was little and stuff all those little games like what if I was blind”. Georgia’s engagement was prompted by a sense of empirical authenticity while different than that espoused by Ellie and Rose illustrated again how evaluation integrated with affective response, both contributing to pleasure.

Readers’ perceptions of credibility were based on various factors including writing quality, other readers’ views and ‘authenticity’ of setting indicated the personalised nature of response. While Rory and Mason did not refer to credibility, data from the other participants results in an assertion that engagement derives from affective and analytical interaction with fiction. The relationship between engagement and talking about books is explored in more detail in the next section.

5.5 Conversation

“oh I think I’ve seen a film of this” (Rose interviewed 11/12/18, line 114)

The final theme extrapolated from the pupil interview data, conversation, entwined with previous themes of this study and reflected findings from extant research indicating ‘booktalk’ supports RfP (2.7.3). Peer book recommendations supported choice by identifying fiction offering MWD, matching interest and ability (5.2). Sharing response had potential to narrow the gap between implied and actual reader, informing interpretation, strengthening connection and possibly discovering new links. Data relating to conversation is presented under two headings: supporting choice and connection; developing interpretation.

5.5.1 Supporting Choice and Connection

The data evidenced most pupils found ‘booktalk’ supported RfP by offering reading recommendations and extending connection with text. This is dialogic talk, distinct from more

generalised discussion (2.7.3). Book suggestions from peers were likely to include fiction presenting MWD, matching with individual interests. This benefitted RfP by helping resolve the reported selection problems (5.2.2) while identifying fiction wherein implied and actual reader aligned.

Natalie, Matilde and Lanika (interviewed 19/12/18) all mentioned booktalk sharing recommendations. Natalie commented particularly on conversation outside school, explaining she began the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997) as her mum and sister were fans, regularly discussing the books: she wished to be part of the conversation. Her reading of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Snicket, 2013), prompted by her father's enjoyment of the film, suggested anticipation of future booktalk. The potential for these series to engage by acting as a MWD has already been explored (5.3) but the opportunity to discuss reading extended this through social interaction and shared interests.

Lanika (interviewed 19/12/18) reported talking to her brother about books but was cautious about who to converse with, only discussing a book "if someone's read it". Shared experience was a prerequisite for booktalk, emphasised by her comment that, after Matilde had read *The Girl on the Train* (Hawkins, 2015), they "spent quite a lot of time discussing it", adding "I do like discussing it – definitely". Talking about books read extended engagement by developing connection with other readers and the books. Discussion involved exchanging affective reaction and evaluative whereby opinions were compared, informing interpretation. Pleasure was stimulated by the exchange and contrast, prompting new insight and connection.

Matilde (interviewed 19/12/18) talked about books articulately and enthusiastically in the interview and Lanika mentioned talking with Matilde about a book they'd both read. Aside from this, Matilde contributed only one point about booktalk. She explained her dad didn't read for pleasure but her mum was a good person to talk to about books, implying overlapping interests and shared reading. Some fiction could, conceivably, act as a mirror or window or door for parent and child. Perhaps more frequent conversation with a wider range of people, both peers and adults, would stimulate further engagement.

Rose (interviewed 11/12/18) engaged in booktalk at home, sharing interests, "me and my mum like the same books". She also displayed confidence to engage in booktalk with adults beyond her family. When experiencing difficulty finding reading material she connected with, Rose sought help, visiting a local bookshop: "I went to one of the ladies that worked there", asking for suggestions. While it could be inferred family booktalk imbued confidence and ability to engage in conversation with adults, this reader was motivated by engagement, determined to find more books aligned with her, offering interest through MWDs.

Ellie (interviewed 11/12/18) talked about books she had read with Rose, referring to comparing reactions and recommending books to each other. She intimated peer influence: "I said to Rose that I want to read Anne Frank's diary as well". Rose mentioned a jointly compiled reading list and Ellie's reference to the "whole list" suggested that booktalk was a regular feature of their friendship. Comparing likes and dislikes extended their connection with fiction and each other, both apparently

enjoyable. Additionally, they benefitted from recommendations of other work reflecting shared interests, widening repertoires and possibilities for further engagement.

Rory (interviewed 18/12/18) did not refer to peer booktalk whatsoever, perhaps reflecting his anti-reader stance (5.2.2). Consequently, booktalk was overlooked or avoided and not valued.

However, booktalk with adults was implied. His form tutor supported and encouraged his reading

whenever a new *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* comes out she's like 'Rory, I'm going to call the library and get them to get it' cos she knows I like them (Rory, interviewed 18/12/18, line 392).

This suggested previous booktalk had imbued familiarity with his preferences and ability, leading to appropriate recommendations, supporting RfP. Albeit currently a narrow range of titles, his teacher's personal investment in Rory's reading was encouraging and motivating. Additionally, it can be inferred conversation with his teacher provided booktalk models, developing his confidence and competence, exemplified in the interview exchange where Rory recommended *Wonder* (Palacio, 2013) to Mason (5.4.1). This indicated strong connection with the book and his relatively detailed comments demonstrated eloquently how booktalk can connect readers through sharing experiences and providing valuable recommendations: both supportive of RfP.

Mason (interviewed 18/12/18) explained he'd recently read books recommended by peers but he didn't talk to anyone about his reading. Although he expressed enjoyment gained from reading (5.3.1), primarily imagining himself in the world of the book, perhaps more booktalk would extend this by sharing reactions, comparing views and alerting him to more fiction offering doors, his current preference. Indeed, his enthusiastic participation in interview booktalk and acceptance of Rory's recommendation (5.4) show these connections being formed.

Georgia (interviewed 4/12/18) seemed an enthusiastic participant in booktalk, aware of its potential for extending engagement. She reported talking "lots about reading" and named her classmate friend, Natalie, and her brother as conversation partners. This frequent booktalk indicated pleasure from sharing and comparing response with other readers.

Willow (interviewed 4/12/18) mentioned booktalk with adults but reported this was not helpful or supportive of engagement. Her mother had encouraged Willow to read by suggesting books

I think she has an idea that I quite like romance stuff. Like she recommended a few books to me and they're quite lovey . . . that rubbish (Willow interviewed 4/12/18, lines 248 - 250).

Mismatch of perceived and real interests led to material in which Willow could not find mirror, window or door, impairing engagement and potentially deterring future reading and booktalk. Willow's later comment that, if people have recommended a good book, "you actually want to talk to them about it as well", demonstrated her keenness to engage in conversation about books. It is interesting that in formulating this point, she switched to the second person, "you", as if she was not comfortable or confident in owning this desire. Her later point, she didn't talk about books as "I don't think anyone actually like cares", was poignant highlighting a dearth of like-minded readers to exchange views with. While not deterred from reading, further booktalk was desirable to Willow as enjoyable activity.

5.5.2 Developing Interpretation

As well as supporting choice and connection, booktalk appeared to prompt thinking. By comparing response, readers could extend ideas or discover new ones. Through articulating their views and hearing other perspectives, readers' interpretation developed, with both affective and analytical reaction involved. This social and cognitive work had potential to bring implied and actual reader closer as well as engaging through shared experiences of text acting as MWDs.

Rory's interview-based booktalk (interviewed 18/12/18) was fascinating for a pupil who claimed to not like books. When explaining enjoyment of *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2004) series, he demonstrated detailed knowledge and enthusiasm

Rory it's not really a hero – it's just like a normal kid . . . that goes to school every day and like . . . he doesn't like going outdoors. He likes staying in playing games and like the book I'm reading now . . . his best friend has got a girlfriend now . . .

Int. Right

Rory so his best friend doesn't hang out with him anymore. He hangs out with his girlfriend and he's doesn't really hang out with anyone – he's not got anyone

Int. aah

Mason that's not very nice

Rory but in their school on the playground they have like a button that says find my friend like 'find me a friend' and they press it and if someone's on the other side . . . then you meet in the middle or something

Int. oh that sounds

Rory and if someone's on the other side or something you can speak to them

Int. Right. So it sounds like - you've read the series as well? There's a series of books?

Rory yeah

Int. It sounds like you're following the same character – he's got a bit older

Rory yeah

Mason I thought that was a real bird [gestures to stuffed crow on windowsill]

Int. It's creepy isn't it?

Mason It just looks bad

Rory It – he doesn't get like any older or anything but it's basically him just staying – he might go on to different years but he doesn't seem older because . . . he like . . . goes to the pool with his friends and . . . then he might have suddenly – I don't know what happens but he might have – then his friend's suddenly going out with someone. Like they're fourteen or fifteen or something (Rory and Mason interviewed 18/12/18, lines 113 – 137).

Rory's enthusiasm conveyed through relatively detailed comments about character, coupled with frequent conjunction use suggested engagement from the book acting as a mirror and window. This extended extract from the transcript began descriptively, identifying connection between reader and character but moved into evaluation. Utilising his knowledge of other narratives, Rory compared the protagonist to other fictional characters, judging him "not a hero". As he talked, his interpretation developed with the interviewer's comment about age further stimulated Rory's thinking, revealed in the last comment. Rory did not slow his pace or become deterred from talking despite Mason's interruption, indicating commitment to text and conversation, enjoying opportunity to talk. .

As the interview continued, Rory appeared to develop greater awareness of connection between himself and protagonist

Can I just like – I – he's basically just like me because he stays indoors and plays his game while it's rainy and that and whenever it's sunny he goes out on his bike (Rory interviewed 18/12/18, lines 147 - 148).

Text acting as a mirror seemed to strengthen during the conversation. The observation, "he's just like me" suggested new understanding achieved through the talk, contributing to his engagement. The extent of the connection was further illuminated by his recognition about the links between books he liked (5.2.1) which led him to continue talking about other books he'd enjoyed like *Hamish and the World Stoppers* (Wallace, 2015) and *Wonder* (Palacio, 2013). He appeared to gain confidence as the interview continued, becoming more comfortable talking about books.

Mason (interviewed 18/12/18), with a reading age significantly higher than Rory (3.3.2) and deemed more able in English by his teacher, was not so fluent or articulate. When discussing villains, Mason commented about the antagonist in *Eagle Strike* (Horowitz, 2003)

Actually I think – I don't really know – my villain might not be a villain at the moment but kind of is (Mason interviewed 18/12/18, lines 105 - 106).

Participating in interview-based booktalk provided Mason opportunity to articulate ideas not yet fully formulated. His engagement with character was extended through comparing knowledge of the single novel to other fictional villains he had encountered, developing more nuanced response. Like Rory, Mason's thinking seemed to develop through booktalk with engagement prompted by problem-solving and the emerging richer interpretation.

Rose and Ellie (interviewed 11/12/18) were also actively involved with booktalk during the interview, building on each other's ideas, developing response as they conversed

Int. [to Ellie] when you mentioned *The Immortals* I imagined it was about Greek myths but it's not, it's about vampires

Ellie no . . .well . . . it's hard to explain. They're not vampires but they can live forever. It's an ordinary girl and she dies in a car crash but this boy – who's been trying to find her for like hundreds of years – because obviously like they – in the book they re- re-

Int. reincarnate?

Ellie yes but they obviously don't know

Rose oh I think I've seen a film of this where there's these two people who are like in love and each time the girl is reborn but the boy isn't and

Ellie yeah that's basically it and so she's lived all these different lives and he's been there through them all and she'd no idea then he – so she died and then he brought her back – and now she's immortal and it's just like – she has to - she's facing everything different like . . . (Rose and Ellie interviewed 11/12/18, lines 107 – 119).

This dialogue illustrated readers revisiting, sharing and developing interpretation, engaging by consolidating connection. Ellie's explanation indicated the novel acted as a window on a fantastic world, identified by her as distinct from her experience through comparison. Despite her judging it complex, "it's hard to explain", she tried to do so. By exchanging ideas with Rose, a clearer conceptualisation began to emerge.

Rose's contribution, "I've seen a film of this" demonstrated how social interaction provided comparison, assisting interpretation development. She was actively listening and interested in Elle's comments about the book, reviewing her own experience. Rose could make connection between texts, inferring from and evaluating Ellie's explanation, potentially benefitting both readers. Ellie received confirmation her ideas were understood, "yeah that's basically it", and the shared perspective strengthened social and textual connection. Booktalk bestowed a sense of fellow-feeling and affirmation, supplementing engagement gained from the reading experience itself.

During the interview (19/12/18), Natalie, Matilde and Lanika engaged in booktalk, articulating views and developing interpretation. Their exchange about settings (5.4.2) illustrated how sharing ideas, even about different books, contributed to interpretation. In this case, the dialogue, comparing perceived limitations fuelled critique (5.4). Talking about opinions was enjoyable sociably, prompting feelings of belonging and shared views. Perhaps, it also offered reassurance that lack of connection was the fault of the book rather than the reader.

Booktalk was revealed as not always supportive of engagement, regardless of reader/text interaction. Willow (interviewed 4/12/18) appeared to struggle when conveying response verbally: "I don't know how to – it's . . ."; "No no no. It's like you don't even . . . I really don't know how to say it"; "Yes and then he – it's just the way he . . . [laughs]". These half-formed and incomplete utterances suggested limited confidence and competence in articulating ideas, illustrated by this longer exchange

Willow When you read the first chapter it comes to the end of the chapter – when you get to the end of the chapter there's a bit of the other story and you read and 'what's going on?' cos it's like suddenly we've gone from this to this and it begins the next chapter where you've got the normal story and at the end you're reading like this bit about umm this girl and . . . um it's just like a bit – I don't know – a bit weird

Int. you like having the two storylines

Willow but like

Int. but it's a bit confusing

Willow yes . . . yeah . . .

Int. difficult to keep track of

Willow No, you can keep track of it – it's just like . . . cos . . . it doesn't really have like chapters like in the other story. There'll be a bit of it and then another bit of it.

Int. so you have to be really alert to when it changes storyline?

Willow yes

Int. you could read half a paragraph before you know

Willow no it's in a different font so you know but it's still just a bit like umm (interviewed 4/12/18, lines 143 – 158).

The use of general descriptions, “normal story” and “a bit weird”, showed limited vocabulary. Willow was extending her reading repertoire, but her language and understanding of narrative styles lagged behind, perhaps from lack of booktalk. The interviewer's attempt to draw out Willow's meaning seemed to add to her confusion, potentially undermining engagement, bringing the exchange to an end. While there was no evidence of interpretation developing here, Willow was cognitively engaged in the conversation and understanding could have developed retrospectively.

In the same interview, Georgia (interviewed 4/12/18) found articulating response challenging. The first instance happened after Willow had three difficulties expressing her ideas, noted above. Georgia was perhaps subconsciously offering moral support to her classmate, displaying similar inability to communicate clearly

Oh actually – it was quite interesting because basically – you know - at the very beginning – like she said we've committed very similar crimes ya-de-da-dah that's definitely a word umm (Georgia interviewed 4/12/18, lines 97 – 99).

This self-deprecation seemed to be an attempt to diffuse embarrassment at her lack of skill. She repeated this 'word' when sharing disappointment of *Ketchup Clouds* (Pilcher, 2013a)

so the guy she was dating was called Max and then his brother and Max were having an argument err because they were like 'how could you – you betrayed me ya-de-da-dah'. I keep saying that [laughs] (Georgia interviewed 4/12/18, lines 126 – 127).

Georgia displayed self-awareness, recognising her limited vocabulary, contrasting with her usual confidence and eloquence in class (journal, p.36). The nonsense word served as a filler but could reflect feelings of inhibition when talking to an adult or indicate thinking not sufficiently developed to be expressed. More opportunity to talk about reading could help eradicate the discrepancy by giving opportunity to articulate ideas.

The interview with Rose and Ellie (11/12/18) prompted thinking about frustration with booktalk instigated by English teachers. At the end of the scheduled questions, the topic of connection between books was resumed

Ellie When I read books I just read it. I don't think – into – oh what does this mean or is this related to – I don't know why – I find it I just find it ten times harder to do that. I just want to read the book. I understand it perfectly fine without going thinking like blah blah blah like thinking how the teacher goes what did you think about this, think about how he did this

Rose How this links back to Maggot Moon. I don't want to think about that

Ellie you just want to

Int. You want to stay with the book

Ellie It's a completely different book

Rose they're just different things – annoying thing about teachers

Ellie He's saying oh look there's this thing that Standish does like George and no

Rose They're completely different books

Ellie He's in the war. He's in the Great Depression. It is completely different

Rose He calls them two different

Int. so stop making me think about how they link?

Rose I don't want to do that. I want to read my book

Ellie A link yeah and it's no they're not related in any single way they're not by the same author – it annoys me so much (Rose and Ellie interviewed 11/12/18, lines 679 – 696).

This dialogic exchange demonstrated trust and understanding as they picked up on ideas, completing each other's utterances: collaboration in action. Both readers expressed strong motivation to read, rejecting the teacher's interpretation, instead wanting agency to form their own. The teacher's questioning was unwelcome and intrusive, halting reading, undermining engagement by interrupting narrative flow and preventing pleasure from the development of individual response.

Booktalk emerged as supportive of RfP in several ways. Peer recommendations support readers' choice of fiction offering MWDs, aligning with interest. This maximised opportunity to forge strong connection with books, also engaging. The social interaction appeared enjoyable, adding to that gained from revisiting and sharing books. Talk appeared to stimulate thinking, with comparison assisting understanding, developing interpretation.

5.6 Overview of Key Themes

Pupil interview data was presented under the four themes identified through coding: choice, connection, credibility and conversation. A key point about engagement has been extrapolated from each. Readers feeling agency emerged as more important than choice. Connection between reader and text was vital, with the strongest links forged with character. Reader interactions incorporated judgement, integrating affective and analytical response. Booktalk supported choice and connection but also thinking, helping interpretation development. The next chapter presents data from teacher interviews, offering professional perspectives.

Chapter 6 – Teacher Interview Data

In keeping with case study, several data sets were elicited for this investigation. In addition to that presented in Chapters 4 and 5, practising English teachers were interviewed (3.3.3). Gaining professional perspectives provided insight on practices, individual and institutional, enabling or presenting barriers to RfP related to engagement. Juxtaposing views of adults and young readers developed insight about RfP via increased engagement, generating findings and subsequent recommendations for practice (see Chapter 7 & 8).

Three Waldren School English teachers with Y8 classes were interviewed at the end of the summer term, 2019 (3.5.3). The potential impact of timing along with the researcher/researched relationship has been explored (3.7). The data was prepared similarly to pupil interviews (5.1) with pseudonyms used throughout. It is presented under the key themes identified through the analysis of the pupil interviews: choice, connection, credibility and conversation. Additional themes extrapolated from teacher interviews are included under the relevant headings and identified as such.

6.1 Choice

6.1.1 Fiction Read in Class

All three teachers perceived pupils' pleasure of novels read in class, echoing the positive reception reported by some pupils (5.2). However, this data suggested teachers viewed their pedagogy as a more significant enabler of pleasure than offering choice of material.

Cindy explained her approach involved reading aloud where pupils “follow along to make the connections” (interviewed 4/07/19) with pauses to “ask questions and get them to discuss things”. The teacher performed as a story-teller and guide, framing text to provide MWD she deemed appropriate for listeners. This approach was teacher-led yet also unstructured, assuming readers could develop interpretation and forge connection independently. It presupposed oracy and vocabulary sufficient to articulate response, the development of which did not seem supported. Nonetheless, Cindy valued this approach for immersing readers in the narrative, effectively engaging. She reported positive pupil reaction

a couple of them would come in and say ‘are we reading more today?’ yes ‘are we reading more today?’ (Cindy, interviewed 4/07/19, lines 128 – 129).

Cindy's repetition of the question recognised pupils' enthusiasm for reading, emphasising the emotion involved. It could also suggest pleasure in the recount, perhaps stemming from professional pride in this evidence of successful RfP pedagogy as well as gratification that pupils had positive classroom experiences. However, perhaps these individuals were predisposed to favourable views of reading regardless of teacher behaviour and so not representative. It also sidestepped issues of pupil choice entirely.

Cindy acknowledged reading aloud was not effective universally: it “was not necessarily appreciated by all”. As this awareness did not result in pedagogical change, questions about practice were raised. Perhaps Cindy accepted a “best fit” model, had no alternative strategies or was resistant to change. Offering choice was not mentioned implying Cindy did not consider this as

engaging or pleasurable, contrasting some pupil views (5.2.1). Cindy's description of teacher-centred pedagogy not only precluded choice, consciously or otherwise, but also did not support individual interpretation, promoting connection with texts as MWD, potentially denying agency.

Like Cindy, Ruby did not comment about choice enabling RfP but she did suggest powerful narrative engaged, compensating for lack of choice: "I find that the plots of the texts is what gets boys involved" (interviewed 1/07/19). With a predominantly male class, she noted engagement was key and this entailed immersion in the storyline. Ruby described the typical Y8 boy's attitude: "if it's not relevant to me I don't care". Relevance was established by the teacher: she identified MWD for the pupils, negating agency. Interestingly, neither of the Y8 male readers expressed relevance as a precursor to RfP (5.2.1) indicating Ruby's judgement could be challenged. However, as neither participant reported lack of choice as a barrier, further investigation of the relationship between choice and RfP is needed.

Ruby described the pedagogy employed to engage: establishing the material as relevant to these readers, involved extended time on "an introduction – we talked about the London bombings" and "because they'd had that lead up [and] they were already engaged". Somewhat at odds with the department's fast-read approach (2.7.4) and the practice foregrounding narrative espoused above, Ruby saw exploration of context prior to reading as vital to pupils' 'buy in'. Pedagogy involved the teacher occupying a central position, not performing like Cindy, but akin to a stage manager, aligning 'audience' and text, exerting control over sequence and pace, framing text as MWDs. Paradoxically, Ruby recognised the power of the narrative but judged the plots insufficient to attract and hold readers' interest. Instead, teacher-led practice was necessary, focused on background material rather than the text itself. Pupils' perspectives about fiction read in class typically related to character and genre (5.2.1) raising further questions about the rationale for the pedagogy adopted by Ruby.

Jack also reported class readers engaging Y8 but speculated some pupils' eagerness to read in lesson time was nothing to do with text choice but rather a deliberate avoidance strategy as "they don't like writing" (interviewed 20/06/19). Partly this was as "the actual physical effort of writing is so laborious to them", continuing

I think they enjoy reading so they don't see it as work. They are conditioned to see work as not fun (Jack, interviewed 20/06/19, lines 57 – 58).

Notwithstanding these are generalisations, Jack's empirical judgement sited pleasure in the avoidance of labour rather than inherent in reading. Although his views could provide insight into pupils' differing perceptions of reading and writing, it overlooked choice.

Jack's recognition, "I think they work harder when they're reading", demonstrated awareness of its cognitive demands but pedagogy was also revealed: "when we read I am questioning like a dervish". While this simile conveyed Jack viewed his role as performer, both dynamic and complex, the approach was teacher-centred. Directive questioning was employed to steer comprehension, inference and activate prior knowledge. Teacher-led connection forging denied agency, encouraging passivity and the assimilation of adult interpretation: all barriers to engagement. Although Jack's practice required considerable oral skill and understanding of literacy development, it was rooted in

didactic principles rather than reader response. Individuals answering questions had opportunity to articulate their views but this pedagogy offered little support for individual interpretation and connection forging, central to engagement.

Overall, these interviewees felt pupils gained pleasure from class readers: pedagogy identified as the chief enabler. Offering choice of fiction for classroom reading was not a priority and the issue of diversity of genre or setting raised by pupils (5.2.1) not acknowledged. This could reflect the reality of departmental stock limitations but the narrow range reduced opportunities for fiction to offer MWDs. Cindy showed awareness pupil-centred practice could mitigate by offering agency: “they don’t ever get to choose what we read”. She identified tension in the teacher’s role when promoting reading. Pupils were encouraged to pursue their interests in independent reading choice whereas

in the classroom we’re not really giving them an opportunity to choose a book they’re passionate about. We’re kind of saying ‘this is what we’re going to read’ (Cindy, interviewed 4/07/19, lines 549 – 550).

The inconsistency appeared difficult for Cindy: her unease about the apparent contradiction echoed concerns raised about DEAR (see 6.1.3). Cindy recognised the importance of modelling and the value of affective engagement but lack of choice undermined engagement.

Ruby talked about how important text choice was for teachers, explaining that, for her, this connected with quality of teaching

having choice is great – as a teacher if you’ve chosen something and you’re invested in it – you’ve chosen it – yeah I’ve chosen *The Tempest* but then is your teaching of it better and therefore the engagement of it better because they can see you have that passion, that love for the text (Ruby, interviewed 1/07/19, lines 744 - 747).

Although referring to Shakespearean drama, this comment was relevant to fiction, raising questions about teacher autonomy and pupil entitlement. Ruby speculated it likely that, if teachers were compelled to use material they were not “invested in”, their performance would be impaired with pupils’ engagement impeded. However, pupils made no mention of teachers’ enthusiasm contributing to their pleasure (5.2.1).

6.1.2 Pupils’ Independent Reading

As research literature identified pupils’ independent reading choice as an enabler of RfP through increasing engagement (2.7), teachers were asked directly about this. Comments were brief and general suggesting lack of confidence or knowledge, not surprising as independent reading represents a negligible curricular aspect. However, it is uncontroversial to view developing motivated, autonomous readers as part of English teachers’ remit and so the following section explores what can be inferred about teachers’ perceptions from their limited contributions.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) offered some comment on pupils’ independent reading, framed initially as institutional practice

the mind-set of our department and our school is very much let’s encourage students to have some autonomy with this, some exploration of this not let’s tell them they must love it (Cindy, interviewed 4/07/19, lines 620 - 622).

This laudable stance, granting pupils' freedom to choose what to read, was potentially empowering. However, such contrasting practice to that for shared fiction (6.1.1) did little to actively support RfP and reader agency nor those readers who find selection challenging.

Jack's comments (interviewed 20/06/18) reflected similar reservations about intervening with independent reading: "compelling children what they can and can't read is problematic". While there was no direct explanation of why this was not perceived as an issue with novels read in class, Jack's reluctance was revealing

I don't like helping them choose a book because how do – as English teachers – when we were – I'm rereading books that I was reading when I was their age and I'm rereading and I'm thinking now – like with a – I was reading classics when I was thirteen because we – we were readers we were like – I don't know – I don't know (Jack, interviewed 20/06/19, lines 322 - 326).

The hesitation indicated by dashes and repetition of "I don't know" suggested feelings of disempowerment and inadequacy. He found it challenging to relate to these pupils, very different to him at that age and felt unequipped to make recommendations.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) also perceived her reading history impacted on interaction with pupils

I errr personally did not connect with reading until I was probably about 12 or 13 ermm and that was through having the opportunity to explore and actually to have some form of choice in my reading (Cindy, interviewed 4/07/19, lines 615 - 617).

Like Jack, she appeared reluctant to be directive, comparing herself to pupils. As her development involved reading widely and exercising autonomy over choice, she wished this for pupils. However, as noted above, the Y8 pupils interviewed required support in making informed choices (5.2.2). Both teachers constructed rhetoric validating freedom of choice, but this did not support RfP effectively. By their own admission, their prepubescent reader selves were very different from their pupils, necessitating a different approach.

Jack and Ruby conceded their role in supporting pupils' independent reading was minimal. Ruby stated unequivocally "I feel that my role in that could be bigger" (interviewed 1/07/19) explaining several ideas about how to develop (see 6.1.3 & 6.2) but yet to be implemented. She had invested time in gaining funds from the Commonwealth Trust to purchase books selected by pupils (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19). Jack was more reflective

How many conversations have I had with my Year 8s about their independent reading this year? Two or three in a year and that isn't good enough (Jack, interviewed 20/06/19, lines 190 - 192).

His judgement this "isn't good enough" indicated recognition booktalk was important in English teachers' remit (see 6.4.1), supporting engagement, but change had not occurred.

In addition to the reservations mentioned above, Jack cited curricular pressure (interviewed 20/06/19) as preventing intervention. He felt the low priority given to independent reading, a direct consequence of the assessment-driven culture prevalent in education, meant teachers' priorities lay elsewhere

in English lessons we've got such a lot that we've got to get through that space to stop and talk about [independent] reading isn't very wide (Jack, interviewed 20/06/19, lines 210 – 211).

The revised GCSEs include an increased volume of texts as well as additional challenges such as unseen response and compulsory nineteenth century texts, typically resulting in preparation beginning in KS3 (2.3). Lesson time focused on skill development for external assessment and, for Jack, this meant “independent reading is minimised”. This illustrated how assessment pressures have distorted practice, prioritising GCSE grades. It indicated also teachers' lack of understanding about how reader response practices support literary appreciation and higher order thinking skills required for top grades. More cynically, Jack could be seen as making excuses, justifying the status quo rather than exercising professional agency in developing more effective practice to meet **all** curriculum demands.

6.1.3 Drop Everything and Read

The teachers referred to the school's Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) practice, justified on the website as improving academic performance and well-being (Waldren School, 2019, website). The literature base identified increased frequency of reading as enabling RfP (2.7.1) but the implication that reading is “good for you”, prescribed by adults, undermines. While none of the pupil participants mentioned DEAR, this cannot be interpreted as evidence that it did not support RfP through increasing frequency of reading (2.7.1) but perhaps viewed irrelevant to the interviews.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) initially offered a balanced view of DEAR: “there are some students that I can think of in the class that look forward to it” while others “noticeably their body language and what they say shows me that they're not really enjoying [it]”. However, she admitted not being entirely comfortable with the practice

it's difficult because as a teacher in a school you need to follow you know . . . some of the things that have been set as a school incentive (Cindy, interviewed 4/07/19, lines 362 - 363).

She felt compelled but reservation was indicated by hesitation and mention of “incentives”. This circumspection could stem from experiences of inconsistent pupil engagement (6.1.1) but a personal element emerged

it can be quite difficult because as somebody that enjoys reading at this stage in my life, I feel like I'm not necessarily having the opportunity to read in DEAR (Cindy, interviewed 4/07/19, lines 23 – 25).

There was tension between her needs as a reader and responsibilities as a teacher. Recognising her reading as less important than pupils', nevertheless disappointment was conveyed. Developing practices more supportive for RfP could result in better engagement, benefitting pupils and teacher alike.

Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) was more explicit about the “massive pros and cons” of DEAR explaining “compelling children to read in a controlled environment” was not conducive to pleasure. However, he went on to present an idyllic picture of DEAR

sometimes I sit and look around and it is beautiful that I am sitting in a room on a warm Thursday morning and there are thirty kids really into a book and they really are. They're not pretending to read – they're reading (Jack, interviewed 20/06/19, lines 200 - 202).

This evocative image directly contradicted his earlier claim, perhaps reflecting its erratic quality but also optimism. The emotive language, “beautiful” and “really into a book” indicated personal and professional gratification. Jack was aware this level of engagement was achieved partly due to his subject specialism: “but then I'm an English teacher, I'm a passionate reader”. Other colleagues supervising this activity may not possess this enthusiasm and commitment to reading. Jack's influence meant that, despite the compulsion, the activity seemed pleasurable: whether pupils judged it similarly is moot.

Ruby's experience (interviewed 1/07/19) in another school raised doubts about DEAR at Waldren: “I wonder how effective DEAR time is”. She expressed feeling it was not beneficial for pupils and potentially counterproductive

I wonder if that [DEAR] kind of takes away from . . . the pleasure of reading because they have this designated time a day (Ruby, interviewed 1/07/19, lines 212 - 213).

The regular, enforced nature of DEAR could undermine its potential for pleasure through increased engagement, a type of adverse conditioning. However, her solution was more control: pupils “need to be held to account” and if they weren't, “why do it?”. She advocated the approach from her previous school where pupils shared the reading of one text and completed interactive tasks. Ruby repeated several times desire for more active approaches to reading, but choice was not considered.

Overall, the teachers did not perceive choice as enabling RfP through increased engagement: reader agency appeared unsupported across the different activities. Lack of choice in class material did not warrant much consideration as pedagogy was deemed a more significant enabler of RfP. Teachers engaged little with pupils' independent reading choice, citing a variety of reasons. How RfP is enabled through readers forming connection with fiction is considered next.

6.2 Connection

Teachers were unequivocal about the importance of connection in RfP, giving examples of practice designed to facilitate this. However, again this appeared directive, conveying scant trust in pupils' ability to forge connection independently, starkly contradicting the textual analysis evidence (see Chapter 4). The data is presented under two headings. Teachers' views about connection with character, most significant for pupils are explored. The second section, cultural capital, was raised only by teachers but included as it contributed to exploration of RfP.

6.2.1 Character and Pleasure

The teacher participants recognised readers' connection with text as important to RfP, echoing the textual analysis and pupil interviews (see Chapter 4 & 5), perceiving links between readers' lives and those depicted in the text as significant. The empirical foundation of connection reflected pupils' views but there was little comment foregrounding the importance of character identified by young readers.

Cindy provided a classroom anecdote (interviewed 4/07/19) illustrating pupils' affective response, also evident in the textual analysis (4.12; 4.2.2). She recounted the class's reaction to a short story, *Lullaby* (Berridge, 1947), describing the atmosphere

they really enjoyed it and actually a lot of them – all of them were hanging off every word – there was silence in here when we were reading (interviewed 4/07/19, lines 448 - 449)

adding, “that doesn't happen often”. Reader pleasure was inferred by her sense of their anticipation, they “were hanging off every word” and the dramatic as “there was silence” as the reading continued. The change from “a lot” to “all of them” was interesting. Whether true of the whole class or not, Cindy's perception of high levels of engagement and pleasure remained strong. She seemed gratified by this mood with the rarity of the experience enhancing it, elevating it to a stand-out moment of the year. However, pleasure was attributed to immersion in the narrative. The teacher's performance facilitated temporary suspension of reality, inviting readers imaginatively into the text, rather than connecting with character, identified by pupils as significant.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) felt text selection assisted connection forming by expanding readers' experience. The thematic approach in the Y8 curriculum provided cohesion for pupils “to consider wider issues” and to capitalise on natural curiosity as “they like to explore things that they don't know much about”, thus fiction acted as windows depicting the unfamiliar. Indeed, readers' sense of intrigue was demonstrated in the textual analysis (4.1.2). Reflecting on her work with *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece* (Pilcher, 2013b), Cindy explained how this novel expanded pupils' perspective by presenting a different world

it covers a lot of controversial topics and something that they found really hard to get their head around was xenophobia what that meant what that looked like and then they started making connections with things they'd heard in school so in that sense the reading actually allowed them to explore a little bit some of the things they had perhaps experienced through social interactions (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 101 - 105).

Her judgement that the novel presented too much new material for readers to cope with independently led her to act as a guide, helping pupils make links between the text and their own experiences. While time and space to “explore” was given in peer discussion (see 6.4), this was directed by Cindy and more focused on theme than character.

Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) talked about how universal topics, such as those in *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012), helped readers connect with fiction

what does it mean to grow up, what does it mean to fall in love, what does it mean to kiss someone, what does it mean to be an adult – they're things those kids are experiencing (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 738 - 740).

Following characters through situations, emotions and issues similar to those experienced by readers forged connection but characters were secondary to exploration of the adolescent condition. There was an underlying understanding that engagement could result from fictional characters holding up a mirror to the reader's life. However, Jack asserted not all books dealing with growing up themes would imbue pleasure: these young readers “shouldn't be reading Alice-in-bloody-Wonderland”. Implied was belief this Victorian work was too far removed from the lives of these readers so connection and pleasure would be impaired.

Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) also recognised engagement could relate to the unfamiliar but endorsed the primary role of the teacher as assisting with imaginative connection while the textual analysis indicated pupils could do so independently (4.1.2; 4.2.2). He commented “when I’m reading, I’m making a film in my head”. He saw reading as imaginative pursuit and when pupils did not engage, it was as “they’re not breathing life into it”. As a teacher he acted to compensate, animating the text and articulating his process

Living through other experiences and understanding yourself through . . . creating other perspective glasses that you can look through and seeing kids experience that when . . . some of them are like “I hate books”, “I don’t like reading” - that’s really profound (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 42 – 45).

Jack made an explicit link between affective response and personal growth. Character was implicit as the vehicle presenting ‘other experiences’ but his focus appeared to be opportunity for expansion with fiction offering windows. Readers’ self-awareness could develop through comparison of their lives and those presented in fiction. Working to establish imaginative connection, Jack felt could hook the most reluctant readers. moving and motivating this approach.

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) recognised connection with fiction required some similarity between reader and character but not an exact match

it’s seeing yourself in a – in a text – not necessarily in a situation but identifying with . . . a character or identifying with somebody in the text and I think erm . . . or I think it’s having maybe that’s more similar – an experience studying something that’s similar as well that maybe triggers you with a theme or idea to go and do something else (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 172 - 176).

For Ruby, engagement stemmed from identification with character or a situation, endorsed by the connections pupils made in the textual analysis (4.1.2; 4.2.2). Her hesitation in this comment indicated thinking as she articulated, her ideas about the roots of RfP not yet fully formed. As she talked, her exploration developed, exemplifying that booktalk aids adults’ thinking too (see 6.4.1, 5.5). The concept of broader similarity could perhaps suggest texts acting as windows, triggering empirical connection, but not explicitly from character. Her concluding point, connection prompts readers “to go and do something”, illustrated how fiction’s exploration of alternatives and possibilities can engender confidence and self-awareness, contributing to personal development and, potentially, pleasure.

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) like Cindy appeared directive in pupils’ connection forming: “I think you have to make those links”. She related a scenario with her Y8 class who were also reading the Pilcher novel (2013b), identifying the unfamiliar content as part of its appeal

something we don’t normally speak about – have an opportunity to speak about. We talked about terrorism. We talked about Islamophobia. We talked about the media and how they present things (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 17 - 19).

Echoing Cindy’s point above about curiosity, Ruby perceived the novelty of the subject matter as engaging for pupils partly as it offered a window on another world, expanding their horizons. Her pedagogy incorporated establishing links with contemporary issues, implying time was given for pupils to explore ideas. This could indicate pedagogy rooted in RR but as the amount of freedom

readers were given was not clear, it could represent the teacher's lack of trust in readers' ability to forge connection independently, skill demonstrated clearly in the textual analysis (4.1.2; 4.2.2). Again, the link between character and pleasure was not mentioned.

In response to the opening question of the interview, Jack mentioned (interviewed 20/06/18) affective response. When asked about what Y8 had been reading, he gave this description

my most golden moments are at the – nearing the end of a narrative or when they've been predicting and they're about to realise they've been predicting right or when something's about to shock them and that energy you get in the room when you're reading . . . talking about it is giving me goose-bumps – genuinely – because I love it (Jack interviewed 20/06/18, lines 28 - 33).

Clearly, Jack viewed narrative as powerful, engaging and engendering pleasure. He interpreted its impact as creating "energy", developed and shared by the readers. The affective response of the pupils was implicit but Jack's emotive language describing the experience, captured its impact on him. Like Cindy, he gained personal gratification from these "golden moments", getting "goose-bumps" and 'loving' this shared experience. Jack valued affective response and felt professional pride when it manifested: "those moments when you've done it together – it's beautiful". The choice of adjective here is telling, conveying not only Jack's heightened emotional state but also its subjective, fleeting nature. It seemed like alchemy rather than a result of pedagogy designed to engage.

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) reflected on the fiction read with Y8 across the autumn term, making an interesting distinction between the books. The first novels of the year

are pitched as the reading for pleasure in a way but I feel that with a text like *Of Mice and Men* in the second term - that everybody does – not - not is that reading for pleasure – it's just that it's such a big text as an English teacher you do want to do more with it than kind of read and enjoy it in the way that *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece* (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 396 - 399).

Despite the first novel being presented as RfP, the reference to enjoyment was Ruby's only acknowledgement of this. Her comment implied the approach to Steinbeck was antithetical to pleasure, posited as analytical: "you want to do more" with the text. This 'more' could be moving into evaluation, developing literary appreciation more akin to GCSE preparation, which pupils proved able to do independently with appropriate guidance (4.1.2). It was interesting that she appeared to see the purposes of reading in a binary manner and RfP reductive – it is "less".

Doing "more" with Steinbeck appeared an enabler of RfP despite this not being the intention. Ruby explained pupil response

they loved that – that book and there were high levels of engagement in that – they never wanted to finish the lesson – they were "no what's going to happen" and that was – for me – it was great to have them so engaged – those boys especially (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 94 – 96)

A direct link was established between pleasure and engagement with the narrative rather than character. Ruby expressed the same type of professional satisfaction as Cindy and Jack. The comment "it was great" conveyed gratification that pupils found the plot so engaging they wished to continue, keen to find out what happened next. Ruby was pleased particularly this impacted the

male members of the class, conveyed in the phrase “those boys especially”. This related to Ruby’s perceptions of what appealed to boys, raised earlier, and suggested that for whatever reasons, these readers were more connected and engaged by Steinbeck’s novel than the contemporary work by Pilcher (2013b).

Later in the interview, Ruby mentioned the “heavy discussion that comes with *Of Mice and Men*”. While both texts explored issues such as racism, sexual politics and inequality, Pilcher’s novel (2013b) covered bereavement and terrorism. Therefore, the concept of “heavy” seems questionable and provokes further scrutiny of the apparent binary distinction made between texts read for pleasure or ‘to do more with’. Additionally, Ruby’s comments suggested pupils gained more pleasure from greater engagement with the latter novel, deemed as carrying greater weight. Teachers’ comments about cultural capital are explored next.

6.2.2 Cultural Capital

All three teachers raised the concept of ‘cultural capital’ in relation to RfP. As this was not part of the interview schedule (Appendix F) or the researcher’s questions, it was inferred to be part of departmental dialogue about reading and readers, therefore relevant to present. What these comments revealed about engagement is explored below.

Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) perceived his pupils’ lack of ‘cultural capital’ as inextricably linked to reading, necessitating teacher intervention

some of our students do not engage with their culture in a critical way is the way I would phrase it and I think one of our jobs as English teachers is to enable them to be engaged readers is to try and bridge that gap between the perceived writers – er readers with cultural capital (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 164 - 167).

Jack recognised developing ‘critical’ reading as enabling, improving awareness of self and the world. If pupils cannot make judgements about their own culture, comparison with fictional worlds will remain limited. Implicit was the view texts read in class depict culture somewhat alien to pupils and therefore teacher’s assistance with connection forming was required, not supported by the textual analysis (4.1.2; 4.2.2). Without this, cultural deficit would be too great, preventing comprehension, engagement and consequently pleasure.

Similarly, Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19), felt addressing pupils’ lack of cultural capital was part of teachers’ remit. She felt “a responsibility” to extend pupils’ understanding

for their own cultural capital I had to do that [unpick ideas about terrorism] so I made that choice that it was important before we read the book that we had – get our ideas out about how we – what terrorism is (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 59 - 61).

This focus, while rooted in understanding the subject matter of the novel, Ruby presented as a social endeavour assisting pupils’ understanding through the ‘window’ fiction provides on worlds hitherto unknown. Implied was the teacher compensating for readers’ deficit of ‘cultural capital’, being a guide, assisting readers’ exploration and evaluation of unfamiliar territory. Pupils did not seem to be encouraged or trusted to develop their own connections based on existing cultural reference points.

Cindy’s comments (interviewed 4/07/19) about ‘cultural capital’ also indicated a desire to widen pupils’ knowledge of the world by exposing them to texts depicting the unfamiliar. For her, the

selection of texts in the current English curriculum required extending to bestow the necessary 'cultural capital'. There needed to be more "reading about other cultures" as, with the exception of the Steinbeck novel, "it's all about our culture – based upon British culture". The rationale for widening the range of reading material experienced in the classroom for Cindy was to extend pupils' understanding

I think they would be curious about reading about other cultures because what I've seen from my Year 8 class, they're very inquisitive about things they don't know a lot about (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 573 – 574).

Exposure to fiction providing windows onto different worlds increased engagement by satisfying curiosity but focus appeared to be readers positioned as tourists, observing cultures distinct from their own, rather than being invited to forge connections themselves. The third theme, credibility is discussed next.

6.3 Credibility

This data did not extend understanding of pupils' perceptions of text credibility (5.4) but teachers did comment about related aspects presented under two headings relating to pedagogy imbuing text and reading with credibility, then the validity of current reading policy.

6.3.1 Reading Pedagogies

The interviews revealed teachers' feelings that their pedagogy bestowed reading with credibility. All three referred to encouraging pupil engagement with fiction via modelling imaginative interaction.

The reading practices Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) employed were informed by personal experience, using imagination to produce the virtual text (2.5). He was explicit about the process

when I'm reading I'm making a film in my head and you practise that with them in class (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 118 – 120).

Readers needed explicit instruction for the text to act as a window. Modelling visualisation (6.2) moved pupils from initial affective response to analysis with interpretation built from selecting and rejecting. This could bestow credibility to text and reading by encouraging active engagement. However, its teacher-led nature, not necessarily aligned with pupils' points of reference, could undermine. Individuals were not supported in forming their own connections.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) also referred to pedagogy influenced by her reading experience. Using the metaphor "it's a journey and it's a personal journey" displayed recognition of the role fiction can have in development. She explained its impact

when we're young if we have – if we have the privilege of being read to or we can engage with literature as a young child – that playfulness – like I remember – I was very fortunate - my mum and dad read to me and my sister every single night when we were very small [. . .] I remember pop up books, pulling things, being shocked, doing the voices and my dad doing funny faces and singing and dressing up and that whole playfulness of reading and not seeing it as a chore (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 680 – 686).

She recalled immersion prompted by her parents' performance, opening fiction as mirrors, windows and doors. Recognising not all pupils have had this "privilege", credible pedagogy was that designed to replicate some of this experience, 'performing' books.

Similarly, Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) related pedagogical decisions to her formative experiences of reading. She valued reading fiction that acted as a doorway, providing vicarious experience, but acknowledged its credibility was diminished in light of competition in the fast-paced, multi-media, technology-driven age

I think that for a young child – in the same way for me when I was little – would escape in a book - well now they can escape on their phones so why pick up a book (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 222 – 223).

Consequently, she found opportunities for pupils to connect with reading through sharing within a reader community. She also endorsed imaginative response to text (6.2) as she felt this was more credible than other approaches, and in particular, DEAR as by Y8, pupils were 'over it' (6.1.3).

All three teachers described valuing other 'performative' pedagogy, suggesting they viewed it conducive to RfP by increasing engagement which readers could not achieve unaided. For example, Jack talked about reading fiction as combination of interrogative and performative practice

you know that when you're reading and questioning and bringing the book alive, they are developing reading strategies and there is a lot of like cognitive work going on (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 14 - 16).

This presented an interesting binary. Questioning appeared to be important in supporting comprehension and connection forging, narrowing the gap between actual and implied reader. The reference to "bringing the book alive" suggested Jack adopted a performative stance to enliven and enrich the reading. Texts were given credibility through teacher enthusiasm and accomplished delivery. While this approach included questioning, the balance struck between the affective and analytical was not evident.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) reported proudly her nomination for "educator of the week", a result of her performative delivery. She quoted the nomination: 'I like the way miss reads – she does all the voices'. This pedagogy reflected her personality: she described herself as "a very loud and extrovert character", unapologetic about this, "that's just who I am and I bring that into my teaching". She perceived this efficacious to RfP, relating occasions when pupils reprimanded her for not maintaining character voice. She revealed "I do perform and I do jump around and they're like 'you're weird' but they like it". Like Jack, her 'performance' had a visual element to help pupils feel "like they're watching a soap opera". In making explicit how she felt the fiction offered MWD, she also directed the action.

While Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) did not make any explicit reference to "performing" books like Jack and Cindy, there was evidence she took an active role in promoting text credibility. Comments revealed a range of creative and social activities helping readers to engage with fiction as MWD: writing reviews, book cover design, sharing books read, peer recommendations, pupils presenting talks about books. One activity referred to several times was board games based on books pupils read. Her enthusiasm for the activity and pride taken in the results were clear

one of the girls came up with snakes and ladders and it was about a marine biologist who'd just discovered this new sea snake and how this might actually jeopardise his career and – that's fantastic but it – I wish – if that's more interesting than – that sea – adventure – kind of highs and lows, ups and downs – survival (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 335 – 338).

This pedagogy encouraged readers to create their own interpretations, forging connection between their experience and fiction. The choice of snakes and ladders demonstrated imaginative engagement and understanding of narrative structure, with rising and falling action, and a range of dramatic episodes moving towards denouement. This task required readers to develop affective and analytical reading with Ruby's comments suggesting it was highly effective. Teachers' perceptions about the credibility of policy relating to RfP are examined next.

6.3.2 Policy Credibility

As this research project was stimulated by changes to the *National Curriculum* (DfE, 2013) whereby RfP was included in the core strand of reading (p.4), teachers were asked directly about its impact (Appendix F). While the NC is no longer mandatory, its official status means it's likely to continue influencing provision. Teachers were unequivocal about the limited impact of the NC in promoting RfP, reporting no change to their practice. Preparation for GCSE had greater influence in shaping practice with teachers viewing this as incompatible with RfP.

Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) recalled the departmental meeting where the NC was reviewed: "we guffawed" and "then carried on with what we have to do". This conveyed a stark sense of discord between policy and the classroom. Policy was dismissed as irrelevant to that perceived as their main business. He judged the document was "written by no-one in an English teaching background", dismissing it as "laughable". This derision was partly rooted in the formulation of the requirement "to teach a love of reading" (DfE, 2013, p.4) as "linguistically that sentence is so cretinous", citing its tautology as problematic before adding "You can't teach love, can you?".

Cindy's (interviewed 4/07/19) immediate response was similarly rhetorical: "Do you teach a love of reading?". Placing emphasis on "teach", she indicated awareness of the tautology raised by Jack. She continued

I think reading is something you – I don't think it's something you necessarily go 'yep well I've been taught that and I love it' (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 611 – 613).

Cindy was clear about the tensions between the didactic process and engendering love, raising doubts about the policy's credibility. In her experience, no-one "has specifically decided to teach a love of reading" in response to the new curriculum. Like Jack, Cindy questioned the provenance of this phrase, "It's not kind of how it works. I wonder who wrote that?".

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) echoed Cindy's appraisal that new NC had not changed curriculum provision, implying policy itself had little credibility for classroom practitioners

I wouldn't say that anybody's necessarily pushing a love . . . I don't know – a love of reading in response to the government. I think it's more just as a duty as English teachers (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 688 – 690).

Ruby identified teachers' attitude toward their role and responsibility as more significant. If individuals saw RfP as part of their remit, their practice would promote it and perhaps more likely if teachers were keen readers. Her observation, "attitudes to reading come from way outside of the classroom", acknowledged the limited influence teachers have but this should not preserve the status quo, especially given the growing evidence of RfP's benefits.

GCSE requirements were cited as exerting considerable curricular influence. Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) felt this impacted on KS3

is it possible to foster a love of reading when you've got the pressure of exams? Probably not (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 788 – 789).

This comment suggested Ruby saw RfP and examination skills antithetically: opposing requirements rather than complementary. It could also reflect the time pressures brought by increased content of the new specifications. Ruby's views echoed current conceptualisations of reading in educational policy (DfE, 2013) with purposes binary and distinct.

External assessment took priority and for Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19), GCSE impacted the whole secondary curriculum, "it's becoming a five-year course". She asked

because the pressure of what's needed at Key Stage 4 are we taking away that pleasure and enjoyment because we so focused on the skills that are needed for Key Stage 4? (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 457 – 460).

Ruby felt there was no space for other types of reading. She talked about teachers' fear of KS4 requirements exerting pressure to begin GCSE preparation in Y7, describing this as "sad" and "frightening". This reflected the view that credible classroom reading activity focuses on examination preparation rather than reader response, echoing the findings of research literature (2.8).

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) unpicked the impact of the new GCSE requirements on KS3 a little more

it's very easy to feel you're doing something useful by chucking in an analytical question at the end or as part of a lesson you think 'ok this is quick and easy – I've come up with a question – done and they can write for twenty five minutes on that and that's the lesson done wo-who – I'm really helping them but it also saves me time' . . . you convince yourself it's good practice for later on when actually it's not (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 591 – 599).

Teachers cannot be criticised for employing "quick and easy" techniques and these comments indicated Ruby acted from good intentions but was driven by GCSE requirements. Ruby recognised becoming accustomed to working in ways not compatible with her values as an English teacher. While she sounded resigned, "That's sad that that's what teaching has become", this also illustrated the need for teachers to exercise professional agency to facilitate change.

Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) also acknowledged accountability of GCSE, citing "data drops", numerical data required by his senior leaders to provide evidence of pupil progress, as fundamental in shaping the curriculum for every year group. This exerted a moral duty

and I can't assess them on something they haven't been taught and if they need to have been taught it I need to explicitly teach them skills – it's unethical to assess them on it – so from day one pen to paper do what I say so yeah it's hard – it's really hard and it does hinder cos it – we're not giving them the space to . . . see reading as reading for

reading's sake and they're expecting them to see reading for reading's sake when all we're doing here is reading to assess (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 505 – 510).

These comments suggested that, while Jack was dissatisfied with the dominance and priority given to written work, he complied. To result in change, the NC requirement needed further official endorsement mandating “periods of time without any writing”. Without this approbation, school leaders would continue asking for written evidence of progress with the status of RfP remaining marginalised.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) made a single reference to GCSE but this related to teachers' feelings of accountability, echoing the other teachers. She judged the syllabi impacted on curriculum by narrowing the range of texts

you're still going to be held accountable for covering the stuff that's laid out in the GCSE specs and the National Curriculum (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 594 – 596).

For Cindy, this constrained content across both key stages, reducing opportunities for teachers to use fiction to widen pupils' experiences, develop their self-awareness and empathy (6.2). External accountability was thus perceived as a barrier to RfP. The final theme, conversation is explored in the next section.

6.4 Conversation

Teachers provided many examples of classroom talk they perceived as assisting pupils' engagement and meaning making, some of which have been explored above. These frequent comments suggested discussion was valued by teachers and featured regularly in their classrooms. However, the generalised rationale for talk indicated little deliberate strategy or clearly delineated pedagogical aims, focused on RfP or any other objective.

Data from the teacher interviews is presented under two headings, classroom talk and reader communities, broadly reflecting some aspects of extant research literature (2.7) but possessing little correspondence with the pupil data (5.5).

6.4.1 Classroom Talk

Literature identifies 'booktalk' as important support for RfP (2.7.3); the pupil interviews corresponded. The teachers' frequent reference to classroom discussion suggested they valued and promoted it. However, the link between talk and RfP via increased engagement was not addressed and the data implied very loose pedagogical aims, with little evidence of dialogic practices. For example, Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) suggested reader response was assisted by co-construction of interpretation. She wanted to hear pupils' perspective, acknowledging it is “so interesting to hear their words”

they're Year 8 – they're thirteen years old – they're like sex – tell me more about this – oh racism – I've heard some things about racism but I don't feel that comfortable talking about race – I want to hear about this – or – we spoke about – we've spoken about so many different topics this year (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 561 – 564).

Cindy appeared to prioritise readers' response to texts as mirrors or windows, reflecting their lived experience and widening knowledge. Although there was suggestion the discussions were pupil-

directed, as the topics emerged from the fiction shared in class, this was not consistent with other evidence. Cindy's description of classroom talk implied informal, unstructured practice raising questions about how efficacious it would be in supporting readers to develop response or experience pleasure. Likewise, as not all voices would be heard, issues of equality and participation would be problematic.

Similarly, Jack (interviewed 20/06/19) recognised the value of pupils exploring relevant issues in discussion, appearing to foreground readers' engagement with texts as mirrors. Across the interview, Jack referred to the appeal of talk focused on themes

I like it when we talk – also growing up is a huge one. When you talk about the processes of ageing – of adolescence with kids because we don't do that enough (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 731 – 733).

Implied is discussion of books reflecting readers' lives contributed to personal growth, widened perspectives and provided insight. Fiction allowed young people to examine issues they face through exploration of characters' lives, de-personalising situations and feelings as well as providing different perspectives and solutions. Like Cindy, there was little evidence of Jack's structuring discussion deliberately to engage, rather it was presented as unfolding organically. Despite espousing this activity, Jack conceded it did not feature sufficiently frequently. This was further emphasised by Jack's reference to *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) and its teenage protagonist: "actually teenagedom is a very complicated thing and reading books that explore that hugely important". While endorsing discussion building connection between pupils' worlds and that depicted in fiction, Jack did not appear to take deliberate action to do so.

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) also valued discussion, giving time for pupils to share opinions and experiences. Typically, this explored "something we don't normally speak about" but seemed influenced by her values rather than a deliberate strategy to develop pupil response or engender pleasure. She was explicit about "being an ethnic minority" bestowed "responsibility to unpick and talk about" issues related to racism, appearing to prioritise her agenda rather than promoting reader response to fiction as MWDs. Her social and moral compulsion to engage pupils in this discussion of race was also described relating to Steinbeck's novel (1937) where the "N word" features

as a black female teacher and there being only one mixed race pupil in that class that was a really kind of key lesson where I thought I'm not reading this book without having this discussion (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 110 – 112).

Although Ruby was exploring the novel's social and historical context, this seemed secondary to discussion of a term which retains controversy. The text was a vehicle to explore wider social issues, identified by Ruby as important.

The lack of departmental planning for reader progression generally and booktalk specifically was implied when Ruby reported surprise at discovering "no-one else had" devoted lesson-time to this aspect before. She later circulated her materials to support the rest of the department. For Ruby, exploring prejudicial language was an essential part of an English teacher's job

it's everyone's duty and I think you know it's a word that they hear – you know lots of the boys are into kind of rap music and it's a word they hear and I think we really had an

interesting discussion about am I going to use the word when I read it and I said yes because it's my job as an English teacher to read this word out and I said – we talked about – there's a great clip of Jayzee and Oprah discussing it and he said he uses it to empower him and she says that word can never empower anybody and we had some really great discussions (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 118 – 124).

This transcript extract conveyed Ruby's clarity about language critique forming part of her remit, with moral and professional responsibility overlapping. To help pupils understand the complexity of the debates around the word, both today and in the 1930s US setting of Steinbeck's novel (1937), she drew on popular culture and media, establishing relevance and credibility to support pupil engagement. However, it appeared framed around her practice as a teacher rather than opening space for pupils to share their opinions and experiences. Teachers' views that discussion could imbue a sense of community is explored next.

6.4.2 Reader Communities

Teachers' response appeared to lead classroom talk but each participant also mentioned the sense of community sharing reading imbued: an aspect identified in the literature as supporting RfP (2.7.3). Their comments indicated this was a favourable consequence of discussion rather than deliberately targeted.

Jack (interviewed 20/6/19) was very explicit about the need for social engineering to foster a sense of community, exploiting pupils' social standing with peers

I target the most popular kids in the class, ask them questions that they have to answer and then draw out when they're feeling enthusiastic about it because that is signposting to the kids' reading is like – reading is for everyone (Jack interviewed 20/6/19, lines 530 - 532).

Jack intervened to normalise reading thus increase engagement, bestowing credibility by using knowledge of individuals to expose positive response. Nevertheless, this targeted questioning is not dialogic, however. Direct action was justified as “if I want the shy kids to not hide the fact that they read and I want it to be socially acceptable you can use peer relationships to do that”. By facilitating participation in conversation about reading, he attempted to create a more inclusive atmosphere, providing a safe space for reader response. Pleasure was not the key driver but Jack used pupils to model positive attitudes towards reading - a crucial step towards its realisation.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) also referred explicitly to the sense of togetherness which can result from reading fiction in the classroom

it's like a community – that kind of shared experience that you hear and they all – most of them – even the people who might not be as vocal read along and I read their books afterwards - we've got this dialogue - a different form of communicating (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 422 - 425).

Discussion of the text was implied through the reference to hearing “shared experience”. Pupils writing was viewed as a continuation of this, a different type of “dialogue”. However, Cindy's comments suggested conversation, although commonplace, was somewhat taken-for-granted. There was no indication talk was planned as a pedagogical tool, considering explication, modelling

and practice. Conversation helped create a shared dialogue, forming a community but this appeared not to be deliberately targeted or considered.

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) did describe deliberate action taken to forge a reader community more inclusive and diverse, aligned with her values. She had made a successful bid for funding to the Queen's Commonwealth Trust. She explained

I want to do more of an black and Asian ethnic minorities focus at the school and I think that is important – so many kids that I feel are unsupported or don't see themselves in literature and erm we've basically got one thousand five hundred pounds from the trust and the idea is that we're going to get kids from a diverse range of backgrounds – LGBT as well – to think about and pick books to go in the library (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 507 – 511).

As with exploration of the 'N' word (6.4.1), Ruby acknowledged her ethnicity influenced pedagogy and here expressed opinion which could be ascribed similarly. Her empathy with minority groups led to direct action expanding stock and widening choice to encourage talk.

Tacit in Ruby's thinking (interviewed 1/07/19) was assumption it was engaging for readers to see themselves reflected with fiction acting as a mirror. Her aim was new stock to "create a sort of buzz around the school so the kids can see these books" with reading and fiction occupying a higher profile in the school community. Her commitment to and belief in using talk to promote reading was emphasised when she recounted the last department meeting

I pushed this a bit the other day – that we could be doing more for oracy and taking books and actually discussing them and having kids present ideas that stand out to them. I think that's really really important (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 540 – 542).

Ruby acted as an advocate for readers and RfP. Her wish for a reading community better reflecting the diversity of the school population was powerful and important, supporting RfP by widening access to MWDs.

Conversation, rather than booktalk, appeared as part of teachers' pedagogy, drawing primarily upon adults' reading experiences. They 'performed' to imbue reading and fiction with credibility and also worked to form a sense of community, offering further endorsement.

6.5 Overview of Key Themes

Interviews with teachers corresponded with some pupils' views but dissonance emerged. Choice was not viewed as significant to RfP via increasing engagement; pedagogy was deemed more impactful. Teachers reported reluctance to engage with Y8's independent reading, intimating freedom was paramount. There were mixed views about the efficacy of DEAR. Connection and credibility were accomplished apparently through teacher-led pedagogy with policy deemed irrelevant and inconsistent. Discussion of fiction featured prominently but seemed to lack strategy. Teachers described working to forge reader communities. The next chapter reviews all the data collected, discussing key issues, identifying knowledge gained.

Chapter 7 - Discussion

This chapter discusses the data elicited for this participatory case study, presented in the previous three chapters, addressing the initial research question: what are the enablers of, and barriers to, RfP in KS3 English? It draws upon the literature base and theoretical framework (see Chapter 2) explicating the key finding, reader agency is central to engagement and a precursor to potential pleasure from fiction, using four headings each representing an enabler of increased engagement: asserting individuality; responding as children; developing critics; dialogue not discussion. These sections identify the knowledge gained from the study, supporting the extrapolation of practice efficacious to RfP (see 8.3).

7.1 Asserting Individuality

Research has indicated autonomy over choice of reading material enabled RfP (2.7), claiming increased frequency of reading led to more pleasure (NLT & Clark, 2014; Hall & Coles, 1999; Laurenson *et al.*, 2015). This 'virtuous circle' (Dombey & UKLA, 2010) assumed choice allowed pursuit of individual interests, motivating more reading. The relationship between choice and RfP was presented as causal and relatively uncomplicated. This study revealed a more nuanced picture, suggesting lack of choice did not always prevent pleasure.

Some pupil participants found pleasure in the fiction read in class (Willow, Georgia, Rory, Mason, 5.2.1), over which they had no choice. Others, who expressed desire for a wider range of genres and settings (Natalie, Lanika, Matilde), still gained pleasure from these books. One pupil (Ellie) did not enjoy them and wished to exert choice. Another (Rose) criticised novel choice informed by tradition rather than its suitability for Y8.

Limits on choice emerged as potentially positive, serving to widen pupils' reading repertoires and extend their 'cultural dialogue' (Coats, 2011) by introducing books otherwise not considered. Rose talked about reading Anne Frank's diary at primary school, revisiting it recently (5.2.2). Other pupils extended their reading, taking up recommendations by friends (Natalie, Matilde, Lanika) or family (Rose, Georgia). Adult selection also removed the responsibility of decision-making, felt to be burdensome by pupils (Georgia, Lanika, Natalie, Ellie, Rose). This range of views indicated choice alone was not a significant or consistent enabler of pleasure.

The conceptual framework of this study (2.6), rooted in RR, can explain this variation in perspectives. When implied and actual reader align, the 'gaps' in the text act as hooks, connecting reader with text (Iser, 1974). Readers actively engage and this interaction results in pleasure (Rosenblatt, 1978). Bishop's (1990) mirror or window or door model revealed more about different pleasure stimuli, exposing the dialogic (Chambers, 1985), two way process (Iser, 1974) involved (see Figure 2.6.2). These models combined explicate pleasure can emerge from engagement with familiarity, possibilities and change with overlap possible (see Figure 2.6.4), regardless of implied and actual reader proximity and issues of choice: the reader's agency is key to engagement.

When lack of choice did preclude pleasure, the data suggested this was only partly related to alignment of implied and actual reader. The main barrier appeared to be readers' passivity in the process, rather than a dearth of options. Inhibited or absent interaction resulted in readers not able to 'play' (Hollindale, 1997) with text or 'see' themselves in the book (Chambers, 1985). Expansion of experience (Rosenblatt, 1968) and opening of possibilities (Iser, 1974) and escapism (Rosenblatt, 1968) were all out of reach. These varied pleasure stimuli, whether from interaction as reflection, hypothesis and change (see Figure 2.6.4), offered readers discovery (Meek, 1988), a new understanding of the self or their world (Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2018). The pupil interviews (Chapter 5) suggested when readers could exert agency over 'composition' of the new 'virtual' work (Iser, 1976) constructing interpretation based on their own experiences, lack of choice could be negated with dialogic interaction imbuing pleasure.

Evidence from the textual analysis (Chapter 4) also indicated lack of alignment did not necessarily impair or prevent engagement. The implied reader analysis (4.1.1; 4.2.1; 4.3.1) identified considerable disjunction with Y8 actual readers but the pupils' responses illustrated active meaning-making and pleasurable interaction. The dialogic exchange with text helped readers engage, accessing a range of pleasure stimuli (see Figure 2.6.4). The rich interpretations emerging from actual reader textual analysis (4.1.2; 4.2.2) highlighted the value of giving readers freedom to develop their own interpretations: agency increased engagement, engendering pleasure.

Teachers identified pedagogy as more important than choice, ascribing pupils' pleasure of classroom fiction to their approaches (6.1.1). However, the data suggested teacher-led practice appeared to offer readers little agency or scope for individual interpretation, rather than that advocated by the "fast read" approach (Westbrook et al., 2018; 2.7.1). Chambers (1993) advocated positioning pupils actively in a number of roles: dramatist, director, audience, actor and critic. Instead, teachers seemed to 'perform' (6.1) either by reading aloud (Cindy), presenting explanations of contemporary relevance (Ruby) or frequent directive questioning (Jack). These approaches were felt efficacious to RfP with issues of choice apparently not explored.

The interviews revealed teachers were aware of links between choice and RfP (6.1). Cindy was concerned about mixed messages conveyed: no choice was offered over material read in class but pupils were expected to choose independently for DEAR time. Ruby felt there was a strong link between teacher's ability to choose what they taught and quality of teaching. Jack acknowledged few conversations about reading with pupils. However, this understanding had not translated into more democratic classroom practices. The teacher appeared to place themselves centrally as *the* reader with pupils' agency apparently denied.

These views were contradicted somewhat with teachers' reluctance to intervene with independent reading (6.1.2). Jack and Cindy explained this as reticence to impose their views and preferences, starkly contradicting the teacher-led pedagogy described when working with novels in the classroom (6.1.1). While teachers added valid concerns about time and assessment pressures (6.1.2; 6.3.2), it is hard to imagine these arguments validating neglect of other curricular

requirements. The wish to provide freedom of choice also sat uneasily alongside the school's DEAR policy, enforcing daily reading in classrooms (3.3.1). It also presupposed Y8 could select material, aligned to reader's interests and result in pleasure. Pupils identified this as problematic (5.2.2), echoing previous research (e.g. NLT, Clark & Poulton, 2011).

Inadequate understanding of pupil readers was apparent and highlighted by teachers comparing their own reading development with pupils (6.1.2). Teachers' personal reading experiences appeared to impede development of pedagogy supportive of RfP, rather than utilised to inform it, unconceivable with other curricular areas such as writing. It is fallacious to think teachers' practice is not coloured by personal traits. When teaching writing skills, teachers draw skilfully and effectively on their own experiences and preferences to showcase the writing craft; why should reading pedagogy be different?

Pupils' overlooking DEAR (5.2.2) and teachers' views of the practice (6.1.3) suggested its value in increasing frequency of reading was not perceived as connected to RfP (2.7.1) indicating school-wide conversations were needed about its purpose and teachers' role. Locating DEAR in the pastoral curriculum at Waldren School appeared well-intentioned, promoting whole school literacy and encouraging more frequent reading but how teachers from other disciplines support RfP would benefit from scrutiny. More guidance for readers and teachers could enhance DEAR by establishing communities of readers (2.7.3) as well as improving proficiency to make reading less work (2.7.1), increasing engagement, enriching both RfP and, potentially, staff/pupil relationships.

A paradox in current practice was evident. Pupils appeared capable of independent meaning-making, not necessarily trusted to do so, yet expected to have skill to exercise informed choice over reading material. Teachers felt their pedagogy mitigated lack of choice. However, the data revealed lack of choice did not prevent or impair pleasure *per se*: if readers could be agentic, engagement was possible. Interaction with fiction could offer various stimulation including familiarity, opportunity for hypothesis or prompting change (see Figure 2.6.4). The purpose and efficacy school DEAR as a vehicle for RfP appeared to need review.

7.2 Responding as Children

Reader agency was also revealed as enabling pleasure through the active forging of connections with fiction. Alignment of implied and actual reader was only part of the interaction. When given opportunity, individuals could establish rich, personal and diverse linkage, stimulating different types of pleasure (4.1.2; 5.3), illustrated by the conceptual framework mapping (see Figure 2.6.4). This individualised process, predicated on a child's perspective, was rooted in the empirical. However, creating interpretation also involved affective *and* analytical response simultaneously, not previously identified in research.

The implied reader textual analysis (4.1.1; 4.2.1; 4.3.1) suggested connection between reader and text could be affected by text choice: if implied and actual reader were not aligned, pleasure would be inhibited or prevented. *Maggot Moon* (Gardner, 2012) was assessed as possessing more potential alignment for Y8 readers than *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). The combination of

Steinbeck's setting, adult characters and themes were deemed too distant to be relatable to these young readers (4.1.1, 4.2.1). Gardner's novel, with its coming of age theme and protagonist of similar age to readers, was deemed closer, therefore stimulating more pleasure (4.3.1). However, this contrasted with the actual reader textual analysis and the interview data, suggesting other factors at work.

The actual reader textual analysis demonstrated readers were capable of forging connections independently with links diverse and highly personal (4.1.2; 4.2.2), regardless of implied and actual reader proximity. Pedagogy based on RR (3.4.2) gave readers opportunity to exercise agency when responding to fiction, actively constructing interpretation from their perspective rather than assimilating an adult reading. The framework provided clear, sequenced direction, scaffolding in an accessible yet open-ended manner (3.4.2). Individuals could draw upon their life and experiences (4.1.2; 4.2.2). Affective reaction to character and setting was stimulated by reflection and familiarity (see Figure 2.6.4) from memories (e.g. Canada, falling in a pond, a friend's swimming pool, a holiday). The proliferation of connections led to a specific prompt added during the activity (3.5.1). Annotations illustrated inferential and comparative visualisation (e.g. characters, sands, skittering), evidencing hypothesis and speculation (see Figure 2.6.4) incorporating simultaneous affective and analytical response. Researcher and class teacher were surprised by the high level of interaction between reader and text displayed during the activity (journal p.43; 4.4). Pupils' ability to devise individual interpretation was impressive, suggesting agency encouraged connection forging, enriching their reading experience.

While both interview data sets indicated pupils and teachers shared the view that connection between reader and text was important to RfP (5.3; 6.2.1), the origins of these links were attributed differently. Pupils' comments revealed connection with character significantly enabled pleasure (5.3) but this interaction stimulated different types of pleasure, illustrated by the taxonomies of the conceptual framework (2.6). For example, Rory felt affinity with characters sharing characteristics with him so fiction offered the familiar (see Figure 2.6.4), acting as a mirror, giving affirmation and a sense of belonging. Willow expressed connection with Ness's LGBTQ+ characters but it was not clear if the primary appeal lay in the novel acts as a mirror (the familiar), window (possibilities) or door (change) or some combination (see Figure 2.6.4). Whether any or none of these functions were the source of Willow's pleasure, she was interacting with the text as a child.

Georgia did not find appeal in characters who reflected her own age and interests (5.3): she was bored by this, demonstrating an 'unyielding' stance (Chambers, 1985). Instead she found fictional adult relationships engaging, their complexity pleasurable perhaps demonstrating this reader's embrace of the mutability of childhood (see Figure 2.6.4). The novel offered access to scenarios not yet experienced but by seeing or living them vicariously, Georgia began to consider possibilities. This represented a 'kind of thinking' (Meek, 1991) which leads to new understanding (Bishop, 1990) from imaginatively considering possibilities. The appeal could also reflect her reader aspirations: she anticipated enjoying challenging fiction.

Some readers (Rory, Rose, Ellie) found complexity dissatisfying (5.3). Unreliable or multiple narrators impaired connection and pleasure. It could be these readers do not yet possess the emotional and psychological sophistication required to tolerate uncertainty, experiencing a 'state of becoming' (Hollindale, 1997) in life and fiction simultaneously: seemingly preferring 'safe house' fiction (Applebee, 1996). Reading more widely could help stimulate greater understanding of narrative voice, enabling more confident negotiation of fiction presenting these challenges. Readers could become more able to develop empathy for character and situation, opening possibilities for 'enlarging experience' (Rosenblatt, 1968).

Mismatch between reader and text was also evident in Lanika's comments about her changed reading habits (5.3). Devaluing "teen" books, she placed a higher value on more complex fiction aimed at older readers. Lanika appeared to perceive pleasure as linked to challenge, anticipating change (see Figure 2.6.4): only "difficult" books would facilitate 'discovery' (Iser, 1974). This echoed Georgia's observation that books which make you think were pleasurable, suggesting willingness to occupy a 'state of becoming'. These readers benefit from giving themselves 'private lessons' (Meek, 1991) whereby something of the 'Matthew effect' (Stanovich, 1986) was evident: more frequent reading improves proficiency making it less work thus more potential for pleasure (see also Mol & Bus, 2011).

Conversely, Rory found books not too hard and not too easy pleasurable (5.3). His current selection offered familiarity (see Figure 2.6.4) acting as a mirror, with schoolboy protagonist depicted in settings not dissimilar to Rory's own. The connections Rory forged were fairly literal whereas Mason's connection was from stepping into text world, exploring possibilities. He enjoyed the vicarious experience offered by fiction, allowing him to imaginatively place himself in a fictional character's shoes. This could be deemed as stimulating thinking like Georgia but through being there, perhaps a more intimate experience.

Natalie's failure to find either class novel enjoyable (5.3) could indicate the gap between implied and actual reader was too great, perhaps compounded by lack of opportunity to respond as a child. It seemed inability to forge connections led directly to her pejorative reaction: she found neither mirror, window or door in the text (2.6) and proved unable to exert agency in interaction by imaginatively re-writing like Matilde and Rose, above.

Like Georgia, Rose and Ellie were not engaged by characters closely aligned with their own lives, reflecting their age and circumstances (5.3). Ellie found pleasure in fiction presenting windows on real life events or fantasy realms, offering possibilities (see Figure 2.6.4). Rose shared some of these preferences but was not negative about fiction acting as mirrors, able to connect with other familiarities (e.g. the Gramps character). However, her engagement stemmed primarily from exercising agency, imaginatively re-writing the text, hypothesising about alternatives (see Figure 2.6.4): examples of 'playing' with the text (Chambers, 1985; Mackey, 2006). This creative engagement, producing a virtual text rooted in the original work but expanded and its focalisation shifted, gave pleasure. Matilde reported similar gratification, connecting with characters to the extent

she re-wrote the ending to expand their stories, occupying different stances as advocated by Chambers (1993). These readers could tolerate uncertainty by exerting agency with effective problem-solving making them architects of their own pleasure.

Teachers recognised connection as important to RfP but seemed to underestimate readers' ability to be agentic in creating interpretation independently, viewing the process simplistically (6.2.1). Teachers saw connection as primarily rooted in the narrative not character. Jack endorsed fiction acting as mirrors for pupils as pleasurable, focusing on the 'coming of age' theme rather than character. Familiarity with this life phase (see Figure 2.6.4) was situated contextually, too. His dismissal of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865) indicated a belief that distance between implied and actual Y8 readers was too great: its contemporary relevance would not be grasped and engagement impaired: a view underpinning the implied reader textual analysis (see Chapter 4) and since challenged by this study. While aspects of the novel could well seem obscure and opaque to the modern reader, Jack's rejection of the book belies little trust in readers' ability to develop connections and interpretation of fiction presenting characters and settings not explicitly mirroring readers' lives. It could also illustrate a limited awareness of the various pleasure stimuli of fiction (see Figure 2.6.4).

Cindy viewed themes as the primary method of readers' connection (6.2.1). She provided examples of pupil response to classroom reading but these reflected engagement with plot rather than character, reporting pupils keen to find out what happened next, hypothesising about possibilities (see Figure 2.6.4), suggesting some agency with interpretation. Jack also mentioned engagement prompted by prediction (6.2.1), specifically finding out if they were correct. This implied problem-solving was pleasurable and pupils had absorbed the 'rules' of narrative but focused on the text not reader or reader interaction with text. Implied was a dearth of dialogue about the connections pupils made (see 7.4) but it is necessary to acknowledge time between practice and interviews could have distorted accounts (3.7).

Ruby did mention readers seeing themselves in fiction: engagement from texts acting as mirrors (6.2.1). However, she didn't feel this required an exact match. Familiarity with some aspect (see Figure 2.6.4), not necessarily character, would 'trigger' readers, prompting hypothesis about theme or action bringing change. Ruby's comments suggested recognition that engagement was enabled by fiction offering windows onto different worlds and situations, with reader connecting through empathy, cognition, imagination or some combination. While seeing the texts as triggers did embrace readers' agency, her recall did not echo the importance of characters for pupils (5.3).

While all three teachers endorsed connection as important to pleasure, the data suggested there was no emphasis placed on pupils' own interpretation. This echoed the OECD (2021) report that only a quarter of pupils were encouraged to make connection between fiction and their own lives. Directive techniques were reported as forging links (6.2.1). Their descriptions indicated different stances with Cindy as performer, Ruby a guide and Jack a film director, all making links for the pupils rather than supporting engagement via individual meaning-making from a child's perspective or by

occupying different roles (see 7.1) advocated by Chambers (1993). This teacher-led pedagogy appeared to promote passivity, perhaps advantageous for classroom management but not supportive of progress in reading or pleasure. However, it is necessary to remember the relationship between researcher and teachers (3.7) may have led to this emphasis.

Teachers' comments about 'cultural capital' also suggested lack of confidence in pupils' ability to be agentic in connection forging (6.2.2). However, endorsement of this deficit model indicated awareness RfP comprised affective *and* evaluative response (see 7.3). In meaning-making, readers compare their knowledge of the world to that presented in fiction. When this understanding proved insufficient, comprehension was impeded, preventing connection between reader and text, consequently impairing engagement. There is some overlap between theories of 'cultural capital' and implied reader as they were predicated on alignment between reader and text but both have limitations if employed to unpick the relationship between culture and RfP. Bourdieu's concept (1979) was primarily interested in methods of cultural, thus ideological reproduction via systemic and institutional practices somewhat removed from this study's focus. Iser's theory (1974; 1976), seemingly more focused on the individual, offered no distinction between contextual factors influencing reader's interaction with text, resulting in generalisation (2.5.6). Pedagogically, if pupils are judged as lacking the 'cultural capital' to devise response to text, transmission models could dominate whereby agency is diminished which this study suggests forms a barrier to RfP. The data suggested teachers addressed pupils' perceived lack of cultural capital with teacher-led practice whereby adults possessing knowledge transmit it to those without.

Readers' comments demonstrated disparate connections possible when opportunity was given for them to respond as children. Connection with fiction was rooted primarily in the empirical with different types of pleasure possible when agency could be exercised. Affective response was complemented by readers' comparison of themselves and their experiences to that depicted in fiction. Teachers recognised the importance of connection but, in practice, appeared to have little trust readers could achieve this unaided. Additionally, these teachers, despite being aware their knowledge of reading and children's literature was insufficient to support RfP via increased engagement, had not taken remedial action.

7.3 Developing Critics

Across the early stages of the study, readers' critical appraisal of fiction was not considered either as enabler of, or barrier to, RfP by increasing engagement: it did not feature in the extant research literature (2.7). Its emergence in the pupil interviews as a contributor to engagement or pleasure (5.4) necessitated re-appraisal of the other data. This led to identification of congruent aspects previously overlooked, generating new insight into reader/text interaction and the value of the study's conceptual framework in examining RfP (2.6).

RR views reading as an active process (2.5): there exists a 'live circuit' between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1968). This involves the reader's cognitive faculties whereby textual details are selected and synthesised to create the new 'virtual' work (Iser, 1974). Critical skill is implied as the

reader identifies what is significant or resonant, forging connections accordingly, prompting pleasure. Albeit typically subconscious, comparative judgements are involved. Rosenblatt's (1978) efferent and aesthetic modes (2.5.3) acknowledge affective and evaluative purposes of reading with frequent switches but this interplay had not been identified previously as an enabler of RfP by increasing engagement. Its emergence as important in pupil interviews indicated the implied reader textual analysis (4.1.1; 4.2.1) considered interaction too limited in range. Young readers' engagement was influenced by their evaluation of writers' craft and settings but also intertextually and in comparison with other readers' views.

The actual reader textual analysis (4.2.1; 4.2.2) illustrated readers' dynamic interaction with text (Iser, 1974), whereby their agency led to construction of the 'virtual' text – an interpretation 'composed' by the reader (Iser, 1976). During the task, the RR prompts appeared to help readers be active in the meaning-making process, developing interpretation from a synthesis of affective and analytical response (7.2). Encouraged to exercise agency, they forged individual connections, often rich and unusual (e.g. giant rabbit army, 4.1.2; Skittles, 4.2.2), suggesting enhanced engagement with potential for pleasure from speculation (see Figure 2.6.4).

Critical judgement was evident in the data as pupils compared and evaluated against their experiences, noted above (7.2): connotations of 'green' by Ellie, Georgia, Rory (4.2.2); intertextuality by Georgia and Willow (4.2.2). The importance and relevance of detail was assessed, with selection and inference employed to make meaning (e.g. vocabulary critique by Matilde, 4.1.2; memories from Mason, Rory and Willow, 4.2.2). Reading was detective work, identifying 'clues' in the text (Rosenblatt, 1968) with pleasure possible from problem-solving and the creative process of constructing interpretation.

The interview data provided other evidence that pupils' nascent critical ability informed their response, influencing engagement and potentially pleasure. For some, quality of the writing was significant (Matilde, Georgia, 5.4.1), while others assessed favourably books which 'taught readers something' (Lanika, Natalie, 5.4.2), suggesting pleasure from change (see Figure 2.6.4). When fiction offered readers MWD, this was judged positively (Matilde, Lanika, 5.4.2) or conversely, if they didn't, it impaired pleasure (e.g. Ellie, Georgia, 5.4.2). Issues of genre expectations were apparent: when these were not fulfilled, books were found wanting and pleasure impaired (Mason, 5.4.1; Rose, 5.4.2). Some readers found less pleasure in texts with blurred genre lines or multiple narrators (Ellie, 5.4.2) suggesting limited repertoires and lack of ability to tolerate ambiguity or uncertainty: they could not experience pleasure from occupying a 'state of becoming' (7.2). Navigating these uncertainties transcends fiction, with OECD (2021) noting literacy of the post-truth era requires development of autonomous and advanced reading skills. The discussion around 'authenticity' (Rose, Ellie, 5.4.2) suggested rigid and undeveloped views of "truth" and "lies" in fiction. These readers required the author to be a more effective 'guide' (Chambers, 1985) as they were not able to navigate for themselves. This data may provide some explanation of the popularity of series fiction with these readers (5.2.2), engaging with and enjoying familiarity (see Figure 2.6.4). However, other readers

(e.g. Georgia, 5.4.2) gained pleasure from engaging in speculation, imagining possibilities emphasising again the various stimuli experienced.

Whatever criteria was employed to judge texts, readers interacted with fiction affectively *and* analytically simultaneously rather than switching between modes. This critique impacted on pleasure. Favourable judgements about writing quality appeared to increase pleasure to the extent that perceived flaws could be overlooked (5.4). Others' positive assessment of texts could motivate reading of new material, extending repertoires with potential for more pleasure through increased engagement (5.5.1). Overall, this data indicated developing critical skill could enable pleasure in a number of ways.

As literary appreciation is a core element of the English curriculum, it was anticipated teachers would refer to readers' critical skills. The data indicated teachers underestimated pupils' ability to make independent judgements and formulate interpretation. Typically, teacher-led pedagogy was reported, suggesting scant opportunity for readers to exercise agency (6.3.1). As noted above (7.2), this indicated little trust in pupils' ability to connect and interpret independently. However, teachers not mentioning pupils' critical judgements or any encouragement to do so, does not constitute proof it never happened. Rather, it could suggest teachers did not view this as relevant to RfP, the main focus of the interview, judging instead my interest lay in pedagogy (3.7). To what extent reader critique was valued or overlooked in the classroom was not captured in the data. While awareness of how kudos could be given to texts and reading was evident, this appeared not harnessed to provide consistent or strategized reader-centred practice supporting engagement. Teachers reported 'performing' (7.2) positioning readers passively, reducing opportunities for pleasure created through agentic interaction (see Figure 2.6.4).

Teachers provided critique of current policy, assessing this as a direct barrier to RfP (6.3.2). The NC was perceived by all three teachers as irrelevant and inconsistent across KS3 and KS4 yet practice had not changed as a result. Accountability for examination grades meant GCSE requirements overshadowed the early secondary years. Teachers felt for RfP to feature prominently in English, further official support was needed. While accountability for GCSE shaped practice, all three teachers felt this was not compatible with RfP. Professionally, these teachers espoused RfP's value, viewing the NC as flawed and inconsistent but this judgement had not triggered change.

Reading, as a core element of the curriculum, is linked inextricably to conceptualisations of English and English teaching (2.3). These teachers appeared to espouse personal growth model of English and RR can complement this through advocating focus on reader/text interaction. Despite bemoaning the narrowness of the GCSE specifications, teachers appeared to be taking no action to advocate change or adjust KS3 practice, instead extending examination preparation into KS3, contradicting their espoused values and professional judgement.

Across the data, readers developing critical skill emerged as an influence on engagement. If favourable judgements were made about fiction, there was potential for perceived shortcomings to be overlooked. This connection between affective and analytical domains of reading represents an

important finding. Teachers appeared to encourage judgement of fiction either generally or framed by GCSE requirements rather than allowing readers to develop their own critique. The NC was viewed as somewhat irrelevant to RfP by teachers due to the pressures of external assessment, undermining its legitimisation in policy.

7.4 Dialogue not Discussion

Research has found young readers talking about books enabled RfP (2.7.3) and this study corroborated but with an important distinction: dialogue rather than general discussion is needed (5.5). Application of the conceptual framework (2.6) provided insight about different functions of talk particularly from the interview data (5.5). This demonstrated the value of dialogue about fiction in encouraging reader agency. It supported forging and extending connection, informed selection, developed interpretation by stimulating thinking, enhanced critical appraisal, and built language skill.

The implied reader textual analysis focused on interaction between reader and the fictional text (4.1.1; 4.2.1; 4.3.1). RR conceptualises reading as interaction between reader and text (Iser, 1976) and this was the focus, overlooking the contribution social interaction may have. After reviewing the actual readers' response (4.1.2; 4.2.2), its limitations became clear. While exploration of implied reader served as an essential platform for the examination of other data (3.4), it contributed little to understanding of the role of talk in engagement or RfP.

The actual reader textual analysis did provide opportunity for talk about fiction (4.1.2; 4.2.2). The classroom prompts, using RR principles devised in collaboration with the class teacher (3.4.2), supported readers to make connections between their experiences and the text evidenced by through annotation. Interpretation was enriched by conversations with peers and teachers, noted by the class teacher (see 8.2) and me (journal, pp.43 – 47). Dialogue about imagery led to connotations prompted by memories, evident in annotations (5.3). Talk appeared to enhance and extend readers' connection with fiction as MWD, presenting new perspectives and informing interpretation which the implied reader textual analysis did not consider (4.1.1; 4.2.1).

Data from the pupil interviews indicated dialogue about books supported choice by providing reading recommendations (5.5.1), echoing other research (e.g. Laurensen *et al.*, 2015; Merga, 2018; 2.7.3). Most frequent were suggestions from peers, mentioned explicitly by Matilde, Lanika, Ellie, Rose and Georgia. Mason reported reading books recommended by peers but refuted engagement in booktalk, an inconsistency perhaps explained by his self-perception of not being a reader. Suggestions by Y8s would draw upon a limited range but could identify fiction more aligned with their peers' interests and ability than those recommended by teachers, maximising the potential for pleasure from familiarity (see Figure 2.6.4). As research by Cremin *et al.* (2009) found teachers' limited reading of YAL formed a barrier to RfP, suggestions from peers could be invaluable in accessing fiction offering MWDs, especially in view of the problems of selection these readers reported.

Some participants reported talking to adults about books (Natalie, Matilde, Rose, Rory, Willow, 5.5.1), obtaining recommendations and sharing responses, contributing to connection with other readers and the texts. Conversely, Willow described talking to her mother negatively: her lack of understanding of Willow's preference led to fiction not being pleasurable. This adverse experience indicated a lack of dialogue and reinforced by comment about not talking to anyone about books as "nobody cares". During the interview, Willow appeared an enthusiastic, insightful reader so this could indicate self-consciousness about being a keen reader or she had yet to feel part of a community of readers, identified as an enabler of RfP (Laurenson *et al.*, 2015; Cremin *et al.*, 2009).

Others talked to siblings (Natalie, Lanika, Georgia, 5.5.1) and one pupil (Rory) his form teacher. It was notable the only mention of booktalk with English teachers was negative, expressing frustration with one teacher's efforts to make connections between books (5.5.2). These readers (Rose, Ellie) resisted the teacher's interpretation, not relating to the book as mirror and window in the way identified by the adult. This indicated pupils' desire to exercise agency, responding as children, forging their own connections and interpretation (7.2). The actual reader data provided evidence of this capability when given opportunity to do so (4.1.2; 4.2.2).

The earlier finding that RfP incorporated affective and analytical response (7.3) to fiction was also evidenced in relation to booktalk. The data showed conversation helped readers' cognitive engagement by developing interpretation, reflecting extant research (King & Briggs, 2012; Mercer, 2000). Sharing response with peers could be affirming (e.g. Rose and Ellie, 5.5.1), even when discussing different books (Merga *et al.*, 2015), a validation of opinion but it also stimulated thinking, leading to connections extended or new ones emerging (e.g. Georgia, Natalie, 5.5.2). This could enable pleasure by alerting others to text as MWDs, potentially leading to construction of more complex interpretation.

Rory's continued focus despite Mason's interruptions (5.5.2) exemplified thinking through talk. He appeared absorbed, developing his evaluation through evaluation and comparison, persevering to work out and articulate his point regardless. Engaging in dialogue gave Rory confidence with response and articulation of ideas, noted in other research (Hempel-Jorgensen *et al.*, 2018; Cliff Hodges & Arizpe, 2018). In contrast, Mason seemed more tentative when talking about books. His thoughts sounded similarly unformed initially but he did not display commitment to talk which could help develop his thinking and interpretation. The link between talk and thinking is well established in other research (e.g. Bruner, 1990, Barnes, 1976, Nikolajeva, 2014; Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2018), as well as assisting concept development (Williams & Willis, 2017), both confirmed by this study.

Dialogue, rather than discussion, also appeared to help develop readers' critical appraisal, shown to enable pleasure (7.3). Natalie and Matilde's exchange of views demonstrated comparison influencing interpretation (5.5.2), despite talking about two different novels (Snicket and Rowling). Their dialogue integrated affective and evaluative response as did Rose and Ellie's talk about *The Immortals* (Lister, 2016). Readers compared their views with each other and different books. Collaboration involved hypothesis (see Figure 2.6.4) prompting new insight with more nuanced

perspectives emerging. Articulating ideas appeared to develop spoken language skill, perhaps also exposing preferences, assisting future selection more likely to engage.

There was little correspondence between interview data sets on this theme. Teachers referred to generalised reading discussion (6.4.1) rather than deliberately planned social pedagogy deemed 'booktalk' (Cremin *et al.*, 2009). All three teachers gave examples of discussion around thematic concerns (6.4.1). While the content of the novels were reported as prompting this, it seemed the topics explored in talk were those identified as important by the teacher. Only Cindy expressed willingness to let the pupils pursue their own interests dialogically. Discussing whatever piques pupils' interest could support understanding through collaborative development of interpretation, increasing engagement and potentially pleasure. However, it appeared rather informal and organic. This may not accurately reflect classroom practice but lack of comment about reader response, developing connection and interpretation through dialogue suggested this aspect was undeveloped with teachers perhaps unaware of how this could contribute to RfP.

Jack espoused the value of dialogue about books (6.4.1) but conceded it didn't happen enough. This echoed other research findings of teachers advocating booktalk but not enacting it (Laurenson *et al.*, 2015; Ofsted, 2009; Goodwyn, 2102). His description of 'questioning like a dervish' (6.1.1) suggested teacher-led practice rather than dialogue designed to give readers' agency to develop response. He blamed curricular pressures, recognised as a factor (Cliff Hodges, 2016) but adopting RR principles like the actual reader textual analysis (4.1.2, 4.2.2) could take no more time than current practice yet encourage agency widening access to pleasure stimuli (see Figure 2.6.4).

Ruby's discussion of the 'N word' (6.4.1), illustrated dialogue's potential to 'enlarge experience' (Rosenblatt, 1968) of readers through speculation and hypothesis (see Figure 2.6.4). While Ruby will have undoubtedly identified the points she wished to raise in advance, there was no sense of a wider, explicit strategy for progression in response or any focus on RfP. Her judgement of a "really great discussion" seemed impressionistic, possibly coloured by personal and professional investment in the topic. More strategic pedagogical decisions capitalising on dialogue's potential to extend connection and provoke thinking would support RfP via increasing engagement.

Cindy's point that dialogue emerged through shared experience (6.4.2) was powerful and thought-provoking, apparently emphasised the value of communities of readers, identified by other research (2.7.3). These teachers, seemingly aware that dialogue was important, raised questions about why this professional knowledge had not led to change. The interview data relating to teachers' 'performance' (6.2.1), emerging potentially as a result of the relationship between researcher and interviewees (3.7), highlighted the amount of energy and influence they exerted to engender positive attitudes towards reading. More informed pedagogical intervention would provide more efficacious support for RfP through increasing engagement.

Teachers' lack of reference to dialogue as an enabler of RfP through increasing engagement (6.4) suggested its potential was not recognised or exploited. The pupil interviews showed various

benefits: developing connections, peer recommendations, prompting thinking, developing evaluation and practising language (5.5). The scant attention given by teachers implied pupils have not been given agency to become 'savvy travellers' instead remain tourists (Dressman & Rao, 2020). Employing the conceptual framework (2.6) revealed ways dialogue can extend and enhance readers' interaction with fiction, potentially opening access to a wider variety of pleasure stimuli.

7.5 Overview

The data sets elicited for this study have provided a range of perspectives from which insight has been gained. This chapter has explored the similarities (e.g. choice of fiction not as important to RfP as pedagogy) and differences (e.g. teachers prioritised plot whereas pupils' engaged more with character) in the data. The conceptual framework proved useful in understanding how fiction engages to stimulate pleasure and emphasised the different types possible. To experience pleasure, young readers need to feel agentic, responding as children, developing their own connections and critical skill as well as participating in dialogue about fiction. The next chapter considers the professional learning achieved from this study.

Chapter 8 – Professional Learning

My past and present roles in education led me to the professional doctorate route rather than the PhD. From the outset, I wanted my study to make a “contribution to knowledge relating to practice” (University of Rockwell, 2019, p.7). I feel the findings outlined in the previous chapter add to current debates about ‘reading for pleasure’ via increasing engagement in the secondary English classroom. This chapter draws attention to the professional learning for myself and the teacher participants gained from involvement in the study before culminating with recommendations for practice in light of these insights.

Below, I present data from the teacher interviews evidencing positive impact from participation in this study. I then provide a reflective commentary highlighting significant moments in my research journey, celebrating reading and its role in my personal and professional life. Finally, I offer suggestions for pedagogy enabling RfP through increasing engagement, extrapolated from the application of the conceptual framework (2.6), addressing the study’s third aim (1.4). The chapter overall demonstrates further “evidence of critical reflection through the research process” (University of Rockwell, *ibid.*).

8.1 Teachers’ Professional Learning

While the rationale for my investigation was primarily to develop understanding of practice efficacious in supporting ‘reading for pleasure’ (1.4), analysis of interview data indicated involvement in the project contributed to teachers’ professional learning. Extracts from the transcripts are discussed below, illustrating how engaging in dialogue prompted reflection. This appeared to provide a valuable opportunity to consider actual readers, their pupils and themselves, moving teachers towards new understanding of RfP.

When discussing independent reading, both Jack and Ruby (interviewed 20/06/19 & 1/07/19 respectively) reported they felt they could do more to support Y8 pupils’ reading engagement. Jack was honest about limitations

It’s the time and space to make it happen properly and that is making an excuse as I feel that it is an area that when I think about it gives me one of those cold teacher things because I’m not doing my job in this regard (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 221 – 223).

Judging there was scope for improvement, he described his feelings emotively: “one of those cold teacher” moments. The reference to “cold” implied paralysis stemming from a strong sense of professional guilt. This was so striking in the interview, I offered reassurance that the interview purpose was not judgemental. He acknowledged this, commenting the conversation had “just brought it to the fore” (line 224). Reflection about supporting pupils’ independent reading had begun prior to the interview: “This is a huge issue for me. I knew we were going to talk about this” (line 190). The focus on RfP and actual readers had prompted re-examination of current practice, judging it inadequate: “it’s an area where I feel I’m not doing as much as I should” (lines 224 – 225). This recognition could be a catalyst for change, leading to tangible developments driven by Jack’s

commitment to his pupils and professional responsibilities, stronger motivation than any top-down initiative.

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) drew similar conclusions to Jack, deeming her support for RfP insufficient, “I feel that I could probably do more in that role” (lines 277 - 278). This applied also to the weekly Y8 library lessons: “I feel that my role in that could be bigger” (lines 271 – 272). After suggesting several possible actions, including liaison with the school librarian (line 376), Ruby judged all feasible: “that’s something that I can kind of do and think about” (lines 341 – 342). The ideas emerged in the interview: “it’s just now I’m reflecting on it” (line 379). Not only did participation in research provide Ruby opportunity to focus on actual readers, ‘diagnosing’ the professional issue but also space to identify potentially effective solutions. Like Jack, this process could provide impetus for action, developing pedagogy to better enable RfP through increasing engagement.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19), reflecting on the novels covered in Y8, articulated the realisation “so many different topics” (line 536) had been covered

if we were to put a theme ... a title for Year 8 it would definitely be like discrimination or inequality because everything we’ve kind of covered has been looking at themes of discrimination or inequality (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 536 – 538).

The hesitation here suggested thoughts about actual readers were formulating as she spoke. The thematic link had not been pre-planned but identified retrospectively. Importantly, this articulation led Cindy to critique the texts used: “I’m not sure that we do so much of things like reading about other cultures (lines 537 – 568). This double recognition could inform future discussion about curricular provision, potentially widening the range of material engaging by offering MWD, enriching and extending pupils’ experiences with increased pleasure ensuing. In future, Cindy may design pedagogy more explicitly developing actual reader interaction with fiction.

When Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) was asked about current Y8 reading practices and their role in supporting RfP, she took time formulating her response

I think it’s – it’s . . . what’s the word I’m looking for . . . [sigh] I just think . . . that’s that – it’s funny because I’m just thinking about it now – but that’s when it’s . . . slightly . . . not stifles but I just think – it just stifles any sort of imagination (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 608 – 610).

Ruby’s hesitation and difficulty locating appropriate vocabulary could indicate an understandable reluctance to criticise her practice and that of the department. However, it is another suggestion that evaluation emerged through conversation: she observed “just thinking about it now”. Her choice of the verb “stifles” conveyed a sense that provision did not just fail to prioritise RfP, it was a barrier for the actual readers. Whether others concur is moot but Ruby’s perception could influence provision subsequently.

Ruby (interviewed 1/07/19) offered other judgement on current practices. Referring to the dominance of writing in the English curriculum, she explained its impact on KS3 pedagogy

It’s that skill of Key Stage 4 - that fear of GCSE which is such a shame – I’m really depressed now [laughs]. It is such a shame but the earlier you can prepare them I think people feel that’s better and I think people fear that if they go to next year without having

good practice of that skill – but I think we’re doing it to death a bit now (Ruby interviewed 1/07/19, lines 551 – 554).

While admitting pre-occupation with examination preparation, Ruby’s view “it is such a shame” indicated these practices did not align with her conceptualisation of English or support actual readers’ engagement. The confession, “I’m really depressed now”, suggested through articulation, Ruby conceptualised her practice in a new way, adversely affecting her mood. While this was uttered in a light-hearted way, the recognition was important. Changing to the second person, “you”, suggested the “fear” of GCSE was a collectively held belief which exerted influence over the KS3 curriculum. The second person pronoun and talk of “people” created a psychological distance between Ruby and this behaviour which she now questioned. However, her conclusion “we’re doing it to death” recognised shared responsibility while conveying desire for change. By articulating dissatisfaction, she owned her beliefs with emerging recognition of actual readers’ needs. This assertion of professional values could be empowering, imbuing a renewed sense of confidence and purpose, ultimately inspiring action.

Cindy (interviewed 4/07/19) reflected on the role of RfP in the KS3 English curriculum when exploring methods promoting reading. Recounting previous school events celebrating World Book Day, she considered

that word pleasure’s so important. How are we actually introducing this to students? Are we teaching them [laughs] or are we teaching them to explore – I mean as an adult if someone sat and told me ‘you will love reading, you will read this’ I’m not necessarily sure how much pleasure I would have over reading that so a lot can be learned from the things we’ve done in the past perhaps utilising that a little bit more. (Cindy interviewed 4/07/19, lines 656 – 660).

The initial question asked suggested there were no established protocols. Despite the requirement that pupils are ‘taught a love of reading’ (DfE, 2013, p.3), it appeared to not feature in department planning or provision review. She identified the inherent problem with compulsion, love can’t be forced, but recognised the role of events such as World Book Day. In the conversation, she identified activities which gave actual readers agency, encouraging active interactions, as effective in engaging. Cindy knew what enthused young readers and supported RfP but needed to find confidence to adopt these practices more consistently and systematically.

Jack’s interview (20/06/19) contained reflection leading directly to pedagogical intervention. When discussing independent reading, I mentioned some pupil participants confessed struggling to make book selections (lines 302 – 303). His response was particularly emotive, “God that is absolutely horrific” (line 309), suggesting shock at this revelation and professional concern. This topic was pursued for some time with Jack echoing his emotional response later, “that is so profoundly troubling” (line 318). Jack verbalised his assumptions

obviously I know how to read a blurb and I just take it for granted that like you infer from it – from the blurb. This phrase means it’s probably going to be this type of book (Jack interviewed 20/06/19, lines 347 - 348).

Following this reflection, Jack took action. He used the next Y8 assembly to explain and model choosing books (journal, p.108) and produced a series of PowerPoint slides to help English

teachers support pupils in making selections. Participation in the study contributed to the development and sharing of good practice, designed to support actual readers.

These examples suggest teachers' reflection could constitute a powerful change mechanism. Considering and articulating practice through participation in the research assisted teachers to develop a clearer sense of what they do and how effectively this meets the needs of the actual readers. This study offered some provocation, leading to new understanding, which could, in turn, inform departmental discussion about their curriculum offer and pedagogy more efficacious in enabling RfP through increasing engagement (see 8.3).

8.2 Reflection on the EdD Journey

Down the Rabbit Hole

I began Stage 2 of the EdD with intent to investigate the gap I'd noticed between RfP policy and practice in KS3 English classroom. My aims were threefold: professional, pedagogical and academic. The genesis of the study came from my experience teaching secondary English, and my professional interest in supporting RfP. Currently involved in ITE, I wanted my research to contribute to subject knowledge and pedagogical understanding: I hoped the findings would result in recommendations to improve practice. The academic driver was to devise, implement and report research for a doctoral thesis.

I acknowledge the highly personal nature of this investigation: it began with me as an 'actual' reader. The focus, process and outcome of this study were unique as they reflect my identity, professional and personal. Being a lifelong reader has impacted on every aspect of my life. A favourite childhood book was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865), re-read many times since. Alice recognised her evolution as empirical: "it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then" (p.134). This metaphor resonated as it captured the on-going development of self and how a synthesis of factors, including being a reader, influence lives. It also reflected my idiographic interest: I wanted to undertake a qualitative study, prioritising individual feelings and perspectives, to understand actual readers' development. While this was somewhat due to my years of teaching, it was also pragmatic. If I wished to understand how young readers could be encouraged to 'read for pleasure', I needed to talk to them.

With these parameters clear, I set out to gain access as my current role in HE had removed me from the secondary classroom. Acutely aware of the pressure teaching colleagues were under, I had to negotiate carefully to ensure my research did not place an undue burden on teachers or exploit my privileged position. Fortunately, my professional network assisted in developing partnership with colleagues equally invested in understanding young readers and pedagogy. The next challenge was to design a study that fulfilled all its aims.

Getting Lost in the Woods

Reading has been a lifelong pleasure which led to my teaching of English and later return to study. Undertaking the reading for this study was not a chore; I threw myself into it and my search

parameters soon expanded. I read. I read and read. As my study drew upon several disciplinary bases, I needed to keep reading, or so I told myself.

Reading became my siren song: seductive, distracting and ultimately leading me astray. I found it challenging to break the spell. Reading yet another article felt as comfortable and comforting as that familiar, washed soft jumper, shaped perfectly to fit after so much wear. It felt like I was making progress but, as the volume increased, I began to lose track of what I'd read, the similarities and differences, the tensions and echoes. However, I kept reading but developed a record keeping system of tables and star charts attempting to chart the constantly expanding literature base. This perhaps, allowed me to balance pleasure from reading with academic purpose: affective and analytical response combining.

Around this time, I was reading Pullman's wonderful collection of essays on storytelling. He writes so evocatively regardless of genre. As a collection of speeches and journalism, his key ideas about the craft of writing and the disposition of the writer were repeated. In "The Path through the Wood" he said

the business of the storyteller, or the novelist, it seems to me, is with the path and not the wood (Pullman, 2017, p.88).

This powerful image perfectly captured the role of the author. When I'm reading, I am being led by the writer who is my guide. Pleasure is found in the sense of exploration but also the experience, although risky, is ultimately secure as I will return home safely. The guide is a trusted expert and knows the route. This struck a chord as it referred just as well to the job of the researcher who has to map the terrain and find 'a path through the woods'. Reading Pullman's words helped me to take a purposeful step forward – I could see the direction of travel more clearly. I could still appreciate the surrounding vistas, of the literature, but would no longer be so distracted by them, staying on the path. At the risk of stretching the metaphor too far, I did take some wrong turns along the way, discover dead ends and loop back on myself, but this thesis provides tangible evidence of arrival, even if only a temporary waystation.

While I have no regrets about the volume of reading undertaken, reading Pullman bestowed a new sense of purpose as, seeing myself as a guide to help the reader navigate my study helped me focus on establishing a clear pathway. I found this metaphor particularly valuable when dealing with data sets. Viewing analysis as a creative process, weaving a story from the data, foregrounded my responsibilities to the reader and reminded me of the need for a clear narrative 'path'.

Meaning Making

By Easter 2019, the pupil interviews had been conducted and transcribed. The first cycle of coding was complete, using a framework devised from the literature. I was pondering how to develop the second cycle and what was emerging as significant. It was apparent the initial themes of frequency and access would not be helpful and I needed to formulate revised codes to move forward with concept building (journal, p.94). I stalled.

I was reading *Transcription* (Atkinson, 2018). Having previously enjoyed Atkinson's other works, I had been looking forward to it. I was drawn to the central premise of the novel, the past haunting the present, partially set in WWII which she evoked so well. Her narratives were always complex, multi-layered and realistic yet contain something unexpected and thought-provoking. Despite all of this, I found myself not experiencing pleasure.

I felt I could relate to the well-drawn, psychologically credible, female protagonist but did not find her interesting. While I found the 1940s humour and turn of phrase an evocative 'window' on this world, her Britishness, the stiff upper lip stoicism so characteristic of the period was alienating. There was insufficient familiarity (see Figure 2.6.4) to furnish connection with character, presenting a barrier to pleasure. Consequently, I wasn't really interested in her or what happened to her (journal, p.89), denying pleasure from speculation.

This extract, where the 18-year-old protagonist accompanies her boss, Peregrine Gibbons, on an "expedition", demonstrates Atkinson's narrational style. The reader was aware of Peregrine's romantic intentions, and humour was created through his gaucheness and apparent lack of experience with women juxtaposed by Juliet's innocence:

Time rolled by, very slowly. Very damply. Very coldly. Juliet wondered if waiting for the otters was perhaps part of her training in some way – surveillance, perhaps. Or patience. She did need training in patience, she knew that. And it did feel strangely like an undercover mission as they sat, breathlessly still, on the riverbank, waiting for a little family of otters to show themselves. (Atkinson, 2019, p.77)

I grasped the irony but found Juliet's perspective too credulous and passive. I became impatient with the continual self-deprecation. I was acutely aware of typical traits of this generation of women but I found myself wanting to talk to her, encourage her to raise expectations. So, while I connected with the novel, and was actively involved, not least by wanting to re-write the character, I did not experience much pleasure.

My struggles with this novel prompted much reflection about the stimuli of pleasure. I felt able to fill the gaps, to occupy the stance of the implied reader, but did not find it pleasurable. Despite all the positive indicators, I struggled to connect. This served to emphasise the alchemy of reading and its highly individualised nature. Trying to unpick reasons for the absence of pleasure did not lead to definitive answers but rather highlighted the complex web of factors impinging on reading and, particularly, the significance of connection and reader agency. My thinking about this novel informed directly the four Cs - the themes of the second cycle of coding (5.1).

Growing Differently

In summer 2019, I was invited to present my work in progress at the University's School of Education Postgraduate conference. At this point both sets of interviews had been conducted along with some preliminary analysis but findings were tentative. I was reading *The Overstory* (Powers, 2019), an inter-generational saga exploring human lives but also transcended them, exploring a multitude of ideas with ecology prominent. Without a clear linear narrative, this expansive novel

affected me, drawing me in. I felt my perceptions of time were somehow altering as I read. I pondered its provocation. The narrational style was frequently philosophical

His fingers trace the grain in the desk's wooden top. He's trying to see how these wild loops in the wood could ever have come from so simple a thing as rings. Some mystery in the angle of the cut, the place of the plane inside the nested cylinders. If his brain were a slightly different thing, the problem might be easy. If he himself grew differently, he might be able to see. (Powers, 2019, p.191)

This mediation on transformation from tree to desktop, simple rings to wild loops, presents an industrial process as almost alchemical and serendipitous. The character recognises his lack of understanding. He couldn't grasp how the change occurred but this did not prevent him marvelling at its wonder and beauty yet he was not sufficiently aligned with the wood to conceive its full complexity. I felt the change from tree to desk reminiscent of Rosenblatt's conceptualisation of reading: an event, a transaction, whereby the reader emerges from the process altered (2.5), represented in my mapping of pleasure stimuli (see Figure 2.6.4).

This struck me as another metaphor applying equally to the research process. The researcher's role is to create something tangible from raw materials. Technical expertise is required for successful completion but design decisions shape outcomes. Guiding this transformation takes agency, care and skill. This symbiotic process requires alignment between product and maker, resulting in personal development - a way of "growing differently" through the research journey.

Across my doctoral research, I have developed. The design, implementation and writing up of the study have given confidence and skill in conducting qualitative research, engendering a better understanding of research methods and concept development to generate findings useful in a professional context. Exercising agency, working creatively yet systematically across the duration of the project alongside my professional duties has been rewarding and challenging. I have experienced extremes: exhilaration and despair; frantic activity and moments of contemplation; needing time alone and wanting to talk; being structured and embracing fluidity. My "growing differently" led to recognition these states are not binaries or polar extremes but rather different ways of being. I learnt not to be overly anxious about the destination; to trust I would find my path. I became more patient, able to enjoy the journey, value the people and places I experienced along the way. As the study draws to a close, the parallel between self-knowledge and the understanding developed is evident: agency and dialogic interaction in reading and research provide the 'way through the woods', offering pleasure and growth.

8.3 Recommendations for Practice

The location of the case, Waldren School, was judged by Ofsted (2017) to possess a 'strong culture of reading' with English a 'strong subject' (3.3.1). Nevertheless, a number of implications for professional practice can be identified. It is important to recognise that, although the initial stimulus for the research was RfP, the key finding regarding reader agency aligns with studies exploring reading engagement (e.g. Fletcher, 2018, McMullan & Sutherland, 2020), indicating a wider relevance.

From the study's key finding, readers feeling agency is central to engagement and a precursor to RfP, recommendations are extrapolated, presented under the areas identified in discussion (Chapter 7): asserting individuality, responding as children, developing critics, dialogue not discussion. However, as holistic reader-centred pedagogy is advised, overlap is inevitable.

The mixed views about fiction read in class proved inconclusive for RfP (5.2.1) but as agency emerged as significant to pleasure, practice to support autonomy can be recommended to support engagement. When no choice of fiction is possible in KS3 due to stock limitation or inflexible curriculum provision, there are ways to engender readers with a sense of agency. Pupils could be provided with or research plot overviews of novels available, then vote to select which will be read. Offering choice with other genres, such as poetry or short stories, validating autonomy and individuality, could be offered as published editions are not always necessary. Class discussion about selection would give opportunity to engage pupils in dialogue about fiction, expressing preferences and judgements, increasing confidence and skill in oracy and individual response.

The readers interviewed would benefit from teachers' modelling how to select independent reading (5.2.2) and subsequent opportunity to practise exercising choice in a supportive environment. This could help develop pupils' awareness of their preferences, leading to informed choices, maximising the chance of finding books which resonate. If fiction can engage by offering readers MWDs, there is potential to experience a range of pleasure stimuli (see Figure 2.6.4). Curriculum time devoted to peer recommendations could similarly support choice and widen repertoires (7.4).

This study exposed teachers' own reading experiences and preferences influenced practice, (6.3.1) and could be extended to better support RfP through increasing engagement. Teachers could be more explicit about their own processes, articulating and modelling response. Remembering what it is to be a reader would help teachers recall or revisit their own pleasures, stimulating more trust in readers and texts to make meaning. Consequently, a more holistic pedagogy could emerge, recognising and planning systematically to develop affective and analytical response rooted in readers' experience. Teachers would be acting as reading role models, found valuable in other research (2.7.4), while encouraging readers to be agentic in their interaction with text.

The revelation of teachers' limited awareness of Y8 readers' needs and interests (6.1.2) combined with pupils' reporting difficulty selecting fiction independently (5.2.2) indicated this area could be improved to better support engagement and RfP. Engaging in dialogue with pupils about their reading could imbue knowledge of pupils as readers, assisting recommendations for suitable reading likely to interest. Undoubtedly, such recommendations are only possible if teachers possess sound knowledge of material available. As the interview data (6.1) appeared to echo other research reporting teachers' restricted repertoires of young adult fiction (Cremin et al., 2009), an expansion of this reading could assist. However, even if teachers shunned the professional obligation to read more YAL, engaging in dialogue with pupils about their reading and their interests more frequently would additionally support RfP by valuing individual readers and their reading.

The conceptual framework for this study (2.6) successfully developed insight about interaction between reader and text (7.2), demonstrating the value of reader-centred pedagogy in RfP, allowing pupils to respond as children, forging individual connections to develop independent interpretation, regardless of choice. Employing pedagogy focused on reader and text interaction, such as the actual reader textual analysis (3.4.2) could enable teachers develop more understanding of *how* fiction enables pleasure, making interactions visible, informing future practice. It could also counter any prejudices about independent reading choice. Despite the study uncovering no direct evidence of this, Cliff Hodges' (2016) finding pupils felt tension between what they *should* read and what was *actually* read, resonates with the popularity of series fiction reported by my participants (5.2.2). This genre, frequently disparaged by adults (2.5.5) but holding wide appeal for young readers, suggested potential dissonance. Pedagogy supporting readers to connect with fiction appeared more important to RfP to adult judgements about genre or quality. Adapting the CLPE (2016) *Reading Scale* for the lower secondary phase, could provide a useful starting point for a more strategic, reader-centred approach.

While independent reading remains a marginalised part of the English curriculum, reading is a core strand (2. 3) requiring professional attention from teachers and teacher-educators. As the current version of the KS3 NC (DfE, 2013) is the slimmest and least prescriptive to date, there is opportunity to promote reading as discovery. Conceptualising the reading act as dynamic interaction could encourage trainee and qualified teachers to develop pedagogy assisting individual connection-forging, incorporating affective and analytical domains (7.3) revealed by this study as important to engagement. This could complement the current focus on vocabulary acquisition and cultural capital (2.5.5) by empowering individuals rather than prioritising deficit models (6.2.2) and align with the OECD (2018) assertion that 'post-truth' era education requires ownership of classrooms by teachers *and* ownership of learning by pupils. Having opportunity to respond as children (7.2) is perhaps particularly important when canonical fiction little aligned with actual readers is introduced, a major component of the GCSE syllabus (2.3). Developing confidence and ability with independent response in KS3 thus has potential to enable RfP through increasing engagement, supporting progression in reading.

This study has revealed booktalk rather than discussion helps strengthen connection between readers and texts while also extending the possibility of fiction acting as MWDs. Pleasure through social interaction could complement other stimuli while developing interpretation. Therefore, more widespread and considered use of social pedagogies is recommended. Not only could this enable pleasure through increased engagement but it could also develop critical appraisal skill (see 7.3). Exploration of veracity could form part of the dialogue, helping individuals to tolerate uncertainty by developing more nuanced understanding of genre, narrational style and verisimilitude, valuable to some (5.4.2) when facing genre-spanning fiction or with multiple or unreliable narrators.

Participating in booktalk rather than discussion provides readers opportunity to improve language (Arizpe & Cliff Hodges, 2016), activity lacking in schools (Ofsted, 2012). The data

illustrated how articulation of response exercises verbal and cognitive skills (5.5.2; 6.4.1). Structured dialogue, with clear support and progression, could help readers develop response to fiction, transferable to other genres, supporting pleasure as well as independent interpretation, forming the foundation for literary appreciation required at GCSE. Fluency and lexis could be improved also, supported by teacher modelling, identified as important to RfP (Chambers, 1993; Laurenson *et al.*, 2015; Merga, 2016).

On the basis of this study, the requirement for pupils to be ‘taught a love of reading’ in the new NC (DfE, 2013) seemed to have resulted in little change. Teachers’ responses indicate accountability measures and the increased content of GCSE specifications have led to a narrowing of their role and practice. One consequence was the devaluing of reader response with the ‘new’ closed text examinations reinforcing the idea of reading as a ‘technical exercise’ (Cuthbert, 2019). Consequently, teacher-led practice appears to dominate the classroom whereby adults transmit interpretation. My work during ‘lockdowns’ due to the coronavirus pandemic along with trainees’ feedback about school practices, indicate ‘remote’ teaching has exacerbated this shift.

There are grounds for optimism, however. Research about the impact of ‘lockdowns’ on reading indicated increased popularity with children “discovering or re-discovering themselves as readers” (NLT, Clark, & Picton, 2020, p.2). The pupil participants in this study experienced a range of pleasures from reading. Teachers recognise RfP matters. Instead of bemoaning the pressures of accountability, teachers should find confidence to assert their expertise as subject specialists (and readers) to act in best interests of young people by encouraging engagement.

During this study, the conceptual framework (2.6) proved valuable, in theory and practice, providing insight about what engages, stimulating pleasure from reading. Wider adoption of these principles could lead to more reader-led and exploratory pedagogies, in turn developing ability for pupils to think for themselves, identified as essential to C21st literacy (OECD, 2018). Professional dialogue and training for pre- and in-service teachers could help forge a better balance between examination preparation and practices more strategic and effective in developing readers’ agency. Pedagogy which increases engagement by encouraging young readers to forge their own connections and develop individual interpretation is essential to RfP *and* literary appreciation. The consequences of failing to support RfP has potential to last well beyond compulsory schooling.

Chapter 9 – Conclusions

This chapter indicates reaching a destination of sorts. While my research ‘expedition’ (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015) did not follow a straightforward route, I have forged a ‘way through the woods’ and now offer some concluding observations.

By exposing interactions between reader and text, this study of the enablers of, and barriers to reading in KS3 English has provided much to consider with regards to reading engagement generally and professional practice specifically. The conceptual framework devised from RR, Iser’s implied reader (1974) and Bishop’s MWD (1990) models, contributed to knowledge as it had not been used previously to explore RfP. It may be tempting to endorse Barthes’ contention (1977) that, by championing the reader as meaning-maker, the author is “dead”. However, the text is symbolic embodiment without which there can be no reader response.

This study has explored how unpicking reader/text interaction can create understanding of engagement as a precursor to pleasure. A succinct answer to the research question can be asserted: what engages one reader, enabling pleasure, could be a barrier for another. The complex web of personality and experience colouring every reading event is highly individualised and mutable. If readers feel agency and are able to respond to fiction from their own perspective, pleasure from the activity appears more likely, particularly important as no universal childhood experience exists (Wall, 2019). Those interested in developing effective pedagogy need to ‘listen seriously’ to the recipients of schooling (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000) and the rich data generated from participatory approach (3.3) illustrates its value.

Limitations, additional to those identified earlier (3.7), are now apparent. The emergent design of the actual reader task (3.4.2 & 3.5.1) resulted in individual pupil responses to only one of the novels read and analysed using Iser’s implied reader theory (1974). Earlier collaboration with the class teacher could have facilitated work with the first novel read. This would have produced additional data enabling comparison and further analysis of reader/text interaction. This represents a potentially rich avenue to pursue in future perhaps through action research methodology.

The data analysis revealed limitations relating to interviewing practice. For example, pupils could have been probed further about classroom talk: all except Rory and Mason referred primarily to talk outside school (Chapter 5). Also, teachers made considerable references to DEAR and asking pupils directly about this would have been a valuable addition (Chapter 6). While RfP and pupils’ home life was touched upon in the conversation theme, this could be explored in future research to see if correlation exists between reading households and pleasure.

I intend to use my role as PGCE tutor to engender the next generation of teachers with greater understanding of the importance of engagement in RfP and pedagogy supporting reader agency. I am launching a YAL Reading Group as a mandatory part of the course, codifying this aspect of subject knowledge while widening repertoires. I would like to publish from this thesis, disseminating my findings to secondary English teachers, contributing to practice. Hopefully, I can

also further validate YAL, working collaboratively to develop a Masters in Children's Literature at my institution.

One of the papers exploring the complexity of RfP I read early on in my study was Benton (1982), wherein he outlined 'Ten Paradoxes' of reading fiction, illustrating the dynamic and often contradictory impulses involved. I have taken the liberty of adapting this to supplement my claims to knowledge and practice recommendations (see Chapter 7 & 8.3). My version captures readers' feelings about RfP, appropriate to include at the end of a study aiming to foreground these perspectives:

1. Readers want the freedom to choose books yet struggle to make selections.
2. Readers enjoy familiar people and worlds in fiction yet wish to be transported elsewhere.
3. Readers need to "get it" yet enjoy problem-solving.
4. Readers want to find out for themselves yet wish to be told.
5. Readers find unfamiliar vocabulary a barrier yet can overlook it and experience pleasure.
6. Readers enjoy using their imagination yet wish to be shown.
7. Readers dislike teachers making links between reading material yet can forge astute connections of their own.
8. Readers find pleasure in aspects of texts which are barriers for other readers.

I conclude by pondering the scale of challenge English teachers face when trying to "teach a love of reading" (DfE, 2013, p.4). To do so, not only must they reconcile the needs of the individual reader with the demands of teacher accountability, the current curriculum and assessment regime, but also convince young people about the value of reading in the face of competition from other more instantly gratifying competitors.

Teachers were readers before entering the profession and if this experience was recalled, the efficacy of exploring personal, affective response as a precursor to higher level literary appreciation would be championed. Above all, the best support teachers can offer their pupils is to continue to be readers themselves.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participation Information Sheet – Pupils

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you want to be involved, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what you will be asked to do.

What is the purpose of the research project?

It is to explore Y8 pupils' attitudes to reading and their reading experiences.

Why have I been invited to take part?

I have been working with you and your English teacher during this term and I would like to find out more about your experiences and feelings about reading from a short written activity and by interviewing you with another pupil.

Do I have to take part?

- No, you do not have to take part. Being involved in the research is voluntary.
- If you do decide to be involved your parent / guardian / carer will need to give their permission as well.
- If you do decide to take part but change your mind, you can drop out without giving a reason.
- Choosing to either take part or not will not affect your marks, assessments or future English work.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The whole class will do a short written activity in response to a fiction text. If you have agreed to take part in the research, your work will be included in the project. Your name and the name of the school will **not** be included.

The interview will be in a pair with another pupil after school. You can choose who to pair up with. It will last no longer than 30 minutes. I will ask questions about how you choose books to read, what type of books you enjoy and the reading you do in English lessons. I will record the interview with a digital voice-recorder.

Who will see what I say/do?

The recording of the interview will be listened to only by me, the researcher, and not be shared with parents or teachers. Your real name or school will **not** be given in the report.

What should I do if I want to take part?

Do you understand what you will be asked to do? yes / no

Do you have any questions about what will happen or why? yes / no

Do you want to be involved in the research project? yes / no

Name

Date

Appendix B: Participation Information Sheet – Teachers

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. This information sheet will help you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. The study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee.

What is the purpose of the research project?

It is an investigation into the enablers of, and barriers to, reading pleasure for Y8 students.

Who is responsible for the project?

I am a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of [REDACTED]. I have twenty years' experience of teaching English in secondary schools. This project will contribute to my Doctorate in Education.

Why have I been invited to take part?

The views of practising English teachers are important to consider alongside those of the pupils. I wish to find out about Y8 English teachers' experience of reading for pleasure in the current context. Participation is voluntary and you have the choice of participating fully, partially or not at all. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. Any data collected up to withdrawal may be used by researcher for the purposes described on this sheet.

What will be involved?

The study will require you to participate in one interview, lasting the maximum of one hour. The interviews will be conducted in your workplace or the University of [REDACTED]'s Falmer Campus, whichever is most convenient for you. The questions will ask for your views about the role of reading for pleasure in the Y8 English classroom and how reading enjoyment can be encouraged.

How is the data to be collected, stored and used?

An audio recording of the interview will be made using a digital voice recorder and stored securely in password protected files, only accessible to the researcher. Your identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms in the transcripts and project report. The audio recordings will be destroyed after assessment of the project.

What's in it for me?

As discussing classroom experiences, pedagogy, curriculum content and delivery is a usual part of teachers' lives, participating in the interviews should not result in any adverse effects for you. The opportunity to reflect on contemporary issues in the English classroom may well contribute to your professional learning.

What's next?

If you are willing to participate in the project, you will be asked to complete a consent form before the interview takes place. If you have any further questions about the research project, you can contact me via email, [a.denmead@\[REDACTED\].ac.uk](mailto:a.denmead@[REDACTED].ac.uk), or telephone, 01273 643445. If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research you should contact my supervisor: [sjw7@\[REDACTED\].ac.uk](mailto:sjw7@[REDACTED].ac.uk).

Thank you for taking time to consider participating in my research project.

Anne Denmead

Appendix C: Consent Form – Pupils / Parents

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study. This sheet contains information about why and how the research is being done to help you decide whether or not to give permission for your child to be involved,

What is the purpose of the research project?

It is to explore Y8 pupils' attitudes to reading and their reading experiences.

Why has my child been invited to take part?

I have been working alongside [REDACTED] in your child's English class this term. I would like to find out more about these Y8 pupils' feelings about reading.

Does my child have to take part?

Your child does not have to take part in the research - participation is voluntary. If you do decide to give permission for them to take part, they have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your child's marks, assessments or future English work.

What will happen to my child if they do take part?

Your child will complete a short writing activity in class responding to a fiction text. Also, pupil interviews will be conducted in pairs after school, lasting no longer than 30 minutes. I will ask questions about how they choose books to read, what type of books they enjoy and the reading they do in English lessons. The interview will be audio-recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The writing task is part of the English curriculum and all pupils will complete it whether or not they choose to be part of the research. The interview will take place at the end of the school day so alternative transport arrangements may be needed to ensure your child's safe return home. At least one week's notice of the interview day will be given.

What are the potential benefits of being involved?

Participating in the study may be of direct benefit to your child as it gives opportunity to share their experiences. The final report will be made available to your child's school and may influence what happens in future English lessons and school reading policy.

How will the privacy and confidentiality of my child be protected?

Written work will be anonymised, with all identifiers removed. The audio-recording of the interview will be stored in a password protected file, only accessible to the researcher. Your child's identity will be protected by use of pseudonyms in the transcripts and project report. All materials will be destroyed after six years, as stipulated by Data Protection Law.

Who can I contact with questions about the study?

If you have any further questions about the research project, do contact me via email, [a.denmead@\[REDACTED\].ac.uk](mailto:a.denmead@[REDACTED].ac.uk), or telephone, [REDACTED]. If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research you should contact my supervisor: [sjw7@\[REDACTED\].ac.uk](mailto:sjw7@[REDACTED].ac.uk).

Thank you for taking time to consider your child's participation in this research project.

Anne Denmead

[Please turn over]

Consent

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow them to participate. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission, you may discontinue his or her participation at any time. You will be given a copy of this document.

I agree for my child to take part in this research exploring Y8 pupils' attitudes to reading.

Name of parent or legal guardian (please print)

Signed

Name of child (please print)

Date

Appendix D: Consent Form – Teachers

What are the enablers of, and barriers to, reading pleasure for Y8 students?

- I agree to take part in this research which is to generate insight into reading for pleasure in the KS3 secondary English curriculum.
- The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.
- I have read the information sheet and I understand the principles, procedures and possible risks involved.
- I am aware that I will be required to participate in an individual interview.
- I agree to the audio recording of the interview.
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researcher and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.
- I agree that should I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used by the researcher for the purposes described in the information sheet.
- I understand that the audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the project.

Name (please print)

Signed

Date

Appendix E: Pupil Interview Schedule – draft and final versions

Initial Formulation	Finalised Version
1. Tell me about what you've been reading recently.	1. Tell me about what you've been reading recently outside class *.
2. Think of something you really enjoyed or not enjoyed reading. Tell me about it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up - Which is more significant: the characters, the world, the plot? Follow up – Do you prefer books set in your world or that take you somewhere else? 	2. Are you enjoying it or not? Why? (Was Q3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up - What do you think has the most influence on your enjoyment?
3. How did you choose the book?	3. Why did you choose to read this book?
4. Do you talk about books? If so, when and who with?	4. Do you enjoy talking about books? Why or why not ? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up – Who do you talk to? When?
5. What do you do if / when you come across unfamiliar vocabulary in the book?	5. What do you do if / when you come across unfamiliar vocabulary in a book? (Was Q4)
6. What is reading in English lessons like?	6. Tell me about what you've been reading in class. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you enjoyed it? Why or why not?
	7. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about reading?

Appendix F: Teacher Interview Schedule – draft and final versions

Initial Formulation	Finalised Version
1. Tell me about what Y8 pupils have been reading recently.	1. Tell me about what Y8 are choosing to read independently * (e.g. in DEAR time).
2. How do Y8 pupils chose books to read?	2. What strategies do pupils use to choose books for independent reading?
3. How successful are pupils at choosing books?	Follow up – How successful is this? Follow up – Does it lead to enjoyment?
4. What tells you that pupils enjoy (or dislike) books? Can you give some examples?	3. How can you tell if pupils are enjoying (or not enjoying) reading ? Can you give some examples?
5. What type of reading experiences does the Y8 curriculum provide?	4. What do you think about the reading experiences that the Y8 curriculum provides?
6. Do you talk about books in class?	5. What is the predominant form of 'book talk' in class?
7. What do you think encourages Y8s to have pleasurable encounters with books?	6. What do you think encourages Y8s to have pleasurable encounters with books?
	7. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about Y8 and reading?

* **Highlighting** indicates amendment

Appendix G: Transcription Conventions

The conventions I have used are adapted from Silverman (2013, p.449). The range of symbols has been reduced in an attempt to capture the spirit of the original conversation without becoming distracted by an exhaustive catalogue of paralinguistic details. I felt that the priority was to focus on the content of the participants' contributions. I have utilised a narrow range of prosodic features, limited to those which add meaning to the utterance. This includes timed pauses, emphasis of particular words or phrases and fillers.

Int Interviewer / Researcher

[Left brackets indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by another's talk

= Equal signs, one at the end of a line and one at the beginning of the next, indicate no gap between the two lines.

... A series of dots indicates a gap or hesitation in speech/thought, longer than the typical pause between utterances.

Word Underscored words indicate some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude

() Empty parentheses indicate inability to hear what was said

(()) Double parentheses contain author's descriptions rather than transcriptions

.,? Punctuation indicates speaker's intonation and pauses.

Appendix H: One complete transcript

Willow and Georgia – Interviewed 18 December 2018

- Int. Tell me about what you've been reading outside of school
- Willow I've been reading – what's it called . . . it's a book – I can't remember what it's called – it's called *Release* and it's by – who's it by =
- Georgia = I don't know. How do I know?
- Int. You sit next to her in class
- Willow I can't remember who it's by but it's by a famous author and it's about – basically – a lot of the – he's like this boy and a lot of his friends and family are Christian and he's gay and . . . his family kind of knows it but – and it's all about him and his best friend is moving away and where he has to deal with all this stuff
- Int. Right. His family know but he hasn't officially come out
- Willow No and he does like – his brother's seen as like this really like – he's seen as really like . . . oh what's the word? I can't think. He's really like – he's seen as like the perfect idea and then like his parents
- Int. Good at sport. Good at school
- Willow yeah and then like he err he – how he has to live up to his brother and things
- Int. Aah ok thank you. What about you?
- Georgia I'm err well I'm only just – I've only just started the book I've got at the moment
- Int. Right
- Georgia which is *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman erm so I don't really know that much about it. I'm only on the first couple of pages
- Int. Do you want to talk about the one you've just finished then?
- Georgia The one that I've read most recently is *Ketchup Clouds* by Annabel Pitcher =
- Int. = Right =
- Georgia = and I read that because I really liked her first book you know her first novel which was . . . what was it called? *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece*
- Int. Oh, I've heard of that but not read it
- Georgia I really liked that so then I decided to read her second novel. I didn't really think it was as good as the other one if I'm honest but I think that – there was kind of like a romance thing and I decided that that's not really my thing (([laughs]))
- Int. but you didn't know that before you started reading it
- Georgia yeah
- Int. Right. Ok but you managed to carry on and finish reading it

Georgia Yes because it was ok but just . . . not really my thing

Int. Not one of your favourites

Georgia Yes

Int. Would you both say a little more about what you've enjoyed about those books? ((to Willow)) you've said a bit about the content of the book. Could you say a bit more?

Willow I don't know – it's just a bit weird. I think the way the writer does the layout of the story – I don't know . . . it's just a bit

Int. A different sequence?

Willow What he also does is there's another story as it goes along – it's so confusing but basically it's – well if I explain it – basically it's like – in the story there's a girl who dies at the end and there's another story of her dying and she comes back and it's like really weird and she – this other story and the way he does it but it's mostly like the gay boy and – I don't know how to – it's

Int. so you like it because there are parallel storylines

Willow Yes but they're the same – kind of

Int. they cross?

Willow Yes =

Georgia = Oh I love those books

Int. Was it one of those books that when you start reading you've got no idea about how the two plots relate?

Willow No no no. It's like you don't even . . . I really don't know how to say it cos it's just really good the way he does it and then like . . .

Int. Does what? The two stories?

Willow Yes and then he – it's just the way he . . . ((laughs)) =

Int. = ((laughs)) you said at the beginning you liked it because it was different =

Willow = Yes he does it like – no other writer does it like that

Int. You haven't read any other books like that with two storylines?

Willow No

Int. Is it different also in what it's about – you know the boy

Willow No, you do get books like that but it is a bit different. I think his books – a lot of his books involve LGBTQ characters cos I've read like a few others because I think he really supports that stuff . . . I guess – I can't remember

Int. So, is this the best one?

Willow Yes – no – I read a better one and it was about this group of people and then they like . . . umm they had like umm . . . oh what was it . . .

Georgia ((laughs)) =

Willow = there were this group of friends and they – one of the friends was gay but he wasn't like openly gay to all his friends and like . . . it was like that and all his friends – the main character was best friends with him and . . . it's all about kind of them . . . and yeah

Int. so a friendship and people supporting each other

Willow yeah

Int. ok ((to Georgia)) and what about you? *Ketchup Clouds*?

Georgia Well what I found interesting about it was – it's quite similar to what Willow said but not the same thing – like the way it was written erm . . . but obviously for different reasons ((laughs)) that book was written in letters so the whole thing was letters

Int. clever =

Georgia = so it was basically this teenage girl that had – you know – had basically murdered someone – err – which to be honest was quite boring in the end ((laughs)) the way that they got killed if I'm honest ((laughs))

Int. predictable boring?

Georgia It was just err not very exciting ((laughs))

Int. murder not being exciting?

Georgia ((laughs)) you know – never mind – but like yeah so she's basically writing – cos she found this thing online where . . . she got away with the murder basically and erm she found this thing online where it was basically prison – prisoners in America err in a certain prison needed pen pals ((laughs))

Int. right

Georgia which I know sounds very weird but – you know – and then she erm was writing like the entire time – the whole thing was just letters to these prisoners and I found it quite interesting yeah . . . but yeah

Int. Was the person in prison for murder?

Georgia Yes murder of his wife

Int. so there was an interesting =

Georgia = a crime of passion. Oh actually – it was quite interesting because basically – you know - at the very beginning – like she said we've committed very similar crimes ya-de-da-dah that's definitely a word umm

Int. I'm going to have trouble spelling that one

Georgia ((laughs)) but like you know because like she murdered her boyfriend because she loved his brother more and it was like

Int. ((intake of breath))

Georgia yeah and then the prisoner had killed her wife for having an affair so

Int. crime of passion. All about love

Georgia Yes

Int. Can I take you back to what you said at the beginning – of this bit – you said ‘it’s similar to Willow’s’. So similar how? Written in letters?

Georgia Yes, I just really – I liked the way it was written. The structure of the book.

Int. It was unusual?

Georgia Yes

Int. My next question is about anything you didn’t like. You’ve just said that the murder was boring. Would you like to say anything more about that or was there anything else that you didn’t like?

Georgia Umm . . . well . . . hmmm . . . I mean obviously . . . yeah I mean but the ending was just a little bit yeah – I mean it wasn’t as exciting as I was expecting because there was quite a lot of the entire thing being all like dramatic about what she’d done and everything and then in the end – can I do spoilers?

Int. Yes =

Georgia = cos basically she – err I think like the character – her fake name was Zoe – I can’t remember her real name – oh was it – it was Alice that’s it – err and basically umm you know she basically pushed the guy that she was dating into a river

Int. ((laughs)) and he couldn’t swim?

Georgia It was – so basically umm his brother and the guy she was dating were having an argument umm so the guy she was dating was called Max and then his brother and Max were having an argument err because they were like ‘how could you – you betrayed me ya-de-dah’. I keep saying that ((laughs)) and then like then cos they were arguing she was like ‘oh just stop it, stop it’ and being kind of annoying and then . . . ((giggles)) sorry . . . and then she pushed him into the river cos she was like trying to break it up

Int. right =

Georgia = and then he like slipped and fell in the river and it was like really heavy flowing and stuff and then he drowned – which . . .

Int. It doesn’t sound like it was murder more like an accident

Georgia Yes, that’s the thing they kept making it sound way more interesting

Int. taken an axe to his head – not to give you any ideas ((laughs)) =

Georgia = ((laughs)) they made it seem like a bigger deal that it actually was and. . . yeah

Int. so that was a bit annoying. You didn’t like that

Georgia No

Int. ((to Willow)) What about your book?

Willow It was really confusing about the two stories

Int. Right – it sounded it

Willow When you read the first chapter it comes to the end of the chapter – when you get to the end of the chapter there’s a bit of the other story and you read and ‘what’s going on?’ cos it’s like suddenly we’ve gone from this to this and it begins the next chapter where you’ve got the normal story and at the end you’re reading like this bit about umm this girl and . . . um it’s just like a bit – I don’t know – a bit weird

Int. you like having the two storylines

Willow but like

Int. but it’s a bit confusing

Willow yes . . . yeah . . .

Int. difficult to keep track of

Willow No, you can keep track of it – it’s just like . . . cos . . . it doesn’t really have like chapters like in the other story. There’ll be a bit of it and then another bit of it.

Int. So you have to be really alert to when it changes storyline?

Willow Yes

Int. you could read half a paragraph before you know

Willow no it’s in a different font so you know but it’s still just a bit like umm . . .

Int. Ok. I was going to ask you next about anything that puzzled you but I guess you’ve answered that already, Willow. ((to Georgia)) Was there anything about your book that puzzled you, Georgia?

Georgia Hmm . . . I mean if . . . in *Ketchup Clouds* I guess like – the thing that – I mean the things that confused me were like logic stuff if you know what I mean like if she was writing to someone in prison you know surely the police would start tracking her because she was confessing stuff

Int. yes

Georgia yes, you know it’s just like . . . yeah

Int. it’s stretching credibility =

Georgia = and the fact that prisoners had pen pals in the first place was a little bit odd ((laughs)) but you know it was a good story.

Int. Thank you. The next question is about patterns. When you were reading those books did you notice any patterns or connections with anything else that you’d read?

((Long pause))

- Georgia I mean . . . umm . . . not especially. It was just like a normal story. This happened and that happened.
- Int. from what you said earlier it didn't sound very normal but I know what you mean
- Willow With the one with the girl if in the beginning you don't know what's happening it's literally really weird cos you suddenly start reading this thing about this girl who wakes up in this forest and like – as it goes on you understand why she's got to being in it
- Int. yes
- Willow like in other books you read on and understand it
- Int. so you had to read on to find out?
- Willow basically she got killed by her ex-boyfriend. They were doing like drugs and umm he got angry and then got really high and . . . he got really angry with her because she thought he did something and basically she – he – I think he like hit her and she got knocked out or something and he thought she was dead so he – then he put bricks on her and tried to drown the dead body which at the time was still alive . . . and erm . . . so she goes in the lake and she erm like comes back and there's this whole other thing with like big – like fantasy parallel world or something and like . . . it's really confusing and then erm she comes back and she tries to yeah yeah
- Int. but you've finished it?
- Willow I haven't finished it not yet but it's like the end
- Int. but you're going to carry on?
- Willow yeah
- Int. it sounds complicated
- Georgia to me as well
- Int. are you both drawn to violent books? That's a pattern I've noticed ((laughs))
- Willow I didn't find it
- Int. you didn't choose it?
- Willow No it was given to me because of the author but I can't remember his name
- Int. The next question was about how you came across the book. You came across your book because you read *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece* and you were interested in reading a book by the same writer
- Georgia yes
- Int. Was there anything else that drew you to that book?
- Georgia I think it was just because of the writer . . . because I liked how she connected with the characters and stuff and I wanted to see if she did that in other books
- Int. and you found out she didn't

Georgia yes

Int. and what about you Willow?

Willow Yes, I'd read other books by him and someone recommended this book and then I saw this book as because it's by the same guy I thought 'oh well I'll read that then'

Int. Right. Good. Thank you. The next question is about when you've finished reading. What do you do?

Willow I read another one.

Int. straightaway ((laughs)) =

Willow = [laughs] well I mean I close it first

Georgia I was going to say go to sleep – like you know . . .

Int. Do you read a lot in the evenings then?

Georgia yeah

Int. the question is deliberately wide

Georgia I mean if it was in the evening and I finished it I'd maybe sit and think about it a bit

Willow yeah

Georgia like sometimes if it's a really good book that I want to sit and think about for a bit like . . . I'd just sit and listen to some music and think about it

Int. Yes. Do you talk to anybody about your reading?

Georgia yes lots

Willow I don't think anyone actually like cares

Int. aaah

Willow no I don't mean that. It's just 'you read that - great'

Int. ok but you said you talk a lot, Georgia.

Georgia mmm – yeah well I talk to my friend Natalie a lot and then I also talk to my brother quite a lot about the books I've been reading

Int. Is he older than you or younger?

Georgia He's older than me. He's in Year 11 now – scary.

Int. Why do you talk to him?

Georgia Well I don't know. We're just really close and whenever we hang out we just talk about whatever and so if I've just read a really interesting book you know I might just yeah talk to him

Int. Do you recommend books to each other?

Georgia Yes. Quite a lot

Int. Yes ((to Willow)) but there's nobody like that for you?

Willow No. Sometimes my mum though if she reads a book she might recommend a book to me oh like 'you might like this Willow' so yeah

Int. and does she get it right?

Willow mmm sometimes =

Int. = sometimes

Willow like some of them are a bit like quite I don't know. I think she – I think she has an idea that I quite like romance stuff. Like she recommended a few books to me and they're quite lovey . . . that rubbish

Int. right yeah. Not your sort of thing?

Willow No

Int. Maybe you need to start recommending books to her

Willow Yes

Int. so she gets to know your taste a little better

Willow Ok yes. A few hints

Int. Right. Last question. Would you tell me about the books you've been reading in class.

Georgia Oh, I really like them

Int. Both of them?

Georgia Yes

Willow I like *Maggot Moon* a lot . . . yeah – I don't know . . . I liked it a lot

Int. Can you say what you liked?

Willow I like things that – it was like an alternative history. I quite like things like that

Georgia yes

Willow alternative things that happen

Int. yes, sort of real life but with a twist

Willow yes, yes. It's still realistic but . . . different really

Int. Thanks, Willow.

Georgia Yes, I agree. I love alternative history because like you know =

Willow = it gives you an idea of what could have happened =

Georgia = I love like – you know – I just love the fact that the writer’s just sat and thought ‘what if’ you know – what if the world was completely different and you know I love thinking like that. When I was little and stuff all those little games like =

Willow = yes =

Georgia = what if I was blind

Int. Oh those sort of games ((laughs)) =

Georgia = ((laughs)) like I used to close my eyes and see if I could find my room and like you know I love those sort of – what if my life was completely different

Int. that’s about your imagination, isn’t it

Georgia yeah yeah

Willow () write literature using their imagination like doing this . . . and most books – well you get books like that

Int. so, you like it more because it’s not totally out of her imagination. It’s a mix of real life and not =

Georgia = yeah

Int. that makes your imagination

Georgia yes it’s imagination but it’s still realistic

Int. Ok. Well that’s *Maggot Moon* but what about *Of Mice and Men*?

Willow [*Mice and Men* – I did quite enjoy that. It was like . . . I don’t know . . . cos it was . . . yes sorry

Georgia [no no

Willow no I did quite like that it’s – the way George acted with Lennie . . .

Georgia yeah

Int. the relationship between them

Willow yeah

Georgia like I was going to say I really liked how you know the author sort of emphasised like . . . the way their relationship was. Like it was kind of like – I just – I know this sounds weird but I kind of like how complicated it was because then you thought about it a lot and I like books that make you think about stuff

Int. Yes. Is there something there about your experience, too? You know that relationships can be complicated

Georgia [yeah
Willow [yeah

Int. so it's that – 'well I can relate to that'

Georgia yes

Willow yes I think so

Int. Was there anything you didn't like so about either of them?

Willow well it's not something I disliked but I . . .

Int. don't worry

Georgia I don't actually know

Int. you think they were both good class readers

Georgia I did actually like both of the books yes

Int. Yes, good. Thank you. The last thing I was going to do was just to invite you to say anything else you want to say to me about reading either inside school or outside. Anything we haven't covered?

Willow I do quite enjoy reading

Int. quite

Willow yes it just depends on what the book is

Int. right. if you've got a book that you like you're prepared to spend time =

Willow = yes but if it's something that's just a bit boring then – if it's got a really slow start I'll probably try to read it to the end but if it's boring I just don't want to read it

Int. Do you give up?

Willow No. Usually I'll read books to the end but . . . if I didn't like it . . . I just wouldn't pick it up again

Int. No ok

Georgia I mean – like there have been . . . quite a few books . . . last year where. . . you know I was trying to read them but they were just very very boring and I think it was because I kept telling myself that I liked different types of books if you know what I mean =

Int. = right =

Georgia = rather than actually liking the genre I did and then you know I started trying different types of genres and then I started finding books that I liked

Willow and sometimes if people tell me 'oh this is a good book' that I will read it and even I don't like it, I'll carry on reading it cos like they told me it was good

Georgia yeah

Willow and you actually want to talk to them about it as well

Int. yeah ((to Georgia)) was it a deliberate choice for you to try to read more widely then?

Georgia Yes. I definitely like decided that I was going to do that because I just . . . noticed that there was a little pattern of not . . . liking the genre that I was reading

Willow and if a lot of people have read the book or it's famous sometimes I'll try to read it then

Georgia mmm

Int. yes, to get to know it

Willow yes

Int. and make your own mind up about it

Willow Yes

Int. I have to ask you Georgia after trying to convince yourself that you like other genres, what do you choose to read now?

Georgia well, I mean, as I said I really like alternative history and stuff and I quite like erm horror sort of thriller stuff and oh I really like dystopian =

Willow = yes – no – that's such good =

Georgia = fiction yes

Int. Can you tell me what have you read that's dystopian?

Georgia I can't really think of anything off the top of my head but – I just yeah

Int. It's that alternative history

Georgia yes – the stuff that makes you think about the real world and make you think about what if stuff was really different and everything yeah

Int. and you both like violence and usually in dystopian fiction you find violence

Willow [yes

Georgia [yes

Int. you're drawn to the grim

Georgia I don't like – you know – I like books to be different to real life =

Willow [yes so you don't have to

Georgia [to make you think =

Willow = think about different stuff

Int. to take you into a different place

Georgia to help you experience well you know imagine what it's like to experience a different kind of life

Int. Yes. Is that something that appeals to you about the LGBTQ books?

Willow No . . . I just thought it was different because not many people – not many books have characters that are actually . . . part of that like thing

Int. yes

Willow and it's just like the author just put them in

Int. It sounds like I've got a lot of reading to do – to catch up. Thank you.

25 minutes 38 seconds

Appendix I: Codes to Themes Table

Initial Code	Explanation	Revised Code	Explanation	Themes
FREQ	when, how often and where		Removed as distinct code as not significant in this data set.	Choice
ACC	book availability, reading opportunities	+ or - CH	autonomy of choice, making selections + or – added to indicate enabler or barrier	
CH	autonomy of choice		access code subsumed in CH	
ID	reader interests & background	+ or - CON	connections readers make with text/s + or – added to indicate enabler or barrier	Connection
		SA	awareness of reader identity – process, preferences, forging links within and between texts	Credibility
		CRED	quality judgements, emerging analytical reading	
BT	book talk	BTH	book talk outside school	Conversation
COM	reader community	BTS	book talk at school with other pupils or teachers/ librarians	
TRM	teachers as reading role models			

Appendix J: Coded Transcript Extract

61	Int.	Is it different also in what it's about – you know the boy	
62	Willow	No, you do get books like that but it is a bit different. I think his books – a lot of his books involve LGBTQ characters cos I've read like a few others because I think he really supports that stuff . . . I guess – I can't remember	Anne ID CH clear sense of her interest
63			
64			
65	Int.	So, is this the best one?	
66	Willow	Yes – no – I read a better one and it was about this group of people and then they like . . . umm they had like umm . . . oh what was it . . .	Anne BTS ID indecision, difficulty articulating
67			
68	Georgia	[laughs]	
69	Willow	there were this group of friends and they – one of the friends was gay but he wasn't like openly gay to all his friends and like . . . it was like that and all his friends – the main character was best friends with him and . . . it's all about kind of them . . . and yeah	Anne ID difficulty articulating
70			
71			
72			
73	Int.	so a friendship and people supporting each other	
74	Willow	yeah	
75	Int.	Ok [to Georgia] and what about you? <i>Ketchup Clouds</i> ?	
76	Georgia	Well what I found interesting about it was – it's quite similar to what Willow said but not the same thing – like the way it was written erm . . . but obviously for different reasons [laughs]. That book was written in letters so the whole thing was letters	Anne BTS CDM ID belonging
77			Anne CDM identifies one point of similarity selective
78			Anne ID familiar MIRROR
79	Int.	clever	
80	Georgia	so it was basically this teenage girl that had – you know – had basically murdered someone – err – which to be honest was quite boring in the end [laughs] the way that they got killed if I'm honest [laughs]	
81			
82			

Appendix K: Illustration of second cycle coding

Pupil Interviews 2nd CYCLE CODING - Excel

1	Speaker	Comment	Line	Code	Pos Neg	Notes
33	M	I've finished the eighth book of the series of Unfortunate Events	8	CH	Pos	series
34	L	I don't really find books that I like any more .	18	CH	Neg	acc hard selecting
35	L	it's all based on colours	25	CH	Neg	AR barrier restricts
36	L	I think you should just read what you like	29	CH	Neg	restrict
37	L	I used to order books from the website	35	CH	Neg	cost innibits
38	R	but now I normally read at school but I'm a bit stuck on finding a book	47	CH	Pos	
39	R	but now I normally read at school but I'm a bit stuck on finding a book	47	CH	Neg	
40	R	I like to read and re-read the books	52	CH	Pos	familiarity
41	R	I've just finished the sixth .	57	CH	Pos	Harry Potter series
42	M	I quite like mystery and crime sort of . . . and those thriller sort of book	63	CH	Pos	genre
43	R	I like reading A Series of Unfortunate Events	87	CH	Pos	series
44	L	I didn't like the book I chose from the library	199	CH	Neg	AR barrier restricts
45	L	there's a shelf in our tutor	201	CH	Pos	availability
46	L	I really didn't like the front cover but I really liked the blurb so . . .	202	CH	Pos	
47	L	Usually I choose a book from its front cover and that's why – what mak	205	CH	Pos	availability
48	L	Yes, yes. I picked it up and read the blurb and thought 'oh this seems ir	209	CH	Pos	
49	L	I was definitely enjoying the book because it was definitely well writt	310	CH	Pos	had to continue
50	L	Of Mice and Men I really enjoyed that book but I think at the beginning	314	CH	Pos	grew on her
51	R	I also think we should do a variety of genres	363	CH	Neg	
52	R	we could read like a fantasy novel	366	CH	Pos	suggestion

N.B. The highlighting indicates quotations selected for insertion in the findings.

Appendix L: Novel Openings for Implied and Actual Reader Response

Maggot Moon by Sally Gardner

One

I'm wondering what if.

What if the football hadn't gone over the wall.

What if Hector had never gone looking for it.

What if he hadn't kept the dark secret to himself.

What if . . .

Then I suppose I would be telling myself another story.

You see, the what ifs are as boundless as the stars.

Two

Miss Connolly, our old teacher, always said start your story at the beginning. Make it a clean window for us to see through. Though I don't really think that's what she meant. No one, not even Miss Connolly, dares write about what we see through that smeared glass. Best not to look out. If you have to, then best to keep quiet. I would never be so daft as to write this down, not on paper.

Even if I could, I couldn't.

You see, I can't spell my own name.

Standish Treadwell.

Can't read, can't write.

Standish Treadwell isn't bright.

Miss Connolly was the only teacher ever to say that what makes Standish stand apart is that he is an original. Hector smiled when I told him that. He said he personally had clocked that one straight away.

'There are train-track thinkers, then there's you, Standish, a breeze in the park of imagination.'

I said that again to myself. 'Then there is Standish, with an imagination that breezes through the park, doesn't even see that there is no dog shit where dog shit should be.'

Three

I wasn't listening to the lesson when the note arrived from the headmaster's office. Because me and Hector were in the city across the water, in another country where the buildings don't stop rising until they pin the clouds to the sky. Where the sun shines in Technicolor. Life at the end of a rainbow. I don't care what they tell us, I've seen it on the TV. They sing in the streets – they even sing in the rain, sing while dancing round a lamp post.

This is the dark ages. We don't sing.

But this was the best daydream I'd had since Hector and his family vanished. Mostly I tried not to think about Hector. Instead I liked to concentrate on imagining myself on our planet, the one Hector and I had invented. Juniper. It was better than being worried sick about what had happened to him. Except this was one of the best daydreams I'd had for a long time. It felt as if Hector was near me again. We were driving round in one of those huge, ice-cream-coloured Cadillacs. I could almost smell the leather. Bright blue, sky blue, leather seats blue. Hector in the back. Me with my arm resting on the chrome of the wound-down window, my hand on the wheel, driving us home for Croca-Colas in a shiny kitchen with a checked tablecloth and a garden that looks as if the grass was Hoovered.

That's when I became vaguely aware of Mr Gunnell saying my name.

'Standish Treadwell. You are wanted in the headmaster's office.'

Frick-fracking hell! I should have seen that coming. Mr Gunnell's cane made my eyes smart, hit me so hard on the back of my hand that it left a calling card. Twin thin, red weals. Mr Gunnell wasn't tall

but his muscles were made out of old army tanks with well-oiled armytank arms. He wore a toupee that had a life of its own, battling to stay stuck on the top of his sweaty, shiny head.

His other features didn't do him any favours. He had a small, dark snot-mark moustache that went down to his mouth. He smiled only when using his cane – that smile curdled the corner of his mouth so that his dried-up leech of a tongue stuck out. Thinking about it, I am not sure the word smile is right. Maybe it just twisted that way when he applied his mind to his favourite sport, hurting you. He wasn't that worried where the cane landed as long as it hit flesh, made you jump.

You see, they only sing across the water.

Here the sky fell in long ago.

***Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck**

1. Setting

A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan Mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees- willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.

2. Character

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders.

The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, and wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely. The first man stopped short in the clearing, and the follower nearly ran over him. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat-band with his forefinger and snapped the moisture off. His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse. The small man stepped nervously beside him.

from Steinbeck (1937) *Of Mice and Men*

Appendix M: Overview of Fiction Read by Y8



Brooks, K. (2013) *The Bunker Diary*, London: Penguin

The novel tells the story of Linus Weems, a teenager who is captured and imprisoned in a mysterious bunker. Other kidnap victims begin to appear via a lift. The victims' lives are controlled by an invisible kidnapper who only communicates through the lift. This thriller describes the harrowing experiences of those trapped in the bunker and Linus' efforts to get everyone to co-operate.

The novel won the 2014 Carnegie Medal winner for Children's Literature

Dennis, H. (2014) *River of Ink: Genesis*, London: Hodder.

A boy washes up on the banks of the Thames. He doesn't remember his name, where he's from or how he ended up in the river. The novel describes his quest for answers but he's up against the clock . . .



Edington, I. & D'Israeli (2003) *Scarlet Traces*, Milwaukie, Or. : Dark Horse.

A Steampunk comic series, set a decade after H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. Bodies are washed up on the banks of the Thames, drained of blood. A detective and his sidekick set out to solve the mystery. Heavily influenced by the Victorian context, the adventure also involves harnessing Martian technology to save the world.

Frank, A (1947, 2009) *The Diary of a Young Girl*, London: Puffin Modern Classics.

A young girl's record of her life in hiding for two years during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

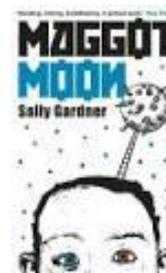


Gaiman, N. (2014) *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, London: Headline.

Returning to his hometown for a funeral prompts a man's memories of his childhood. Enigmatic and striking people and events are recounted including his neighbour, Lottie Hempstock and her belief that the garden pond was an ocean.

Gardner, S. (2012) *Maggot Moon*, London: Hot Key.

A plot summary is provided in Chapter 4 as its opening was used for the implied reader analysis.

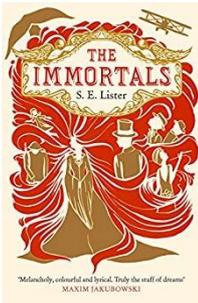


Horowitz, A. (2003) *Eagle Strike*, London: Walker.

The fourth book in the Alex Rider series sees the young spy going rogue from MI6. He tries to prevent a madman, Damian Cray, from launching nuclear weapons. It includes another encounter with Alex's nemesis, Yassan Gregovich.

Kinney, J. (2017) *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Getaway*, London: Puffin.

The titular wimpy kid, Greg Heffley, records his daily struggles and fills the pages with sketches and doodles. This realistic account of teen life is filled with observational humour.

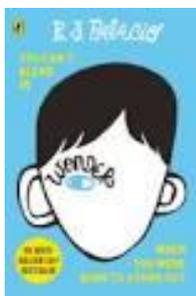


Lister, S. E. (2016) *The Immortals*, London: Old Street.

A time-travelling adventure by set in 1945 again and again. Rosa Hyde wants to break free from that year and can't believe what she sees when she does.

Ness, P. (2017) *Release*, London: Walker.

A coming of age novel featuring a gay protagonist trying to cope with changing landscapes and some supernatural events, too.



Palacio, R. J. (2013) *Wonder*, London: Corgi Penguin.

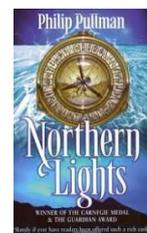
The story of ten-year-old Augie, born with a facial deformity. Previously home-schooled, his parents decide he should go to join school from 5th grade. The novel follows his experiences there.

Pilcher, A. (2013) *Ketchup Clouds*, London: Orion.

This winner of the Waterstones Children's Book Prize is told in a series of letters between the 15 year-old protagonist and her pen pal on Death Row in America. She has a secret.

Pilcher, A. (2013) *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece*, London: Orion.

Ten-year -old Jamie's sister was killed in the September 9 London bombings. After moving away for a new start, Jamie makes friends with a Muslim girl, risking the disapproval and anger of his father.



Pullman, P. (1998) *Northern Lights: His Dark Materials*, Witney, Ox.: Scholastic.

Initially set in Oxford, the novel follows Lyra on her quest to save her friend, Roger. Set in a parallel universe, the heroine gets caught up in her uncle's investigation of "dust", a mysterious substance.

Rowling, J. K. (2016) *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them: The Original Screenplay*, London: Little Brown.

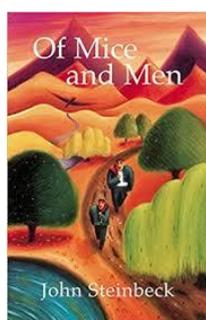
The screenplay was developed from Rowling's fictitious guide to creatures in the Harry Potter universe. Supposedly written by a magical creatures' expert, it featured on the Hogwarts' curriculum.

Rowling, J. K. (1997) *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, London: Bloomsbury.

The first novel in the fantasy series describing the protagonist's move from the cupboard under the stairs to Hogwarts' School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Snicket, L. (2013) *The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events*, London: Egmont.

The first book in a fantasy series heavily influenced by Victorian Gothic. It follows the adventures of the three orphaned Baudelaire siblings, sent to live with a distant relative.



Steinbeck, J. (1937) *Of Mice and Men*, Penguin Classics edition 2000, London: Penguin.

A plot summary is provided in Chapter 4 as its opening was used for the implied reader analysis.

Wallace, D. (2015) *Hamish and the World Stoppers*, London: Simon & Schuster.

Hamish's life becomes exciting when he notices that everything has stopped – everything apart from him. A funny, sci-fi adventure which has the protagonist trying to save the world.

