

Bronze - Student Award 2021



Every child in every page

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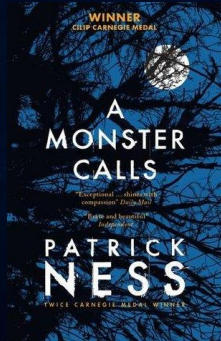
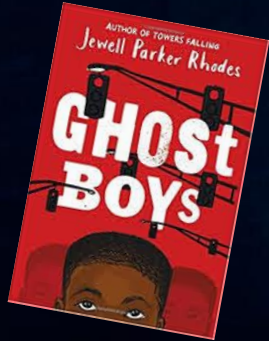


Context



We are 3rd Year Primary Education Students at the University of Greenwich. For our enhancement, we have chosen Children's Literature and through this have explored a range of texts. These texts have inspired and motivated us to bring literature alive in our teaching and have highlighted the importance of being a reading teacher.

As part of our enhancement, we are creating reading journals on a book of our choice. The books we have chosen are Ghost Boys, A Monster Calls and Thornhill.



Our research inspiration and rationale

The Open University's Teachers as Readers (TaRs) findings recognised that if teachers are to effectively foster Reading for Pleasure, they must develop:

- ◆ Considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts
- ◆ As Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach
- ◆ Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive

(Cremin et al., 2014; Open University, 2020)

As part of our reading, we have found that in order for *all* children to find pleasure in reading, they must find themselves reflected in the texts they read (Bishops-Sims, 2015). We have been inspired to explore racial diversity in children's literature, to improve our knowledge so that we may develop as effective reading teachers. By doing this, we aim to be well equipped to encourage and engage children in a reading community, regardless of their background.



Aims

Our research focused on developing our awareness of diverse and inclusive books in particular, we felt this was vital if we was to effectively welcome all children to engage in a reading community.

Research says:

“When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part” (Bishops-Sims, 2015).

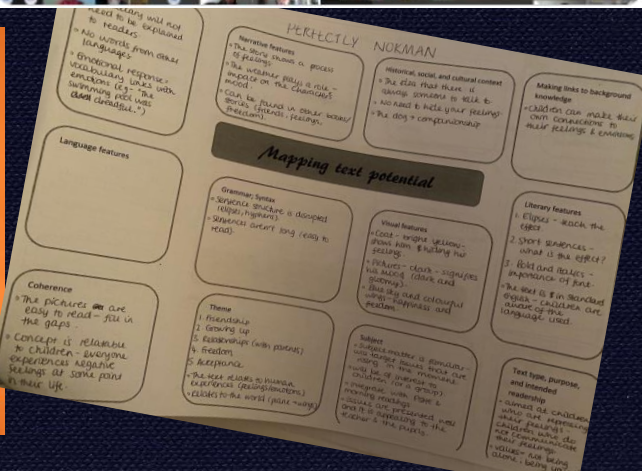
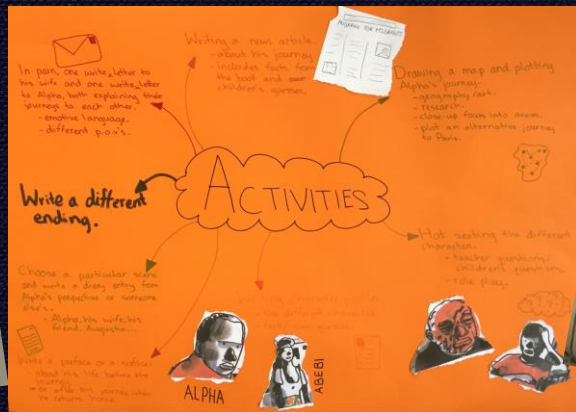
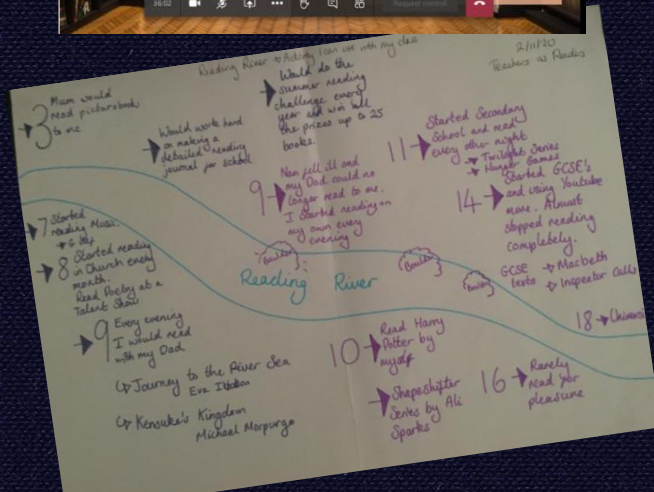
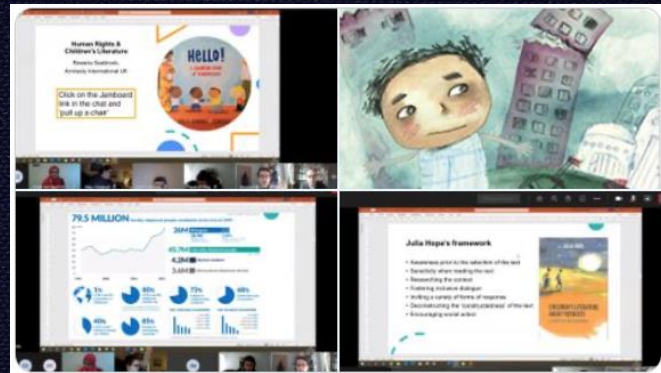
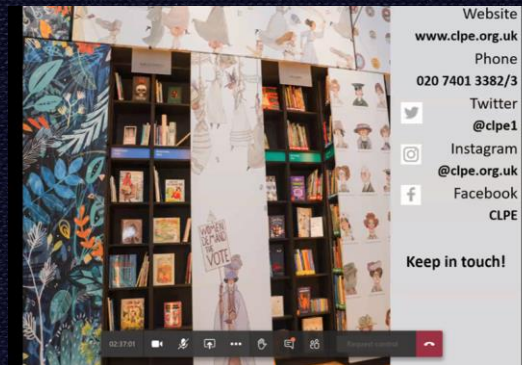
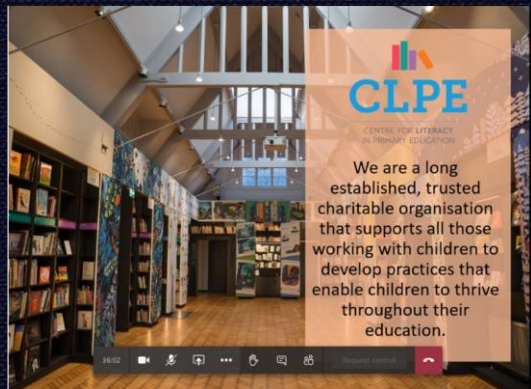
"It's very common among BAME children to imagine and dream themselves to be in another skin colour. This is because the ideal 'type' in the books they read are portrayed as white. It's important for all children to see themselves in books as beautiful people living a normal life.” (Ghanimifard, 2018)



Outline



We engaged in several activities and work to achieve our aims:

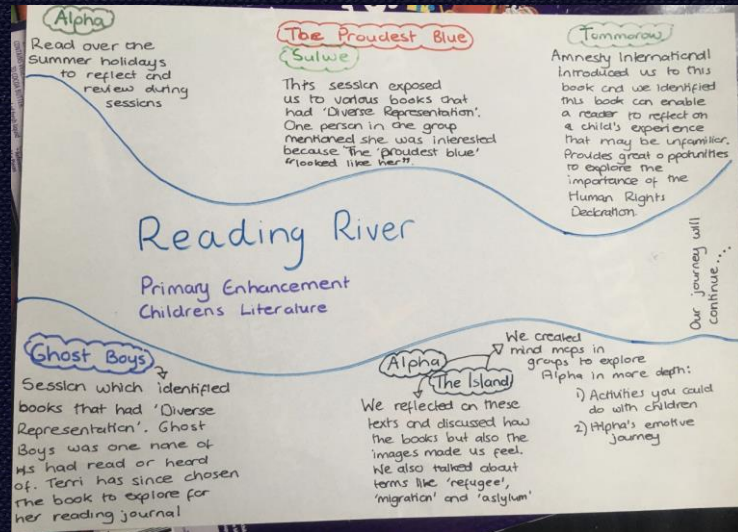
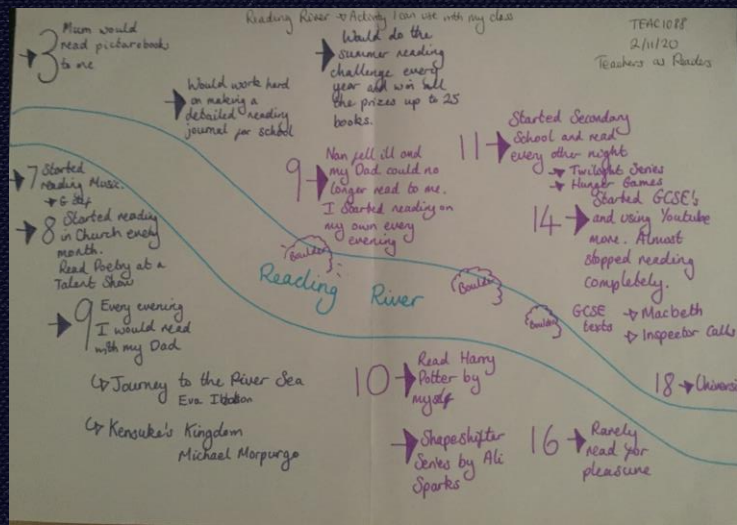


Reading rivers

We reflected upon our reading journeys from the books we read as children in comparison to the books we have read over the last few weeks.

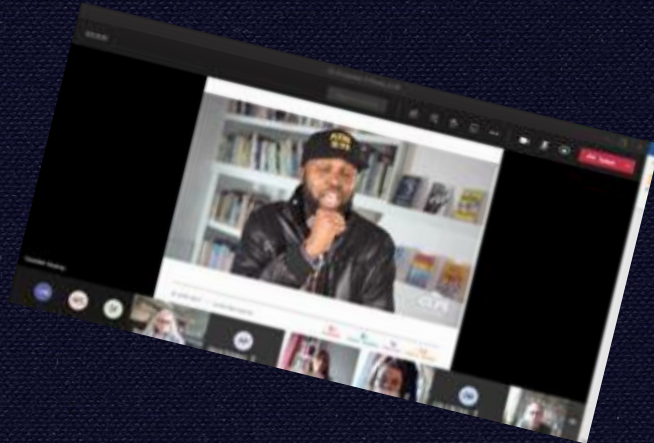
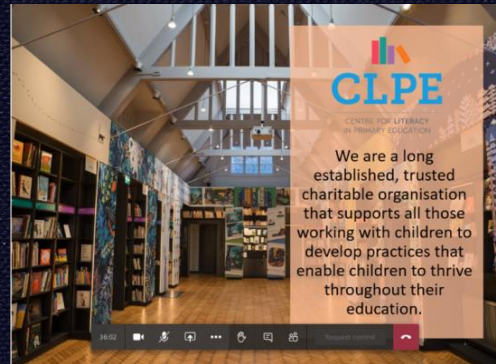
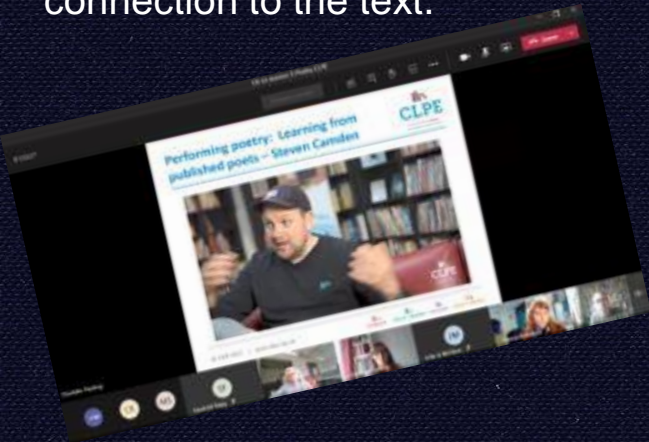
The reading rivers show that many of the books we read as children were from white authors and had white characters:

However, as shown, more recently we have been exposed to a more diverse range of books and authors.





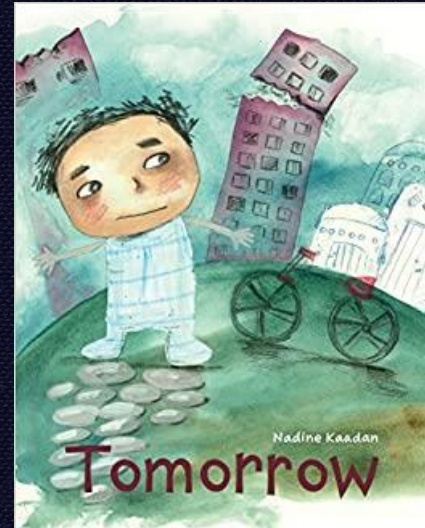
We attended a session on Teams with CLPE and discussed the importance of poetry and how we can explore it in our classrooms. During this session we were introduced to a wide range of poets and poetry, including poems by Shirley Hughes and Kate Wakeline. This inspired us to write our own poems that explored an emotion and to reflect upon our own poetry experiences and the impact poetry has on a reader. This session also highlighted ways poetry can support pupils in all aspects of literacy and reading. We discussed ways in which we can engage all pupils in poetry, one of which included providing diverse poetry in order for children to develop an interest but also a social and emotional connection to the text.



Amnesty International

Through Teams, we attended a session with Amnesty International which explored teaching Human Rights through Children's Literature. Together, we explored 'Tomorrow' by Nadine Kandan, a book about a child from Syria who is stuck inside because it is too dangerous to go out on the streets, to the park and to school. We identified that this emotive book enables the reader to reflect on the child's experiences and provides great opportunities to explore the importance of the Human Rights Declaration.

Additionally, we explored the importance of choosing texts that are appropriate, counter stereotypes and welcome rich learning experiences where students can share their enthusiasms, connections and understanding through the 'tell me' approach (Aidan Chambers, 1993).



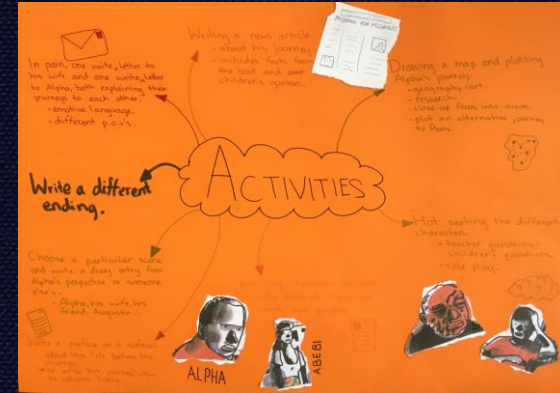
Mind Maps

As a class, we all read Alpha and this is therefore a shared text of ours. This enabled us to explore the book in depth and in groups we did so through Mind Maps.

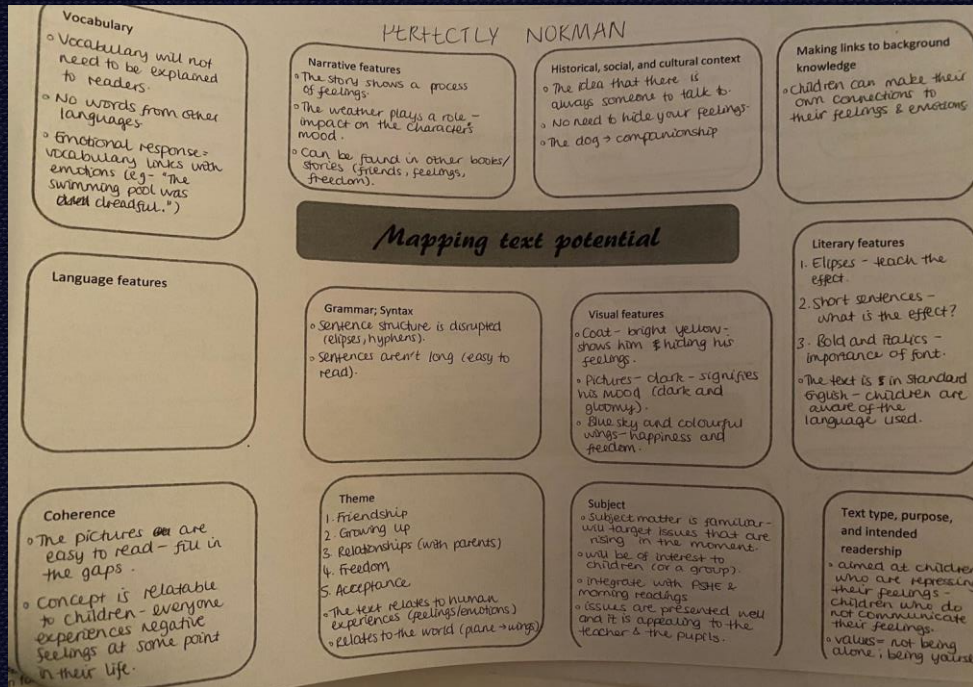
One of our mind maps explored the various activities you could initiate in a classroom in order to develop a deeper understanding and reflection of the text. Activities such as using drama to recreate scenes in the book or using the classroom to explore the journey, enabling the readers to be emerged within the text.

Another reflected on Alpha's emotions and how he may have felt throughout the text. This was presented through an emotion graph.

Lastly, the mind map reflected on the characters journey throughout the text. Using images of the map from Alpha to connect the important places mentioned to create a timeline for the story. Not only was this a particularly poignant activity in relation to Alpha, but this activity can also be used in any example of children's literature in order to deepen children's understanding of characters and their journey's.



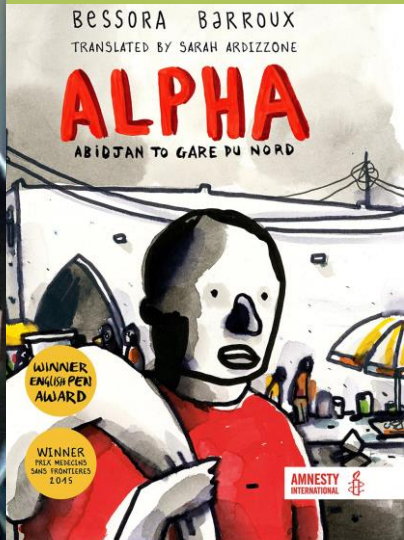
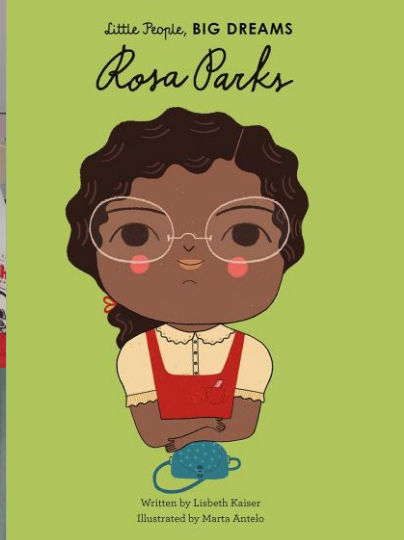
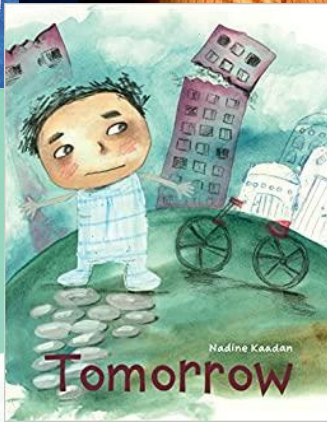
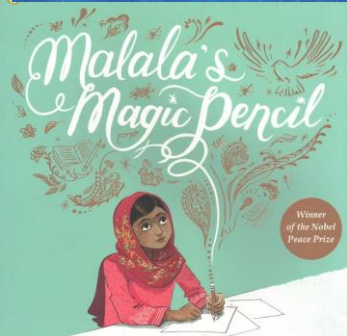
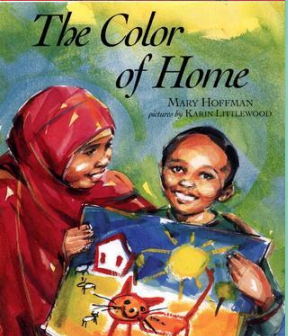
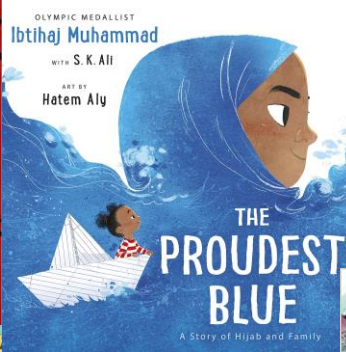
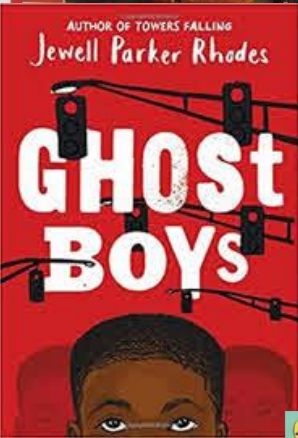
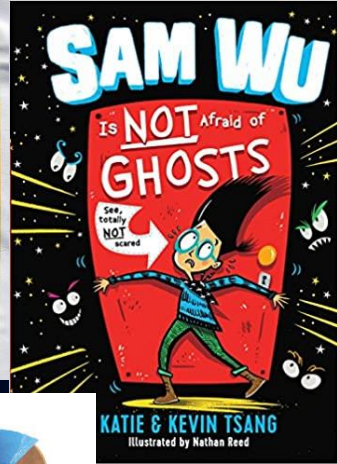
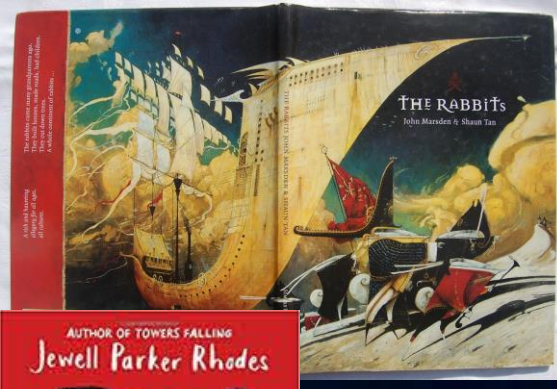
Mapping Text Potential



By mapping texts we were able to identify its different features such as the vocabulary, themes, links and many more.

We felt this activity was extremely helpful for us to explore texts and be able to identify the potential of particular books in future.

This activity can also support us to identify areas or texts that we lack in our classrooms, for example themes or texts that represent diversity in particular.



Reading Realities Report

33.5% of the children in UK schools

Were of minority ethnic origins in 2019

7% of Children's Books

Feature characters from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background. (Books published in the UK in 2017, 2018 and 2019)

5% of Children's Books

Had an ethnic minority main character (Books published in the UK in 2019)



Reflections on Impact the TaRs Research had on Practice

We resonated most with the phase 1 survey which states that teachers tend to rely on 'childhood favourites and celebrity authors'. Our survey shows very similar results, therefore we chose this aspect of the research in order to be able to introduce new and diverse authors to our children.

Through reading a range of diverse children's literature, we as teachers have developed our awareness of authors, poets and texts from different backgrounds which we can implement into our teaching.

5. List 6 'good' children's book authors

Ali Sparks	Rick Riordan
J.K. Rowling	Jackie Wilson
Michael Morpurgo	Malorie Blackman

6. List 6 good children's picture book authors/illustrators

Quentin Blake	Tony Ross

7. List 6 good children's poets

Michael Rosen	



Impact

As a result of our research, we now have a much wider repertoire of texts that we are aware of which feature main characters from a range of diverse backgrounds. By introducing these to our classroom, we are better equipped to help each child feel included and represented in a reading for pleasure community.

We have also improved our awareness of the under-representation of BAME children in children's literature and the negative impact this can have.



Thanks!

- ◆ Sarah
- ◆ John
- ◆ Terri

