



Change your story

# Reading for Pleasure

DENI Webinar 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026

# Aims of the session

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- What is RFP
- Why Should we be worried?
- Why does it matter?
- How does it improve literacy?
- Why does it matter so much in Northern Ireland?
- How does it fit within the literacy framework?
- What resources are available?
- What can we do?
- NYR



A photograph of a man with a beard reading a book to a young child. The man is on the right, leaning over the child on the left. They are both looking at an open book. The book's cover is visible, showing the title "Have You Seen the Crocodile?" and illustrations of a crocodile and birds. The background is a dimly lit room with a lamp and a red vase.

**What is your favourite reading memory?**

# Defining reading for pleasure

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“reading that we do of our own free will, anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading.

It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else’s request we continue because we are interested in it”

Clark & Rumbold, National Literacy Trust, 2006



# Reading for Pleasure in 2025

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Analysis of over 114,970 responses by children and young people.

*“In 2025, reading enjoyment is at its lowest point in two decades.”*

Clark et al, Children and young people’s reading in 2025. National Literacy Trust

(18.7%) 8 to 18-year-olds told us they read daily in their free time, a decrease of 20 percentage points since 2005.

(32.7%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 said that they enjoyed reading in their free time.

# Why reading for enjoyment is important

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Children who enjoy reading are three times more likely to **read above the level expected** for their age

NLT, 2019

Children who are the most engaged with literacy have **better empathy, creativity and mental wellbeing**

Sun & Sahakian et al, 2023

NLT, 2018

Children who read for enjoyment made **more progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling**

Institute of Education, 2013

Sullivan & Brown, 2015

Reading for enjoyment is more important for children's **cognitive development** than their parents' level of education.

Institute of Education, 2013

Sullivan & Brown, 2015

Sun & Sahakian et al, 2023

# Reading for Pleasure and attainment

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Children who enjoy reading are:

- More likely to have above-average reading skills
- More motivated to read independently
- More likely to succeed academically

Clark et al, Children and young people's reading in 2025. National Literacy Trust

34.2% of children who enjoy reading had above-average reading skills

Compared with only 15.7% who do not enjoy reading

# Reasons for optimism

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- Reading frequency and enjoyment are undoubtedly linked
- Connection between reading skill and positive reading attitudes
- School can clearly have an impact



# Reading Mechanics & RFP

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## Strong literacy teaching includes:

- Explicit phonics and decoding
- Fluency instruction
- Vocabulary teaching
- Comprehension strategies
- AND opportunities to read for enjoyment

Clark & Rumbold (2006), National Literacy Trust,

OECD PISA studies (2002–2021)

National Literacy Trust Annual Literacy Survey (2024)

## Not Either / Or



# DE Literacy Framework

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The Northern Ireland Literacy Framework emphasises:

- Language-rich classrooms
- Reading fluency
- Vocabulary development
- Reading comprehension
- Pupil engagement
- Reading confidence and enjoyment



# The DE Literacy Framework 2025

## Reading for pleasure

Reading for pleasure refers to independent, self-selected reading for personal or social enjoyment. It includes a wide range of formats: fiction, non-fiction, e-books, magazines, comics and graphic novels.

Research shows reading for pleasure has a strong correlation with confidence, academic performance, social-emotional outcomes and reduced inequalities. Studies demonstrate positive associations between children and young people's recreational reading and cognitive development, academic attainment, comprehension, general knowledge and vocabulary.

# Reflection:

What does reading for pleasure look like in your school?

Barriers to RFP



# 5 Motivations to Read for Pleasure





## Immersive pleasure of play

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e.g. getting lost in a book and living through the text.

*“I read it because I like it! I like living through the stories!”*

*“[The characters] become like your friends. And you’re so much in their lives they’re like our best friends.”*



## Intellectual pleasure

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e.g. finding out about issues of interest in the world and solving problems in narratives.

*“It's that process of taking the information you have and coming up with possible solutions. Like, it's like being a detective almost. It's taking the evidence and information and putting it together. Processing it and seeing what ends connect, and then finding, once all those ends connect, what that last piece is.”*

*“I like to think also about what the author could have written instead of what they did write, like different endings, like a dramatic part, I'll stop and think about what could happen next and then read and see what does happen.”*



## Social pleasure

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e.g. belonging to a community of readers and connecting to others through reading as well as identifying as a reader.

*“A lot of my friends, they started recommending these books.”*

*“All my friends were telling me I had to read this .... I go to this writing group every Monday and they were telling me this. You've got to read it! And so I did because I wanted to talk to them about it and be part of the group doing that kind of reading.”*



## The pleasure of functional work

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e.g. using reading to learn, think, and act in different ways, and using reading to shape one's writing.

*"I like to understand people better than what I could do in real life."*

*"Well, I like reading books that I can write about. Like I'm very interested in writing government conspiracy stories, so I like to pull things from other books and I can kind of think okay, well this worked really well in this story so how can I do something like that in a book I am writing."*



## The pleasure of inner work

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e.g. using reading to learn about oneself, to imagine oneself in different situations and consider options.

*“Well, I learn about myself through books when I imagine myself in the different situations .... You can help yourself change when you really admire a character in a book who's really brave, you kind of can idolize them and become more like them. So it's not really learning about yourself, it's learning about what you could be.”*

*“When I read I kind of find a character that I relate to the most. I kind of watch them through the book, just because having a character that's so much of yourself, kind of following the character along through events and the problems and [unclear] so it kind of, the problem come up, and you kind of have that, you feel more like you can handle it.”*

# Reflection

What motivates you to read?

What motivates the children in your class to read?



Pleasure of play



Intellectual pleasure



Social pleasure



Pleasure of functional work



Pleasure of inner work

# Features of a Reading Community

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Rich reading environment

Space and time to read

Opportunities to choose reading materials

Access to a variety of reading resources and formats

A collection that is reflective of a diverse community

Quality interactions with reading role models

Reading initiatives and events

Reading regularly to support teaching and learning

Social interactions around reading



# Practical Classroom Strategies

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- Daily class read-alouds
- Book recommendation displays
- Reading journals
- Library visits
- Teacher book talk
- Peer recommendations
- Reading ambassadors
- Protected independent reading time



# Celebrating Diversity & the importance of choice



# Diversity is not a genre



*Professor Rudine Sims Bishop  
Grant Snider, Incidental Comics, 'Books are...' (2018)*

“Books create belonging. They help us see each other and understand one another. They shine a light on the world.”

Lit in Colour report 2020, Penguin & Runnymede Trust

“

I have every right to be here. As me. Exactly as I am. I might be different to you, I might be different to every person in this room, but you have no more of a right to exist than I do.

”

Elle McNicoll, *Show Us Who You Are*

# Book choice strategies

## Look

Browse the bookshelves – it's a good idea to have a good look at the books.



## Read the blurb

The blurb is the short paragraph on the back of the cover and tells you something about the story. What does the blurb tell you? Does it make you want to read it?

## Check out the cover

Does it look interesting? What is the title? Who is the author? Is it like books you've tried before?

## Think about the genre

This is the type of story found in the book. This could be comedy, adventure or fantasy! What other kinds of stories have you enjoyed?

## Ask

...the school librarian, teachers, parents or carers, and your friends to recommend a book!

## Try it out

Read a few pages of the book. Do you want to know what happens next? It's fine to put it back if it doesn't feel right



# Providing Access with Audiobooks



Keep an eye out for our Audiobook Webinar in the Summer term!

# Teaching Resources

Home > Primary > Promoting diversity through literacy

## Promoting diversity through literacy



It's so important that children and young people see themselves and each other in the books they read. Teachers and librarians are working hard to ensure that pupils have access to texts that reflect the diversity of our communities.

The National Literacy Trust can help your school diversify the texts studied and the books in your school library through our resources, training and school programmes. We've pulled together some of our favourite resources and the work being done by some of our partner organisations.

[literacytrust.org.uk/resources/celebrate-black-history](https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/celebrate-black-history)

Home > Programmes > Libraries for Primary programmes > Diverse Libraries: webinar series

## Diverse Libraries: webinar series



Do you work in a school or public library? Would you like to develop your knowledge to help ensure you are providing a library collection and reading experience that is as diverse and inclusive as possible?

### Free Diverse Libraries annual webinar series

[literacytrust.org.uk/resources/diverse-libraries-webinar-recordings](https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/diverse-libraries-webinar-recordings)

Home > Resources > Promoting diversity through...

FREE

## Promoting diversity through literacy: our resources

Added 22 Jun 2021 | Updated 28 Jun 21

It's so important the books we use in schools reflect our communities and that children see characters who are similar to themselves in their reading material.



[literacytrust.org.uk/primary/promoting-diversity-through-literacy](https://literacytrust.org.uk/primary/promoting-diversity-through-literacy)

# National Year of Reading 2026






**GO ALL IN.**

The National Year of Reading

**SCHOOLS PARTICIPATION AWARD**

St. Margaret's Primary School  
have completed the National Literacy Trust's  
"Reading for Pleasure in the Room" Award.

*J. Douglas*  
Jonathan Douglas  
Chief Executive Officer

*A. Etlinger*  
Andrew Etlinger  
Director of Education




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# LIBRARIES for PRIMARIES

# What small change can I make today?

Improving reading for pleasure doesn't require a single large initiative. Research consistently shows that the most successful schools create a culture where reading is visible, valued and discussed. Small, consistent actions by all staff can have a significant impact on children's attitudes towards reading.

