

Case Study: Clara Crocetti, Primary School Librarian, Tower Hamlets Schools Library Service

Taking part in Tower Hamlets Book Award

Clara Crocetti works for Tower Hamlets Schools Library Services who offer primary schools access to a professional librarian on a part-time basis and one of her schools is Marner Primary School. The Year 6 children took part in Tower Hamlets Book Award: children read all the short-listed books, voted for their favourite and created a performance play of their chosen book – “Illegal” by Andrew Donkin. The project aimed to promote reading for pleasure among year 6 children exposing them to selected quality, newly published children’s literature as well as exercising their creativity in setting up a performance play. By delivering this to the Book Award Ceremony audience, it also strengthened their oracy skills and increased their self-confidence.

Marner School’s mission statement includes a focus on oracy: “to increase children’s confidence with oral skills and presenting to an audience”. The Tower Hamlets Book Award project enabled the school to meet this objective by getting the children to create their own play and perform it to an audience wider than their own school assembly. The project also encouraged reading for pleasure which is a crucial skill for future school attainment in all subjects, as well as having a wider impact on wellbeing.

The project referenced several research studies:

- A growing body of evidence which illustrates the importance of reading for pleasure for both educational purposes as well as personal development (cited in Clark & Rumbold, 2006).
- Evidence of a positive relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and attainment (Clark 2011; Clark & Douglas 2011).
- Reading enjoyment reported as being more important for children’s educational success than their family’s socio-economic status (OECD, 2002).
- A link between positive attitudes towards reading and scoring well on reading assessments (Twist et al., 2007).

- Regularly reading stories or novels outside of school is associated with higher scores in reading assessments (PIRLS, 2006; PISA, 2009).
- International evidence supports these findings; US research reports that independent reading is the best predictor of reading achievement (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988).
- Evidence suggests that reading for pleasure is an activity that has emotional and social consequences (Clark & Rumbold, 2006).
- Other benefits to reading for pleasure include: text comprehension and grammar, positive reading attitudes, pleasure in reading in later life, and increased general knowledge (Clark & Rumbold, 2006).
- Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-evidence-on-reading-for-pleasure>, May 2012).

The project reached several outcomes. Marner School’s performance of “Illegal” was specifically praised by the author who was present at the ceremony, as well as by a teacher of another school. Some of the children who took part in the project went on to enjoy reading at an after-school reading club in partnership with Hachette Publishing and, whilst visiting their offices in Blackfriars, some children expressed an interest in pursuing a career in writing and publishing. Also, inspired by the book award, the majority of Year 6 children took part in a writing competition with four winning prizes for their efforts.

The longer-term legacy of the project is that Marner School will take part in future Tower Hamlets Book Awards, building on this success.

Tips:

1. Promote the project to all appropriate year groups (years 5 and 6)
2. Film/record the performance and share it with parents /carers and in the school
3. Source enough copies of the shortlisted books in advance.