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Readers in the round: Children's holistic engagements with texts

Abstract

In this paper we demonstrate the relationship between reading and writing for pleasure. Children read a wide range of media as well as books for pleasure and develop strong affective bonds with the artefacts of literacy they encounter. What remains less well understood is the relationship between the array of texts children engage with and the texts they subsequently create. A focus on 'Reading for Pleasure' has enabled us to think anew about the relationships between the texts children read, play and engage with and those they make, play and tell.

Data from two doctoral research projects illuminates the ways children draw on cultural resources, moving skilfully across mode, medium and form. In doing so they learn language conventions which enable them to engage in schooled literacies and learn to use conventional language techniques for their own purposes to transform and re-imagine texts. Children's identities as readers, writers, and storytellers are constructed holistically and we explore the role of pleasure in reading and meaning making. In conclusion we consider the potential for positioning reading for pleasure not in isolation, but as a strand in the complex fabric of literacy that needs to be nurtured in children.

Key words

Reading, Writing, Popular Culture, Media, Creativity, Literacy Pleasure

Introduction

Reading for pleasure does not stand alone but is an integral part of children's emerging identities (Marsh, 2004) and dispositions towards literacy. What is more, children read many forms of narrative and texts in many media which become important cultural and narrative resources. In this article we consider the ways in which two research projects, focussing on oral storytelling and independent free writing help to illuminate the debates around supporting reader engagement in reading for pleasure. We demonstrate that children's creative and transformative work with texts depends upon their leisure and pleasure reading. We argue that the examples taken from the research projects show that children's engagements with texts enable them to use conventions of language, narrative, cohesion, and multimodality in their creative work, and that therefore an holistic approach is productive,

essential even. Reading, writing and talking for pleasure in free or classroom contexts are envisaged as strands in a 'braid' of literacy (Wolf and Brice-Heath, 1992) which are woven together, each informing our understanding of the other. Before presenting our data we offer a review of the literature examining reading for pleasure which has enabled us to recontextualise our own data through the lens of the 'readerwriter' (Oatley, 2003)

Valuing reading and writing for pleasure

Reading for pleasure is acknowledged as having a significant impact on academic achievement, both in literacy and in other curriculum areas (OECD 2002; Sullivan and Brown, 2015) and has been widely embraced as part of the national agenda in the United Kingdom for raising standards of attainment. In 2006 The National Literacy Trust produced a review of the research into reading for pleasure (Clark and Rumbold, 2006), partly in response to The Rose Report (DfES, 2006), and what was seen to be media emphasis on the technical elements of learning to read, namely synthetic phonics, at the expense of recommendations about the importance of a language-rich curriculum. Clark and Rumbold (2006) summarised the positive effects which have been linked to reading for pleasure, including attainment in literacy, vocabulary development, confidence, comprehension, positive attitudes, general knowledge, and empathetic response (p8-9). Taken from a large number of studies from the previous twenty years these positive effects can be seen to have informed approaches to reading for pleasure in schools and communities since 2006. Primary schools have policies in place to develop children's reading for enjoyment, libraries and community groups regularly organise schemes to encourage and incentivise children's reading and national newspapers run courses and conferences on reading for pleasure (The Guardian, 2017). A subsequent report from Ofsted (DfE 2012) re-iterated the points raised by the National Literacy Trust in 2006, and further attested to the academic benefits of reading for pleasure. Buoyed by a burgeoning children's book market (Squires, 2009) and a growing belief among parents that it is important for children to read (Scholastic, 2015) children's reading for enjoyment is increasing. In the National Literacy Trust survey of 2016 (Clark and Teravainen, 2017) enjoyment levels are recorded as being 14% higher than in 2005, and 58% of children said that they enjoy reading very much or quite a lot. Although these figures vary for children of different ages and genders, it could be argued that the campaign to promote reading for pleasure is succeeding.

A key concern, however, for those surveying children's reading habits is motivation (Clark and Rumbold, 2017). The literature review commissioned by The Reading Agency '*The impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment'* (BPO Consulting, 2015) suggested that where children are intrinsically motivated, and enjoyment is a driver of autonomous and self

directed reading, then the benefits are clear. Where reading for pleasure becomes institutionalised as another part of the school curriculum (Cremin, 2015), there is a danger that it ceases to be an integral part of a child's ongoing development acquiring and performing a range of literacy identities, that it represents a narrow definition of reading and texts, and that children do not become intrinsically motivated or engaged. Although children are generally expressing more positive attitudes towards reading, these attitudes are much more prevalent where they are able to choose books that interest them; it is this that leads to genuine enjoyment and engagement (Arzipe et al. 2013). If reading for pleasure is seen by children as independent reading from officially sanctioned texts, rather than being able to make a genuine personal choice about reading matter, there is a risk that divisions appear between 'schooled literacy' and literacy which occurs in children's homes and communities (Moss, 1989, 2000; Bennett, 1995). As children develop literacy identities, the personal and social elements of this development are essential and '*cannot be forced or imposed upon by teachers'* (Ellis and Smith, 2017, p87); teachers need to be able to provide spaces for children to define themselves as readers and writers. Where children are engaging in most of their reading within school it is important that teachers are knowledgeable enough to address pupils' interests (Collins and Safford, 2008; Cremin, 2009; Cremin et al. 2014), but it is also important that school systems allow for the integration and celebration of children's preferences and practices from their homes and communities (Levy, 2011).

Many of children's meaningful language experiences are situated in texts. In the 1980s and 90s, questions about the role of children's texts in learning were explored by Bearne and Watson (1999), Barrs and Cork (2001), Fox (1993), Martin and Leather (1994), and Meek (1988, 2000), and texts were conceived as print based, often traditionally literary books. Children's literary texts were seen as models for children's writing, and children positioned as learning about narrative, form and language through their reading of texts. Watson (1994) noted that children take and mimic the things that are significant to them in the texts that they read, and the concept of reciprocal reading (Meek, 1977) and the relationship between 'the teller and the told' (Meek, 2000, p100), became key to an holistic understanding of children's literacy development.

Children's reading for pleasure, of course, is no longer solely located in traditional paper books, and stretches beyond literary texts to include a variety of genres in a variety of media. Indeed, children's reading for pleasure has never been solely located in such contexts, and this has been illuminated by the ethnographic studies conducted by Shirley Brice Heath (1983, 2012; Wolf and Heath 1992), by the work of Haas-Dyson (2008, 2003, 1997), and by those working within the frameworks of new literacy studies (Pahl and Rowsell (2005); Pahl and Burnett (2013); Dowdall (2006, 2013); Mackey (2002); Marsh (2005)). Studies in

multimodality and children's multimedia texts have also informed this perspective (Bearne, 2003; Parry, 2013). Wolf and Brice-Heath (1992) used the metaphor of a 'braid' of literature, to explore the ways in which textual and non-textual features weave together in children's experiences of literature. They argued that through the texts they encounter children "collect clues" (p20) about the meta-textual elements which facilitate comprehension, such as characters, narration and predictable patterns, and that these elements are explored through socio-dramatic play. Children's enactments are seen to transform and rewrite familiar texts, and the language of the literary texts gives the children the tools to make the transformations. Elsewhere, Brice-Heath re-asserted the significance of play in language development (2013) and children's interactions with multimodal texts are increasingly positioned as playful (Mackey, 2002). Given a broader conceptualisation of text than the literature discussed by Wolf and Brice-Heath, which includes digital, visual, informal and mulitimodal experiences, the idea of the braid is still useful one. Children's engagement with texts is multi-stranded, and it is only through the acknowledgement of the different threads that we can approach a full understanding of the child.

Today's readers still play with texts in the many different contexts in which play can be defined, as pretending or performing, as orchestrating or messing around, (Mackey, 2002) most notably with digital texts which are determined by their interactive nature and the way the relationship between reader/writer is explicitly part of the form. As Carrington and Dowdall (2013) demonstrated, children's play and textual engagement is situated within cultural contexts that include artifacts such as toys and game trading cards (Vasquez, 2003), so in approaching children's reading and writing these contexts cannot be kept separate. Children move between online and offline domains comfortably, just as they read and write multimodal comics and picture books, and as they incorporate film, visual media and song into their textual outputs. Haas-Dyson (2008) argued that 'literacy practices and textual productions are in flux' (p151) and that children are well placed to negotiate changing contexts because they engage with such a range of texts as readers. Haas-Dyson's assertion that the relationship between official and unofficial literacy practices needs to be carefully interrogated is supported by Brice-Heath's (1988) observations of the literacy practices of different social groups. Where the community practice is aligned to official literacies, children are more likely to succeed in school; in the same way, children whose reading habits and preferences are more closely aligned to those in their school are more likely to be engaged readers. The cultural capital provided by familiarity with official literacies cannot be overlooked (Street, 1995, 2016). In many cases children are developing skills in transformation through and across media; they have semiotic resources which can leave their adult teachers and carers behind. If some of the gaps are to be bridged between

official and unofficial literacies, then adults need to allow children agency in their reading and writing practices and allow time and space for these to occur (Dyson and Dewayani, 2013), and find ways to recognise how children are understanding the worlds in which they are growing up in (Cremin et al., 2015). If the gaps are not bridged, then there is a danger that many of the assets children bring will be lost, particularly if the national curriculum leads some schools to feel unable to engage with children's social and cultural contexts (Bearne, 2017).

Recent research into digital literacy practice has provided insights into new approaches to children's literacy identities. Potter (2012, Potter and Miller, 2015) explored the notion of curation in children's use of digital texts. In considering the ways in which young people represent themselves in online spaces, Potter and Miller (2015) describe a process of both creation and of remixing intertextual elements which reflects a controlled, curated creation of identity. This has implications for the way in which we interpret children's use of texts in a range of media because children create and present identities in part through the texts they choose to engage with, and the ways they transform those texts in their own productions.

Reading for pleasure is not just implicated in literacy, but also contributes to "the building...of minds and identities" (Oatley, 2003, p173). A theorist in cognitive poetics, Oatley considered the potential future directions for cognitive poetics and put forward the notion of 'writingandreading' (p160), not as separate, independent skills but as part of one process. As he considers 'the uses of literature', Oakley cites Bruner's argument that 'the great writer's gift to the reader is to make him a better writer' (Bruner, 1986, p37) in the sense that the reader effectively writes their own version of the text as they read. In common with Reader Response Theory (Iser, 1995, Rosenblatt, 1995) the interaction between text and reader is one in which the reader is creatively engaged, and meaning resides between reader and writer, rather than being located in one source. When applying this thinking to children as readers and writers, who are still in the early stages of their development, the texts children encounter and the texts they create are significant. Where the processes of reading and writing are understood as '*the acquisition of repertoires of language… and the capacity to remake such repertoires through use*' (Moss, 2017, p60), it is clear that the language of encountered texts contributes to the development of both literacies and identities. Mackey's 'Auto-bibliography' (2016) offers new directions in understanding the early stages of literacy development, examining literacy through a series of remembered encounters with text, specifically located in their time and place. This approach takes ideas about the social contexts of learning to a detailed, individual level, framing the importance of valuing every child's specifically located experiences of developing literacies. Here, Kress' (2013) notion of the design and redesign of cultural resources helps us to traverse the range of texts and

media that children engage with, recognising their active adaptation of their textual experiences and it this we now wish to turn to. We have found the work of Cornelia Funke an enticing lens through which to think about this process.

In Funke's *Inkheart* series (2005) the protagonist, a child called Meggie, discovers that she has an enviable talent; when she reads aloud, Meggie's words come to life, dancing dangerously from the world of the book into her world and allowing her to read herself into the story. She reads the words to life, and '*without her the old man's words are nothing but ink'* (*Inkspell* p107). The children in the two studies we discuss breathe life into the texts they encounter by creatively transforming them and by using them to assemble their literacy identities. By observing and analysing their processes we can further understand the nature of reader engagement in the context of the whole child, and position children as readers and writers in the round.

Oral storytelling and freewriting

In this section we draw on data from two ESRC scholarship doctoral research studies. In the first study six Year five (aged 9 and 10) children took part in a year long creative and participatory research project in order to develop a series of telling cases about the role of film in their understandings of narrative and the development of their literacy identities (Parry, 2013). The research activities included creating stories in verbal, drawn, written, film and animated form, a series of interviews and observations of school based literacy activity. Finding from the broader research are now published, but data has been selected here which exemplifies the way in which children were able, when invited, to draw holisitically on their repertoires of knowledge of narrative. The second, more recent, study (Taylor, forthcoming) was an investigation into the relationship between children's reading and their writing, where the writing was free choice and independent, rather than teacher led. Six classes of children in key stage 2 (aged 9 and 10) were surveyed about their reading habits and preferences and two classes maintained independent writing journals over the course of a school half-term. The writing samples discussed are taken from the journal of a participant in a year five class and similarly illustrate the potential for children to engage with texts holisitically.

We firstly present data from doctoral research focusing on six Year five children's repertoires of understanding of narrative in different forms. In this primary school in the north of England, oral storytelling was not a strong feature of school-based literacy but outside the classroom this provided a useful insight into their engagements with narrative. The activity undertaken, one of a range of creative and participatory methods, gave the children verbal

story openings and then asked them to add a new part to the story before passing it on to the next child. The activity was video recorded and the verbal utterances were transcribed, and some of these are presented here. The children, three girls and three boys are here renamed Liam, Connor and Aaron and Matilda, Eve and Abbey.

The 'story starts' were predominantly 'everyday' but the rules and conventions shaping plots, character and settings for these sorts of story were almost entirely abandoned by the children in the study as they delved deep into their cultural resources and shared their knowledge and expertise of favourite films, games and animation. The number of ideas they had often spiralled out of control and the stories became chaotic and frenetic attempts to out do each other. The oral storytelling involved a wide range of imaginary, action orientated characters from popular culture, including vampires, werewolves, zombies and 'Star Wars' characters. In this context the children did not appear to be concerned with rules and were playful so that even where 'everyday' characters, such as a doctor, were introduced they were unlikely to perform the conventionally expected role of a doctor. As the researcher I regularly worried about how the class teacher might perceive these activities as noisy and unproductive. However, on closer reflection on the data it was evident that many rules of the storyworlds the children were drawing on were being carefully negotiated and transformed:

> *Connor: Cos they went from dead and then they turned into vampires [whispers of suggestions] zombies, zombies or vampires, no vampires [aside] (cos it won't work with zombies) and then he turned the light switch on and then shone it at him and then he pulled out his mirror to look at hisself , cos he took a mirror to his school every day, he shone the mirror and he could see where the light was shining and he shone it at every single vampire there was and they all..*

Chatman (1989) asserts that 'some principal of coherence must operate' in narrative texts (Chatman, 1989 p. 30). He argues that there must be continuity in identity of the 'existents' of the narrative. Things cannot randomly change or be introduced from one moment to the next. During the oral storytelling activity, rules about character and plot at first appeared to have been abandoned with enthusiasm by the group, with a little reluctance from Matilda. However, it soon became apparent that they were still thinking about the extent to which the story had coherence and could therefore be considered plausible:

When Connor was the storyteller, he was initially happy to take the suggestion of zombies rather than vampires as the baddies to be defeated. He then realised that the idea he planned to do with light from the light-house would not work with zombies so he changed his mind. Then he went ahead with the idea of light but worked out that he needed to introduce a mirror to make the device work. Rather than just allowing his character to find a mirror,

Connor suggested that the boy always had a mirror and was known to take it to school every day. In the first case Connor perceived some sort of problem that would mean that zombies were not, according to convention, susceptible to bright lights. This could be described as non-diegetic or intertextual coherence, so the need for coherence comes from outside of the text and lies in what the audience might already know about the nature of zombies. In the second case the coherence is diegetic; Connor was acknowledging that early in the story it would have been good to establish that the boy took a mirror to school regularly so that it was plausible later on.

The issue of coherence was again raised by Aaron, who was the principal storyteller, in the final verbal story based on 'Star Wars' (Lucas, 2002) characters. This story began as an 'everyday' story but Aaron quickly changed course:

> *B: Sarah answered the loudly ringing phone, 'oh no' she said.*
>
> *Eve; She, em her Mum had said. She said "oh no" because her Mum had been taken to hospital in a serious car crash and she was and she was traumatised when she heard.*
>
> *Aaron: that Master Yoda was [laughs] taking care of her. [Laughter] He was a small, he was a small green alien with a light sabre what could chop through metal and he was the best doctor there but every patient he operated on died [laughs and passes story on].*

Aaron was entirely happy to abandon coherence and take the story in a new direction, furthermore he said entirely contradictory things; Master Yoda is a good doctor but all his patients die. Abbey was happy to take on the 'Star Wars' story but was keen to restore some sense of causality:

> Abbey: Obviously he wasn't a very good doctor so in the end they decided to put Master Yoda out of his job. [Passes story on].
>
> Liam: So then Master Yoda pulled out his Light Sabre and chopped up all' hospital and [Connor comments] Shut up. Sarah's mum's eye popped out. [Passes story on]

Liam appeared mainly to be concerned here to out do his peers in terms of how gory and unexpected the events he introduced could be. The coherence of the story was again abandoned until Connor's final installment:

> *Connor: Then Obe won Kanobi used sign language. It was a new language that no one had ever heard before and it sounded like this [speaks made up language] and he said it so loud that people in outer space could hear it. Oh well not really people - aliens. The, the aliens came down in a ship like this [produces blu tac space ship- laughter] the dangly bit was just in case it, it ran out of gas – it could stick onto a building and hang on like that and then all the aliens came out and Obe won Kanobi said you need to em you need to help Master Yoda and they all came to Master Yoda and Master Yoda didn't know they were helping them so Master Yoda battled all the.. battled all the aliens and he thought he had won and he walked off to go and kill someone… one of the humans and one of the aliens come up from behind and jumped on him and then Master Yoda went like that [stabbing motion] and stabbed himself in his stomach and it stabbed the other one and it took it out like that [knife holding action] and the alien fell to the floor.*
>
> *Aaron: What about Master Yoda?*
>
> *Matilda: the machine, the machine.*
>
> *Aaron: It was a hologram. It was a hologram what people could jump on so that's how he did it.*

During the course of Connor's narration, Aaron stopped interjecting to make suggestions; he was happy to let his friend take over. However, he listened intently and became increasingly concerned about how Yoda could have stabbed himself in the stomach and not died. He gave this some thought and then suggested a hologram, a device that has been used in 'Star Wars' (Lucas, 2002) films before. However, he realised that a hologram would need to have some solidity, not usually a feature of holograms, so with Matilda's help, he suggested an adaptation. This adaptation might stretch plausibility to the limit, but it is also fair to say that some explanations of events, relationships and technology in the 'Star Wars' films require some fairly contrived explanations to regain coherence. What is important is that once Aaron had ownership of the story and had established it as a 'Star Wars' story he sought the same level of coherence as a 'Star Wars' film would have. When the children

drew on favoured and significant texts, like Jenkins' (1992) textual poachers they took a high degree of ownership of their own story taking it in new directions but simultaneously using their knowledge of the conventions of that story, avoiding breaking rules which other fans of the text would recognise.

The nature of this oral storytelling task appeared to enable to children to draw on popular culture readily. This led to shifts in form so that live-action and animated children's film characters and settings as well as film and game plots were used as sources. Although this did not satisfy conventional coherence, coherence in line with the original source texts or story-worlds was constructed. The children paid little attention to audience in terms of carefully explaining their story but the audience, that is to say themselves, and the ephemeral nature of the task did enable ideas to surface and pleasures and consequent expertise to become evident. More importantly perhaps, the activity prompted a noisy, laughter filled space in which favoured stories could be playfully and transgressively engaged with. Whilst at first glance, rules seemed to have been abandoned, on closer inspection it was clear that maintaining the coherence of the storyworlds was important to the children and helped them to make what they knew about stories explicit. Their own engagement with texts as readers enabled them to understand that coherence was needed and how they might create coherence; through experience of the conventional they were able to be transgressive, but also understood where convention could not be breached. Verbal storytelling has the potential to enable children to share their favourite stories and those story worlds they are familiar with, out loud and this plays an important role in enabling the process of redesigning story elements into new modes and forms. We would argue that of equal importance is the opportunity to undertake free or independent writing.

In the second study, as part of a recent doctoral research project children were invited to use a free choice, independent writing journal. They were given time and space in their classrooms to write in the journals and were encouraged to take them home. Participants were also surveyed about their reading habits and preferences. Children chose to write in a remarkable range of genres and styles, including narrative, prose non-fiction, poetry, labelled illustrations, comics, lists, personal accounts and songs. They were far more likely to choose to write in a genre which they said they enjoyed reading; and the content of the children's writing often made reference to film, television or computer games and printed texts in various forms with which they were familiar. Through their writing their engagement with texts as readers was illuminated; texts which they chose to play with, imitate, interact with

and transform were those which spoke to and contributed to their emerging literacy identities.

Children were very clear that they saw the texts they encountered as a potential resource to draw on in their writing. Characters from the *Percy Jackson* series of books appeared in new stories and a version of *The Hunger Games* featuring Pokemon characters was rendered in cartoon form. However, one of the most fascinating aspects of the writing was the way in which they were able to transform one medium into another. Jake acknowledged that '*it felt like I were watching the story while I were writing it*', as he grappled with the challenge of trying to render a multimodal experience of sound, vision and movement within the confines of a single mode, writing.   There were numerous examples of playful adaptation, which crossed boundaries of schooled literacy and children's cultural contexts and identities. One child who wrote an acrostic poem using the letters of the internet meme 'nyan cat', another wrote a story which used the format and language of a television game show.

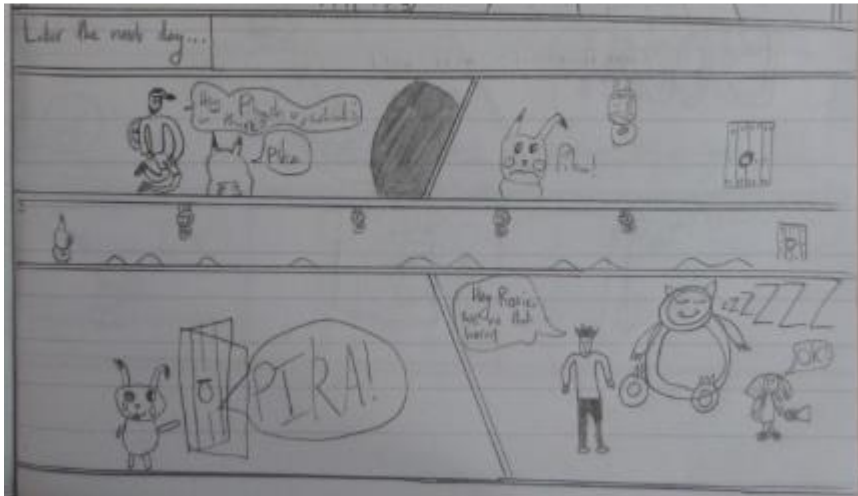
In this example 'Andy's', comics about Pokemon created a hybrid of the different media in which Pokemon can be encountered in order to present them in a written form. Pokemon can be played as a trading card game; in video games and in the much hyped *Pokemon Go*! which involves hunting virtual Pokemon which appear, via an app, in real places. Pokemon adventures can also be read in print or online in comic strip form.

Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the first two panels of a comic strip by Andy. In the first panel he introduces the protagonist who is engaged in a game, perhaps Pokemon Go!, indicated by his speech 'OH WOW a wild weedle!', who may, or may not be an avatar of himself. The carefully delineated double lined edges for the panels and dynamic images suggest a comic book style similar to Manga. However, in the second panel Andy moves into the online world in his representation. The second panel shows a battle between the wild weedle and Pikachu. The panel shows the 'health bar' for each character, as would be displayed on a screen. Speech bubbles show the words of encouragement, presumably called by the protagonist from panel 1 '*Go Pikachu!, Use thunderbolt!'* and the information on the screen tells us that

'Weedle used Struggle'. Struggle and thunderbolt are weapons that can be deployed in a fight; the thunderbolt is shown being directed by Pikachu towards the weedle. This panel creates a hybrid of the video game experience, represented by the stylised fight scene, and the comic strip experience, where a protagonist participates in the events of the narrative through speech bubbles. A similar combination of the comic strip and video game experience can be seen in figure 2, taken from later in the same piece of writing.

Figure 2



Under the title 'Later the next day' Andy has divided the page into two panels, divided by a diagonal line leaning to the right. In the left hand panel the protagonist kneels in front of a dark cave or tunnel entrance and asks 'hey Pikachu what is in there?' Pikachu also looks into the cave, with his back to the reader and gives the reply 'Pika', the characteristic sound made by this creature. In the right hand panel Pikachu has entered the tunnel, placed by Andy on the line between the two panels so that both the character and the reader have to pass through to reach the next panel. Andy further demonstrates his skills in multimodal communication by showing the fearful response of Pikachu on the character's face, not in the words which again only say 'Pika!' There is a door which Pikachu has to pass through, but before it are a number of obstacles hanging from the ceiling. Andy gives no explanation; he makes the assumption that a reader familiar with the conventions of adventure video games will know that where there is a door it should be reached and opened, and where there are obstacles they should be avoided. Below these two panels is a long thin panel stretching all the way across the page. Pikachu is shown at the left of the page ready to embark on an attempt to reach the door whilst avoiding the hanging obstacles, his bouncing motion indicated in the wavy line on the floor. In the panel on the bottom left Pikachu arrives triumphantly and opens the door, his smiling face and the large, upper case 'PIKA!' indicating success.

In writing this piece Andy makes some significant decisions as the author. His experience as a reader of different texts has given him the tools to assess the affordances of different modes of representation. The fact that Andy responded to the invitation to write independently by producing a comic strip suggests that he has developed a sense of what writing can be beyond the requirements of the classroom, and that he knows how to make use of texts he has read in his writing. The best way to tell the story he wants to tell, or to represent the experience he wants to represent, is to use a form which makes use of text and image; he adapts and transform his written text by making use of the texts he has interacted with, whether in video game or comic form. When Andy was surveyed about his reading habits it was evident that he was a keen reader of a variety of texts, but the text he had read most recently for fun was 'Pokemon Go! Field Guide'. In this instance, then, Andy is essentially a reader and writer in the round; his leisure reading is part of his writing toolkit and his writing explores what he likes to read. Without the opportunity to write freely and independently, drawing on the pleasures of key texts, children's opportunities to redesign the texts they are familiar with are limited. Indeed arguably, they are left at the classroom door with their Pokemon lunch bags (Parry, 2014)

Conclusions: Literacy as multimedia and multistranded

What Connor and Aaron and Andy all have in common is they way in which they create new types of texts through transforming others that they have engaged with. When invited to create texts freely, whether through spoken or written language, they automatically draw on resources from their own cultural experiences. This point is not, in itself, revelatory. The work of researchers in New Literacy Studies, and of thinkers such as Kress have illuminated children's processes of design and redesign, based on texts encountered in social and cultural contexts. However, we believe these insights need to be more closely aligned with the debates surrounding reader engagement and motivation to read. The insights from our own research suggest that children are not only drawing on cultural texts, but are very specifically learning from them about significant and essential aspects of literacy, such as narrative cohesion, the affordances of different modalities and the use of language appropriately in context. Children are learning about texts through contexts which motivate and inspire them; they are expressing their understanding through the texts they create themselves, whether those texts are spoken or written, collaborative or individual. The act of 'writingandreading' (Oatley, 2003) is one in which experience in reading is intrinsically bound to experience in writing, so our understanding of reading for pleasure has to be one which sees it as part of the 'braid' of literacy development. This has clear implications for pedagogy and practice but also for research where there is a greater need to look at children's holistic engagements with texts, their auto-bibliographies, rather than the single thread of their

engagement with a particular device or text. In supporting reader engagement we should also support writer engagement, and the engagement of children in all forms of text through which they shape and assemble their literacy identities. In so doing, we support them in breathing life into the texts they engage with and greatly enrich their opportunities for literacy learning.

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