The Reading Habits of Secondary School Teachers of English

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Abstract

This thesis presents a study of the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English. It explores what they read, why they read and how they feel about their reading. The introduction explores the background to this work, discussing how my idea to research this topic came into being and outlining my three research questions. In the literature review I discuss the existing literature surrounding the reading habits of teachers, highlighting the gaps in the literature and providing a rationale for this study. I begin by exploring what existing scholarship tells us about how teachers view themselves, their role and their effectiveness in the classroom, and consider how this may affect a teacher's reading life. I also examine the expectations teachers face with regard to how they fulfil their role, before going on to reflect on what existing research tells us about the amount teachers, both pre-service and in-service, read. I then consider the implied expectations regarding teachers' reading contained within that research. Finally, I explore the importance of reading itself in order to establish its academic, economic, and social benefits.

In my methodology chapter I discuss how the theoretical framing of a critical realist paradigm helped shape the methodological approach I took to answer my research questions. I also explore how the concept of Narrative Inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, and Clandinin, 2022) helped me create in part the questionnaire, but more significantly the semi-structured interviews I used to encourage teachers to reflect on their reading lives. I examine the strengths and limitations of the pilot questionnaire and pilot interviews, and also explore the implications of my status as a colleague to the participants involved in the study, drawing on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006 and 2022) as I do so. I also reflect on how Covid-19 had practical implications for my work, and also affected teacher reading habits during lockdown and beyond.

In subsequent chapters, I report and discuss the data drawn from the results of my questionnaire (sent out electronically to 164 secondary school English teachers during the late autumn of 2021 and completed by 99 teachers, a response rate of 60.3%) and 10 interviews. I systematically analyse the questionnaire data question by question and consider relevant themes generated by the interview data for each of my research questions in turn. I draw on relevant literature where appropriate to either contextualise or challenge my findings. Finally, my conclusion endeavours to refine and draw together my findings and offers recommendations for professional practice, particularly within teacher training organisations and whole-school attitudes towards reading and teacher professional development.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as references. No material in this thesis has been presented for publication.

The Reading Habits of Secondary School Teachers of English Introduction

“No bubble is so iridescent or floats longer than that blown by the successful teacher” - Sir William Osler (1925/1993).

Teachers of English face a variety of expectations held by a variety of stakeholders, including students, parents, peers, school senior leaders and politicians. There is the expectation that they should read widely because they are assumed to be the gatekeepers of literary knowledge - a priceless educational resource that can have a measurable and positive effect on the outcomes of students (Ruddell, 1995). Teachers have the potential to be highly influential role models who are often considered to be trustworthy and influential by their students (Applegate and Applegate, 2004), a view also shared by Hassen (2016) and Cremin et al (2014). Similarly, Margaret Meek (1982) describes teachers as having the capacity to be trusted friends, who “have to know the books and the child to match them in terms of the complicated individuality of both” (p.133), suggesting the necessity for teachers to cultivate a personalised knowledge both of their students and of the literature they favour. Cremin et al (2008a) also argues that “...classroom practice is influenced by a myriad of factors… one of these is teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature. Such knowledge is surely a prerequisite if teachers are to nurture positive attitudes and sustain and develop young readers” (p. 450).

Teachers of English then have the rich potential to introduce students to the delights of reading texts that exist beyond those determined by examination specifications (Dymoke, 2009; Pullman, 2002), but they must also be knowledgeable about those set texts and authors (Hopper, 2005; Gordon, 2012). Indeed, the UK government expects that teachers must keep their knowledge up-to-date in order to fulfil their professional standards (DfE, 2011 - terminology updated 2021). Teachers are also expected to be experts in their field, bearers of knowledge that will help guide subsequent generations to become, not only engaged readers, but thoughtful, tolerant and productive citizens (Commeyras and DeGroff, 1988). Reichenberg and Andreassen (2018) argue that teachers’ leisure-time reading should be considered an integral part of their continued professional development, while Leighton et al (2019) explicitly link students’ attainment to teachers’ subject knowledge. Finally, Harrison (2013) goes so far as to suggest that teachers have a moral duty to read for their own pleasure and interest.

In contrast to this bank of weighty expectations, however, existing research would suggest that teachers of English, and indeed, teachers of other subjects too, are

not the readers it is therefore assumed they might be. With regards to engaging in professional reading, the reading of books, journals and articles, with the specific intention of improving their practice in the classroom, research shows that in Australia engagement in this kind of reading by teachers of a range of subjects, including teachers working with students with special educational needs, was relatively limited (Rudland and Kemp, 2008). This is a view echoed in America, by Hipple and Giblin (1971), Burhans Jr (1985) and Womack and Chandler (1992). More recently, Boemmel et al (2019) reported in a study conducted in America that 98% of the 333 teachers they surveyed did report some professional reading within the previous year, but added that "many teachers reported that they do not read frequently and they seldom read as part of their professional development" (p. 14). They cited teachers' feelings of time pressure and the limited ability to make immediate use of their readings, as two of the reasons behind their findings.

With regards to teachers' professional knowledge of children's literature, in the UK Cremin et al (2008 and 2008a) also argue that, primary teachers, although readers for their own pleasure, do not have the breadth of literary knowledge essential for the classroom and as a result do not operate as reading teachers of the kind Commeyras (2003) discusses. A reading teacher is a practitioner who finds out about their students' reading habits and, rather than just simply sharing their love of reading, instead actively works to bring both her and her students' reading interests into the classroom (Cremin, 2010; Cremin et al, 2014; Cremin et al, 2018; Cremin, Williams and Denby, 2019, and Cremin, Harris and Birchall, 2020). There is clearly an opportunity here to explore whether similar conclusions can be drawn regarding the reading habits of secondary school English teachers in England, something Cremin (2011) acknowledges, or, indeed, whether entirely different conclusions might be reached. Could it be found instead that secondary school English teachers' reading choices are actually closer to those of their students than their primary colleagues, that they do function more as reading teachers? That they do engage in what Chambers (1996) calls "booktalk" (p. 75)? That their breadth of reading is wider and richer than primary teachers, who, of course, are not single-subject specialists in the same way as secondary school teachers of English. This study is also interested in exploring how these teachers perceive their own reading, whether they read for themselves or for their students, what factors shape their reading lives, and whether they distinguish between themselves as readers and reading teachers.

In 2020 The Arts Council found that 63% of the English adult population read for pleasure, but those who bought more than 16 books a year - what they defined as 'heavy' readers - were in the minority (Woodley and Mantell, 2020). In 2016, the

annual Times Educational Supplement (TES) survey of teachers' top 100 books showed that teachers' knowledge of contemporary Young Adult literature was less extensive than their apparent knowledge and familiarity with long-standing specification choices such as *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), and canonical texts such as *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1847), so bringing to the fore issues of unimaginative text choices, perhaps fuelled by nostalgia for texts they enjoyed and first taught as trainee teachers, together with ideas of value and worth becoming attached to a particular type of text. This research then aims to discover what it is that English teachers actually read. Is their reading primarily focused on literature in the form of canonical texts as the TES survey would seem to suggest? Are they, in fact, part of the 37% of the English adults who do not read for pleasure, and how do they feel about the way their reading lives shape their classroom interactions about books and reading with their students?

It is important to state at the beginning of this thesis that this scholarship grew from my initial assumption that teachers should be readers, that they have a responsibility and obligation to read, and that the more they read, the better the outcomes for their students will be. This assumption, however, was based solely on my personal views as to what constituted effective teaching, rather than on any scholarship or research I had encountered. Indeed, the idea behind this research was sparked by a conversation I had with an English teacher who told me that they only ever read the American author John Grisham. I was intrigued as to how that teacher could develop and broaden her subject knowledge and recommend texts to her students if she did not read widely herself. I was also surprised as it had never occurred to me that an English teacher might not demonstrate an enthusiasm for avid reading of all kinds of texts, from fiction and non-fiction, to poetry, plays, or biography. The more I considered this, the more I wondered whether this could be the case for other English teachers. Was I wrong to assume that most teachers would actively want to read? Was I naive to believe that just working as an English teacher would automatically mean rich and varied reading habits, engaged with to ensure both professional development, conversations about reading with students and personal satisfaction? I realised that my initial assumption was flawed, based as it was on a narrow and extremely personal understanding of how teachers view their reading habits and their role. I have worked in this thesis, then, to explore, unpick and challenge my own views about teaching by undertaking the role of a reflexive researcher, something I discuss in more detail later. Through the data I have gathered, I have also tried to gain an improved understanding of how teachers of English feel about their reading habits and the implications of those reading habits for their

classrooms. I have therefore, taken my initial unsubstantiated assumption and held it up to considerable scrutiny in a bid to generate new insights into the reading habits of teachers of English which are based on data rather than conjecture.

Further unpicking of my assumptions led me to realise that how I defined the idea of reading for pleasure was inextricably linked to the notion of what and why English teachers read. I realised that I did not distinguish reading for pleasure, for recreational reading, as something different to reading to improve subject knowledge. I embraced the blurring of purpose between the professional and the personal because I saw all my reading - whether sparked by a friend's recommendation or generated by the necessity to familiarise myself with a new text to teach in the classroom - as reading for pleasure. However, the conversation above and my subsequent research has led me to understand that this may not be the case for all teachers of English. This has led me to consider carefully how scholarship defines reading for pleasure and to question whether teachers should indeed be expected to devote their limited time to reading with their students in mind or for professional development.

Definitions of reading for pleasure are varied and lack precision. Krashen (2004) calls it "voluntary reading" (p. 1), Cullinan (2006) describes it as "independent reading". Burnett and Merchant (2018) say reading for pleasure "is not a concept that includes or excludes any particular kind of textual engagement or purpose" (p. 62), a definition which seems rather unhelpful in its sheer inclusivity. Clarke and Rumbold (2006) define it as:

> ...reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act. It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else's request we continue because we are interested in it. It typically involves materials that reflect our choice, at a time and place that suits us. (p. 6)

Wynne-Jones describes reading for pleasure as a feeling of complete immersion, when we get "gut-hooked and dragged overboard down and down through the maze of print and find, to your amazement, you can breathe down there after all and there's a whole other world." (1998, p. 165). Two other considerations of reading for pleasure I also consider to be useful are those of Moses and Kelly: "Students reading self-selected texts on their own either silently or aloud" (2019, p. 332), and Ben-Yosef's reflection, "In the real world, we control what and how we read, and we are led only by our interests, imaginations and pleasures" (2010, p. 1). These latter two ideas are particularly important because they introduce the idea of agency into reading for pleasure. Are we reading truly for pleasure if we have not chosen the text to read in the first place? Clarke and Rumbold (2006) suggest that reading that is an obligation or responsibility, such as that embarked on for professional purposes, can also be

pleasurable, but whether that is the view held by teachers of English is at the heart of this study, and how teachers view the reading they undertake in order to function as knowledgeable and effective practitioners, compared with the reading they do which has no explicit links to their role and responsibility, is something I explore in greater depth later. Should being a teacher of English be seen as a vocation any more than any other choice of employment? I also draw on Chettri and Rout's definition of a reading habit as something often considered "in terms of the amount of materials being read, the frequency of reading as well as the average time spent on reading" (2013, p. 13).

This study, in exploring secondary school English teachers' reading habits, investigates whether teachers recognise or fulfil these many expectations discussed above, and begins to answer the implied question facing teachers of English: who is their reading actually for? My study did not ask teachers to focus on one literary genre, such as fiction or poetry, but instead asked them to reflect on all the reading material they consumed. It asked them to give details of how much they read, and the text types they read. It asked them about their professional reading habits as well as their recreational habits. In the questionnaire, I defined a book as something that may be physical and printed, as well as available as an audio book or a digital ebook, the contents of which could be any literary genre. In doing so I hoped the teachers of English who took part would be able to report on a rich and varied reading diet.

I define a teacher of English as a practitioner who is employed to teach subject English and who is held accountable for the progress of the students they teach. I include in this definition practitioners who may have either an English Language or English Literature degree, or who may have a degree in a different field, as non-subject specialist teachers are common in the subject English classroom, mostly at Key Stage 3 (KS3 - Years 7-9 in English secondary schools), within the multi-academy trust I used for my research. For the purposes of this study my definition is focused on practitioners working at secondary school level. In order to define the idea of literature, I draw a distinction - and attempt to explore the tensions - between the idea of teaching English Literature as a discipline and the expectations teachers face as they do that - and the wider definition of literature as a body of writing, be it fiction, non-fiction, biography, plays or poetry, that may or may not be canonical. The fact that it may not be canonical is important because Young Adult (YA) writing is often referred to as YA Literature (see for example the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), 2021), but its quality may be variable. Equally, not all texts taught during a KS3 English Literature lesson in the multi-academy trust I worked with could be described as canonical or have what Cuddon (1999) describes as

“superior qualities” (p. 472).

I employ reflexive thematic analysis as my method to draw together and make sense of my data. I situate this study as a *Big Q* (Kidder and Fine, 1987) approach to qualitative research in that I view the act of reading as a pursuit necessarily affected by the context in which it occurs, and consider how those contexts, such as school and home, come to shape teachers’ reading identities. As can be seen from my introduction already, I also emphasise the “active role of the researcher in the research process, and the importance of embracing researcher subjectivity” (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015, p. 223), something which I shall return to in more detail later.

It is this idea of the “active role of the researcher” (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015, p. 223), a concept that I have given considerable thought to, and that I discuss in more detail in my methodology chapter, that led me to use a critical realist paradigm (Bhaskar, 1975 and Bhaskar 1979; Braun and Clarke, 2022) to investigate and explore the individual, domestic and professional tensions which characterise teachers’ reading lives and habits.The theoretical stance of critical realism has evolved since the initial work of Bhaskar in the 1970s. He defined knowledge as a “social product which individuals must reproduce or transform” (Bhaskar, 1975, p. 248), arguing that “thought has a reality not to be confused or identified with the reality of its objects…the truth-conditions for our knowledge of P are not the same as the truth-conditions for P.” (Bhaskar, 1975, p. 250). Critical realism then seems a fitting lens through which to explore the way teachers of English feel about their reading habits and how they frame and articulate those feelings, because it explores the nature of reality, and our experiences and subsequent representations of reality – as Willig (2008) says, it “combines the realist ambition to gain better understanding of what is ‘really’ going on in the world with the acknowledgement that the data the researcher gathers may not provide direct access to this reality” (p. 13). I talk more about this in my methodology chapter.

Reader-response theory is used to underpin the study’s understanding of the importance of reading in an educational context, in that the teacher is perceived to play an important role in helping the student to embark on and explore their relationship with literature, assuming, as Rosenblatt (1983) says, that “the teacher’s task is to foster fruitful interactions - or, more precisely, transactions - between individual readers and individual literary works” (p. 26). This theoretical framework is important to my research because its focus is on the role of the reader in the literary experience, and how the reader's perceptions, prior knowledge and personal experiences influence their interpretation of a text. As Young says, “The relation between reader and text…is not linear but situational, an event occurring in a context of time and space” (1987, p.

13). In my research the participants talked about what had influenced their appreciation of, or relationship with, certain texts and then built their exploration of why they considered reading to be so important for their students around the building blocks of this understanding and appreciation. Their unique personal experiences helped to play a direct role in their bid to help students engage with and interact with literature – students who then go on to create their own understanding of the text as they "attempt to grasp completely the structured sensations and concepts through which the author seeks to convey the quality of his sense of life" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 113).

I also draw on the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 1994, 1996 and 2000), who view teachers as storytellers of and inside their own lives, to help me interpret the rich narratives teachers tell about their reading habits. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England?
- What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?
- How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?

In the first chapter of this thesis, I discuss the existing literature surrounding the reading habits of teachers, highlighting the gaps in the literature and providing a rationale for this study. I begin by exploring what existing scholarship tells us about how teachers view themselves and their role in the classroom, and consider what effect this may have on a teacher's reading life. I also examine in greater detail the expectations teachers face with regard to how they fulfil their role, before going on to reflect on what existing research tells us about the amount teachers, both pre-service and in-service, read. I then consider the implied expectations regarding teachers' reading contained within that research. Finally, I explore the importance of reading itself in order to establish its academic, economic, and social benefits.

In the second chapter I discuss how the theoretical framing of a critical realist paradigm helped shape the methodological approach I took to answer my research questions, and explore in greater detail how Connelly and Clandinin's concept of Narrative Inquiry (1990, 1994, 1996 and 2000) helped me create in part the questionnaire, but more significantly the semi-structured interviews I used to encourage teachers to reflect on their reading lives. I examine the strengths and

limitations of the pilot questionnaire and pilot interviews, and also explore the implications of my status as a colleague to the participants involved in the study, drawing on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006 and 2022) as I do so. I consider the methodologies used by similar investigations and reflect on how these studies helped to influence and guide my own. I also reflect on the effect of Covid-19 on the study, which while it had practical implications for my work, also affected teacher reading habits during lockdown and beyond.

In chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, I outline my findings and examine in detail how those findings answer my research questions, drawing on relevant literature where appropriate to either contextualise or challenge my findings. Chapters 3 and 4 attempt to answer my first research question by exploring the results of the questionnaire and the interviews and found that the vast majority of the teachers of English employed by my trust were reading widely and regularly, consuming texts that were extremely diverse in content, form, genre choice and language of publication. However, only a small number of the texts teachers reported reading were YA or children's literature. Chapters 5 and 6 attempted to answer my second research question and found that a significant minority of respondents could not and did not engage with YA and children's literature, although the majority did recommend books to students, or discussed ideas and topics from their own reading with their students, once or twice a month. Chapter 7 and 8 focused on my third research question and found that roughly a third of the questionnaire respondents reported regularly reading YA or children's literature, but the majority did not, reporting a variety of reasons for this, including time and a lack of interest. However, in contrast to this, virtually every respondent agreed that reading was important for a rich variety of reasons.

My conclusion endeavours to draw together my findings and answer the questions posed above. In its exploration of the reading habits of these teachers, the interplay between their reading habits and their abilities to recommend books to their students, and then in its discussion of their feelings about this relationship, it has shed light not only on what teachers of English read, but who they are reading for. It has contrasted their feelings about their reading with the expectations of scholars and education stakeholders, and examined the tensions that exist around teachers of English choosing to read solely for themselves. It also considers the limitations of my research, my contribution to existing scholarship, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1 - Review of the Literature

“People say that life is the thing but I prefer reading” - American essayist Logan Persall Smith in Mangan (2018, p. 1)

1. How do English teachers identify as readers?

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English, the nature of their reading, how frequently they read, how they feel about their reading habits, and how these reading habits influence their classroom interactions with students concerning books and reading. In this section, I argue that how teachers view themselves as readers can be linked to how they identify themselves as English teachers and, indeed, how they view the role of subject English in the curriculum. Their understanding of the dynamics, responsibilities and demands of their role forms the backdrop against which to explore and understand their reading habits, the subsequent effect of these reading habits on their teaching and their perception of themselves as reading teachers.

1.1 Models of English

In the introduction to his 2004 book *Teaching Secondary English*, Mark Pike writes of his intention to “help teachers of English foster keen readers, writers and communicators who do more than acquire skills and knowledge: they experience the power of literature and learning to transform lives” (p.vii). Here his focus on the transformation of lives reminds us of Matthew Arnold’s recommendation of culture “as the great help out of our present difficulties” (1869/2006). The use of the phrase “do more than” signals his implied belief that teachers of subject English are not merely facilitators of learning by rote, but rather that they play a significant role in introducing their students to texts, concepts and ideas that will actively and positively affect their life chances. In his view, teaching which focuses on the “creative, imaginative, visionary and inspirational” (Pike, 2004, p.3), provides access to literature that can positively influence a student’s perception of their existence and potential, an argument McGuinn (2005) and McGuinn and Stevens (2004) agree with. Pike locates this kind of teaching within the ‘personal growth’ model, one of the five models explored within the Cox Report (DES, 1989), and also describes English teaching to be an “art” (Pike, 2004, p.6). The idea that literature has a perceived power to

transform its readers' lives for the better, to become a humanising force, as Arnold might have argued (1869/2006), stands in contrast to the work of George Steiner, concerning the moral power of literature, and his "astonishment" that "you can use human speech both to love, to build, to forgive, and also to torture, to hate, to destroy and to annihilate" (2002), that the same people who read and appreciate the great classics of literature can be responsible for the most terrible of atrocities. This study is interested then in exploring whether the reading habits of secondary English teachers still show an adherence to the idea that literature can play a positive role in developing "children's imaginative lives" (Cox, 1991, p. 21) or, indeed, their own, or whether they no longer consider this to be the case.

Pike's rooting of English as an endeavour tied to the arts, and the exploration of self and imagination, can be found in the Newbolt Report of 1921, a link which helps illuminate how teachers of English both now and in earlier decades have perceived their role. *The Teaching of English in England*, written in part by Sir Henry Newbolt in 1921 and referred to hereafter as the Newbolt Report, took the view that English should exist as a school subject because it is the "keystone" of all learning (Newbolt, 1921, p. 20), but that its importance had been previously underrated, and this "inadequate conception of the teaching of English" (Newbolt, 1921, p. 4) resulted in it being poorly taught. The report appeals strongly to national identity and represents subject English as the creative, academic and humanistic tool by which impressionable hearts and minds of all young learners, regardless of economic background, could be strengthened and refined. It contains a "dissatisfaction with the exclusiveness and aridity of the classical curriculum" (Newbolt, 1921, p. 78), and stated there was "need for a wide recognition of the value of a liberal education, and of English as the only Literature available by which all may hope to obtain it" (Newbolt, 1921., p. iii). Margaret Mathieson says of the report in her work *The Preachers of Culture* that it had the effect "of strengthening the notion that English has the unique power to improve the character and to transform society" (Mathieson, 1975, p. 79).

Terry Eagleton has dismissed Sir Henry Newbolt as "a minor jingoist poet" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 25) and discusses the development of subject English as negatively linked to England's imperialistic expansion, arising out of "the urgent need for a sense of national mission and identity" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 24). Perry (2019) argues that Eagleton's disapproval is perhaps linked to the national zeitgeist of the time. With the UK embroiled in the Falklands War, The Sun (1982), a national UK newspaper, was inviting readers to sponsor Sidewinder missiles and published the infamous Gotcha! headline upon the sinking of the Argentinian cruiser, the General Belgrano. Despite this, Eagleton's view does, however, seem uncharitable given that

the report was written in the aftermath of the Great War and was an attempt to bind the nation's wounds and create a better world.

Ball et al (1990) are also critical of the report, questioning its rigour and describing it as a "Romantic interpretation of Literature" (Perry, 2019, p. 247). They argue that the report was less about social equality than it was about "everyone forgetting that classes existed" (Ball et al, 1990, p. 52). In contrast to Ball et al and Eagleton, Perry suggests instead that the Newbolt Report "argued social unity was desirable, but believed that access to high quality education about literature was a way of developing social understanding across and between classes" (2019, p. 247).

The Newbolt Report in its clear sense that the exploration and experience of literature could be academically enlightening, morally enriching and personally enjoyable, that it could be "a source of delight, a personal intimacy and the gaining of personal experience, an end in itself and, at the same time, an equipment for the understanding of life" (Newbolt, 1921, p. 19), articulates a view that participants within this research echoed repeatedly more than 100 years later. The report also suggests that creating a "community of interest between pupil and teacher" (Newbolt, 1921, p. 7), is an effective method of engaging students, and that the "creative power of the author" (Newbolt, 1921, p. 8) is a valuable field for study, which is an attitude towards the teaching of subject English that, as Pike argues, is familiar to teachers of English to this day. Indeed, as Doecke (2017) has written, the Newbolt report "posits a relationship between literary 'knowledge' and the work that teachers do in schools that remains instructive for any attempt that we might now make to reconsider the intellectual foundation of subject English" (p. 231).

The Newbolt report's varied purposes of English are neatly summarised by Roberts (2019):

- To bring unity through culture
- To develop children's character
- To provide communication skills necessary for a productive workforce
- To enable access to all subjects
- To develop understanding and experience of life

(p.213)

Almost 70 years later it is possible to see these aims continued and reflected in the five different perspectives or models of English teaching outlined and explored within the Cox Report (Mathieson, 1991), those of 'personal growth', a 'cross-curricular' view, an 'adult needs' view, a 'cultural heritage' view and, finally, a 'cultural analysis' view (Cox, 1991, p. 21). The 'personal growth' model, in its emphasis on "the relationship

between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative lives" (Cox, 1991, p. 21) echoes the language of the Newbolt Report and carries the report's ideas of literature as "a source of delight, a personal intimacy…[and] an equipment for the understanding of life" (Newbolt, 1921, p. 19), forward to another generation of teachers. Cox says that as the five models overlapped, they could not be seen as "sharply distinguishable" (Cox, 1991, p. 21). However, Goodwyn (1992) takes issue with Cox's five models, questioning the nature of their development and challenging whether they can, indeed, be seen as indistinguishable. He used a questionnaire to discover the views of 46 teachers of English working in a variety of secondary schools and sixth-forms, and his findings are clear: "...at present personal growth is the most important model for the majority of teachers and it is also perceived as the most influential" (Goodwyn, 1992, p. 6). In addition to this, "about 70% believe[d] that literature has a civilising influence", which again reaches back to the Newbolt Report and its view that "if...literature can be ably and enthusiastically taught, the child's natural love of goodness will be strongly encouraged" (p.9). Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) repeated this research, this time with a larger number of respondents, but report that, "Teachers are holding on to their faith in Personal Growth and the value of literature in developing more personal responses" (p. 19). Goodwyn (2016) and (2017) continues to research and discuss this finding, with Goodwyn reinforcing his earlier findings of the centrality of the 'personal growth' model for teachers of English (2016), and exploring the tensions between official educational policy and teachers' continuing belief in the importance of the 'personal growth' model in their classrooms (2017). It is also explored in the work of Peel and Hargreaves (1995).

Bousted also recognises this identification of teachers of English with the 'personal growth' model, describing it as the "central conclusion" (Bousted, 2002, p. 190) of her research, and explaining it as "an underpinning rationale" for the work of teachers of English, "influencing their conception of their aims, their policies and their practices in all areas of the English curriculum" (Bousted, 2002, p. 190). Similarly, Pike (2002) references a survey he carried out amongst his UK PGCE students in 2000 which revealed that around three-quarters of them "believed that the 'personal growth' model deserved to be the most important in the English classroom," (Pike, 2002, p. 32). Pike also echoes the Newbolt Report when he says that teachers of English "seek to perform a transformative social and moral function" (Pike, 2002, p. 35). He adds that "'Personal Growth' describes...the model of English valorised and privileged by English teachers", and links this allegiance, imbued as it is with the idea of a creative and imaginative response to literature, to the work of reader-response theorist Louise

Rosenblatt, whose work he holds up in contrast to that of the New Critics, while describing the “perspective of many teachers of the subject…[as] the antithesis of New Criticism” (Pike, 2002, p. 31) - a view Scholes (2021) agrees with.

The scholarship discussed in this section can only offer a limited snapshot as to the views of teachers of English. Pike (2002) references a survey carried out in 2000 where “around three-quarters” (p. 32) of a university PGCE cohort indicated that the ‘personal growth’ model was their favoured model. However, the imprecise language and small-scale nature of the study means that this finding may not be representative of English teachers’ views nationally. Similar points regarding the size of the sample can also be applied to Goodwyn’s earlier work. The research of Bousted and Pike discussed above is also relatively dated now and, it could be argued, may not fully acknowledge the complex socio-political contexts that underpin teachers’ practice, nor perhaps the radical shift in reading practices brought about by digital literacy and social media.

In attempting to answer my third research question: How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students, this thesis contributes fresh insights into the research on this subject by encouraging teachers to reflect on their belief in the importance of reading for their students and themselves. Through the questionnaire responses and the nuanced semi-structured interviews, the participants articulated the benefits they felt reading brought to their students, ranging from the boasting of their imagination and their empathy, to the improvement of their writing skills and knowledge of vocabulary. In considering these findings, this research explores whether these claims concerning teachers’ favouring of the ‘personal growth’ model remain valid in more recent times - and if so, does a teacher’s belief as to the importance of literature play a role in the reading decisions they make for themselves and their students? Do teachers still express the belief that literature has the power to transform students’ life chances by offering them a means to self-improvement or growth? Indeed, do all English teachers consider themselves to be primarily teachers of English Literature or do many see themselves as teachers of English Language primarily? Have other models such as the ‘adult needs’ view and the ‘cultural heritage’ view risen to prominence due to changed social circumstances, such as Brexit or a desire by practitioners to equip their students with practical language skills in a changing economic environment? This research, then, explores whether the texts read by teachers, and the texts they recommend to their students, are a reflection of their beliefs as to the importance and role of subject English.

1.2 Rosenblatt and The Role of the Reader in the Text

In this section, I continue to investigate Pike's reference to Rosenblatt's reader-response theory. I consider his argument that her emphasis on *aesthetic* reading, where the focus is on the experience of the reader and how she interacts and responds personally to the text, is a characteristic of those teachers who prefer the 'personal growth' model. I also use reader-response theory as a framework for understanding a teacher's role in the classroom, that of a guide who helps others access and understand a literary work. This stance implies that subject English teachers may prefer the 'personal growth' model, and it offers a starting point from which to identify and compare the differing perspectives teachers may hold as to their role in the classroom and the reasons that they read.

In her work *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, Rosenblatt (1994) discusses how each reading of a poem is a "different event", leading to a "different poem" (p.14), as the reader brings it to life; the author diminishes and the reader herself is the necessary product of a particular social, cultural, and historical environment, a theory Barthes also explores (1986/2000). She goes on to praise literature for its power to "lead us into a new world", until "it becomes part of the experience which we bring to future encounters in literature and life" (p.21), recognising that its meanings can change as it moves through time and is received by new generations in new contexts. Rosenblatt's attitude towards the role of the teacher is also an important element of her work. She published *Literature as Exploration* in 1938, just before the terrible devastation of the Second World War, and is concerned with the role teachers play in nurturing morally-sound young people - a view shared by F. R. Leavis (Leavis, 1948/2011; Bell, 1988). Rosenblatt writes that "the teaching of literature inevitably involves the conscious or unconscious reinforcement of ethical attitudes" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 16) and that a "student's social adjustments may be more deeply influenced by what he absorbs through literature than by what he learns through the theoretical materials of the usual social science course" (p. 22). Rosenblatt's work is relevant to the questions I attempt to answer in this thesis because it sheds light on the way teachers use their reading in the classroom, and how they position themselves as both readers and educators.

This ability of literature to broaden horizons by offering insights into different cultures or even fictional worlds and experiences is acknowledged by Margaret Meek (1991), who writes:

> Readers know they are re-created by what they read; not simply because they learn new facts or ideas, but, more practically, by discovering how written texts *make worlds*, realities, other than those they live in. Experienced readers know how life extends into literature and reading itself is part of the experience of the text as they read it (p. 39).

While a personal response or a "transaction", something Rosenblatt (1994) calls "the dynamic interfusion of both reader and text" (p.viii), is certainly encouraged by exam boards, they award most credit for precise, critical analysis of language, and the exploration of accepted, and therefore supposedly 'correct' interpretations, always solidly backed up with evidence. It is this sense of a right answer, which Pike (2002) calls the "antithesis" of many English teachers' passion for their subject. He aligns this with the New Critics (p. 31), a movement which rose to prominence in the 1950s in both American and British universities. They favoured a formalist method of textual analysis, based on the text itself, valuing the critical distance of an objective critic over subjective or emotional engagement by a reader.

Rosenblatt's and then Wolfgang Iser's transactional reader-response theories emerged as successors to the New Critics' determination to focus on the text and the text alone. Rosenblatt (1983) stresses she does "not reject responsibility to the text" (p.xii) but rather sees it to be enriched by the life experiences a reader may bring to a text, and those evolving life experiences may result in different understandings of a text upon each reading. She argued that the New Critics "tended to diminish the concern with the human meaningfulness of the literary work" (p.2 9). Reading for her was not a "passive process of absorption" but an "intense personal activity" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. v). Rosenblatt encouraged emotional responses to a text, which in her view were critical, with the text becoming a vehicle for the embodiment of "human personalities, human situations, human conflicts and achievements" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. vii). This study asks whether her view is still shared by today's teachers of English. It explores, particularly in the interviews, the emotional reactions teachers of English articulate with regard to their reading, the role this has had and continues to have on their lives, the way they view the world and their experiences in the classroom.

In contrast to Rosenblatt, the New Critics' focus was the form, structure and technique of a text, which they viewed as a literary artefact, something to be understood and appreciated in isolation, separated from its author and from the personality, morality, history and politics of its reader. New Criticism sought to bring their understanding of precision and clarity to the discussion of literature. J. C. Ransom (1938/2001), a leading proponent of New Criticism, exemplified this in his essay 'Criticism, Inc', when he said, "Criticism must become more scientific, or precise

and systematic" (p. 1,109). He argued that knowledge concerning the background of a text means students are learning *about* literature, rather than studying literature itself.

Cleanth Brooks is another example of a formalist critic, who, in his work *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947), argued that criticism should be analytical and precise, a scrutiny of technique, form, patterns of language and ambiguities within the text, rather than a reaction impacted by emotions and subjectivism. Poetry, he said, must be subjected to criticism, viewed as something other than an "expression of its age" (p. x), "otherwise the poetry of the past becomes significant merely as cultural anthropology, and the poetry of the present, merely as a political, or religious, or moral instrument" (p. xi). He was concerned with the idea that a poem could transcend its time and have meaning for future readers, and become something "universal" (p. xi").

This relentless focus on the text to the exclusion of all other influences, something Tyson (2006) calls the "the timeless meaning of the text" (p. 170), can also be seen in the work of I. A. Richards, who is often viewed as seminal in the development of the New Critics' ideas. He also serves as a link between New Criticism and the development of reader-response theories, in that while he shared the New Critics' concern for the primacy of the text, he was also interested in the reader's ability and competence to analyse literature. He was more keen to explore what Freund (1987) calls "semantic instability" and "the prodigality of verbal meaning" (p. 43). In *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924/2001) Richards discusses how, "Between the possession of ideas and their application is a gulf" (p. x), and it is the expression of this gulf which he feels language hinders rather than elucidates. He opens *Principles of Literary Criticism* with a chapter entitled *The Chaos of Critical Theories*, in which he accuses critical theorists, the "best thinkers" (p. 3) as he describes them, of producing "a few conjectures, a supply of admonitions, many acute isolated observations, some brilliant guesses, much oratory [and] inexhaustible confusion" (p. 2). It is this confusion which he set out to remedy in his later work *Practical Criticism* (1929/1991), in which he sought to "prepare the way for educational methods more efficient than those we use now in developing discrimination and the power to understand what we hear and read" (p. 3).

These differing views as to how a reader may engage with a text, emotionally, analytically or more objectively, provide a backdrop against which to explore what underpins the reading choices teachers of English make, and how those reading choices might find their way into the classroom. Are they driven by a desire to be swept away by plot and character and, or, by the instinct to unpick and focus on language choices made by the author, so bringing their professional skills into their personal reading? Does their knowledge of the contextual, authorial or historical

background of a work influence their reading choices, and, if so, why and how? Does the nature of their reasons for engaging with a text influence whether they will recommend their reading choices to their students, or whether it will be discussed in their classroom? While the debate between the various merits or otherwise of the proponents of reader-response theory and the work of the New Critics may seem dated, it remains important. Rosenblatt and the New Critics were interested in *how* people read and react to texts, both as students and teachers of literature. In this research I explore whether these ideas still underpin what teachers read, why they choose to read the texts they do, and what role these choices play in the classroom.

1.3 Influence of Critical Theories

Many teachers of English Literature enjoy exploring texts with their students, and delight in stimulating the "creative imagination of the reader to put it all together" (Wolfgang Iser quoted in Evans, 1987, p.23), but the demands of the examination mean that it is their role to eliminate as much as possible of what Richards (1924/2001) would describe as "defects in criticism" (p.105), and to which the examination boards refers to as misconceptions and relegate to a lower point score. The *Eduqas GCSE Amplified Assessment Grid* and Marking Instructions for the Summer 2023 English Literature Component 2 examination calls upon examiners to scrutinise candidates' papers for the ability to "analyse and appreciate writers' use of language, form and structure" and to make "assured references to meaning" (p.10). While we would not encourage a student to argue for a perverse or unsubstantiated reading of a text, this mention of "assured references to meaning" does seem to suggest that there is, indeed, a "correct" or accepted "meaning", or meanings to which candidates are expected to refer and which can be explicitly identified by examiners as belonging to an accepted mark scheme, generated by the exam board, of appropriate and insightful responses.

This insistence on the authority and prevalence of the text, that its truth is to be found in its words alone, and that any critic should, as William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley say in 'The Affective Fallacy' (1949/2010), "lean to the cognitive" as opposed to "romantic reader psychology" (p.1398) is also reflected in the way the Eduqas exam board urges candidates to address the text. In its *Guidance for Teaching* handbook (2015), it offers tips as to how best teach the Literature examination questions and reminds teachers that "some learners do not do themselves justice in their answer to the Shakespeare extract question, because they do not analyse the words and their implications closely enough" (p. 6). In the *GCSE Examiners' Report* -

English Literature (2022), teachers are encouraged to help their students make "more selection of detailed supporting references rather than general impressions" (p. 5), the implication being that moving away from language to speculative or unsubstantiated commentary can dilute the quality of a students' response. It is the text and its implications that are important according to the examination board, comments not rooted in precise evidence but reflective instead of a reader-response attitude of personal engagement and interpretation will not be rewarded as highly, which Stock (2017) and Dymoke (2017) argue is to the detriment of student creativity and personal engagement. McGuinn (2005a) argues that it is the so-called errors in a student's response to a piece of work that can act as a launch pad to a more thoughtful and insightful analysis of a piece of literature, a text can be unpicked and probed until understanding and personal relevance gradually evolve, perhaps echoing Barthes' view that "there are common interpretations, agreed understandings, but there is no unequivocally correct one" (1993, pg. 146). Of course, Barthes and, indeed Rosenblatt, do not argue that all interpretations are correct. Instead, Rosenblatt argues against "the old method, whereby leading questions were aimed at preordained conclusions" (1983, p.ix), in favour of "fruitful inductive learning" (Ibid, p.ix), a viewpoint which Pike, Stock, Dymoke and McGuinn share. While there is clearly a difference here between what a teacher and class might explore together in a classroom, particularly at KS3, and what a student needs to show they can do in an examination, it does seem ironic that it is the assimilation of these "preordained conclusions" which still leads most students to examination success.

Almost 20 years ago, The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), said that the effect of this focus on a 'correct meaning' had been to downgrade literary texts into nothing more than a "kind of manual" (Ofsted, 2005, p. 26). More recently this debate still exists. Merga (2017) argues that classroom time devoted to testing detracts from other activities that can have a long-term impact on student outcomes, such as reading for pleasure. Interestingly this view is also reflected by Goodwyn and Findlay (1999), who argue that "English teachers are increasingly opposed to the dogmatic nationalistic Cultural Heritage model" (p. 19). This is because they see it as representative of a "chalk and talk model" (p. 21) which eliminates the personal response to literature which they consider to be "almost sacred" (p. 28). Protherough (1983) discusses this difficulty that teachers face in the classroom, when he says that teachers are "conscious of struggling against the mainstream of the secondary curriculum, with its emphasis on suppressing the personal in favour of 'facts', emphasising thoughts rather than feelings...they are suspicious of a gulf between the actual responses of children and what as teachers they feel *should* be made of the

stories read" (p. 4).

In my research, I look to continue this exploration of teachers' intent behind their classroom teaching and the tension that exists between the teacher's task of giving their students the skills to study literature as a discipline and the idea of fostering reading for pleasure and engagement, thus offering an up-to-date reflection on the debate discussed above.

1.4 Summary

From the Newbolt Report, through to the Cox Models, and then beyond to the more contemporary research of Goodwyn and Pike among others, there is a theorising of subject English as an art form that allows students to "extend the boundaries of their lives [and] contemplate worlds possible as well as actual" (Alexander et al, 2010, p.199). But there also exists a tension within the teacher's role in the classroom, a need to carefully impart an accepted meaning of a text in order that a student might be successful in an examination, rather than allow them to come to their own understanding and appreciation of a text in the manner of reader-response theory. It is against this backdrop that my research considers the importance and substance of teachers' reading habits, exploring whether reader-response theory, although perhaps not identified as such by teachers themselves, is reflected in the reading choices they make and the way they allow their reading lives to permeate their classrooms. Where I believe it does, I have identified and discussed it within my results chapters. The participants' answers, particularly to my third research question, which considers how the teachers feel about their ability to interact with students about their reading, discuss how the need to prepare students for examinations affects their reading habits and their classroom practice with regard to reading. In their articulation of their beliefs as to the importance of reading, whether teachers still favour the 'personal growth' model is also explored.

2. What are society's expectations of teachers?

In this section, I examine the roles society's stakeholders, such as parents, students, other educational professionals, and government leaders, expect teachers of English to perform. Research shows these expectations range across a variety of ideas and concepts. Teachers of English are expected to be experts in their field, and therefore as knowledgeable about contemporary literature as they are about those works considered to comprise the canon. This expertise must also extend to their ability to

engage with the workings of language at a linguistic level, as well as be knowledgeable about set texts and authors. This in itself is problematic as Giovanelli (2015) comments, identifying that the majority of English teachers have followed an academic pathway focused more on English Literature rather than English Language. Giovanelli found that teaching in a less familiar subject area, where the teachers he interviewed felt less competent in their abilities, was considered to be a significant challenge. This point is important to consider because it raises a number of questions that are relevant to this study and the reading habits of the teachers who took part in it. I define a teacher of English as a practitioner who is employed to teach subject English and who is held accountable for the progress of the students they teach. As a result, I include in this definition practitioners who may have either an English Language or English Literature degree, or who may be a non-specialist, with a degree in a different subject. But, would a teacher whose degree is in English Language exhibit the same reading practices as a teacher whose degree is in English Literature - and would society's educational stakeholders expect them to because they have similar responsibilities in the classroom? Would the expectations discussed above and in the rest of this section be viewed as unreasonable for a practitioner who is a non-specialist teacher of English?

Teachers must also be extremely knowledgeable about the examination specifications that they teach, and the success criteria their young people need to succeed. Teachers of English are, therefore, expected to be individuals who are widely read and enthusiastic about their subject, individuals who are able to act as role models for their students (Merga, 2016), and who have the skill to engage with their students on a personal level, therefore helping to craft the minds and morals of the young people they teach. On top of this, they are expected to be expert communicators, able to not only enthuse possibly reluctant students but also deal professionally with parents and colleagues. In this section, I consider these varied expectations in some depth and discuss their relationship to teachers as readers. In subsequent chapters, I go on to explore how teachers perceive these expectations and whether they play a role in teachers' reading choices.

2.1 The Varied Role of the Individual Teacher and the Significance of Teachers' Attitudes

The DfE (2011) says that teachers should be able to "demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge", "have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings", as well as "demonstrate a critical understanding of developments

in the subject and curriculum areas" (p. 11), thus suggesting that teachers of English should have a detailed and critical knowledge of their field, and that they should be cognisant of developments within that field. By implication then, teachers of English should be able to make educated references to those texts considered to constitute the canon, but also to more contemporary and diverse publications. There is also a sense that they should have a wider subject knowledge and the ability to recognise "what could constitute the appropriateness of texts for specific ages, and indeed what might define 'great reads'" (Gordon, 2012, p. 384) and Cremin et al (2008 and 2008a), as mentioned earlier. Hopper (2005) emphasises this point when she says a "teachers' detailed knowledge of recent available fiction can indeed be important, in order to link interest to similar authors or books of similar genre to those enjoyed" (p. 117). Interestingly, Hopper questions whether teachers can actually fulfil this expectation due to burdens of time, workload and the sheer number of texts available, thus highlighting a gap between governmental expectation and actuality. Although not the focus of her research, she asks: "To what extent do current English teachers actively seek out and read teenage fiction beyond the set texts?" (p. 118). This question contains the suggestion that teachers *should* read YA literature beyond the set texts, otherwise they will be limited in the variety of books they can recommend to their students.

Action researcher Katie Kibbler (2013), writing of how she used critical incident collages, inspired by her PGCE tutor Gabrielle Cliff Hodges, to personalise her schemes of study for children accessing education in a hospital, arrived at Hopper's conclusion when she reflected on her subject knowledge. She pledges to read a young adult novel a fortnight and acknowledges that "with just a few more books in my arsenal, I've found myself better placed to give authentic recommendations to students - and, even better, to have genuinely passionate conversations about reading with them" (p. 56). This is a view shared by Reichenberg and Andreassen (2018) who go on to argue that teachers' leisure-time reading should be considered an integral part of their continued professional development, the implication being that, in their view, for a teacher there is no distinction to be made between reading for recreational purposes and professional reading. While not the focus of this study, it would be interesting to explore whether similar expectations are held for teachers working in disciplines other than English Language or Literature. This, of course, brings us back to issues concerning how we define reading for pleasure and the role a teacher's reading for pleasure has on their ability to improve outcomes in the classroom. Does a physics teacher's reading for pleasure, for example, have the same potential to be a useful instrument in their classroom?

The research clearly shows that knowledge of children's literature is important and without it teachers will struggle to make the recommendations necessary to engage young readers and encourage further reading (Cremin et al, 2023). Yet, scholarship also shows that many teachers do not have this breadth of knowledge (Cremin et al, 2008; Cremin et al, 2009; Clark and Teravainen, 2015). This thesis explores whether secondary teachers of English share the view held by Hopper and others above, and how they feel about the weight of this expectation if they do not feel the same.

Garces-Bacsal et al (2018), Benevides and Stagg Peterson (2010) and Leighton et al (2019) also link teacher subject knowledge to student attainment. Leighton et al express the idea that suitably challenging and engaging subject matter has a direct effect on a students' motivation to engage with the topic. Thus, a teacher's subject knowledge, and their ability to choose texts that prove highly stimulating to their students can have an effect on their students' attainment (Manna and Misheff, 1987 and Bean and Moni, 2003). Cho et al (2010) agree, writing that "teachers who are well-prepared and knowledgeable...were able to engage students further beyond the text" (p. 212). This raises interesting questions with regard to teachers' reading habits. Do secondary school teachers of English have the extensive knowledge of literature which this research shows would allow them to make engaging and stimulating recommendations to their students? My study attempts to answer this question.

There is a significant body of research which has explored the idea of the teacher as role model, whether from the standpoint that a teacher should serve as a guide to "character and moral virtues" (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 46) or the sense that teachers' style of practice in the classroom can have a positive or negative effect on the learning of the students before them (Shein, P. P. and Chiou, B., 2011; Brandt et al, 2021). Cremin emphasises the importance of how teachers are perceived by their students as this "enables them to model the value, pleasure and satisfaction they find in reading" (2023, p. 6). Indeed, the idea of the teacher as role model was found by Bennett (2007) to be the driving force behind some of his participants' decision to enter teaching.

Morrison et al (1998) establish a link between teachers who not only model a passion for reading in front of their students, but who also engage in recreational reading their students cannot see, and those who employ "recommended" (p.8), and, by implication, best practice, literacy strategies. Their research did not explicitly explore or attempt to quantify the actual amount of reading completed by the teachers involved, but it did reveal that older teachers were more likely to read than younger teachers (Cogan, 1975; George and Ray, 1979). Morrison et al conclude that, "When

teachers take time to read often and regularly, they will be more effective in their work with children...Effective teachers take advantage of situations that arise in their classrooms to recommend books to children when the need arises" (p.98). This reinforces the suggestion that not only are reading teachers more likely to use instructional practices considered to be more effective (McKool and Gespass, 2009), they also have the capacity to recommend books, so encouraging their students to read, a point also made by Gennrich and Janks (2013).

Cho et al's research (2010) introduces the added element of teacher personality and argues that a teacher's attitude towards reading and the way it is demonstrated in the classroom plays an important role in encouraging students to enjoy reading. Trelease (2013) and Cox Gurdon (2019) also discuss the positive effect teachers (and parents) can have when they read aloud to their children. To the expectation then that a teacher is highly knowledgeable in their specialist field, is added the sense that a teacher should also display the appropriate enthusiasm and attitude if her students are to be motivated to succeed. When they do this, Ruddell (1995) argues that they become more successful because they "upgrade the emotional importance of the text in the mind of the student" (p.455).

There is considerable evidence to suggest that teachers' attitudes, positive or negative, play an important role in cultivating positive attitudes towards reading and learning in their students. (Mueller, 1973; Mour, 1977; Heathington and Alexander, 1984; Fleming, 1992; Cardarelli, 1992; Briggs, 1997, and Dreher, 2003). Young (1987) says: "In schools, our readings of texts are monitored and modified by the presence of an *other* in the person of the teacher…" (p. 7), suggesting that the *other* can have a significant effect on students' outcomes, sense of educational reward and perception of what they are reading. Applegate and Applegate (2004) argue that "teachers' beliefs about reading as well as their reading habits may play a significant role in the development of reading engagement among students" (p. 555). Ten years later, in their 2014 study *The Peter Effect Revisited*, they make the same point: enthusiastic student readers are more likely to have been taught by enthusiastic reading teachers. Nathanson et al (2008) ask the question: "Do children learn because of what we, as teachers, say or do they learn by observing what teachers do and how teachers behave?" (p. 313), so questioning whether "teachers' values and behaviours exert as powerful an influence on students' hearts and minds as the curriculum itself" (p. 313). This is emphasised by Hassen (2016), who says, "…teachers must be avid readers themselves in order to ignite a lifelong reading habit in their students" (p. 60).

Commeyras and DeGroff (1998) explicitly link the idea of being able to read well with the concept of education as a lynchpin in the creation of thoughtful, informed

individuals. They report how the US public puts the role of the teacher at the heart of the formation of an educated and tolerant nation, therefore expecting “the nation’s educators to teach every child to read, to enjoy reading, and to use reading to make informed decisions as citizens in a democratic society” (p. 434). They go so far as to say that the US public holds teachers “accountable” for producing “literate citizens” (p. 434). In the UK, the Department for Education (DfE) also links education with the provision of moral guidance, expecting the country’s teachers to “act with honesty and integrity; have strong subject knowledge, keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and [be] self-critical; forge positive professional relationships; and work with parents in the best interests of their pupils” (DfE, 2011, p. 10). In both cases the implication is that an ethically principled, highly educated and reflective practitioner of English has the power to act as a role model (Anderson et al, 1988; Benevides and Stagg Peterson, 2010) or moral compass for the young people they teach, that they can “exert influence on the development of readers in future generations” (Gray and Troy, 1986, p. 184).

However, the idea of teachers acting as role models is perhaps not as straightforward as it seems. This perception that not only should teachers act as role models, but that they are viewed as such by their students is countered by Hutchings et al (2008), who found that students were more likely to view their teachers as role models only if they too considered that occupation as a career. Maylor (2007) also considers the increasingly complex and problematic nature of the assumption that white teachers should act or can act as role models for black students. Corcoran (1987) also disagrees with the premise of the teacher as role model, utilising their subject knowledge to personalise their teaching. He says, “Some literature, like some medication, may even be good for us, but the images of the teacher handing out prescriptions from a moral or psychological dispensary is a dangerous one” (p. 48), not least, he adds, because students “are trail-blazing explorers, meticulously mapping their individual paths...they certainly feel no need for the teacher as informed tour guide” (p. 67).

2.1 Summary

Despite the opposing views discussed above, research shows that teachers of English are expected to play a pivotal role in the nurturing and cultivation of young minds and spirits. Through their personalities and enthusiasm for their subject, teachers act, whether actively or passively, as role models who influence, for better or worse, their students perceptions, attitudes and outcomes - or as one recipient in Manna and

Misheff's (1987) survey of what teachers thought about their own reading development, said "enthusiasm for reading is caught, not taught" (p.166). But at the heart of their ability to influence and instruct their students is their subject knowledge. It is expected and encouraged that through their extensive knowledge, not only of the examination specifications they teach, but of the canon and more contemporary texts, they can choose texts that stimulate and engage their students, and thereby encourage their own students to engage in reading (Chambers, 1985; Medwell et al, 1998). They present as excited and enthusiastic readers in their own right and so influence their students to actively reflect their classroom behaviours, a point echoed by Cremin et al (2008a): "...classroom practice is influenced by a myriad of factors… one of these is teachers' knowledge of children's literature. Such knowledge is surely a prerequisite if teachers are to nurture positive attitudes and sustain and develop young readers" (p. 450). While the use of "surely" here suggests the offering of an opinion alongside Cremin's research, her point is reasonable and logical. This thesis explores whether secondary school teachers of English share her view.

By investigating in detail the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English, this study explores how teachers feel about their abilities, or otherwise, to engage with their students about reading. Do they see themselves as role models willingly tasked with the responsibility of cultivating passionate readers with a love of learning? I also examine more closely the idea of subject knowledge. In the research above, a teacher's recreational reading is conflated with the idea of subject knowledge. There is no distinction between the two - a reading teacher, research suggests, is therefore a better teacher, leading to the implied assumption that all reading a teacher does, whether demanded by professional obligations or prompted by personal choice, improves and extends subject knowledge. This view negates the idea that a teacher may craft an identity separate from their classroom persona and so read texts that actively reflect this differentiation between the spaces and roles of their life. It also does not allow for the idea that reading undertaken to fulfil professional obligations may also be pursued willingly as a recreational activity. As a result, I explore whether teachers actively link their recreational reading to the teaching strategies they employ in the classroom, whether their role as a teacher explicitly affects their reading choices, and whether they do have, or pursue, a subject knowledge which is extensive enough to allow them to recommend suitably interesting and challenging texts to their students.

3. What do we know about teachers' reading habits?

Section 2 of this chapter explored society's expectations of teachers, the assumptions surrounding the nature and extent of their professional expertise and knowledge, their role in the classroom and their effect on their students as a result of their attitudes, subject knowledge and capacity to act as a role model. Section 2, then acts as the backdrop for Section 3, in which I examine research on the reading habits of pre-service and in-service teachers, as opposed to the theoretical expectations of Section 2. I examine the reading habits of pre-service and in-service teachers both in the UK and internationally, and I demonstrate how this study, in exploring the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English in the UK, remedies a gap in the existing scholarship.

As previously discussed, existing research has suggested that teachers largely identify with a model of teaching which is imaginative (Pike, 2004) and many are driven by the idea that the study of literature can not only help a student pass an examination, but also stimulate the imagination, broaden cultural knowledge, increase and encourage the cultivation of empathy and tolerance, while also providing linguistic lessons in technical accuracy that help to improve writing skills and prepare for life beyond school (Cox, 1998). Against this backdrop are set the expectations of teachers of English, expectations explored and validated by research, that their personalities and extensive subject knowledge work in tandem to create inspirational individuals, who act as role models for their students, encouraging them to read with engagement and curiosity, as they themselves do. An image of Roald Dahl's earnest Miss Honey springs to mind, or perhaps Robin Williams' English teacher in the 1989 film *Dead Poets Society*, leaping on to a desk and urging his enthralled students to "carpe diem", so extensively is this view of teachers embedded in popular culture.

It is interesting, then, that research exploring what pre-service and in-service teachers actually read, appears to present a more complex picture, both in their professional reading and in their recreational reading, and the way both these reading purposes manifest themselves in the classroom. A tension emerges between the professional expectations outlined above and the reality of teachers' lives and their personal and professional interests, responsibilities and obligations.

3.1 Research into Teachers' Professional Reading Habits

As discussed earlier, research suggests subject knowledge is linked to student outcomes. Previously, I have explored the idea of subject knowledge with reference to a teacher's knowledge of literature and set texts. However, subject knowledge also includes knowledge of pedagogy and classroom strategies, such as adaptation and scaffolding, which research shows can improve student outcomes. Teachers' reading

of professional literature, such as journal articles, therefore plays a part in their ability to function as effective practitioners. The following section, in investigating what the research tells us about teachers' propensity to read professional material, foregrounds my subsequent exploration of the kinds of material, including professional publications, read by the participants in this research. It also provides a backdrop against which to consider my first research question: What are the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? It is clear that a distinction exists between reading fiction in order to recommend texts to students and reading material to improve professional practice. However, I would argue that the two are linked. This research investigates whether teachers might read professional journals for personal satisfaction and recreation, and also explores the idea that reading a professional journal demonstrates a desire to improve subject knowledge which might result in an increased reading range, perhaps stimulated by references to new or previously unexplored literature.

As far back as 1971, Hipple and Giblin complained that: "The practising secondary school English teacher in Florida is not likely to be engaged in much professional reading related either to education in general or to teaching English in particular" (p. 153). They point out exact areas where the dearth of subject knowledge seems particularly egregious to them. For instance, of the 380 respondents to a questionnaire which aimed to test their familiarity with a range of professional, subject English journals, authors and works, 269 reported that Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* was "unknown" to them. Burhans Jr (1985) conducted similar research, this time in Michigan, where he surveyed 141 teachers, asking them if they recognised the names of a collection of educational theorists and writers. He found that secondary school English teachers on average had recognised only five of the names and had read or were more familiar with less than two. He came to the conclusion that "English teachers...are teaching from obsolete information and knowledge by unsupported and often discredited methods" (p. 95). Also in America, Womack and Chandler (1992) surveyed a variety of studies which point to the lack of professional reading undertaken by teachers. They also conducted their own research involving 64 public school teachers from a range of key stages, and came to the conclusion that "society overburdens teachers, who simply do not have time for professional reading in addition to all the other demands of their career" (p. 394). Littman and Stodolsky (1998) surveyed 666 subject English, mathematics, social studies and science teachers across America to explore how these professionals kept up-to-date on latest educational research and discovered only just over half of them (51.7%) read a professional journal regularly. A total of 59.9% of the subject English teachers they

surveyed read a professional journal regularly, compared to 61.8% of Science teachers, although only 68 Science teachers were surveyed compared to 282 English teachers. They too recognised the limited amount of time" (p. 83) teachers had available for background reading, but noticed that while Social Studies teachers were least likely to read a professional journal, these teachers invested more time than their colleagues in Maths and English in background reading around their subject. Monoz and Valenzuela (2019) found that pre-service teachers lacked motivation to read academic texts, while Boemmel et al (2019) reported that 98% of the 333 teachers surveyed did report some professional reading within the previous year, but added that "many teachers reported that they do not read frequently and they seldom read as part of their professional development" (p.14). They cited teachers' feelings of time pressure and the limited ability to make immediate use of their readings, as two of the reasons behind their findings.

However, these findings relate to research conducted in America, and much of it is dated. In this study, I go on to explore whether we find a similar dearth of professional reading in my sample. I also explore whether my participants identified the pressure of time as a defining factor in their reading habits.

3.2 Research into American Teachers' Recreational Reading Habits

Although undertaken 50 years ago, the work of Mueller (1973) is often cited with regard to teachers' attitudes towards reading. Her research focused on how teachers felt about reading, rather than investigating a particular type of reading teachers might be expected to engage in, such as the professional reading explored by Hipple and Giblin (1971). She argued that "teachers are expected to be zealously committed to reading" (p. 203), and then asked seven evaluative questions to explore how teachers value reading, ranging from "Do you choose freely to read?" to "Do you prize reading, hold it dear?" (p. 203). Her conclusion was that the 41 students in her sample valued reading only "mildly" (p. 205) in their lives. She acknowledges that the sample size was small and the research instrument used was unsophisticated but she describes her findings as "provocative" (p. 205).

Gray and Troy (1986) also explored the assumption that "teachers at all levels should devote [their] efforts to leading students into the other worlds that can be found in the pages of books" (p. 179). They asked 80 elementary education majors, the American equivalent of students studying for a degree in primary education, five questions which related to the reading of books, such as "Are you reading a book now?" and "Why read books?" (p. 180). Only 29 of the 80 responded to say they were reading a book at the present time, 51 were not reading a book at the time of the

survey, and 19 of those 51 had last read a book more than six months ago. Healy (1990), conducting similar research, found that 25% of student teachers admitted to a "lifelong discomfort with print" (p. 22), something Mann and Micheff (1987) also allude to. Draper et al (2000) discovered a similar lethargy towards reading among the 80 pre-service teachers they surveyed, something they describe as *aliteracy* - that is, clearly the student teacher can read, but does not enjoy reading and does not regularly read. Their research asked teachers to recount memorable reading experiences together with the circumstances under which they learned to read. It is interesting that, just as research suggests teachers' attitudes have a direct impact on their students, so it appears that some teachers still consider themselves negatively affected by their own reading mentors, or lack thereof. All except two students recounted the positive effect of a teacher, but seven students who rated themselves less likely to read for pleasure, had no memories of a positive teacher. Draper et al concluded that "none of the students were able to articulate suggestions for fostering a love of reading or writing in their own future students" (p. 198), with one student even admitting, "...it is too frustrating to just sit down and read a book" (p.192).

Lundberg and Linnakyla (1993) link weaker teaching with a failure to read. They describe teachers who read and who value reading as "literacy spark plugs for students" (p. 288). McKool and Gespass (2009) discovered that of the sixth grade American teachers they surveyed, 63% reported that they did not read for pleasure, and indeed spent less than 10 minutes reading anything at all each day. Applegate and Applegate (2004) reported themselves "stunned" (p. 555) to discover that many of their pre-service students "had no use for reading other than as an academic obligation" (p. 555). They coined a biblical reference to describe the situation, the 'Peter Effect'. The term refers to a story contained within Acts, the fifth book of the New Testament. In it, the Apostle Peter is asked for money by a lame beggar. He refuses the request for money, saying he cannot give what he does not have, instead he uses his faith to help the crippled man walk again unhindered. Applegate and Applegate used the Peter Effect to refer to student teachers "who [were] charged with conveying to their students an enthusiasm for reading that they did not have" (p. 556). They created a pilot survey which aimed to explore reading habits and attitudes towards reading. They reported that 54.3% of the 195 university sophomore students enrolled on an initial teacher training course in elementary education who took part in the pilot survey fell within the parameters of what they termed "unenthusiastic about reading" (p. 558). Positive experiences of early reading were found to correlate to increased levels of reported enjoyment of reading. In their substantive study, where respondents were 184 sophomore students who intended to train as teachers, they

found the overall number of unenthusiastic readers fell to 48.4%, but they still described that level as “very disconcerting” (p. 560). Through respondents’ answers to the survey questions it became clear that “significant numbers of respondents were affected, either positively or negatively, by the instruction they received during their early school years” (p. 560), perhaps validating the importance of the teacher’s position as role model and academic guide research has suggested.

Ten years later Applegate et al (2014) revisited their research. This time they surveyed 1,025 sophomores from seven colleges and universities on America’s East Coast. The respondents represented a range of subject specialisms, unlike the 2004 research which had just explored the attitudes of students who were studying for certificates in elementary school education. Once again the survey explored the students’ reading activities and asked them to self-report their level of enjoyment when it came to reading. After analysing the results, they divided the students into two categories - *Enthusiastic Readers* and *Unenthusiastic Readers*. Within the *Enthusiastic Readers* category were three sub-categories - *appreciative readers*, those who reported having read at least one book over the previous summer; *focused reader*s, who read with enthusiasm but preferred a particular genre or type of reading; and *engaged and avid readers*. Within the *Unenthusiastic Readers* category existed a similar three sub-categories - *lukewarm readers*, who were lethargic towards reading and had read for only a limited amount over the summer; *reluctant readers*, who were more explicit in their dislike for reading and who admitted to reading only to fulfil the obligations of their studies; and *unwilling readers*.

They discovered that 46.6% of college students they surveyed fell under the category *Enthusiastic Readers*, while the description of *engaged and avid readers* could only be applied to 5.7%. 53% of those surveyed were identified as *Unenthusiastic Readers*. Interestingly, of those students who identified as *enthusiastic Readers*, 54.1% referenced a teacher who read aloud to them, and 55.1% recounted that they had had some choice in reading material. Some students recounted a teacher who encouraged discussions about reading, and of those students 68.4% were categorised as *Enthusiastic Readers*. When asked to explore their own attitudes towards their reading, some of the respondents who struggled to read with enthusiasm blamed “poor teaching” or “teachers who don’t love reading themselves” (p. 195). Applegate et al found that 90% of the students who reported they loved reading because it allowed them to “escape into a different world” (p. 195) or “get into the minds of different characters” (p. 195), were identified as *Enthusiastic Readers*. They conclude their research by expressing their disappointment and concern in the lack of *enthusiastic readers* they surveyed, and by relating this to the effect they perceive their

uninspired and lethargic teaching is likely to have on the students they will encounter throughout their careers. Their research exposes the cyclical nature of the findings - those students surveyed who expressed a dislike of reading were less likely to cite a teacher who inspired them to read for more than just information gathering and as a result were now less likely to inspire their own students to read.

3.3 International Reading Research

The research discussed above is focused on pre-service or in-service American teachers. While there is a considerable amount of research discussed above, it is not recent, suggesting a gap may exist in the research into secondary teachers' reading habits, at least in America. This section continues to investigate scholarship exploring teachers' reading habits in order to determine whether this is also the case internationally in countries other than America, and to continue to establish a thorough understanding of existing research against which my study can be viewed. Oyeronke (2009) explored the reading habits of secondary school teachers in Nigeria and concluded that "only a few of the teachers read for pleasure" (p. 1). Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011) found that the 65 Malaysian secondary school English Language teachers they interviewed acknowledged the importance of reading but expressed little enthusiasm towards reading for pleasure themselves. Hassen (2016) found that the trend in Addis Ababa was for teachers to read newspapers and texts that were educationally necessary, but not to read texts for pleasure.

Commeyras and Mazile (2011) found a less straightforward picture of reading habits amongst teachers of four schools in Botswana. They found that in the previous month 91% of respondents had read a newspaper, 70% had read educational books, but the number who identified reading books for pleasure was much lower, at 38%. Listening to the radio, reading a book or watching television was the first or second preference of the majority of the respondents, which does suggest some book reading, but when asked about their most recent enjoyable read, of the 86 respondents, 11 failed to answer the question. They argued that it was more likely that a teacher in Botswana would read a newspaper than a novel, but when asked to identify a text they had enjoyed, they cited more fiction than non-fiction. Commeyras and Mazile concluded that teachers in Botswana were reading but their reading habits were "unlike that found in other parts of the world" (p. 426), with educational, spiritual or factual texts likely to be read more frequently and regularly than fiction texts.

Reichenberg and Andeassen (2018) explored the reading habits of a group of Swedish and Norwegian teachers and, in contrast to the American research discussed above, found them to be prolific readers. They concluded that there was evidence "for

an association between teachers' professional capital (human and social) and teachers' reading habits during leisure time" (p. 443), adding categorically that "professional development matters for teachers…" (p. 443). They noted that older teachers were more inclined to read non-fiction than their younger counterparts, who favoured fictional texts. They also reported that younger teachers were more likely to read on electronic devices than their older colleagues. Their conclusions that age and years of experience as a teacher may critically influence reading habits, together with the idea that an "association" exists between professional and personal reading, is something that this study also goes on to explore.

3.4 Reading Research in the UK

Cremin et al (2008 and 2008a) sought to explore the personal reading habits of 1,200 UK primary school teachers. Using a survey she asked respondents to consider how frequently they read for pleasure, what exactly they had read recently, and what were their favourite texts when at school. The survey went on to explicitly ask respondents to name a book they considered to be of considerable importance to them and to list six 'good' (Cremin defined the term 'good' as successful or valuable for younger readers) authors of children's books, six 'good' children's poets and six 'good' children's picture book authors/illustrators. It asked respondents to consider when they had last read aloud to their classes and when they had last read an entire book for pleasure with their class. Cremin positioned her research against concerns that the introduction of the 1998 National Literacy Strategy for UK primary schools, which involved a daily "literacy hour" and sought to explicitly improve students literacy skills, had effectively de-skilled teachers, causing them to teach through extracts rather than whole texts, and to limit the amount of time they spent reading aloud to students. Cremin also explains that "as the knowledge and skills delineated in the detailed curriculum objectives had been privileged, teachers' and children's own creative engagement with literature may have been sidelined" (Cremin et al, 2008, p. 9). Her team's research endeavoured to explore whether this was the case.

Initially, her findings seem quite positive, with 73% of her respondents reported to have read for pleasure in the last month, and Cremin concluded that "for the majority of the teachers, reading remains a source of satisfaction" (Cremin et al, 2008, p. 12). Cremin found the range of teachers' personal reading to be fairly extensive. Teachers reported having read authors ranging from the so-called 'chick lit' authors Cecelia Ahern and Sophie Kinsella, to the perhaps more heavy-weight, or at least more emotionally complex, writing of Khaled Hosseini, Audrey Niffenegger, Louis de

Bernieres and Sebastian Faulks. When asked to select personally significant texts, many chose religious or spiritual books, but a significant number chose novels which endeavour through fiction to address timeless moral, philosophical and social issues, such as intolerance of difference, racism, romantic love, friendship, terrible injustice, and historical, world-changing events. Works such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), *Lord of the Flies* (1954), *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1952), were each mentioned by respondents more than 10 times. Cremin notes that the frequent mention of such books, which would have appeared - and in many cases continue to appear - on examination curricula, suggests just how important teachers can be in bringing literature to young readers" (Cremin, 2008, p 13-14).

However, when asked to list six "good" children's writers, only 46% could name six and Cremin found that a small selection of authors (Roald Dahl, Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson, J. K. Rowling and Anne Fine) were referred to time and again. She refers to the range of knowledge as "severely limited" and notes it stands in contrast to the rich and varied personal reading the teachers had reported. A similar dearth in knowledge was repeated when the respondents were asked to report six poets and six fiction authors/illustrators, leading Cremin to conclude that teachers were "drawing upon a very narrow range for use in the classroom" (Cremin et al, 2008, p. 15). Cremin notes that "there was little mention of writers from other cultures or even writers writing about other cultures" (Cremin et al, 2008a, p. 454), and that very few women poets were mentioned, so hampering students' ability to explore their own identity as well as the identity of others (McCarthey and Moje, 2002). She questions whether the respondents were actually "familiar with a wide enough range of children's authors in order to plan richly integrated and holistic literacy work" (Cremin et al, 2008a, p. 458) and adds:

> In recognising the deep imaginative value and emotional engagement which literature can offer, the survey's respondents clearly seek such satisfactions, sustaining themselves as adult readers. However, their limited knowledge of children's authors suggests some tensions and difficulties exist for these primary phase professionals, who may be able to successfully source their own reading habits, but are not in a strong position to support younger learners in developing their own preferences. (Cremin et al, 2008, p. 18)

Cremin suggests therefore that, while her participants read for their own pleasure, they had a limited knowledge of children's literature, a finding which may link to teachers' perceptions of the purpose of their personal reading and their views of their role as teachers. This thesis not only questions whether this is also the case for secondary school teachers of English, but also explores and acknowledges that a teacher could indeed be an avid reader of children's literature but still struggle to recommend age

appropriate texts, given the wide range of age groups they are likely to teach and the varied personalities and interests of their students. This research, then, builds on Cremin's ongoing work in that it asks whether these tensions and challenges exist for secondary teachers of English, and, if so, how they feel about it.

3.5 Summary

The research explored above suggests that for some working teachers and those training to be teachers, the drive to read is not as pronounced, as wide ranging and as frequent as might be supposed, particularly given the effect modelling of enthusiasm, passion and interest in reading is likely to have on students (Dreher, 2003). This is an interesting perspective, especially as research suggests the way teachers' view their professional identities is very much linked to their appreciation of their subject (Beijaard, 1995; Helms, 1998). Teachers in Florida and Michigan were found lacking in their knowledge of educational theorists, leading to fears that their teaching strategies and subject knowledge were "obsolete" (Burhans Jr, 1985, p. 95), a concern if the assumption is made that reading widely, and using professional journals to aid with this aim, is likely to lead to improved subject knowledge and a richer diet of reading matter. Teachers have cited lack of time given their other professional and domestic obligations as a reason for not keeping up with their professional and personal reading. Researchers have coined the term *aliterate* to describe this propensity by teachers to have little enthusiasm for reading, despite clearly being able to, and a link has been made between teachers who do not read or rarely read, and their ability to teach well. In the UK, primary school teachers were found to be reading fairly widely for their own satisfaction, but were drawing on a narrow field of literary knowledge when it came to reading texts with their own classes (Cremin et al, 2008, 2008a, 2009, 2009a, 2014, 2023).

In response, this study explores whether its participants do in fact perceive a tension between the role a teacher is expected to fulfil with regards to encouraging their students to read, their actual personal conduct as readers and teachers, how they identify as teachers of English and their desire to share their subject, and the significant benefits reading can have for students (and adults) if they read widely and well. It considers whether they concur with Benton's (1995) view that: "Teachers will be at a disadvantage in understanding their pupils' responses to reading and to literature unless they have some understanding and interest in the reading...culture that adolescents are busily constructing and reconstructing in their everyday lives...if English teachers do not offer great literature, it may be claimed, pupils will never know what it has to offer" (p. 458). Benton, here, says that English teachers need to offer

their students “great literature” and the participants in this study were in agreement with him that the books children read should have value, be that literary value, enjoyment value or academic value, but some also found the idea of “value” problematic. As I discuss in more detail later, one interviewee actively associated the idea of reading classic literature with the idea of privilege. Another interviewee worried that not all YA Literature was of a suitable calibre to be used in school. What constitutes the idea of reading well is something, therefore, that some of the participants grappled with in their responses. However, while identifying whether a text has value or can be considered “great” allowed for some differing of opinion, the study’s participants were clear that children who don’t grow up in a “literacy-rich environment” (Clark and De Zoysa, 2011, p. 6) need more motivation or stimuli to pick up any book, thus again considering the nature of their identities as teachers and the varied roles a teacher is perceived to play in encouraging a child to read.

4. The Importance of Reading

The research discussed above is of particular concern when consideration is given to the significant benefits for both students and adults of reading regularly and for pleasure. Clarke and Rumbold (2006) define reading for pleasure as:

> …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. It typically involves materials that reflect our choice, at a time and place that suits us. (p. 6)

I have adopted this definition of reading for pleasure for this study because it allows for the idea that a particular type of reading may be begun at the behest of someone or something else, but is continued because it is found to be enjoyable. It also recognises the arguments of both Moses and Kelly (2019) and Ben-Yosef (2010) that agency for a reader, the ability to choose a text for oneself, is an important part of reading for pleasure, for both adults and children.

Elkin, Train and Denham (2003) explore in detail the many advantages of frequent and regular reading for children. They list these as “a language and audio stimulus”, “enrichment to the imagination”, “a visual stimulus”, a “widening [of] horizons”, a “therapeutic effect”, “for information”, “for social development” and for “physical development” (p.13-14). To these, the Department for Education (DfE), in its 2012 report *Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure* acknowledges the “positive

relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and attainment" (p. 3) (Clark and Rumbold, 2006; DiGiovanna, 1994),and the fact that reading well can have more of an impact on a child's future attainment than their socio-economic background (OECD, 2021).

Children who read, therefore, are likely to be more skilled in their abilities to explore texts, to express their emotions and manipulate their wide vocabulary. Their reading enjoyment will have a positive impact on their reading attainment. Clark and Teravainen-Goff (2019) found in their survey of 56,906 children and young people across the UK, that enjoyment of reading was positively linked to their development of reading skills (Shugar and Dreher, 2017; Gilleece and Eivers, 2018; Rogiers, van Keer and Merchie, 2020; Tavsancil, Yildrim and Demir, 2019; McGrane et al., 2017; Clark, 2011; and Taylor, Frye and Maruyama, 1990), making them more economically successful in later life. For Finnegan and Warren (2015), "Ensuring that all children are reading well by the age of 11 would make a game-changing contribution to making us a more socially mobile and fairer country" (p. x). Meek (1991) says: "...literacy, like language itself, is a map of society. It separates people, differentiates them. Not everyone has the same range of literate expertise or confidence. This creates other differences of which we are uneasily aware" (p. 49). For teachers then, the ability to harness their own enthusiasm for reading in order to encourage their students to not only read, but to love reading is important. It could be the difference between creating an academically-creative, imaginatively-inspired, emotionally-sensitive and socially-powerful child, and one who from childhood onwards cannot engage or compete at the same level of their peers (Cremin et al, 2009). Meek adds: "In learning to read some children learn other lessons. There are certain standards of performance that regulate success or failure. This is a totally new experience, lifelong in its effects. There is no failure in childhood before school…" (p.128). Li (2013) also links the idea of success in literacy to becoming a "competent member of a community" (p. 517), thus attributing the perception of a socially-perceived increased worth and value to those who can read and engage successfully with language.

Children who read well and frequently are likely to have a larger vocabulary (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Stanovich, 1986; Sullivan and Brown, 2015), and this acquisition of vocabulary plays a number of implicit roles in their social, personal and academic development. Stanovich (1986) says: "Children with inadequate vocabularies - who read slowly and without enjoyment - read less, and as a result have slower development of vocabulary knowledge, which inhibits further growth in reading ability" (p. 381). Children with a limited vocabulary at an early age are more likely to remain poor or reluctant readers as adults, leading to less economic success (Douglas

and Lawton, 2016) and poorer mental health (Law et al, 2009). Quigley (2018) concurs with this view in his discussion about the differences 'word poor' and 'word rich' students encounter because of their limited vocabulary, and argues that while educational practitioners cannot easily close the gap between the rich and poor, they can, by improving a child's vocabulary, offer a "small [solution] to the damaging inequalities we observe in the classroom" (p. 2). Like Murphy and Murphy (2018) and Hirsch (2013), supporting children to acquire a "wealth of words" (Quigley, 2018, p. 2) creates the potential for positive social mobility as "a restricted vocabulary as a young child goes on to correlate with factors in later life such as employment, pay and even health and wellbeing as an adult" (Quigley, 2018, p. 22).

From an adult perspective, Kirsch and Guthrie (1984) found that in the workplace higher skilled employees read more fiction and spent more leisure time reading, than their lesser skilled colleagues. While this could be an instance of correlation than than causation, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a reluctance to read as a child, leads to reduced reading as an adult and so less exposure to the learning, knowledge and cultural capital that results in higher-paid employment (Dymoke, 2009 and Meek, 1982). Research shows that as children progress through school, students with a restricted vocabulary find it harder to access the materials they need to succeed in examinations, and, as there exists a link between restricted vocabulary acquisition and low parental income and education (Quigley, 2018; Murphy and Murphy, 2018 and Sullivan and Brown, 2015), it is more often the attainment of disadvantaged students which is negatively affected. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) similarly state that reading is unrewarding for students who find reading difficult, who demonstrate "slow, capacity-draining word recognition" (p. 934), which slows their appreciation and comprehension. Thus, students with a wider vocabulary enjoy reading because they are successful at it. That success sparks enjoyment and confidence for the child about their reading abilities (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999). This in turn generates an increased desire to read, and the on-going acquisition of a wide and rich vocabulary (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998). As Cremin et al (2023) say, "the will to read influences the skills and vice versa" (p. 2).

Sullivan and Brown (2015) make the point that reading for pleasure is the vital ingredient in, not just vocabulary acquisition but also more general academic success. Other research suggests that students who read well are likely to succeed academically (OECD, 2000; Krashen, 2004; Anderson et al, 1988; Pfsot et al, 2013) because they will absorb and so demonstrate better text comprehension and accuracy in grammar skills (Cipielewski and Stanovich, 1992; Cox and Guthrie, 2001, Lawton and Warren, 2015). Krashen (2004) argues that "Reading is a powerful means of

developing reading comprehension ability, writing style, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. In addition, evidence shows that it is pleasant, promotes cognitive development, and lowers writing apprehension" (p. 37) (Nicholson, 2006).

Students who read well are able to enter new worlds as a means of escape or exploration (Douglas and Lewton, 2016). Spufford (2002) writes that books free "us from the limitations of having just one limited life with one point of view; they let us see beyond the horizons of our own circumstance" (p. 6). But those students can also enjoy an enhanced sense of who they are in the world as a result of their confident reading (Pfost et al, 2013 and Beard, 1987). Children who enjoy and are successful at reading are likely to have a better understanding of other cultures (Monobe and Son, 2014) and a greater insight into the reasons behind their thoughts and actions (Meek, 1991), together with improved general knowledge (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998, and Stanovich, 1996). The Reading Agency (2017) also cites studies which show that the benefits of reading for both children and adults include the development of empathy, better relationships with others, and improved well-being throughout life. The ability to read well also plays a role in students' self-confidence (Ho and Lau, 2018).

In contrast, students who do not read or who do not enjoy reading do not benefit from these advantages. Students who find reading difficult are not motivated to read (Snow et al, 1998; Dreher, 2003; Alvermann, 2001; Stanovich, 1986), and this in turn impacts on their literacy skills (Smagorinsky, 2001). Reading is so prevalent in our day to day lives that we almost take it for granted. Catherine Wallace (1992) says that "urban technological societies operate on the premise that their members can read" (p. 5). Therefore, to be unable to read or read with confidence, means access to social groups and certain levels within our social hierarchy can be limited (Lawton and Warren, 2015).

This is of particular concern when research suggests children's reading enjoyment has declined significantly in recent years (Sainsbury and Schagen, 2004). Clark et al (2023) found that only 43.4% of the 71, 351 children and young people aged between 5-18, that they surveyed in 2023, said that they enjoyed reading. They say this is the lowest level of reading enjoyment that they have reported since 2005, and describe children's reading enjoyment as at "crisis point" (p. 1). The testing of reading skills at KS2 and KS3 particularly seems to have actively decreased children's enjoyment of reading (Twist et al, 2003; OECD, 2002). Research also shows that reading engagement and enjoyment declines as children age (Department for Education, 2012, Clark and Osborne, 2008, Book Marketing Limited, 2000, Clark et al, 2023) and that a gap exists between the reading skills and engagement of boys compared to girls (OECD, 2010; Clark and Teravainen-Goff, 2020; Clark and Picton,

2020; Clark et al, 2023).

There have been other investigations in recent years into the attitudes of young people towards reading and their motivations to read. Book Marketing Limited (2000), a report of reading habits of both adults and children across the UK, commissioned by the Library and Information Commission and The Reading Partnership, which surveyed 900 households, reported that by the time boys leave school “many are not really reading for pleasure at all” (p.15). Children aged 9 to 11 were more likely to read fiction than older students, with 88% of 9-11s reporting the reading of fiction, compared to 52% of 17 to 24-year-olds. More children than adults reported that they didn’t read because they didn’t enjoy it - 23% of children and 14% of adults. Interestingly, individuals who read most frequently were most likely to recommend books to other people, “...with over half the heaviest readers discussing books with others, and with 60% + recommending books to others, and a similar proportion acting on recommendations” (p. 84). This would suggest that those who do not read are less likely to recommend books to others, a finding which is of particular concern given the lack of teacher reading suggested by the research above.

The gap between the reading enjoyment and skills of girls and boys is also of concern (Benton, 1995a). Dillon et al (2017) note the American National Endowment for the Arts research which suggests boys read less frequently than girls, and that boys access fewer books and fewer genres as they progress through school. They ran a Guys Read Summer Book Club initiative in an effort to tackle this issue in Minnesota, and reported that boys’ engagement with reading was improved when they were actually able to read the books they chose, a point also raised by Benton (1995 and 1995a). Coles and Hall (2002) argue that girls read more than boys because they appreciate the academic value of the exercise. They are clear as to their expectations of the teacher in helping students to not only read better, but to view themselves as better readers. Coles and Hall add that “many teachers could take children’s voluntary reading choices more seriously, they could broaden definitions of what counts as being a ‘good reader’ by careful analysis of what readers can, rather than what they cannot do…” (p. 106). This alludes to the idea that teachers have a role in nurturing and protecting the self-esteem of young people as they engage with reading (Benton, 1995a), and, perhaps, in recognising that their reading might not take conventional forms.

Research show that this sensitivity needed by the teacher is also important when societal and cultural norms sometimes make it challenging for boys to express their enthusiasm for reading and exhibiting an “emotional response” (Pike, 2000, p. 41; Smith and Wilheim, 2009), while also being much less likely than girls to be supported

as readers by their families (Clark and Akerman, 2008). This difficulty in creating, what Rosenblatt calls a transaction with the text, can make it hard for boys to demonstrate personal engagement, but, as Pike says, reinforces the need for “responsive English teaching [which] allows the picture, the literary work of art, to be experienced” (Pike, 2000, p. 52).

In addition to the attitudinal and gender issues which affect whether children engage with reading, are practical difficulties. Clark and Poulton (2011) report that students who own books are twice as likely to enjoy reading, and are likely to read more frequently with greater enjoyment and success, but despite this they found of the 18,141 young people aged 8 to 17 they surveyed, 31.2% had never been given a book as a present, 21.5% had never been to a bookshop, and 12.5% had never been to a library. A total of 9.4% had no books in their home, and those who didn’t own books were, perhaps naturally, five times as likely to say they didn’t read. Those with books in their home, read a greater number of books a month and were more inclined to think positively about reading. Book ownership gave them what Bourdieu (1986) would term cultural capital, an advantage in society due to the power of literacy and its benefits. The figures have not improved over the years. In 2023 the National Literacy Trust discovered that 12.4% of children did not have a book of their own (Picton and Clark, 2023). This is of particular concern in the light of recent research which found that owning a book was one of the top three predictors of a child’s future reading performance (Lindorff et al, 2023).

Behind these surveys into young people’s reading endeavours is the question surrounding what actually motivates young people to read. Pretzlik and Chan (2004) argue that students’ attitudes are heavily impacted by both their teachers and their peers (Skinner, 1993; Brandt et al, 2021). Guthrie (1996) says that students who “believe they belong to the classroom community” (p. 438) and who are more than just compliant readers, are more likely to display interest and engagement which enriches their learning experience. Becker et al (2010) argue that promoting intrinsic motivation is more likely to result in increased frequency of reading; children who read for extrinsic reasons, to please a teacher or parent or for reward, had weaker reading skills than their peers who read for intrinsic reasons (Kavanagh, 2019; Guthrie et al, 1996). Dweck (1986) argues that students’ motivation is highly influenced by how students view themselves and the self-esteem they feel. This again serves to highlight the importance of the teacher in the classroom and their relationship with their students. Those students who are encouraged to read, who perceive that their teacher believes in them and their abilities to improve at reading, and who see reading as a skill that they can improve at, are more likely to demonstrate success in future

academic challenges. My research explores whether the teachers involved do actually recommend texts to their students. It asks how teachers feel about their ability to recommend texts - do they agree that their role as reading teachers is pivotal to their students' future educational successes, or does the day-to-day grind of planning, marking and preparation and possibly poor behaviour in the classroom, mean that the desire to engage fully as a reading teacher is idealistic rather than realistic?

Conclusion

In this review of the existing literature, I have attempted to provide a foundation for my research, by demonstrating the perceived complex and challenging role teachers of English are expected to fulfil, by exploring the research behind those explorations, and by considering the effect these expectations might have on how a teacher performs and reflects on their performance in the classroom. Teachers are seen to be, not only the custodians of knowledge in their classroom, but also the cultivators and protectors of students' self-esteem and ambitions. Their subject knowledge should be second to none, thanks to their pursuit of both professional and personal reading, and they should be able to translate that in the classroom into engaging and motivating lessons. However, research suggests that teachers may not always live up to these expectations. In attempting to answer my three research questions this study aims to shed light on how the secondary school English teachers in my study feel about these expectations, how they position themselves as practitioners and how they view themselves as readers. Finally, this research in exploring the reading habits of English teachers in the UK fills a gap in the literature, which has previously focused on the reading habits of international teachers or teachers within the primary school system.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

"...learn nothing of your subjects, and you will disrupt them. Learn something of your subjects and you will disrupt them" - the lament of an ethnographer in Record of a Spaceborn Few (Chambers, 2018).

Introduction

This section discusses the development of the research questions that drive this study, and explores my decision to adopt a mixed-method research design that allowed for a strong qualitative emphasis. It also considers both the pilot and substantive versions of my questionnaire and semi-structured interviews and the necessary reflections, amendments and analysis which I made at different stages as my research progressed. It considers my position as a researcher working within the context of my research and explores the effect this integrated position could have on any data collected. It also discusses how the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 1994, 1996, 2000), who view teachers as storytellers of and in their own lives, helped me to interpret the rich narratives teachers told me about their reading habits.

Cohen (2007) describes research questions as part of the "orienting decisions" (p. 79) a researcher must make as they construct their research project, in that they "set the boundaries or the constraints" (p. 79) that the research will encounter. This study sets out to answer the following questions:

- What are the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England?
- What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?
- How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?

When drafting the questions, I was also conscious of Andrews (2003) who warns that a lucid, precise and researchable first, or main, question, can often be followed by subsidiary questions that become more of a "metaphorical wish" (p. 24) than a substantive, investigative research question. Thus the questions were subject to considerable revision in order to ensure they could actually be answered, that they accurately mirrored the aims of the thesis, that they were workable, in that a suitable research design could be devised, and manageable, in that their scale was neither too

ambitious, nor too small (Andrews, 2003).

From an ontological perspective this study is concerned with the behaviours, attitudes, identities, and perceptions of a group of teachers of English as they engage in, and reflect on, the social practice of reading. Consequently I have adopted a critical realist paradigm to underpin this study. This paradigm seemed most appropriate because it allowed me to focus on my participants' discussion of their reading habits, while also recognising that their understanding of their positions is necessarily blurred by their subjectivity (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Critical realism then recognises that "people's words provide access to their particular version of reality; research provides interpretations of this reality" (Braun, Clarke and Hayfield, 2015, p. 224). A mixed methods approach to this research then seems fitting as, on the one hand it is interested in the texts English teachers read, the nature of the texts, the forms they take, and the frequency with which they encounter these texts. On the other hand it is focused on the relationship between that reading and their classroom practice. It also considers their individual philosophies of reading and the way these teachers feel about their ability to recommend engaging reading choices to their students, communicating and sharing their love of reading. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that it is not strictly necessary to make a choice between qualitative and quantitative research methods, as "both kinds of data can be productive for descriptive, reconnoitring, exploratory, inductive, opening up purposes. And both can be productive for explanatory, confirmatory, hypothesis-testing purposes" (p. 42).

However, I felt that a mixed-methods approach would be most appropriate as this study investigates not only factual reading choices, that can be listed, collated and tallied according to frequency, but also the subjective reasons behind those choices which go to the heart of how teachers view and vocalise their identities as readers in the classroom, and their role as teachers in encouraging their students to read. As Punch (2009) says: "quantitative research brings the strength of…profiling dimensions, tracing trends and relationships…[while] qualitative research brings the strengths of sensitivity to meaning and to context, local groundedness, [and] the in-depth study of smaller samples" (p. 290). The qualitative element of my research would also allow me to explore the "richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity" (Mason, 2002, p. 1) of the teacher's attitudes towards their own reading and any ways they shared that reading with their students. Indeed, while the quantitative research could provide the building blocks or scaffold of my research, the qualitative element allowed me to adopt an interpretivist stance, exploring how the reading lives of teachers are "interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted" (Mason, 2002, p. 3), as they shared with me the stories of their reading lives. Similarly to

Cremin et al (2014), I wanted to view reading from a socio-cultural perspective and so explore what teachers read, why they read, and the effect that reading may have in their interaction with students in their classrooms and how they felt about those interactions.

This study began as a result of my personal interest as an English teacher in reading, a particular conversation I described in my introduction, and the many discussions I had with colleagues about their reading and the reading they were enjoying with their students. Therefore, it derives from an interest in which I continue to be professionally and personally involved and it is important that this element of my research is acknowledged. This brings with it its own challenges, as Dencombe (2003) says: “Qualitative research recognizes more openly than does quantitative research that the researcher’s own identity, background and belief have a role in their creation of data and the analysis of data. The research is ‘self-aware’” (p.281). I took the view that this integration into the research setting was unavoidable and could actually be positive. Mason (2002) describes it as both “highly creative” (p.3) and “exhilarating” (p.3), in that it means “thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions” (p.3). Creef (2000) argues that it is difficult and not necessarily useful to maintain an objective distance when conducting research which is metaphorically “close to one’s own home” (p.443). Indeed, in attempting to maintain an objective distance during her research, she found herself hindered. Instead, she argues that it is valid for a researcher to embrace the role of a “sympathetic insider” (p.445), thus allowing opportunities for more “self-reflexive ethnographic” research (p.448).

I feel this is particularly applicable to my research, where I am not on the outside looking in, but am entwined in the professional environment of my respondents. As a result of first-hand knowledge of the challenges facing English teachers, I am indeed a “sympathetic insider” in that I had a contextual and practical understanding against which I could interpret their comments. As a former Head of English and a parent of a young child, I have juggled professional and domestic duties. I think this insider knowledge made me more accessible to my participants, who perhaps felt reassured that they were less likely to be judged, depending on their answers. Ultimately, I think my role as a “sympathetic insider” encouraged rather than suppressed an honesty in my participants’ responses as they felt understood.

Thomas (2017) argues that it is important to relate to participants involved in qualitative research and emphasises the importance of personal contact, of “proving you are human” (p. 202). The advantage, then, of previous interactions with my participants, would mean that the initial awkwardness and small talk between

strangers could be dispensed with, and an “active and reflexive” (Mason, 2002, p. 66) exchange of ideas and insights could ensue, particularly when I turned to the semi-structured interviews. As I investigated the reading habits of others, I worked hard to remind myself that my research did not focus on any pre-existing expectation of what teachers *should* be reading, but rather on an exploration of the situation as I encountered it in the educational environment my participants and I shared. I wanted to create a safe environment where my participants could explore their reading narratives without fear of judgement, however, I had to accept that on occasion responses could be influenced by my personal and professional relationships with the participants, and I endeavour, in order to protect the trustworthiness of this work (Robson, 2002) to identify and consider the effect of this when it occurs.

Finally, Braun and Clarke (2022) say that “viewing subjectivity as something valuable, rather than problematic, is a key aspect of a qualitative sensibility” (p.12) and add:

> Reflexive research treats knowledge as situated, and as inevitable and inescapably shaped by the processes and practices of knowledge production, including the practices of the researcher” (p.12).

It is this understanding of the researcher’s position as reflexive that has led me to utilise Braun and Clarke’s concept of reflexive thematic analysis. In this study the work of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke on reflexive thematic analysis not only guides the interpretation of my results but also helps conceptualise and articulate my understanding of my research as a whole. Not all thematic analysis views the role of the researcher as a positive means by which to explore the intricacies of the experience or idea being investigated, see Boyatzis (1988), but Braun and Clarke (2019) view qualitative research as being “about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as context-bound, positioned and situated” (p. 591) and qualitative analysis as about “telling ‘stories’, about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the ‘truth’” (p. 591). They describe a reflexive practitioner as someone who reflects on their “assumptions, expectations, choices and actions” (2022, p.14), and this is something I have endeavoured to do in my research. Indeed, this understanding of how data might be perceived and interrogated, seems to capture the essence of the way I felt this research should be conducted, and as a result I have taken the view that “Influence is not contamination to be worried about; it is an inevitable part of the knowledge production process” (2022, p.18).

Willig’s conceptualizing of critical realism, that it “combines the realist ambition to gain better understanding of what is ‘really’ going on in the world with the acknowledgement that the data the researcher gathers may not provide direct access

to this reality" (2008, p. 13), relates to the issues I have discussed above as it helps to illustrate the appropriateness of critical realism for my research. It captures the sense of the challenges I faced as a researcher gathering data from colleagues within my own work place (a challenge I discuss later). The reality I attempted to explore would be "mediated" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 171), by my professional relationships with those colleagues who took part in the research and by their sense of how they wished to present themselves to a senior colleague. Part of my role as researcher, therefore, was to appreciate how the "limits and constraints" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 171) of their lives and experiences shaped their sense-making and articulation of their reading habits – and to recognise that these articulations would then be interpreted and understood in the light of the "limits and constraints" of my own life. As a result of this thinking, I considered it appropriate to view critical realism as an ontology (Braun and Clarke, 2022) because of its focus on what is 'real', but recognise that it does combine elements of epistemological relativism because, as I have discussed above, truth is nebulous and "impossible to access…directly" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p.169).

1. Choosing the most appropriate research method

In developing an appropriate methodology for my research, it was necessary to investigate how other researchers working on similar enquiries had approached their studies. Research into the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English in the UK seems sparse, a gap which this study may help to fill, but Teresa Cremin and her team have conducted extensive research into the reading habits of primary school teachers in England (Cremin et al, 2008, 2008a, 2009, 2009a, 2014, 2023), while Taylor (2019), Clark and Reravainen-Goff (2020) and Clark and Picton (2023), Applegate and Applegate (2004) and Applegate et al (2014), McKool and Gespass (2009), and Draper et al (2000) have also conducted research which investigated the reading habits of both educators and civilians and which utilised approaches I found to be interesting and appropriate.

Cremin et al's research, undertaken on behalf of the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) took the form of two projects or phases, Phase I, *Teachers as Readers* (2006-7) and Phase II, *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers* (2007-8). Her text *Building Communities of Readers - Reading for Pleasure* (2014) is the culmination of this work and discusses the concept of Reading Teachers (an idea also explored by Commeyras et al (2003), but described as Teachers as Readers). As discussed before, a reading teacher is a teacher who reflects on her own reading, and shares her reading choices with others, including her students. They are

also teachers whose knowledge of literature for children and young adults is extensive and up-to-date. Cremin and her team used a questionnaire approach to collect responses from 1,200 primary school teachers across 11 local authorities, having first piloted the questionnaire with smaller groups of teachers and made necessary amendments.

The teachers targeted were not necessarily literacy specialists and the questionnaires were administered on in-service training days rather than remotely, through the post, or electronically, thus ensuring a high response rate. The questionnaire investigated teachers' reading preferences through open-ended questions but also asked them to identify six "good" children's writers, poets and picture book authors, defining the term "good" as "valuable and successful" (Cremin et al, 2014, p. 21). The qualitative and quantitative data generated was subjected to categorical analysis and interrogation through the quantitative software package SSPS respectively, and, combined with the high response rate, allowed Cremin and her team to explore rich data concerning teachers' knowledge of children's literature. The results, that their knowledge appeared narrow, relied heavily on the teachers' childhood favourites, and lacked diversity (Cremin et al, 2008, 2008a, 2009, 2009a, 2014), provided the foundation for Phase II of the project, which took place in schools and, following individual interviews and group discussions, attempted to measure the impact a reading teacher might have on students' attitudes to reading for pleasure.

Taylor (2019) in her book *Why Women Read Fiction*, explored the reading practices of more than 500 women across the UK, through the use of questionnaires, completed electronically or returned to Taylor by post, and interviews, some conducted over the telephone, others by email. The 39-question questionnaire traced her respondents' reading lives, from exploring who first taught them to read, through the recollection of favourite childhood texts, and memories of first being able to read, before exploring set texts in school and onto the kinds of reading they favoured as adults, and how they conducted that reading as adults. The data she gathered allowed her to chart her respondents' reading journeys, and discuss the role reading played in the narrative of their lives, and in their "emotional and intellectual development" as they drew "sustenance" from the characters and experiences they encountered in their reading (p. 234).

This idea of a dialogue between the researcher and the respondents, with her questionnaire almost taking the form of a conversation in the open-ended nature of its wide-ranging questions, appealed to my inclination to investigate teachers' relationships with their reading and its effect on their professional lives, and was thus considered relevant to the design of this study. I was also influenced by the manner

that Taylor's participants explored their reading habits, how they constructed a narrative about their reading lives, and were emotionally uplifted by the fictional narratives they read. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe teachers as "storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories" (p. 2). Certainly, as my research developed it became clear that in telling me about their reading experiences, teachers crafted their answers in the form of narratives, shaping their responses in uniquely different ways. Connelly and Clandinin define their framework of Narrative Inquiry as a "study of ways humans experience the world" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) and that "education is more a process of rethinking and rebuilding the past" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994, p.149). This idea that the concept of learning, or academic evolution, involves an analysis of past personal experiences, draws on the idea that education and experience are inextricably linked (Dewey, 1938/1997), while also recognising that the personal past experiences of teachers helps define who they become as practitioners. This is a key element of my research. Thus, Taylor's study helped me to create a questionnaire and a series of questions for the interviews, that would encourage my participants to engage in my study in such a way their responses would generate rich narratives of their reading lives, considering both past influences and future implications, while at all times linking those reflections back to their classroom interactions and their roles as educators. In the words of Braun and Clarke (2019) my participants would be able to tell their "'stories'" (p. 591) and I would be able to interpret them.

Working with the National Literacy Trust, Clark and Teravainen-Goff (2020) and Clark and Picton (2023) have conducted reading engagement surveys of thousands of children aged between 5 and 18. The results in 2023 showed what the researchers described as a "crisis point" (p. 1), with the respondents reporting reading less and enjoying their reading less than the year before (similar surveys have been carried out since 2005 and seem to point to an on-going trend in young people's disengagement from reading). The surveys generated a significant amount of quantitative data, allowing for the calculation of percentages to indicate the rise and fall of trends. However, the numbers used to generate these figures, while large enough for the researchers to be confident they could draw valid conclusions from what they found, were significantly larger than my own study would be capable of. This, combined with the fact that these surveys focused on generating numerical data rather than exploring the attitudes of the respondents through more open-ended questions, thus providing the children and young people with a more nuanced voice, meant that I did not directly draw on their form for this study, preferring instead to craft a more qualitative design.

A series of American researchers have investigated teachers' perceptions of

themselves as readers. Mueller (1973) conducted a study to explore the value teachers placed on reading. She developed a questionnaire which used seven questions to assess the undergraduate and graduate teachers' attitudes towards their reading practices. However, not only is the study somewhat dated now, but Mueller employed five questions which utilised a "Do you...." framework. Favouring closed question over open questions suppresses what Oppenheim (1992) describes as "spontaneity and expressiveness" (p. 114), and meant that while this study proved interesting to me, I realised I needed to develop questions that had the potential to tease out rich, more sophisticated and more thoughtful responses from my respondents.

In contrast American researchers Draper et al (2000) and Applegate and Applegate (2004) used methodologies I found to be more relevant to this study. Draper et al (2000) explored the reading and writing habits of pre-service, student teachers, first conducting a survey which asked the respondents to reflect on their reading habits and motivations to read (as well as write), and then used purposive sampling to gather a pool of 24 students who were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview, which explored their responses to the survey questions in more depth. The researchers favoured this approach because it meant they could explore the students' personal reading or writing "histories" in detail (p.188) - as Denscombe (2003) recognises, one advantage of using purposive sampling was they could "home in on people" (p. 16) who they thought could offer critical contributions to their research. Bell (2005) says interviews allow researchers to "follow up ideas, probe responses, and investigate motives and feelings" (p. 157), and this is apparent in the study where the personal reflections of the students make for thought-provoking reading, something I wanted to emulate in my own research. Applegate and Applegate (2004), like Draper et al, explored the reading habits of pre-service, student teachers, and considered the potential effect of their reading (or lack of it) on their students. They drew up a pilot study using open-ended questions because they "feared that a forced-choice questionnaire would not provide [them] with as effective an opportunity to listen to student voices" (p. 557). I found this emphasis on listening to the respondents' voices, or narratives, to be particularly relevant to this study, in that it echoed my intention to give my participants the freedom to reflect and comment on their reading lives. This research helped me to craft a questionnaire and a series of interview questions, that could provide a starting point for rich and potentially complex responses.

Finally, Commeyras and DeGroff (1998) and McKool and Gespass (2009) sought to examine the reading habits of teaching professionals by using questionnaires that relied heavily on Likert scales to gauge attitudes and motivations with regard to

reading. Commeyras and DeGroff (1998) utilised a 99-question survey which explored recent reading types, attitudes towards the effect of professional reading, attitudes towards students' motivations to read, ways their own reading had been influenced, attitudes towards book clubs, together with questions exploring attitudes towards the way teaching is taught. Bell (2005) considers the Likert scale something of an unsophisticated tool, stating, "All that can be said is that they indicate order" (p. 142), and this is apparent in the result of this questionnaire, where one respondent is recorded as having written a fuller response to the side of one scale, presumably to add nuance to their response. McKool and Gespass (2009) appear to add this nuance by developing a questionnaire which contained a mix of open-ended questions, scaled responses, and attitudinal prompts, thereby resulting in a mix of prompted thinking and the opportunity for personal reflection. Interestingly, while exploring reading habits and considering the impact of other activities which draw on teachers' time both at school and on the home front, McKool and Gespass's survey was also considerably shorter, which given the demands on teachers' time, seems preferable in order to safeguard the reliability of answers to later questions.

Following this review of the literature discussed above, I decided to conduct a pilot study, utilising a questionnaire populated with both open-ended and promoted or scaled questions, similar to that employed by McKool and Gespass (2009), but also including questions about reading practices harvested and inspired by the questionnaires discussed above. The pilot version of the questionnaire is included in full as Appendix A.

Questions 5, 6, 7, 15 and 16 were directly influenced by the work of McKool and Gespass (2009). Their questionnaire was geared towards encouraging the respondents to identify how they viewed themselves as readers, and to consider how specifically they spent their time. It worked to establish whether the participants could be classed as reading teachers and if a positive connection could be drawn between teachers who read and the employment of effective specific reading strategies in their classroom. Questions which investigated the exact nature of reading, asking for titles and authors and specific genres, and knowledge of young adult or children's literature were drawn from the work of Cremin et al (2008, 2008a, 2014) and her investigation of teachers' subject knowledge, and Applegate and Applegate (2004 and 2014), who used similar questions to determine their participants' enthusiasm for reading. These were questions 8 to 14, while the final question was also inspired by Taylor (2019), who asked her participants, "How important is reading in your daily life..." (p. 236).

Questions 5 through to 12 were specifically designed to answer my first research question: What are the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English

employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? These questions established initial attitudes towards reading, frequency of reading, and nature of reading. While questions 13 to 16 allowed me to answer my second and third research questions: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?, and: How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? These questions focused specifically on teachers' attitudes towards, and their reading of, children's and YA literature, and the implications their reading may or may not have on their classroom teaching and their philosophies surrounding reading and its importance.

During this period I also carefully considered the ethics involved in conducting the research. I complied fully with the University of York's *Code of Practice on Research Integrity* (2022), which included submitting my research project for ethical approval by the university, approval which I gained. I also familiarised myself with the university's *Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure* (2017). Three principles guided my conduct throughout this study: that I respected the rights and dignity of those who took part, that no psychological harm in the form of stress or anxiety should come to them as a result of taking part in my research, and that I would always conduct myself with professionalism, honesty and integrity. (Denscombe, 2003). At all stages of my research, these remained guiding principles. As a result, participants could not continue into the questionnaire until they had completed a consent form, which clearly explained the nature of the research, that they were aware of how they could withdraw from the study should they want to, and that their data would remain completely anonymous. I was clear about how I intended to use my data, both for my thesis and subsequently, how the data would be securely stored and at what point it would be destroyed. Interviewees were also informed that they would receive transcripts of their interviews. See Appendix E for the complete wording.

The pilot questionnaire was administered to a sample of 14 English teachers, who were also encouraged to reflect on its wording and fitness for purpose. This sample was determined somewhat by convenience. However, while convenience sampling is considered by Denscombe (2003) to run the risk of being a "lazy approach" (p. 17), in this instance it was necessary, as Stake says, "Our time and access for fieldwork are almost always limited. If we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry" (1995, p. 4). In my case, once the pilot study was completed, my intention was to refine the questionnaire and deliver it to every teacher of English within the trust. Therefore, rather than decrease my ultimate

sample size and to retain consistency of job title within my sample, I elected to deliver it to the team I work directly with, who are not main scale, classroom teachers of English, but rather Directors of English.

My trust consists of secondary schools located throughout the north of England. Many of its schools serve communities which suffer severe economic deprivation. Directors of English, as employed by my trust, work in partnership with leaders of English departments and their teams, making strategic decisions aimed at securing improved outcomes for students. They deliver lessons, create resources and team teach where appropriate. Although they do not hold the title of Teacher of English per se, they fulfil that role in a variety of ways, such as planning schemes of work, solving absence-related issues, considering timetables and dealing with disciplinary and competency issues. They have all worked as leaders of English departments in the past. I judged this team to be a large enough sample to allow for a rigorous testing of my pilot questionnaire, bearing in mind the view of Sandelowski (1995) with regard to the perils of small samples and their potential to "undermine the credibility of research findings" (p. 179). I felt the team was well placed to complete my pilot questionnaire for me, in that they had extensive knowledge of the role of an English teacher, often performed as teachers of English on a day to day basis, and were viewed as teachers of English by the students they encountered. Given that they would not be able to complete the substantive questionnaire, I additionally felt they provided an intellectual pool, sufficiently perceptive, to offer me useful feedback on the wording of the questionnaire, but would not reduce the numbers of teachers of English to which I ultimately intended to deliver the questionnaire proper. Denscombe (2003) says one disadvantage of using questionnaires is that it is impossible to verify the truth of statements made by the respondents (p. 161). I felt, however, that the professional integrity of my colleagues was sufficient to assuage that concern.

1.2 The Pilot Study

As Oppenheim (1966/1992) says, "Questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged" (p.47), so a pilot study was conducted in order to test that the questions contained within the questionnaire did indeed answer the research questions I had devised. As discussed above, the pilot study involved the delivering of a questionnaire to 14 Directors of English working for the multi-academy trust by which I am also employed. The questionnaire was four-pages long, included my definition of a book, and consisted of 12 substantive questions, as detailed above, calling for a combination of reflection, fact and factual recall with regards to their reading preferences and choices. Denscombe

(2003) suggests a questionnaire is an appropriate research tool when there are potentially large numbers of respondents, when the information being harvested is “brief and uncontroversial” (p. 145). Equally, the use of a questionnaire means the chances of the initial data being affected by interpersonal factors (Denscombe, 2003, p. 145) are also reduced, which was an important consideration given my personal and professional relationships with the respondents in both the pilot and in the subsequent research. I hold the title Regional Director of English, which is a senior role within my trust. I have overall responsibility for GCSE English and GCSE English Literature outcomes across 10 secondary school, which means I work closely with English Director colleagues, school principals, Heads of English, and English teachers to ensure quality classroom practice, classroom resources and curriculum planning, leading to GCSE results which are above the national average in both subjects. Part of my role also involves the training and coaching of colleagues to ensure their subject knowledge is up-to-date. The use of a questionnaire in the first phase of my research, therefore, allowed me to collect a considerable amount of rich qualitative and quantitative data, which could then be used to devise and hone the questions I then employed for my semi-structured interviews.

I asked my colleagues to complete the questionnaire at the beginning of our regular Friday meeting. They had around 25 minutes to do this. I was conscious that I was intruding on the business of the meeting and, in hindsight, choosing this moment did not encourage respondents to expend more time than was absolutely necessary on considering the questions. Mason (2002) makes the point that a researcher needs to be sensitive to the “contexts and situations” (p. 7) in which the research is undertaken. While Mason may be referring to larger ethnographic social or cultural challenges of conducting research, the small-scale, perhaps more domestic, contexts and pressures faced by respondents are of equal importance. I remained in the room while the questionnaire was completed. The presence of the researcher was not judged to be threatening, not least because the respondents were my peers, long-time colleagues, and the questionnaire was completed in the spirit of professional assistance and intellectual curiosity. It is possible that at some level participants responded in ways that were intended to enhance any perception of them as professionals (Fontana and Frey, 2003), although I do not judge this to be too great a problem as at least one colleague reported reading very little despite my presence in the room. On the other hand, remaining in the room did facilitate a number of candid and useful conversations with regards to the wording of questions for the final version of the questionnaire and respondents proved happy to discuss their responses with colleagues as they completed the questionnaire, suggesting an ease about their

involvement, which Creef (2000) argues can be to the advantage of the researcher as "sympathetic insider" (p. 45). Counsell (2009) also recognises the role of the researcher as a subject within their own research and the advantages this can present.

1.3 Analysing the results of the pilot questionnaire

The initial factual questions concerning age, gender, and years of teaching experience, did not prove problematic to complete. However, going forward, in order to respect LGBTQ+ sensitivities and the contemporary understanding that people identify in ways other than simply 'Male' and 'Female', I decided it would be prudent to include the category of 'Other', so allowing a fuller, more inclusive and perhaps sensitive, gathering of information.

The first main question featured a Likert scale and asked respondents to rate five questions about their reading life, from a scale of 1 (Extremely) to 5 (Not at all). This question: *How descriptive is this statement about your reading life?,* was designed to explore how respondents framed or conceptualised their reading experiences, and the strength of the respondents' attitude towards reading. It also began to explore whether the expectation that teachers should be keen readers, as discussed in my earlier review of the literature (Harrison, 2013; Reichenberg and Andreassen, 2018) was actually the case for these respondents. The statements respondents were asked to evaluate were:

- *I love to read and I find the time to read for a sustained period every day*
- *I read in order to prepare to teach a text, but rarely for my own pleasure.*
- *I get lots of satisfaction from my personal reading.*
- *I would read more if I had more time*
- *I prefer other activities to reading, such as watching television*

This question immediately proved problematic, with the first bullet point eliciting confusion from the respondents. Comments included, "I love to read - would be 1 - but don't have time to so 5" and "My answer would be different for each part of the question". Clearly this question was "double-barrelled" (Oppenheim, 1966/1992, p. 128), and thus lacked clarity. On reflection it was clear that the genesis of this question was my pre-existing theory that all teachers love to read and rarely have time. My bias as to how respondents might respond, had led to a question that threw the respondents into a quandary, as the comments above show. My recognition that this had happened and my ability to reflect carefully on it are what Braun and Clarke (2022)

would characterise as the hallmarks of a reflexive researcher. At this point and throughout this study I have aimed to be a researcher who is "thoughtful and (self)questioning, identifying and then interrogating [my] positions, values, choices and practice…someone seeking awareness" (p. 15).

Cohen (2007) makes the point that in conducting phenomenological research, the job of the researcher is to "gain access to people's 'common-sense thinking' and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view" (p.14). It was important to remember then, that the purpose of this study was to discover teachers' attitudes towards their reading rather than to anticipate, perhaps erroneously, what those attitudes might be. The final statement was subsequently re-written to read: *I love to read*, followed by an additional bullet point: *I read for a sustained period every day*. While the definition of "sustained" could be in question, I felt that the revised question successfully communicated the sense of reading for an extended period or without interruption at some point every day. Other questions later in the questionnaire would address exactly how long respondents did read for if they felt they did not read for a sustained period, and if their reading fluctuated according to the academic calendar, thus allowing for more nuanced data to be gathered.

The second bullet point: *I read in order to prepare to teach a text, but rarely for my own pleasure,* was crafted with the intention of analysing whether the time pressures of ensuring up-to-date subject knowledge impinged on teachers' abilities to read for their own pleasure, as argued by Boemmel et al (2019). This elicited one comment: "Not clear/Two questions", although the other 13 respondents felt able to answer without clarification. However, it became clear that the wording of the question did not allow for the possibility that reading a text in order to teach it or to keep up-to-date with a changing specification, could actually be a form of reading for pleasure. While I did not feel that this bullet point would be successful as two questions, it was clear its existing form made unhelpful assumptions that respondents might not necessarily agree with, but were not able to clarify. The bullet point was subsequently amended to: *Preparing for my role as a teacher negatively impacts on the time I have available to read books of my own choice*.

The final bullet point: *I prefer other activities to reading, such as watching television,* was also problematic and led to colleagues offering question suggestions, such as *I prefer watching television to reading*, and to also point out that even the most avid reader might, at some point, choose to watch television, rather than to read a book. The question was, therefore, ambiguous, and didn't allow for the, not unreasonable assumption, that readers may enjoy the television too. The aim of the question had been an attempt to identify a decline in reading enthusiasm from the respondents, should that be the case, as found by Applegate and Applegate (2014). However, on reflection it became apparent that, even if I were to reword the question to: *I prefer watching television to reading*, the very nature of the respondents' professional employment, the workplace environment in which they completed the questionnaire, and my presence in the room as a relatively senior colleague, would mean very few would admit to preferencing television over reading, perhaps as a result of prestige bias (Thomas, 2017), embarrassment or the fact that they enjoy other activities rather than watching television. However, I still wanted to create a question that would allow respondents to signal if they had other interests which they prioritised over reading on a day-to-day basis and so the question was reworded to: Do you prefer other hobbies or pursuits, such as crafting, exercising, watching television, baking etc…) over reading on a day to day basis?

The next question asked respondents to judge how much time they spent on an average day doing a variety of tasks, such as exercising or household chores, in a similar manner to the question posed by McKool and Gespass (2009). While the completion of this question did not seem to cause any difficulties for the respondents, I realised as I analysed the results that much of the data generated was not strictly relevant to my research questions. The "aperture" (Andrews, 2003, p.10) of my first research question is quite clearly defined: What are the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? The emphasis is on the habits of the teachers that revolve around the act of *reading*. Discovering that four respondents spent more than an hour watching television every day was interesting, provided some additional contextual information, but it did not exclude the possibility that they also spent an hour reading. Equally, the focus of my questionnaire was on reading habits rather than a specific investigation into whether television impacted on the time teachers spent reading, so ultimately I decided to eliminate the majority of these questions, and instead insert three additional pursuits on which they could identify time spent: *reading for pleasure on a school night, reading for pleasure on a weekend and reading for pleasure on an average day during the school holidays*, thus offering me a much clearer understanding of how

teachers' reading habits may fluctuate over time. To accompany these additions, I decided to add the following question: *Are there any obstacles you encounter in your day-to-day life which prevent you from reading as much as you would like? What are they?* I felt this additional question would allow respondents to signal other demands on their time, and in an open-ended manner, so reflecting the sense that this interpretivist research explored the "perceptions, feelings, ideas, thoughts [and] actions" (Thomas, 2017, p. 114) of the respondents in a more nuanced manner. For similar reasons, I decided to eliminate question 15 which probed classroom teaching strategies, and instead replace it with two open-ended questions which seemed more relevant to my purpose, namely: *How often do you share insights from your personal reading with your students?*, and *How often do you recommend specific book titles in class?*

Question 7: *What motivates you to read?* seemed to be answered without difficulty, and highlighted the interesting result, that, while every respondent signalled they read for personal enjoyment and relaxation, only one respondent indicated that they read in order to recommend texts for their students, a finding that would interest Hopper (2005). This question helps to answer my second research question: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?, and so was judged to be a success.

Question 8: *What is the title and who is the author of the book you are presently reading?*, was also successful. Only one respondent left this question empty, which was in itself illuminating. Answers were eclectic, from mainstream to mass market publications. The answers to these questions showed significant potential for analysis focused on literary genre choice (and genre absence), whether a respondent is reading at all, and publication date. This was also true of question 10: *List three books you enjoyed reading recently*, which most respondents could answer with apparent ease, although one respondent left this blank. Question 9: *How many books have you read in the last month?*, was also straightforward to answer and generated interesting data. Five respondents reported that they had not read an entire book in the last month.

Question 11: *How likely are you to read the following kinds of material*?, was also completed without difficulty and provided interesting data which could be explored on a wider scale in the final questionnaire, (six of the respondents did not read poetry collections, 10 did not pick up graphic novels). It was also successful in providing another method to answer my second research question: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and

appropriate reading material for their students?

Question 12: *When was the last time you bought a book? What was the title*?, also proved straightforward for respondents. This question was designed to evaluate teachers' enthusiasm for the acquisition of new reading material. The following question: *Does your reading include books aimed at younger or young adult readers?*, provided data that would be effective in answering all my research questions. This question was judged to be a success as the data it generated would allow analysis of diversity in the reading habits of teachers of English, exploration of the endurance of certain children's texts, and discussion concerning the on-going popularity of certain children's authors, despite the publication of much new material over the years, something discussed at length by Cremin et al (2014).

1.4 Results of questions involving coded responses

Two questions within the questionnaire were more open-ended and generated some interesting and thoughtful responses, to which I was able to apply thematic analysis influenced by the research of Braun and Clarke (2006), whose work on Big Q (Kidder and Fine, 1997) or 'big question' qualitative research has gone on to characterise this study. A Big Q framework is based around a qualitative paradigm, including such elements as research that is focused on meaning, where subjectivity is valued and "life-embedded truths" are explored (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 6). Different researchers use different terms to describe thematic coding. Bryman, for instance, notes that it can be referred to as "indexing" (Bryman, 2004, p. 408). However, I have drawn on the terms of thematic analysis favoured by Braun and Clarke because of their emphasis on using thematic coding to draw out "patterns of shared meaning" (Braun and Clarke, 2021, p. 39) from the data. This reflects the critical realist nature of my research, in that Braun and Clarke view themes as "generated by the researcher through data engagement mediated by all that they bring to this process…" (2021, p. 39) and their method recognises the "inescapable subjectivity of data interpretation" (2021, p. 37).

Firstly, I read and then re-read the answers in order to familiarise myself fully with the questionnaire data. During this stage, I began to note recurring ideas in my research journal. Next I began to generate what Braun and Clarke call codes. Codes are repeated ideas, repeated patterns of language, or repeated concepts. I analysed for semantic and latent codes, looking for descriptive as well as interpretive insights because I was open to every idea my respondent might articulate. I wanted to give "full and *equal* attention to each data item" or code (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89).

However, as I coded the responses I was also aware of the parameters of my research questions and so was alert for ideas and articulations that would help me to answer those questions. This phase resulted in an extensive list of codes which I then began to sort into themes. Braun and Clarke say that, “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (2006, p. 82). Thematic codes consider how shared ideas, insights and concepts might be grouped, or align, or interact. They have an “‘essence’ or core concept that underpins and unites the observation” (Clarke and Braun, 2018, p. 108). Thematic analysis “involves the searching across a data set - be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts to find repeated patterns of meaning” (p. 86). Braun and Clarke are very clear that a theme does not simply “‘emerge’” (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015, p. 231) from the data, rather they are “constructed at the intersection of the data and the researcher’s theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, and research skills…” (2015, p. 231). In summary, I followed Braun and Clarke’s six phases of thematic analysis (2022): I familiarised myself with the data, employed a systematic coding process, searched for themes which I subsequently reviewed to ensure they had a clear central organising concept. I then named my themes before beginning to write about my findings.

Analysis of the question: *Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult literature...to recommend books to your students?*, generated the following codes (on the left), and on the right column, the themes, which go some way towards interpreting, interconnecting and conceptualising the data (Punch, 2009, p. 179).

Figure 1: Thematic analysis of data generated in response to the question: *Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult literature...to recommend books to your students?*

Codes	**Themes**
Subject knowledge is out of date Classic children’s authors are still favoured and enjoyed	Knowledge of young adult reading is outdated

Children sap their parents' time to read Teachers more likely to have knowledge of children's literature because of parents Parents with older children don't read as much as they used to	Effect of parenthood
Desire for more time Guilt that not enough reading is being completed Other obligations (domestic and professional) compete for time	Lack of time to read
Teachers utilise other literacy professionals to maintain their subject knowledge	Librarians are knowledgeable
Teachers who move beyond the classroom do not keep up-to-date Different teaching roles require different literacy obligations	Changes in professional circumstances
Lack of interest in reading	Don't read enough

Figure 2: Thematic analysis of data generated in response to the question: Reading is important to me as an English teacher because…

Codes	**Themes**
Reading allows for relaxation Reading is enriching/intellectually stimulating Reading is restorative for your mental health	Reading is enjoyable

Reading offers the opportunity to experience varied out of the ordinary events Reading helps to generate cultural capital	Reading is a form of escapism
It acts as a way to improve professional skills	Reading allows for reflection on professional practice
Modelling good reading habits is an expected part of a teachers role Students will emulate their teachers	Teachers should model good reading habits
Teachers have a repository of literary knowledge which they can share	Teachers should discuss and recommend books

It is clear that both questions generated enough codes and themes to be considered successful and to provide some thought-provoking data upon analysis.

1.5 Summary

When the results of the questionnaire were analysed, together with feedback from the initial respondents, it became clear that some questions lacked clarity, were double-barrelled and were ambiguous. These needed to be reworded and trialed again. Others drifted from the focus of my research questions and needed to be honed to become more precise and relevant. Other questions, however, mined a rich seam of data even with relatively few respondents and were judged to be successful. I felt that with the re-working discussed above the questionnaire would be fit for purpose, in that it would allow me to answer all three of my research questions, while also generating interesting themes for further analysis and exploration during the interview stage of my research process.

2. Results of the Second Pilot

After delivering the first pilot questionnaire, it became clear that, once the questions had been reworded, refined and refocused, the questionnaire would need to be delivered once again. The first questionnaire had gone some way to answering my research questions, but because some of the questions were unclear and less relevant than they could have been, the information collected was not as focused or precise as I needed it to be. Some elements of the questionnaire also caused respondents some difficulty in its completion in that they felt the question didn't allow them to answer fully or precisely, and they felt compelled to add additional notes or comments.

The revised questionnaire was delivered to three senior colleagues, who had also completed the first questionnaire. On this occasion the questionnaire was delivered electronically due to Covid-19. All the respondents completed the questionnaire within a week. They reported that they found the re-worded questions to be unambiguous and had no difficulty answering them. I also introduced two new questions: *How often do you share insights from your personal reading?*, and *How often do you recommend specific book titles in class?* These questions proved unambiguous and the respondents responded clearly. Ultimately, following my revision of the pilot, I felt I had achieved a series of unambiguous questions which allowed me to answer my research questions.

3. Conducting the pilot interviews

My next step was to develop and trial a series of interview questions. I chose the method of semi-structured interviews, because I wanted to tap into the natural inclination of English teachers to share and reflect on their own experiences and narratives, to give them a voice with which to express their experiences of reading and their identities as teachers. Connelly and Clandinin's concept of Narrative Inquiry (1990, 1994, 1996 and 2000) underpinned the questions I crafted for the semi-structured interviews as I wanted to encourage teachers to reflect on their reading lives.

The format of an interview allowed for a thoughtful, perceptive and candid conversation. Punch (2009) describes interviews as effective vehicles for "accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality" (p. 144). Interviews have the potential to demonstrate in rich detail, or as Mason (2002) says, with "depth, nuance, complexity and roundedness in data" (p. 65), the

ways teachers perceive their reading habits and their reading-influenced interactions with their students.

Thomas (2017) argues that semi-structured interviews may be too rigid a formula for true ethnographic research (p. 206). However, while I did class myself as a form of "participant observer" (Thomas, 2017, p. 206), I had a clear focus for my interviews, and wanted to explore clear lines of enquiry, rather than letting the interviewee determine the structure and topic of the interview, as an unstructured interview might require. Semi-structured interviews allow for follow-up questions and the probing of interesting ideas, concepts and reflections, while also ensuring each interviewee answers similar questions, thus allowing for detailed comparisons between respondents. I therefore considered it to be an appropriate structure for my study.

Oppenheim (1966/1992) warns that in order for interviews to be effective, the interviewer must remain detached from the process they are involved in. They must "'switch off' their own personality and attitudes… try to be unaffected by circumstances, by their attitude to the topic or the respondent, or by personal involvement" (p. 66). He is clear that a research interview is not "an ordinary conversation" (p. 65). But the colleagues with whom I conducted the interviews had worked with me for several years, were considerably familiar with my personality and well aware of the positive attitudes I hold towards reading and also my interest in their reading lives. Oppenheim's fear is that the intrusion of the personal brings with it the risk of generating a conversation rather than an interview, with subsequent biased probing, biased recording of answers, and a lack of consistency in the phrasing of attitude questions on behalf of the interviewer (p. 97). There was also the risk that those involved would feel flattered to be asked and answer in ways which they thought would please or impress me. I am a senior figure within my trust, involved in the line management of Heads of Department, together with recruitment and retention. They might acquiesce to the premise of the question out of concern that they might offend me (Cohen et al, 2007). They might also feel a negative compulsion to take part for fear that I would think less of them or that I would judge their subject knowledge as lacking if they declined to be involved.

These concerns return us to the importance of why I adopted the reflexive thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2022). They argue that qualitative research can be "messy and organic, complex and contested" (xxvi) and, in contrast to Oppenheimer's views discussed above, it is impossible to fully separate the researcher from the landscape of their research. They argue that the complications outlined above cannot be eradicated and should be embraced as "an asset" (p. 6), as long as the researcher reflects on their "assumptions, expectations, choices and actions

throughout" (p. 14) their research.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe a research interview as a "professional conversation… where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee". Oppenheim (1966/1992) also notes that a poor rapport itself can lead to bias (p. 97) and argues that the rapid establishment of rapport "at just the right level" (p. 82) is also essential in encouraging a interviewee to talk candidly and reflectively during the interviews, and to feel afterwards that they have been part of a valuable experience (p. 2). I would argue that it is my professional and personal relationships with these colleagues, my knowledge of their integrity, together with a constant reflexive scrutiny, which would offset these concerns and allow honest communication to take place.

I worked to establish the trustworthiness (Robson, 2002; Ahmed, 2024) of my interviews in a number of ways. The interviews were all recorded electronically, transcribed using Otter.ai software, and then proofread and checked for accuracy. Interviewees were provided with a final transcript of their interview and the recorded interviews were then saved securely. Each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym. As a result of the four pilot interviews conducted, I redrafted and re-ordered the questions a number of times.

I used my research questions together with the pilot responses to the questionnaire to draft an initial set of interview questions. I considered questions employed by both Taylor (2019) and Cremin et al (2008) in their questionnaires as useful starting points. Taylor's questions in particular were helpful. Although intended as questionnaire questions, they were actually very open-ended and covered many, various ideas associated with reading and the habits we build as readers, designed to encourage thoughtful and reflective responses in much the same way that those designed for an interview might. Cremin's questions provided a focus for my study, by exploring areas already the subject of reading research at primary school level, where a comparison between secondary and primary teachers' reading habits might prove illuminating, and, simultaneously, identifying areas where more exploration might prove insightful, such as the effect of a teacher's early reading habits on their development as readers and professionals.

I re-drafted the questions following each of the pilot interviews. Between the first interview and the second, I worked to refine the gathering of the questions into loosely-related areas - reading as a child or younger person and the effect parents and teachers have on early reading, followed by established reading habits as an adult and as a teaching professional, followed by reflections on the effect of their reading habits on their classroom choices and behaviours. After the third interview, I worked to refine

the language of the questions, for instance adding the word ‘personal’ before the word ‘reading’ to the question: *What do you think is the impact of your reading on your students in the classroom? Do they benefit in any way?* After completing the fourth interview, I completed transcriptions of the interviews and uploaded them to NVivo for analysis. Copies of my pilot interview questions and my final interview questions can be found in Appendices B and C respectively.

At this point I used thematic analysis to discover, reveal and explore the shared themes of the interviews. Braun and Clarke (2006) make a distinction between inductive and theoretical thematic analysis, with inductive analysis, “a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame” (p. 83) and theoretical analysis involving coding for the researcher’s “theoretical or analytic interest” (p. 84). I would argue that I employed a method of thematic analysis that fell somewhere in between. While I coded diversely for themes and ideas that appeared repeated or shared, but were not necessarily explicitly linked to my research questions, I was also cognisant of my research questions, and alert for themes and insights which would allow me to answer my research questions. Indeed, as a result of that focus on my research topic during my analysis of the interviews, it became clear to me that my questions related to the second and third research questions (What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers’ ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? and How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?), needed to be more direct in their wording, so the double-barreled question: *What’s your reading ethos? Do you think it’s important students encounter good literature?* became simply: *Do you think it’s important students encounter good literature*? Re-drafting my questions allowed me to refine their focus and ensured my research questions were answered, but when analysing the responses to the questions, I was also curious to explore and code for themes, issues, and reflections which arose spontaneously from the interview.

I once again followed the method of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, I read and then re-read the interviews. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) stress that computers and software such as NVivo are “not intended to supplant the time-honoured ways of learning from data” (p.2), neither can they turn slipshod work into “sound interpretations” (p.3), so I read carefully and repeatedly to ensure a detailed and nuanced knowledge of the content of the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I began to generate initial codes and then to note possible themes or recurrent ideas. Similarly to the work undertaken on the questionnaires, I coded both to the ideas explored in the data, giving “full and *equal* attention to each data item” (Braun

and Clarke, 2006, p. 89) and with an awareness of the parameters of my research questions.

This work resulted in 12 broad themes:

- Effect of culture on reading choices in the classroom
- Teachers' ethos towards reading
- Effect of family life on reading
- How teachers' acquire books and reading material
- How teachers' make reading choices
- Teachers' literary knowledge
- Teachers' love of reading
- Obstacles to reading
- Influence of past education on reading choices
- Professional discussions focused on reading
- Reasons for reading and reading at different times of the year.

I then reviewed and refined these themes to audit each coded piece of data to ensure, not just internal homogeneity (Braun and Clarke, 2006), but that the data recorded could indeed provide insights into my research questions. Given that this was at the pilot stage, I ended my analysis of the interview data at this point, returning to my interview questions only to delete two questions which appeared following the interviews to generate less relevant answers.

4. Delivering and analysing the Final Questionnaire

The final version of the questionnaire was ultimately sent to participants in November 2021. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in the appendices. I did this after seeking final permission from my trust CEO to email every English teacher in the trust. While this approval had been granted some three years earlier, I wanted to be absolutely sure that my research was still considered appropriate. Again, a copy of my email and the response I received (redacted to preserve the anonymity of the trust) can be found in the appendices. I had previously envisioned delivering the questionnaire face to face, much as I had delivered the pilot to my Director colleagues. I wanted to travel to every English department throughout the trust, introduce my work in person and then be on hand to answer queries as colleagues worked to complete the questions. I felt that this method would provide me with the greatest take-up rate, unlike an electronic questionnaire delivered by email which could easily be deleted.

However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 global pandemic in March 2020, and its continued impact into the following year meant I had to re-think my plans after it became clear that the University of York no longer viewed face-to-face research as an appropriate or safe method for gathering data. See Appendix D for a copy of an email confirming this. Initially I delayed, hoping that the situation would ease and I would be able to follow my original plan, but during the summer of 2021 I realised that I had to move forward.

Following discussions with my TAP supervisors, I made the decision to turn my paper questionnaire into an online questionnaire, specifically a Google Form. The advantages of this method of questionnaire delivery were immediately apparent as I trialed the format to check for errors. Not only was an electronic survey the most effective - and safest - method to communicate with colleagues who were otherwise difficult to reach due to Covid restrictions (Wright, 2005), but Google provides an immediate breakdown of the collected data, in whole-question summary form, by individual question and by independent respondent. All the gathered data can be downloaded as a csv document, which can then be converted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or a Google Sheets document, both of which allow for the use of filters to unpick and scrutinise data trends. Google's settings allow the creator to separate the respondent's email address from their response, so allowing for full confidentiality, unless the respondent had signalled they would like to take part in the interview process of the research, in which case they were asked to provide a name and contact details. In addition, I was very mindful of the impact Covid-19 had on teachers' workloads with the need to learn new skills in order to offer streamed lessons, where students are simultaneously taught at home through Google Classroom while the teacher also interacted with children in the classroom, and the extremely high absence rates schools experienced as a result of staff illness (Kim and Asbury, 2020).

Ultimately, I issued the questionnaire at the beginning of November 2021 to every secondary teacher of English in the trust and followed this with two reminders during the half-term, which thanked those who had already taken part, encouraged others to do so and then shared an interesting snippet of information I had gleaned from the responses so far. I closed the questionnaire on December 18th 2021, by which time 99 individuals had responded - a completion rate of 60.3%. Copies of all emails sent are available in the appendices.

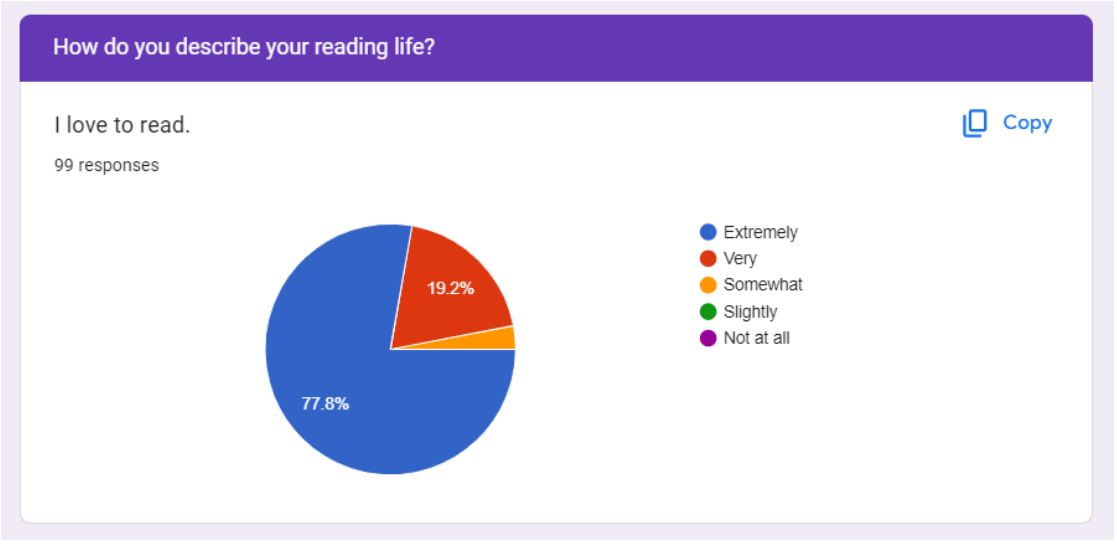
The first section of the questionnaire deals with consent, gender, age and experience. Respondents were invited to take part in a research study looking at the reading habits of secondary school English teachers. This section identified myself as leading the research and explained that its purpose was to explore the nature of

secondary school English teachers' reading habits, with a view to investigating how much they read, the text type they read, and the barriers that they feel stop them from reading. This was followed by information concerning the exact processes the research would take and then offered a series of answered questions to help respondents decide if they wanted to take part.

Respondents were encouraged to think carefully before agreeing to participate and to contact me if they were unclear. The detail contained within this section was extensive and therefore ensured that informed consent could be given. Bryman (2004) stresses the importance of this. The detail of the pre-survey information given was also in line with guidance offered by the Social Research Association and the British Sociological Association. During the Christmas break and into the New Year I began to analyse the results, while simultaneously organising and carrying out the interview element of my research.

I began to analyse the questionnaire data by interrogating each question in turn. For questions that generated quantitative data, such as Question 5: *How do you describe your reading life?*, I was able to make use of Google Form's capacity to calculate and present data in an accessible manner. Below is an example of one of the ways Google Forms is able to present the data it gathers:

Figure 3: An example of the way Google Forms presents and calculates its data.

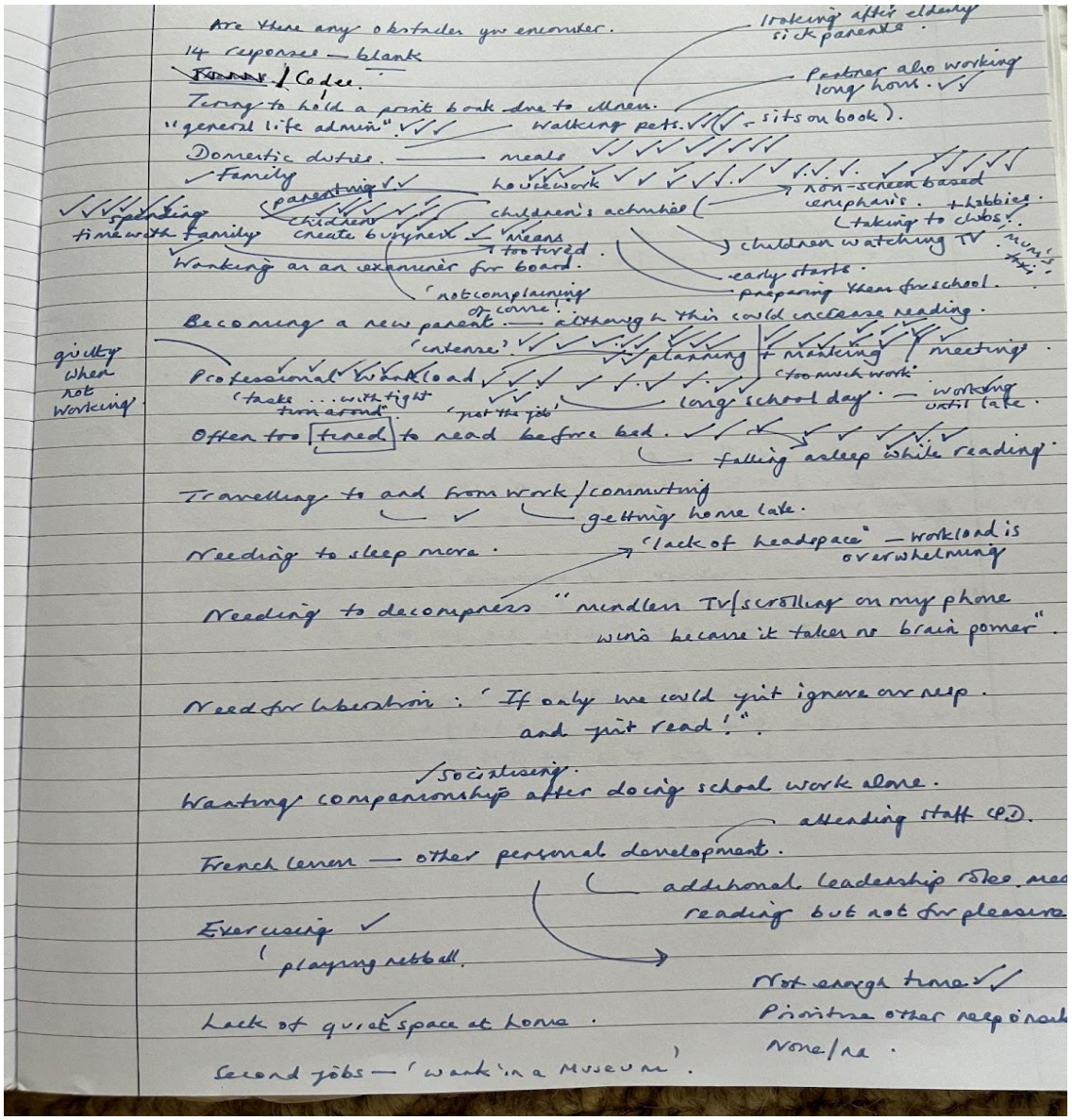


I was able to take this information from across all the quantitative questions and present it in a manner which allowed me to show my results clearly and accurately. The following chapter, which deals with the questionnaire findings that helped to answer my first research question contains a range of examples of this work.

I again used the thematic analysis method of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022) to

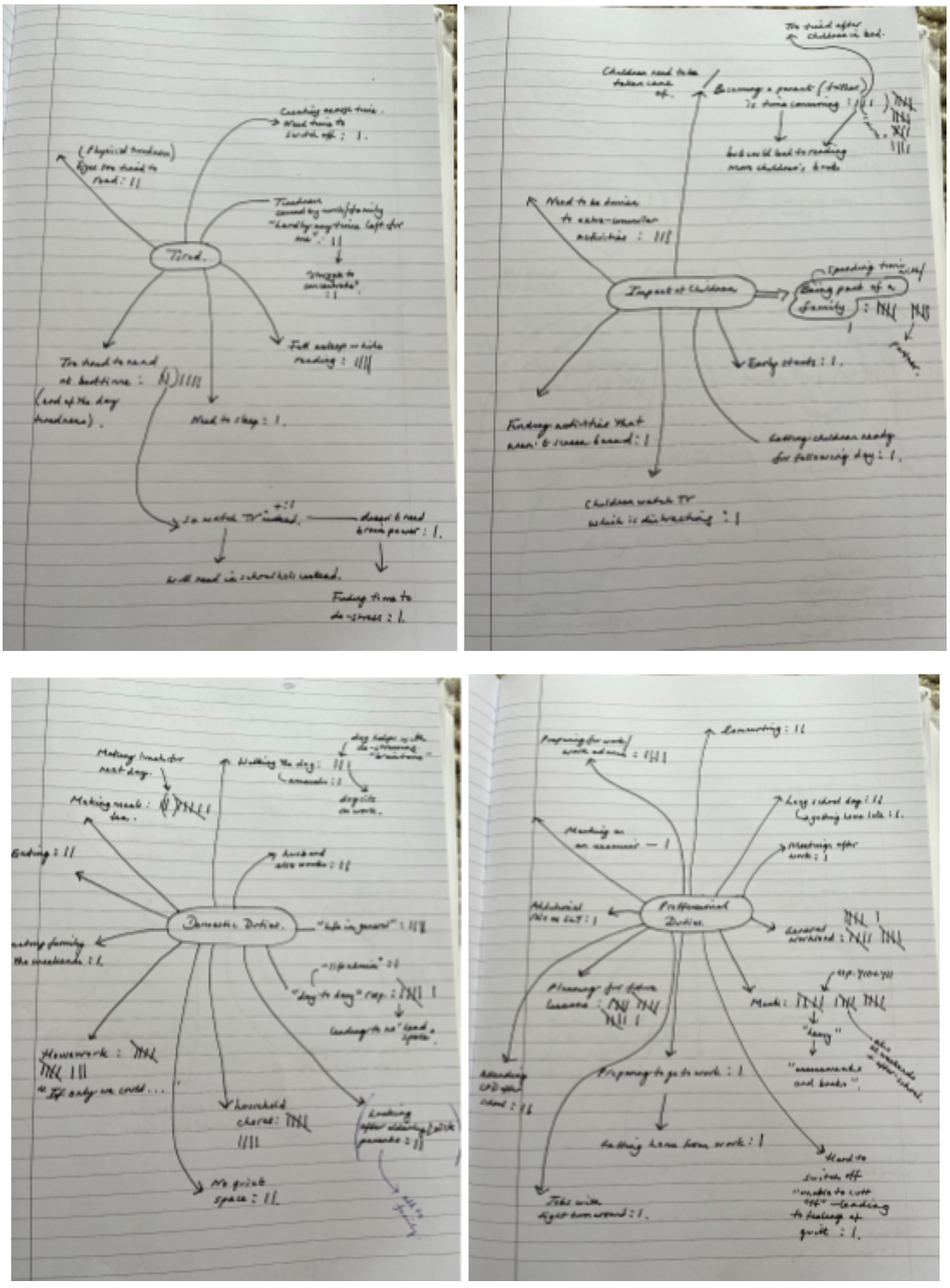
analyse the findings of the qualitative questions contained within the questionnaire. I did this manually, saving my use of Nvivo software for my analysis of the interviews, when the analysis of a considerable amount of data would make creating a manual, visual (see figure 3) representation of my findings impractical and liable to lack clarity and precision. For each qualitative question I read through the answers systematically and began to tag responses or segments of responses with codes (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Each code represented an idea that was either relevant to one of my research questions, or was a repeated idea that showed a shared concern or issue among my respondents, or seemed interesting to me and worthy of further exploration. The result was a “robust and detailed analytics interrogation” (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 54). Once I had done this, I began to consider how I would organise my codes into themes that spoke of a shared, organising concept. Below are a series of images that show how I generated a series of “candidate themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 79), around which I grouped the codes which had helped me to arrive at the theme. These themes were considered to be candidate themes because at this stage I had not decided whether they were “coherent, distinct and/or comprehensive enough” (Braun and Clark, 2022, p. 99) to work successfully to provide meaningful answers to my research questions. Below Figure 4 shows my first interrogation of the answers to the question: *Are there any obstacles you encounter in your day-to-day life which prevent you from reading as much as you would like? What are they?* It’s possible to see that at this stage I was noting down the repeated codes and tallying with ticks. The code of *Housework* has 22 ticks associated with it, signifying this idea was repeated multiple times across the answers.

Figure 4: First go at analysing the results of the question *Are there any obstacles you encounter in your day-to-day life which prevent you from reading as much as you would like? What are they?*



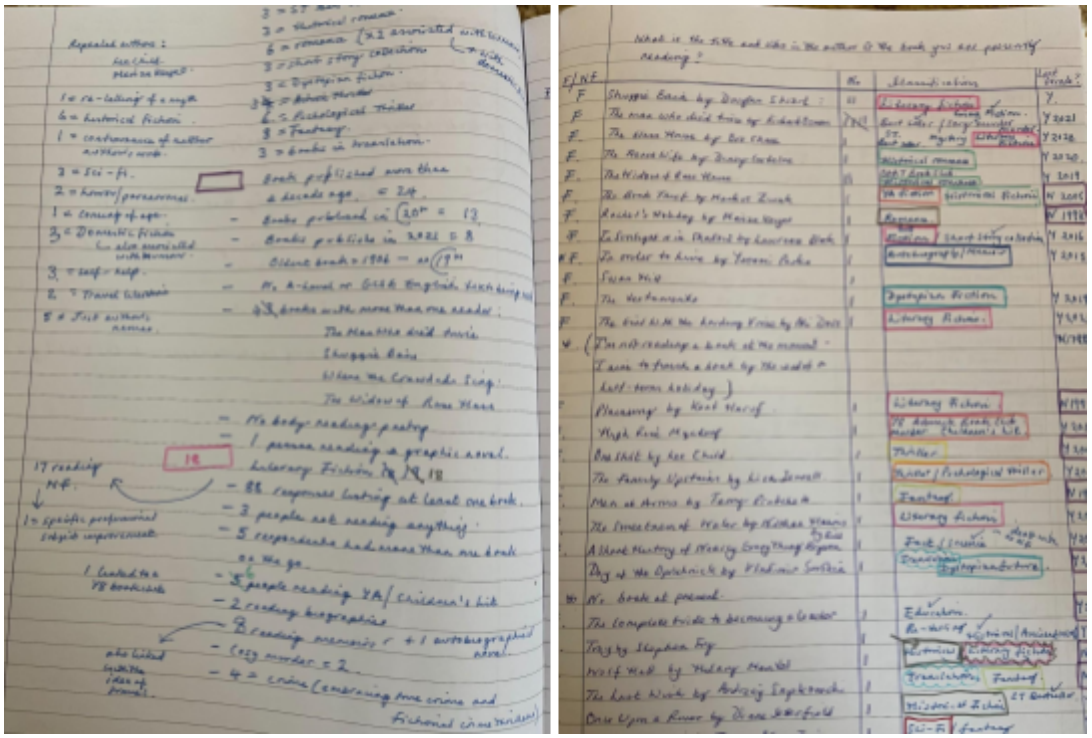
As can be seen, it was immediately clear that the question had generated a treasure trove of data. I found this initial analysis to lack clarity and so instead worked to cluster my codes more clearly around an organising theme. As can be seen from the images that follow, I began to develop themes that brought together a group of codes. I also began to tally the number of times a code was repeated. Braun and Clarke (2022) do not advocate for frequency counting in their model of thematic analysis. They say the reporting of frequency "seems to represent an implicit re-articulation of the idea that numbers are more precise and better than general descriptions" (p. 141). They call this a "remnant of quantification envy" (p. 141). However, while I take their point that qualitative research should not be perceived to lack rigour because of its subjective nature, I was also interested to gather a sense of just how often my respondents were thinking about the ideas that I found to be repeated. My frequency tallies then enabled me to engage with the size of the issue I was exploring. The discussion of the code *Housework* above is a good example of this - for 22 respondents it was an obstacle to reading. I felt in this case that attaching a specific number would add power to my findings, rather than summing up in more general terms, as Braun and Clarke (2022) advocate. The final outcomes of this work on the qualitative questions can be found in the following chapter.

Figure 5: Images showing how I began to generate themes from the codes I determined existed in the questionnaire's qualitative questions.



Finally, I felt it was important to identify respondents' reading choices by text type or fictional category rather than just by book title. I felt this was important because it would give a clearer indication of the kinds of reading my respondents were undertaking. This is of relevance because, as I go on to discuss later, society attaches different values to different text types (Driscoll, 2014). There is no doubt that, rightly or wrongly, our perception of a teacher who reads only the mass-market fiction of John Grisham - such as the teacher in my introduction - would be different to a teacher who told us they were working their way through the Russian classics, beginning with Tolstoy, or the dramatic works of Henry Miller. Therefore, I felt that by identifying exactly what my respondents were reading, I could generate another insight into whether they were fulfilling the expectations of teachers discussed earlier. Assigning a category to a text within a literary genre, such as fiction, proved to be a slippery process in that texts would often be something of a mixture of categories. If this was the case, I assigned the text to the category that seemed most fitting. For instance, *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel (2009) could be categorised as historical fiction, but its status as a contemporary classic and winner of the Booker Prize made it more appropriate for the Literary Fiction category. Ultimately, I applied my subject knowledge of fiction category types, together with the classification and listing information contained by Google Books - a very comprehensive and accessible library of text information - to make my determinations as to which books were within which genre. My work on this can be seen in the images contained Figure 6 below:

Figure 6: Two images which show how I assigned a category label to every text mentioned in the questionnaire.



4.1 Conducting and analysing the Interviews

During early 2022, I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews. These were conducted via Google Meet due to the change in the university's research requirements following Covid-19, as discussed above. Those interviewed had signalled their willingness to take part through the original questionnaire. I interviewed 9 female and one male English teacher, of a variety of ages and career stages. In choosing my sample I was somewhat restrained by the fact I needed participants to volunteer, and then be available for an interview once they had decided to take part. Ultimately, I tried to secure a sample that would reflect a range of teaching experiences and lengths of service. As mentioned earlier, I wanted to conduct a series of interviews because I wanted a more nuanced insight into the reading habits of a selection of participants. Connelly and Clandinin (1994) say, "life is a story we live" (p. 149), and I wanted to actively hear my interviewees' stories. As Cohen et al (2007) recognise, "The use of the interview in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations" (p. 349). Interviews are time-consuming, to complete, to transcribe and to analyse, and so I decided 10 interviews would be the most I could reasonably complete. The gender

split was intended to replicate the gender split within the completion rate of my questionnaire. I chose semi-structured interviews so I had the flexibility to respond to my interviewees' ideas. Robson (2002) says that the semi-structured interview is most appropriate when a study "focuses on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants" (p. 271). As I wanted my interviewees to talk about the phenomena of reading and what it means to them, this highlights exactly why the semi-structured interview seemed most useful for my research.

The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. Following completion of the interviews I used Otter.ai software to transcribe the material. I had to carefully read each transcript following its creation by the software while listening to the interview again. This was necessary particularly to correct proper nouns, any other anomalous word additions and to make sure the right speaker had been correctly identified. I corrected any errors made by the software, but I did not remove any hesitations, repetitions, or other speech irregularities from the interview, so that the spirit or integrity of the interviewees' meaning and inflections remained intact. This was done with painstaking attention as, as Cohen et al (2007) recognise, when transcribing interviews there "is the potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity" (p. 365).

I was then able to apply Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis to the material. I followed the same process I described for the pilot interviews, but due to the significant amount of data to code, I made use of the software Nvivo to support my analysis. I used Nvivo because I felt it would help me to manage my data and manage my ideas. It would help me to visualise my data, through its highly interactive processes, and then report clearly from my data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). As I coded, I tried to "notice shared or similar" (p. 55) ideas or meanings, bearing in mind that "coding is a process of interpretation - or meaning making - and researcher subjectivity fuels that process" (p. 55). My reflexive attitude towards my analysis meant I could shift my analytical focus within my dataset depending on its content, exploring new ideas as they presented themselves.

Coding my data took almost three months to complete. I systematically subjected each interview to multiple readings, before I began working through my dataset in a "fine-grained way" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 35). I coded for segments of my data that appeared "potentially interesting, relevant or meaningful for [my] research questions" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 35). I then began to organise those codes into candidate themes of "broader, shared meanings" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 35). These candidate themes were then subjected to further refinement until I arrived at a series of themes that were each "built around a strong core concept" (Braun and

Clarke, 2022, p. 36), and worked to answer my research questions. This final stage was important because it took me a number of attempts to arrive at my final number of themes. My first attempt at generating themes left me with too many. Further work suggested that some candidate themes were actually elements of another theme, rather than unique in their own right. I also took great care to name my themes in such a way that they suggested a concept rather than a topic, an important distinction that Braun and Clarke (2022) discuss as one of the main characteristics of reflexive thematic analysis. Each theme, therefore, had to tell a "story" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 36), and feel rich and nuanced, rather than be a collection of things people said about a certain topic. See below for a breakdown of the themes I developed:

- The effect of family on teachers' reading habits
- The struggles teachers face to read
- Reading enriches our lives and positively affects our sense of wellbeing
- How, when and what teachers read - and what do they think about their reading habits?
- The effect of reading on teachers' subject knowledge and their perception of themselves in the classroom
- Teachers' belief in the importance of reading for their students and themselves
- How teachers make use of and value their library and librarian
- Teachers' feelings about their reading of YA Literature

As I completed my analysis it became clear that some codes could sit under more than one theme. For instance, the interviewees talked about how reading was important *(Teachers' belief in the importance of reading for their students and themselves)* but how they did not read as much YA as they would have liked (*Teachers' feelings about their reading of YA Literature)*. Themes, then, produced data that could be used to answer more than one of my research questions. In the interview results chapters that follow, therefore, I have indicated from which themes I have derived my data. A full breakdown of all codes and themes generated by the interviews can be found in Appendix H. Below in Figure 7 is a chart which, using pseudonyms, allows the interviewees' responses to be understood in the light of their sex, their age, the number of years they had been teaching and the subject of their degree. I use these pseudonyms to identify the interviewees in subsequent chapters.

Figure 7: Information which, using pseudonyms, allows the interviewees' responses to be understood in the light of their sex, their age, the number of years they had been teaching and the subject of their degree.

Name	Age	Years Teaching	Degree
Wes	53	16	English Language and Literature
Sarah	42	15	English Literature
Lydia	40	18	English Literature
Rose	39	15	English Literature
Kate	48	25	English Literature and History
Jenny	37	15	English Studies
Christine	35	14	English Literature
Clarissa	36	15	English Literature and Professional Education
Becky	27	1.5	English Literature
Kylie	34	2.7	English Literature and History

4.2 Summary

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to create what Koch (2006) calls a “decision trail” (p. 92). I have detailed what literature I used to construct a pilot questionnaire, and what amendments were made following piloting. Similarly, I have discussed literature which helped influence my creation of questions for the semi-structured interviews, and explored the changes made following piloting. I have therefore attempted to not only provide transparency so allowing for thorough critique (Long and Johnson, 2009), but have also worked to achieve validity or trustworthiness by endeavouring to represent “accurately those features of the phenomena that [I] intended to describe, explain or theorise” (Hammersely, 1992). I have recognised that my embedded role as a participant researcher will necessarily influence my research, but rather than attempting to negate the concerns surrounding this position, I have instead attempted to take on the role of reflexive researcher (Hammersely and Atkinson, 1995; Braun and Clarke, 2022), and tried to understand this impact. Ultimately, I have endeavoured to craft a methodology which will not only answer my research questions, but also contribute “evocative, true-to-life, and meaningful portraits, stories, and landscapes of human experience” (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 1), to the literature associated with the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English.

Chapter 3 - What are the reading habits of the secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? Results and discussion of the questionnaire.

"Then the last page was read, the book was finished. I had to stop the headlong rush of my eyes and of the voice which followed noiselessly, stopping only to regain my breath in a deep sigh" - Proust (1972, p.23).

This chapter begins to discuss the results of the questionnaire sent out electronically to 164 secondary school English teachers during the late autumn of 2021. It was ultimately completed by 99 teachers, a response rate of 60.3%. It specifically focuses on the questionnaire questions which work to answer my first research question: What are the reading habits of the secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? I determined these to be questionnaire questions five to 13, and elements of responses generated by Q18. I have offered my results as both total figures and percentages when the figure in question has been over 10. Given that my response rate was a total of 99, results below 10 tended to work out as identical whether presented as total figures or as a percentage.

This chapter discusses each questionnaire question in turn, and attempts to identify patterns and trends within answers given. In Chapter 4, I then turn to the data gathered as a result of my interviews and consider how this dataset also answers this initial research question. A similar pattern is followed in later chapters to provide results and discussion focused on my second and third research questions: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?, and, How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?

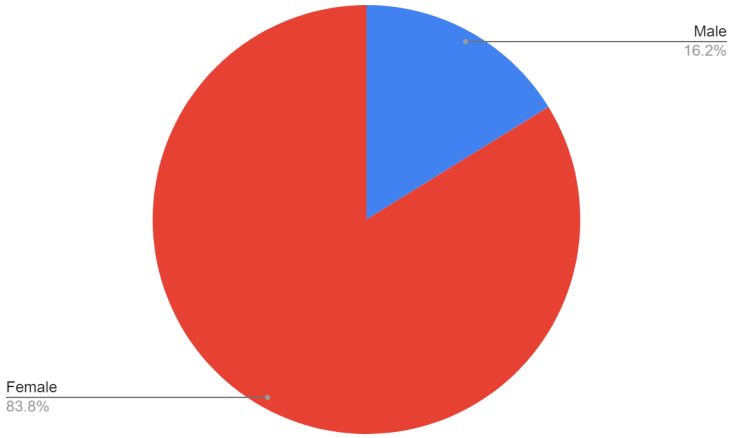
Introductory Questions

Responses to the first three questions of the questionnaire are included here in order to provide context for the more nuanced and qualitative questions that follow.

Q2. What is your gender?

The results regarding the gender of those who took part are shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8 - Gender divide in responses

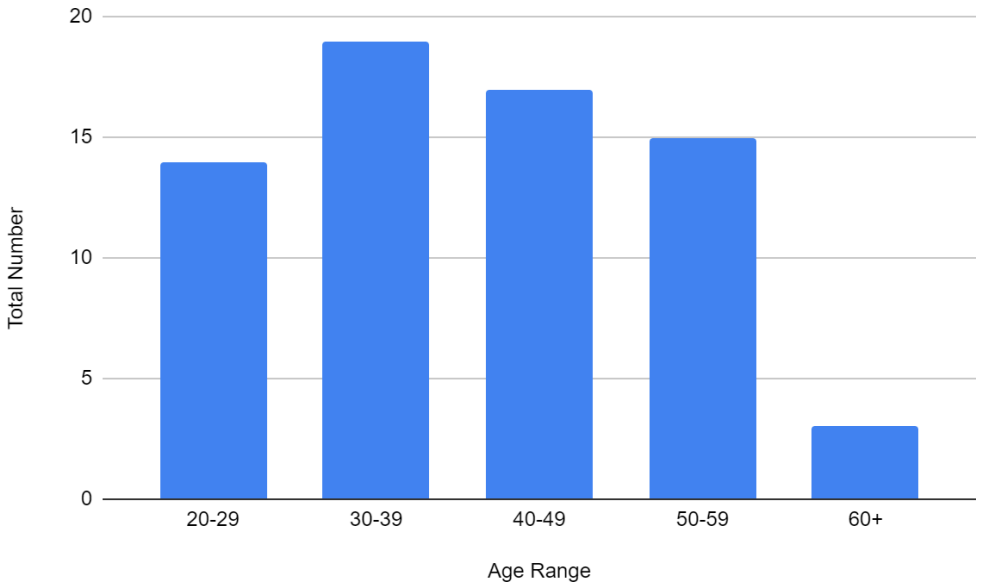


The greater numbers of female to male respondents appears to reflect a recognised challenge in the teaching profession in the UK and overseas (Mills, Martino and Lingard, 2004, and Lahelma, 2006). It is also something that I discuss in more detail later in this thesis as I begin to explore the obstacles to reading reported by my participants

Q3. What is your age?

Every respondent answered this question. The results appear in Figure 9 and show that the age range with the greatest number of respondents was between 30 and 39. This age range also contained the most frequently identified ages: 31 (identified by 6), 32 (7), 34 (7) and 38 (6). Only three respondents were older than 60.

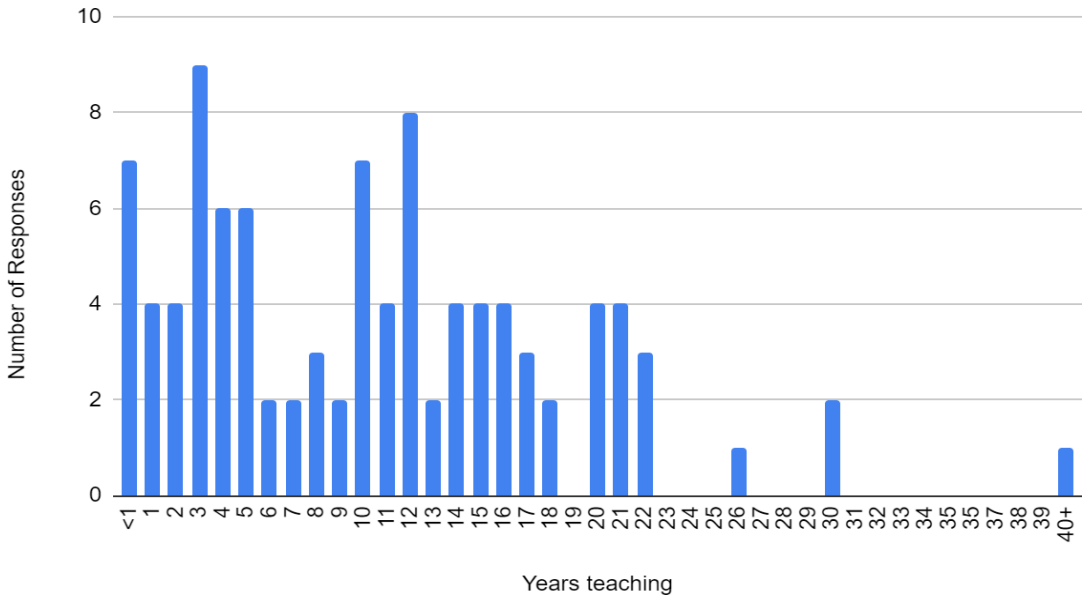
Figure 9 - Total number of teachers in each age range



Q4. How many years have you worked as an English teacher?

Every respondent answered this question and the results can be seen in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10 - Number of responses compared to years spent as an English teacher



Seven teachers indicated that they had been training/teaching for just one year, nine had been teaching for three years, and seven for a total of 10 years. The greatest number of respondents had been teaching for 12 years or less. After 12 years, responses dip and eventually dwindle off, ending on one respondent with more than 40 years of teaching. That teachers with fewer years in the classroom were more likely to take part in the survey, could suggest an eagerness or willingness to become involved in new initiatives, or, alternatively, a desire to be compliant. It perhaps also reflects the fact that more experienced teachers may hold leadership positions and have less time to spend on what they consider to be non-urgent business, such as filling out a questionnaire. This is possibly evident in that after the age of 39, the numbers of teachers in each age bracket began to decline (see Figure 9 above), meaning that fewer teachers of that age group were in a position to complete the survey. Interestingly, Reichenberg (2018) found that the older Norwegian and Swedish teachers participating in her study read more non-fiction and fiction than their younger counterparts. If that finding was also the case in older English secondary school teachers of English, it is surprising that these older teachers did not want to share their reading habits. This could be a fruitful line of enquiry for future research.

Q5. How descriptive are these statements about your reading life?

This question was crafted in an attempt to garner a first insight into the respondents' reading habits, with a view to determining how they saw themselves as readers. Did they prefer reading in their lives to the exclusion of other activities? Were they frustrated that they could not spend more time reading, or was reading just one of many activities they enjoyed in the course of their day to day lives? The results for this question are shown in detail in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11 - How descriptive are these statements about your reading life?

	Extremely (n)	Very (n)	Somewhat (n)	Slightly (n)	Not at all (n)
I love to read	77	19	3	0	0
I read for a sustained period every day	11	29	31	12	0
Preparing for my role as a teacher negatively impacts on the time I have available to read books of my own choice	40	31	20	3	5
I get lots of satisfaction from my personal reading	71	25	1	0	0
I would read more if I had more time	87	8	3	1	0
I preference other pursuits, such as crafting, exercising, watching television etc… over reading	3	16	37	18	25

A total of 77 respondents (77.7%) said they loved to read, but only 11 (11.1%) felt that they read for a sustained period every day. This links to the fact that 87 (87.8%) indicated that they would read more if they had more time, and a total of 71 (71.1%) felt that the preparatory work they needed to undertake in order to fulfil their professional responsibilities either extremely negatively affected their available reading time or was very likely to. Interestingly, and perhaps unexpectedly, three English teachers said that a love of reading only “somewhat” described their reading habits, one reported only “somewhat” deriving “lots of satisfaction” from their reading, and one said they were only “slightly” likely to read more if time presented itself. These results begin to suggest that the reading habits of at least some English teachers may not reflect the professional, societal and academic expectations I discussed in my literature review, but rather echo the findings of Applegate and Applegate (2014) who discovered a “...strikingly low level of enthusiasm for reading” (p. 188) in the trainee teachers they interviewed. This is perhaps also demonstrated in my study by the fact that 37 respondents (37.3%) said they were “somewhat” likely to prefer other hobbies or pursuits over reading, with a total of 31 (31.3%) only “somewhat” likely to read for a sustained period, therefore suggesting that teachers’ time is willingly absorbed in other pursuits, the nature of which are explored in further questions.

Q6. How much time do you spend on an average day doing the following (time you spend reading…)

This question was designed to explore how reading might look different for respondents at different times of the week and the year. It touched on the idea, followed up in later questions, that the reading habits of respondents might include reading for both personal and professional reasons and satisfactions. It also gave respondents the chance to offer a longer, more considered response to a sub-question which explored the obstacles that might prevent them from reading. Figure 12 below shows the results of the questions aimed at exploring the time respondents spent reading different text types at different time periods.

Figure 12 - How much time do you spend on an average day doing the following… The amount of time is represented as minutes at the top of the table.

	No time	1-15	16-30	31-60	60+
Reading required texts/materials and planning lessons for the following day/week if it's a school night	5	12	31	27	24
Reading professional materials such as educational journals or texts on an average day	42	39	10	4	4
Reading for pleasure on an average day during the school holidays	0	4	15	31	49
Reading for pleasure on a weekend	11	6	20	29	33
Reading for pleasure if it's a school night	26	23	30	19	1

Respondents indicated that the reading completed on a school night, outside of hours traditionally associated with the working day but during the working week, was devoted mostly to preparation for upcoming lessons, rather than reading for their own pleasure. Twenty-four respondents (24.2%) spent more than an hour on professional responsibilities on a school evening, which is perhaps also reflected in the finding that 26 respondents (26.2%) said they had no time to read for pleasure on a school night. This sense that time was precious for respondents might also be reflected in the fact that 11 teachers (11.1%) said that, even on a weekend, they did not read for pleasure. Only eight respondents indicated that they spent more than 30 minutes reading

professional journals or books, perhaps suggesting a focus on the more practical rather than theoretical elements of teaching as practitioners. More than half the respondents said they read for pleasure for more than an hour every day during the school holidays, while 33 (33.3%) said they read for pleasure for more than an hour at weekends. These findings suggest that teachers' time to read for pleasure during the week plays second fiddle to their professional responsibilities, as found by Boemmel at al (2019). However, at weekends and during holidays when their time is less structured, many are indeed able to find time to read.

Q7. Are there any obstacles you encounter in your day-to-day life which prevent you from reading as much as you would like? What are they?

This question was designed to catalogue the obstacles that respondents identified as preventing them from reading as much as they would like. It was the first qualitative question on the questionnaire. Fourteen (14.1%) failed to answer, one said that they encountered no obstacles to their reading life, and another felt this question was not applicable to them, although whether that was because they also encountered no obstacles, or whether they simply had no drive to read, is not clear. However, the remaining answers were extremely rich and varied. Using Braun and Clarke's methods of thematic analysis (2006) for the questionnaire responses, as discussed in detail earlier, it was possible to identify a series of codes, which I was then able to group into themes, namely:

- Day to day domestic responsibilities
- The effect of having children and/or being part of a family
- The effect of professional responsibilities
- The effect of physical tiredness

Figure 13 - Thematic coding of data generated in response to the questionnaire question: Are there any obstacles you encounter in your day-to-day life which prevent you from reading as much as you would like? What are they?

Codes	Number of times identified	Themes
Walking the dog/having an animal	4	Day to day domestic responsibilities
Husband also works	2	
“Life in general”	4	
“Life admin”	1	
Day to day responsibilities	6	
Household chores	9	
No quiet space	2	
Housework	13	
Visiting family at the weekends	1	
Eating	2	
Making meals	8	
Being a parent is time consuming and tiring	23	The effect of having children and/or being part of a family
Being part of a family/spending time with family	10	
Early starts	1	
Getting children ready for the following day	1	
Children watch TV which is distracting	1	
Finding activities for children that are not	1	

screen based		
Children need to be driven to extra-curricular activities	3	
Commuting to and from work	2	The effect of professional duties
Long school day/getting home later	3	
Meetings after work	1	
General workload	16	
Marking	15	
Hard to switch off leading to feelings of guilt	1	
Preparing to go to work	1	
Getting home from work	1	
Jobs with a tight turn-around	1	
Planning	16	
Attending Continuing Professional Development (CPD) after school	2	
Additional role as a senior leader	1	
Marking as an examiner for a board	1	
Work admin	4	
Creating enough time/Desire to switch off	1	The effect of physical and mental tiredness
Tiredness caused by work/family	2	
Struggling to	1	

concentrate because of tiredness		
Falling asleep while reading	4	
Need to sleep	1	
Too tired to read at bedtime	6	
Eyes too tired to read	2	
Socialising	1	Other reasons
Not enough time	2	
Hand and neck injuries make holding a book challenging	1	
Exercise	3	
Prioritise companionship after working alone	1	
Having an additional job	1	

7.1 Day to day domestic duties

References to household chores or housework were repeated throughout the questionnaire responses. Thirteen respondents (13.1%) referenced the term “housework”, which I interpreted to mean general cleaning and home maintenance duties. Nine respondents said “household chores” were a barrier to reading. I interpreted this to mean not only cleaning and maintenance, but also washing, ironing and putting away clothes, cooking, buying groceries and supplies, and other jobs that are necessary to ensure the smooth running of a household. Six respondents referenced “day to day” responsibilities, one mentioned “life admin” and four said “life in general”, which I took to include the above mentioned “chores”, but also things like making medical appointments, booking a car in for a service, and other practical responsibilities included in day-to-day living. Given that almost 84% of the respondents were female, it is perhaps not unreasonable to speculate that female teachers were bearing the brunt of their household’s domestic duties, leading two respondents to lament the fact they had no quiet space to read. Two respondents also mentioned that they had a husband who also worked, which ate into their time to read, presumably

because of the additional domestic responsibilities they took on, bringing to mind Molière's words, "Books and marriage go ill together" (1672/1993, p. 101).

References to food were also prevalent within the reasons given. Seven respondents said their time was taken up "making tea" or feeding their family their evening meal. One mentioned needing to prepare lunches for the following day and two respondents said that merely "eating" in order to live was time consuming and prevented them from reading as much as they would like. Owning pets was another factor respondents referenced, but while they prevented respondents from reading, their effect seemed not to be identified with domestic workload in quite the same way. The effect of owning pets was identified as something that took up time, but was also considered by some to be positive and was often expressed in a more light-hearted manner. One respondent whimsically reported that they couldn't read because their dog demanded their attention by actively sitting on their books, and another respondent said that walking their dog actually helped with "de-stressing" from the rigours of the day and allowed them some "brain time". This idea of needing time to decompress after a busy day was also linked by respondents to the idea of tiredness and I discuss it in more detail in the tiredness sub-section. Three respondents linked the idea of looking after elderly or sick parents, or visiting family at weekends, as domestic duties.

7.2 Effect of children and/or being part of a family

Having children was widely considered to be an obstacle to reading by the questionnaire respondents. Clearly these parents loved their children and other members of the family, but there was a clear recognition that having children limited the time these respondents had to read. In the questionnaire, nineteen respondents (19.1%) said that having children, or being a parent with the associated roles and responsibilities, affected their reading time. Two respondents singled out being a "mum" or a "father" as time consuming, but the latter respondent did also mention that while being a new dad took up his time it would also lead to him reading more children's books in the future, a view not universally shared. While not referencing children specifically, 10 respondents (10.1%) said that being part of a family, or spending time with their family, took up their time. Children needed to be entertained away from screens for one respondent, or driven to sporting or other extra-curricular activities for three respondents. Their early starts sapped time for another respondent, and two respondents mentioned that by the time their children went to bed, they were themselves too tired to read. School paraphernalia needed to be readied for the following day which took planning and time for one respondent. Finally, perhaps

tongue-in-cheek, one respondent said they could not read as much as they would have liked because their children were always watching television and it was distracting. While this may have been meant light-heartedly it also harks back to the respondents in the earlier subsection who lamented that they lacked a quiet space to read, or as Virginia Woolf (1929/2017) would put it, a room of one's own.

7.3 Professional Duties

The industry of an English teacher's life was very much in evidence in this section. The time needed to plan and prepare for lessons and to mark was repeatedly cited by respondents in the questionnaire. Sixteen respondents (16.1%) to the questionnaire said planning for future lessons absorbed their time, with four responding that preparation for work and "work admin" were also time consuming and prevented them from reading. Fifteen (15.1%) said the job of marking took up their time, one described this workload as "heavy", while another mentioned the marking of both "assessments and books", which perhaps suggests a recognition that the testing process in English requires marking in addition to the day-to-day work which takes place in exercise books. This was also apparent in the response of one teacher who said that marking in Y10 and Y11 was particularly demanding. One respondent mentioned that their marking also took place at "weekends and after-school", though this comment stood alone. Perhaps the fact that no other respondent signalled their "free" time was used this way also correlates with the fact that more than 60 respondents (60.6%) said they caught up with their reading for pleasure on a weekend, as discussed in an earlier question. Sixteen respondents (16.1%) also made reference to "work" or the "workload" associated with teaching, but didn't specify the exact nature of this workload.

Apart from the need to be prepared to teach, respondents signalled a variety of other reasons as to why their professional duties ate into their time. Meetings after work occupied one respondent, while the issue of a long school day and getting home late took up the time of three respondents. The time it takes to travel to and from work was an issue for three respondents, while attending compulsory staff training after school (known as CPD or Continuing Professional Development) was a problem for another respondent. The expectations of school leaders was raised by one respondent who complained that their time was taken up by "jobs with a tight turnaround". The time taken to prepare to actually go to work took up the time of one respondent. Finally, one respondent alluded to the fact that their job was so pervasive in their life that they could not read because they felt "unable to cut away" and reading for their own pleasure led to feelings of guilt. The perception by respondents that their workload

meant it was difficult to establish a satisfactory work life balance echoes the findings of Walker (2019).

7.4 Feelings of Tiredness

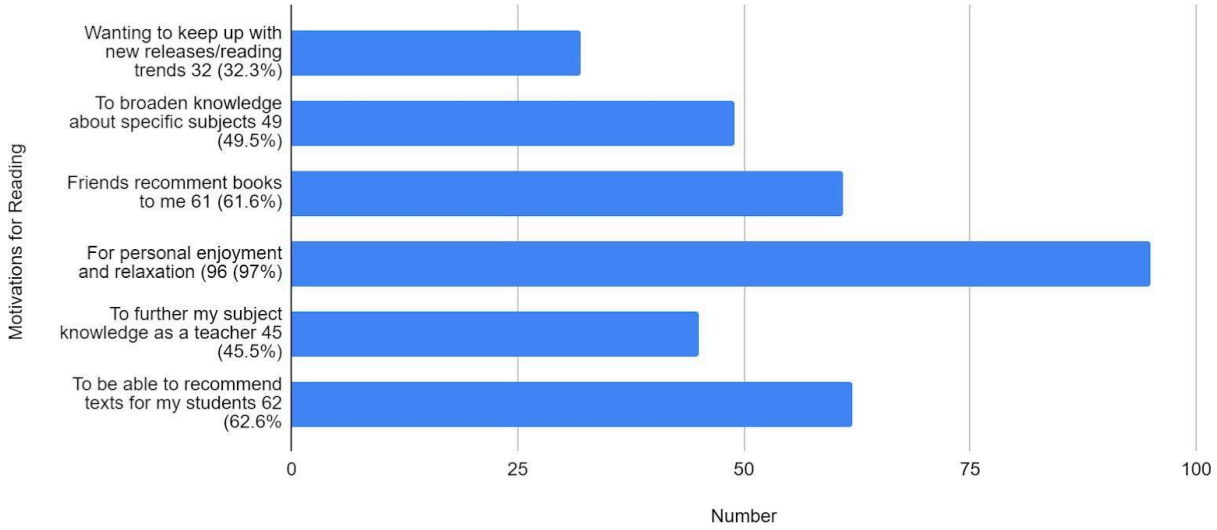
Feeling too tired to actually read following a busy day at work was a repeated theme here. Two respondents said their eyes were too tired to read in the evening, perhaps as a result of extensive screen time at work. Six respondents said they were too tired to read at bedtime, with one of those respondents saying this meant they ended up watching television instead, although the implied suggestion that watching television is less tiring than reading is an interesting one. Another respondent said they did not have the "brain power" to read at the end of the day, another said that they "struggle to concentrate" following a day in the classroom, and this idea of being "mentally tired" was also mentioned by one of the interviewees. For two respondents, finding the time to de-stress through reading simply wasn't possible because of their active lives. These responses perhaps signal the mental toll teaching takes on people. Of course, it could be argued that many professions could be equally as exhausting, and some even more so than teaching. However, what is clear from my findings is that a significant number of my respondents perceived their tiredness, caused by a combination of their roles and their busy lives, to be so pronounced as to prevent them from reading. One respondent said that tiredness caused by workload and family means there was "hardly any time left for me". Four respondents said their tiredness was so acute that they actually fell asleep while they attempted to read at bedtime.

There were a variety of other reasons for being unable to read. Three respondents said they spent some of their time exercising. Another said they would prioritise companionship after doing schoolwork alone; this was echoed in the response of another teacher who said that their "socialising" prevented them from reading. Having an additional job was a drain for one respondent who worked in a museum, while another said that the head and neck injuries they suffered actively prevented them from holding up a book for long periods.

Q8. What motivates you to read?

This question from the questionnaire was designed to explore the motivational factors behind English teachers' reading habits. Were they motivated by professional reasons (to further their subject knowledge as a teacher) or by personal reasons (for personal enjoyment and relaxation) or a combination of both. The results of this question are recorded in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14 - What motivates you to read?



Respondents were presented with six suggestions as to their motivation to read and could click on as many as they felt applied. The variety of suggestions resulted in 33 different combinations, and, in 30 of those combinations, respondents, a total number of 96 (97%), included the option that they read for personal enjoyment and relaxation. Sixty-two respondents (62.6%) said they read in order to be able to recommend texts for their students, and this reason occurred in 18 of the combinations. Ten respondents signalled that all six suggestions were motivational factors behind their reading, while 11 (11.1%) said that all the statements, with the exception of wanting to keep up with new releases/reading trends, provided their motivation to read. Eight respondents said that they only read for personal enjoyment and relaxation, while nobody read solely for professional reasons. This final finding is discussed in more detail in my discussion associated with Q12 and in my conclusion, but does seem to suggest that for some teachers, improving their subject knowledge and being able to discuss and recommend texts with their students, is not a motivational factor behind their decision to read, perhaps echoing the findings of Littman and Stodolsky (1998) and Monoz and Valenzuela (2019) as discussed earlier.

Q9. What is the title and who is the author of the book you are presently reading?

Ninety-six respondents (96.9%) provided at least one title in response to this question, which was designed to create an insight into reading tastes and literary genre preferences. Five respondents provided more than one title. Respondents completed the questionnaire during November and December 2021 so the responses not only

provide a snapshot of these English teachers' reading choices but are also an insight into the publishing world at that time. This is particularly evident in that only four titles within the 96 cited were being read by more than one respondent and all had been published within three years of the questionnaire's issue: *Shuggie Bain* (2020) by Douglas Stuart, winner of the 2020 Booker prize; *The Man who Died Twice* (2021) by Richard Osman; *The Widow of Rose House* (2019) by Diana Biller; and *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) by Delia Owens. Indeed, of the 96 titles reported by respondents, only 24 (25%) had been published more than a decade earlier than the issue of the questionnaire. Eight titles (8.3%) had been published in 2021 and 13 (13.5%) had been published in the twentieth century. The earliest publication date for a title was 1906 *The Railway Children* by Edith Nesbit. No respondent listed a title published in the 19th Century. It is interesting that although participants were not limited to reporting their reading of fiction, it is this literary genre that was most prevalent in the responses.

Three respondents said they were not reading a text at all at the moment, although one did add that they did "aim to finish a book by the end of a half-term holiday". Given that the October half-term holidays had just passed I interpreted that to mean that this respondent had recently finished a book but had yet to pick up another, and presumably was one of the respondents who in earlier questions had identified that their reading increased during the holidays. Five respondents had more than one book on the go. Two respondents said they were reading a print and an audible book at the same time - one at home and one in the car as they drove to and from work. One respondent broke down their reading in to specific areas - they were reading one book for pleasure (Erin Morgenster's *The Starless Sea* (2019), one for professional development (*Mindset* (2006) by Carol Dweck) and one in the car on the way to work: *Oathbringer* (2019) by Brandon Sanderson, amounting to a widely diverse range of genres from Literary Fiction, research-focused personal development and finally fantasy, in a variety of reading forms. Five respondents were unable to cite the name of the book they were reading, but offered the author instead.

Of the responses where at least one title was named, the majority were works of fiction, while 17 (17.7%) were non-fiction, covering such topics as history (*Stalingrad* (2007) by Antony Beevor), general knowledge (*A Short History of Nearly Everything* (2004) by Bill Bryson) and the role of women in scientific development (*Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (2019) by Caroline Criado-Perez. Only two authors were named more than once throughout the responses, Lee Child and Marian Keyes, representing the two very different genres of action thriller and romance.

Of the responses in which at least one individual text was mentioned, only six respondents indicated that they were reading children's or young adult literature. Titles listed included *High-Rise Mystery* (2019) by Sharna Jackson (which was being read as part of a Year Eight reading group at one of the trust's schools), fiction title *The Book Thief* (2007) by Markus Zusak, fantasy novel *Shadow and Bone* (2013) by Leigh Bardugo, *La Belle Sauvage: The Book of Dust* (2018) by Philip Pullman, T*he Railway Children* (1906) as mentioned above, and popular classroom novel *Refugee Boy* (2013) by Benjamin Zephaniah. Although the range of titles was fairly diverse in content, genre and publication date, that fewer children's literature texts than adult texts were being read by secondary school English teachers at that point in time was notable, and reflective at secondary school level of Cremin's (2008) findings.

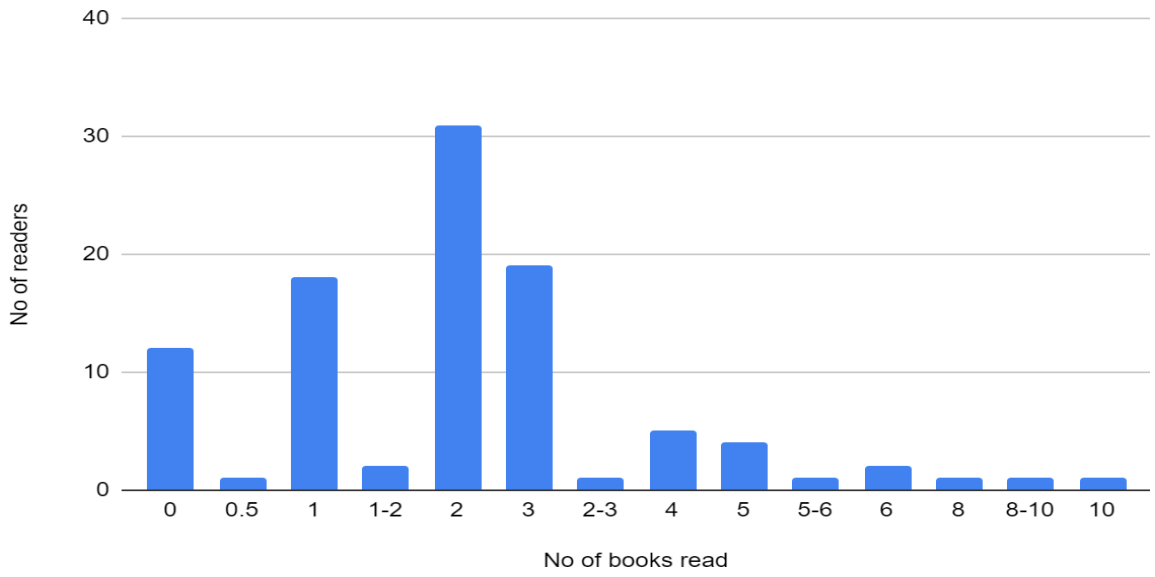
By far the most popular fiction category was Literary Fiction with 19 (19.7%) respondents reading contemporary titles such as *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) by Nathan Harris and *The Girl With The Louding Voice* (2021) by Abi Daré. The next most popular fiction categories were fantasy works, such as *Piranesi* (2021) by Susanna Clark, memoirs such as *Rosie: Scenes from a Vanished Life* (2018) by Rose Tremain, with eight respondents reading within that genre. Six respondents said they were reading psychological thrillers such as *The Family Upstairs* (2019) by Lisa Jewell, six also indicated that they were reading romance novels, such as *One August Night* (2020) by Victoria Hislop. The same number were enjoying the cosy murder category encapsulated by the Richard Osman novel *The Man Who Died Twice* (2021) and also the historical fiction category, represented by titles such as *Wolf Hall* (2009) by Hilary Mantel. Respondents were also reading within the literary genres and fiction categories of: Biography (2 readers); crime (4); historical romance (3); dystopian fiction (3); action thriller (3); the re-telling of an ancient story/legend/myth (1); science fiction (3); horror featuring the paranormal (2); domestic fiction (3); self-help (3); travel literature (2). Two respondents were reading short story collections and three were reading books in translation. As can be seen, the list of works cited by respondents was extensive and extremely diverse in its content, literary genre choice and language of publication. It is interesting to note that, in response to this question, no participant was reading any text form other than fiction or nonfiction.

Q10. How many entire books would you say you have read in the last month?

This question was designed to explore the number of books respondents were reading during an average month. As the questionnaire was delivered during November and December 2021, this month may for some respondents have included a half-term, for others it may not have done, depending on the date they completed the survey. There

are very few months in a year in which teachers do not have at least part of a holiday, and so the time of the delivery would have allowed for a fairly typical reading month, avoiding as it did the fewer, longer holidays of the summer, Easter and Christmas. The findings can be seen in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15 - How many entire books would you say you have read in the last month?



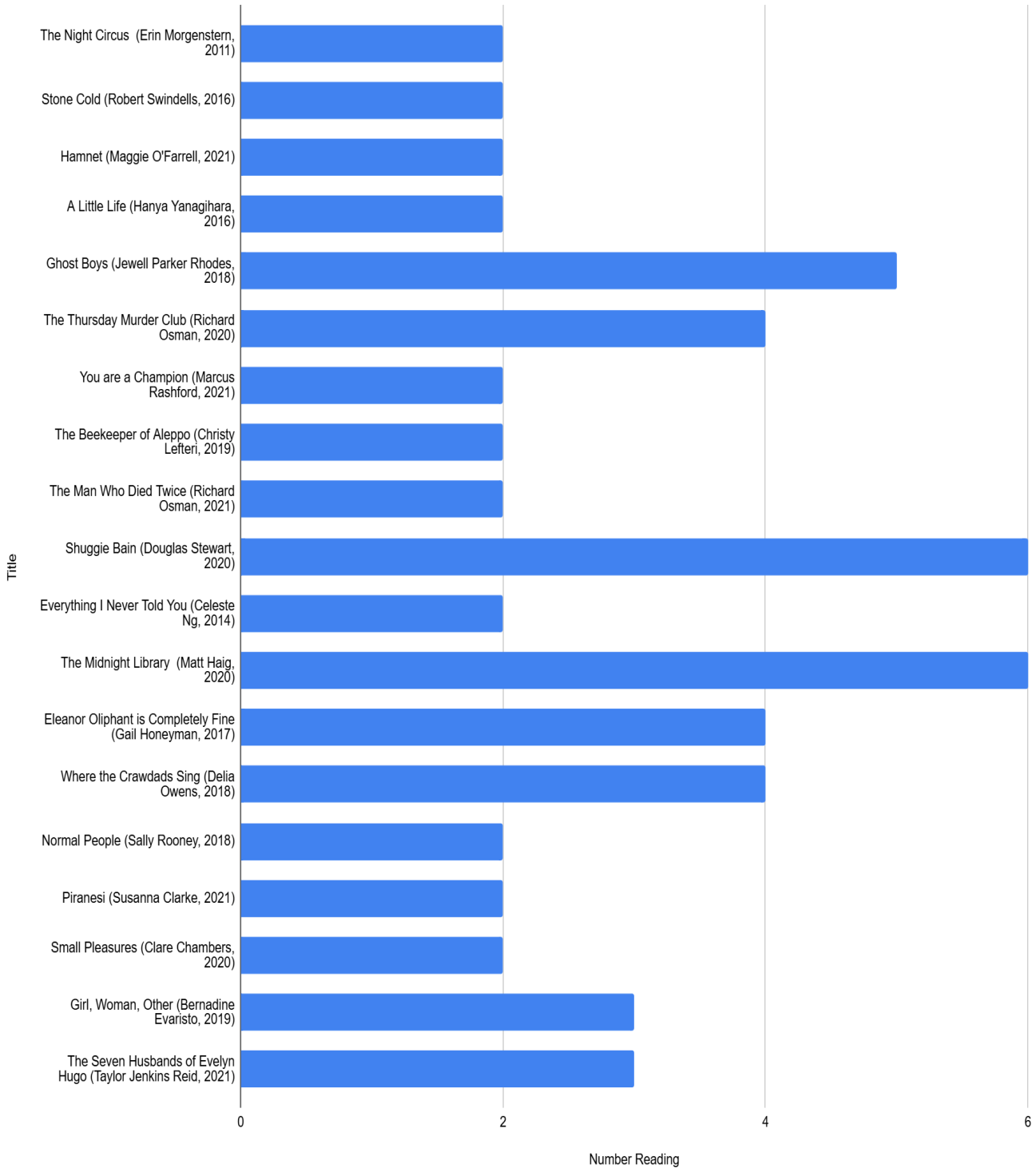
Interestingly, 12 respondents (12.1%) had not completed an entire book in the last month. Thirty-one respondents (31.3%) said they had read two books, and 19 respondents (19.1%) said they had read three books, to which can be added, the single respondent who said they had read between two to three books. Some respondents were finding the time to complete around a book a week, with four respondents having read four books over the last month, and the same number completing five books. The completion of a greater number of books was more rare. One respondent had managed to read 10 books, and another eight, but these respondents were in the minority.

Q11. List three books you have enjoyed reading recently (excluding the title you are presently reading).

While Q9 was designed to create a snapshot in time of the respondents' reading habits, Q11, in its potential for a wider range of responses, was designed to provide a more detailed insight into the kinds of texts the respondents favoured over time. In allowing for a greater number of titles to be listed, the question allowed for

respondents to cite a range of responses read during different periods in the respondents' lives. This meant respondents might report titles that showed a consistent preference for a certain kind of text (one respondent cited only psychological thrillers in their response), or preferences for a wider variety of text types, such as poetry. This question meant that respondents' reading habits were not simply limited to the text they were reading currently, and allowed for a more thorough investigation of my research questions. In total 90 respondents cited 258 texts which they had enjoyed. The titles which were mentioned more than once and the numbers reading them can be seen in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16 - Numbers reading repeated titles



Seven respondents left this question blank. One wrote, “[I] can’t recall the last book I read”. One simply answered with the number “4”, suggesting they had not read the question properly, somewhat ironic in a questionnaire about reading.

This question resulted in far more repeated titles, 19 in total. These titles were more varied in their literary genre type than the repeated titles in Q9. The fiction categories listed included young adult/children’s literature, literary fiction, cosy murder titles, and fantasy. Literary fiction again proved to be the category respondents said they enjoyed the most, but the escapism of the Richard Osman cosy murder series (*The Thursday Murder Club* and *The Man Who Died Twice*) was also noticeable as these texts were mentioned six times. *Ghost Boys*, a young adult novel by Jewell Parker Rhodes was mentioned five times. The short novel, which revolves around the killing of a black boy by an American policeman, is perhaps reflective of a move by English departments within my trust to introduce more diversity into their KS3 schemes of work following the killing of black American man George Floyd in May 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the subsequent political and social movement of Black Lives Matter which came to widespread attention shortly afterwards.

This question also generated far more evidence of teachers reading YA or children’s literature over time. In total 13 (5%) YA or children’s literature texts were mentioned, with Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford’s book *You Are a Champion*, mentioned twice and the only non-fiction text to be listed. The YA works recorded encompassed a variety of categories, from historical fiction (*Secrets of a Sun King* (2018) by Emma Carroll) through science fiction (*The Extinction Trials* (2017) by S M Wilson) to psychological fiction involving a murder (*One of Us is Lying* (2017) by Karen M McManus). Every YA title listed featured a publication date within the last decade, apart from *Stone Cold*, by Robert Swindells, which was published in 1993 but is still a favourite in schools at KS3 level. Unlike in Q9, where no respondent was reading a text published in the 19th Century, Q11 revealed these texts were indeed being read by the respondents. Twelve texts (4.6%), which could be comfortably placed in the literary canon genre, were listed as having been enjoyed recently, of which seven (*Villette* (1853) by Charlotte Bronte, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holme*s (1892) by Arthur Conan Doyle, *Anna Karenina* (1878) by Tolstoy, *Great Expectations (1861) and A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Dickens, *A Woman of No Importance* (1893/2004) by Oscar Wilde and *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte) were published in the 19th Century. Two texts by John Steinbeck were listed, *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *East of Eden* (1952) and two works by George Orwell were referenced, *1984* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1944). Interestingly, *A Christmas Carol* and *Of Mice and Men* are regularly taught in school at KS4 and KS3 level respectively,

suggesting perhaps that the respondents may have read these texts as part of their professional obligation and had they not been teaching a scheme of work which used these texts, they may not have appeared on the list.

Orwell and Steinbeck were among 12 authors to have been mentioned more than once by the respondents. Other authors mentioned ranged from two female Booker prize winners (Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo), through non-fiction writer Oliver Burkeman (the only non-fiction writer to be mentioned more than once), to established literary author Pat Barker, author of the *Regeneration* trilogy (2008), American mass-market best seller Taylor Jenkins Reid, British quiz show host-turned author Richard Osman (author of the *Thursday Murder Club* novels), ghost story writer Michelle Paver and contemporary literary fiction writers Sally Rooney and Matt Haig.

Two respondents said they had enjoyed reading professional subject-specific books (*Closing the Vocabulary Ga*p (2018) by Alex Quigley and *Running the Room* (2020) by Tom Bennett). Two respondents were reading poetry or a book including some poetry (*On Drinking* (2019) by Charles Bokowski and *A Poem for Every Winter Day* (2020) compiled by Allie Esiri). Two respondents reported enjoying non-fiction issues-driven texts *(Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (2018) by Reni Eddo-Lodge and *Uncomfortable Conversations With a Black Man* (2020) by Emmanuel Acho). Dystopian fiction had been enjoyed by four respondents (*The Testaments* and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (2019, 2016), *The Water Cure* (2020) by Sophie Mackintosh and *The New Wilderness* (2020) by Diane Cook). Horror writers Stephen King and James Herbert were listed with their classic novels *Salem's Lot* (2008) and *The Fog* (2011) respectively. But less gory ghost stories were also being enjoyed, such as *Wykenhurst* (2019) by Michelle Paver and *Foxglove Summer* (2014) by Ben Aaronovitch. Holocaust novels *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* (2018) by Heather Morris and *The Librarian of Auschwitz* (2019) by Antonio Iturbe were listed, suggesting some respondents favoured a more challenging but redemptive read.

The re-telling of classic myths and folklore was also popular. Respondents listed *The Women of Troy* (2021) by Pat Barker, *Norse Mythology* (2020) by Neil Gaiman and *Ariadne* (2021) by Jennifer Saint. American police-procedurals *Another Man's Moccasins* (2020) by Craig Johnson and *Heartwood* (2010) by James Lee Burke were also mentioned, together with British police procedural texts, such as *Death on the Nile* (1937) by Agatha Christie and *The Conwy Harbour Killings* (2021) by Simon McCleave. Two respondents said they had enjoyed a spiritual or religious book recently (reminding us of Commeyras and Mazile's (2011) findings from Botswana), listing *A Praying Life* (2017) by Paul E Miller and *Gentle and Lowly* (2020) by Dane

Ortland, which stood in contrast to the 26 (10.7%) thrillers or psychological thrillers mentioned by 19 (21.1%) separate respondents. These texts comprised mostly contemporary, mass-market best sellers such as novels by Shari Lapena and Lisa Jewell. Autobiographical, science fiction and fantasy texts were also listed by respondents, but in fewer numbers, as were self-help texts and romance novels.

Of the seven respondents who left this question entirely blank, all seven had indicated in their answers to Q10 that they were currently reading a text and were able to name that text. In contrast, four of the seven had also previously answered that they would not read a single book in an average month. In Q7 which asked about obstacles to reading these four respondents had referenced, “marking and planning”, “time” and “planning and preparation and family”. One had elaborated in more detail: “It’s really the workload and having my mind full of what I need to do on a day-to-day basis that stops me reading. Basically it’s lack of head space.” These responses suggest a combination of professional and personal obligations resulting in no time to read and “no head space” with which to enjoy reading. Three of the seven who said they would read a number of titles during an average month, indicated that they had read one, two and three books. This suggests that these respondents were reading, but perhaps could not remember the title or author of a book they had enjoyed recently, or chose not to complete the question due to time or other pressures. The respondent who indicated that they couldn’t “recall the last book” they had read had also indicated that they were reading a book currently and would read one book on average a month, perhaps suggesting that the text they were currently engaged with was the first for some time.

Q12. Likelihood of reading different genres and types of texts

This question explored the different range of text types that the respondents favoured. It sought to investigate whether and how much the respondents' reading choices were determined by recreational, reading for pleasure choices, choices designed to improve their subject knowledge relating to educational theory and knowledge, and choices which would allow them to explore and engage with texts that could interest their students in a classroom setting.

Figure 17 - The likelihood of respondents reading different text types.

	Extremely (n)	Very (n)	Somewhat (n)	Slightly (n)	Not at all (n)
How likely are you to read literary fiction aimed at adults?	74	16	6	3	0
How likely are you to read fiction aimed at young adults?	24	27	36	10	2
How likely are you to read non-fiction writing?	14	21	36	21	6
How likely are you to read mass-market best sellers?	19	30	34	13	2
How likely are you to read magazines?	3	8	22	28	38
How likely are you to read graphic novels?	3	6	12	20	58
How likely are you to read newspapers?	19	12	18	32	18
How likely are you to read poetry collections?	6	14	28	30	21
How likely are you to read academic journals?	1	10	35	27	0

A total of 90 respondents (90.9%) said they were extremely likely or very likely to read literary fiction, which is consistent with the earlier findings of Q9 and Q11 where literary fiction texts were by far the most popular choice of text. Indeed, nobody said they would not be likely at all to read these kinds of texts. Fifty-one respondents (51.5%) said they would be extremely likely or very likely to read literature aimed at young adults, thus making this text type the second most popular reading choice - although this result was not reflected in responses to earlier questions. Reading non-fiction split respondents fairly equally. Thirty-five (35.3%) said they would be extremely likely or very likely to read non-fiction texts, while 27 (27.2%) said they would be slightly likely or not at all likely to read non-fiction texts. More respondents said they were extremely likely or very likely to favour a young adult read than they were to read a mass-market best seller.

Interestingly, this finding is not reflected in the answers to Q9 and Q11, where mass-market best sellers were often to be found in the form of psychological thrillers, and in greater numbers than the YA or children's literature titles listed. This is perhaps

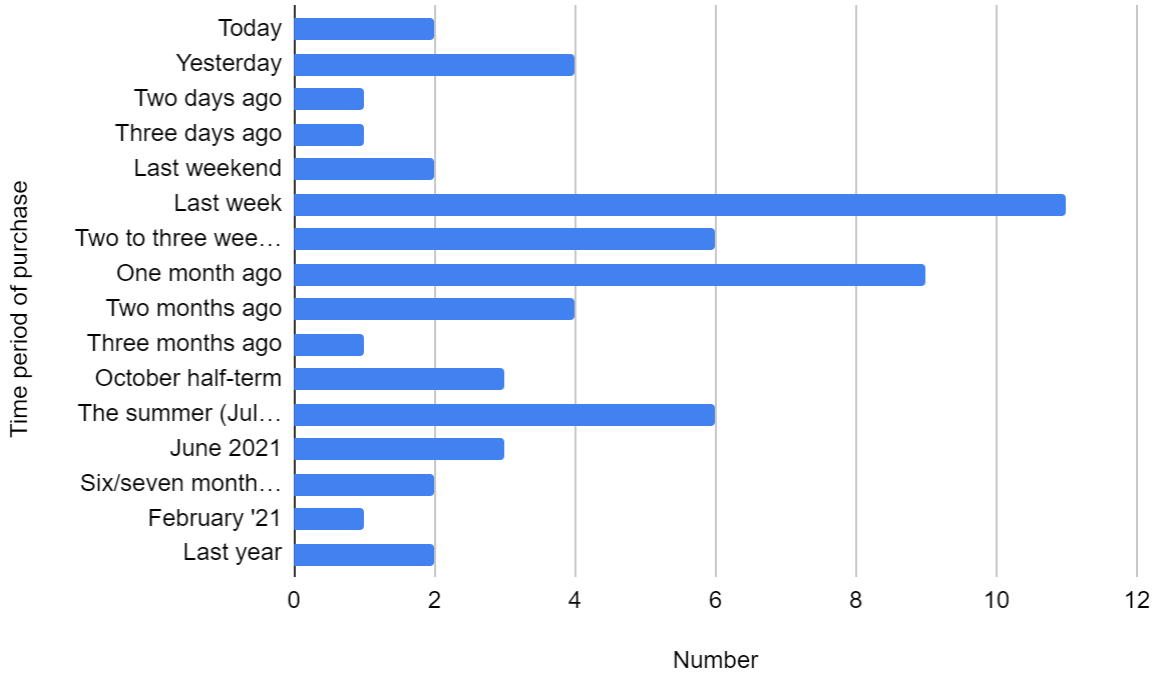
explained by the idea that one of the text types offered in Q12 was that of YA fiction, as opposed to Q9 and Q11 which sought to find out the types of texts that the participants were reading at the time of the research. Participants may have felt, therefore, that, as teachers of English, they *should* choose this category as one of their options. This point helps to exemplify my choice of critical realism as my lens through which to view my research. The individuals in my research perhaps perceived a judgement might be made if they did not show some enthusiasm for YA fiction given the nature of their roles. Their "physical context" had a "casual influence on their beliefs and perspective" (Maxwell, 2012, p,20), and my understanding of their perspective is necessarily influenced by my personal views about the importance of reading, whether I am in agreement or not. There is, therefore, "no possibility of [me] achieving a purely "objective" account that is independent of all particular perspectives" (Maxwell, 2012, p. vii), bringing us back to Braun and Clarke who argue that the truth is nebulous and "impossible to access…directly" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p.169).

Magazines and graphic novels were an unpopular reading choice, and 21 respondents, almost 27% of the 99 answers to this question, said they were not at all likely to read a poetry collection. Nobody said they were not at all likely to read an academic research journal, and 11 (11.1%) said they were extremely likely or very likely to read this kind of material. The responses to this question were surprising. More than a quarter of the respondents were not at all likely to read poetry and more than half were not likely to pick up a graphic novel, both text types being of value for teachers of English aiming to create breadth of learning and engagement for students at KS3, in the case of poetry, and those teachers aiming to recruit reluctant, often male readers, in the case of graphic novels.

Q13. When was the last time you bought a book? What was the title?

This question was designed to explore the frequency with which respondents bought books, therefore contributing to answering my first research question. Frequency of book buying could indicate enthusiasm for reading, thereby offering another layer of detail and perspective to the answers given to Q5: *How do you describe your reading life*, and Q10: *How many entire books would you say you have read in the last month*? The results of this question can be seen in Figure 18:

Figure 18 - When was the last time you bought a book?



The findings showed that the majority of respondents had purchased a book recently; 11 respondents (11.1%) (the greatest single number for any pinpointed time) said they had bought a book in the last week, six respondents had bought a book within the last two to three weeks, and nine respondents had bought a new book around a month ago. A total of nine respondents said they had last bought a book during a school holiday (three at October half-term and six over the summer holidays), which links with the findings of Q6: *The time you spend reading*, where respondents signalled that the time they could devote to reading for pleasure was likely to increase during the school holidays. For a total of four respondents, the last time they bought a book was between six months and a year ago, although it is not clear whether this finding reflects a lack of enthusiasm for buying books, financial restraints preventing the purchasing of books, or simply the fact that these respondents may already have a large To Be Read pile, or borrow books from the library or from friends.

Two respondents did not complete this question. Twenty-eight respondents (28.2%) provided me with a title, but did not tell me when they had bought the text they referenced. Four respondents were able to tell me the titles of the books they had read, but not when they had bought them. One respondent wrote: “April, when lockdown ended, I bought about 17 books”, and another: “Recently - I bought 5 books”, perhaps suggesting that for these individuals the thrill of purchasing large numbers of books was somehow more important or memorable than the actual books bought. Five

respondents, including the two respondents mentioned above, reported buying multiple books in groups of two, three, five (bought by two respondents) and 17. Seven respondents said they could not remember when they last bought a book. For three this was for positive reasons. One said “I buy them all the time” suggesting there was no novelty associated with their book purchases because they were so plentiful. Another said: “I tend to swap books with friends”, suggesting that for this respondent the ownership of the text was not necessarily important or necessary, and a third wrote: “I download via my phone and I truly cannot remember the last book I bought”, which perhaps suggests that the ease with which digital texts can be downloaded has also somehow eradicated the excitement and novelty of buying a new book, something explored by Birkets (2006). Four respondents, however, simply could not remember the last time they had purchased a book, suggesting that the buying of books was not a memorable experience or important act for these individuals.

Q18 Complete the sentence: Reading is important to me as an English teacher because…

This question allowed respondents the opportunity to reflect in more detail about why they read and the role it plays in their lives. Did the respondents read because they were driven by the same motivators given as reasons why teachers *should* read, such as a desire to improve subject knowledge and develop as classroom practitioners, or were their reading habits driven by their own personal rather than professional desires? I investigate the full responses to this question in Chapter 5, but one theme that this question generated - identified following the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006) as discussed earlier - is relevant to answering my first research question and so I deal with it here.

18.1 Enjoyable and restorative experience

A total of 17 respondents (17.1%) made reference to the idea that they read because it was an enjoyable experience, and this experience was a way to enjoy time away from work. At least two respondents linked the idea of pleasure and relaxation in their response, thus suggesting that reading was a pleasurable experience that involved time away from other activities that might involve more responsibility or agency. This was echoed by respondents who dealt with both these ideas separately. One wrote, “It helps me relax when I need to decompress from work”, which suggests that reading provides a refuge or haven from the mental busyness of work. Another wrote, “I enjoy it, it’s why I chose to study English and it’s why I teach English - because I enjoy it”.

Here, the repetition of “enjoy” suggests that recognition of reading as an enjoyable experience became a driving force in the decision to become a teacher of English.

For others their reading allowed for less tangible benefits, a chance for the mind and spirit to recuperate as well as be educated or stimulated. One respondent said reading offered the chance for “reflection”, while another said it offered “peace and quiet”. One teacher wrote, “It’s chicken soup for the soul”, a reference to a series of books published from 1993 which were filled with inspirational true stories, designed to offer readers comfort and hope. This was echoed by another respondent who said reading was “medicine for the soul”, suggesting that reading could help to alleviate or salve worries. Indeed, references to hope and comfort were also explicitly made by respondents, with one respondent writing, “words on a page bring imagination, hope and knowledge to life”. Reading for some respondents then offered not just the chance to enjoy an adventure on the page, but an opportunity to improve their mental health and sense of wellbeing.

Summary

This chapter sought to answer the question: What are the reading habits of the secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? Using the data generated by a questionnaire I was able to harvest rich and nuanced data which does answer this question successfully. The vast majority of the teachers of English employed by my trust were reading widely and regularly, consuming texts that were extremely diverse in content, form, genre choice and language of publication. However, only a small number of the texts teachers’ reported reading were reading YA or children’s literature, a finding which echoes that of Cremin et al (2008), in that while the majority of teachers were reading regularly, they were reading for themselves and not with their students in mind. The data also showed that a minority of teachers were not reading regularly and only “somewhat” felt that they loved reading, findings which echo those of Applegate and Applegate (2004 and 2014). The key findings from this chapter are below:

- **Reading habits** The majority of teachers were reading regularly and reading a wide range of titles which were extremely diverse in their content, form, category choice and language of publication. Their book choices were mostly contemporary, with the most popular fictional category being literary fiction, followed by fantasy and then psychological thrillers. Teachers reported that they would spend little time reading professional journals or books, reflecting the findings of Chandler (1992), Littman and

Stodolsky (1998), Monoz and Valenzuela (2019) and Boemmel et al (2019). Canonical reading choices were present however, but outweighed by more modern publications. Most teachers reported that they were reading a book at the time of the questionnaire and most had read at least one book in the last month, but this did not apply to every teacher who completed the questionnaire. A significant few were either unable to name the book they were reading at the time of the questionnaire or reported that they were not reading a book at all. Twelve respondents (12.1%) reported that they had not read an entire book in the last month and seven left blank the question that asked participants to name three books they had enjoyed recently. While these results do somewhat reflect the findings of Mueller (1973), Gray and Troy (1986), Draper et al (2000), Applegate and Applegate (2004 and 2014), Oyeronke (2009), and Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011), in that they echo their findings that some pre-service and in-service teachers showed little enthusiasm for reading, they do not echo them entirely in that the percentage of teachers in my research who reported not reading regularly was relatively small, and certainly smaller than the percentages reported in the research above. It was far more common for English teachers to be reading regularly and buying books regularly, which aligns my findings more with Reichenberg and Andeassen (2018) and Cremin (2008), who concluded that for the majority of primary school teachers who took part in her research, “reading remains a source of satisfaction” (Cremin, 2008, p. 12).

- **Titles being read** When asked to list three books that they had read recently and enjoyed, the 90 teachers who responded collectively listed a total of 258 books. Of those only 13 (5%) were YA or children’s literature. When asked about the book they were reading at the present time, 96 titles were reported. Of those, only 6 (6.25%) were YA or children’s literature. These findings suggest then that while the English teachers who took part in this research read a huge range of texts, their focus was on adult titles rather than titles aimed at younger readers. Again, this echoes Cremin’s findings (2008, 2008a, 2014), suggesting a parallel between the reading habits of primary and secondary school teachers which could make for a fruitful area of further investigation. Interestingly though, when asked about the likelihood of reading certain text types, the second most popular choice after literary fiction, was identified as YA and children’s literature. While this result does not obviously marry with the findings discussed above, it could suggest that because time was precious for the English teachers who took part in the survey (I discuss this in more detail below), while they intended to read YA or children’s literature, it was their first choice of text which represented their current reading - the pressures on their time meant that they never made it beyond their first choice. Again, another area for further investigation.

- **Obstacles to reading** Those that took part in the survey reported that their professional responsibilities meant they could not read as much as they wanted to. Most participants reported that they would read more if they had more time. Virtually no reading for pleasure took place on the evening before a school day. These findings reflect those of Boemmel et al (2019), who reported teachers' feelings of time pressure. The respondents said that they used weekends and holidays to catch up with their reading. Given that 96 (96.9%) of the 99 respondents said they loved to read, it is telling and somewhat ironic that these participants felt there were periods in their lives where, as a result of their jobs as teachers of English, they could not actually enjoy their reading habit.
- **Domestic responsibilities and tiredness** The teachers reported three other significant obstacles to their being able to read: day-to-day domestic responsibilities, the effect of having children and/or being part of a family, the effect of physical tiredness. The majority of teachers who took part in the survey were women and their articulations of the domestic chores that took up their time are in line with the findings of Seedat and Rondon (2021) and Cerrato and Cifre (2018). While this research is not focused on female English teachers' perceptions of inequality in the home and work-family conflict, it is clear from my data that this was an issue that preoccupied my female respondents. It is another area that would make for productive further investigation. Respondents talked about the effect of children on their reading habits, an effect that was perceived as both positive and negative, and is explored in more detail in later chapters. Children negatively affected the respondents' time to read, but equally their existence allowed for the reading of texts that might otherwise go unnoticed. Interestingly, this does not quite align with the findings of Goldsteen and Ross (1989), who found that employed mothers - despite their busy lives - reported feeling less burdened by their children than non-employed mothers. Goldsteen and Ross did find, however, that mothers often felt burdened by the fact that it was hard for them to be alone, which my findings do echo.
- **Motivations to read** Finally, 97% of respondents reported that the main motivation behind choosing to read was for personal enjoyment and relaxation - they did not consider reading for professional reasons to be a motivating factor in their reading. Respondents were presented with six suggestions as to their motivation to read and could click on as many as they felt applied. The variety of suggestions resulted in 33 different combinations, and 62 respondents (62.6%) said within their personal selection that they read in order to be able to recommend texts for their students. While this finding does seem out of kilter with the other findings associated with the participants' decisions to read YA or children's literature, it can perhaps be

explained by the fact that respondents could click on as many motivations as they felt was appropriate, and given that, it was not unreasonable for a respondent to suppose that they might at some point read with the aim of being able to recommend a book to their students. The fact that this was a questionnaire about reading aimed at English teachers may have also affected these findings, in that respondents may have felt they should include this motivation for appearances' sake. This final point helps to exemplify my reason for the adoption of critical realism as the lens through which to view my findings. Critical realism assumes that "our experiences and representations of reality are mediated by language and culture" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 286). It is possible that the participants perceived the "culture" of their school as something that would champion the extended subject knowledge that reading YA texts might bring. They may have viewed me as a representation of that culture and therefore responded in ways that would reflect positively on their attitudes and values. This is another example of the fact that I could only access a "mediated reflection" of the participants reality (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 171), just as the participants felt a need to craft a representation of themselves that spoke to the reality of their perception social constructs and expectations that influenced them as teachers.

Chapter 4 - What are the reading habits of the secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England. Results and discussion of the interviews.

“There's that opportunity to be able to open a book and then [there’s] a whole new world that is just mine. Nobody else's. I share that with the writer who wrote the book, but I don't think of other people reading that book. It is… they've written it for me and the characters are for me and that's my, my sort of special personal journey, independent journey in a day where you are pulled from pillar to post for everybody else, whether that's in the classroom or your department or a home with your child or needing to do things and when the lights are out it is my moment to be able to just go somewhere special. That you know, nobody else goes to” - Rose (Interviewee)

This chapter begins to discuss the results of the interviews I conducted with 10 teachers of English during 2022. It specifically focuses on the interview questions which work to answer my first research question: What are the reading habits of the secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? I determined these questions to be primarily interview questions 1 to 9 and questions 15 and 16. I coded the answers to these questions and as a result generated the following themes, from which this interview data is taken. For a discussion as to the processes and guidance I used to arrive at these themes, see my earlier methodology chapter and my discussion of the work of Braun and Clarke (2006 and 2022).

- The effect of family on teachers’ reading habits
- The struggles teachers face to read
- How, when and what teachers read - and what do they think about their reading habits
- Reading enriches our lives and positively affects our sense of wellbeing

This chapter analyses the data derived from each theme in turn, and attempts to identify patterns and trends within the answers given which help to answer the research question above. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 provide results and discussion focused on my second and third research questions.

The effect of family on teachers' reading habits

This theme was generated from the following codes and encompasses ideas about work-life balance, domestic responsibilities, as well as the effect all family members have on past and present reading habits. Figure 19 below shows the full range of codes identified and the number of times they occurred:

Figure 19:

Childhood reading habits	14
Family as readers	1
Being a parent is busy	1
Impact of family life on reading habits	15
Work/life balance	4
Mums reading with their children	19
Parents don't read	4
Parents reading habits	5
Parents reading to support children	2
Parents talking about reading with children	7
Reading easier with no children	1
Reading with a baby	1
Spending time with a partner	1
Literature helps when parents can't	2
Reading linked to nostalgia for people	9

The majority of the interviewees, similarly to the questionnaire, were women, and many were mothers, who talked candidly, and sometimes with frustration, about how time-consuming a family can be. Domestic duties were also discussed by the interviewees, as was the relationship of children to reading. However, the interview

questions allowed the respondents to develop those ideas further. Rather than simply considering the effect their own children, and babies, have on their reading, they were able to discuss themselves as child readers, the influence their parents, and particularly their mothers, had on their reading habits, the influence of wider family on their reading, and their concerns about parents who either do not read for themselves, or do not read to their children.

For Sarah, when the domestic and professional obligations of the day were over, there was simply "nothing" left. She said, when asked what obstacles existed to her reading:

> The vast majority of time it would be work, wouldn't it? It's all of it work and the having to be home, a homeowner and a parent is just mad. It's that kind of, you know, if you…leave the house at seven and get back in it, at what 6.30pm? And then you're dealing with tea and kids and, and everything else and all of a sudden it's nine o'clock. You just sit down for the first time. That's it, isn't it? I mean that's…there's nothing.

Kylie echoed this idea of time being eaten by household and childcare responsibilities. She said, "...life is so consumed especially after having children", here the use of the word "consumed" reminds one of Lord Capulet's plea to Paris to let "two more summers wither in their pride", (1990, p.905). In his bid to protect Juliet from an early marriage, he says she is not yet "ripe", (1990, p.905) recognising that marriage and child-bearing will eat away, or consume, her youthful vitality and health. Indeed, Rose discussed how she optimistically planned to use her baby's nap time to read, but admitted, "I read very, very little after [my daughter] was born".

The interviewees were also able to consider the idea of domestic responsibilities from the perspectives of their childhoods, when they were the focus of their mothers' time. A repeated idea was that they recognised the influence their mother in particular had on their attitude towards reading. Two respondents said that their mother actively encouraged their reading. Lydia said, "My mum was a big encourager (sic) of my reading, so mum taught me to read before I went to school". Here the mother is not just a champion of reading but a teacher of it too. This interviewee qualified her response with the comment, "mum particularly, I mean dad encouraged as well, but…". Here it is clear that the father's role in reading was secondary to the mother. Sarah talked about being "encouraged to read" and lived close to a library where "my mum and dad, usually my mum, would have taken me on a Saturday morning and that was kind of our routine." Here it is the mother who has established the household "routine" and organised the trip to the library. Rose talked about how her father was in the RAF and her mother stayed at home to look after her and her siblings. As a result, "no

matter where we moved a lot as a consequence, books always stayed with us", no mean feat for a service wife who presumably ran her household alone.

The importance of the role of the mother as a champion of reading, a crafter of positive attitudes towards reading, and as a facilitator for opportunities to read is clear here. Christine actually said, "I just loved reading, I think it was, it was modelled to me by my mum, my mum was an avid reader," with the use of the word "avid" suggesting her mother's passion to read, a passion the interviewee has since inherited. "Inherited" was a word Kate also employed to describe her love of reading and her difficulty in forgetting memorable, much-loved characters, "I think I've inherited that from my mum as well," she said.

Interviewees could also remember their mothers' exact reading choices, for one it was Stephen King, for another Catherine Cookson, and another the romantic tales of Mills and Boon, again emphasising the importance of their mothers in their identities as readers. Indeed Kate, whose mother had been the Mills and Boon fan, talked about how, when her mother was dying, it was their shared love of these cosy romances which provided a topic of conversation they could both enjoy, distanced from the bleak discussions of the sick room. Clarissa commented wryly on her ageing mother's unexpected love of detective and crime novels. "I'm pretty sure if there's a murder in [the town where she lives], get [my mother] on the case, you know, she's seen it all…" Rose recognised the role her mother played in her attitude to reading and talked about how there were always books in the house. She added, "we just had lots and I think that that's being replicated now I've got my own family, you know. The house is just absolutely bursting with books and [her daughter's] bookshelf is… she's got more books than at the library". In a later section, where I consider the role of libraries in the reading lives of the respondents, I explore this idea of replication with regards to the many participants who reflected on their own roles as mothers and, to a lesser extent, fathers, whose intention is to encourage their own children to read.

For many of the interviewees, then, it was their mother who was their champion of reading, but as they grew, other members of their families, fathers and siblings have also proved to be influencers of their reading. Sarah described visiting the local library with her younger sister when she was old enough to undertake the journey alone. Clarissa spoke about her brother, saying he "devours" books and reminiscing that it was their mother, taking them both to the library that was "kind of the start" of her reading life. Talking about a book she had re-read (*Leviathan Wakes (*2011), by James S. A. Corey), she said, "...it reminds me of my brother you know, it was something he read, and also I think it's one of these things that's quite nostalgic. …I read it when I was probably a teenager, so I have positive feelings about it." Here, the interviewee

links reading and memories surrounding reading to happy, formative times spent with family. She went on to discuss her father saying that she "always remember[ed] my dad saying to me, as a teenager your music tastes will never change…these are your formative years with music… and I feel the same about books," so expressing the idea that the types of books you favoured as a child and teenager will continue to be the books you gravitate to throughout your life. The same interviewee remembered how she watched the dinosaur film *Jurassic Park* for the very first time with her parents and all the family's friends. It was a big event, with furniture rearranged to make room. She spoke of how terrifying the film was but adds:

> I still feel this kind of nostalgia, there's a comfort to it…I remember finding the book [*Jurassic Park,* 1990] at a church book sale…I've still got it, like a big hardback and all the pages are all orangey, and I think who else has touched it, but I've still got it and I've read it multiple times.

This idea of happy memories or fond nostalgia was shared by Kylie. She talked about Enid Blyton's *The Magic Faraway Tree* (1939)*,* a favourite childhood book and discussed how she still returned to it every now and again as an adult. She said:

> I think that's because it was read to me when I was very little, and then as soon as I got me a copy of it, it was passed down from my grandma, and I read it again, and now I've started reading it to my little girl…it's probably got more sentimental value, if that makes sense.

This interviewee links the fond memories of her childhood reading with the sense that she wants to recreate this time of security and contentment with her own children. That Kylie highlighted this book as one of her favourites highlights the power of her childhood reading experiences on her attitudes to reading as an adult. That her childhood reading experiences were positive is, of course, the result of the adults who surrounded her and read *The Faraway Tree* to her countless times, which also speaks to the ideas of relationships. The act of reading in her family was an expression of love, something she identified in her own relationship with her daughter. She said, "...like with my little girl, who knows that reading is so important to me, it adds value to my life, and she does that as well…it has spilled into her and she does mirror that as well."

Wes remembered that his father read gung-ho war stories written by the likes of Leo Kessler, and because his mother favoured Catherine Cookson, it was his father's books he read as he became a teenager. He said, "it was all action, tanks and machine guns, very clear-cut goodies and baddies, which, you know, when you're 11 or 12, it's really easy to get into." For another respondent, their dad's attitude to

reading was quite different. Becky talked about her father reading “a lot of men, even though he…was quite forward thinking with his attitude. He says he makes a conscious effort to read widely but he found himself drawn back to…the classic genre…he’s a massive Dickens fan”. Here his daughter notices her father’s gender preferences in his authorial choices, and attempts to qualify her statement, perhaps in recognition of society’s recent drive for recognition of more diverse authors, but her comment about his love of the classics, implies a quiet pride in her father’s reading. Jenny’s dad had read the psychological thriller *The Girl on the Train* (2015) by Paula Hawkins, and when his daughter threatened to give up half-way through encouraged her to keep reading so she could enjoy the twist. “Thanks to my dad,” she said, “I persevered”.

For Jenny, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) is a particularly poignant text she has read multiple times, at different points in her life, and each time with a different experience. She read it when she was a teenager, stolen from her English teacher’s book shelf and “absolutely loved it…it was the 15-year-old me saying how can they treat people like this? It’s horrible. And then I read it in my 20s, as someone who had…lost a parent quite young. So then…Atticus then kind of made that connection with my dad. Then I read it again, as a parent myself, and was like, what values do I want my children to have?”. Here, this respondent, I think unwittingly, illustrates Rosenblatt’s ideas very succinctly. For her, the “raw material of the literary process itself is the particular world of the reader” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.11). The respondent has turned “paper and ink” into “a literary work” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. ix), because the text has activated “certain elements in [her] past experience - external reference, internal response - that have become linked with verbal symbols” (Rosenblatt, p.11).

Christine was delighted to view her husband as a help rather than a hindrance when it came to fulfilling her reading ambitions. She recalled a weekend when she was determined to read an entire 1,000-page book, and did so, not moving from the sofa, while her husband “gave me cups of tea [and] made the meals”. This contrasts with Clarissa who felt her husband’s demands on her time were unrealistic and unhelpful. She said wryly, “I just feel like other people will be saying it’s their children [who negatively affect their reading] but I’ve got a 40-year-old…” Not all respondents’ husbands were in the dog house though, Rose repeatedly explored how it was her husband’s love of non-fiction which had encouraged her to engage with a previously unexplored literary genre. For a few of the interviewees however, their families were not always enthusiastic readers. Becky commented on how her father only “read a little bit”, but “got a lot more into reading” when his daughter took her GCSE examinations, highlighting the idea that her father wanted to support his daughter during a

challenging period in her life by being able to help her discuss important texts. This again speaks to the idea of love and her father's determination to help his daughter even though reading was not something he enjoyed as much as she did. Sarah seemed quite surprised when she considered her parents and their
reading habits. She said:

> ...really, when I think about it, my mum and dad weren't huge readers that just kind of instilled the importance of it in us. They certainly weren't. I don't think we were necessarily a house that was full of books, but there was always reading material for us.

The interviewees highlighted above had parents who did not particularly read for themselves, but recognised its importance for their children. Becky raised the point that parents who were not always enthusiastic readers might not cultivate a range of reading material at home. She said "access to a range of books" during her childhood "was quite limited". She would instead have to make do with re-reading and only began to encounter a much wider range of books when she went to university.

The interviewees' memories discussed here encapsulate Connelly and Clandinin's notion that "life is a story we live" (1994, p. 149). Their idea of Narrative Inquiry is particularly relevant here. As the interviewees' remembered the effect of their families - and repeatedly their mothers - on their reading, they told me the stories of their lives.

The struggles teachers face to read

This theme was generated from the following codes and deals with ideas such as how busy life is for training and classroom teachers, and how that necessary level of industry can make it difficult to find time to discuss books with students, and to be motivated to read outside of school. It also discusses the idea of how mental tiredness affects the teachers' reading lives. Figure 20 below shows the codes identified and the number of time those codes occurred:

Figure 20:

Being a teacher is busy	7
Classroom is too busy to discuss books	1
Impact of becoming a teacher on reading habits	2
Loss of motivation to read	1
Marking takes up free time	1
Negative impact of teacher training on reading habits	2
Planning for teacher role	1
Pressure of work on reading	2
Reading in younger years	6
Big books take too long to read	2
Negative impact of Covid on reading	3
Positive impact of Covid on reading	8
Idea of waiting for a book	1
Intimidated by big books	1
Preserving free time	1
Sense of decision making about how we use our time	2
Time gained during Covid	2
Fall asleep while reading	2

Mental tiredness	8
Reading is too effortful sometimes	2
Too tired to read	4
TV is mindless relaxation	3
Want to make sure time is well invested	1
YA easier to read in term time	1

Findings from the questionnaire suggested that teachers struggled to find time to read for pleasure during the week because of their professional responsibilities, as found by Boemmel at al (2019). However, at weekends and during holidays when their time is less structured, many were indeed able to find time to read. This finding was echoed in the interviews, where interviewees were able to explore their reading patterns in more detail.

The interviewees battled with the idea of too little time. Jenny linked her lack of reading time to feelings of guilt. “I feel guilty that I can't read as much as I want to actually. And I tell myself that I don't have the time. I’m too busy. I don't have time but we all, we all have the time.” This comment recognises that we have agency in the way we choose to use the 168 hours allotted to us each week. Christine reflected on her decision to pursue a different role at school in order to preserve her work-life balance. She said:

> I just wasn't making any time for me… because I'm so consumed by the extra work. So that was an obstacle for me. I guess where reading is concerned as well is that stress? If I'm stressed, I'm not reading. So I think an obstacle is making sure I balance my life. So I give time for myself and for reading because it's really important to me.

For this interviewee her focus on time meant that she chose carefully and wisely when it came to picking her next read, in a bid to ensure that it was worth the investment of her time. Kate talked of how she favoured her electronic reader, a Kindle, over buying paper books in a shop or online because of the speed with which she could pick a new book and begin reading. “I think there's a kind of instant thing with that, isn't there,” she

said. “It’s a way you can, you can look and it can be in front of you seconds later”.

Becky was quite clear as to her desire to read more regularly but also expressed her frustrations as to the obstacles she encountered when trying to achieve this. “I would say it is my intention to read every day. That is always my intention.” Here the word “intention” signals her desire to read daily, but prepares us for a rather different outcome. She goes on to say, “...in an ideal world I will, on an evening, I will read while relaxing before I go to bed…That doesn’t always necessarily happen”, and as a result “I definitely make my weekends a priority to read”. When this interviewee describes her desire to read daily as “an ideal”, it almost suggests that it exists only in her imagination. Her “intention” to read was echoed by others in the interviews. Sarah said, “I actually really do prioritise making sure it is part of, like a, night-time bed routine now, to read on a night before I go to sleep”, suggesting a similar desire to actively make sure daily reading takes place. Both these interviewees link reading to relaxation time before bed, suggesting that reading brings a chance for peace and calm after busy days. This was addressed by Kate who said, “I’ll read between 8 and 10pm) normally, because it gets rid of everything that’s in my head, that’s worrying me or bothering me and then I can go to sleep dreaming about whatever it is I’ve been reading…” This interviewee was different from the other interviewees in that she was far more certain of her daily reading - in her interview she went on to say that didn’t like watching television - but she shared their sense that reading brought a peaceful close to the day. I discuss the idea of reading cultivating a sense of peace in more detail later.

Two interviewees discussed the difficulty of reading during the week or term time because of the tiredness they experienced due to the nature of their jobs. For these interviewees it meant that one not only chose to read more in the holidays but also preferred to read a different genre during the holidays. Jenny said, “I find it difficult to read during term time, and it’s more so if I do read during term time, what I read will be just different to what I read in the holidays…So [in term time] I will read something cheesy…and then in the holidays, I’ll perhaps read something probably a little bit more highbrow”. This ability to only read “something cheesy” during term time suggests that the interviewee recognised the need for a mental break from rigour, and this was reflected in the comments of Becky who said, “I feel too mentally tired to read in an evening, hence why I try to make it a priority on the weekend”. Two interviewees described tiredness as a condition that sapped their ability to engage with their reading. For Clarissa, her reading habits had changed over the years to the extent that reading a big book was something she considered intellectually intimidating. She said as a student she was a:

> …much, much more an avid reader than what I am today and picking up much more difficult texts. You know, much more heavy going texts in that age than what I would today, I think I'm much more intimidated by that now because I don't feel like I've got the mental capacity to keep up or I'll fall asleep half-way through.

This comment clearly shows how the interviewee feels they run out of time and energy at the end of the day. For Becky, ensuring this didn't happen was an active focus in her day. She said, "I've tried to get into a routine where I finish working at a reasonable hour that I've got a couple of hours free in the evening", here introducing the idea of free time, or time that is one's own without other responsibilities. Their batteries are drained by their roles as classroom teachers and it is only at weekends or during the holidays that they can recharge. These interviewees might be heartened to know that they are in good company. Charles Darwin wrote of how after a day of "grinding general laws out of large collections of facts" his mind became enfeebled meaning he no longer enjoyed reading poetry or Shakespeare (Jacobs, 2011, p.100).

But saving up reading for the weekend was problematic for one interviewee. Clarissa spoke about her husband and said, "[he] and I will have big arguments at weekends about…the marking pile. Sunday's my marking day, and I'm like, I have to do this for tomorrow and [he's] like, you don't have to, but if I don't, I'm screwed…" Rose said she was wary of joining a book club because "it would create a deadline and a commitment that at the moment, I just know with work and everything else, that I wouldn't be able to fully engage…" Wes identified the pressures of his job as an obstacle to his reading longer novels. He said:

> I'm the type of person who, you know what it's like, you have a good book and you just don't want to put it down do you, and [then] it's got to two, perhaps three o'clock. I'll just do one more chapter. I'll just see how this bit ends. Then it gets too late. You think oh my god, I've got to work tomorrow… And I think that's had an impact on reading perhaps entire novels.

These responses clearly signalled the idea that professional responsibilities were a drain on their spirit or zest for life and affected their feelings of contentment. Clarissa explored the effect of being a classroom teacher on the time available to them not just to read for themselves, but to also discuss reading with their students, as well as alterations that were made to their reading habits because of time constraints. She said, "Life in the classroom is so busy that to chat about books is not really…by the time you've done your First Five and your Next Five…your learning intentions, your self assessment…" Here this interviewee refers to spelling strategies (the First Five refers to words such as there, their and they're which students often misspell), as well

as to expected classroom routines, such as outlining lesson objectives and outcomes (learning intentions).

Kylie was asked whether she used a library and she answered, “I used to, I used to, but then I became a teacher, and having that little time to go and exchange them. I found that I was renewing them. All the time, and I just thought it wasn’t really fair…”. This sense of not making it through books because of work commitments was echoed by Rose. She said, “I’ve seen myself pick up books and put them down because school gets busy and I don’t get back to them for three weeks and then I can’t remember who’s who…” How ironic that for these English teachers, who all, in other parts of their interviews, went on to express their love of reading and books, found themselves limited in their abilities to engage with literature due to the nature of their jobs - being English teachers. Their sense that working as a teacher, and particularly an English teacher, took up a lot of their time, would not be inaccurate. Findings by Jerrim et al (2014) found that teachers in England worked on average nine hours a week more than their international counterparts.

The pressures teachers face which make it a challenge to read were also considered to start before their professional careers properly began. Clarissa described how the intense pressure of training to become a teacher stifled her reading life. “I don’t think I read for the first few years of my teaching career. Like you know, the pressure… Like I was just trying to get by at work,” she said. This was a sentiment echoed by Kylie who said that she barely read for her own pleasure during university and, “when I first started teaching training as well. But as soon as I finished, I was quite an avid reader.” There is a strange irony to this comment, that the desire to become an English teacher should act as a hamper to having time to read. Kylie went on to explore how the ongoing pressures of being a relatively new teacher were directly affecting her desire to read, and that she could no longer read the same number of books. She described losing interest in the Karen McManus book she was currently reading and said, “I don't know whether it's because, and this is going to sound awful for a teacher to say but it’s getting to the end of term like and I know that I've got my lessons to plan… I'm losing a bit of motivation.” Kylie described her present situation as a “book slump” and talked about how it had happened before. “When I was doing my degree, I didn't read as often because I was primarily reading for that. And the same when I first started teaching training as well,” she said. These comments echo the findings of Roness (2011) who studied whether second year teachers were still motivated to teach and discovered a significant proportion felt “the profession to be too demanding” because there was “too much to do” (p. 635).

This sense of tiredness was reflected in the interviewees’ choice of reading

material. Clarissa said if she was going to read in the evening, it would need to be something “light and easy”. This comment introduces the concept of text hierarchy, in that it was a repeated idea that some texts were easier than others to read because they required less “brain power”. Lydia summed this up nicely. “I don't want my mind to be taxed and I don't want it to have to deal with murder… so I'm going to read *The Devil Wears Prada*…”

Clarissa associated the effortfulness of choosing to read with the idea of not working hard enough. She said:

> I do think there's a laziness in the sense of the effort you put in to read and sometimes I want to be passive… I find it quite embarrassing and I just think it's the same with the kids when they come in and say they just can't be bothered. What do you mean you can't be bothered and at the weekend I’m sat with my cup of tea and a Kit Kat and I’m watching Masterchef repeats.

So, while interviewees generally associated reading with the idea of relaxing, something I discuss in more detail later, there was also the sense that it was not effortless. The interviewees above responded to this variously by choosing either not to read at all, or to read something that was not mentally taxing. Sarah summed this up, explaining that when she was a student:

> I think I sort of felt that there was an expectation that I was reading things that were worthwhile and and I suppose now, as I've got older, I'm kind of, I just want to read what I would like to enjoy to read. I think probably I see reading now as a sort of an opportunity to relax and sometimes that needs to be something that isn't going to require me to think too deeply.

She went on to add that she probably read more “trashy” reads than “worthwhile” reads, another reference to the idea of hierarchy in reading texts.

One final point to make here, is that in conjunction with the idea of mental tiredness, the interviewees also discussed the impact of Covid-19 on their lives. While a challenging time for all, the lockdowns of the global pandemic in 2020 and 2021, provided much-appreciated reading time for many. Sarah said she had decided during the pandemic to tackle some of the canon that had previously passed her by. She said, “I think that's probably the difference with Covid. I [had] the brain space. So I was quite happy to spend time reading things that weren't necessarily in my comfort zone or that I would naturally pick off a shelf because my brain wasn't tired.” She wasn’t alone in using this unexpected time at home to good use. Becky said:

> I remember my New Year's resolution that year was to set myself a reading target… I think it was like 50 books you know, I'd made a conscious effort

> that I wanted to read more, and then we went into the lockdown, and I thought I'm never going to have as much free time in my entire life as I've got right now. So I made [an] even more determined decision to read more. And I read absolutely loads that year. I think I read about 80 books in total, so that really transformed my reading.

Rose added, “...during Covid I think I mean, I had at least one book on the go and at least one Audible during that whole period of time and being, we felt like, trapped in the house. We weren't really allowed to leave.” Interestingly, the first and last of the interviewees discussed in this paragraph went on to talk about how the end of the pandemic signalled the end of their increased reading capacity. As their old lives returned, so did the limits to the mental capacity after a busy day in school. Kim and Asbury (2020) make a similar point. They say that Covid has brought about changes in society that are "likely to be cognitively and emotionally taxing for teachers" (p. 1063). For these respondents, those emotional and cognitive challenges took the form of enjoying a release from the pressures of the classroom which meant they could read more, only for these pressures to return when school in the UK attempted to return to normal throughout the spring and summer of 2021.

How, when and what teachers read - and what do they think about their reading habits.

This theme was generated from the following codes and embraced ideas associated with the practicalities of the interviewees’ reading lives. Figure 21 below shows the codes identified and the frequency with which each code occurred.

Figure 21:

Abandoning texts	11
Always reading	3
Annual re-reading	4
Re-reading	21
Authors mentioned	62
Book collections	8
Book clubs	8
Books mentioned	125
Books as presents	3
Bookshops	1
Buying secondhand books	5

Buying books at the supermarket	1
Can’t resist buying books	3
Charity shops	6
Cheap books	1
Easy to buy books	1
Experience of buying or borrowing	2
Idea of pre-ordering books	2
Joy of buying books	2
Not buying books	2
Recycling books	1
What to do with unwanted books	1
Certain authors worth investment	2
Difficulty choosing new book	1
Feelings about a book can change over time	1
Issues driven reading	1
Life experience influences reading choices	1
Moving on from finishing a book	1
No death	1
Obstacle to reading	1
Pressure of discovering a series to read	1
Can’t read every book	1
Guilt	4
Lack of time to read everything	5
Sense of reading properly	1
Sense of urgency in reading	2
Reading as an investment	2
Reading as an obsession	2
Distinction between term-time and holiday reading	2

Literary fiction saved for the holiday	1
Read in the holidays	1
Read more at weekends	1
Reading before bed	4
Want to read every day	1
Reading challenges	2
Reading choices	1
Reading choices change with mood	1
Reading from shelves	1
Reading habits change over time	12
Reading on the train	1
Reading reviews	2
Reading target	1
Sad to finish a book	1
Stuck in a reading rut	1

The interviewees were asked if they could name a favourite book. Only one interviewee could not answer this question, instead making the point that there were too many texts to choose from and her favourites changed from day to day depending on what she was reading. The remaining nine interviewees were able to name a text and their selections proved to be just as wide ranging as the text range generated by the questionnaire and discussed in the previous chapter. The oldest favourite text identified, and the only play cited, was *Othello* by William Shakespeare (1603/2018), next was *The Great Gatsby* (1925), followed by *Rebecca* (1938) by Daphne Du Maurier, which was named by two interviewees. Enid Blyton's *The Faraway Tree* series (1939) was the only children's text mentioned as a favourite. One-time GCSE text *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) was named by one interviewee, while others chose far more contemporary publications, *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson, (1996), was mentioned but no other texts from the 1980s or 1990s made an appearance. The remaining favourites were *My Brilliant Friend* (2012), the first of the *Neapolitan Quartet* by Elena Ferrante, *The Expanse* science-fiction series (2011) by James S. A. Corey and *The Midnight Library* (2020) by Matt Haig. Even in this short range of titles, the breadth of teachers' reading is clear, traversing centuries, covering multiple literary genres, and fictional categories, and proving that some texts, such as *Rebecca* (1938),

more than adequately stand the text of time.

Driscoll (2014) would identify many of the texts listed here as those favoured by, what she terms, new literary middlebrow readers. She argues that there are a set of characteristics that define those readers. They tend to be "'middle-class, reverential towards elite culture, entrepreneurial, mediated, feminized, emotional, recreational and earnest" (p. 6). For her the new literary middlebrow:

> …is personalized book recommendations on Amazon, or a café in the middle of an independent bookstore. It is a literary prize's Twitter feed or a movie star's sold out appearance at a writer's festival. It is online cultural magazines such as Salon.com or Slate.com, or a book club that watches Austen TV adaptations (p.5).

She argues that she is not critical of the new literary middlebrow - she mentions how she realised her reading had become elitist and so decided to widen it by engaging with more populist authors such as Nora Roberts. She says it should not be viewed as a pejorative term, but rather positively valued as it "combines a reverence for elite literature with an entrepreneurial spirit and an opposition to academia." (p. 201). In as much as my respondents were largely female, engaged emotionally with their reading, wanted to improve themselves and their students through the act of reading, read recreationally, appreciated and enjoyed a selection of canonical literature, and talked of the importance reading played in their lives, they would appear to be the very epitome of middlebrow.

However, while lauding the new literary middlebrow on the one hand, Driscoll contrasts her definition of new middlebrow readers with the highbrow readers of academia. She argues that middlebrow readers favour texts that are "enmeshed in a commercial context" (p. 1). She cites literary critic Robert McCrum's description of Hilary Mantel's novel *Bring Up The Bodies* (2012) as a "middlebrow triumph" (p. 10), but does not challenge his rather condescending tone. She references a line from Bourdieu: "Middlebrow cultural capital speaks to the middle class longing for increased social status" (p.18). This combined with descriptions of middlebrow readers as "earnest" (p.201), looking "upwards to elite culture for legitimation" (p. 21) and "guidance" (p. 22) somehow belittles the intentions of the readers she describes. Her reference to author AS Byatt describing adult readers of Harry Potter as comfort seekers "whose imaginative lives are confined to TV cartoons" (p. 110), seems to weaken her proposed celebration of the middlebrow rather than strengthen it - and would certainly come as something of a surprise to many of my respondents who mentioned their appreciation of Harry Potter either in the questionnaire or in the interviews. Driscoll goes on, "Highbrow reading is pure intellectual work, leaving the

body behind, but middlebrow reading is embodied in specific physical spaces: the couch, the bath, the bed." (p. 37). Ultimately, while Driscoll makes many interesting points, I think the label of middlebrow is one that my respondents would not identify with, arguing that where they choose to read, should not undermine the intellectual or academic intent of their activity. Flint (1993) provides an interesting counterpoint to Driscoll's work. Her research examines representations of the female reader in fiction, poetry and painting, but also goes on to explore how female readers understand their own reading experiences, something which Driscoll does not.

The interviewees were not asked specifically about buying books but nevertheless the notion was repeatedly discussed. Books were discussed as being ideal presents, Rose remembered she always received a book at Christmas, the pleasure of loitering in a book shop was commented on, and particularly their deliberate attractiveness to children. More than one interviewee talked about how much they enjoyed browsing in secondhand or charity bookshops (and returning their books there when done with), looking for authors they had enjoyed previously. Others talked about the ease of buying books these days, from supermarkets, or online - one talked of the "joy" of being able to order quickly from Amazon. Lydia talked about the pleasure of pre-ordering a book on Amazon, forgetting, and then months later being delighted when it dropped through the letterbox.

The interviewees were united in their love of buying books, but many of them also shared a sense that they bought too many books and that it was a habit they had to reign in. As Lydia said, with her tongue only a little in her cheek, "book reading and book buying are two very separate hobbies." German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer made a similar point in 1851. "Buying books would be a good thing if one could also buy the time to read them in: but as a rule the purchase of books is mistaken for the appropriation of their contents" (1851/1993, p. 102). Interviewees talked about the pleasure of adding just one more book to their library almost as if it were an addiction. Kylie discussing a conversation she had with her partner said that her attitude was:

> …right, no more books, I'm not going to buy anymore. You know, we're going to sort of like, just carry on and try and read through some and then I've got a notification off Amazon, and there's a new book out and it was being released. I'm like, oh this looks really interesting, and [my partner's], you told me that you weren't going to get anymore, and I'm like, just one more…

Lydia said she was determined to take her little daughter to the library more so she could borrow rather than buy. She resolved, "I think I'm going to, I will do that. And

maybe that will mean that I'll not buy as many… I probably won't, though [laughs]".

The interviewees were not asked to list books in quite the same way as those who responded to the questionnaire had been, however, considering the amount of books one can read in a month or in any other period of time seemed to touch a nerve. Interviewees had already signalled that the busyness of their lives reduced their reading time, but they were also able to discuss the pressures they felt to keep up with their reading, not because of external obligations but because of their own internal desires to read as many good books as they could. Sarah said, "you know, we've only got a certain amount of time, a certain amount of reading time in our lives", so introducing the idea that their own mortality will cut short their reading time. Kate said, "isn't it sad that we will never read every book in the world?", introducing a sense of melancholy to her reading habits.

The interviewees also discussed the idea of abandoning books mid-way through and, the opposite, re-reading favourite texts, with some linking their attitude towards these concepts to their sense that there were too many books in the world that they had not read. With regards to re-reading, Becky said, "...there's so much out there. There are a few things that I think I would like to revisit but…there's just so much out there to read and not enough, not enough time to go back". Kylie sounded almost panicked when she considered the books she had waiting for her to read:

> I mean my partner, it was my birthday last week and he bought me so many texts that I'd asked for, and just to go through them all, oh God, what do… I want to read, I need to finish this quickly, and read another one but I can't just like… I'm resenting it a bit.

Kate did not re-read because, "life was too short", but in contrast two others annually re-read Jane Austen and *The Great Gatsby* (1925) respectively. Lydia talked about how she looked forward to her yearly re-acquaintance with *The Great Gatsby*, in much the same way as you might greet an old friend. Her comments were reminiscent of the words of Rintaro's grandfather in *The Cat Who Saved Books* (2021), "...they'll be like friends to you. They'll inspire and support you" (p. 14). Pennac (1994) makes a similar point, "...we re-read gratuitously, for the pleasure of repetition, for the joy of finding an old friend..." (p.160). For the interviewees, these favourite texts were treats that they saved for themselves and generally read during the holidays. As Proust (1972) said, "These friends, if we spend an evening with them, it is truly because we desire them…" (p. 55).

Lydia, who enjoyed re-visiting *The Great Gatsby,* was also a serial re-reader of a wide variety of texts, including *Life After Life* (2013) by Kate Atkinson, *The Woman in Black* (1998) by Susan Hill, and *Gone Girl* (2012) by Gillian Flynn. This final choice is

particularly interesting because the entire premise of the book revolves around a twist of such magnitude that the text itself launched a whole genre of copy-cat psychological thrillers where the plot of the book unfolds through the eyes of an unreliable narrator. She was quite clear about her reasons for re-reading. “I've read it like six times,” she said. “...*Gone Girl* for me is that book that I wish I'd written…I think I hold it in this, like, sort of pinnacle of a book in my head. And when I need to comfort read, you know when you just like, if you feel a bit sad or something…” This idea of a comfort read is a concept I return to later in this chapter and was echoed by Sarah who said she regularly re-read *Pride and Prejudice* (1889) because she had read and enjoyed it during her honeymoon to America. Re-reading proved to be an interesting topic then. Some of the interviewees actively planned and looked forward to their re-reads, associating them with the active pleasure of revisiting a text, and with happy or nostalgic memories, so reminding us of Rosenblatt’s reader-response theory (1994) which builds around the idea of the reader making their own sense from a text. For others though, re-reading ate into their limited reading time and could not be considered because there were too many books in the world to read any of them more than once.

The idea of abandoning a text was equally as fraught for the interviewees, who seemed to fall into two camps - those who could abandon without a second thought and those for whom it became an emotionally-charged decision. Christine was very clear about her views. “I think I'm a big advocate, especially for kids as well at school, that you can't force someone to trudge through a book if they're not enjoying it. For me, I think reading is for enjoyment. So if I'm struggling to read, why am I battling through something, if I'm not enjoying it?”. Kate echoed this clear-cut view, saying:

> ...until about five years ago, I had never started a book that I hadn't finished. But I can now say that I have started several books that I've now not finished because I've just thought, no, no, it's not for me… I think I'm getting less tolerant. Because what my, what I used to think was, if somebody spent hundreds of hours writing this, they deserve my attention. They deserve me to finish it, even if I don't like it. But now I'm not convinced some authors do spend hundreds of hours particularly, particularly in the checking process.

Kate was critical of the number of typographical errors she encountered in her reading and this had affected her appreciation of the skills of the writer. For most of the interviewees however, giving up on a book, even if that were to then affect the amount they could read, was a difficult decision to make. Becky said:

> In my mind I like to think that if I'm not enjoying a book and if it's stopping, if it's stunting my reading, that I would put it down but I could probably count on one hand the number of books that I’ve put down because sometimes

> you do end up enjoying it or once you've got used to the style or it might just be something that you've not, you've not read before but yeah, I find it very hard not to give in and put it down.

Here she recognises that a book may grow on its reader and that a special or memorable reading opportunity might be lost by a too hasty discarding of reading material. She also introduced the idea that a poor reading experience might “stunt” her reading motivations. For Jenny that idea of giving up on a book was linked to anxiety. “I don’t know, I feel like I've got that OCD in some respects, I find it very difficult…And just knowing that it is there and that like you've not finished, it's not completed…” Here we have a sense of an uncompleted task that means the reader cannot move on, another reference to the experiences associated with one book having a negative effect on the appreciation of those that follow.

When exploring ideas associated with abandonment, interviewees also made reference to their families again, painting a warm picture of households where more than one person was invested in reading and had strategies they applied to their reading. Rose talked about her mother’s own recognition that she could not abandon a book and what she then did to ensure she could read as much as possible. She said her mother would “only read things that may be maximum of about 200 pages, maybe 250 pages, because and her logic is because if I don't get into it, I have to finish it. I've started it at least then I'm not going to be reading it forever…” This was in contrast to her own views. “I'm quite happy knowing we're not working. This isn't working for me. The writer probably wouldn't necessarily agree that it's working as well. So it's going…”. Interestingly, here Rose imbues the writer with agency when it comes to abandoning a text, exploring the idea that the writer might also want their readers to enjoy their work.

Wes talked about the role his wife played in his reading. When asked if he ever gave up on a book, he said, “Very rarely.. My wife…she'll say, are you enjoying your book? And I'll say it was terrible…But you've got to go to the end, it’s the law.” It is interesting that interviewees who found abandoning a text difficult used language associated with the idea of rules and obligations. Pennac (1994) uses similar language. "This is the vague feeling of having been defeated. I opened, I read, and rapidly I sensed myself being submerged by something which felt beyond my control. I reassembled my neurons. I battled with the text, but there was nothing doing..." (p.158). For the interviewees, as well as Pennac, discarding a book brought with it many challenges associated with rule following and determination to win through.

Finally, Lydia, while recognising the plethora of books to be read, had a very considered attitude when it came to abandoning books, or DNFing (Do Not Finish) as it

is known. She said:

> I think there's a school of thought where life's too short to read a book. But then I also think everything, even when you read a rubbish book, you're like, that was rubbish. But then it was rubbish for these reasons, write a scathing review on Goodreads and then I'll feel better. I think even books that I would only give like two stars to is still something and then you know, to avoid it in the future.

Here she reflects on her reading practices, recognising exactly why a book may not suit her, and considering how to avoid a similar misstep in the future. This suggests she has, perhaps unconsciously, brought her critical appreciation skills of the craft of the writer to bear on her reading, evaluating and analysing much as she would teach her students to in the classroom.

Reading enriches our lives and positively affects our sense of wellbeing

This theme encompassed the codes below and brought together ideas around how interviewee's perceived that reading books actively improved the quality of their lives. Figure 22 shows the codes identified and the frequency that each occurred.

Figure 22:

Books are a constant	1
Not returning to books	1
Reading as an achievement	1
Reading associated with personal growth	2
Reading broadens perspectives	3
Reading can change you	1
Reading can require emotional commitment	2
Reading enriches life	1
Reading is exciting	1

Reading linked to curiosity	2
Reading is linked to our emotions	2
Reading is an escape from reality	13
Reading is enjoyment	2
Reading is linked to freedom	1
Can’t read when stressed	2
Reading helps clear your mind	1
Reading helps with stress	1
Reading helps you ground yourself	1
Reading is comforting	3
Reading is done in isolation	1
Reading is linked to peace	3
Reading linked to negative feelings	1
Reading linked to positive feelings	4
Reading linked to relaxation	1

The interviewees shared the idea that reading was a form of relaxation that brought with it peace and comfort, and also a sense of achievement that was spiritually enriching. Rose found it impossible to read when she was stressed. She said, “I found, like, if I'm stressed, I won’t read and it's really interesting because some people might view books as an escape from that stress. But I think I get so in my head when I am feeling moments of stress that I can't switch off.” But for others, reading did indeed offer an escape from stress and the responsibilities of life. Kylie said that reading was her “safe haven”, and for Kate reading “just gets rid of everything that's in my head,

that's worrying me or bothering me and then I can go to sleep dreaming about whatever it is I've been reading…".

Sarah made the point that completing a substantial read, such as *Middlemarch* (1871), brought with a sense of achievement that helped to cultivate an inner sense of happiness linked to the idea of self-improvement. This idea links to another made by Rose who recalled reading *The Handmaid's Tale* (2016) by Margaret Atwood and discussed how the content and the ideas were actively transformational - they "changed" her for the better.

This idea of reading bringing peace was also discussed by Rose, who linked it explicitly to the fact that it was done alone, away from the noises and voices of the day. She said, "...it's a very personal thing… like it feels, like, quite secret. And so sometimes I like that. I like the fact that I think I'm given the characters and then I get to enjoy them by myself." She added:

> There's that opportunity to be able to open a book and then [there's] a whole new world that is just mine. Nobody else's. I share that with the writer who wrote the book, but I don't think of other people reading that book. It is… they've written it for me and the characters are for me and that's my, my sort of special personal journey, independent journey in a day where you are pulled from pillar to post for everybody else, whether that's in the classroom or your department or a home with your child or needing to do things and when the lights are out it is my moment to be able to just go somewhere special. That you know, nobody else goes to.

The reader-response concept that a text exists as a unique artefact for its reader is explored here (Rosenblatt, 1994). But there is something more in Rose's interpretation that gives agency to the author, in that it is the author who has gifted these characters to this reader who can enjoy and experience them in a uniquely personal and private way. This suggests an active relationship between author and reader, where the text has become an tangible artefact which they offer to their reader. While Barthes (1967) might argue that the text is not a reflection of the personality of the author, this is not the point here. For this interviewee, the author exists as a creator of a text intended just for the reader at the time of reading - it is a personal and intimate transaction of thoughts and ideas between two individuals who remain strangers but who are united by their shared passion for reading. Proust (1972) quotes Descartes on this point: "...the reading of all good books is like a conversation with the most cultivated men of past centuries who have been their authors" (p. 29).

Wes shared this idea of privacy "First of all," he said, "I think the pleasure of reading is just another enormous thing in that busy, hectic schedule and life, getting that solitude and pleasure from something which…I've always thought [of as] a very

intensely personal experience." Wes recognised that the silence of reading offered benefits for students as well as their teachers, and explored how learning "to enjoy a bit of peace and quiet and their own time a little bit," might ease the digital noise of teenagers; lives. He went on, "an hour or two of real peaceful reading. It's just like my little, almost like my little nirvana when I get…into that zone and you've got a really…good book in your hands. It's just wonderful". Wes appreciated that reading could allow you to step out of the pressures of day to day life, and enjoy the "wonder" of reading. The strength of his belief that reading could act as a salve against the woes of life, and could be cultivated with that specific intention in mind, was evident in his closing thoughts:

> ...there are some students who don't want to read…I think perhaps one way when we're trying to encourage them to read more, we need to learn that there's an atmosphere, an excellence to reading. It's something we can very much learn to enjoy - it's me time isn't it? Read the book in the bathroom…wherever you want to, have a cup of tea. Lose yourself, it's absolutely wonderful. I think…the calming nature of the process is absolutely… it's a great experience.

The idea that reading could act as a balm or comfort was evident. Rose said during her A Level and university years, "...Jane Austen was like my, my go to woman…when I was feeling miserable and down." Here we see the idea that Austen acted almost as a friend to the interviewee in her younger days, putting us in mind of Karen Swallow Prior's thoughtful comment, "Reading well adds to our life - not in the way a tool from the hardware store adds to our life, for a tool does us no good once it is lost or broken, but in the way a friendship adds to our life, altering us forever." (2018, p.18). Rose went on to describe reading as offering "solace", again suggesting that reading can offer comfort in times of distress - an idea Manguel agrees with calling his re-reading of one particular text a "balm and a consolation" (2010, p. 287).

Finally, the act of reading was itself explored as a form of relaxation, a practical way of shrugging off feelings of stress and anxiety. Lydia said:

> I feel like for me reading is…it's coming home…that lovely feeling you get, I'm at home now I can relax. I can just de-stress. But that is also what reading is for me, is that opening my book and falling into it, it's that same feeling. It's walking through my front door.

These words echo those of American essayist Anna Quindlen, "Books are the plane, and the train, and the road. They are the destination, and the journey. They are home" (p. 70). This discussion suggested that reading created a sense of kinship for the interviewee, that opening a book involved shutting the front door on the world, and

allowing yourself to be surrounded by your family. For both the interviewees and the questionnaire respondents then, books and reading offered comfort and solace, peace and relaxation, and were seen as ways to shut out the noise and worries of life, as their readers enjoyed the companionship of old and new literary friends.

Summary

This chapter sought to answer the question: What are the reading habits of the secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? Using the data collected from interviews with 10 teachers of English, I was able to reinforce the findings discussed in the previous chapter and add additional reflections which also help to answer this question. Like the respondents to the questionnaire, the interviewees were reading widely, but felt that their capacity to read was negatively affected by their professional duties. They reported feeling too tired to read and so saving their reading for weekends and holidays. They associated their reading with feelings of nostalgia and all considered the influence of their families - and most prominently - their mothers on their reading habits as adults. They considered that the act of reading brought with it feelings associated with comfort and peace that they found rewarding and important. The key findings from this chapter are below:

- **Pressure of domestic and professional duties** Like the questionnaire respondents, the interviewees reported that the daily grind of domestic and professional duties left them without the time or the inclination to read. One said after a busy day at school and at home they had “nothing” left. Another said that the combination of domestic chores and professional responsibilities “consumed” them. As a result of this the interviewees talked about saving their reading for the weekend and the holidays. These findings reflect those of Boemmel et al (2019), who reported teachers' feelings of time pressure, and those of Seedat and Rondon (2021) and Cerrato and Cifre (2018), who found inequality with regard to the quotidian workload, as discussed in the previous chapter. The interviewees’ sense that they were busy is also not likely to be inaccurate given Jerrim et al (2014)’s findings that teachers in England worked on average nine hours a week more than their international counterparts. These findings reinforce those discussed in the previous chapter.
- **Family life** Families played a significant role in the interviewees’ perception of their reading habits and memories of reading as children were nostalgic and warm. The interviewees discussed the positive influence of siblings and parents on their

reading as children and, consequently, their reading as adults, but it was the influence of mothers that was most significant. The interviewee's mothers variously encouraged reading, ensured there were books in the house, organised trips to the library and helped their child learn to read. The interviewees could remember the exact books their mothers had read and enjoyed. Their mothers were often described as "avid" or "enthusiastic" readers. Connelly and Clandinin (1994) say "Our lives are both a source of imaginative possibility and the prisons for our habits" (p. 151). This is particularly pertinent when the effect of childhood reading experiences is considered. For my interviewees the early years of their reading became the framework for their future reading selves - in their cases, however, the habit they generated were not "prisons" but rather the freedom and confidence to read. The influence of the mother on a child's future reading habits would be another field for subsequent fruitful enquiry.

- **Varied reading choices** The interviewees' reading was varied and diverse. Probably as a result of volunteering to be interviewed, none of my interviewees reported that they were not reading. They were reading a combination of contemporary and classic texts, and bought new (or new to them) books regularly. They struggled with the idea of re-reading or abandoning texts, repeatedly discussing the pressures they placed upon themselves to read as many books as possible. These findings were in line with Cremin who concluded that for the majority of primary school teachers who took part in her research, "reading remains a source of satisfaction" (Cremin, 2008, p. 12).
- **Joy of reading** Finally, it was noticeable how emotionally invested the interviewees were in their reading. It was inextricably linked to their sense of happiness and satisfaction with life. They felt it brought peace and calm to otherwise chaotic days, and acted as a "haven" by which they could temporarily retreat from the personal and professional expectations life placed on them. Author Jeanette Winterson refers to this. She writes, "Books work from the inside out. They are a private conversation happening somewhere in the soul…Reading calms me and it clears my head. In the company of a book, my mind expands and I find myself less anxious and more aware" (2011, p. 112). These findings could also be a field of further investigation.

Chapter 5 - What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? Results and discussion of the questionnaire.

"As every reader knows, the social contract between you and a book you love is not complete until you can hand that book to someone else and say, Here you're going to love this" - Ann Patchett (2021, p. 201).

This chapter continues to discuss the results of the questionnaire. It specifically focuses on the questions which work to answer my second research question: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? I determined the most relevant questions to be questions 14, 16 and 17 and elements of the responses generated by Q15.

Q14. Does your reading include books aimed at younger or young adult readers? If it does, please provide three examples.

This question aimed to explore whether the respondents' reading habits allow them to cultivate a knowledge and understanding of literature aimed at younger readers, so providing them with the subject knowledge to discuss suitably engaging reads with their students, as argued by Cremin (2008 and 2014), Hopper (2005) and Meek (1991) among others.

Sixteen respondents (16.1%) out of 99 left this question entirely blank, suggesting they were perhaps embarrassed to answer in the negative, or they could not remember any titles to refer to and did not have the time or inclination to look these titles up. Six respondents simply answered "No" to this question and made no attempt to justify their responses. One respondent wrote that this question was "not applicable" to them, which I initially considered to be a slightly curious response given the nature of their professional obligations. However, as a reflexive thematic researcher, I realise I may simply underestimate how much English teachers do not consider this focus to be relevant, given that they are not children themselves. Certainly, as I worked through the results in this section, it became clear that the assumptions I brought to my analysis may not be shared by many of my respondents - and it may not occur to them that they should be. In the words of Braun and Clark (2022), I have reflected on my "assumptions, expectations, choices and actions" (p.14), in order to analyse my results without preconceived assumptions or expectations clouding my vision.

Eleven respondents (11.1%) said that they did not read material aimed at

younger readers, but were not quite as categorically negative as the first six respondents mentioned. Instead, they offered phrases such as “not usually”, “not often”, “not really” or “rarely”, which suggests that some reading of literature aimed at younger readers did take place, but that it was not a regular or habitual activity.

A small number of respondents said they did not read literature aimed at younger readers regularly or consistently, but took some time to justify their reading choices. These justifications seemed to fall into five categories. Those for whom reading this kind of literature was a treat to be saved for the holidays (“It’s always in the summer that I read young adult fiction”), those who read it because they teach it or are considering teaching it (“Pre-reading books as part of the curriculum for example *Ghost Boys* before deciding to introduce the scheme”), those who did read it but some time ago, presumably, although not explicitly stated, when their personal or professional lives involved teaching or living with younger children (“Not really current as I have not for some time”), those who intended to read this kind of literature but had not quite got around to it yet (“not currently but I intend to start reading more fiction aimed at young adults”), and those who were not guided by literary genre choices when choosing a text to read, but instead were led by the quality and content of the reading material (“I don’t usually consider the age they are aimed at - only if they sound like I would enjoy them or not”).

Fifteen respondents (15.1%) to the questionnaire said that they did read literature aimed at younger readers, but could not provide three titles to answer the question. However, 35 respondents (42.1% of those who did not leave this question blank) were able to name three texts that they had read and enjoyed recently which could be defined as aimed at younger readers. Of those, however, two respondents cited texts that most would dispute as being aimed at younger readers. *The Shining* (1977) by Stephen King and the novels of Lee Child contain extremely adult themes of violence, sexual behaviour, and the supernatural, which most consider to be inappropriate reading materials for younger children. This suggests that these respondents either made an error in their categorisation or were in doubt as to the definition of young adult books. If the latter is the case, as a reflexive researcher, I consider this to be an example of a label for which I assumed a universally accepted understanding existed, particularly by teachers of English. These results show, however, that this is not necessarily the case, meaning an assumption I previously held with regard to the subject knowledge of teachers of English was inaccurate. This is an interesting finding and one worthy of further research moving forward.

Of those texts mentioned, older authors were in the minority of the wide range of texts cited by these respondents, perhaps showing an appetite among some teachers

of English for newer, more contemporary texts. Roald Dahl was only mentioned once, as were Michelle Magorian, author of *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1986), and Robert Swindell, who wrote *Stone Cold* (2016), a still popular KS3 text. Popular titles and authors such as Michael Morpurgo, Stephanie Meyer, author of the *Twilight* series, first published in 2006, the Harry Potter novels by JK Rowling, first published in 1998, *The Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins, or the *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Philip Pullman, first published in 1995, were also named more than once, but the number of these literary best sellers of the last 20 years were largely matched by a wide range of more contemporary authors who, in their writing, are working to reflect on and understand culturally relevant issues.

This was apparent in the repeated references to *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas, which revolves around the shooting of a young black man by police in America. Themes which are also tackled in the 2018 novel *Ghost Boys*, as mentioned previously. *The Boy at the Back of the Class* (2018) by Onjali Q Rauf, which explores being a refugee from a child's perspective, was another repeatedly cited text, as was *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003), an older book by Mark Haddon, which sensitively focuses on how autism impacts on the main character. *A Monster Calls* (2011) by Patrick Ness, which features an angry young protagonist whose mother is dying from cancer was mentioned, as was *Paper Towns* (2008) by John Greene which explores how we cope with bereavement as a society and as individuals. Other texts mentioned, which revolve around causes and concerns that young readers might experience, included: *The Skin I'm In* (2000) by Sharon Flake, which explores racism and *The Girl Who Speaks Bear* (2020) by Sophie Anderson which explores issues concerning body image and our perceptions as to what is considered to be normal by society. Friendship, sexuality, and the treatment of women in society, were also present in the texts read, but so was an element of old-fashioned storytelling, driven by plot and adventure rather than by issues, perhaps more akin to traditional children's storytellers such as Roald Dahl. in the form of *Slime* (2020) by David Walliams and *Mortal Engines* (2001) by Philip Reeve. These types of texts, however, were in the minority.

Q15 - Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult or children's literature to recommend books to your students?

This question encouraged participants to reflect on the extent of their YA or children's literature reading and their use of it in the classroom, particularly with regard to whether they could actually recommend books to their students as a result of their own reading. This phase resulted in an extensive list of codes which I then began to sort

into themes, considering how shared ideas, insights and concepts might align and interact. This was a similar process to that undertaken to Q7 which explored participants' perceptions of the obstacles which prevented them from reading as much as they would like, and, again I used Braun and Clarke's methods of thematic analysis (2006 and 2022). Figure 23 below shows the results of this analysis. I include the full list of codes and thematic codes below, but in this chapter I intend to deal only with the thematic code: *Importance of the school library and librarian in the recommendation of YA and children's texts*. The remaining findings from this question are dealt with in Chapter 6, when I begin to explore how the respondents feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students.

Figure 23 - **Thematic coding of data generated in response to the question:** ***Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult literature...to recommend books to your students?***

Codes	Themes
Active reader of YA or children's literature Actively encourages students to read and recommend books to each other Students recommend books to each other and to the teacher Membership of a book club Recognition that it is a way to build relationships with students Reference to use of an website to help with reading choices	Active reading and recommendation of YA and children's literature
Reading for own children helps to ensure reading YA or children's literature takes place Others adults reading in the household help to share recommendations Other adults in the world - friends/colleagues help them to keep up their reading of these kinds of texts Worried that when own children leave home, they may not continue reading these kinds of texts	Effect of family, friends or colleagues
Recognition that knowledge of YA or children's literature is out of date. Their YA or children's literature knowledge outdated to their students will not have heard of the texts Their knowledge is now mostly the texts they read as children Sense of a divide between the texts they are familiar with and	Knowledge is outdated

contemporary publications - lack of confidence Any reading of these kinds of texts is sparked by a television series	
Sense that reading enough of these kinds of texts is a challenge Sense that teachers have to “keep up” with their reading - impossible task Sense that people “try” to read these kinds of texts Sense that some respondents have to “wing” this element of their teaching Hard to gauge appropriateness of texts and so easier to recommend texts aimed at KS5 than KS3 Recognition that they have only surface level knowledge, but consider that appropriate	Reading YA or children’s literature presents challenges
No engagement with the question Limited engagement with the question, such as “somewhat”	No or limited engagement with the question
Lack of time prevents reading This kind of reading is saved for the summer holidays	Time
Sense that their reading of YA or children’s literature has tailed off	Reading habits have changed
Sense that they pick books for their own enjoyment and not to recommend to students	Not willing to compromise their own reading choices
Recognition they read these kinds of texts or began to read these kinds of texts only for professional reasons Professional obligations prevent this	Reading because they have to

kind of reading - teaching exam classes only	
Recognition of the knowledge held by the school librarian Reliance on the school librarian to recommend books to students Teacher will read along with students during library visit	Importance of the school library and librarian in the recommendation of YA and children's texts
Recognition that they would like to improve their subject knowledge of YA and children's literature in order to be a better teacher Regret that they don't have this knowledge	Desire to read more and improve their knowledge

15.5 Importance of the school library and librarian in the recommendation of YA and children's texts

Five respondents out of 99 mentioned that their school library was either a source of inspiration or help for them when it came to reading and recommending YA and children's literature. One respondent acknowledged her own perceived lack of knowledge of these texts by saying, "I would also recommend that [my students] speak to the school librarian who has a better breadth of knowledge". This sense that English teachers relied on what they saw to be the superior knowledge of their library colleagues was also present in another respondent's comment: "I feel that I rely heavily on the school librarian to help students pick books". Other teachers said that they, as much as their students, made use of their school library in order to help them broaden their knowledge. One said, "I try to read new books in the library so I can recommend texts we definitely have", while another commented, "I spend a lot of time in the school library and looking at what students read", which suggests the reading habits of their students also influence their own reading choices and, therefore, the recommendations they might make to students. This was true of this respondent who went on to say, "I have a Year 7 class and when we go to do our library lessons, I pick a library book to read and when I have finished it, I recommend it to the class. We have bi-weekly recommendations in the class on what the others are reading". These comments create the sense of a nurturing reading environment where the importance of reading is modelled by the teacher and reflected by the students, much in the

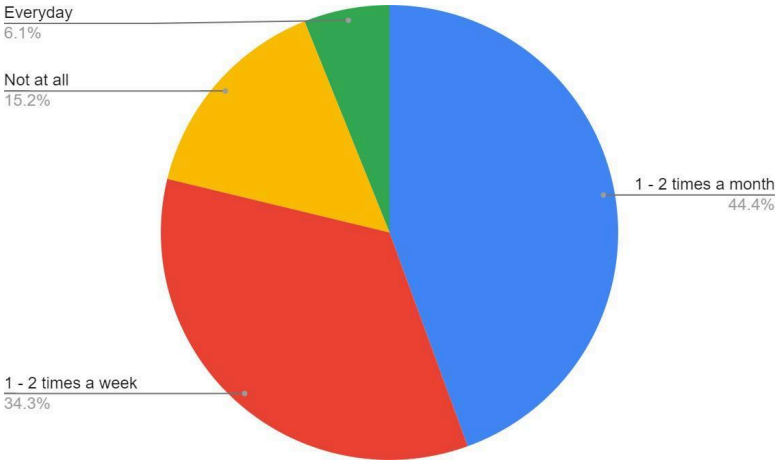
manner Commeyras (1998) envisages with her concept of the reading teacher.

Rather surprisingly, however, one English teacher alluded to the fact that her school did not possess a library and that this deficit had a detrimental effect on her reading choices, and, by implication, her bank balance. “I would like to read more and have a wider selection to pick from - we don’t have an LRC (Learning Resource Centre) at the moment which means I’d need to buy my own whereas I’d normally take from the LRC”. Here there is the sense that buying their own YA and children’s literature texts was not something that this respondent considered doing, and therefore hampered their chances of reading more of these kinds of texts.

Q16 and Q17 - How often do you share insights from your personal reading in the classroom? and How often do you recommend specific books for your students?

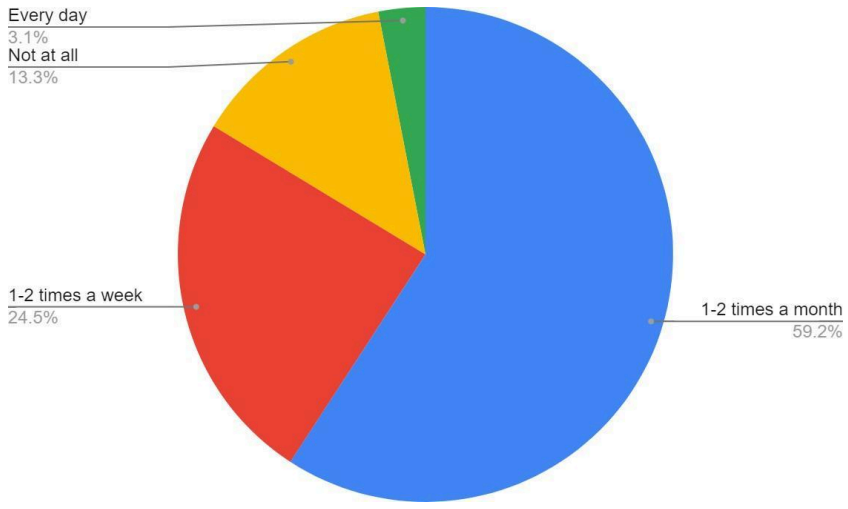
These questions were designed to build on the findings of Q15 which asked respondents if they felt they had enough knowledge of YA and children’s literature. Once Q15 had established how the respondents viewed their knowledge of YA and children’s literature, these questions then worked to discover what the practical implications of their knowledge, or otherwise, actually were in the classroom. Q16 aimed to discover how the respondents’ own reading might lead them to share insights, ideas or considerations in the classroom, or if their subject knowledge might result in the ability to reference other materials on similar topics or themes to those being considered in the classroom. Q17 specifically asked about how frequently respondents recommended books for their students, so engaging in reading-based conversations with their students. The findings for Q16 can be found in Figure 24 below.

Figure 24 - How often do you share insights from your personal reading in the classroom?



The results show that, for most teachers, there were opportunities to make reference to ideas and insights generated by their own reading. A total of 44 (44.4%) were able to do that at least once or twice a month, but for 15 respondents (15.2%) these moments of shared learning did not take place at all. A similar number of respondents in Q17, a total of 13 (13.3%), also reported that they did not recommend specific books for their students. The full results of Q17 can be found below.

Figure 25 - How often do you recommend specific books to your students?



In contrast, to Q16, in Q17, 58 (59.2%) respondents said they were able to recommend books to their students at least once a month, and almost a quarter (24, 24.5%) said they recommended books at least once or twice a week.

These results appeared to show that more respondents were specifically recommending books than alluding to insights they had gained from books. This could be because teachers preparing students for examinations have little time to digress into discussions about other, apparently less relevant, ideas, or perhaps the pressure to complete schemes of work means time for class discussions is eroded. However, 15.2% of respondents in Q16 and 13.3% of respondents in Q17 did not either discuss ideas and topics generated by their own reading or make recommendations based on their own reading in the classroom.

Summary

This chapter sought to answer the question: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? Having established my respondents' reading habits with my earlier question, I wanted to explore whether the respondents' reading habits allowed them to cultivate a knowledge and understanding of literature aimed at younger readers. I was also interested to discover whether their reading habits enabled them to recommend reading material to their students. My findings in this chapter showed that a significant minority of respondents could not and did not engage with YA and children's literature, although the majority did recommend books to students, or discuss ideas and topics from their own reading with their students, once or twice a month. The main findings are summarised below:

- **Reading books aimed at younger or young adult readers** Q14 asked respondents: *Does your reading include books aimed at younger or young adult readers? If it does, please provide three examples*. Less than half of the 99 respondents to the questionnaire were able to provide three books they had read which could be enjoyed by a younger reader - and, even then, one of those books was *The Shining* (1977) by Stephen King. Twenty-two (22.2%) respondents simply left this question blank or answered "No". Some respondents included answers to the question that explained why they did not favour this kind of reading - perhaps in an attempt to add context to their answer, but overall the answer to this question was overwhelmingly negative - a significant number of respondents did not read YA or children's literature, seemingly not sharing Benton's view that "Teachers will be at a

disadvantage in understanding their pupils' responses to reading and to literature unless they have some understanding and interest in the reading…" (1995, p. 458). Overall, these findings are inline with the findings of Cremin et al (2008). Seeking to explore the personal reading habits of 1,200 UK primary school teachers, she asked respondents to name a book they considered to be of considerable importance to them and to list six 'good' authors of children's books, six 'good' children's poets and six 'good' children's picture book authors/illustrators. Only 46% of her sample could complete this task. However, while Cremin found that a small selection of older, more traditional authors (Roald Dahl, Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson, J. K. Rowling and Anne Fine) were referred to time and again, my findings found, in addition to references to the old favourites, an appetite among some teachers of English for more issues-driven, contemporary texts, such as repeated references to *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas. This contrast could be explained by the fact that my sample included secondary teachers, rather than their primary colleagues, and would certainly be worthy of further investigation.

- **The library and the librarian** A number of respondents recognised that the school librarian had knowledge of YA and children's literature that they did not possess. The librarian was valued for their ability to recommend texts to their colleagues as well as to the students. References to reading in the library suggested this was a place where reading was valued and discussed much in the manner Commeyras (1998) Cremin et al (2023) envisage with their concept of the reading teacher. The value the teachers placed on the library echoes the findings of McDowall (2021). However, one respondent reported that her school did not possess a library. This is an interesting area worth further research. Do some teachers of English feel that it is not necessary to have a working knowledge of YA and children's literature because this role can be more adequately filled by the librarian? Perhaps, *should* be filled by the librarian? Do schools value their library and librarian appropriately, considering the powerful role libraries can play in helping children to become confident and happy readers?

- **Classroom interactions about reading** Finally, most respondents recognised that their reading habits could play a direct role in their classrooms, either through allowing them to make references to interesting topics and ideas they had encountered in their reading, or through their ability to recommend books to their students. But for the majority of the respondents, this only happened once or twice a month. Again, a significant minority reported that they did not either discuss ideas and topics generated by their own reading or make recommendations based on their own reading in the classroom. This suggests that some respondents do not cultivate the kind of

“literacy-rich environment” (p. 6) Clarke and De Zoys (2011) discuss, although, of course, a classroom can be literacy-rich in other ways, perhaps through displays, access to reading material and the oracy of students and teachers. Pretzlik and Chan (2004) argue that students’ attitudes are heavily impacted by their teachers, and research has shown the impact the modelling of enthusiasm, passion and interest in reading is likely to have on students (Dreher, 2003). It would seem that this research has found, at the very least, a missed opportunity by a significant minority of respondents to cultivate an engagement in reading and its many benefits for their students as a result of their own reading. Further research could explore whether this trend is present when the sample size is increased.

Chapter 6 - What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? Results and discussion of the interviews.

"When you're alone with a book, you're never really alone. Not just because the characters come alive in your imagination or the author's voice rings out in your head. The book is a reminder of your relationships with other people - the people who told you about it, or those who gave it to you, or those who've already read it" - Mole (2019, p. 113.)

This chapter continues to discuss the results of the interviews I conducted with 10 teachers of English during 2022. It specifically focuses on the interview questions which work to answer my second research question: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? I determined these questions to be primarily, but not inclusively, interview questions 5, 10, 11 and 12. I coded the answers to these questions and, together with relevant codes generated by answers to earlier and later questions, generated the following themes, from which this interview data is taken. For a discussion as to the processes and guidance I used to arrive at these themes, see my earlier discussion of the work of Braun and Clarke (2006 and 2022).

- Teachers feelings about their reading of YA Literature
- How teachers make use of and value their library and librarian

This chapter analyses the relevant data derived from each theme in turn, and attempts to identify patterns and trends within the answers given which help to answer the research question above. In their answers the interviewees often described their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material and then reflected on how it made them feel. This focus on their feelings is the topic of my next two chapters, which attempt to answer the question: How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students. However, it is clear that an overlap exists in the interviewees' answers. As a result the theme T*eachers' feelings about their reading of YA Literature* which is discussed in this chapter will also be examined again in Chapter 7, but this time more specifically through the lens of the teachers' perceptions.

Teachers' feelings about their reading of YA Literature

This theme was generated from the following codes and explores ideas which included whether the interviewees read YA and children's literature with their students in mind or for their own enjoyment away from work. Figure 26 shows each code identified and the frequency with which it occurred.

Figure 26:

Availability of YA to read at home	1
Keeping up-to-date with children's literature	3
Knowledge is outdated	1
Knowledge of YA fiction helps with understanding teenagers	1
Quality of YA fiction	1
Sense they should read more YA	5
Teachers recommending books	20
Sense of wanting to recommend more books	1
Teachers reading habits are not student friendly	2
Teachers reading YA	4
YA is an easier read	1
YA is linked to escapism	1

The interviewees were asked to explore the frequency of their reading of YA or children's literature and their responses echoed the findings of the questionnaire, in that a minority reported that they were not regular readers of these kinds of texts. Two interviewees were not categorically negative. Clarissa, "Not really. I've only done

reading for my own pleasure…", which suggests choosing a YA or children's literature book would not bring her pleasure, while Kylie said, "I don't really know. Were you just looking for any recommendations? Like I was thinking, what have I read recently for young adults? and I don't read for young adults...". Both of these responses include a phrase which acts to soften the ultimate revelation that neither interviewee regularly reads YA or children's literature. Clarissa later went on to be far more explicit about her reading choices. "Unless it's for school, so you know, something that we're actively, actively involved [in] then I'm not doing it," she said, in a comment which implies almost active resistance to the idea of reading YA and children's literature.

Wes acknowledged that he did not read much YA and children's literature and expressed a desire to read more as a result. When asked whether he chose books with the idea in mind that this might be material he could share with his students, he replied, "Do you mean to me when I'm reading at home?...No, I'm probably guilty of that. I probably need to do a bit more than that," and went on to confirm that he only read for himself. All three interviewees at some point in their responses worked to qualify their comments about their preferred reading matter, with only one interviewee ultimately owning her reading choices later in our conversation, suggesting they all felt a perception that they should read more, but were ultimately honest in their answers.

The interviewees explored the reasons behind their reading choices. Becky said, "I'm not against, like, young adult fiction, like when I was teenager I loved reading them. I just think I'm more drawn to more adult books." While Kylie said, "I probably don't, I'm not gonna lie, because I think given the books that I read, I'm not sure if maybe it's age appropriate for them…I mean, there was a student and he, you know, he was discussing, *Dante's Inferno* with me and things like that, and that's the one I've given *Lord of the Flies* too. And I did think also, I think he'll really enjoy that. At the same time, the content of it is a bit…" This interviewee had recommended *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), a GCSE text, to a year eight child, and her reflections do seem to suggest some anxiety as to whether the content matter was inappropriate for his age. She went on to say that very little of her personal reading material was age appropriate for her classroom.

How teachers make use of and value their library and librarian

This theme was generated from the codes below and shows that the interviewees, in the same manner as some of the questionnaire respondents, placed a high value on libraries and the knowledge of librarians when it came to recommending engaging and appropriate reading material for children. Some of the interviewees' answers link the

idea of the library with their childhoods and the parent that took them to the library, demonstrating an overlap with the theme: *The impact of family on teachers' reading habits*. However, these answers were coded within this theme because of their specific reference to the effect of libraries on their reading habits and their perceptions as to how important libraries are. Figure 26 shows each code identified and the frequency with which it occurred.

Figure 27:

Accelerated reader	4
Childhood visits to the library	8
Desire to own a book rather than borrow	2
Giving library books back	1
Keeping books	2
Knowledge of the librarian	2
Positive impact of the librarian	2
References to using the library as an adult	8
Use of the school library	1

The interviewees agreed with the questionnaire respondents when it came to the importance of their school library. School libraries and English lessons that took place in the library were recognised as an excellent place to discuss books. Accelerated Reader (a commercial scheme aimed at encouraging independent reading) lessons, typically in years seven, eight and nine, were repeatedly identified as good opportunities to discuss reading with an expert on hand to help with book recommendations. Jenny said:

> When we do Accelerated Reader at the start of every lesson, I'm currently reading with them. Sometimes it's what I'm reading, sometimes it's what I'm reading with my eight year old and then I think it's, it is really, it's really good

> when you can speak to students about the types of fiction that they're reading.

Finally, Rose said, “I still like to have a bit of a nose when we’re doing Accelerated Reader and just have a look around”.

The interviewees also acknowledged the social importance of libraries and the knowledge of the librarian. Wes talked about how libraries offered, the “chance of exposure to a lot more titles, authors, genres” much as Mangel (2006) says they offer “illumination” (p. 4) and added:

> ...you know, even just chatting to a good librarian…you've probably never heard of this author before, but I'll tell you, if you've enjoyed that, have a look at this. And just sharing, shall we say, the professional experience of reading…or, just like another reading mind sharing some of that information with others.

Wes also discussed how people who work in bookshops “weren’t the same” as librarians, lacking their training and subject knowledge, but despite this admitted that he “rarely” visited a library now.

However, while recognising the value of libraries, not all the interviewees used a library regularly. Christine said, “Where I live currently, there isn't a local library. It would mean travelling into the town centre. And the joy of being able to click something on Amazon and it arrive the next day, really takes any stress about having to travel to go get books.” Other interviewees also made reference to the difficulty of having to return books to libraries, compared to the ease of ordering them online. Kylie said:

> I used to [borrow from the library]. I used to, but then I became a teacher and having that little time to sort of go and exchange them. I found that I was renewing them. All the time. And I just thought it wasn't really fair if someone wants to have that book. Or you know, no-one can use it when I’m reading it. So…what I actually tend to do however, is Amazon and usually they have like a thing where it's like two pound books…

Another repeated idea among the interviewees was the ease and cheapness of buying books from highstreet shops such as Waterstones. Christine said, “ For me, now the magic is in…going to Waterstones. And that for me is more magical than a library I think. I like to own books as well”. This final comment highlighted the idea that a book borrowed and enjoyed, might not be a book the borrower would want to return. Clarissa made the point, “And I always think about the library, what if I got a really good book out and I really enjoyed it and then I have to give it back?”, and Christine

said, “I'm a hoarder. The thought of…if I fall in love with a book, and I have to give that back to the library. I think that doesn't fit with me anymore. I know I want it, I need to keep it.” Both interviewees here remind us of Daniel Pennac’s words in his witty 1984 text *Reads Like a Novel*, “And if I've liked what I've read, then indeed, yes, I do experience some difficulty in 'giving it up'" (p. 143).

The idea of simply being able to buy a book, rather than borrow one from a library prompted Becky to discuss how the idea of financial privilege is associated with the ability to buy books. She discussed how universities might expect students to have read certain books before they arrived for their first year, but to actually have the means to buy all those books was, she felt, a “huge privilege” that was possibly “unacknowledged” by higher education establishments. She was not the only interviewee to make this point. Wes also linked the idea of buying or reading books as children with the idea of privilege. He highlighted just how important libraries had been in his life when he was growing up as a result of his households’ lack of disposable income. Wes said that there was, “a strange irony for the disadvantaged students who don’t have books, we didn't have a lot of money growing up, but that's why we had books, because you could go to the library, get them for free and that was your free entertainment.” This comment highlights his bewilderment that contemporary disadvantaged children should not read, given that libraries are a free facility. He added, “I wasn’t the kind that could afford to spend lots of money on new books as fast as they came out, but libraries became very important places, so obviously you can check out authors and ask the librarian…I think we miss that…I'm thinking I certainly do.” Wes introduced a sense of nostalgia in this comment, suggesting that he, at least, did not make the same use of the library and the skills of the librarian as he once did.

Interestingly, this nostalgia for libraries and all they offer was a thread that virtually every interviewee shared. Apart from one, they all clearly enjoyed discussing visits to the library with, most often, their mother. Clarissa said, “My mum's a really avid reader. So we were always taken to the library as kids.” Christine said, “I was such an avid reader. And I always used to go to the library every week, we used to go on a Wednesday to the local library. That was where I’d get my new books for the week.” Kate said, “We used to read loads from the library and school library and town library, we even had, we lived in a village and had like a library van. Yeah, that came down every Friday. I was there!”. These interviewees’ memories of their libraries have such clarity, even down to remembering the exact day of the week that they would visit. There is an intensity of emotion to these memories, which create powerful narratives based around stories of reading. As Mangel (2010), says:

> We come into the world intent on finding narrative in everything: in the landscape, in the skies, in the faces of others, and, of course, in the images and words that our species creates. We read our own loves and those of others, we read the society we live in…we read that which lies between the covers of a book (p.ix).

As a reflexive researcher these narratives allowed me to "enter the inquiry field in the midst of [the respondents] living their stories" (p. 63) as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) would put it, the candidacy of the respondents' memories, helping to shape vivid memories they wanted to share and make sense of for themselves.

Jenny said, "I had a childminder that took me to the library [and] I began to read. And it was just like this, it was amazing! Like, how had I never really read books before…?" Lydia had this memory of preparing to choose books from the library to take on holiday:

> I was like an avid reader as a child and [my mum] would always make sure that I had books, we had a library, had library cards. We'd just go to the library and…I remember when we went she used to limit me - this is why Kindles are the future - she used to limit me to six books, because we couldn't take any more in the suitcase because obviously like the weight of them all, I remember being like, oh no, what am I going to take, how can I possibly survive on six books for two weeks?

Here the childhood indignation at being limited as to the number of books this interviewee could borrow can still be heard. These tellings, taking as they do the form of a narrative, are reminiscent of Connelly and Clandinin's research. They say that "...teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories" (1990, p.2). They argue that the way teachers explore and articulate their experiences works to shape their perception of present and future circumstances. This seems particularly true when the interviewees talk about the effect of their pasts on their present reading habits. It is as if they are "composing" their lives (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994, p. 147), crafting their memories and lived experiences into narratives that define them moving forward.

While virtually all the interviewees shared fond memories of their library use as children, it was interesting that fewer reported regularly using a public library, as opposed to a school library, as an adult. Kylie said that she "used to" take her daughter to the library every Saturday, but now favoured browsing secondhand bookshops. Lydia said, "We did get library cards. We do occasionally go to the library but it's not a habit. Sadly, we sort of gave it up…". This was not true of all the interviewees. Rose said she "quite regularly" took her daughter to the library, appreciating the "calming experience" of the venue. She talked at some length about how, as her daughter read,

she would “people watch”. “I'm just quite happy sitting there,” she said. “People watching, watching other people choosing books. You're going for that. Are you? Oh interesting…”

Summary

This chapter sought to answer the question: What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers’ ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students. In it I was able to build on the findings discussed in the previous chapter and add additional reflections which help to bring a more nuanced answer to the questions. Like the questionnaire respondents, not all the interviewees were regular or enthusiastic readers of YA or children’s literature, meaning that for those interviewees, their personal reading habits limited their opportunities to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students. Also, similarly to the questionnaire respondents, the interviewees valued the role of librarians and libraries both inside their schools and in their communities. The main findings for this chapter are outlined below:

- **Ability to reference YA texts in the classroom** For a minority of the interviewees, the ability to reference other literature as part of the classroom teaching process did not or could not take place because the teachers did not read YA texts as widely as they read other fiction which did not have a place in the classroom. As in the previous chapter, these findings echo those of Cremin (2008).
- **Libraries and Librarians** Libraries and librarians were considered to be extremely valuable, again reflecting the findings of McDowall (2021) and Battles (2003), but there was a clear distinction to be made in the interviewees’ library use. Libraries as a concept were valued and appreciated. The school library was used, but public libraries were not utilised, despite the interviewees’ happy memories of using them as children and their philosophical belief that the existence of libraries was important. It was ironic that for some of the interviewees, their lifestyles and reading habits meant they did not make use of their public library at all. As one interviewee wryly put it, “They don’t fit into the schedule anymore.”

Chapter 7 - How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? Results and discussion of the questionnaire.

[Reading has] given me an awareness of the world and much further boundaries than I could ever hope to have seen. It's opened my eyes to hundreds of thousands of different things from people's different cultures, different times, different perspectives, different narratives, but wow, what a way to tell a story" - questionnaire respondent.

This chapter continues to discuss the results of the questionnaire, and specifically attempts to answer my third research question: *How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?* Here I consider responses to Q15 and Q18.

Q15 - Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult or children's literature to recommend books to your students?

This question encouraged participants to reflect on their YA or children's literature reading and their use of it in the classroom, particularly with regard to whether they could actually recommend books to their students as a result of their own reading. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, this question resulted in an extensive list of codes which I then began to organise into themes, considering how shared ideas, insights and concepts might align and interact and help to answer my third research question. Again, I used Braun and Clarke's methods of thematic analysis (2006). Figure 27 shows the full list of codes and thematic codes generated by this analysis. Each theme is discussed in full as the chapter progresses.

Figure 28 - **Thematic coding of data generated in response to the question: *Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult literature...to recommend books to your students?***

Codes	Themes
Active reader of YA or children's	Active reading and recommendation

literature Actively encourages students to read and recommend books to each other Students recommend books to each other and to the teacher Membership of a book club Recognition that it is a way to build relationships with students Reference to use of an website to help with reading choices	of YA and children's literature
Reading for own children helps to ensure reading YA or children's literature takes place Others adults reading in the household help to share recommendations Other adults in the world - friends/colleagues help them to keep up their reading of these kinds of texts Worried that when own children leave home, they may not continue reading these kinds of texts	Effect of family, friends or colleagues
Recognition that knowledge of YA or children's literature is out of date. Their YA or children's literature knowledge outdated to their students will not have heard of the texts Their knowledge is now mostly the texts they read as children Sense of a divide between the texts they are familiar with and contemporary publications - lack of confidence Any reading of these kinds of texts is sparked by a television series	Knowledge is outdated
Sense that reading enough of these kinds of texts is a challenge	Reading YA or children's literature presents challenges

Sense that teachers have to “keep up” with their reading - impossible task Sense that people “try” to read these kinds of texts Sense that some respondents have to “wing” this element of their teaching Hard to gauge appropriateness of texts and so easier to recommend texts aimed at KS5 than KS3 Recognition that they have only surface level knowledge, but consider that appropriate	
No engagement with the question Limited engagement with the question, such as “somewhat”	No or limited engagement with the question
Lack of time prevents reading This kind of reading is saved for the summer holidays	Time
Sense that their reading of YA or children’s literature has tailed off	Reading habits have changed
Sense that they pick books for their own enjoyment and not to recommend to students	Not willing to compromise their own reading choices
Recognition they read these kinds of texts or began to read these kinds of texts only for professional reasons Professional obligations prevent this kind of reading - teaching exam classes only	Reading because they have to
Recognition of the knowledge held by the school librarian Reliance on the school librarian to recommend books to students	Importance of the school library and librarian in the recommendation of YA and children’s texts

Teacher will read along with students during library visit	
Recognition that they would like to improve their subject knowledge of YA and children's literature in order to be a better teacher Regret that they don't have this knowledge	Desire to read more and improve their knowledge

15.1 Active reading and recommendation of YA and children's literature

A total of 32 respondents (32.3%) said they were actively reading and recommending YA or children's literature to their students. Within this group respondents commented that not only were they recommending texts for their students, but their students were recommending texts to each other and to the teacher. One said: "I tend to ask my avid readers what they are reading at present. I then research these titles, looking at the blurb and taking a sneak peak at the books to gauge whether or not I think they are appropriate and of interest", thus suggesting that it is not just the teachers' subject knowledge that can be drawn upon in a classroom where reading is promoted and discussed. For this teacher, recommendations from her students helped to broaden her subject knowledge, and in turn she could make recommendations to other members of her class. One respondent had created a book display in her classroom to help scaffold students' recommendations "to each other", while another said that they "deliberately instigate these conversations", suggesting an explicit determination within the classroom to ensure conversations about books were taking place.

Respondents within this group felt confident in their knowledge of children's and YA literature. Responses such as "Yes - I read a variety of young adult books now and have read a lot of the main YA authors as a teenager and young adult" and "I was an avid reader as a student and I still actively research age appropriate books to recommend to my students", suggest that for some respondents their own reading, and love of reading, as young adults still acts as the backbone to their reading as adults. One respondent talked of how she intersperse[d] reading books for adults with reading young adult literature", suggesting a balancing act within their reading habits which allowed this respondent to broaden their subject knowledge while also enjoying books aimed at a more adult audience. Two respondents within this group mentioned running or belonging to book clubs or reading clubs for young people, which helped to

ensure they were reading regularly. One respondent said, “I have a friend who runs a Zoom book club. She’s an Usborne [book]seller so we read young adult fiction. I therefore read a new young adult fiction book every 6-8 weeks”. Another reference to an external source of book recommendations, such as Usborne, was that of the Book Trust, mentioned by one respondent, a UK charity which encourages children to read by helping them to own their own books, thus increasing the prominence of literacy within the family. Finally, one respondent actively made a link between reading and relationships in the classroom. They said, “It is also a way I can connect with my students and communicate my love of reading”.

15.2 Effect of family, friends or colleagues

Fourteen respondents (14.2%) felt that reading with their own children helped to ensure they were regularly engaging with YA or children’s literature, and could in turn recommend that literature to their students. One respondent wrote, “I tend to recommend books my children have enjoyed”, and another talked of how her knowledge of YA and children’s literature had been gathered by “looking at books with my daughter in [the] library/bookshops”. Respondents also referenced the effect family members and work colleagues had on their reading habits. One respondent said sharing books with their 12-year-old sister kept their reading regular and up-to-date, while another said that the recommendations she received from “fellow English teachers” were useful. One wrote, “My husband… always shared his thoughts and findings with me. I now also have teen readers at home who are more than happy to give honest and informative recommendations. Reading and a love of reading are very important in our house”. Here the respondent creates the sense of a family unit that appreciates the value of reading, where parents have modelled a love of reading and seen it reflected in their children (see Meek (1991), for a discussion about the importance of parents in encouraging their children to read).

Responses also commented on how reading at home generated subject knowledge that was recognised and felt to be useful in the classroom. Here, however, there was a sense that while their children ensured regular reading, these book choices were as a result of being a parent, and, while enjoyed, were not a first choice of reading material. One respondent wrote, “I read with my 7 year old and 11 year old every night, as well as my own books. This means I encounter a wide range of fiction aimed at younger ages. Reading *The Girl Who Stole an Elephant* (2020) with my 11 year old has led to it being introduced as a Y7 text in school!”. Here reading for personal enjoyment at home has led to increased subject knowledge which has been utilised to the benefit of many students. Interestingly, this respondent clearly values the

reading they do with their children, but distinguishes it from her “own books”, suggesting again that balancing act in reading habits. For this respondent, the drive behind their reading of YA and children’s literature is linked to their parenting, rather than an enjoyment of the literature itself, although this is a happy by-product. This was also true of another respondent who wrote, “I read the books my daughters read (aged between 8 and 12) so I am currently keeping up with their interests. Before they reached this age, I wouldn’t read fiction for this age range unless it was part of a scheme”.

Here the respondent’s need to keep up “with their interests”, suggests, similarly, that the respondents’ reading choices are primarily being made in order to entertain or engage their daughters, rather than to further their own interest in this type of text. Two respondents reflected on what would happen when they no longer had children at home to read to. One, optimistically, said, “I can see keeping an interest as I have enjoyed being able to recommend books to my students”, but another wrote, “I am guided by my children and worried that when they leave home I won’t sustain that knowledge”. This final comment is curious. Initially I perceived this as the respondent having no agency of their own, relying instead on the headwind of their children. However, as a reflexive researcher I began to understand that it might instead be the case that the respondent does not have the stamina or the curiosity, rather than the agency, to sustain the corpus gathering initiative on their own, and that having children at home is the only way to ensure regular reading of YA and children’s literature for this individual.

15.3 Knowledge is outdated and Reading YA or children’s literature presents challenges

Fifteen respondents (15.1%) said they felt that their knowledge was not up-to-date, and that the books they could recommend to their students were more likely to be books that they read and enjoyed as young readers. Their reflections are explored in this subsection. Responses which took a form similar to this one, “I can recommend books that were popular when I was growing up e.g. *Noughts and Crosses*/*His Dark Materials* trilogy, but I’m not up to date with recent releases of children’s knowledge”, were plentiful. One respondent felt that their knowledge of YA and children’s literature was “very limited but I’ve often read something they haven’t heard of”, suggesting differing reading habits between the teacher and their students. Initially, I perceived this as a lack of engagement, in that the respondent appeared to demonstrate no sense of reflection or inclination to align those reading choices through their own agency. However, on further reflection, and as part of acknowledging that my own

views played a role in the “process of understanding” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 98) the views and ideas of my participants, I recognised that another way to view this could be far more positive - these teachers actually have the potential to broaden their students’ reading lists as a result of their own reading. In this instance, and in others throughout this thesis, my “perspective and understanding” at first shaped my interpretation of the participant’s words, but “that interpretation [was] open to revision and elaboration as it [interacted] with the phenomenon in question”, and as my “perspective and understanding” including my “biases and blindspots, [were] revealed and evaluated”. (Tappan, 2001, p. 50).

Often there was a sense of divide or tension between modern publications and old favourites or classics. One respondent said, “I recommend things that I enjoyed at their ages”, while another said, “I am a stickler for the classics”, perhaps almost suggesting that the enduring value of those texts should be enough. Linked to the comments about out-of-date knowledge was often the feeling that the respondents lacked confidence in their abilities to recommend texts to certain age groups, and particularly younger readers. One respondent said:

> I feel like my knowledge of YA is surface level. I sometimes find it hard to gauge suitability - some YA I feel is too mature for some students whereas other titles are too ‘babyish’. I do teach two KS5 classes so I find it easier to recommend to them.

The responses here suggest their authors become more confident when recommending for older readers who are not far away from adulthood.

Some of these 15 respondents felt that their reading had not kept up with more recent YA and children’s literature publications as they had matured as readers, and that endeavouring to keep up presented them with a challenge. Respondents commented that, “keeping up to date with new material is difficult”. Another said, “it is difficult to be able to read enough to recommend to everyone”. One respondent felt, “...although I might not have a thorough knowledge of what is currently ‘on trend’ I can recommend things that I’ve enjoyed which are appropriate and for pupils who I know well and know their tastes”. While the use of the phrase “on trend” here suggests a slightly dismissive tone, that these kinds of texts may not stand the test of time perhaps, this sense that the respondent had failed to keep up somehow was echoed through the responses.

More than one response included the verb “try”, in comments similar to this from one participant, “I try to keep up to date with new releases as well as old classics”. Tensions were also apparent here. One respondent felt that keeping up with modern

texts was an integral part of their role. They wrote, “I try to anyway. I realise that they want newer books that reflect their own experiences”, suggesting a recognition that newer texts might engage teenage readers more. Another, however, took an opposing view, “I just don’t have time to keep up with their interests”, suggesting that reading texts aimed at younger audiences was something they were not willing to invest time in, but also perhaps reflecting their appreciation of the varied and complex texts that students choose to read. Clark and Douglas (2011) reported that while 2/5ths of young people read fiction outside of school, they also reported reading magazines, websites, text messages, emails, blogs, newspapers and even manuals.

15.4 Answers that say ‘No’, Time, Not willing to compromise their own reading choices, Reading because they have to

Of the 99 responses, only two respondents left this question (*Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult or children’s literature to recommend books to your students?*) blank, but six respondents answered simply ‘No’ showing a reluctance to engage with the question. Thirteen (13.1%) began a sentence with ‘No…” or employed a similar use of negative language, and then went on to explain why they did not read YA or children’s literature. One respondent admitted that the last time they had read these kinds of texts was “in my PGCE”, suggesting that a sense of professional obligation to read for subject knowledge no longer prevailed. This was echoed in another comment where the respondent wrote, “Not as much as I used to”, which again suggested a falling off of this kind of reading. There was an honesty to these answers - one respondent explained, “I do not have enough knowledge to read for myself or look for YA”. These latter two respondents appeared to recognise or acknowledge a gap in their subject knowledge, while another said “No I feel like my knowledge of YA is surface level”. Two respondents felt no need to defend their reading habits. One said, “...if I’m honest I feel like I blag this a bit”, while the other explained they might only pick up texts that interest them if they have seen them televised or made into films. This final point was echoed by Kylie, one of the interviewees, who said she had recently re-watched the film of *The Hunger Games* films and thought she might re-read the books as a result.

Time was a factor for some respondents. One said that they didn’t have “the time to be ‘current’”, another in a comment mentioned above, said, “I just don’t have time to keep up with their interests”. It was interesting, that although time was generally recognised to be an obstacle to reading more, as discussed above, it was only mentioned three times as a reason for not reading YA or children’s literature. Instead, the reason offered more in this question was simply that respondents preferred to read

other text types. One rather surprising comment along these lines was, “As I have so little time, I tend to read things that I will enjoy rather than broaden my reading”, where the respondent clearly recognises that their reading habits limit their reading choices. A second respondent said “in general I do read more adult fiction”, while another said, “No, I tend to read for pleasure and pick books that I think I will enjoy”, suggesting that a YA or children’s literature text would not be a book they would enjoy. Another was clear that they tended to read within one literary genre and this prohibited reading of much else. They said, “No, because of the genre I like. The books I read are usually crime thrillers which are not suitable content-wise for a younger audience”. There was no sense from this respondent that their reading habits could change to accommodate different kinds of reading.

My first response to this was to feel that these respondents’ reading habits were somehow defective - as an English teacher, shouldn’t one read at least some YA literature? Again, I had to pause and reflect on this reaction. I came to the conclusion that reading is an intensely private and personal occupation - Proust (1972) calls it “that fruitful miracle of a communication in the midst of solitude” (p. 31). Is it reasonable then that what one reads should be determined and judged by others simply because one works in education? This is something I explore further in my conclusion. This respondent’s view was echoed by one of the interviewees, who simply said, “Unless it's for school, so you know, something that we're actively, actively involved in, then I’m not doing it.” Her final words are ambivalent - is it simply not happening and so she is “not doing it”, or is her phrasing meant to be interpreted as an act of rebellion? Her meaning is not clear.

In contrast, however, one respondent did acknowledge that they were actively working to build their knowledge of YA and children’s literature. They wrote, “No, I am now having to discover books aiming (sic) at younger readers as I was too focused on books aimed at teenage girls, as a child, rather than children’s books”. Here the use of “discover” suggests this respondent is enjoying their new reading experiences and sees this broadening of their subject knowledge as something to actively enjoy.

It was also interesting that three respondents said they read YA because they felt a professional obligation to do so. For one respondent this was because of their career choice and, by implication, the subject knowledge they deemed necessary. They said, “I’ve been reading teenage fiction since becoming an English teacher and have a personal library in my classroom of books I lend out to students”. This was echoed by another respondent: “I am getting more so since we have done reading lessons based on recently released books in school but my young adult reading tends to be focused at work rather than my own reading”. One respondent said, “I have only started

reading these kinds of books now I am training to teach". At first this seemed to me to be a curious response from an English teacher, where one would have thought the cause and effect would have worked in the opposite direction. However, on further examination, I do understand this point. Completing an English Literature degree and then working as an English teacher, where the focus in both cases may be on canonical literature, could mean that an individual may not read YA literature until their degree and their route into teaching, and perhaps beyond.

15.6 Desire to read more and improve their knowledge

Finally, a total of 10 respondents commented in some way that they had a desire to broaden their knowledge of YA and children's literature texts. Comments like, "I would like to read more and have a wider selection to pick from", and "I am forever trying to improve", suggested that the reading of these kinds of texts was an ongoing aim or issue for a number of respondents, and they had recognised prior to the questionnaire, that this was an area of their subject knowledge in which they were less confident. One respondent said, "I intend to start reading more children's literature so I can better recommend books to students", directly linking their perceived gap in their subject knowledge with their ability to engage with students about their reading. Another commented that they were "working on" their subject knowledge and added, "so there will be some great titles I don't know about yet", where the "yet" employed at the end of the sentence echoes the respondents earlier who talked about discovering new books. For one respondent, there was a sense of urgency to the need to broaden their knowledge, signified by the comment, "this is an area I must address".

Q18 Complete the sentence: Reading is important to me as an English teacher because…

This question offered respondents the opportunity to reflect with more nuance on the role that reading plays in their life and was designed to help answer my third research question: How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? It also offered me the chance to compare the contents of the answers to the many expectations of teachers discussed in Chapter 2. Did the respondents read because they were driven by the same motivators given as reasons why teachers *should* read, such as a desire to improve subject knowledge and develop as classroom practitioners, or were their reading habits driven by their own personal rather than professional desires? Operating as the final question in the survey, it also allowed me

to make comparisons between the answers to earlier questions. When a respondent reported little personal reading and limited knowledge of YA or children's literature, it was interesting to explore how they answered this question. On a few occasions it felt like this was the "ought" answer for some respondents, in that this answer summed up what they believed to be true and worthy about reading, and what an English teacher might be expected to write, but their earlier answers were a more accurate indication of their reading identity and the role reading actually played in their personal and professional lives. The idea of the "ought" paradigm with regard to self-regulation is explored by Higgins (1994). This question then also allowed respondents to explore questions of identity and how they perceived themselves as English teachers. Once again, I followed the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006 and 2022), to create a series of codes and thematic codes with which to make sense and organise the responses into categories which helped to answer my research question. The first theme: *Enjoyable and restorative experience* was discussed in Chapter 3. Two respondents left this question blank.

Figure 29 - Thematic coding of data generated in response to the question: Complete the sentence: Reading is important to me as an English teacher because…

Codes	Themes
Relaxing Allows time for reflection Enjoyable Spiritually restorative Brings hope Brings comfort	Enjoyable and restorative experience
Expression of a love/enthusiasm or passion of reading Want to share passion/love of reading Importance of teacher as role model Want to help them enjoy books Allows student to feel with teacher feels Want to inspire students to read for pleasure	Teachers love to read and want to share that passion with their students

Escape reality and existence Escape from day to day Opens us the world Allows exploration of the world/different experiences Live different lives through characters	Escapism
Reason for being a teacher It's what I do Can't live without it It's important	Definition/Perception of professional Self
Build relationships Enables improved communication Develops vocabulary Improves spelling Models good writing skills Generates ideas for lessons Unlocks student potential Enables exploration of language Generates/improves knowledge Cornerstone of future learning	Improved learning experiences for students
Develops creative thinking - stimulates thinking Feeds the imagination Keeps brain active and switched on Builds confidence Encourages curiosity and independent thinking Makes a better person/Shapes the reader Enriches and improves lives of readers It can bring change Transforms students lives educationally	Development/Transformation of Inner Self of the reader

Transforms students lives culturally	
Allows us to connect with each other as human beings Understand human behaviour Improves understanding of the way the world works Teaches sympathy/empathy	Appreciation of the Other
Broadens text choices in the department Has professional benefits	Professionally useful
Reminds me of the power of words New characters to consider Broadens horizons to new literature	Appreciation of Literature

18.2 Teachers love to read and want to share that passion with their students and Escapism

Twenty of the 99 respondents (20.2%) used the words “love” or “passion” to communicate why they considered reading to be important to them. In virtually every case this love of reading was also linked with a desire to share that passion and enjoyment with their students. One respondent wrote, “I have a true passion for reading, it is my main hobby outside of work and I would love for students to share my passion”. This passion for reading was also extended to embrace the subject of English, as one respondent indicated: “It allows me to develop and share my passion for my subject”. Another respondent wrote that it was “important that I enjoy reading as much as I want my students to”, which links to the idea of the teacher as a role model as explored by Hassen (2016) and Cremin (2014 and 2023). As one respondent put it: “I think it is vitally important that I am a reading role model and share my enthusiasm with students. In lots of cases, we will be the only positive role model in students’ lives, in regard to having good reading habits”, suggesting an implied understanding that a teacher in the classroom has more than just academic responsibilities, but social ones too.

This was echoed by another respondent who wrote, “it’s important that students have teachers who know, and invest in, their interests outside of school”, a comment which stands in stark contrast to the respondent who in question 15 who said they did

not have time to “keep up with their interests”. Another respondent said, “I want my students to feel what I feel when I am absorbed in and transported by a great story. I think it is important to speak from and teach from a position of love, experience and knowledge”. This respondent succinctly demonstrates two of the three main reasons, identified by Kyriacou and Coulthard (1988) that a person might enter the teaching profession - they believe it to be “socially worthwhile” (p. 117), they have a “desire to help children succeed” (p. 117) both altruistic reasons, while also the intrinsic reasons that they have "an interest in using their subject matter knowledge and expertise" (p. 117). Here the respondent identifies the benefits of reading and their enthusiasm for reading as tools that can help with student engagement and enjoyment of a text.

Cumulatively, these comments concerning the idea of the teacher as a role model whose attitude can have a direct effect, be it positive or negative, on their students, are clearly reflected in the literature. In addition to research discussed in the literature review chapter, Johnson et al (2009) discuss how one way they do this is through their influence as role models, who by communicating positive values develop strong relationships with their students. This is also discussed by Cole et al (2022).

This idea of sharing a love of reading in order to help students find pleasure in a story or develop good reading habits was also linked to the idea of inspiration for some questionnaire respondents. One respondent wrote, “It helps me inspire students to read for pleasure” and another, “I loved reading so much as a teenager, I want to inspire my students to enjoy reading as much as I did”, where here the teacher assumes an almost parental role in wanting to pass on something they have enjoyed and valued. This was echoed in the words of another respondent who said that “it brings me joy and I want to share that with others - probably a bit corny but true”. This respondent not only recognises the importance of an intensely positive emotion such as “joy” and the benefits it can bring, but signals a desire to want the same for her students, again showing an almost parental desire to want the best for a child.

The idea of escaping or escapism was also discussed. For some respondents reading offers “a place to escape” from the rigours and concerns of day to day life. One particularly poignant comment which brought together many of the ideas discussed above was, “It allows me to fulfil my love of the English language and helps me understand how I can transfer this love to the students I come into contact with. Reading takes us to a place where we are untouchable and this sense of escapism is something all of us should experience”. Here there is the sense that being able to immerse oneself in a book creates a form of armour or protection from the outside world, allowing the cares of day to day life to be temporarily forgotten - again, another nod to the fact that some students lead challenging and exhausting lives and reading

can act as a respite for them. For other respondents “escaping into another world” was important simply because it was pleasurable rather than serving any other purpose. One respondent wrote excitedly, “I get to live a different life each time I pick up a book!”. Another said, “It's given me an awareness of the world and much further boundaries than I could ever hope to have seen. It’s opened my eyes to hundreds of thousands of different things from people’s different cultures, different times, different perspectives, different narratives, but wow, what a way to tell a story.”

Another respondent wrote that reading “changed my life and brings the world into my life and I am passionate about sharing that with my students and trying to inspire them to find that joy and exploration”. This was a repeated idea. Respondents recognised the importance of students encountering “new worlds and situations vicariously”, that reading “widens our knowledge of the world around us”, that it allowed them to “explore the rest of the world”, can “transport you to another world” and helps broaden experiences or cultural context in that “reading allows us to escape reality and experience so much outside of our own existence, It opens the world up to us”. For respondents then reading allowed them and their students the opportunity to not only learn and experience more about the world they inhabit, to “broaden their depth of knowledge and insight” but to also explore and engage with the rich ‘other’ worlds that fiction can create. This idea of teachers of English wanting their students to explore the world through their reading, is in itself worthy of more study, and particularly an investigation into the texts that are made available for students with which to do this. Morgan (2015) would argue that what we think of as global literature is actually extremely limited and representative only of the Western, and largely white, publishing houses which have the means to distribute literature to the wider public. The fact that of all my references, only one text that I cite, was published in a non-Western country (India), perhaps bears this out.

18.3 Definition/Perception of professional Self and Improved learning experience in the classroom and beyond

For some respondents, reading was important because it was tied up in their perception of who they were as people in the world. The strongest comment expressing this was, “I can’t live without it in my life”. For one respondent it provided the scaffold behind their decision making processes, “It underpins everything I do”, suggesting it affects both their personal and professional lives. Another said, “It’s what I do, it is the reason behind what I do”, suggesting reading had become an almost instinctive act and had led to that respondent choosing a career in teaching, a sentiment echoed in the similar comments of, “It’s one of the main reasons why I do

my job", "It is fundamental to the reason I became a teacher", and, "Without it my job is pointless", reading here providing substance and meaning to the teaching of English. For two respondents it was enough simply to reiterate the importance of reading. The comment, "Reading is important to everyone", acknowledged the personal importance of reading for that respondent, but also applied it to the wider world almost in the manner of a truth which must be universally acknowledged as Jane Austen might write. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the comedic response of the second respondent, "To quote Ru Paul, it's fundamental", places the importance of reading in a modern day pop-culture setting, making reference to a popular catchphrase of drag artist Ru Paul, and thus signalling the non-discriminatory and accessible nature of reading for that respondent.

This link between reading and teaching subject English is also apparent in a series of comments which suggested reading could lead to an improved learning experience for students, on a personal and an academic level. Respondents felt that their reading helped them to build and sustain relationships with their students because it facilitated a channel of communication. One said, "It also means I can talk to the students passionately about my subject" and another, "[it] gives me a common interest with my students and enables me to connect with them". The fact that regular reading can improve vocabulary skills was repeatedly mentioned. Respondents explicitly linked the skills of reading and writing, suggesting that good reading habits could lead to improved writing skills in that reading helps students become familiar with words, thus enabling them to spell with more accuracy. Books themselves were also recognised as treasure troves of material which could be called upon, once known about, to model good writing, something which was thought to be valuable to both teachers and students. Knowledge of a range of books was also, in a similar manner, recognised as inspirational for teachers trying to come up with lesson ideas. One respondent wrote, "It can often provide excellent examples of literature that can be used in class discussions to pick out excellent examples of narrative." Another respondent said, "It gives me ideas for lessons and examples to show students. It improves my writing and my vocabulary." Indeed, more than one respondent believed reading was important because it helped them to "broaden" or develop their language skills as practitioners, as much as it helped students to develop their own fledgling skills.

Respondents felt that reading was important to students because it "unlocks potential" in students, and often this sense of potential was linked to the idea that reading helps students to acquire knowledge. Respondents made comments like, "It gives students access to any knowledge they wish to acquire in any subject area", a

view which embraces the idea that reading is important for all areas of the curriculum and not just English. One respondent said that this acquisition of knowledge was as important for her as it was for her students. She said, “It provides me with a wealth of knowledge required in all walks of life both in and out of the classroom.” While this comment is made with the teacher’s own personal growth in mind, it is equally applicable to the students in their classroom. One respondent described reading as the “cornerstone of all future learning”, a summary which neatly describes the effect good reading skills can have on all areas of the curriculum, and the progress students make through their academic journey. Respondents in this question signalled an appreciation of the ‘adult skills’ model of English, in that reading provided not just enjoyment for their students but access to a world of knowledge and skills that would prove useful beyond the classroom, a contrast to the findings of Pike (2002) and Goodwyn (1992, 1999, 2016, 2017), as discussed earlier.

18.4 Development/Transformation of the reader’s Inner Self and Appreciation of the Other

Respondents repeatedly signalled that reading was important because it allowed for the development of the inner self of the reader, and again this was seen as equally as applicable to students and teachers. While this idea is perhaps sentimental, and an example of what Driscoll (2014) would doubtless see as an example of the new literary middlebrow, the respondents were nevertheless sincere, if unoriginal, in their articulation of their beliefs. One respondent wrote, “The stories I read inspire creative writing ideas and unlock different ways to paint pictures with words”. There was repeated use of the word “broaden” in this context, suggesting a recognition of growth or enrichment. Reading could “broaden the mind” and “broaden the imagination”. Respondents linked together the idea of creativity and imagination. Reading could “develop” both, while keeping the brain or the mind active. As one respondent said,”It keeps me switched on”. Reading was variously described as “fuelling” or “feeding” the imagination, suggesting that reading could act as a stimulus for creativity, or a staging point for deeper, more creative thinking.

One respondent linked the idea of the growth of the imagination, with the growth and transformation of our inner selves. Indeed, this comment linked together many of the ideas discussed above. “Reading underpins everything we teach! Reading fuels the imagination needed for creative writing, it helps build vocabulary, it makes us understand human behaviour, and teaches us sympathy and a whole range of other emotions…Reading is knowledge and knowledge is power!”. For this respondent, reading has academic value, but that seems almost overshadowed by the passion that

is present in the description of the less tangible benefits of reading. Embodied here is the ‘personal growth’ concept of reading and subject English (Cox, 1991), suggested by the idea that reading helps to shape who we are as people, and a teacher plays an important role in moulding their students.

This was echoed in the following comments, “It forms me and shapes me into who I am and that person helps me to shape others”, and “It also gives us access to experiences that can govern and shape who we want to be”, suggesting a sense of agency in the reader, who, inspired by their reading, is active in crafting their individual development, and is instrumental in crafting or guiding the development of others.

Contained within responses then was the idea that reading can be transformative and make us better people, more sympathetic and understanding of the lives of others. Patchett (2021) talks about this. “Reading fiction not only develops our imagination and creativity, it gives us the skills to be alone. It gives us the ability to feel empathy for people we've never met, living lives we couldn't possibly experience for ourselves, because the book puts us inside the character's skin” (p. 253). This was encapsulated in two particularly erudite comments, “It helps me to see the world from the point of view of people who are different to me, which I believe makes me a better person”, and, “I have been educated about the world through books and have invested myself into characters, making me a more empathetic and caring person.”

There was also the sense that reading can transform us academically as well as personally, “It has the potential to transform mine and my students’ lives, educationally, culturally and within the realms of my imagination.” Here the idea of cultural knowledge is mentioned and this was also a recurring theme, seen in comments such as, “I also learn things about cultures and people that I might impart to my class”, and “It gives perspective on other walks of life, [and] teaches culture”. These comments reinforce the idea that respondents felt reading was important because it promoted a kind of personal growth that was imbued with tolerance, appreciation and understanding of others. One respondent summed up this idea, “It allows us to connect to each other as human beings”.

18.5 Professionally useful and Appreciation of Literature

It was interesting that these thematic codes occurred the least times through the comments, suggesting that most respondents did not see their reading habits as directly linked to their professional success or effectiveness. Equally, while respondents’ appreciation of reading was clear in comments that associated it with inspiration and enjoyment, its importance was more directly linked to philosophical

ideas concerning its generalised effect on the reader, rather than a specific appreciation of the craft of the writer as it is embodied in the creation of characters. Only one respondent made reference to, as they put it, “professional benefits” while another explained that their reading knowledge meant, “we don’t always study the same books each year as we find new books we love”. One respondent made reference to the idea that reading kept them passionate about “literature”, while a second built on this saying, “it keeps me constantly passionate for literature and characters”, where here it is the creation and appreciation of fictional lives created on a page that drives the reader. One respondent felt that reading was important because it broadened their “horizons to new literature” and this was reflected in the final comment, “It gives me new language and characters to consider”.

Summary

This chapter attempted to answer my third research question: How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? It explored the rich answers generated by the questionnaire where respondents began to reflect in more detail about how they felt about the effect their reading habits, established in answer to my first research question, had on their classroom practice and identities as teachers of English. Roughly a third of the respondents reported regularly reading YA or children’s literature, but the majority did not, reporting a variety of reasons for this, including time and a lack of interest. However, in contrast to this, virtually every respondent agreed that reading was important for a rich variety of reasons, which allowed for contrast and comparison with the work of Pike (2004) and Goodwyn (1992, 1999, 2016, 2017). The main findings from this chapter are outlined below:

- **Reading and recommending YA or children’s literature** A total of 32 respondents (32.3%) said they were actively reading and recommending YA or children’s literature to their students and another 10 respondents signalled they wanted to improve and broaden their knowledge of YA and children’s literature texts. However, these figures were outweighed by the number of respondents who recognised that they did not read enough of these kinds of texts, and who did not offer a comment signalling their intention to broaden their reading. Cremin (2011) argues that teachers of English should “take responsibility” (p. 11) for encouraging their students to turn into readers, and it was a view I shared at the beginning of my research, as previously discussed. However, my results have shown that it is not a

view shared by a significant minority of teachers who responded to my questionnaire. Either they did not consider that their reading knowledge made it difficult for them to recommend engaging and appropriate texts for their students, or the fact that they could not recommend texts was not a concern to them. It is interesting that the questionnaire allowed some respondents to share what Clandinin and Connelly (1996) would refer to as *teacher stories*, that is the raw narrative of what being a teacher really looks like, as opposed to their *stories of teacher*, that is, the professional influences that guide their public operation on a more formal level. How many of my respondents who opted to share their *teacher stories*, while others opted for *stories of teacher*, the stories they thought I wanted to hear or which would show them in a good light, is unknown.

- **Parents and children** Having younger children or siblings was repeatedly reported as a way teachers were able to continue their reading and keep it up-to-date, with parents who love reading expressing satisfaction at seeing that passion reflected in their children. Here, the influence of the reading parent echoes Meek's (1991) findings and the ongoing research of UK charity Book Trust.
- **Keeping reading up-to-date** Some respondents felt that their reading had not kept up with more recent YA and children's literature publications as they had matured as readers, and that endeavouring to keep up presented them with a challenge. For some respondents this meant they lacked confidence in recommending or choosing YA or children's literature, and so reverted back to the comfort of the classics and the books they had grown up with. This finding is similar to that of Cremin et al (2008) and seems to suggest a cycle where a lack of confidence in reading choices, leads to a lack of YA and children's literature reading. However, those respondents who reported that they did read regularly were also able to report a range of titles, including a diverse selection of contemporary texts, as discussed earlier.
- **Reading is important** The respondents overwhelmingly signalled their belief that reading was important, for personal and professional reasons, perhaps suggesting a recognition of what an English teacher might be expected to write. For those respondents who had signalled limited reading, either of their own text choices or of YA and children's literature earlier in the questionnaire, I considered these to be "ought" answers, in that this answer summed up what they believed they *should,* or were *expected* to articulate about reading as teachers of English, but their earlier answers were a more accurate indication of their reading identity and the role reading actually played in their personal and professional lives. The idea of the "ought" paradigm with regard to self-regulation is explored by Higgins (1994).
- ***Reading is important to me as an English teacher because…*** Teachers'

responses to: *Reading is important to me as an English teacher because…*showed that the findings of Pike (2004), Boustead (2022) and Goodwyn (1992, 1999, 2016, 2017), which suggest that most teachers identify with the 'personal growth' model of English (DES, 1989) remain valid. However, understanding that English skills were important in later life and that English had a role to play in building cultural appreciation and knowledge were also present. In the way teachers discussed their perception of themselves as educators and the power they felt reading and literature had to transform their students' understanding of the world, showed an implied demonstration of the values of reader-response theory and the work of Rosenblatt (1983), although this was not explicitly articulated by the teachers themselves.

- **Teachers as role models** Respondents believed strongly that teachers should act as positive role models for their students (Merga, 2016; Bennet 2007 and others), but there was disagreement with Reichenberg and Andreassen (2018). The responses showed that for some teachers' a clear distinction between recreational and professional reading most certainly existed, perhaps also suggesting that they did not share the weight of expectations argued by Hopper (2005) and Gordon (2012).
- **Enjoyment of reading and link to reading skills** Finally, the respondents shared the view of research that enjoyment of reading was positively linked to a students development of reading skills (Shugar and Dreher, 2017; Gilleece and Eivers, 2018; Rogiers, van Keer and Merchie, 2020; Tavsancil, Yildrim and Demir, 2019; and McGrane et al., 2017; Clark, 2011 and Taylor, Frye and Maruyama, 1990), and increased vocabulary (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Stanovich, 1986; Sullivan and Brown, 2015), and increased academic success in subjects other than English (OECD, 2000; Krashen, 2004; Anderson et al, 1988; Pfsot et al, 2013).

Chapter 8 - How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? Results and discussion of the interviews.

Reading great books gave me unlimited access to people I would never have met, cities I couldn't visit…Through books I fought bravely in wars of both attrition and conquest. Before I'd even asked a girl out, I had fallen in love with Anna Karenina, taken Isabel Archer to high tea at the Grand Hotel in Rome, delivered passionate speeches to Juliet beneath her balcony [and] abandoned Dido in Carthage…" Conroy, 2010, p. 321.

This chapter draws on the results of my interviews and attempts to answer my final research question. How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? It primarily focuses on the codes I generated from interview questions 13 and 14, but the nature of the interviews and the fact that my interviewees tended to be candid and reflective about their thoughts and feelings towards their reading, means that I have necessarily integrated codes into the themes explored here, that came from across my interview data set. For a discussion as to the processes and guidance I used to arrive at these themes, see my earlier discussion of the work of Braun and Clarke (2006 and 2022). The key themes that I determined most helped to answer my research question were:

- Teachers feelings about their reading of YA Literature
- Teachers belief in the importance of reading for their students and themselves
- The effect of reading on teachers' subject knowledge and their perception of themselves in the classroom

Teachers feelings about their reading of YA Literature

This theme explored ideas around whether the interviewees read YA and children's literature regularly and enthusiastically, how they perceived the link between their reading and their ability to recommend texts of this nature in the classroom, and, whether, as a teacher of English, they felt they had a responsibility to read with their students in mind. Also contained within this theme were ideas around whether promotion in the workplace and the ages of the children they taught had influenced their reading. The codes used to generate this theme are below. Figure 30 shows the codes identified and the frequency with which each code occurred.

Figure 30:

Availability of YA to read at home	1
Keeping up-to-date with children's literature	3
Knowledge is outdated	1
Knowledge of YA fiction helps with understanding teenagers	1
Quality of YA fiction	1
Sense they should read more YA	5
Teachers recommending books	20
Sense of wanting to recommend more books	1
Teachers reading habits are not student friendly	1
Teachers reading YA	1
YA is an easier read	1
YA linked to escapism	1

Like some of the questionnaire respondents, most of the interviewees expressed a desire to read more YA and children's literature. When asked if they actively shared reading choices or made recommendations to their students, Clarissa said bluntly, "I don't, I know that I don't read enough of the books that the students will be reading", here recognising that the content of her reading would not be appropriate in the classroom, and that this realisation was not a surprise to her. Kylie said, "I want to make a more conscious effort to read more young adult fiction, that's like one of the things in the back of my mind that I should be doing, so I started reading *The Hate U Give*, but I haven't picked up for a while…I think I've not got many young adult fiction books like that…So if they were [there] I would re-read them."

Kylie's answer is interesting because it starts with a very positive attitude. This interviewee recognised they wanted to read more YA literature and so took steps to

rectify the issue. However, it then becomes clear that the text they have chosen has not engaged them and they have put it down, suggesting their initial desire to read the text was made out of duty or obligation rather than desire. The interviewee then casts around for a reason behind their perceived lack of YA reading and determines it is because she lacks books in the house. However, at no point in her answer does there appear to be an appreciation of her own agency in stocking or amending her own bookshelves. Again, this raises the question, should we expect English teachers to spend their own money on furthering their subject knowledge? Would we expect that of any other profession? I return to this question in my conclusion.

Clarissa had initially declined to be interviewed. I knew this colleague well, had discussed my research with her on numerous occasions, and so was surprised by her response. I tentatively asked if she minded telling me why and she said she felt "ashamed" at what she perceived to be a lack of YA reading. I reassured her of the non-judgmental nature of my research and she did change her mind. We discussed her initial reaction during her interview, during which she had been quite clear that she believed reading to be important for her students, and her response was, "...it's like, do as I say, not as I do…". This was a sentiment I think many of my participants could relate to but had not verbalised quite as succinctly. Becky explored the idea that she intended to read 50 books in the coming year as a New Year's resolution, because she wanted to make a "conscious effort" to read more. While Wes felt, "I think I should read more. I think I should be a bit more aware of that definitely." The use of the verb "think" here suggests an internal motivation to read more that had not quite yet become a concrete action.

Lydia talked with eloquence about how she was able to directly link her YA reading to her ability to recommend texts to her students. She said:

> I do try and read YA because I think it's important that we have, we are still in the game and it's quite nice. We were talking the other day at [my school] when I was, we were making [bookmarks] and we were trying to do the recommendations for books. And it was quite nice to be able to say, Oh, we can put this on because I've read that and…I knew it was good and I knew it would fit with the theme that they were looking for. So, I think if we don't, don't reach a bit of YA, you're really out of touch with what's going on at school.

This teacher is doing what Cremin (2011) considers to be extremely important. She says "...being a reader frames us as reading teachers and supports us as we seek to apprentice younger readers, model our own love of reading and create communities of readers within and beyond school" (p.11). Yet, despite her obvious knowledge of YA literature and her ability to employ it for the benefit of her students, Lydia still felt as if

she needed to “read more”, perhaps an echo of the earlier discussion about how avid readers still feel under pressure to read as many books as possible. Christine made that point that it would be “hypocritical” not to read YA literature if she intended to teach it, suggesting to not read these kinds of texts would be to exhibit behaviours that would not live up to those she wanted to engender in her students.

Christine did feel that she had enough knowledge of children’s literature in order to be able to recommend books. She said:

> So when I first started in my career, I made active choices to go to our school library and look at the books that the librarians have put out, you know, like the children's version of the Booker Prize and things like that. I’d read those books, kind of purposefully, to then recommend them to our students.

She mentioned a book that had received particularly good reviews and added, “So I read that book. So I could then pursue those conversations with students about the children's prizes and these books are on the list and I really recommend that you have a go and read these ones.” There are a number of elements that stand out in this comment. There is the sense of agency in the way this interviewee sought out books to read, she made “active choices”, she read “purposefully”, and then in her final statement assumes the role of teacher, playing out the conversations she was able to have as a result of her reading. Christine went on to explain how she hones her reading choices even further. “I don't just read books that are more for girl readers either. Like, I will know we've got quite a lot of boys who love football books…So I've made sure that I've read books about those as well, so that I can talk to boys about football, books or the car books or non-fiction books as well.” Here her comments suggest an appreciation of the impact gender differences play in the kinds of texts students choose to read (see Cole et al (2022) for their recent research into the impact of gender difference in attitudes to reading in children).

Sarah echoed this idea of actively seeking out texts to ensure enough knowledge to recommend books. When discussing how she and her team worked to ensure their Key Stage Three curriculum was fit for purpose, she said:

> [My department] is kind of in contact with other English teachers… and we ended up with a big list of probably about 20 or 30 books that different people recommended. And between the two of us - [my second] and I - we read, we read a lot of them and then if we were shortlisting them the other person read them for. And we're able to sort of have much more in depth conversations about the choices…

This comment shows how the entire leadership of an English department assumed a

quest to enrich their knowledge of YA and children's literature, working together to read more with a view to directly benefiting their students' future studies.

Christine made the point that during the term, she would veer away from reading texts such as *A Little Life* (2017) by Hanya Yanagihara, which she described as "dense and heavy", and instead would favour a YA text as she perceived it to be a lighter read. Her reasons for reading YA were two-fold then. She said:

> That's another reason why I kind of like the young adult [books}…I can have conversations with students about them… And… I know that I can just switch off in terms of time and I can just read some fantasy texts. That is a bit of escapism, I don't have to think too much about it. I find it really difficult to read during term time. And it's more so if I do read during term time, what I'll read will be just different to what I read in the holidays. So [in term time] I will read something cheesy that I've downloaded off Kindle for 99p, usually a young adult fantasy teen fiction where there's this strong female character that has slain all the dragons. And then, in the holidays, I'll perhaps read something probably a little bit more highbrow, maybe probably more literary fiction.

So, while this interviewee did read YA texts, she did not associate them with the same mental rigour as a text written with an adult in mind, and in fact, this difference served as an advantage and an encouragement to read more YA literature.

The interviewees also discussed the idea that while it was easier to recommend books to students from older age groups based on their own reading choices, as they had become more experienced as teachers they increasingly taught examination-focused classes, leaving them less opportunity to discuss reading choices or read outside of the examination specification with their students. The interviewees made repeated references to the Accelerated Reader programme, a commercial reading scheme which ensures students read at an appropriate level of challenge while offering them thousands of texts to choose from. This scheme was seen as a way they could engage with younger readers, but was not offered to students in Y10 or Y11 which, the interviewees felt, not only restricted their reading diet but also the conversations their teachers could have with them about reading. Christine said, "No student past year eight ever, ever told me about a book that they were reading at home", while added said, "I would have conversations with the students during like the accelerated reading time, 20 minutes, and I would ask them about what they were reading and whether they liked it. But any older than that they didn't have very many conversations about what they were reading."

Clarissa confirmed the idea that the closer the student were to their GCSE examination, the less likely they were to discuss reading in the classroom, because of, "time constraints rather than anything else, because you go in and we've got some

kind of need to get through…and reading isn't always as much as it should be. It isn't always part of that conversation that happens". It does seem ironic that despite the recognised importance of reading with regards to generating, improving and sustaining academic ability, progress and outcomes, as discussed in my literature review, the closer students are to their examinations, the less likely they are to talk about reading with their teachers.

For one interviewee achieving a promotion also reduced the time she could discuss reading with her students. Lydia said:

> [I] like to be able to recommend.. but definitely less so now than when I used to be Head of English. I think I used to recommend a lot more. When I had my own classes that I knew really, really well. I think that's quite hard, isn't it, [when] the level of detail that we know them in isn't perhaps as well as when you had your own year 11…I think it's quite a personal thing recommending somebody because… you're like, it's basically saying this is something I read and enjoyed and I want you to read it and enjoy it too.

For Rose it was the ability, rather than the age of the students which made the difference to her ability to recommend texts. "I think sometimes it depends on the students who you've got in front of you," she said. "For example, I'm teaching a set three at the moment. They know that I read and they know that I enjoy reading in the same way that I know that they are not going to turn into literary geniuses because they told me that on a regular basis…So sometimes it depends on the audience…"

Jenny expressed concerns about whether keeping up with her YA reading would actually provide her with greater insight into contemporary young peoples' lives . She said:

> I still think about my experiences at school, but that was like quite a long time since I was at school… And, you know… I sometimes wonder about what their experiences are like now. And I think that if I did read a bit more young adult fiction, I would be able to understand a little bit more about what they're going through now.

For this interviewee, reading YA literature would bring an enhanced understanding of her students' daily challenges, as much as it would add to her reading repertoire. Building on this, two interviewees made the point that their knowledge of YA and children's literature offered them a route to communicate better with their students. Christine said, "...the benefit to me is joy, knowing that they're reading and knowing that I can influence that. And I guess it helps build relationships as well with the class." This interviewee linked the strong emotion of joy with her efforts to encourage her students to read. Seeing them read brought her a delight that was compounded by the

fact it allowed her to know them better. Building relationships was an idea repeated by Rose. “I think it's, well, it's a way to have a conversation with students about reading, reading for pleasure. So that, you're enthusing them with that, and it's a way to build relationships with them which you need to do in our profession anyway.”

Kate took a differing view with regard to the quality of literature being consumed by students. She made an interesting value judgement about YA fiction. After confirming that it was important for students to read good literature, she added, “I definitely think it's important because often, this is like the trouble that I have with YA fiction, because it's often quite poor, quite trash. And it's important to promote a love of literature, but then I also think that probably not benefiting that much other than a hobby from reading and that's, like, you know, that's a huge stereotype that I’m making I know that there will be good YA fiction out there.” For this interviewee, not only did she consider YA literature to often be of a poorer quality than books written for adults, but she felt there was no benefit for her students in reading it, it would act only as a “hobby” rather than as a force for academic or social improvement. She seems to suggest that a “hobby” is something lacking gravitas or authority in some way, that a “hobby” is somehow a superficial activity.

The effect of reading on teachers’ subject knowledge and their perception of themselves in the classroom

This theme explored ideas surrounding how the interviewees’ reading, and the reading of their own teachers in the past, actively helped them craft their identities as reading teachers. The codes that my analysis generated, and which led to the generation of the theme, are outlined below. Figure 30 shows the codes identified and the frequency with which each code occurred.

Figure 31:

Impact of reading on ability to teach	2
Pedagogical research about reading	2
Reading knowledge helps you choose books for students	1
Reading teachers are engaging	2

Reading helps you build relationship	3
Teacher subject knowledge linked to better teaching	2
Teacher subject knowledge linked to confidence	3
Teacher subject knowledge linked to respect	1
No encouragement from their own teachers	4
No memory of teachers as readers	2
Positive impact of teachers	11
Sense they are not being a good role model	2
Sense of wanting to read more	1
Sense that English teachers should read	2
Teachers as learners	2
Teachers as readers	2
Reading aloud	1
Students recommending books	5
Teachers talking about reading with their students	6
The Peter Effect	1
Teachers talking about books with each other	1
Tracking reading	1
Teachers actively choose texts to recommend	5
Choosing books with students in mind	1
Don’t or can’t recommend to younger children	5
Recommending texts to students	20

The interviewees felt a powerful sense that their love of reading enabled them to communicate more and in an improved way with their students. Rose also introduced the idea of English teachers as readers becoming “experts in their field”. She said:

> I think it's just that full immersion in your subject. That means that it makes you better at what you do and I think that that would apply to anything. [What] if I was an art teacher and didn't immerse myself in that as a hobby, as an interest, going to galleries and things and have that knowledge, that background knowledge, that wider knowledge, you would have to have it to act as a teacher, as somebody that seems an expert in that field.

She added, “And I think that, therefore, it does make you better at what you do and just more engaging because you show that love for the subject that you're trying to then encourage others to share to whatever degree they're prepared to love it.” Here, the interviewee has linked subject knowledge to the idea of engagement, and therefore the idea of classroom engagement and effectiveness. Again, rich and nuanced knowledge (or as another interviewee described it as a “weapon in the armoury” is here compared to what the interviewee described as a “limited, narrow” approach.
Similar language was also evident in Jenny’s thoughts:

> Yes, I do [think teacher subject knowledge is important] because you're living and breathing it, aren't you?...And I think that knowledge of like, you teach To Kill a Mockingbird. If you teach it as a class reader and you haven't read it and you're just teaching it because you've been told to teach it. It's a vastly different, different experience to somebody who has read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, loved it. Like cried over it, then read *Go Set a Watchman* and cried over that as well and has all that, like he's obsessed with Atticus Finch, and that has that all that like kind of joy that comes with it. When you're standing in front of the kids and saying, Let's analyse this scene. This is what you're bringing to, you're bringing…all of that love of literature, which even if…you don't know that text, you'll have read something similar…you've got that ability to kind of cross link and come up with different ideas about different genres. And what makes a good book because you read so many so you know what makes it like, I know when I'm reading something’s that crap in the same way that I know, when I'm reading something that's brilliant. And I think it's that ability to spot literary merit and pick out things that maybe other people wouldn't…

Rose described the idea of teachers demonstrating their skills and enjoyment as readers as almost a moral, and certainly a professional, imperative.

> I think that it's really important that teenagers that you are teaching, and that are in front of you, or even just that you come into contact with because you're a member of staff, [that] they see you as a reader. I think that's very, very important that it's your job to read and that is because you are a reader and you've made that your job and I think that that's really important for them to see for their own choices, whether that's to do with reading or not.

This is a particularly interesting comment because here the idea of reading has become linked to the idea of employment, and yet the concept has not been tainted by the obligation of work. For this interviewee reading is still a pleasure, but one that she is now paid for. However, as with any job, it does bring with it responsibilities and, for this interviewee, one responsibility is that teachers should model their love and enthusiasm for reading. Interestingly, while a repeated idea among the interviewees was that periods of their education, such as their A Level examinations or studying for their degrees had reduced their time reading books they enjoyed, they did not make this connection to work. For the interviewees the texts they taught and read for school still gave them a great amount of pleasure because, as one interviewee said, "...it's me choosing to read it". On a larger scale then, choosing to become an English teacher has meant that their reading both at home and work brings pleasure.

Lydia made the point that it was important that her students saw her valuing the importance of reading. She said, "This is what you're bringing…you're bringing…all of that love of literature…when we talked about *The Woman in Black* and then we were like…Oh, what about *The Loney*? And I was like, *The Turn of the Screw* is there and I…because you've got that ability to kind of cross link and come up with different ideas about different genres." This comment echoes the research of Green (2023), who says that "range and repertoire are crucial" (p. 62) in a curriculum. In a single sentence, this interviewee was able to model, through their knowledge of a variety of texts, just how they believed detailed subject knowledge could lead to thoughtful and rich classroom teaching. She went on to discuss a specific school she worked at where there was a pronounced, sustained and encouraged emphasis on teachers reading. "I definitely think that when you're in a department that reads compared to a department that doesn't read, you can tell there is a huge difference," she said. "That's what I always say about [my school] like you can tell that every single one of them is a reader. And you can tell by the conversations that you have, by the fact that we walked into their classroom and they've got a display of books for kids to borrow or their favourite book posters on the wall and, like their conversations are different to the conversations in departments where people don't read…". Reading in the eyes of this interviewee distinguishes you and enhances not only your reputation as an effective teacher but also your abilities in the classroom.

Kate twice linked the breadth of her reading to the knowledge it allowed her to acquire. She said:

> I just feel like the more, the more you read, the more you have general knowledge as well and [that] has an impact on a lot of what I think makes people more well rounded. Just understanding the world and people and cultures and whatnot. So I suppose there have been times where I can say, you know, I've got some sort of fact about this, or there's a story about this than that, so it works in that story.

She also recognised that the older the student, the more preparation and knowledge was needed in order to demonstrate credibility in the classroom. She said that you needed a thorough knowledge of the text "for A Level because they'll see right through you if you're going to fob them off. [If] I'm talking to them, especially with their coursework, then I'm much more confident, much, much more happy if it's something that I know myself personally." For this interviewee then, her confidence or knowledge within her subject brought her happiness in the classroom which allowed her to become a credible and respected teacher to her students.

Kate also talked about preparation and knowledge and was able to give a practical example of its importance. She said:

> Why did you read a book about Bigfoot? Because I was interested, because I wanted to know where, where this man had come from, if he was the real man…It does help, the more knowledgeable you are, the more kids respect you. And actually, it makes me feel more confident as a person. I dislike, I've always felt uneasy about stuff that we're only ever reading a chapter ahead of the children when we're reading the text because I'm thinking, well, how are you preparing them for whatever's coming up? Candy's dog is a case in point, you know, we have to look out for things, pitfalls, there might be vulnerable kids in the class, you know, that can't cope with certain elements of a text. We need to know those texts really, really well.

For Kate, being prepared with a full knowledge of the text, in this case *Of Mice and Men*, meant that, not only did she feel confident and competent as a professional, but she was also able to protect the more vulnerable students in her classroom. Jenny explored how reading brought her knowledge, and knowledge brought her joy. She said, " I absolutely love knowing. I love knowing what's coming in, but the kids don't. So I love it where you can set things up a certain way, so that they have that reaction, or I could sort of breadcrumb drop hints. There's their magical lessons…" Jenny is quite clear: good knowledge, adequate preparation and effective teaching are the ingredients that allow teachers to create magic in their classrooms.

Two interviewees made the interesting point that, although they consider it

important for teachers to act as role models, their own teachers when they were children, did not. Kylie, when asked whether she was encouraged to read at school, said, “I think when, when I was at school, and I was a bit of a… I wasn't, I wasn't, the best well behaved until I got to, like Key Stage Four, but it was never something that was encouraged by home or school”. She added, “No, it's a shame really, but I think that went down to the fact that you know, when I, when I started, I wasn't the best behaved. And unfortunately, that, not so much now, it's not very prevalent in schools now, but there was a bit of a stigma, wasn't there?…” This interviewee is alluding to the fact that because of her “bad behaviour” she was not considered the kind of student who could or should be encouraged to read. She went on to say that she found her love of reading independently, by browsing charity shops, spending her pocket money on books, and being encouraged by a history rather than an English teacher to explore non-fiction texts.

Lydia talked about how her teachers actively hampered her reading enthusiasm. She had arrived at school able to read thanks to her mother’s endeavours, but her teachers were sceptical of her skills. She said:

> I remember when I went to school, they wanted me to read, because I could read and they wanted me to read all the, I can’t remember what they were called, they were like King and Queen's books, the you know, Biff and Chip, and like Roger Red Hat and Percy Green Power or whatever. And they made me read the whole scheme before they let me read anything else because it’s like I have to tick that box. So they gave me them all and I went home one night and read them all with mum and we ticked them all off and then they tested me the next day and then they let me read them.

A third interviewee simply had no memory of being encouraged to read at school. Clarissa said, “I don't really remember. Like, at school I remember us going to the library and I remember that everybody had to sit in silence, at form time. Get a book, sit down, and if anybody, like, turned the page too noisily, you'd be like descended on. I don't really remember a lot of discussions…I mean, it had a great English department. You know, I wouldn’t be here without the influences of them. But I don’t ever remember talking about what we were reading.” This final comment is really interesting. This interviewee felt grateful to her English teachers for providing her with the skills she needed to become an English teacher, and there is an implied sense here that they acted as a form of inspiration, yet she does not remember any discussions around reading and books. During her interview, this English teacher was also clear that she rarely read YA Literature for her own enjoyment, picking up a text only when it was part of a scheme her department was teaching. It would be interesting to unpick whether her lack of interest in reading YA literature stems, at least in part, from the lack of

interest her own teachers displayed in reading, something Applegate and Applegate (2014) also explore.

The interviewees, however, could also remember teachers who acted as positive role models for them as students. Christine said:

> So it's interesting that you always remember the teachers that encouraged you and the things you love. And so I had three female teachers and I always remember when one of them, think we were in year five, started reading *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* with us, so that's when I got hooked on Harry Potter. I've still got it, my *Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone*, it still says [her name], age 10. So I've still got that copy of that book.

How wonderful that the enthusiasm shown by this interviewees English teacher should have remained with her across the years. She is now in her early 30s and married, but that precious book remains on her bookshelf. Jenny said:

> We read a huge amount of books when we were at primary school, we were the generation where we didn't they didn't really teach grammar...I had a teacher that was willing to kind of read a science fiction alternative I guess pre Harry Potter days, you know, a kind of the magical world. I still love those…the school really, really opened my eyes to the different kinds of texts because I was more of a Famous Five sequels kind of child but they opened my eyes to all the different texts out there …. My teacher… he lent me a Terry Pratchett book, and it felt quite naughty that I was reading this adult book. And I thought then I fell in love with the idea of fantasy and I never thought I would but I really really enjoyed it.

This interviewee, then, credits her primary school for broadening her reading range, moving her away from the childhood classics of Enid Blyton and towards much more nuanced and sophisticated reading.

Lydia explored a moment when the disappointment of letting down a respected teacher, prompted her to take her reading seriously. She said:

> So when I was in sixth form, I had English with two English teachers and one of them was like proper old school. She was the one that kicked me out of my Shakespeare A Level lesson for saying *Measure for Measure* was dull… and the other one was an NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher). And she was really, like, enthusiastic about literature and she was kind of like, she wanted us to read stuff that wasn't on the spec so that we would just foster that love of literature. And one of the books she set us to read was *The Great Gatsby*. And I really was like, I was in that phase of being 17 and being a bit like, I know everything about the world. And I remember sitting in the common room and I was like trying to read this book because it's Great Gatsby and couldn't get past the first page because obviously it's quite like, you know, the opening sentence is really moody isn't it and I just was like, Oh, what is this? What is she given us to read? I was like, oh I can't be

> bothered. And she walked through the common room and she heard me say it and she was like Oh,[says name], I'm really disappointed now, and I said no I just can't get past the first page and she was like, just try really hard she said because it'll be one of the best books you'll ever read. And I had that in my head. And I felt guilty because I was a good girl really and I didn't want to disappoint. And I started to think right, I'm going to sit and read and stop talking to my friends. I'm gonna sit and read my book. And I just completely fell in love with it.

It will come as no surprise that this interviewee said, without hesitation, that *The Great Gatsby* has remained her favourite book ever since, such was the influence of her enthusiastic, young teacher, and perhaps the memory of what she perceived as her teacher's negative judgement of her attitude towards a challenging read - identifying as a "good girl" was still important to her.

Kylie discussed the feelings of comfort and security her English teacher generated in her. Her tone is nostalgic and reminiscent of the tone the interviewees used when discussing the effect of their families on their reading lives as they grew up. She said, "We were always encouraged to read and my secondary school English teacher had an old beaten up sofa in the corner of his classroom. I was encouraged to be outside but I wanted to sit and just read. And he always just let us do that even though the policy was, no, you need to be outside. And I always found that as a safe haven."

Teachers' belief in the importance of reading for their students and themselves

This theme brought together ideas surrounding the interviewees' beliefs as to why reading was important to them and, equally, why they considered it to be important to their students. The codes that my analysis generated, and which led to the generation of the theme, are outlined below. Figure 31 shows the codes identified and the number of times each code occurred.

Figure 31:

Reading benefits writing	6
Reading broadens vocabulary	2
Building a love of reading	3
Building literature humans is important	1
Encouraging students to read	16

Importance of reading regularly	2
Important to promote a love of literature	3
Building literature humans is important	1
Reading helps children create an identity	1
Reading helps you make sense of the world	3
Reading is important because…	7
Reading makes you well rounded	1
Reading makes you knowledgeable	8
Reading promotes broader world view	3
Reading offers an escape from the everyday	1
Reading teaches you about important issues	2
Reading not linked to pleasure in school	1
Sharing a love of literature	1
Students are disengaged with reading	1
Students don't read independently as they used to	1
Students only seen reading in class	1
Lack of reading in older children	2
Link between reading and behaviour	1
Tensions between issues driven and fun texts	2
Discussion associated with sense of value of literature	8
Good literature encourages	5

cultural knowledge	
Good literature encourages use of standard English	1
Good literature engenders empathy	1
Importance of good literature	2
Reading is like…	1
Reading helps you instil values in your children	2

For one interviewee, choosing texts to be read by her students was determined by whether she and her colleagues felt a “passion” or love for the book they wanted to teach. Jenny felt that this was a defining and necessary quality in order for that book to be shared with her students. “If we don't love them collectively, we're not teaching them because if you can't teach with passion for your text, I'd rather we just bin it.” For this interviewee then, the passion she felt for reading was the active ingredient in developing a similar passion in her students.

Christine used the words “escape” and “escapism” when describing why she favoured the fantasy fiction category, “I just fell in love with the protagonist. She was a strong, independent woman, and she falls in love with this, kind of like, fairy prince and he's amazing,” she said. “And then, yeah, just an escape, I think. And I was really enjoying that. I think fantasy as well as another kind of genre, that I love, because it's like, it's escapism.” Kate referenced the idea of escapism and linked it to how she defined herself, suggesting that reading to temporarily avoid the mundane responsibilities of life was a key factor of her personality. “It’s escapism - it’s what I do”, she said. For Jenny the escapism of reading was something so precious and treasured that the idea of not being able to access the escape of reading seemed desperately sad. “I don't understand how people get through the day. You know…people being illiterate and they can't even read birthday cards. It's really saddening and I don't understand how…reading is everywhere. It's in everything that we do. And it just, it saddens me when people can't read.”

Kylie discussed how reading proved an escape for her, but also recognised how it could act as an escape for young people. She said, “It's like Harry Potter. You would give them a text because I think they would enjoy it. It's fantasy. They escape, it boosts their personal growth, but at the same time, it's got nothing to do with what's going on in the world.” Unconsciously, referencing a Cox growth model, discussed in an earlier

chapter, this interviewee explores here the idea that reading has the potential to, as Sir Philip Sidney said in his treatise A *Defence of Poetry*, win “the mind from wickedness to virtue” (1910, p. 26), but at the same time allows them moments of reflection away from chatter and noise or a very modern and demanding world. Rose developed this by linking the idea of books to security in uncertain times.

> … I think sometimes that because I like reading for escapism, it goes back to the fact that there was always books at home and they were always the things that kind of stuck still even if Dad was having to move or travel away or we were going from one place to another, we moved probably every two years.

These are particularly poignant comments. For Rose it was her reading that provided a stable world, albeit fictional, when her real world became too much to manage. This interviewee went on to describe her reading as a “hugely important” “little transportation” and added, “I'm using it as a strategy. It's all about where life is for me right now. And I think for some time, for me, sometimes it's very much about kind of stepping out of my, my world and stepping into somebody else's for a little while.” Rose was the only interviewee to articulate the idea that she utilised her reading as a particular strategy, but this concept is implied in many of the comments above. For the interviewees and many of the questionnaire respondents, reading did not happen by chance, nor were its consequences happy accidents. These teachers were active agents in their decision to step away from their lives, if only for a short time.

Finally, Christine explored the idea that the very act of escaping from life to read was, in itself, a life affirming experience. She said:

> Reading to me is like a breath of fresh air. It's like a fresh wind on a bracing day. You need air to breathe. And I think if I didn't have reading, I wouldn't breathe. Because reading is my escape. It allows me to just go. It does. It's the fresh air because it gives you fresh ideas that can take you back…it makes you feel so many emotions, reading, so you can laugh, you can cry, and the wind can do that too. It can be kind of bracing and bring tears to your eyes. So yeah, reading is life.

This interviewee’s reference to the concept of reading as life-giving is reminiscent of a comment made by Sylvia Plath in an interview in 1962 and discussed by Clark (2020), "Writing was not something Sylvia did to please others, but to please herself - as necessary as breathing, as she would later remark…” (p. 44). Here both reader (Christine) and writer (Plath), compare the appreciation of literature, whether as consumer or creator, as not only critical to life, but life enhancing - an act which they cannot, and would not want to, exist without. This is reminiscent of Fischer’s

discussion of reading when he writes that for an “ancient Egyptian official it was a ‘boat on water’” (2003, p. 7), so signalling its value and importance.

The interviewees were also clear that regular reading led to improved reading and writing skills, as well as a wide and varied vocabulary (a view shared by Beck et al (2002)), while lack of reading resulted in an impaired ability to manipulate language to their own ends. Becky said, “I especially notice when I'm watching my year 10s preparing for transactional or narrative assessments, then they seem to really struggle and I often wonder whether that's because they're not reading themselves, or not reading enough good storytelling and, and things like widening their vocabulary. widening their perspective and getting a bit more of a broader word worldview.” Here it is interesting how the interviewee extends her comments to include “storytelling” and not just the acquisition of words. In her mind, lack of varied reading means her students cannot find the words to tell their stories, they have no sense of how to structure and develop a piece of writing. Equally, the wide reading of Christine meant that she could apply her knowledge of writing to her teaching - her reading brought with it a practical application in the classroom. She said, “By reading more and reading different books, you notice [what] happens in every book, really, there's that story arc and then I guess it helps my teaching because then you can give students different ideas of what they can do in their writing as well.”

This was a point picked up by Jenny. She said, “[Reading is] also important because it…extends their vocabulary, but it also teaches them how to craft language and grammar. So that they can…achieve that themselves and to have that understanding that they are constantly being manipulated all the time into then be able to have that power themselves in their own writing. I think that's important. So the impact of their reading on their own writing and their ability to express themselves, that goes back to the way I was taught at school.” This interviewee linked reading to writing through the exploration of the power of language. There is a recognition here that being able to wield words brings strength. Those who read well can perceive the written world with clarity and insight, while those who do not are likely to be hampered by their inability to understand and to make themselves understood in turn.

The interviewees also discussed ideas around how teachers had a role in encouraging students to develop a love of reading that would sustain beyond their days in the classroom. Kate said:

> I'm hoping that we're building a lifelong love of reading. But also, it's not just about the text. It's about what it teaches you. Why, why some texts have enjoyed the test of time. Why do you have to use power words? Why is it important? It's important because nothing's changed guys. He wrote this 100 years ago to complain about the way we treat the poor. Oh, we're still doing it. So I think you know, the social messages are important. But we also need to build literate human beings who will be good adults and good role models to their own children so that reading doesn't die and we don't have an audio book future, because the word on the page is the most important thing in my mind.

This interviewee makes a number of points that build on each other. She hopes her classroom role builds a "lifelong love of reading", but for her the importance of reading goes beyond simply enjoying a book. This interviewee links the importance of reading to the creation of social responsibility, using an implied reference to *A Christmas Carol* (1843) to illustrate her point. She adds to this her sense that reading well builds a "literate" person who can exist for "good" in the world. Her final point is that this is best established through the print medium rather than audiobooks, a point I shall return to shortly. Rose echoed this idea about reading helping to craft a students' identity. She made the point that children often have little cultural context for viewing the world. Their views are the views of their parents, but reading can help them cultivate opinions and ideas that go beyond the narrow confines of their homes, and teachers play a role in ensuring this happens. She said:

> Yes…we're having…potentially the only impact on widening their worlds. It's not always the case. But you know, we are very aware that the children are often from non-reading backgrounds, children that don't, you know, their parents may read but they don't have books at home. They don't see that that's of any value or an importance, or will have very maybe strict views on certain topics and opinions and you can hear that sometimes in the words that children say, I and think…you're reiterating something you've heard, then you don't really understand the implications of what you're saying. And I think that through reading, and people, it's…making them have an opinion and they're making their identity, creating an identity for themselves, which perhaps they wouldn't have if we didn't give them the literature and I think you have to carefully choose your literature at school to be able to give them that. I think there's a value in them just reading whatever they would like, but also, also as teachers, directing them to certain reading in the classroom so we can try and encourage them to think wider and bigger about the world around them."

Reading regularly was something Becky felt was particularly important. She also explored the idea that the quality of the literature in her opinion could play second

fiddle to the idea of reading regularly, whatever the text. This is in contrast to Meek (1988) who argued that what students read was supremely important in helping them to craft an identity as a reader. “I do think as long as students are reading that is the main thing,” Becky said. “You know that that should be the priority as long as they are reading and reading regularly”. She added, “I feel like the more that you read, the more that you're exposed to in terms of the content, it's out there, the more you can do that. And so I mean, I absolutely love reading and I know it's quite hard, well, I'm trying to encourage oracy at the minute in my classes, but sometimes I feel like when it's something I know they need to be engaging with, I will read aloud to them”. This is an interesting comment in the light of the mention of audiobooks above. For the first Kate audiobooks did not, in her mind, constitute proper reading. For her, word recognition through the printed page led to improved reading skills, but for Becky it was the act of storytelling that was important, in being able to hear rather than read the story.

The importance of reading as a metaphor

Just as one of the final questions of the survey asked the respondents to articulate why they considered reading to be important, so the interviewees were asked to express their belief in the importance of reading, but as a metaphor. This proved tricky for some, but all were able to express what reading meant to them, either emotionally or academically. Sarah said, “It's my way of making sense of the world sometimes,” suggesting that the private act of reading can have an effect on a person’s ability to perceive and understand the public workings of society. For Sarah it was that time to “ground” herself, which acts as a contrast to the first comment with its sense that the act of withdrawing into a book can help settle the mind and spirit as it offered an “independent journey in a day where you are pulled from pillar to post for everybody else”. For Kylie it added “value” to her life, suggesting an addition of something precious to her existence. For Lydia it was like “coming home” suggesting it brought security and comfort to her heart. Finally, Rose baulked at the idea of supplying a “cheesy” metaphor, but instead added, “I think in terms of its importance, I mean, it's huge. Hugely important to me, and it's hugely important just as an, as an aside, it is my escape. It's a little transportation to another place, and to another story and another person's story. So that's not necessarily a metaphor, but it is…you know, a fact.”

Summary

This chapter attempted to answer my third research question: How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? It explored the responses of the interviewees to three key themes - their feelings about their reading of YA Literature, their belief in the importance of reading for their students and themselves, and the influence of reading on their subject knowledge and their perception of themselves in the classroom. The interviewees were mostly united in their feelings that their reading, and particularly their reading of YA and children's literature, made them more knowledgeable and more engaging practitioners. They, like the questionnaire respondents, were also very clear that reading was important for both their and their students' academic, personal and professional development. The key findings from this chapter are explored below:

- **Desire to read more** Like some of the questionnaire respondents, most of the interviewees expressed a desire to read more YA and children's literature. This is interesting as the interviewees actively volunteered to participate in the research, knowing in detail its topic, and presumably, feeling confident in their perceptions of themselves as readers and teachers of English. That some of these keenest of participants and teachers of English should express concerns about their reading range might suggest that YA and children's literature simply is not read as regularly as it could be by any teacher. Further research would be interesting here. However, while a significant minority of the questionnaire respondents seemed unconcerned about their lack of interest in these kinds of texts, the interviewees were much more responsive to the sense that they could read more, therefore sharing Cremin's (2011) view that teachers of English should "take responsibility" (p. 11) for encouraging their students to turn into readers.
- **Advocating for YA** Despite the bullet point above, the majority of the interviewees reported themselves to be passionate readers of and advocates for reading YA and children's literature - a perhaps expected finding given the volunteer nature of the interviews. They clearly enjoyed exploring texts with their students, and delighted in stimulating the "creative imagination of the reader to put it all together" (Wolfgang Iser quoted in Evans, 1987, p. 23).
- **Pressures of time** The interviewees were clear, however, that the closer a student was to an external, high-stakes examination, then the harder it was to devote time to reading and book discussion, other than that determined by the examination

specification. This perhaps reflects the view of Stock (2017) and Dymoke (2017), that preparation for examinations is to the detriment of student creativity and personal engagement. Merga (2017) argues that classroom time devoted to testing detracts from other activities that can have a long-term negative effect on student outcomes, such as reading for pleasure, and this is perhaps reflected in the interviewees' feelings that their older students showed less independent enjoyment of reading, than their younger peers. That something as important as reading was felt to be squeezed out of the curriculum by the need to prepare for examinations, would be a topic worthy of further study on a larger scale.

- **Improved communication** The majority of the interviewees felt a powerful sense that their love of reading enabled them to communicate more and in an improved way with their students. They reported that it was easier to make personalised book recommendations and knowledge of these texts made them more sympathetic to the plight of being a teenager. Even the interviewees who reported reading less YA or children's literature, agreed with the benefits that this kind of material had on classroom relationships.
- **Subject knowledge** They actively linked subject knowledge to the idea of engagement, and therefore the idea of classroom effectiveness, a link also explored by Garces-Bacsal et al (2018), Benevides and Stagg Peterson (2010), Manna and Misheff (1987), Bean and Moni (2003) and Leighton et al (2019). At least three interviewees went so far as to describe the idea of teachers demonstrating their skills and enjoyment as readers as professional imperatives. Virtually every interviewee at some point explored the potential teachers have to act as role models, sharing the view of the research that teachers' attitudes, positive or negative, play a dramatic role in cultivating positive attitudes towards reading and learning in their students. (Mueller, 1973; Mour, 1977; Heathington and Alexander, 1984 Fleming, 1992; Cardarelli, 1992, Briggs, 1997, and Dreher, 2003).They also enthusiastically shared the subject knowledge expectations expressed by Merga (2016), Ofsted (2005), Gordon (2012), Cremin (2008), Hopper (2005) and Reichenberg and Andreassen (2018).
- **Importance of reading** Like the questionnaire respondents, the way all the interviewees talked about the importance of reading to them, seemed to suggest that the findings of Pike (2004), Boustead (2022) and Goodwyn (1992, 1999, 2016, 2017), with regards to how teachers of English identify may remain valid. Again, in the way teachers discussed their perception of themselves as educators and the power they felt reading and literature had to transform their students' understanding of the world, showed an implied demonstration of the values of reader-response theory and the work of Rosenblatt (1983), although this was not explicitly articulated by the teachers

themselves.

- **Enjoyment of reading linked to development of reading skills** Finally, all the interviewees, like the questionnaire respondents, shared the view of research that enjoyment of reading was positively linked to a students development of reading skills (Shugar and Dreher, 2017; Gilleece and Eivers, 2018; Rogiers, van Keer and Merchie, 2020; Tavsancil, Yildrim and Demir, 2019; and McGrane et al., 2017; Clark, 2011 and Taylor, Frye and Maruyama, 1990), and increased vocabulary (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Stanovich, 1986; Sullivan and Brown, 2015), and increased academic success in subjects other than English (OECD, 2000; Krashen, 2004; Anderson et al, 1988; Pfsot et al, 2013).

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

“The result of our work will never be finished. We’re not born finished and we certainly don’t die finished. But the journey between the two points will be beautiful and of real value to this world. That’s where the magic will be” – (Otter, 2023, p.183)

In this chapter, I outline again the three research questions which drove this research and which I have attempted to answer. I then go on to outline my key findings and the contributions the research has made to the existing scholarship in this area. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the limitations of this study, in addition to outlining possibilities for future research in this area, and the implications this research may hold for a range of education stakeholders.

I began this research following a conversation that had surprised me. A colleague had told me that she was not a big reader, and, in fact, only read John Grisham novels. I was quite taken aback. My initial reaction was to question how she could fulfil her responsibilities and obligations as a teacher of English given this narrow breadth of reading. This led me to consider what expectations are, indeed, held of English teachers, and whether they share them. The aim of this research then was to establish what expectations are held of teachers of English, by scholars and by education policy makers and stakeholders, and then to explore whether the teachers of English in the trust I work for recognised or fulfilled these expectations. I wanted to understand what the reading habits of teachers of English might look like, and how these reading habits might influence their classroom practice. I also wanted to explore how teachers of English might feel about the effect their reading choices could have on their ability to engage with their students about reading. Ultimately, I wanted to explore the implied question facing teachers of English: who do they feel their reading is actually for? I sought to address the following questions:

- What are the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England?

- What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?
- How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?

In order to explore the individual domestic and professional tensions which characterise teachers' reading lives and habits, I used a critical realist lens with which to understand and analyse my findings, recognizing that I was interpreting my participants' situated realities. Reader-response theory was used to underpin the study's understanding of the importance of reading in an educational context and I drew on the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 1994, 1996 and 2000), who view teachers as storytellers of and inside their own lives, to help me interpret the rich narratives teachers tell about their reading habits. I employed reflexive thematic analysis as my method to draw together my data and conceptualise my findings, situating this study as a *Big Q* (Kidder and Fine, 1987) approach to qualitative research. I also emphasised the "active role of the researcher in the research process, and the importance of embracing researcher subjectivity" (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015, p. 223) as I sought to understand the rich data this research harvested.

9.1 Key Findings

At the end of six years of research and reflection, it is clear that I began this study working from the assumption that it would be normal for a teacher of English to actively read and keep up with children's and YA literature. I also began my work from the assumption that this would be a commonly-held belief amongst most, if not all, English teachers. But as a reflexive researcher, time and again as part of my research journey and as part of my use of critical realism with which to view my findings, I have had to question whether this assumption is accurate or, indeed, fair, and to understand that "the understandings and theories we create, although they pertain to a reality outside of our construction, are never a reflection of 'objective' rendition of the phenomena we study" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 180). While the majority of my respondents and interviewees seemed to actively derive personal pleasure and satisfaction from reading, and many of them read and enjoyed children's and YA literature, a significant minority of them did not share my view: in fact, a few actively opposed it. It is clear that my questionnaire and interviews gave those teachers a safe space where they did not fear judgement to share their thoughts. Cremin (2011) argues that teachers have to "take responsibility" (p.11) for encouraging their students to read. But my findings would suggest that some

of my respondents would not conceptualise their role as teachers of English as including that view.

Yet, virtually every questionnaire respondent and interviewee, even those that said they read little or did not read children's and YA literature, felt that reading by their students was important. Whether my respondents read for themselves, their children, or their students, an overwhelming sense of love for reading was apparent in my findings. Most respondents loved reading, felt reading led to a sense of improved wellbeing, and an intellectual challenge that resulted in improved academic ability.

I began this thesis by problematising my initial assumption that teachers should be readers, that they have a responsibility and obligation to read, and that the more they read, the better the outcomes for their students will be. My research has shown that the majority of my participants shared my view; my interviewees were particularly clear that it was not unreasonable to expect English teachers to read widely, with enthusiasm and to share that with their students. However, my research has also revealed that many participants simply could not read as much as they wanted to because they did not have the time or the energy, they were drained by the demands of school and home. Since completing this research I have an improved understanding of the many demands teachers face and a more sympathetic appreciation of those practitioners who simply choose to separate their reading for pleasure from the classroom. Reducing teachers' workload so that they can rekindle their enthusiasm for reading would seem to be an important step in helping all teachers of English to be reading teachers, and it is something I address in more detail later in this conclusion.

The key findings that attempt to answer each research question are summarised below.

What are the reading habits of the secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering Yorkshire and the North East of England?

The vast majority of the teachers of English who took part in this research were reading widely and regularly, consuming texts that were extremely diverse in content, form, fiction category and language of publication. However, only a relatively small number of the texts teachers reported reading were YA or children's literature. When asked to list three books that they had read recently and enjoyed, the 90 teachers who responded collectively listed a total of 258 books. Of those only 13 (5%) were YA or children's literature. When asked about the book they were reading at the present time, 96 titles were reported. Of those, only 6 (6.2%) were YA or children's literature.

These findings suggest then that while the English teachers who took part in this research read a huge range of texts, their focus was on adult titles rather than titles aimed at younger readers - they were reading for themselves and not with their students in mind. The data also showed that a minority of teachers were not reading regularly and only “somewhat” felt that they loved reading.

Interestingly though, when asked about the likelihood of reading certain text types, the second most popular choice after literary fiction, was identified as YA and children’s literature. This result does not seem to marry with the findings in the paragraph above, however, it could suggest that because time was precious for the English teachers who took part in the survey, while they intended to read YA or children’s Literature, it was their first choice of text which represented their current reading. The pressures on their time meant that they never made it beyond their first choice.

The majority of teachers were reading regularly and reading a wide range of titles, but little of that time was spent reading professional journals or books. They reported that the main motivation behind choosing to read was for personal enjoyment and relaxation - they did not consider reading for professional reasons to be a motivating factor in their reading. The majority of participants linked reading to their sense of happiness and satisfaction with life. They felt it brought peace and calm to otherwise chaotic days, and acted as a “haven” by which they could temporarily retreat from the personal and professional expectations life placed on them.

Canonical reading choices were present however, but outweighed by more modern publications. Most teachers reported that they were reading a book at the time of the questionnaire and most had read at least one book in the last month. The majority were also buying books regularly.

Most participants reported that they would read more if they had more time, with many reporting that their professional responsibilities meant they could not read as much as they wanted to. Virtually no reading for pleasure took place on the evening before a school day. The respondents said that they used weekends and holidays to catch up with their reading.

The teachers reported that the daily grind of domestic and professional duties left them without the time or the inclination to read. Other significant obstacles to their being able to read included having children and/or being part of a family, and being physically tired. The majority of teachers who took part in the research were women and their implied perceptions of inequality in the home was clearly an issue that preoccupied them. It is an area that would make for productive further investigation. Children negatively influenced the respondents’ time to read for many participants, but

equally their existence allowed for the reading of texts that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Indeed, families played a significant role in the interviewees' perception of their reading habits and memories of reading as children were nostalgic, with the influence of mothers particularly discussed by the interviewees. The effect of the mother on a child's future reading habits would be another field for subsequent fruitful enquiry.

What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?

My findings in this chapter showed that a significant number of participants struggled to engage with YA and children's literature, although the majority did recommend books to students, or discuss ideas and topics from their own reading with their students, once or twice a month. Less than half of the 99 respondents to the questionnaire were able to provide three books they had read which could be enjoyed by a younger reader, suggesting a limited knowledge of YA or children's literature. Twenty-two respondents (22.2%) simply left this question blank or answered "No". Some respondents included answers to the question that explained why they did not favour this kind of reading - perhaps in an attempt to add context to their answer. Similarly, for a minority of the interviewees, the ability to reference other literature as part of the classroom teaching process did not or could not take place because the teachers did not read YA texts as widely as they read other fiction which did not have a place in the classroom. These findings would suggest that more than half of the teachers who took part in this research had a limited working knowledge of YA or children's literature. This would suggest that these teachers had a limited relationship between their own reading habits and their ability to make use of their reading in the classroom.

In contrast to this, most respondents did recognise that their reading habits could play a direct role in their classrooms, either through allowing them to make references to interesting topics and ideas they had encountered in their reading, or through their ability to recommend books to their students. But for the majority of the respondents, this only happened once or twice a month. Again, a significant minority reported that they either did not discuss ideas and topics generated by their own reading or make recommendations based on their own reading in the classroom, suggesting a missed opportunity by a significant minority of respondents to cultivate an engagement in reading and its many benefits for their students as a result of their own reading. Further research could explore whether this trend is present when the sample size is increased.

It would appear that the cohort of teachers in this study whose relationship between their own reading habits and their ability to make use of their reading in the classroom was limited, were not choosing to read or to share their reading for aesthetic reasons. They did not feel that "the teacher's task is to foster fruitful interactions - or, more precisely, transactions - between individual readers and individual literary works" (Rosenblatt (1983, p. 26) says. Some participants in this study did articulate their ideas concerning the importance of reading through the lens of reader-response theory, although they may not have identified it as such. These participants demonstrated a subjectivist epistemology that suggested they felt a sense of agency in their classrooms. But for those who reported little reading, the role it played in their classrooms seemed more efferent – they seemed to read only for the purpose of teaching, rather than for recreational enjoyment and to model that enjoyment for their students.

My trust operates a policy whereby 80% of the curriculum is determined at trust level, particularly the curriculum followed by GCSE students, and 20% is determined at school level, typically the KS3 curriculum. Viewing my findings through the lens of critical realism could suggest that for those students who did not engage in reading, this perceived lack of control of much of their daily workload had created a physical context which had had a negative "causal influence on their beliefs and perspectives" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 20). Perhaps they felt disenfranchised and this manifested itself in a reluctance to do more than the bare minimum in the classroom. In Edward Sapir's words, "the worlds that different societies live in are different worlds, not simply the same world with different labels attached" (1929/1958, p. 69). For these practitioners, it could be that feelings of reluctance to operate without the educational freedom they desired had left them feeling detached and distant from the altruistic and aesthetic endeavour of helping children to read and read well. Recognising the potential negative impact of an imposed curriculum then could help policymakers, trusts and schools to appreciate that those teachers of English who do not engage with reading are still necessarily "part of the world" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 9) and therefore a stumbling block which needs to be resolved if as many teachers as possible choose to operate as reading teachers.

Those who were reading YA or children's literature demonstrated an appetite for issues-driven, contemporary texts, such as *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas. A number of participants in both the questionnaire and the interviews considered libraries and librarians to be extremely valuable, offering knowledge and expertise in YA and children's literature that they did not possess. However, while the school library was used, public libraries were not utilised, despite participants' happy memories of

using them as children and their philosophical belief that the existence of libraries was important. It was ironic that for some of the interviewees, their lifestyles and reading habits meant they did not make use of their public library at all.

How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students?

Around a third of participants said they were actively reading and recommending YA or children's literature to their students or wanted to improve and broaden their knowledge of YA and children's literature texts. The interviewees particularly expressed a desire to widen their reading, perhaps not unexpectedly given the volunteer nature of their participation. However, these figures were outweighed by the number of participants who felt that they did not read enough of these kinds of texts, and who did not offer a comment signalling their intention to broaden their reading. This would suggest that either they did not consider that their reading knowledge made it difficult for them to recommend engaging and appropriate texts for their students, or the fact that they could not recommend texts was not a concern to them.

Some participants felt that their reading had not kept up with more recent YA and children's literature publications as they had matured as readers, and that endeavouring to keep up presented them with a challenge, and this resulted in a lack of confidence in recommending or choosing YA or children's literature. Having younger children or siblings, however, was repeatedly reported as a way teachers were able to continue their reading and keep it up-to-date, with parents who love reading expressing satisfaction at seeing that passion reflected in their children.

The participants in both the interviews and the questionnaire overwhelmingly signalled their belief that reading was important, for personal and professional reasons, perhaps suggesting a recognition of what an English teacher might be expected to feel, and their answers across the research would suggest that most teachers still identify with the 'personal growth' model of English (DES, 1989), although recognition that English skills were important in later life and that English had a role to play in building cultural appreciation and knowledge were also present.

Participants believed strongly that teachers should act as positive role models for their students, but for a minority of teachers there was a clear distinction between recreational and professional reading. Virtually every participant shared the view of research that enjoyment of reading was positively linked to a student's development of reading skills, increased vocabulary, and increased academic success in subjects other than English, and for the interviewees there was a powerful sense that their love

of reading enabled them to communicate more and in an improved way with their students - it actively improved their classroom practice. Even the interviewees who reported reading less YA or children's literature, agreed with the benefits that this kind of material had on classroom relationships.

The interviewees were clear, however, that the closer a student was to an external, high-stakes examination, then the harder it was to devote time to reading and book discussion, other than that determined by the examination specification. That something as important as reading was felt to be squeezed out of the curriculum by the need to prepare for examinations, would be a topic worthy of further study on a larger scale.

9.2 Contribution to existing scholarship

This study has contributed in a number of ways to developing an understanding of the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English. In its exploration of the reading habits of these teachers, the interplay between their reading habits and their abilities to recommend books to their students, and then in its discussion of their feelings about this relationship, it has shed light not only on what teachers of English read, but who they are reading for. It has contrasted their feelings about their reading with the expectations of scholars and education stakeholders, and examined the tensions that exist around teachers of English choosing to read solely for themselves.

Previous scholarship suggests that teachers should be individuals who are widely read and enthusiastic about their subject (Merga, 2016), and have a detailed and critical knowledge of their field (DfE, 2011; Gordon, 2012; Hopper, 2005), and that their leisure-time reading should be an integral extension of their professional reading and development (Reichenberg and Andreassen (2018), because teacher subject knowledge can be linked to student attainment (Garces-Bacsal et al (2018), Benevides and Stagg Peterson (2010) and Leighton et al (2019). Research has also suggested that teachers' attitudes, positive or negative, play a dramatic role in cultivating positive attitudes towards reading and learning in their students. (Mueller, 1973; Mour, 1977; Heathington and Alexander, 1984 Fleming, 1992; Cardarelli, 1992, Briggs, 1997, and Dreher, 2003), but there is a dearth of research which explores whether teachers, and particularly teachers of English, actually share and subscribe to these views. This study attempts to do this.

Existing research has shown that teachers, including teachers of subject English in America are not likely to engage in professional reading (Hipple and Giblin, 1971; Burhans Jr, 1985; Womack and Chandler, 1992; and Littman and Stodolsky, 1998.

However, this research is extremely dated, or explores the views of pre-service teachers (Monoz and Valenzuela, 2019) unlike my study which explores the same question with serving teachers. The same issues can be found with existing research which explores whether teachers enjoy reading or read regularly. It is either dated (Mueller, 1973; Mann and Micheff, 1987), the result of research amongst teachers of children under or over secondary school age (Cremin, 2008; Cremin, 2008a; Gray and Troy, 1986; McKool and Gespass, 2009; Applegate and Applegate, 2004; Applegate and Applegate, 2014) or international: Commeyras and Mazile (2011) - Botswana; Oyeronke (2009) - Nigeria; Tharumaraj and Noordin (2011) - Malaysia; and McDowall (2021) - New Zealand. This study then fills a gap in the literature in that it asks actively serving secondary school teachers of English, working in the UK, about their reading habits and the implications of those habits on their classroom skills.

This study also builds on existing literature in that it confirms the views of Pike (2004) Goodwyn (1992, 1999, 2016, 2017), among others, that teachers of English do, in the main, identify with the 'personal growth' model of English (DES, 1989).

9.3 Limitations of the research

There are a number of limitations to this study. Firstly, the role of the researcher has to be acknowledged, given that I was during this research as a form of "participant observer" (Thomas, 2017, p. 206). Denscombe (2007) says that, "the researcher's self (their social background, values, identity and beliefs) will have a significant bearing on the nature of the data collected and the interpretation of that data" (p. 250). From the outset it was clear that although Oppenheim (1966/1992) says the interviewer must remain detached from the process they are involved in. They must "'switch off' their own personality and attitudes… try to be unaffected by circumstances, by their attitude to the topic or the respondent, or by personal involvement" (p. 66), this was an unrealistic expectation. Instead, I adopted the reflexive thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2022), who argue that qualitative research can be "messy and organic, complex and contested" (p. xxvi) and, in contrast to Oppenheimer's views discussed above, it is impossible to fully separate the researcher from the landscape of their research and that this link should be embraced as "an asset" (p. 6), as long as the researcher reflects on their "assumptions, expectations, choices and actions throughout" (p. 14) their research. I worked then to do this, seeking advice and opinions where necessary, scrutinising my instinctive responses to my data and using the NVivo software programme to help me organise my findings systematically and thoroughly. However, that there will be an element of subjectivity in this highly

qualitative research is unavoidable. Viewing my research through the lens of critical realism, I also had to accept that my understanding of my findings would be “inevitably a construction from [my] own perspective and standpoint” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 5), and that my participants would “different valid perspectives on reality” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 9), that I would endeavour to unpick and faithfully articulate.

Another possible limitation of this study is that data was collected from a relatively small sample, a total of 99 respondents to the questionnaire and 10 interviewees. While the aim of this study was to create research of depth rather than breadth, extending the study across more schools, so increasing the sample size, and perhaps including a greater number of male respondents, would certainly be possible and fruitful. Particularly, increasing the number of interviewees or conducting focus groups could be very illuminating, given the richness they add to the questionnaire data. Also, as this study used participants from just one multi-academy trust, necessarily unique in its systems, strategies, and curriculum intent, as well as its reflection of its varied societal challenges and expectations, it would not be possible to simply generalise these findings as representative of other multi-academy trusts. Carrying out a similar study in another multi-academy trust, or across a collection of multi-academy trusts would provide comparable data that would be interesting to explore further.

9.4 Recommendations for further research

This study has raised a number of questions that would make for interesting and valuable further research. Reichenberg (2018) found that the older Norwegian and Swedish teachers participating in her study read more nonfiction and fiction than their younger counterparts. However, the greatest number of respondents in my study had been teaching for 12 years or less. It would certainly be interesting to explore whether older English secondary school teachers of English read as much as their Norwegian and Swedish counterparts.

The majority of participants who took part in this research were female. They reported one of the main obstacles to being able to read were their domestic (as well as their professional) responsibilities. It would be interesting to explore whether there does, in fact, exist an uneven distribution of quotidian labour in households with a female teacher of English. This is linked to the idea of workload, which virtually every participant felt to be burdensome to some greater or lesser extent. Is the workload of teachers of English commensurate with the workload of teachers in other subjects, and as teachers of English do tend to be predominantly female, does this lead to unfair

workload pressures felt more by women than men? An interesting area for exploration. Throughout the study, a significant minority of participants reported that they did not read YA or children's literature, they could not recommend these kinds of texts and they did not signal any intention to change this. If this study were to be repeated on a larger scale, what would be the implications of this finding when larger numbers of teachers of English were involved? Would this finding have potential implications for the quality of subject English provision in the UK? How many children in the UK are being taught English by a teacher who has no desire to engage in conversations about reading with their students? Considering how else we can support children to become readers is important here and highlights how complex this issue is. Teachers are not the only adults who play a role in determining outcomes for students – the National Literacy Trust (2020) is quite clear that reading to their child is one of the most important things a parent can do for their child's wellbeing and academic advancement. And yet, the trust fears that many parents do not. How can secondary school classroom teachers compensate for a dearth of reading during a child's early years – and what further challenges exist when that teacher is not a teacher who reads?

Families played a significant role in the interviewees' perception of their reading habits and memories of reading as children were nostalgic and warm, but it was the influence of mothers that the interviewees talked about at length. It would be interesting to conduct some longitudinal research that examined the effect a reading mother or non-reading mother could have on the future reading habits and attitudes of their child.

A number of participants reported that they valued libraries and the expertise of librarians in helping students with book recommendations in a way that they couldn't. This would make for another fruitful area of future research. Do some teachers of English feel that it is not necessary to have a working knowledge of YA and children's literature because this role can be more adequately filled by the librarian? Perhaps, *should* be filled by the librarian? Do schools value their library and librarian appropriately, considering the powerful role libraries can play in helping children to become confident and happy readers?

Finally, the majority of the texts discussed by participants in this study were, ultimately, fiction books. While this study gave opportunities for participants to discuss their reading habits in a nuanced way, the majority of those who took part did not report that they were reading other literary genres such as poetry, or biography, for instance, although others did. A study which asked teachers of English to report more specifically on their reading of forms of writing, other than fiction or nonfiction, which

are also taught in schools, might prove illuminating.

9.5 Recommendations for professional practice

These findings may be of interest to those who have a stake in the quality of educational provision in schools, including policymakers, senior leaders and families. The answers to the questions: What are the reading habits of secondary school teachers of English employed by a multi-academy trust covering the North of England? What is the relationship between these reading habits and these teachers' ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students? And How do these secondary school teachers of English feel about their ability to recommend engaging and appropriate reading material for their students, would suggest that while most teachers of English read widely, only a very small proportion regularly read YA and children's literature, and a significant minority did not signal a desire to change that status quo. This means that some children are being taught English by a practitioner who may have a very limited knowledge of YA and children's literature.

It would seem one remedy for this would be to increase the prominence of YA and children's literature in the curricula delivered by initial teacher training institutions, and so to generate an improved perception of its value. Linking this reading to the importance of reading skills in children may create an increased sense of the importance of all teachers of English operating, and describing themselves, as reading teachers. In school, leaders have the potential to transform their schools into places that actively embrace and encourage reading, as Cremin (2023) describes. Again, this would increase the perceived importance of reading for both students and teachers. Teachers' professional development sessions could more routinely discuss the importance and benefits of being a reading teacher, and actively offer ways that teachers could demonstrate the qualities that make the most effective reading teachers so engaging and beneficial to their students. Schools could offer book donation points so children who do not own books at home could be sent home with a text to enjoy over the holidays. Secondary school teachers could visit and learn from primary classrooms where reading takes place every day in less formalised and academic settings, away from desks and white boards. Schools could work with parents and other community members to offer reading clubs where good reading habits are modelled and enjoyed by all the family and then taken home afterwards. Critically, school leaders also need to ensure that they value and fund their library and librarian appropriately, given the expert knowledge and rich resources they offer.

Policymakers and those who regulate the provision of quality in UK schools need

to consider why this significant minority of teachers show no interest in YA and children's literature. Is it because they are not fully reflected in examination specifications, or the National Curriculum at KS3 and KS4, meaning the pressures of time cause teachers to "teach to the exam" rather than promoting and demonstrating the value of reading for its own sake, something criticised by Snapper (2006), Stock (2017) and Dymoke (2017). Multi-academy trusts and individual schools also have a responsibility to consider why this might be the case and to offer potential solutions at grass-roots level. Do teachers within some schools feel that they lack the freedom to teach the curriculum they would like and so offer passive non-compliance as a polite form of rebellion? Within my trust, English departments are given freedom at KS3 level to generate a curriculum that reflects their subject strengths and the interests of colleagues, but decisions as to what texts to buy or read are often governed by concerns as mundane as budgets and convenience. Pressures to plan and mark, as my participants reported, mean that teachers might feel they cannot read widely at YA level because it may not be immediately useful. The result is a reliance on texts which are old favourites and for which teaching schemes exist. Would generating additional non-contact time for English teachers allow them to have a greater voice as to curriculum intent, engender a greater interest in the texts their students might read and a further investment in the outcomes of their students? How can we reduce the marking burden English teachers face – could the rise of Artificial Intelligence software prove useful here? Could trusts like my own craft curriculums that champion reading first and foremost, perhaps encapsulated in three strands – the work of teaching students to read at or above their chronological age, followed by the endeavour to encourage students to read for pleasure, running alongside the creation of a whole-school reading community where adults in all positions read and talk about their reading with students. Could there be times in the academic schedule when reading for pleasure is separated from reading for assessment, so that students can enjoy a book for its own sake and not because it will be the subject of a test?

Does fear of a regulatory inspection mean that teachers of English with little time to spare, must ensure their books and long-term plans are worthy of scrutiny, rather than engaging in reading to discover a new text to teach? This is a particularly pertinent question since the controversial death of headteacher Ruth Perry in 2023 (The Guardian, 2023). Are some teachers of English so tired and worn down by their duties that the only reading they can engage in are texts designed for adults, making YA or children's literature always a lesser choice? I think that these are important questions that school leaders, policy makers and regulators could fruitfully discuss, and which I, as a director of English in this trust, can discuss with colleagues as we

work each year to craft a curriculum for English which engages and excites our students, helps them to be academically successful in subjects other than English, and which allows them to, following their school days, make their way in society as individuals capable of empathetic and critical thinking.

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Appendix A

The Reading Habits of English Teachers Pilot Questionnaire Final

Version (210920)

➤ For the purposes of this questionnaire, books are defined as both physical, printed books, as well as audio books and digital ebooks.

What is your gender? Please circle: M/F/Other/Prefer Not to Say What is your

age?

How many years have you worked as an English teacher?

Q1. .
How descriptive is this statement about your reading life? For each statement please circle the number that best indicates how descriptive the statement is of you

	Extremely all	**Very**	**Somewhat**	**Slightly**	**Not at**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

1. I love to read: **1 2 3 4 5**

2. I read for a sustained period every day: **1 2 3 4 5**

3. Preparing for my role as a teacher negatively impacts on the time I have available to read books of my own choice: **1 2 3 4 5**

4. I get lots of satisfaction from my personal reading: **1 2 3 4 5**

5. I would read more if I had more time: **1 2 3 4 5**

6. Do you preference other hobbies or pursuits, such as crafting, exercising, watching television etc… over reading regularly: **1 2 3 4 5**

Q2. How much time do you spend on an average day doing the following?

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
None	**1-15 minutes**	**16-30 mins**	**31-60 mins**	**60+ mins**

1. Planning lessons for the following day/week if it's a school night: **1 2 3 4 5**

2. Reading professional materials, such as educational journals or texts: **1 2 3 4 5**

3. Reading for pleasure if it's a school night: **1 2 3 4 5**

4. Reading for pleasure on a weekend: **1 2 3 4 5**

5. Reading for pleasure on an average day during the school holidays: **1 2 3 4 5**

Q3. Are there any obstacles you encounter in your day to day life which prevent you from reading as much as you would like? What are they?

Q4. What motivates you to read? (Tick all that apply)

Wanting to keep up with new releases/reading trends. To broaden knowledge about specific subjects Friends recommend books to me.
For personal enjoyment and relaxation.
To further my subject knowledge as a teacher. To be able to recommend texts for my students.

Q5. What is the title, and who is the author of the book you are presently reading? If you are not reading a book at present please indicate this.

Q6. How many entire books would you say you have read in the last month?

Q7. Please list three books you have enjoyed reading recently (excluding the title you are currently reading).

1.

2.

3.

Q8. How likely are you to read the following kinds of reading material?

	Extremely	**Very**	**Somewhat**	**Slightly**	**Not at all**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Literary fiction aimed at adults	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Fiction aimed at young adults	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Non-fiction writing	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Mass market best sellers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Magazines	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Graphic novels	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Newspapers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Poetry collections	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Academic/Research Journals	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q9. When was the last time you bought a book? What was the title?

Q10. Does your reading include books aimed at younger or young adult readers? If it does, please provide three examples.

Q11. Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult or children's literature to recommend books to your students? Please explain your answer.

Q12. Think about the teaching strategies you employ in the classroom when you teach reading skills. How often do you use the following teaching strategies?

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Not at all	**1-2 times a month**	**1-2 times a week**	**Every day**

1. Share insights from your personal reading: **1 2 3 4**
2. Recommend specific book titles in class: **1 2 3 4**

Q13. Complete the sentence: *Reading is important to me as an English teacher because…*

Appendix B

Interview Questions - Pilot 220920

1. What is your favourite book of all time?
2. Were you encouraged to read by parents or teachers?
3. Did you read set books at school? Do you recall and cherish or hate them now?
4. Have you read all your life, or have you had periods when you read little or nothing (perhaps during hard or challenging times)?
5. Have your reading choices changed over the years?
6. Do you ever borrow books from a library?
7. Do you ever abandon books before finishing them?
8. How do you choose what to read next? Where do you get your recommendations from?
9. Are you in a book group?
10. Do you share books with friends, family or colleagues?
11. Are there any books that you have read multiple times?
12. Do you share your reading choices with your students?
13. Do you make reading choices with your students in mind?
14. Do you recommend books you have read to your students?
15. What do you think is the impact of your personal reading on your students in the classroom? Do they benefit in any way? (Changed to: Do you think your personal reading has any impact on the way you operate in the classroom when teaching English or English Literature?)
16. What's your reading ethos? Do you think it's important students encounter good literature?
17. How important is reading in your daily life? Can you express it as a metaphor?
18. What are your obstacles to reading? Both personally and professionally?
19. (Would you like to keep a year-long reading journal?)
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your reading life?

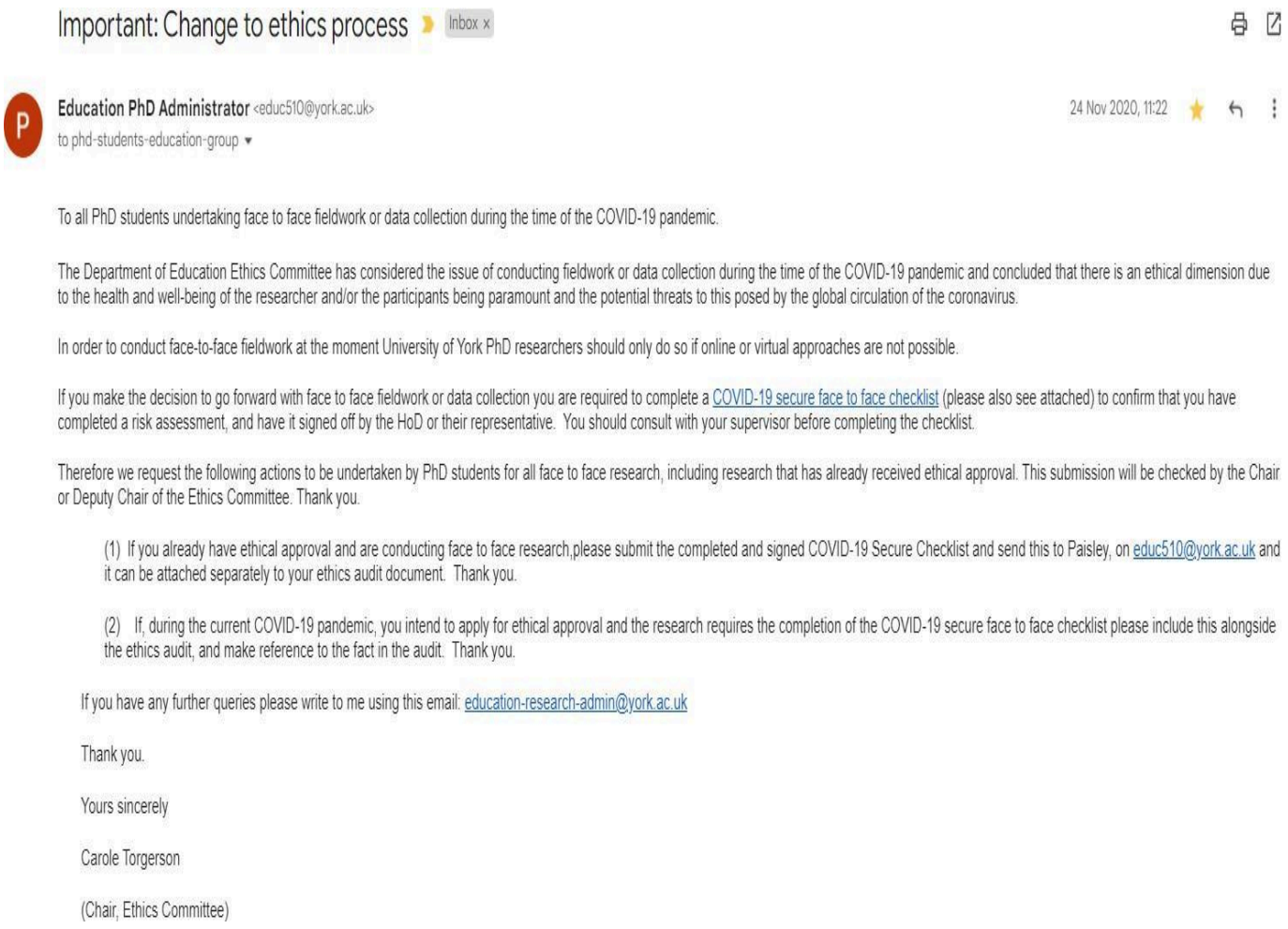
Appendix C

Interview Questions - Final Version

1. What is your favourite book of all time?
2. Were you encouraged to read by parents or teachers?
3. Have you read all your life, or have you had periods when you read little or nothing (perhaps during hard or challenging times)?
4. Have your reading choices changed over the years?
5. Do you ever borrow books from a library?
6. Do you ever abandon books before finishing them?
7. How do you choose what to read next? Where do you get your recommendations from?
8. Are you in a book group?
9. Are there any books that you have read multiple times?
10. Do you share your reading choices with your students?
11. Do you make reading choices with your students in mind?
12. Do you recommend books you have read to your students?
13. Do you think your personal reading has any impact on the way you operate in the classroom when teaching English or English Literature?)
14. Do you think it's important for students to encounter good literature?
15. How important is reading in your daily life? Can you express it as a metaphor?
16. What are your obstacles to reading? Both personally and professionally?
17. (Would you like to keep a year-long reading journal?)
18. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your reading life?

Appendix D

Screenshot of email from Professor Carole Torgerson, chair of the University of York Ethics Committee. Sent Tuesday 24th November 2020 to all University of York Education PhD students



Important: Change to ethics process Inbox ×

Education PhD Administrator <educ510@york.ac.uk> 24 Nov 2020, 11:22

to phd-students-education-group ▾

To all PhD students undertaking face to face fieldwork or data collection during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department of Education Ethics Committee has considered the issue of conducting fieldwork or data collection during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and concluded that there is an ethical dimension due to the health and well-being of the researcher and/or the participants being paramount and the potential threats to this posed by the global circulation of the coronavirus.

In order to conduct face-to-face fieldwork at the moment University of York PhD researchers should only do so if online or virtual approaches are not possible.

If you make the decision to go forward with face to face fieldwork or data collection you are required to complete a COVID-19 secure face to face checklist (please also see attached) to confirm that you have completed a risk assessment, and have it signed off by the HoD or their representative. You should consult with your supervisor before completing the checklist.

Therefore we request the following actions to be undertaken by PhD students for all face to face research, including research that has already received ethical approval. This submission will be checked by the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Ethics Committee. Thank you.

(1) If you already have ethical approval and are conducting face to face research,please submit the completed and signed COVID-19 Secure Checklist and send this to Paisley, on educ510@york.ac.uk and it can be attached separately to your ethics audit document. Thank you.

(2) If, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, you intend to apply for ethical approval and the research requires the completion of the COVID-19 secure face to face checklist please include this alongside the ethics audit, and make reference to the fact in the audit. Thank you.

If you have any further queries please write to me using this email: education-research-admin@york.ac.uk

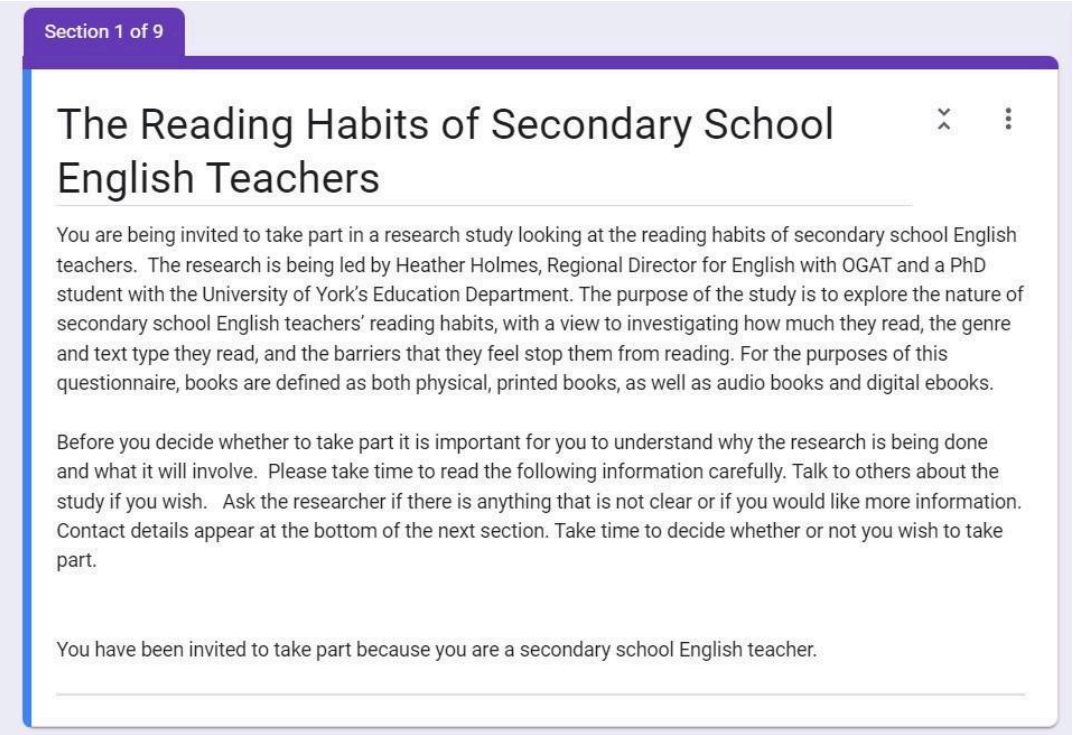
Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Carole Torgerson

(Chair, Ethics Committee)

Appendix E



Section 1 of 9

The Reading Habits of Secondary School English Teachers

You are being invited to take part in a research study looking at the reading habits of secondary school English teachers. The research is being led by Heather Holmes, Regional Director for English with OGAT and a PhD student with the University of York's Education Department. The purpose of the study is to explore the nature of secondary school English teachers' reading habits, with a view to investigating how much they read, the genre and text type they read, and the barriers that they feel stop them from reading. For the purposes of this questionnaire, books are defined as both physical, printed books, as well as audio books and digital ebooks.

Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Contact details appear at the bottom of the next section. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

You have been invited to take part because you are a secondary school English teacher.

Consent Form

The study will take a variety of forms. Mainly, it will involve participants completing a questionnaire about their reading habits, which will take no longer than 20 minutes to complete. A smaller number of participants will be asked to take part in face-to-face interviews following the completion of their questionnaire, which will last no longer than an hour. Fifteen individuals will also be asked to keep a record of their reading over the course of an academic year. Willingness to take part in a semi-structured interview or to complete a reading record will be indicated by participants when they complete their questionnaire.

Do I have to take part?
Participation is optional. If you change your mind during the study, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason.

On what basis will you process my data?
Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University has to identify a legal basis for processing personal data and, where appropriate, an additional condition for processing special category data. In line with our charter which states that we advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research, the University processes personal data for research purposes under Article 6 (1) (e) of the GDPR: Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest Special category data is processed under Article 9 (2) (j): Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes Research will only be undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data. In line with ethical expectations and in order to comply with common law duty of confidentiality, we will seek your consent to participate where appropriate. This consent will not, however, be our legal basis for processing your data under the GDPR.

Data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this information sheet. It will be accessible to the project team at the University of York only. Anonymised data may be reused by the research team or other third parties for secondary research purposes.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection and up to six weeks after data has been collected.

How will you keep my data secure?
The data that you provide, such as completed questionnaires and transcripts of interviews, will be stored by code number. Any information that identifies you will be stored separately from the data. Information will be treated confidentiality and shared on a need-to-know basis only. The University is committed to the principle of data protection by design and default and will collect the minimum amount of data necessary for the project. In addition, we will anonymise or pseudonymise data wherever possible. The University's cloud storage solution is provided by Google which means that data can be located at any of Google's globally spread data centres. The University has data protection compliant arrangements in place with this provider. For further information see, https://www.york.ac.uk/itservices/google/policy/privacy/.

The University will put in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your personal data. For the purposes of this project, data, transcripts and recordings will be kept in locked cabinets and password-protected computer storage spaces.

The data that I collect, such as completed questionnaires, audio recordings, and interview transcripts may be used in anonymous format in different ways. Please indicate on the consent form attached if you are happy for this anonymised data to be used in the ways listed. You will be given the opportunity to comment on a written record of your interview.

How long will you keep my data?
Data will be retained in line with legal requirements or where there is a business need. Retention timeframes will be determined in line with the University's Records Retention Schedule. For the purposes of this study, data will be kept for three years after which time it will be destroyed.

What rights do I have in relation to my data?

Under the GDPR, you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdrawal. Please note, not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For further information see, https://www.york.ac.uk/records-management/generaldataprotectionregulation/individualsrights/.

Questions or concerns
If you have any questions about this participant information sheet or concerns about how your data is being processed, please contact the researcher Heather Holmes in the first instance, at h.holmes@outwood.com or on 07918143828.
If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the University's Acting Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@york.ac.uk.

Right to complain
If you are unhappy with the way in which the University has handled your personal data, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For information on reporting a concern to the Information Commissioner's Office, see www.ico.org.uk/concerns.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information given to me about the above named research project and I understand that this will involve me taking part as described above. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that my data will not be identifiable and the data may be used in publications, presentations and online. I confirm that I have read the information about GDPR *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

After section 2 Continue to next section

Section 3 of 9

Information about you

Description (optional)

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

Short-answer text

How many years have you worked as an English teacher?

Short-answer text

After section 3 Continue to next section

Section 4 of 9

How do you describe your reading life?

How descriptive are these statements about your reading life? For each statement please click the answer that best indicates how descriptive the statement is of you.

I love to read.

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

I read for a sustained period every day.

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

Preparing for my role as a teacher negatively impacts on the time I have available to read books of my own choice.

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

I get lots of satisfaction from my personal reading.

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

I would read more if I had more time.

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

I preference other hobbies or pursuits, such as crafting, exercising, watching television etc... over reading regularly.

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

After section 4 Continue to next section

Section 5 of 9

The time you spend reading

These questions ask about the time you spend reading various text types and the obstacles that might prevent you from reading.

Reading required texts/materials and planning lessons for the following day/week if it's a school night.

- No time
- 1-15 minutes
- 16-30 minutes
- 31-60 minutes
- More than 60 minutes

Reading professional materials, such as educational journals or texts.

- ○ No time
- ○ 1-15 minutes
- ○ 16-30 minutes
- ○ 31-60 minutes
- ○ More than 60 minutes

Reading for pleasure if it's a school night.

- ○ No time
- ○ 1-15 minutes
- ○ 16-30 minutes
- ○ 31-60 minutes
- ○ More than 60 minutes

Reading for pleasure on a weekend.

- ○ No time
- ○ 1-15 minutes
- ○ 16-30 minutes
- ○ 31-60 minutes
- ○ More than 60 minutes

Reading for pleasure on an average day during the school holidays.

- ○ No time
- ○ 1-15 minutes
- ○ 16-30 minutes
- ○ 31-60 minutes
- ○ More than 60 minutes

Are there any obstacles you encounter in your day-to-day life which prevent you from reading as much as you would like? What are they?

Long-answer text

After section 5 Continue to next section

Section 6 of 9

Your reading habits

These questions explore why you read and what you read.

What motivates you to read? Click all that apply.

- ☐ Wanting to keep up with new releases/reading trends
- ☐ To broaden knowledge about specific subjects
- ☐ Friends recommend books to me
- ☐ For personal enjoyment and relaxation
- ☐ To further my subject knowledge as a teacher
- ☐ To be able to recommend texts for my students

What is the title, and who is the author of the book you are presently reading? If you are not reading a book at present please indicate this.

Short-answer text

How many entire books would you say you have read in the last month?

Short-answer text

Please list three books you have enjoyed reading recently (excluding the title you are currently reading).

Long-answer text

How likely are you to read literary fiction aimed at adults?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read fiction aimed at young adults?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read non-fiction writing?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read mass-market best sellers?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read magazines?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read graphic novels?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read newspapers?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read poetry collections?

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Not at all

How likely are you to read academic research journals?

- ○ Extremely
- ○ Very
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Slightly
- ○ Not at all

When was the last time you bought a book? What was the title?

Short-answer text

Does your reading include books aimed at younger or young adult readers? If it does, please provide three examples.

Long-answer text

Do you feel you have enough knowledge of young adult or children's literature to recommend books to your students? Please explain your answer.

Long-answer text

How often do you share insights from your personal reading in the classroom?

- Every day
- 1-2 times a week
- 1-2 times a month
- Not at all

How often do you recommend specific books to your students?

- Every day
- 1-2 times a week
- 1-2 times a month
- Not at all

Complete the sentence: Reading is important to me as an English teacher because...

Long-answer text

After section 6 Continue to next section

Section 7 of 9

Further research

Description (optional)

If you would be happy to take part in a 20-30 minute interview about your reading life as part of the research, please enter your name and contact details below.

Short-answer text

Section 8 of 9

Reading Habits of Secondary School English Teachers

Many thanks for your time completing this survey, If you have indicated that you would like to be involved in further research, the researcher will contact you in due course.

After section 8 Submit form

Section 9 of 9

Untitled section

Description (optional)

Appendix F

Copy of my email to the CEO of my trust and his subsequent reply (names redacted to protect the confidentiality of the trust. The email was sent on 10th September 2021.

Dear,

I hope you had a good break. It was good to see you, albeit briefly, on Tuesday!

I'm writing to bring you up-to-date with my PhD research because the next stage of my project involves (trust) colleagues, and I wanted to run this element of my research by you before I go ahead.

I'm three years into my PhD with the University of York Education Dept, thanks largely to my (trust) bursary, which has been a great help. This academic year I will collect my data, next year I'll write up and in 2023/24 I will submit. I'm researching the reading habits of secondary school English teachers, which my reading over the last three years has shown to be under-explored by researchers in this country. So far, I've written my literature review and methodology chapters, having prevailed on the goodwill of my Director colleagues to allow me to trial my questionnaire and interview questions.

The next stage, with your go ahead, is for me to distribute my questionnaire, via a Google Form, to every English teacher in the Trust. The questionnaire is a combination of multiple choice, graded-scale questions and open-ended questions, which explore how, what, where and why our English colleagues read. In trials it took around 10 to 15 minutes to complete, depending on the thoughtfulness of the response. I would distribute it via a Google form, which would ensure anonymity for those who choose to respond. I have ethical approval for this research from the University of York. Importantly, before entering the questionnaire proper, responders would be made aware that they do not have to take part. They would also be informed of how their data would be securely held, processed, used in the future and the length of time it would be kept. My details are included if people want further information or choose to complain at a later stage. Respondents are also told they can withdraw from the research at any stage. This wording is in line with the university's template wording for such a document and has been approved by my supervisor and the university's ethics committee.

I would aim to distribute the questionnaires and collect the data between October and December. Following this, I will conduct a number of interviews with

colleagues who have signalled through the questionnaire that they would like to be included in this stage of the research. These colleagues would also remain anonymous in the final research. These would take place via Google, most probably over the Spring term, giving me time to present my initial findings to my Thesis Advisory Panel in the late summer.

This has been a really exciting project. My pilot research revealed that our English teachers are reading a wealth of varied Literature and that they are strongly invested in the 'Personal Growth' model of English - that reading for pleasure has the potential to transform lives and widen horizons, both personally and professionally. Listening to colleagues talk about their reading lives, and the impact their reading has on their students in the classroom, has been a thoroughly inspiring experience. An insight into the reading lives of more than 300 secondary subject-English teachers is unprecedented in reading research at this time, both in the UK and internationally, so I'm very keen to move forward. During lockdown I submitted an article on my pilot findings to the peer-reviewed journal *English in Education* and I anticipate that my work will generate further publication opportunities as it progresses.

Many thanks indeed for your time - and for (the trust's) financial support to date. I wonder if you might be able to let me know whether you would be happy for me to move forward?

Best wishes, Heather

--

Heather Holmes
Regional Director of English (Trust)

Good morning Heather

Thank you for your email, your research sounds very exciting and valuable - well done.

Your proposal to canvas (trust) English teachers on their reading habits is approved.

As you will follow the university's ethical research standards and collection and storage of the information I cannot foresee any problems however for completeness I have copied in Katy as the Trust Information Asset Owner/GDPR compliance officer so she is aware of this work taking place.

I wish you every success with your PhD, we are very proud of you for undertaking this. Let me know if we can help further in any way: if you want to explore the views of those outside (the trust) I can try and link you to a number of other large trusts.

Best wishes,

Appendix G

Copies of emails sent to all English teachers in November 2021 to encourage them to take part in the research.

Email 1:

Dear all,

I hope you are all well and looking forward to a break before too long.

Many of you will know that I love to read - I've no doubt discussed a book I've read with most people receiving this email, and read a far few recommendations as a result of the chats I've had! I decided a few years ago that I wanted to pursue my interest in reading, and particularly the reading habits of English teachers, in a more formal manner, and so applied to study a PhD in Education with the University of York. Which brings me to the reason for this email...

I would very much appreciate your help in conducting my research. I've created a survey - which should take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete - and asks you, as a teacher of English in a secondary school, about your reading habits. The questions cover things such as what you read, when you read, how you feel about your reading, and whether you think your reading has any impact in the classroom. The answers are completely confidential, but there is the opportunity towards the end of the survey to indicate that you would like to take part in further research.
More information and the link to the survey is here.

We are all incredibly busy, but if you could find the time to take part in the research, I would be very grateful indeed. This research will be important in determining not just what English teachers read, but the way their reading influences their classroom practice and the obstacles they face when it comes to finding time to read. Research along these lines has been carried out at primary level, but this is the first study (both nationally and internationally) to explore these issues at secondary level.

Do feel free to contact me if you have any questions and thank you again. Heather

Email Two:

Dear all,

Thank you so much to all those who have gone to the trouble of completing my survey. It is very much appreciated as I know that our time is precious. The

information about reading habits that is beginning to come through is very interesting - lots of varied and interesting texts, and lots of people who describe reading as their passion but who simply don't have the time to spend curled up with a good book.

I'm hoping to gather as many responses as I can. If you have not had a chance to complete the survey yet, I'd be very grateful if you consider giving it a go. It should take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete - and asks you, as a teacher of English in a secondary school, about your reading habits. The questions cover things such as what you read, when you read, how you feel about your reading, and whether you think your reading has any impact in the classroom. The answers are completely confidential, but there is the opportunity towards the end of the survey to indicate that you would like to take part in further research. More information and the link to the survey is here.

The survey is open to all qualified English teachers within the Trust, so please do pass on to any One to One colleagues who meet the requirements and you think might be interested.

This research will be important in determining not just what English teachers read, but the way their reading influences their classroom practice and the obstacles they face when it comes to finding time to read. Research along these lines has been carried out at primary level, but this is the first study (both nationally and internationally) to explore these issues at secondary level.

Do feel free to contact me if you have any questions and thank you once again. Heather

Email 3:

Dear all,

Just a final email to say thank you so much to all those who have completed my survey. More than 100 of you have told me about your reading habits and challenges and it makes really interesting reading. We are reading a huge range of material, from the classics to contemporary psychological thrillers (we're reading *a lot* of psychological thrillers!), from YA Literature to poetry before bedtime, but virtually every respondent has said that finding time to read is hard and we wish we could do it more. Having children makes it hard to find the time to read, yet having children has also allowed many of us to access literature we wouldn't otherwise have reached. And we all read loads in the holidays, so roll on Christmas!

If you have signalled that you would like to be interviewed as part of the project, I'll be contacting you throughout December and January to make arrangements.
Thank you for volunteering!

I'll be closing the survey on Friday 17th December, so I can work on the results over the holiday. If you would still like to take part, the link is here.

Thank you once again for helping me with this research, Heather

Appendix H

Details of all codes and themes generated by the interviews

Codes	Themes
Childhood reading habits Family as readers Being a parent is busy Impact of family life on reading habits Work/life balance Mums reading with their children Parents don't read Parents reading habits Parents reading to support children Parents talking about reading with children Reading easier with no children Reading with a baby Spending time with a partner Literature helps when parents can't Reading linked to nostalgia for people	The effect of family on teachers' reading habits
Being a teacher is busy Classroom is too busy to discuss books Impact of becoming a teacher on reading habits Loss of motivation to read Marking takes up free time Negative impact of teacher training on reading habits Planning for teacher role Pressure of work on reading Reading in younger years Big books take took long to read Negative impact of Covid on reading Positive impact of Covid on reading Idea of lack of time Idea of waiting for a book Intimidated by big books Preserving free time Sense of decision making about how we use our time Time gained during Covid Fall asleep while reading Mental tiredness	The struggles teachers face to read

Reading is too effortful sometimes Too tired to read TV is mindless relaxation Want to make sure time is well invested YA easier to read in term time	
Books are a constant Not returning to books Reading as an achievement Reading associated with personal growth Reading broadens perspectives Reading can change you Reading can require emotional commitment Reading enriches life Reading is exciting Reading linked to curiosity Reading is linked to our emotions Reading is an escape from reality Reading is enjoyment Reading is linked to freedom Can't read when stressed Reading helps clear your mind Reading helps with stress Reading helps you ground yourself Reading is comforting Reading is done in isolation Reading is linked to peace Reading linked to negative feelings Reading linked to positive feelings Reading linked to relaxation Reading linked to personal growth	Reading enriches our lives and positively affects our sense of wellbeing
Abandoning texts Always reading Annual re-reading Authors mentioned Book collections Book Clubs Books mentioned Buying books Books as presents Bookshops Buying secondhand books Buying books at the supermarket Can't resist buying books Charity shops Cheap books Easy to buy books	How, when and what teachers read - and what do they think about their reading habits?

Experience of buying or borrowing Idea of pre-ordering books Joy of buying books Not buying books Recycling books What to do with unwanted books Certain authors worth investment Difficulty choosing new book Feelings about a book can change over time Re-reading books Issues driven reading Life experience influences reading choices Moving on from finishing a book No death Obstacle to reading Pressure of discovering a series to read Can't read every book Guilt Lack of time to read everything Not enough time to read every book Sense of reading properly Sense of urgency in reading Reading as an investment Reading as an obsession Distinction between term time and holiday reading Literary fiction saved for the holidays Read in holidays Read more at weekend Reading before bed Want to read every day Reading challenges Reading choices Reading choices change with mood Reading from shelves Reading habits change over time Reading on the train Reading reviews Reading target Sad to finish a book Stuck in reading rut Reading as pleasure	
Impact of reading on ability to teach Pedagogical research about reading Reading knowledge helps you choose books for students Reading teachers are engaging	The effect of reading on teachers' subject knowledge and their perception of themselves in the classroom

Reading helps you build relationship Reading as a means to communicate Teacher subject knowledge linked to better teaching Teacher subject knowledge linked to confidence Teacher subject knowledge linked to respect No encouragement from their own teachers No memory of teachers as readers Positive impact of teachers Sense they are not being a good role model Sense of wanting to read more Sense that English teachers should read Teachers as learners Teachers as readers Reading aloud Students recommending books Teachers talking about reading with their students The Peter Effect Teachers talking about books with each other Tracking reading Teachers actively choose texts to recommend Choosing books with students in mind Don't or can't recommend to younger children Recommending texts to students	
Reading benefits writing Reading broadens vocabulary Building a love of reading Building literature humans is important Encouraging students to read Importance of reading regularly Important to promote a love of literature Reading helps children create an identity Reading helps you make sense of the world Reading is important because… Reading is like… Reading makes you well rounded Reading makes you knowledgeable Reading promotes broader world view	Teachers' belief in the importance of reading for their students and themselves

Reading offers an escape from the everyday Reading teaches you about important issues Reading not linked to pleasure in school Sharing a love of literature Students are disengaged with reading Students don't read independently as they used to Students only seen reading in class Lack of reading in older children Link between reading and behaviour Tensions between issues driven and fun texts Discussion associated with sense of value of literature Good literature encourages cultural knowledge Good literature encourages use of standard English Good literature engenders empathy Importance of good literature Reading helps you instil values in your children	
Accelerated Reader Childhood visits to the library Desire to own a book rather than borrow Giving library books back Keeping books Knowledge of the librarian Positive impact of the librarian References to using the library as an adult Use of school library	How teachers make use of and value their library and librarian
Availability of YA to read at home Keeping up-to-date with children's literature Knowledge is outdated Knowledge of YA fiction helps with understanding teenagers Quality of YA fiction Sense they should read more YA Teachers recommending books Sense of wanting to recommend more	Teachers' feelings about their reading of YA Literature

books Teachers reading habits are not student friendly Teachers reading YA YA is an easier read YA is linked to escapism	