



Page Turners - Developing children as readers at Maidwell Primary in Northamptonshire

As we all know, there is a direct correlation between the amount a child reads, their attainment in reading and the quality of their writing. For quite a number of years we have been talking to the children about how and why the most avid readers make the most creative writers. Whilst the message has been received by a few, we felt we needed to change the mindset of all. Having introduced Pie's suggested spine books as class novels a number of years ago we witnessed an increase in the interest of the authors of the books read, eg: SF Said, but this needed to go further. Current attainment at Maidwell shows a direct correlation between high attainment in reading being matched exactly to high attainment in writing and GPS.

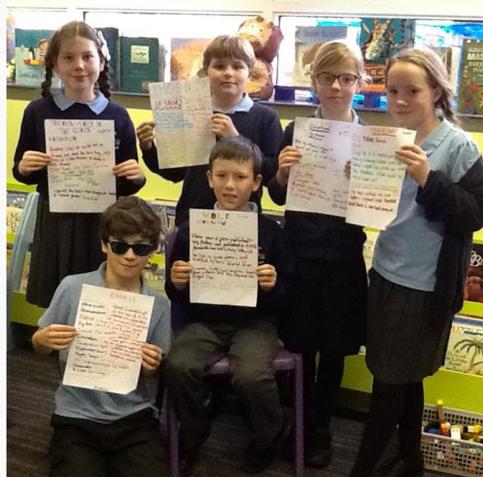
Knowing this to be the case, and having spotted Pie's Y3-6 'Page Turner' sets of books, an idea began to take shape. It wasn't rocket science: if we already had hard data to demonstrate high attainment in reading = high attainment in writing, the only challenge was to develop the children's reading habits and establish a true reading culture in the school.

Our first step was to introduce the books:

Maidwell Primary: Page Turners!

Introducing the books –

Children spent some time investigating the books. They read the blurbs, researched the author's background, looked for other books by the author and read reviews of the books. They presented their findings to the rest of the class before choosing their 'page turner'.



The outcome of this was:

Excitement for reading!

The day we investigated the books, I went home and told my Dad all about Cogheart.

I was so enthusiastic about it that Dad went and bought the book for me that day.

“I have never seen her so excited about a book! I have been trying to get her to read anything for so long and this was it.”

“It’s so cool! I’ve seen the next book is called Moonloket and there is a mystery one coming out soon! Daddy has told me I can have them once I have finished Cogheart!”



The children were given their choice of Page Turner and the outcome was:

Inspiring a love of reading.

He read ‘There’s a boy in the girl’s bathroom’ in less than a day!



Email from Mum:

“Dear Mrs James,

We just wanted to say this is a fantastic initiative! He brought home his first ‘Page Turner’ book yesterday afternoon and sat reading it until bedtime, then got up at 6am and finished the book! He was gripped and thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you for inspiring a love of reading.”

Next we wanted to increase the discussion of reading and the sharing of ideas. To do this a model book review was written by the teacher on a book known by all – a Y5 spine book entitled *Varjak Paw* by SF Said:

Model Book Review

Class 3

Varjak Paw by SF Said

Varjak Paw is a cat – he is a Mesopotamian Blue, living in the Contessa’s house on top of a hill (with his many blue-eyed members of his family) and has never set foot outside of his home. Unfortunately, because of his amber coloured eyes, Varjak is - and always has been- the outcast of the family.

However, things soon change when the gentlemen turns up with his two mysterious black cats: trouble awaits. The Elder Paw, Varjak’s grandfather, soon tells him about ‘The Way’ – a secret martial art for cats - and sends him on an escapade of survival through a city full of wild dogs, vicious cat gangs and, worst of all, the mysterious Vanishings.

Now, Varjak must endure a number of nail-biting moments when he is faced with two street cats: Holly and Tam, an ancient dream cat called Jalal and the deadly Sally Bones. Will he be able to survive being small in a big world?

Jam-packed with adventure, action and mystery, this is a must-read for anyone who enjoys reading from an animal’s perspective. S F Said’s use of suspense and description throughout makes this a ‘page turner’ beyond doubt – you won’t want to put it down!

This best-selling story of *Varjak Paw* (2003) was the deserved winner of the Nestle Smarties Book Prize for Children’s Literature. The sequel: ‘*The Outlaw Varjak Paw*’ (2005) was the winner of the BBC Blue Peter Book of The Year. Furthermore, ‘Phoenix’ is an epic space adventure and another brilliant example of Said’s mind-blowing writing.

I would rate this book:



"Compulsive reading" (*School Librarian*)

"Dazzling" (*The New York Times*)

"The cat magic mystique is brilliant" (Richard Adams *Author of Watership Down*)

SF Said is an award-winning author. He was born in Lebanon in 1967, but has lived in London since he was 2 years old. He has written widely about children's and young adult fiction, films and the arts for *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. For more information on SF and his books, please visit www.sfsaid.com.

The children then co-constructed a boxed-up plan for a book review by analysing the model text.

Class 3 – Computing / Literacy	
Boxed Up Plan (Structure of Book Review)	
<p>Opening paragraph – Main character</p> <p>Next paragraph(s)</p>	<p>Introduce main character.</p> <p>Give an insight in to the story plot and what happens to the main character.</p> <p>Introduces other main characters</p>
<p>What is the story type / genre?</p> <p>Who is it recommended for?</p> <p>Remember this is your personal opinion so make it sound personal!</p>	<p>Tell your reader what type of book it is and if they would like it.</p> <p>Give reasons why you would / would not recommend it e.g. language used, skills of a particular character, particular scenes/chapters in the book</p>
<p>Awards specific to the book</p>	<p>Give full titles of the award. Add dates if possible.</p>
<p>Other books by the author (prequel – sequel – part of a series etc)</p>	<p>Don't give too much detail about the other books but enough to make people want to read them.</p>
<p>Reviews (no more than 3)</p> <p>Personal ratings (out of 5 stars)</p>	<p>Look for appropriate reviews (located within the book). Also look on trustworthy websites</p> <p>Be honest!</p>
<p>About the author</p> <p>Hyperlink (optional)</p>	<p>Information about the author's background and daily life (may include job, ideas/series, DOB, where they live etc)</p> <p>Hyperlink is good to provide more information to the reader.</p> <p>Try to use the author's own website (if they have one)</p>

On completion of a Page Turner, the children were encouraged to complete their own book review using the boxed up plan.



Maidwell Primary Bloggers – linking computing to reading

We have linked the idea of writing book reviews to computing and have now set up our own blogging website.

Once they have read a book, the children's book reviews will be published for others to read and make comments on.

It is a work in progress but the children love it!

<https://maidwellprimary.wordpress.com/>

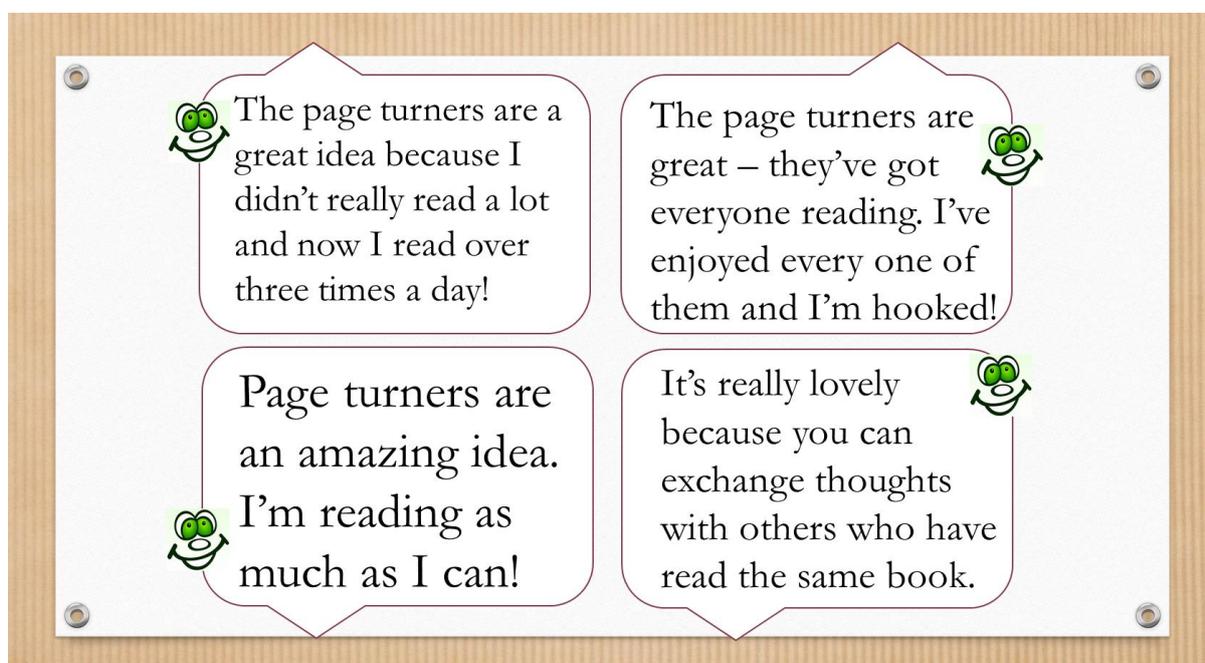
Maidwell Primary Bloggers

Floodland reviewed by Noah

Recent Posts
Floodland reviewed by Noah
The Outlaw Vigil reviewed by Noah
Review of Five Elder Beards by Luke A
500 Dads by David Williams reviewed by Henry

"A dazzling debut from a new writer of exceptional talent, Floodland and its powerful narrative will keep children riveted!" Books Magazine

The comments from the children have been overwhelmingly positive:



The page turners are a great idea because I didn't really read a lot and now I read over three times a day!

The page turners are great – they've got everyone reading. I've enjoyed every one of them and I'm hooked!

Page turners are an amazing idea. I'm reading as much as I can!

It's really lovely because you can exchange thoughts with others who have read the same book.

The principle of reading being the key which unlocks all learning has had a profound impact on the culture of our school. If children's attitude to reading undergoes a significant change it is bound to have a significant impact on all areas of learning. It is quite simple – the more children read, the better their comprehension, vocabulary development, sentence structure, spelling, grammatical understanding etc etc ...

Developing the school as a reading environment

Next steps:

The introduction of Page Turners has been the beginning of an exciting journey. Staff and children reading the books and sharing book reviews has changed the ethos of the school already and we feel there is more we can do. Some of these actions have already been undertaken, others will be the focus during the rest of the Summer Term. They will include:

- Development of Page Turners for Year 1 and 2 after consultation with staff, parents and children
- The creation of reading zones both in the inside and outside of the school
- Creation of Page Turner libraries by adding titles – many by original page turner authors
- Creation of age appropriate blogs:
Class 3 link: <https://maidwellprimary.wordpress.com>
Class 1 link: <https://padlet.com/MrsGarley/b01pkoaxnar3>
- Opportunities to read in the school week – 10 minutes before the start of every school day; lunchtime reading clubs; 'golden' reading time as a reward
- Displays around the school dedicated to reading
- Regular communication of developments with parents in order to encourage their full participation – the ultimate aim to have parents reading, reviewing and discussing the books with their children

Rosemarie James
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