

## Encouraging Extensive Reading: The Teacher's Role

Daniel Xerri – University of Malta

## + A Contradiction

- Universally hailed as beneficial, important, and necessary...yet is so **underutilized and even ignored**

(Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009)



# + Challenges

- Time
- Competing course demands
- Dearth of resources
- Student attitudes
- *Skilled* readers vs *skilled readers*
- Teacher's stance



## + Convincing Students

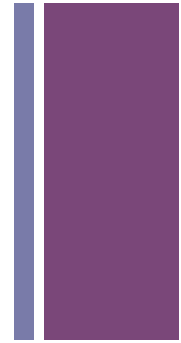
- The primary objective: **convince students of its value** so that they will continue reading extensively on their own
- An obvious but often neglected way to do this is to **model the behaviors of an enthusiastic reader**

(Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009)

## + The Teacher is a Role Model of a Reader

- Effective extensive reading teachers are themselves readers, **teaching *by example*** the attitudes and behaviors of a reader

(Day & Bamford, 2002)



## + Positioning Oneself as a Reader

- Teachers guide students and participate with them as **members of a reading community**
- Keeping in mind that they are role models may **change teachers' perceptions** of the classroom and their role as teachers

(Day & Bamford, 1998)

## + Teachers and Reading

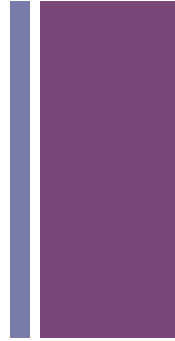
- 73.2% had read for pleasure during the last month; 20.2% during the last three months
- 40% prefer popular fiction while 14% opt for biographies; less than 2% mentioned poetry
- 34% use libraries as a frequent source of reading material

(Cremin et al, 2009)

## + Teachers and Reading

- Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, and 19<sup>th</sup> century classics most mentioned as favourite childhood reading
- Teacher's knowledge of children's literature is limited to a few renowned authors

(Cremin et al, 2009)





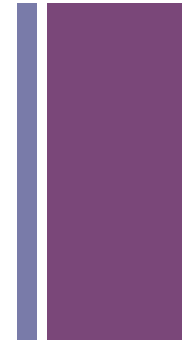
## + Teachers and Reading

- 58% could name only one or two poets; 22% named no poets at all; scant knowledge of women poets and multicultural poetry
- Teachers probably tend to select poetry for its capacity to teach particular language features rather than enjoying it for its own sake

(Cremin et al, 2009)

## + Teachers Reading Poetry

- I read very few novels and less poetry
- I must confess that poetry is not the material that I read most
- Whenever I have time I like to read novels... more than poetry
- There is a tendency to go for prose when it comes to reading for personal pleasure
- Mostly for work purposes not for pleasure



## + A Poet on Teachers' Reading of Poetry

- I don't think they do read it as much as we suppose they do because sometimes if I mention a poet's name to a teacher they don't know who that person is and if I mention certain poems or certain anthologies **it's a very restricted canon of work that teachers have read** and it's usually poetry from very deep in the past

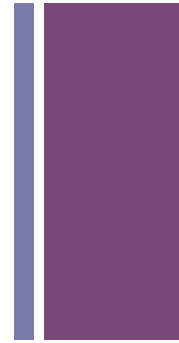
John Rice

# + Do your teachers read poetry?

- They don't mention it...I assume they would
- Yes...one of them does because she has a poetry club so she's quite into that...the others I don't know
- Yes...she always tells us read this...it's a really good book
- I think so...I think it's sort of necessary to read poetry if you're an English teacher...they haven't told us about it though
- I don't know...they never told us I think
- I don't know...I've never heard them mention anything

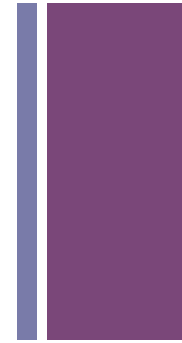
+ Would you like your teachers to share their poetry reading with you?

- Obviously teachers have a huge **influence** on the students...so it would help many students to take the **initiative** to read more poetry
- It's good because...having **suggestions** and an opinion from someone who actually knows good poetry is better
- I think yes because students like me who don't read poems...we don't know **what's good and what's not**



+ Would you like your teachers to share their poetry reading with you?

- I think it sort of encourages the students to have more **confidence**
- Having someone teaching you who has read a lot of poetry is sort of encouraging...you can **trust** the person
- It encourages you even more...like we see someone who likes poetry and we get more **encouraged** to read it



## + The Medway Project

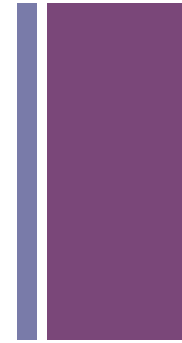
- Aimed to develop 43 teachers' positioning as **teachers who read and readers who teach**
- Teachers' increased knowledge, pleasure and use of poetry **widened the children's repertoires and experience** of poetry, positively influencing their understanding and attitudes

(Cremin, 2010)



## + Teachers as Readers

- talk with students about their reading lives
- tell students how they select a text, why they sometimes reread a text or do not finish it
- talk to students about who influences them as readers—who inspires them

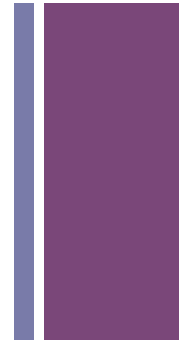




## + Teachers as Readers

- tell students about troubles they have had with reading
- tell students about the strategies they find helpful as readers
- tell students about what they are learning from reading

(Commeyras et al, 2003)



# + The Reading Community

- Teachers positioned as fellow readers
- Emphasis on student selection
- Sharing of recommendations
- Book talks



# + References

- Commeyras, M., Bisplinghoff, B.S., & Olson, J. (2003). *Teachers as readers*. Newark: International Reading Association.
- Cremin, T. (2010). Exploring poetry teachers: Teachers who read and readers who teach poetry. In M. Styles, L. Joy & D. Whitley (Eds.), *Poetry and childhood* (pp. 219-226). Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.
- Cremin, T., Bearne, E., Mottram, M., & Goodwin, P. (2009). Teachers as readers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In M. Styles & E. Arizpe (Eds.), *Acts of reading* (pp. 201-218). Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.
- Day, R.R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Day, R.R., & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 14(2), 136-141.
- Hedgcock, J.S., & Ferris, D.R. (2009). *Teaching readers of English: Students, texts, and contexts*. New York and London: Routledge.