

Case Study 3 – Reading support in Alternative Provision

When starting to work with the group of year 10 students, we discussed the attitude that they have towards books and reading. They all were open that they had had a difficult relationship with books, and in the past had only read when they have been made to do so at school. We discussed their lack of confidence in reading text aloud and all stated they felt uncomfortable about this.

We also discussed the type of stories they liked and related it to the genres of films that they watch. We discussed whether they had read any books that had been made into films and whilst they all knew of books that had been made in to films, they had not read them.

It was clear that reading activities that involved just a single source such as a novel was not going to work, with this group. We decided that we would look at bringing in and introducing different books and extracts and we involved students in creating a Reading Room. We have involved learners in working with us to set up and decorate the room so that they take ownership of it.

We also decided to look at the vocabulary of the group and look at expanding this. This also would support the new standards of the Functional Skills English exam which looks at vocabulary and meaning. This included getting them to improve their use of the dictionaries or learning how to use them

We then looked at the work of Roald Dahl and his selection of books. The two books we focused on was Matilda and the BFG. We had a lesson where learners were looking through his books, for descriptive passages about characters in the book, and exploring how he described them. We had lessons on looking at the words that Roald Dahl creates in his books and the effects that they have. We also discussed themes that were present, and the moral of the stories, if they have them. Learners engaged well with the books and the stories.

Impact

In the GCSE lessons we run every few weeks, we have been reading extracts from Catcher in the Rye and other texts that some of the learners would not have come across before, despite being on the set text lists as many have not been educated in school. We are also looking at Romantic poets and reading Old English texts to look at the changes in language over the years.

These are difficult texts that would not normally be introduced to the learners due to the level and motivation of the learners. However, the project has encouraged us to experiment a little more during the reading sessions. It has also provided them with the opportunity to explore a variety of texts/books by themselves to see if they can determine what particular genre they like the best. This is a substantial turnaround for these learners, bearing in mind that they did not read at all prior to this project.