

## Introduction

As a librarian working with young people's reading needs over the past twenty years, and more recently in my current role with a focus on boys' recreational reading habits, I have always been interested in developing and encouraging young people to read.

I wanted to find how engagement with a diverse range of stories might develop adventurous readers in Year 8 boys, so they might choose unfamiliar themes and formats in their future recreational reading.

## The Research Question

How can engagement with a diverse range of stories develop adventurous Year 8 readers?

## Research Context and Participants

Toowoomba Grammar School is situated in the Queensland regional city of Toowoomba, on top of the Great Dividing Range. The Senior School has a population of just over 900 students.

My research group was made up of 14 Year 8 boys from my Pastoral Care Group who provided a range of reading interests and abilities.



## Key Readings

Manuel, J., & Carter, D. (2015). Current and historical perspectives on Australian teenagers' reading practices and preferences. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 38(2), 115-128.

Rutherford, L., Merga, M., & Singleton, A. (2018). Influences on Australian adolescents' recreational reading. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 41(1), 44-56. Retrieved from <https://search.informit-com-au.ezproxy.slq.qld.gov.au/documentSummary;dn=321113384699281;res=IELAPA>

Smith, M., & Wilhelm, J. (2002). *Reading don't fix no chevys: Literacy in the lives of young men*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection methods included:

- Surveys
- Interviews with individual students
- Reading journals, written or video, as each boy finished a book.

All interviews and video journals were transcribed and coded.

Common features quickly emerged, allowing for identification of the following categories:

- Boyology - Choice - Reading Identity
- Diverse literature and readers - Reading Engagement
- Awareness of themes and formats

## Key Findings and Discussion

The data showed adventurous readers can be developed through engagement with diverse texts. Analysis revealed the following themes:

### Freedom to Choose

Choice is closely linked to motivation. To be intrinsically motivated, boys need to be able to choose reading material freely.

"I got to pick all the themes and formats." Jeff

### Familiarity with the Book

Various methods were used to introduce the boys to themes, formats, and individual books. Methods included book talking and viewing the movie version before reading the book.

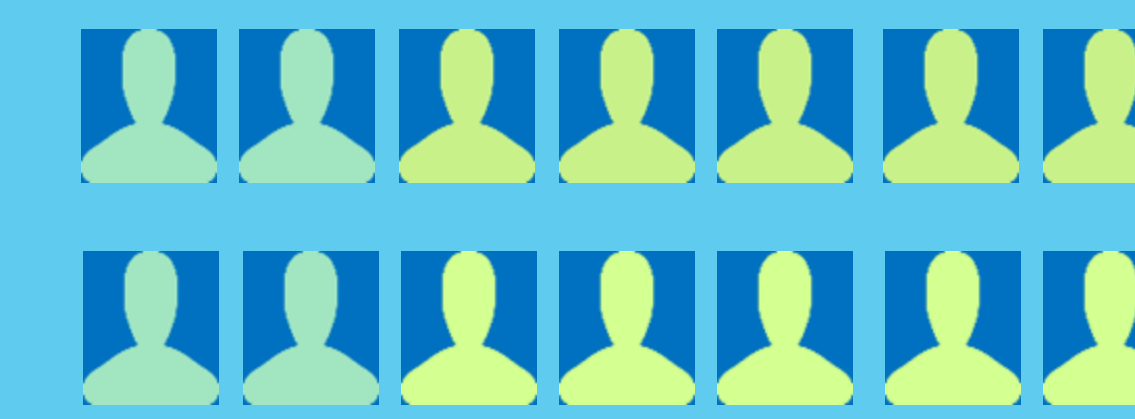
"You said that you'd show us all the books that we could read so I started to listen to them to see if I could find anything that I wanted to read." Joe

"When you watch the movie ... you don't have to worry about the big overview, you can just work out the detail bits." Percy

### Changing Attitudes

#### Survey 1

Conservative



"I haven't read a lot of war books and it was pretty interesting. I liked the perspective of the teenagers, made it easier to relate to." Noah

Adventurous



"I usually look at the holocaust genre as dull, but it is more than that." Bill



### Developing a New Appreciation of Picture Books

"It has sort of changed my idea about picture books. I thought they were mostly for younger readers but this one is more in depth and is a lot harder to understand ... you have to look at the pictures a lot to try and figure out what they mean." Gerald

## Conclusions

In the right environment, with opportunities for the boys to become familiar with and freely choose reading material, and where they learn about themes, genres, and formats, we can develop adventurous readers. I am now more cognisant of the impact book talks have on my students and the importance of our boys developing a relationship with the books they are about to read. Further research might include gathering a variety of frontloading opportunities used by boys and practical strategies to engage aliterate readers.