

Better Books

We've been working with Nottingham Citizens for a more inclusive and equitable education system and curriculum for Nottingham's young people, teachers and families.

The campaign for *Better Books* aimed to provide all Primary schools with a set of culturally diverse reading books, so that all children's identities are represented and celebrated, and their experiences better acknowledged.

To celebrate a successful campaign and the arrival of the new books in schools, we made some resources to encourage children and teachers to explore and use the books in their classrooms.

Activities are designed to encourage a love of books and support listening and the sharing and valuing of perspectives.

Our resources

Our activities are simple to follow and require materials you would find in the classroom.

Our activities are always open ended and designed for everyone to explore and experiment together. There are no wrong or right answers. We encourage everyone to create their own responses

Each activity can be expanded and developed further by teachers and group leaders.

There are suggested discussion points at the end of each activity to consolidate learning and share students' reflections.

Sharing Stories

Bring a story to life through mark making and sculpture

Imagine your favourite story.

What is it about this story that you really like? Is it a particular character?
Is it because it's a page turner and you can't put it down?
Is it how it makes you feel when you get to the end of it?

How would you describe your story?

What would you say to someone if they asked why you liked it so much?

Gather the following materials

- Mark making tools: pens, pencils, crayons, oil pastels, graphite pencils
- Scissors and glue
- Our downloadable template of a cuboid, pyramid, and hexagonal prism onto A3 card or thick paper

In pairs, sit opposite each other. Take it in turns to describe your favourite story whilst the other documents and records it

Here are some drawing tips

- It doesn't have to look realistic, it's your way of recording what your friend is saying.
- It doesn't matter if you go over the lines of your shape
- Try to leave your pencil on the paper and not take it off - this is a continuous line drawing. It can help to loosen control and draw more freely. Drawing with this flow will also capture the energy of the speaker
- Use symbols and motifs to communicate what your friend is saying.

Share your drawings with each other and the whole class

Transform your drawings into a 3D shape by cutting out your net shape

Fold along the tabs and glue them to each side

Make a **collaborative sculpture** using your individual 3D shapes

Discussion prompts

- Why is it important to understand different people's perspectives?
- How easy or difficult was it drawing what the other person was saying?
- Are the drawings as you imagined as you spoke and shared your story?
Are they different to how you would normally draw? Why is this?

Word Play Performance

In small groups, **look** at your new books

What can you **see**?

What do you **think** the book is about?

What do you **wonder** the stories are about?

How do the illustrations make you feel?

Gather the following materials

- Anything you can write with such as pencils, tape, string, wire, ribbon or stencils
- A large piece of paper
- Smaller slips of paper

Choose one book and look through it

Collect 5 nouns, 5 adjectives and 5 verbs from the story

These can be taken from the front or back cover, or anywhere within the book

Write these words down, each on a separate piece of paper

Choose one of your words and **experiment** with different ways of writing it on the large piece of paper

Repeat with another word, using a different technique

Continue choosing new words and **trying new ways** of writing it

Layer and overlap your words

Rotate your paper

Share your responses with everyone.

Have a look at how you have arranged the words on your paper

Group the words together to form a phrase or sentence

Collect the words from your paper to write a short poem or statement. You can add joining words like 'and' or 'is' or make small changes to words.

Share. As a group decide how you'd like to present your poem or statement to the class.

Discussion prompts

- When words are repeated over and over, how does it change their meaning
- What's different when you write using materials other than pencils and pens?
- How does it feel performing in front of your classmates?

Further Resources

Some of the themes in the *Better Books* set are upsetting and challenging. Below we have some recommendations and links to support teachers to support students:

Prepare yourself – Be familiar with the books. Anticipate how children might respond verbally in their reflections and questions and emotionally. Be ready for these conversations. Do some work to address your own gaps in knowledge, assumptions and bias.

Ibram X. Kendi. *The difference between being "not racist" and antiracist*. TED.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCxbl5QgFZw>

National Museum of African American History and Culture. *Being Antiracist*.
<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

Peggy McIntosh. *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*
<https://codeofgoodpractice.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Mcintosh-White-Privilege-Unpacking-the-Invisible-Knapsack.pdf>

Create your environment – Create a culture where children feel listened to and respected; that feels safe to share an experience, opinion or question; where children can be confident that hurtful words and actions are challenged; where there is a practice of constructive discussion and where children know that it's ok to not know or to make a mistake.

Anti-Defamation League. *Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment*.
<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment#.VafFgflVhHw>

The University of Tennessee Chattanooga, Office of Equity and Inclusion. *Guide for Navigating Difficult Conversations on Race*. <https://www.utc.edu/sites/default/files/2020-08/UTC%20Race%20Discussion%20Guide%20%28Aug%202020%29.pdf>

Julie Landsman. *Helping Students Discuss Race Openly*. ascd
<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/helping-students-discuss-race-openly>

Bring tools, techniques and support – This might be a set of questions, strategies to encourage responses and build confidence or a glossary. Think about how you will close a discussion and the further support children might need.

Learning for Justice. *Community Inquiry - 18 Teaching Strategies*.
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies/community-inquiry>

Anti-Defamation League. *Education Glossary Terms*.
<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary-terms/education-glossary-terms>

Augusta Baker Chair & Dr Nicole A. Cooke. *Anti-Racism Resources for All Ages*. University of South Carolina
<https://padlet.com/nicolethe librarian/nbasekqpa336co?fbclid=IwAR1DIVv-uOLZtNqiK-trDDmKGyXavFEpOILKbF0ga-2aZ2Z8gl32Qy7pBQq>