



**A COMPLETE PHONICS RESOURCE
TO SUPPORT CHILDREN**



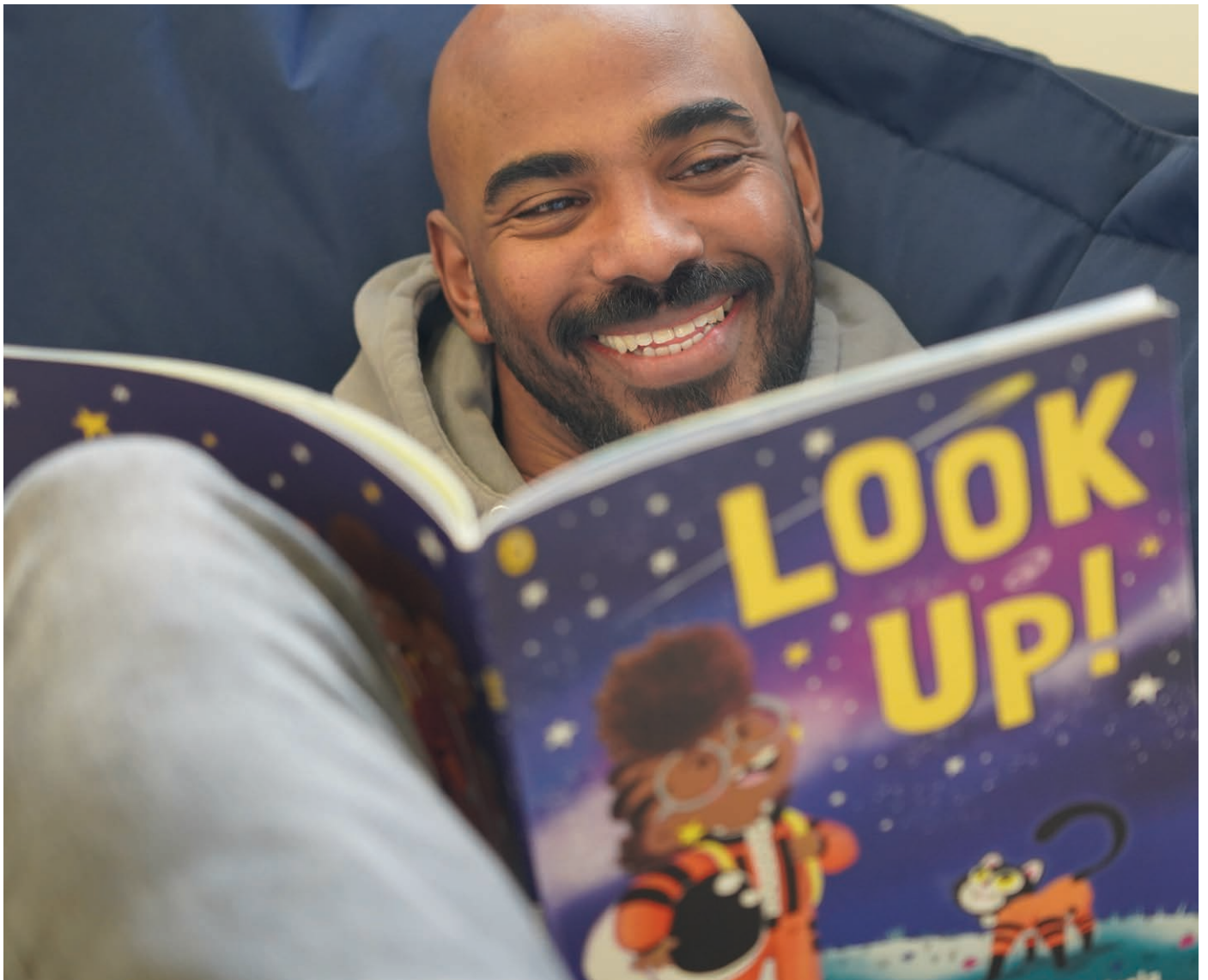
Teachers' knowledge of children as readers

As children progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1), teachers acquire good knowledge of each child's developing ability to apply phonic skills to decode words and read accurately. It is equally important to know about children's attitudes towards reading and their preferences as readers, both at school and at home. Teachers need to find out about each child's interests, and the sort of reading materials (print and digital) that they may choose to read and enjoy reading at home. With this knowledge, teachers are well positioned to recommend appropriate and engaging texts and avoid making assumptions about children's preferences.



**READING
FOR PLEASURE**

Professor Teresa Cremin and Dr Lucy Rodriguez of the Open University explore how teachers can help young children to develop favourite authors, genres and text types by getting to know them as readers.



The influence of reading practices at home

From infancy, children begin to participate in the reading practices of their homes and communities. They might be read to by a parent or relative, participate in online shopping, browse takeaway menus and begin to make meaning from logographic and environmental print.

The reading habits that children develop are influenced by their family's interests, hobbies and occupations, and ways of living (Hall, Levy and Preece, 2018). Some may arrive at school knowing how to engage with football scores; others know how to turn the pages of books or are more adept at swiping a screen.

It is vital that teachers recognise that 'no two readers are the same' (Cliff Hodges, 2010) and that they need to validate and build on young readers' engagement and interest.

Digital technology makes it possible to access texts and reading materials on multiple topics, and when we move beyond book-bound conceptualisations of reading, the breadth and wealth of the texts with which children engage can surprise us. So can the sophistication of their reading practices.

Developing your knowledge of children as readers

There are a number of ways in which teachers can develop their knowledge of children's emerging (and developing) reading preferences and the diverse range of environmental print and digital reading in which they are engaged. These include:

Reader conversations: These are useful as focused yet informal one-to-one conversations to find out about children's preferences, practices and interests at home/school. Committing time and giving attention to each individual reader and discussing their out-of-school reading with parents enables you to recognise and validate their preferences. This will help you make tailored text recommendations that connect to an individual reader's interests and foster reader-to-reader relationships with each and every child.

Reading surveys: By inviting the children to reflect on what they think about reading, either individually or in small groups with an adult, you will gain insight into children's reading practices and their attitudes towards reading. The Open University's [KS1 Children's Reading Survey](#) can offer a valuable baseline to build on. You could repeat the survey after you have developed more sustained and enriched practice. You may also want to draw on pupil voice in other ways.

Consultations with parents: Meeting parents and exploring their child's interests and what kinds of print-related practices they engage in at home can help parents to understand not only the value of choice-led reading, but that what counts as reading is broad and is not confined to the phonically decodable book being sent home. Ensuring children always take home a book that their parents can read to them is invaluable and once they can read, children need to be supported in choosing from a core repertoire of class texts which widens over time.

Reader observations: By closely observing children in school, you will come to notice the stimuli and texts that evoke their curiosity and enthusiasm. What do your less engaged readers do? In free-choice time do they ever choose to settle down with a book? During reading aloud are these young people fully joining in? Who do these readers connect to in class, and are they part of a social reading network? Documenting your observations and informal conversations will enable you to reflect upon each reader, and to 'notice-document-reflect' and act on what you observe in order to nurture increased interest and pleasure in reading. Such observation can help you track subtle changes in children's reading habits, and in their motivation and attitudes as emerging readers.



Enable children to know you as a reader

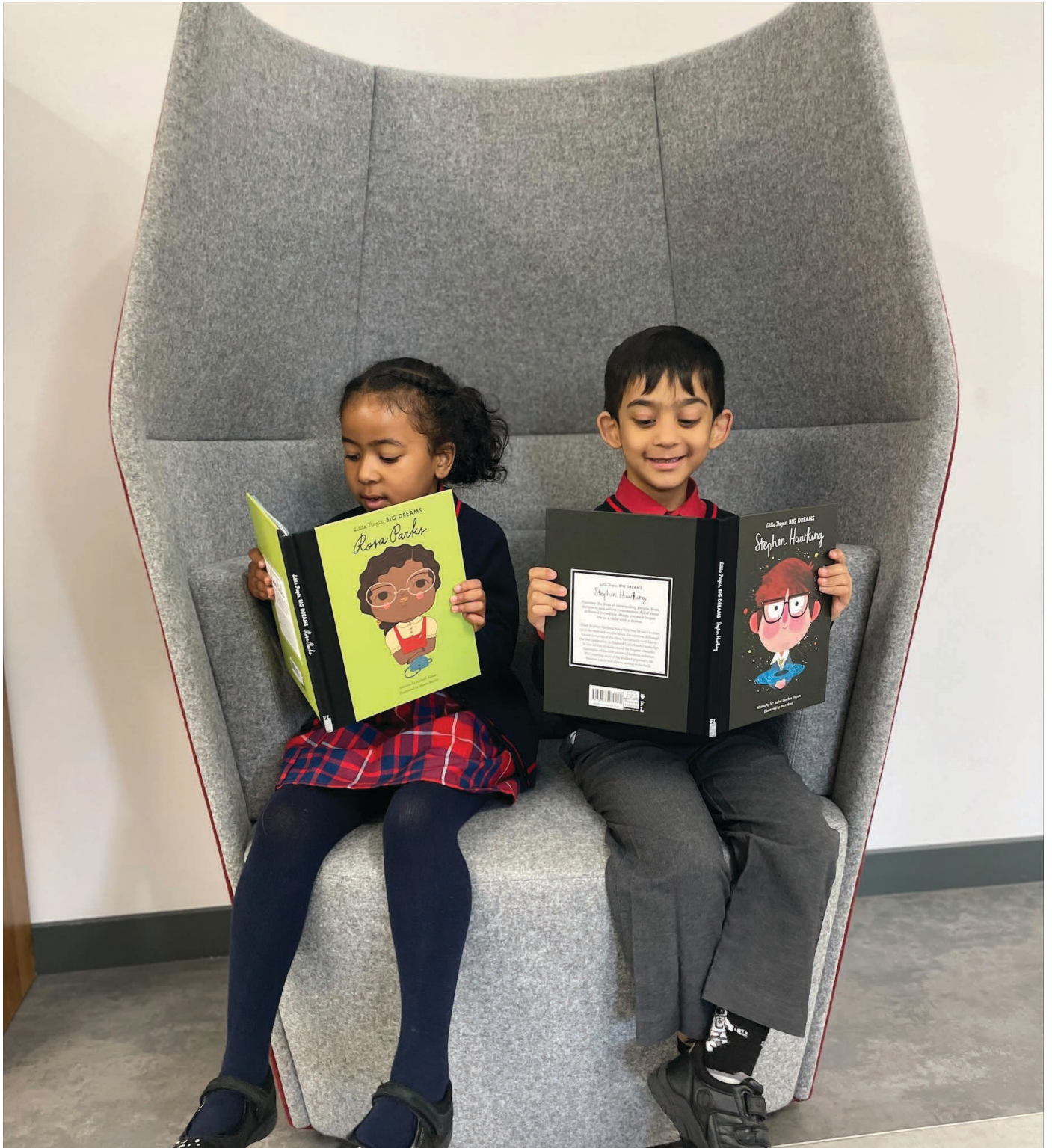
When children know about their teacher as a reader – their habits, their interests, their likes and dislikes – it encourages them to recognise their own out-of-school reading as legitimate, impacting on their identities as readers.

If teachers model and openly share their own reading practices, and their enjoyment of travel brochures, car magazines, a certain genre of literature or cookery websites, for example, they reflect their own interests and passions, and something of their life outside school. This can help children not only recognise that readers are all different and unique, but also connect to their teacher as a reader. Over time, children will develop their own reading tastes and choices and can be encouraged to discuss these.

Holding up a mirror to yourself as a reader and reflecting on your past and present experience of reading will also help you to see reading differently. If you think about reading as a child, who or what supported you? Were you encouraged by trips to the library, by being read to, by friends or family who shared or swapped books, comics or magazines with you?

In developing a richer and more reflective view of reading, you will develop as a **Reading Teacher** – a teacher who reads and a reader who teaches and considers the consequences for their classroom practice (Cremin et al., 2014). Over time you may come to see reading as a more social and less individual practice. This will have consequences for understanding children as readers and adapting your RfP pedagogy.





References

Cliff Hodges, G. (2010). Rivers of reading: Using critical incident collages to learn about adolescent readers and their readership. *English in Education* 44(3), 181–200.

Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Powell, S., Collins R. and Safford, K. (2014). *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for Pleasure*. London and NY: Routledge.

Hall, M., Levy, R. and Preece, J. (2018) “No-one would sleep if we didn’t have books!”: Understanding shared reading as family practice and family display. *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 16(4) 363–377.