

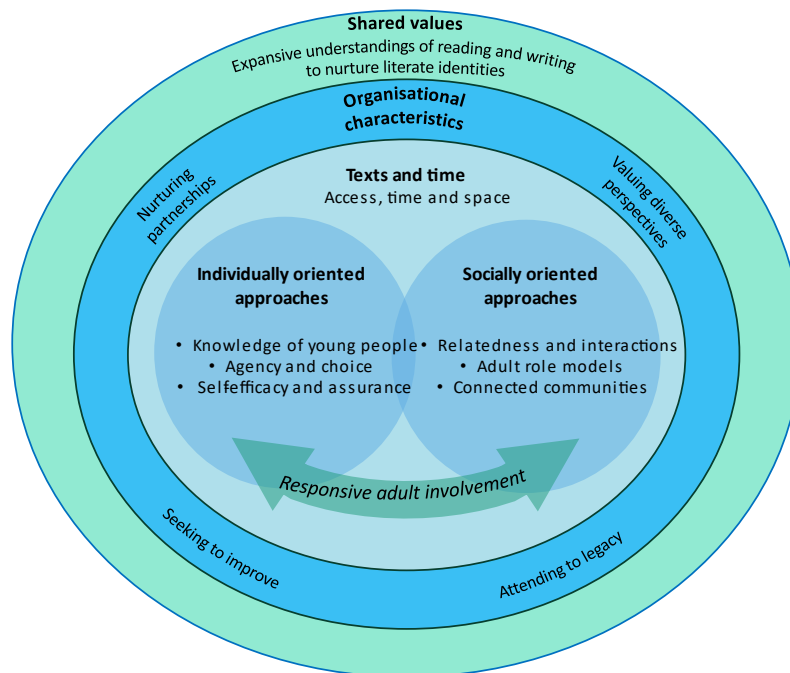
Writing poetry for pleasure

Well ... do you? Write poetry for pleasure that is?

Of course, for the myriad published poets who regularly read this blog, writing poetry for pleasure – by that I mean because they choose to – may be a weekly, even daily occurrence, a normal part of living and expressing themselves artistically. For the many teachers amongst us like me, it may be a less common practice. I know I read far more poetry than I write.

In the UK, reading for pleasure is recognised and supported in schools, but writing for pleasure is neither mandated nor commonly profiled. Worryingly, in 2023 the [National Literacy Trust survey](#) suggests that just 34.6% of our 8–18-year-olds enjoy writing in their own time. We know less about children’s recreational writing than their reading; there are far fewer research studies that focus on young people’s self-chosen writing than on their reading for pleasure. Within these studies, relatively few attend to poetry.

Nonetheless, in a recent research project funded by the Mercers Company (2020-2023), our OU team did find commonalities in approaches that enrich children’s pleasure in reading and writing. We combined an extensive [research review](#) with data from six London-based literacy charities committed to this agenda and created a Framework for Practice. This offers a research-informed basis for practice in homes, schools, libraries, online literacy spaces and local communities.



Reading and Writing for Pleasure Framework for Practice (Cremin, Hendry, Chamberlain and Hulston, 2024)

The Framework indicates that how children and young people perceive themselves as writers/poets - their writer identities- influence their motivation and desire to write recreationally, and that teachers and other adults frame what counts as ‘good’ writing or indeed ‘good’ poetry in particular contexts. When adults set time aside for children to regularly ‘just write’ this is evidenced to be valuable, enabling the young to explore possibilities and generate ideas that may be revisited and refined for publication. Essentially, the Framework highlights the value of individual and socially oriented approaches to supporting recreational writing and the role of the responsive adult.

Individually oriented approaches underscore the value of offering autonomy, choice and agency. Young people deserve to find their voices as poets by being introduced to a range of poetic voices and different forms from which they can choose for their own purposes. The evidence shows that to nurture their enjoyment and self-efficacy as writers, children need to be allowed to exercise their rights as writers and to work with adults who get to know their interests and passions and help them find subjects and forms that resonate personally and that they want to explore.

Socially oriented approaches stress the value of rich opportunities for informal interaction about writing and being a writer. The chance to write alongside others in a writing community that is inclusive and non-hierarchical is seen to support young writers and help them build positive writer identities. The Framework also emphasises the impact of affirmative feedback as well as sharing and publishing writing. With poetry this may involve the publication of class/school poetry anthologies, online recordings, poetry slams and performances, all of which offer audiences, within and beyond the classroom.

The Framework shows that young people's engagement as writers, individually and collectively, is mediated and motivated by attuned and responsive adult involvement. Adult writing role models are recognised as significant; they positively influence young people's engagement in volitional writing - as indeed many poets and teachers can attest.

So, if you are working to enable young people to find pleasure in writing poetry - delight in word play, enjoyment in exploring life issues and satisfaction in voicing their thoughts in verse - you may wish to ponder on the Framework and use it to affirm, celebrate, and even develop your practice.

For more information, see the [Reading and Writing for Pleasure Framework for Practice](#)

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Teresa is [Professor of Education \(Literacy\) at the Open University](#). An advocate of developing teachers' creative artistry, Teresa's research focuses on teachers' and children's literate identities and practices. Her edited collection is [Reading Teachers: Nurturing reading for pleasure](#) (with Helen Hendry, Lucy Rodriguez Leon, Natalia Kucirkova, 24 teachers and 8 colleagues). *Teaching English Creatively* is in 3rd edition (both Routledge).

Teresa is passionate about developing readers for life and leads a [professional user-community website](#) based on her research into volitional reading. The OU team support 100+ OU/UKLA Teachers' Reading Groups annually, 36 HEI partnerships and lead the [OU Reading Schools Programme: Building a Culture of Reading](#) to develop children's and teachers' pleasure in reading.

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