

# THE READING AND NARRATIVE FICTION PROJECT

Elena Santi

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THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH



**READER-RESPONSE  
THEORY**

(Rosenblatt, 1994)

# Narrative fiction as a mirror, window, and sliding glass door



Mirror



Window

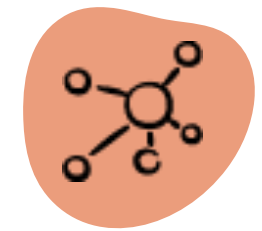


Sliding glass door

# Adolescence and reading



Identity development



Social skills development



Growth in empathy



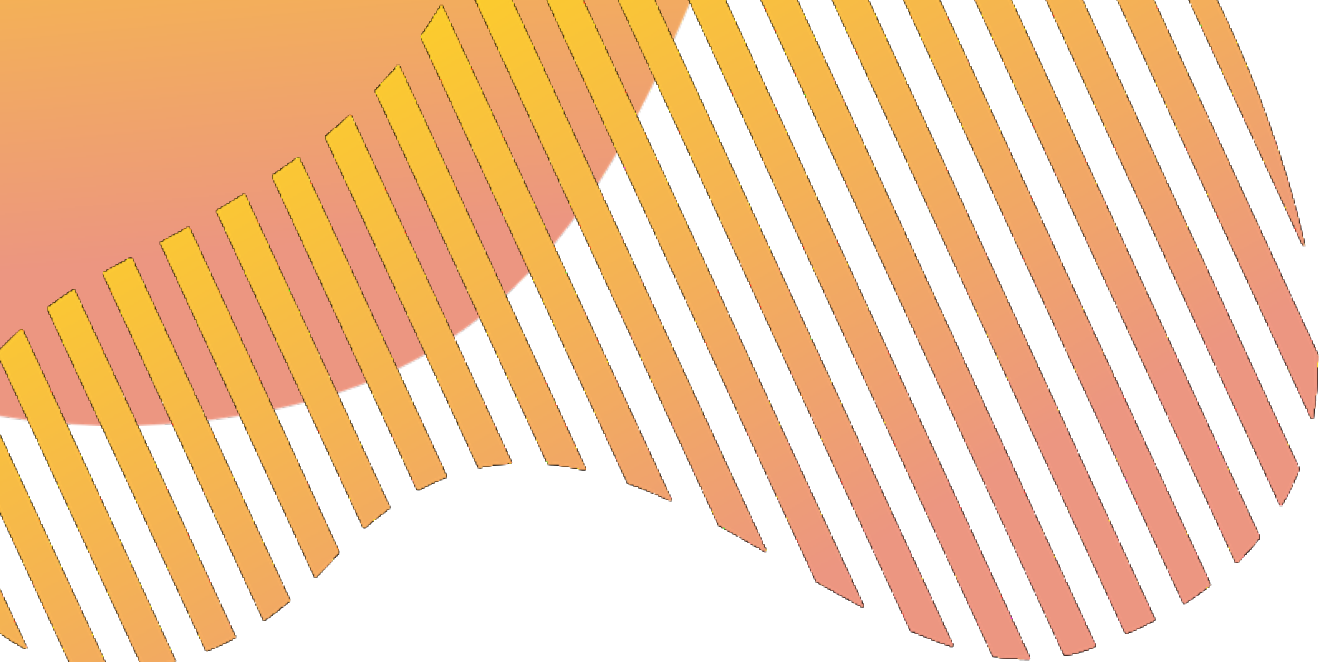
Low levels of reading engagement

# The Reading and Narrative Fiction project

Semi-structured  
interview with 37  
young avid readers  
(aged 12-14) on their  
reading experiences

Inductive thematic  
analysis

Co-creation of a  
reflective reading guide



# RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS





# NARRATIVE FICTION AS A MIRROR

1. DIVERSE WAYS TO RELATE  
TO A CHARACTER

2. MINORITY EXPERIENCES

3. BENEFITS OF RELATING  
TO A CHARACTER



# DIVERSE WAYS TO RELATE TO A CHARACTER

Similar dispositions



"I like how, like, strong and independent, like, aggressive she [the book character] can get sometimes. Like, I like that part because, like, it can relate to me because, like, I get angry and aggressive sometimes and, like, it's not all dainty and princess most of the time."

Similar experiences and/or emotions



"She [the book character] was like a really relatable character because she was a teenager and it was about her [...] like going to high school and like having mishaps with her like friends and stuff."

Intensity of similarity



"I guess in most, most books you can kind of relate to the character in some way with, like...even if it's just a small thing with, like, how they're dealing with their challenges and stuff."



# MINORITY EXPERIENCES

Including diverse positive experiences in books can promote in readers a greater sense of self-awareness, self-understanding, empowerment, integration and inclusion



"Yeah, I also am recently...recently read "Loveless" by Alice Oseman, which is like all about this girl going into uni and, like, figuring out she's like queer and stuff and, like, that was really good because, like, I relate to her quite a lot."

Importance of multifaceted portrayals, for example in relation to the intersectionality of minority experiences



"In "Kaleidoscope" [by Brian Selznick], I liked the, like, was very inclusive, had a lot of, like, there's many people of colour, so I could obviously see myself in that, and the relationships. Basically, her being part of the LGBT community and stuff like that."

Positive and hopeful representations may also support readers' wellbeing by showing possible outcomes from difficult situations



"Like they [the book characters] did deserve a good ending, like, they deserve like happiness and stuff. You know..."

# BENEFITS OF RELATING TO A CHARACTER

Improved self-awareness  
and self-understanding



"Yeah, there is, like, a few of those [books] that, like, I realised that that person was going through the same thing that I went through that I didn't know that I was going through, so, like, kind of show me the reality of my life."

Feeling less alone



"Just make me feel like...They're [...] people like me and I just need to find them and conversate."

"Made me felt good is not just like me experiencing those problems."

Increased immersion in the story



"It's very..., it makes you feel like very... like, it's less like a book, and it's more, like, meaningful."

"it's easier to get through the page and you're more interest in that, I'd say, if you know what that feeling is and you don't have to imagine what that feeling is, if you've actually felt it before."



# NARRATIVE FICTION AS A WINDOW

1. LEARNING SOMETHING  
NEW ABOUT OTHERS

2. IMPACT ON THE  
READER'S LIFE

3. WRITING STYLE



# 1. LEARNING SOMETHING NEW ABOUT OTHERS

Learning that not everyone is the same as you



"That people are different and unique in their own way, and that everyone has their life, and not everybody's the same as you."

Learning about other people's possible experiences



Like, it really makes me understand, like, kind of understand like "Ohh some people might be going through this", like, and it helps. It helps to know that, like everyone isn't... It's the world just isn't like just me.

Learning about minority group's experiences



"That people are different and unique in their own way, and that everyone has their life, and not everybody's the same as you."

## 2. IMPACT ON THE READER'S LIFE

Impact on the reader's behaviour



"And I've learned how to support, like, other people more because I've learned how other people would support people going through tough times."

Understanding people more



"It helps me understanding more about people, like I'm reading people."

## 3. WRITING STYLE

"I liked her writing style and the way she described her characters and I liked the perspective too, because they changed from different series and they all had their own discussions but it was all kind of interlinked as I told you, so it was very interesting to see everything from a different, like, you know."

"I liked, like, how they portrayed things and you're able to, like, they set the scene and stuff, so you can like see what, you can actually see, what the place looks like in your head. And like, you can feel like you're...uhm, I think her name is Sophia in the book. You can, like actually feel like her and stuff.."



# NARRATIVE FICTION AS A SLIDING GLASS DOOR

1. EMPATHISING WITH  
CHARACTERS

2. EMPATHISING WITH  
REAL PEOPLE



# 1. EMPATHISING WITH CHARACTERS

Merging with the character  
and/or story



"You share all their feelings. Or sometimes, if you disagree with the character, then no, but usually you would because you're just...it's, it's like you're just reading your mind because if in first person it feels like it is them talking to you."

Empathising with characters  
and/or stories



"I just really like being able to escape and to, like, immerse myself in something else. Just like, you know, being able to, like, feel and empathise with someone else and, like, to just kind of, like, be able to, like, look into all these different, like, people's lives and, like, different countries and stuff."

# 2. EMPATHISING WITH REAL PEOPLE

"Yeah, like, because, see if in, especially in high school, if someone says something, [...] it's really easy for other people to laugh or belittle their problems, but then when you read a book, you really get to see how that impacts them, and then [...] it gives you more empathy towards situations and people who might experience them."

"I think I learned to empathise with people more, like, figure out what's going on in their heads so I can understand them better."



# CO-CREATION OF THE REFLECTIVE READING GUIDE





# WHAT'S THE AIM?



Support young people's reflective reading practices



Enhance young people's ability to reflect on personally meaningful content and consider things from character's perspectives

—> creating opportunities for young people to learn more about themselves and others

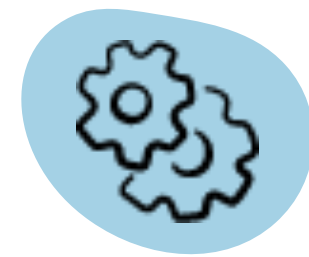


Increase the depth of young people's reading experiences



Have young people's input in this

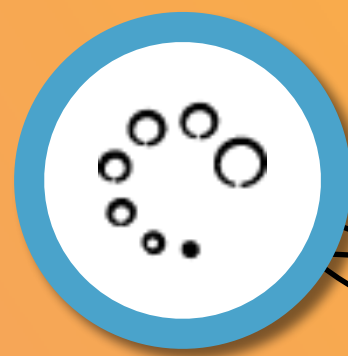




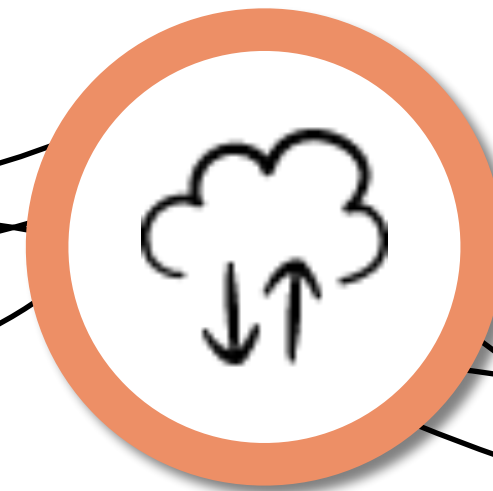
## PLANNING

- 01** Deciding who to involve in the creation of the guide
- 02** Deciding the order of the focus groups
- 03** Code of conduct and sessions plans
- 04** Pre-meeting material for focus groups

Research findings

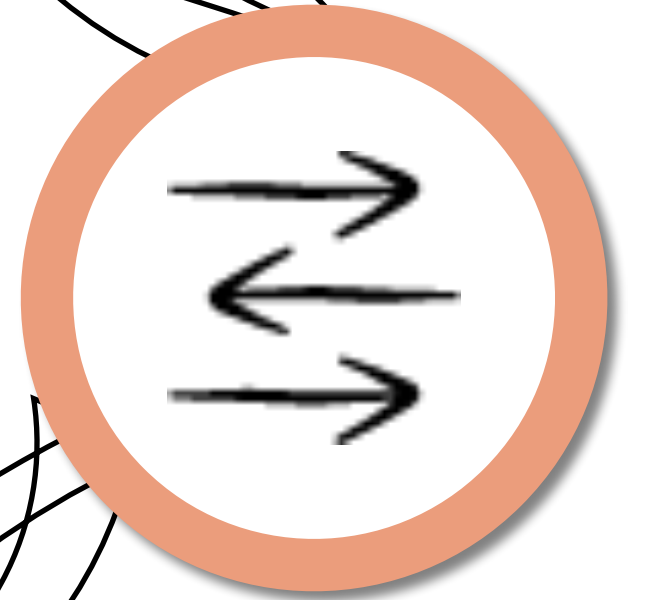


1st focus group with 6 young people (aged 12-14)



Meeting with 2 high school English teachers and 2 high school librarians

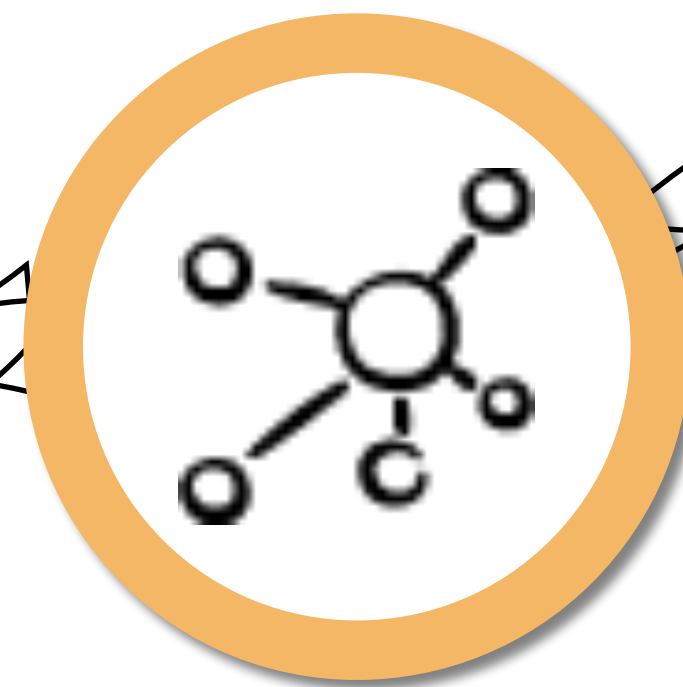
2nd focus group with the same 6 young people



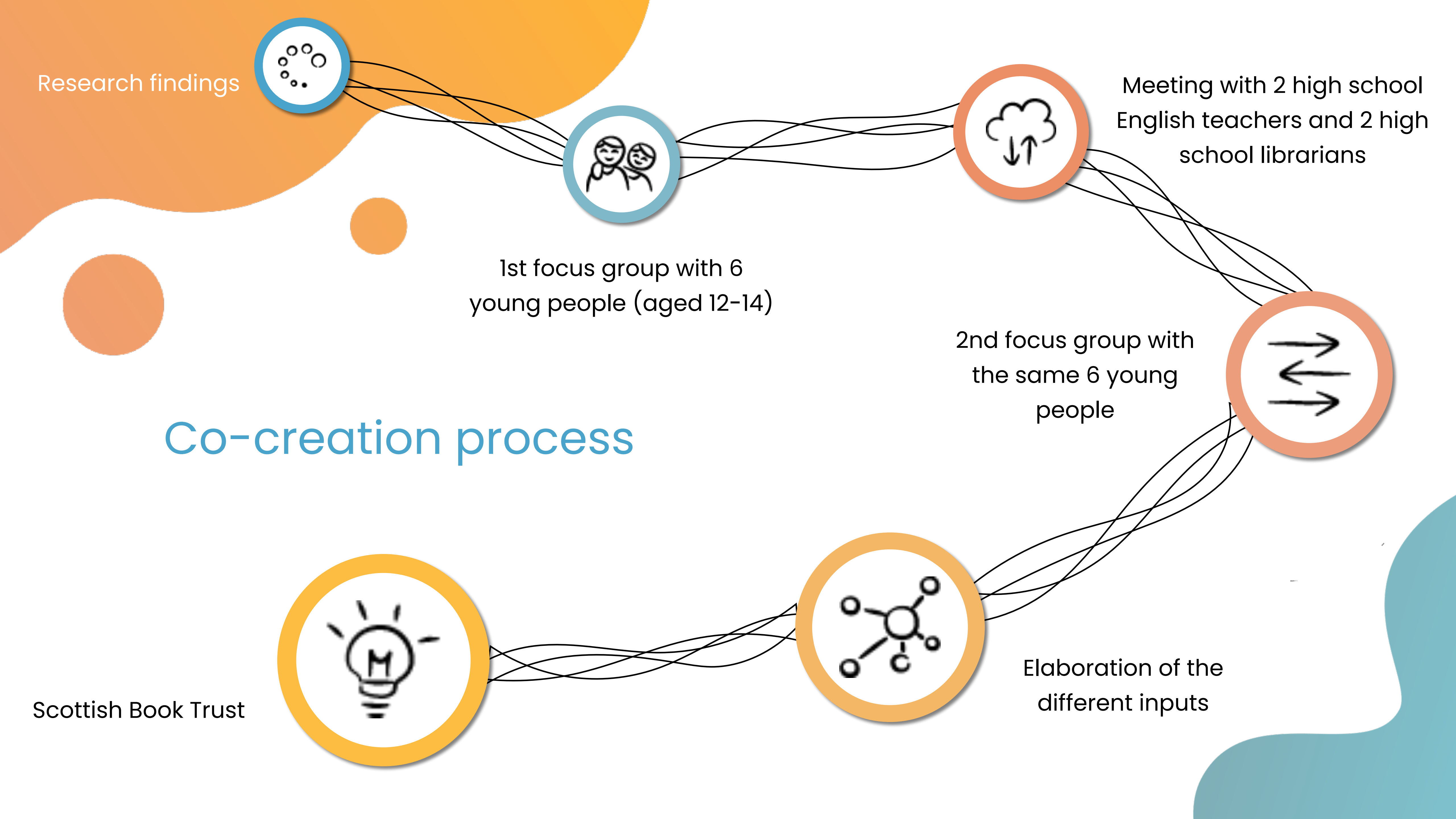
## Co-creation process



Scottish Book Trust



Elaboration of the different inputs





## FROM THE 1st FOCUS GROUP WITH YP



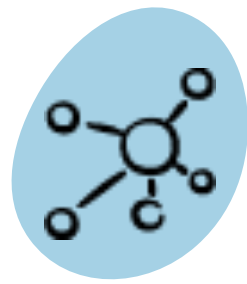
WEBSITE

BOOKLET

POSTER

BOOKMARK





# HOW IT IS GOING TO LOOK LIKE

## GUIDE

- 2 slightly different guides (one for YP, one for teachers/librarians)
- It will share:
  - Research findings
  - Possible ways to support deep reflection when reading
  - Directions on how to use the resources

## WEBSITE

It will include:

- The guide
- Summary of the research findings
- Examples of questions and prompts
- Questionnaire on what kind of reflective reader they are
- Links to useful resources

## BOOKLET

- Instead of creating a new resource, we would like to provide YP with links and examples to support them in making their own reflective reading journal

## POSTER

- Impactful
- Accessible colours/fonts
- A big picture and just a little bit of text, like a prompt for reflection.
- QR code

## BOOKMARK

- Prompts for reflection
- QR code

\* the guide should ideally be introduced to YP at the start of the school year, returning to it throughout the year. It can be introduced to whole classes, small groups or individual students.

# REFERENCES

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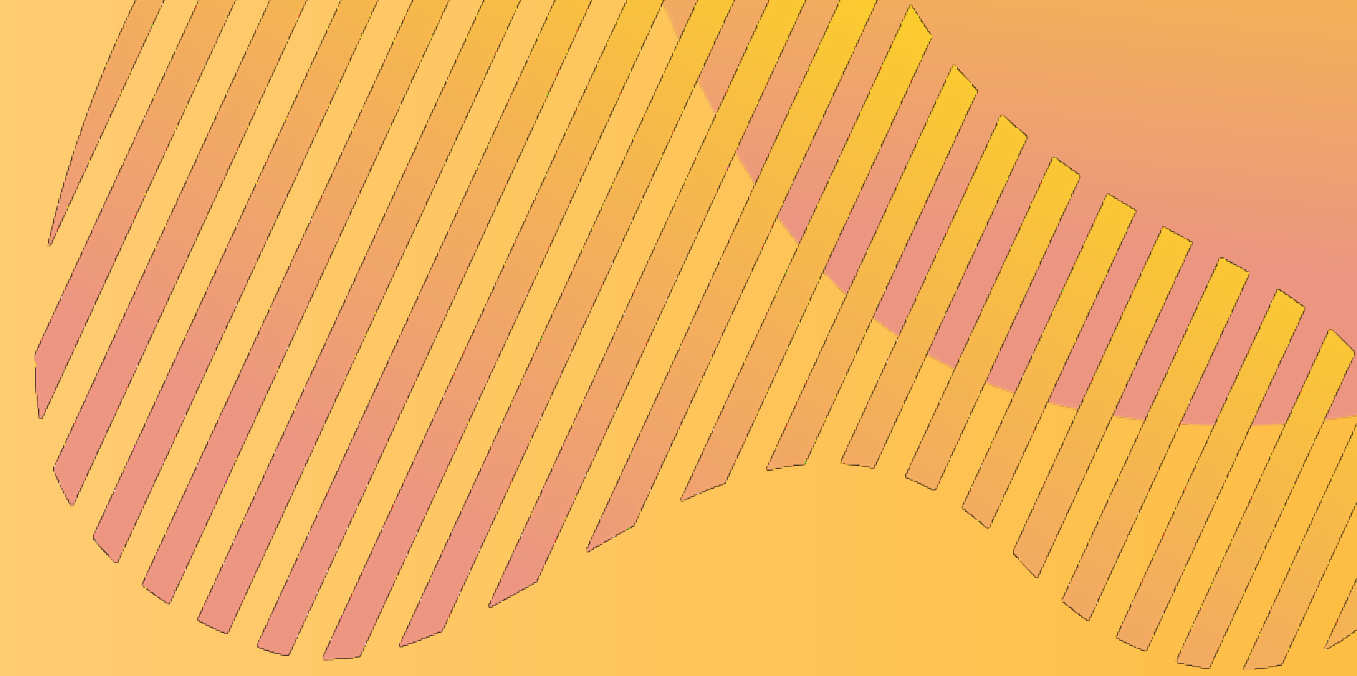
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# THANK YOU!

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Elena Santi  
[e.santi@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:e.santi@sms.ed.ac.uk)

Supervisors:  
Prof Sarah McGeown  
Dr Katie Cebula

