



Diverse disciplinary perspectives: Researching reading experiences and outcomes

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What do we mean by reading?

Diverse disciplines will conceptualise reading in different ways.....
what reading is, how we can research it, and the pedagogies and
provision needed to support it.



Psychological perspective

- **Focus:** Individual cognitive (and affective) knowledge, skills and processes.
- **Methods:** Primarily quantitative - experimental, longitudinal, cross-sectional, though also qualitative.

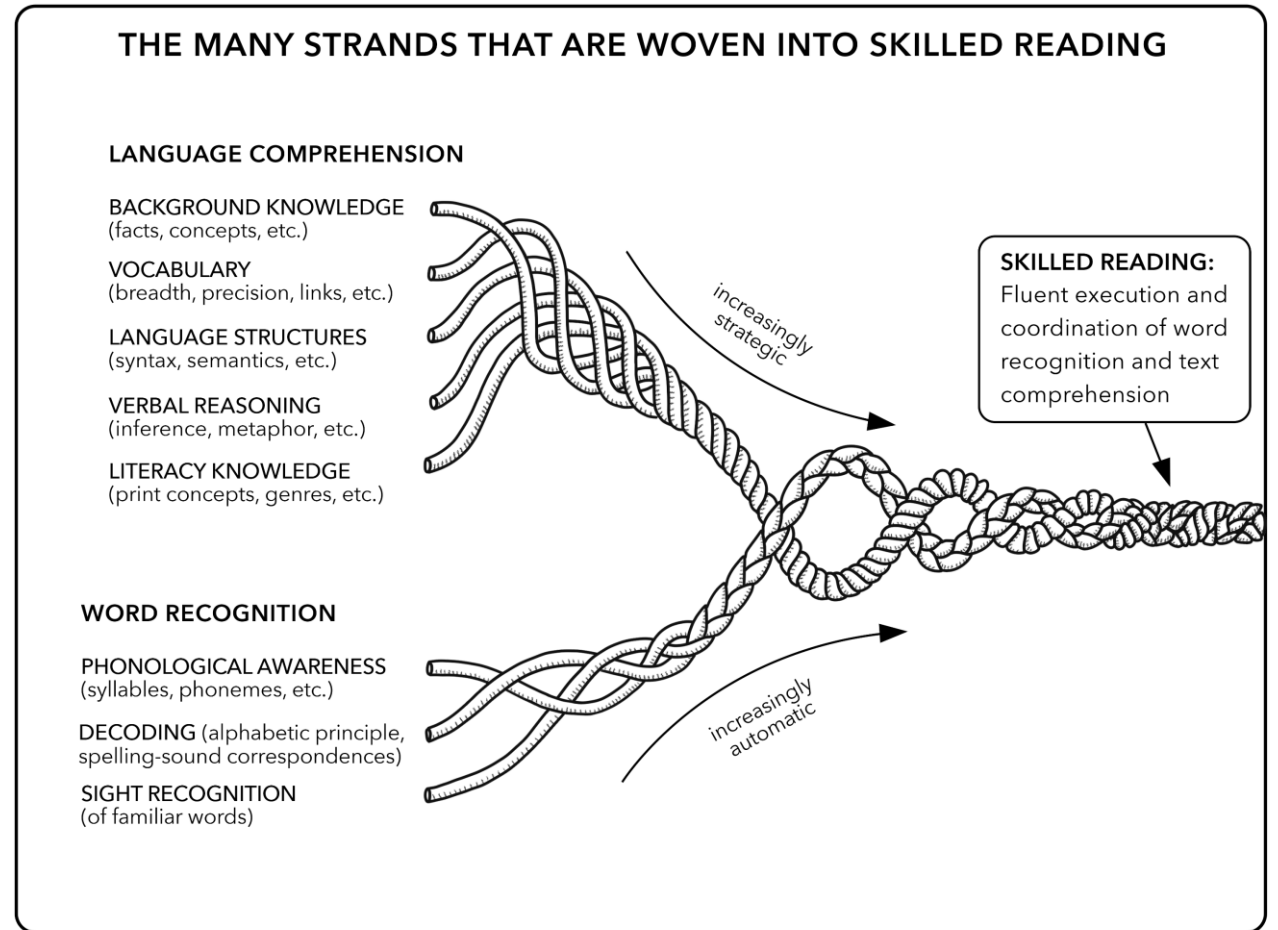


Image by Scarborough (2001).

Psychological: Cognitive/quantitative

Reading instruction, strategy use, skills underpinning early and later reading outcomes.

Read Writ (2014) 27:591–608
DOI 10.1007/s11145-013-9460-5

Using method of instruction to predict the skills supporting initial reading development: insight from a synthetic phonics approach

Sarah P. McGeown • Emma Medford





Learning and Individual Differences

Volume 28, December 2013, Pages 75–81



Individual differences in children's reading and spelling strategies and the skills supporting strategy use

Sarah P. McGeown ^a  , Emma Medford ^b, Gerri Moxon ^b

Journal of Research in Reading

UKLA
The United Kingdom Literacy Association

Journal of Research in Reading, ISSN 0141-0423
Volume 37, Issue 1, 2014, pp 51–64

DOI:10.1111/jrir.12007

Towards an understanding of how children read and spell irregular words: the role of nonword and orthographic processing skills

Sarah P. McGeown
School of Education, University of Edinburgh, UK

Rhona S. Johnston and Gerri E. Moxon
Department of Psychology, University of Hull, UK

Psychological: Affective/quantitative

Reading attitudes, motivation,
habits, skill.



Original Article

Adolescent reading skill and engagement with digital and traditional literacies as predictors of reading comprehension

Lynne G. Duncan ✉, Sarah P. McGeown, Yvonne M. Griffiths, Susan E. Stothard, Anna Dobai

Articles

The relationship between young children's enjoyment of learning to read, reading attitudes, confidence and attainment

Sarah P. McGeown ✉, Rhona S. Johnston, Jo Walker, Kathryn Howatson, Ann Stockburn & Paul Dufton

Pages 389-402 | Received 03 Nov 2014, Accepted 25 Aug 2015, Published online: 28 Sep 2015

Cite this article

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2015.1091234>



Original Article | [Full Access](#)

Understanding children's reading activities: Reading motivation, skill and child characteristics as predictors

Sarah P. McGeown ✉, Cara Osborne, Amy Warhurst, Roger Norgate, Lynne G. Duncan

Psychological: Affective/qualitative

Understanding readers' personal perspectives and experiences of reading.



Original Article | Open Access |

Reading and Empathy: Qualitative insights into adolescents' experiences with fiction books

Elena Santi , Katie Cebula, Sarah McGeown

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
2025, VOL. 67, NO. 1, 79–97
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2024.2445618>



OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Motivating book reading during adolescence: qualitative insights from adolescents

Charlotte Webber ^a, Katherine Wilkinson ^b, Lynne G. Duncan ^c
and Sarah McGeown ^a

READING PSYCHOLOGY
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2025.2504974>



OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

How Does Reading Fiction Support Adolescents' Wellbeing? A Qualitative Study Examining Positive Affect, Connection and Personal Growth

Nicola Currie^a , Charlotte Webber^b , Katherine Wilkinson^c,
Christina Clark^d, Gemma Moss^e and Sarah McGeown^b

Sociocultural perspective

- **Focus:** Socially and culturally embedded practice that *reflects* and *shapes* students' identities and experiences.
- **Methods:** Qualitative-ethnographic, case study, interviews.

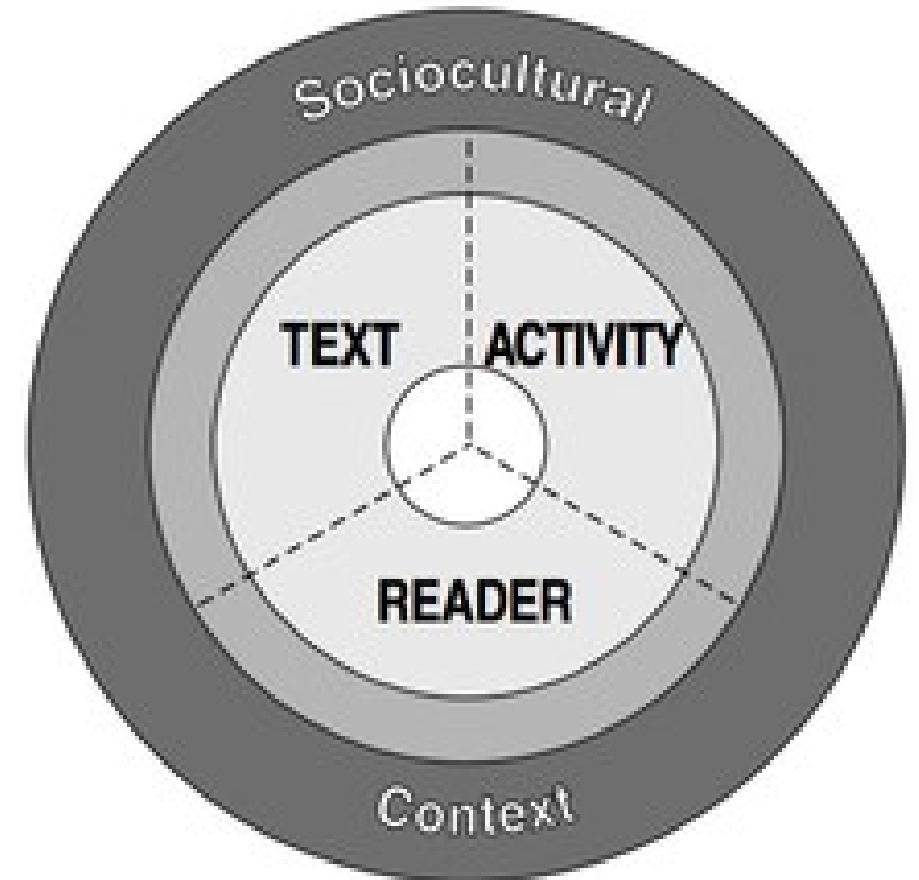


Image by Snow (2002).

Critical literacy perspective

- **Focus:** Examines relationship between language, power and identity.
- **Methods:** Critical discourse analysis, narrative inquiry, visual/multimodal methods.

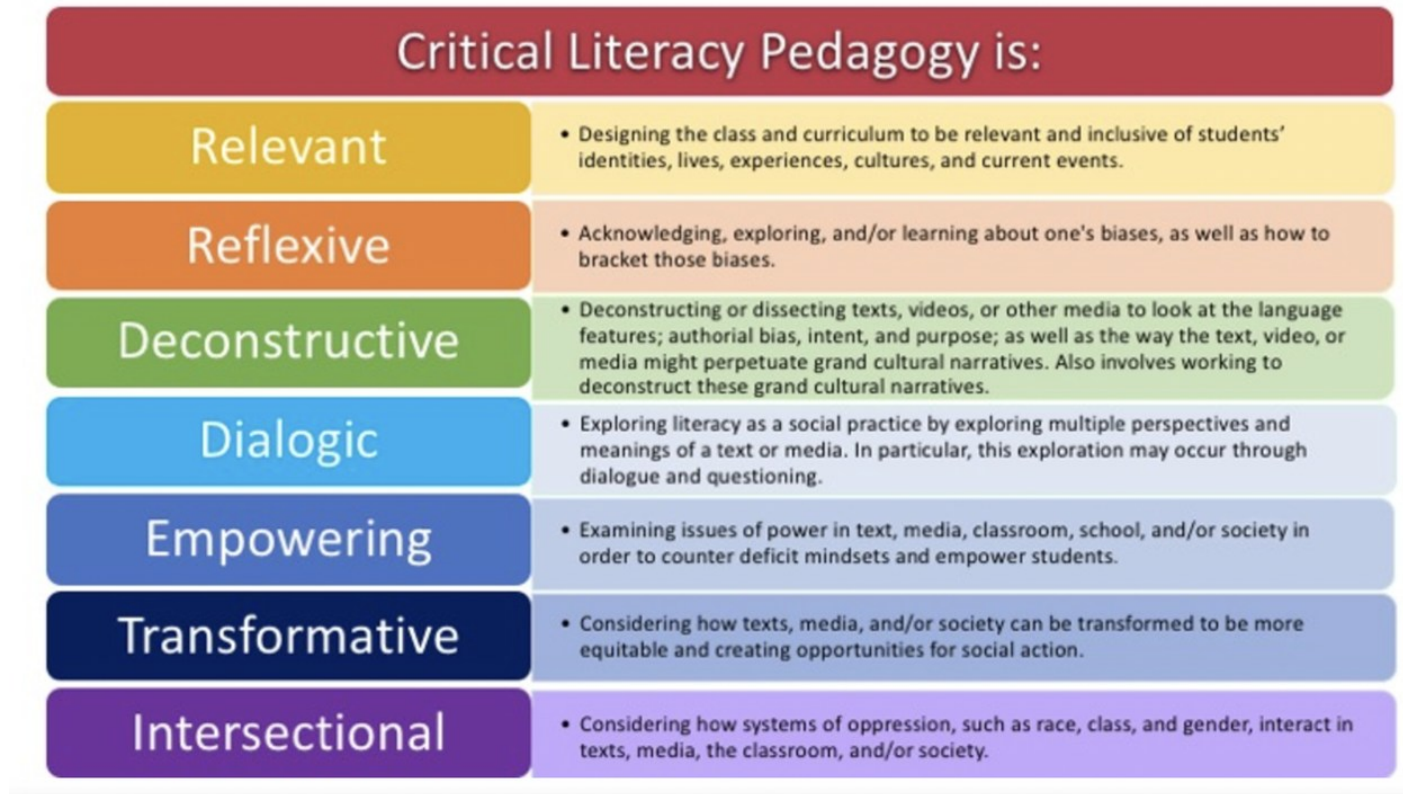


Image by Medlock & Casey (2018).

Sociological perspective

- **Focus:** Social structures and institutions, e.g., schools, governments, families, communities, economic factors.
- **Methods:** Policy analysis, national studies and data (e.g., PIRLS, PISA).

Contexts for Students' Reading Development

Similar to previous cycles, the PIRLS 2026 Contextual Framework captures five broad areas of influence on students' reading development. These are represented visually in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: Contexts for Developing Children's Reading Literacy

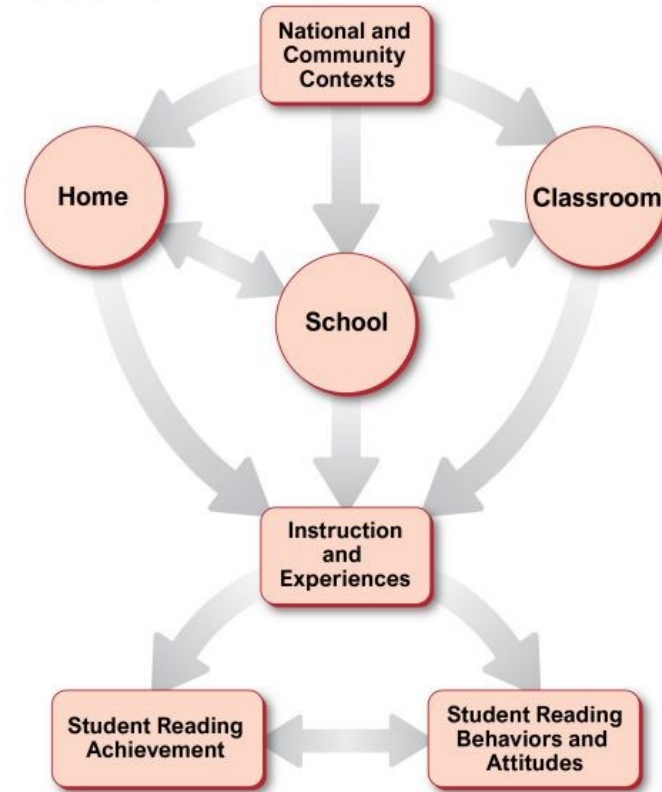


Image by PIRLS (2025)

Moss. (2022). Literacies and social practice: sociological perspectives on reading research.

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003208648-4/open-access-literacies-social-practice-sociological-perspectives-reading-research-gemma-moss>

Sociomaterial perspective

- **Focus:** Literacy is co-constructed through relationships between people, texts, technologies, and the physical environment.
- **Methods:** Network mapping, translation analysis, interviews

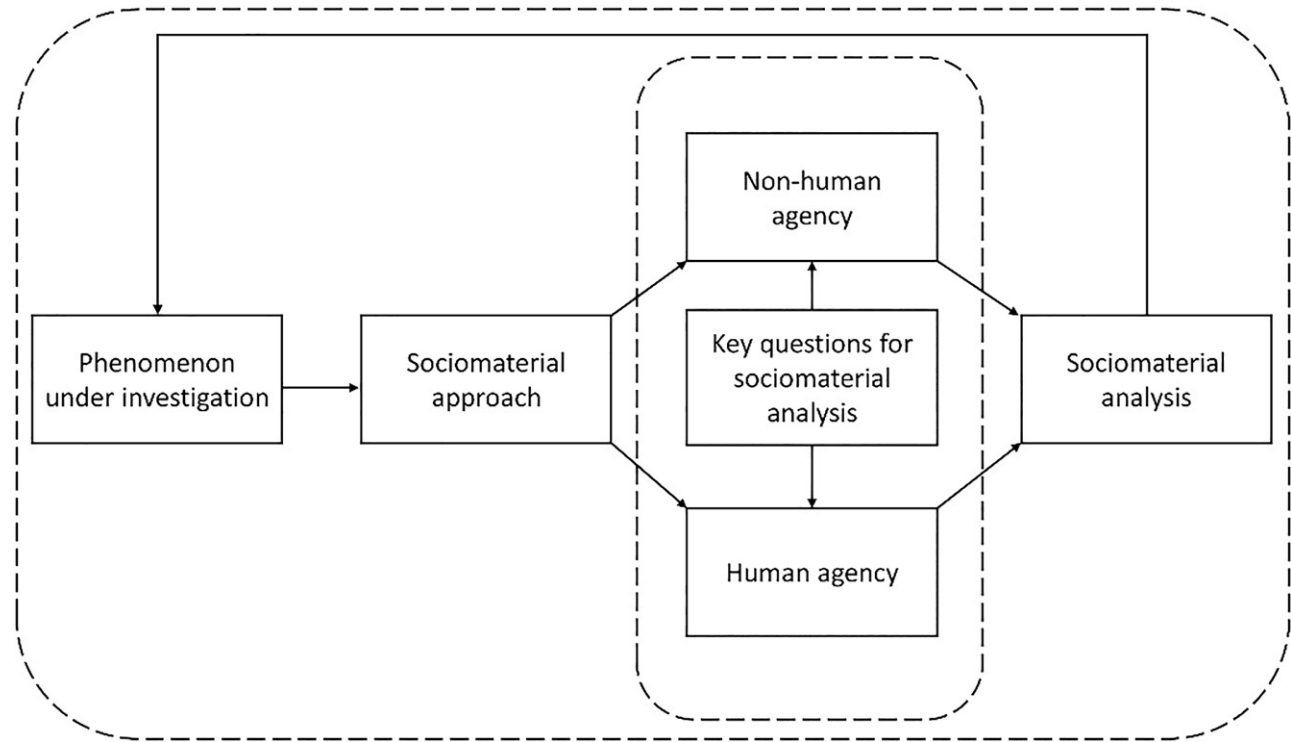
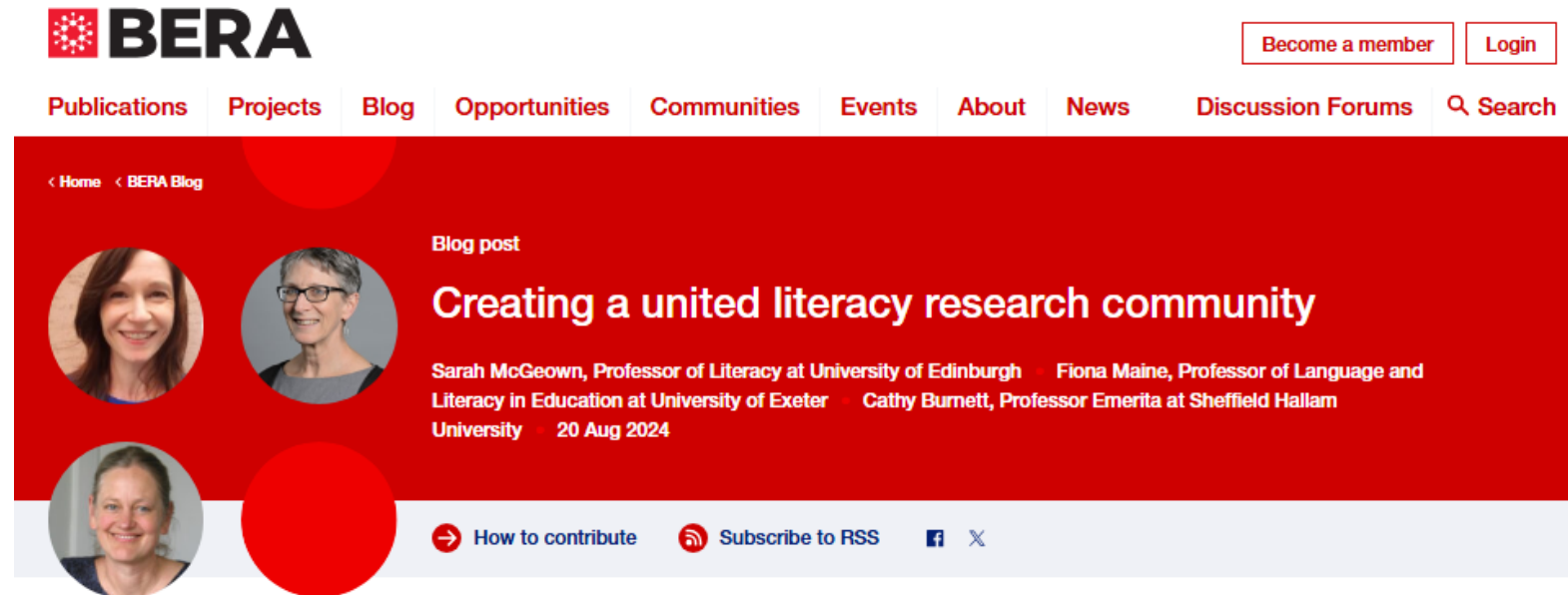


Image by de Moura & de Souza Bispo (2019).

Comparisons..... tensions?

Disciplinary perspective	How reading is acquired and develops
Psychological	Individually, through supporting cognitive and motivational skills and processes.
Sociocultural	Relationally, through participation in social/cultural shared reading practices.
Critical	Individually and collectively, through questioning power structures and dominant narratives, challenging social injustices.
Sociological	Institutionally, through school, curriculum, policy, family, provision.
Sociomaterial	Relationally, through interactions with human and non-human (e.g., texts, technology, environment) factors.

Creating a united literacy research community....



Literacy researchers working across different disciplinary traditions often share a core interest in how to support children and young people's reading experiences and outcomes. Yet despite our shared interests, research silos exist, and will continue to do so, unless we start to consider how our research fits within a broader understanding of literacy. This blog post is borne out of a [discussion between Fiona Maine and Sarah McGeown](#), organised by Cathy Burnett and Parinita Shetty as part of the [Research Mobilities in Primary Literacy Research](#) project which sought to better understand how literacy research moves to, among and around teachers in England, with a particular focus on the kinds of literacy research that teachers encounter (and those they do not).

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/creating-a-united-literacy-research-community>

Applying diverse disciplinary perspectives:

Exploring the concept of reading engagement

Reading engagement

- Cognitive effort and strategy use to support comprehension (psychological)
- **Critical engagement with texts, questioning power, assumptions and misinformation (critical)**



Cognitive



Behavioural

Affective



- Affective experiences associated with different text types/content (psychological)
- **Affective reading experiences influenced by interaction between human and non-human factors (sociomaterial)**

Social



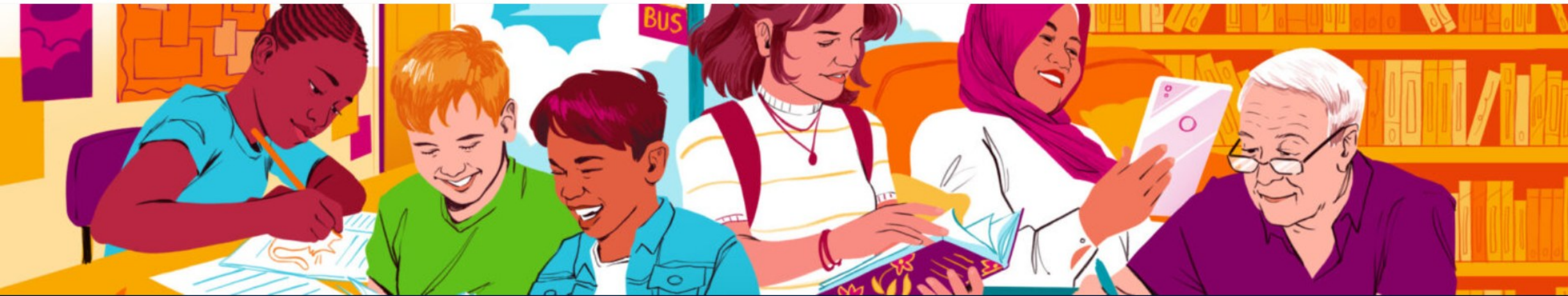
- Enhancing reading experiences and outcomes through social reading activities (psychological)
- **Personally and collectively enriching social reading experiences which reflect identities and life experiences (sociocultural)**

Applying diverse disciplinary perspectives

University of Edinburgh, Literacy Lab
Rewriting Wor(l)ds



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LITERACY LAB

Collaborative research, to improve literacy experiences and outcomes across the lifespan

Integrate theoretical, conceptual and methodological expertise from different disciplinary perspectives (psychology, education, literature).

Research is reflected across five themes: **Enjoy, Engage, Empower, Enrich and Expand**

Work in research-practice partnerships and adopt participatory approaches



Rewriting Wor(l)ds

Rewriting Wor(l)ds is a 4–7-year transdisciplinary research programme, starting Nov 2025, led by Dr Patrick Errington.

Aim: To investigate whether, and how, reading, writing, and sharing poetry can support young people's literacy engagement and wellbeing.

Central to this research is the development of a poetry mobile app, ReWriter.

<https://rewriting-worlds.ed.ac.uk/>

Rewriting Wor(l)ds: Informed by diverse disciplinary perspectives,
methodological approaches and research users



[ABOUT](#)

[TEAM](#)

[EVENTS/MEDIA](#)

[CONTACT](#)

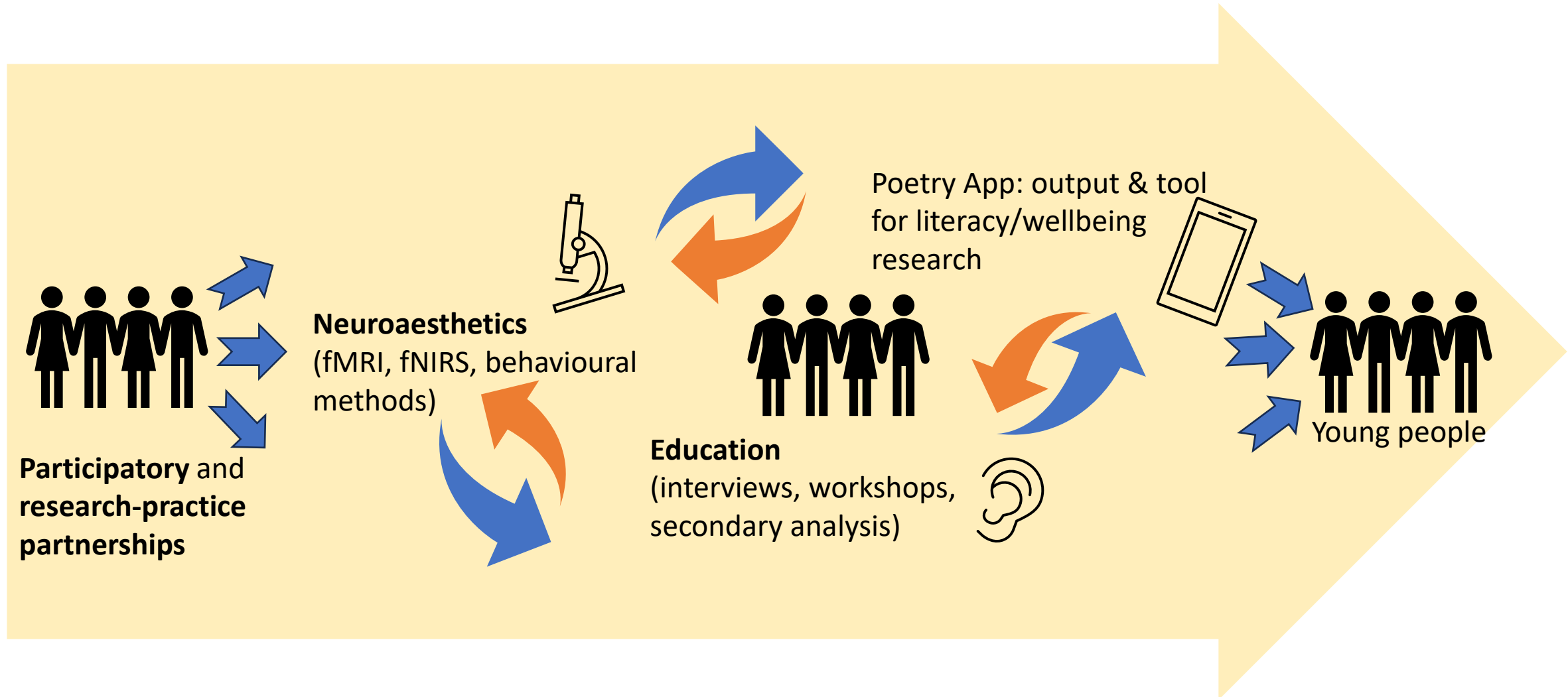
Transdisciplinary research exploring poetry, creativity,
& the links to life-long wellbeing.

ReWriting Wor(l)ds

FIND OUT MORE



Rewriting Wor(l)ds: Informed by diverse disciplinary perspectives, methodological approaches and research users



Rewriting Wor(l)ds

Participatory (involving young people co-researchers throughout) and informed through research-practice partnerships with industry and third sector organisations including:



Change your story



National
Poetry Centre

Scottish Poetry Library

THE POETRY SOCIETY



Summary

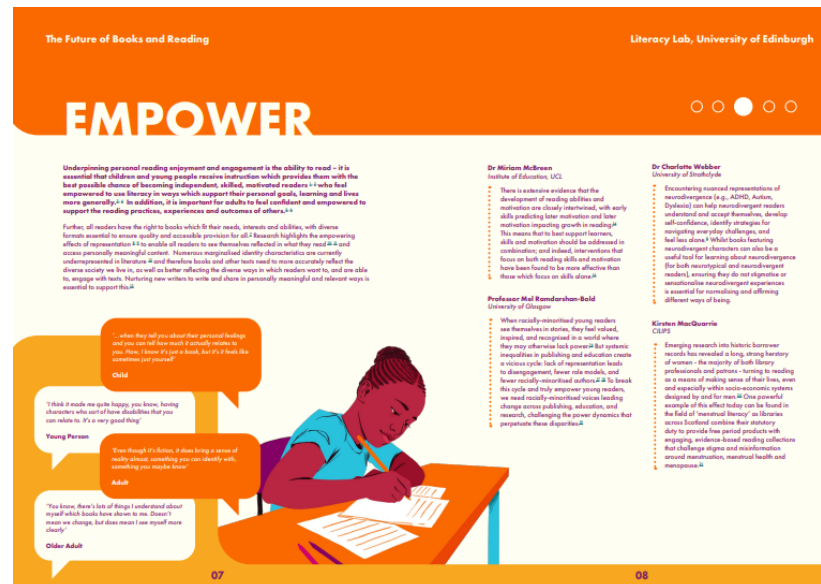
- Synthesising diverse disciplinary perspectives, and integrating different methodological approaches, enriches our understanding of reading, and how best to support it.
- Working beyond University boundaries improves the relevance of our research for education, communities, and society.
- Breaking down barriers, being open to others' perspectives, and learning together as a community is essential.

The Future of Books and Reading

Positive narrative to frame future thinking, discussion and action in relation to the decline in reading enjoyment and engagement.

Shares research insights, and diverse perspectives within the context of five themes:

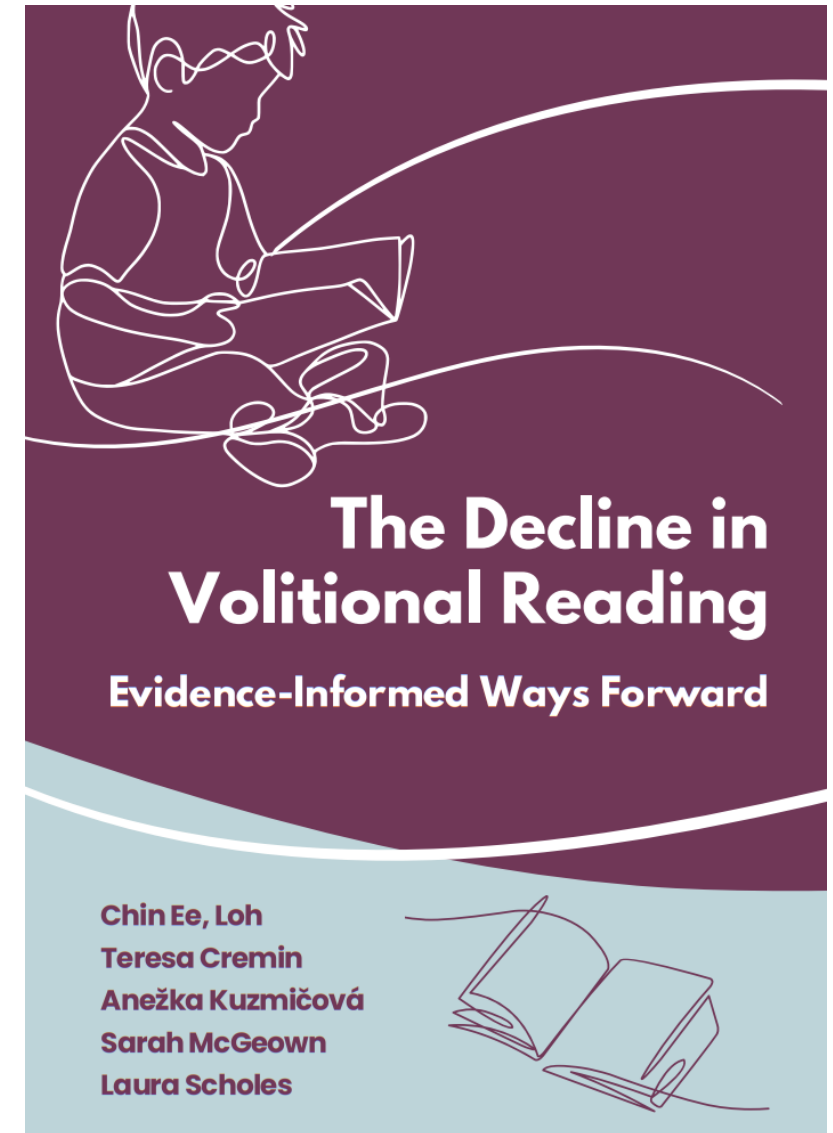
- Enjoy
- Engage
- Empower
- Enrich
- Expand



The decline in volitional reading

International research perspectives on the decline in volitional reading

- Challenges reading myths
- Provides research-informed principles and pedagogies to enable volitional reading.





University of Edinburgh Literacy Lab: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/>

A copy of these slides is available in the 'Talks' tab

Thank you for listening
Opportunity for questions....

Contact details: s.mcgeown@ed.ac.uk



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