

Education Review

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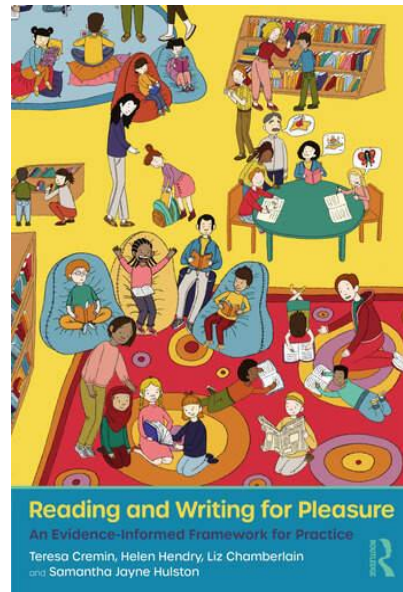
**Cremin, T., Hendry, H., Chamberlain, L. & Hulston, S. (2026).
Reading and writing for pleasure: A framework for practice.
Routledge.**

280 pp.

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The ability or lack thereof to read and write proficiently is the topic of not only academic conversations but a major discourse in public media. The emphasis currently is on children's skills, but the experience of reading for enjoyment and the benefits it brings seem to be missing from the conversation. Teresa Cremin and her colleagues want to change that. They approach the concept of pleasure when it comes to reading and writing and the need in schools to promote students engaging in the activities of reading and writing for pleasure. Cremin has published research focused on the need and value of reading for pleasure (Cremin & Scholes, 2024); and she and her colleagues have extended this work to include writing.



At a time when the United States has been focusing on improving reading outcomes, a book designed to center pleasure as a central element of the student experience seems almost controversial. As a former elementary teacher, I was interested in reading these authors' approach in hopes of finding some inspiration that reading instruction was not destined to become a path for students that is only focused on skill work and test taking. As a self-identified reader, I know the value of reading and writing for pleasure, an aspect of literacy that to my knowledge has not been emphasized in schooling and which currently is being completely ignored. The authors, British scholars, note that in the United States, we often refer to "pleasure reading" as "choice reading." However, I believe the word "pleasure" carries a more positive connotation. Most teachers and parents would like to see that reading and writing would give children a

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sense of pleasure. Less emphasis in schooling has been placed on writing even if it is often considered the companion skill to reading. In this book, the authors utilize the concept of pleasure for both reading and writing and discuss its potential impact for students.

The Introduction begins with a review of the previous research on reading for pleasure and well as a description of the *Reading and Writing for Pleasure Framework for Practice* (Cremin & Scholes, 2024). This framework guides the narrative of the book and is meant to serve as a tool for researchers and educators to implement the practice of reading for pleasure. The book is divided into four parts, each part containing two to three chapters centered around each section's title. It is important to note that the research discussed in this text is specific to primary students and does not deal with middle and high-school learners. This is not to say that the research presented could not be applied to older learners, but the reader should be aware of the intended audience.

In Part One, "Setting the Context," Cremin and her coauthors include a chapter on how the evidence supports reading and writing for pleasure, a chapter about the wider aspects of impact, and a chapter detailing the design of the study the team conducted at The Open University in the UK. Part One details the benefits that reading has on children's academic growth and the long-term impact it has on their success. In addition, the case is made for developing the skills of reading for pleasure to contribute to this success. It is important to note that the research they conducted was part of the Literacy Special Initiative which ran from 2020 to 2023 while each author held appointments at the Open University. The study was conducted utilizing Activity Theory which allowed them to analyze how each element of the program impacted student engagement.

Part Two entitled, "Examining Synergies in Approaches to Reading and Writing for Pleasure" is an examination of the reading identities of children as well as the role that motivation plays in their reading lives. The authors discuss how intrinsic motivation related to reading is associated with children who read more. Their research, though not specifically focused on motivation, utilizes theories like Self Determination Theory to promote students reading for pleasure. Part Two also includes a chapter describing how valuable it is for students to have access to texts of their choosing as well as time in the school day dedicated to reading for pleasure. They support these observations with published research. In Chapter 7, Role Models and Connected Communities, the authors examine the role of adults in the lives of students as readers and writers. They underline the need for adult role models both inside and outside of schools and engagement with these adults as readers and writers.

Part Three, "Understanding the Programmes' Practices," includes a discussion of the implementation of the Literacy Special Initiative program in the six locations where it was conducted. The goal of the program was to improve students' reading and writing enjoyment. The authors discuss the effectiveness of their program but do not provide details regarding the specific materials used. They note the differences in how the program implementation effectiveness varied among sites of implementation and that the ability to implement the program varied from site to site. The authors maintain the need for communities

to build students as readers and writers. They review the role of adults in the process of strengthening students' desires to read and write for pleasure. It is important to note how the emphasis on the value of reading and writing is displayed in the school environment. Teachers and other adults who value reading and writing for pleasure have greater success in supporting development of a similar value in children.

The final section, Part IV, "Considering Implications for Professional Practice," is composed of two chapters that include detailed description of the Reading and Writing for Pleasure Framework for Practice as well as the authors' thoughts on how best to implement the framework in school settings. The Framework is an encompassing model that involves both the individual as well as societal approaches which are governed by an engaged adult. The framework prioritizes the shared value of reading and writing as an important and pleasurable experience and highlights specific characteristics that are designed to support achievement. The conclusion calls for continued research as well as implementation of programs designed to improve reading and writing with an emphasis on pleasure. Moreover, a call is sounded to broaden what is acknowledged as reading and writing in traditional education landscapes.

These authors' emphasis on creating communities of readers and writers who find pleasure in the activities is a much-needed contribution to the field of literacy research. In the United States, emphasis is placed on ability to read and to a lesser extent write with little attention to the experience of reading and writing. Given how valuable reading and writing are and that research has identified that children who are intrinsically inclined to read and write are also more likely to spend larger quantities of time engaged in the activities, resulting in improved skill, it would be beneficial for educators and administrators to explore opportunities to improve the pleasure of the reading experience. The authors prioritize communities as being essential to students' success and extend those communities beyond the classroom. This community emphasis calls for schools to connect with students' lives outside of the school day.

Certain aspects of this book could use some clarity. There is an emphasis on community but lack of clarity regarding how the implementation of the program varied from site to site. In addition, teachers and school leaders reading this book would gain knowledge specific to research regarding reading motivation and the values of choice and access. However, what is lacking for the teachers who are reading this book are tools that they can utilize in their classrooms. This book is written in a clear and approachable tone that is easily accessible to teachers and school administrators who are not deeply immersed in reading research, yet it falls short in providing details regarding specific actions that can be taken by the teachers. Providing the *Reading and Writing for Pleasure Framework for Practice* is a useful visual tool for teachers, however it still leaves educators without clarity on how to make improvements in their students' reading lives. This book would work as a quality tool to engage teachers in reading research that focuses on motivation and engagement in an accessible text. Schools should consider it as a text for professional learning groups.

Reference

Cremin, T., & Scholes, L. (2024). Reading for pleasure: Scrutinising the evidence base – benefits, tensions and recommendations. *Language and Education*, 38(4), 537–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2024.2324948>

About the Reviewer

Heather Hayen is a PhD candidate in curriculum studies at Purdue University, where her work focuses on teacher education, intellectual life, and the formation of teachers as thinkers. With more than seven years experience in elementary and middle school classrooms, including work in a self-contained setting for deaf students, she brings a practitioner perspective to her academic studies. She is particularly interested in how teacher education can support or limit the development of teachers as intellectuals, and how experiences such as reading, reflection, and ongoing study influence one's sense of identity and purpose in the field.



About the Authors



Teresa Cremin is professor of education, and co-director of The Open University's Literacy and Social Justice Centre in Buckinghamshire, England. Her research focuses on volitional reading and writing, teachers' and children's literate identities and practices and creative pedagogies.

Helen Hendry is senior lecturer in education (primary) at The Open University and co-director of the Literacy and Social Justice Centre. Her research centres on early years' pedagogy, reading for pleasure and teacher professional development.

Liz Chamberlain is an emerita professor and past co-director of The Open University's Children's Research Centre. Her research explores the knowledge intersection between practice, learners and practitioners through the lens of literacy education.

Samantha Jayne Hulston is an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow at The Open University. Her research focuses on young children's embodied engagement with stories and the role of teachers in supporting children's playful exploration of texts.

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