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Relevance of Storybooks in Promoting Students' Reading Culture

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Relevance of Storybooks in Promoting Students' Reading Culture

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Abstract

This paper explored past studies that demonstrated how relevant storybooks are in promoting reading culture amongst students. The paper employed the review of literature approach to collect and synthesize information majorly from primary and secondary sources taking cognizance of the research objective. The study reviewed the basis of reading, storybooks, and the benefits of storybooks in improving students' reading culture and the importance of storybooks and strategies for improving students' reading culture. From the extant literature reviewed, students' reading culture is influenced when they are exposed to storybooks.

Keywords: Reading Culture, Storybooks, Students

Introduction

In the world of literature exists a plethora of genres and each one of them is unique and some of them are written for children of certain ages. As a genre, storybooks consist of literary works written for children. Stories play a vital role in the growth and development of children. Children's storybooks are important and form a vital part of the growing process. One of the most fundamental ways in which we communicate to children is through storybooks whether told through picture books, dance, images, math equations, songs or oral retellings. The storybooks they read and the characters they get to know can become like friends. Scholars have found that storybooks have a strong influence on children's understanding of cultural and gender roles. Storybooks do not just develop children's literacy; they convey values, beliefs, attitudes and social norms which, in turn, shape children's perceptions of reality. Storybooks help children develop empathy and cultivate imaginative and divergent thinking; thinking that generates a range of possible ideas and solutions around story events, rather than looking for single or literal responses (Albers, 2016). It is also good for children to understand that storybooks are a useful source of information and that good reading skills are important for success in their future lives. Reading storybooks also helps children with their confidence levels, coping with feelings and language and learning. In addition, the characteristic of storybooks is important as children can make sense of the textual part regardless of their weaknesses regarding their English language. In this sense, a young reader could understand the story by interpreting words that can be found on every page of storybooks. However, text in storybooks could contribute to increasing the reading culture; storybooks add extra information that the textual part could not contain.

Reading is a powerful means of communication. Reading forms a part of an individual and becomes a culture when developed. When children are properly guided,

reading could be an interesting experience. A reading culture cultivated early in life helps the child to grow into an independent adult (Oji and Habibu, 2011). Reading involves interpreting written symbols mentally and also the silent or loud vocalisation of written words. It entails the recognition and verbalization of symbols. Solanke, (2019) opined that it is an act that can take place internally or externally; a process that involves thinking and many complex skills such as the ability to identify letters and words as well as skim for information. Reading can be influenced by several factors like the degree of exposure, level of education, and consciousness, age, status, home and public environment, cultural background, subject background. Usually, people only engage in regular reading if they have developed a strong love for reading. People with good reading culture are lovers of books. The continuous engagement in reading can become part of an individual to the extent that it becomes a culture. While a healthy reading culture facilitates personal and social development, a poor reading culture, on the other hand, may result in low self-esteem. Rubin (2002) observes that individuals with poor reading culture have a higher chance of anti-social behaviour. A healthy reading culture influences an individual's personal development (Igwe, 2011).

Furthermore, children enjoy reading storybooks over and over again. This repetition of reading experiences helps pupils to reinforce not only the learned vocabulary but also the key structures that can be found in storybooks. This leads to reading culture improvement, as well as to independent reading (Wiseman, 2010). While reading storybooks, pupils are challenged to remember keywords or predict what is coming next in the story. Pupils enjoy testing their minds, proving that they can remember or predict events in the storybook. Pupils' participation in reading storybooks positively influences their attitudes towards their reading activities, as their self-confidence increases with each participation. If a pupil decides to participate in the class and elicits a correct answer, the pupil will feel comfortable

contributing again. This sets a learning environment more pleasurable for pupils, as they have an active role that enables them to express their ideas and contribute to building knowledge in a meaningful way. However, reading storybooks create opportunities for developing continuity in children's learning since they can be chosen to consolidate learning in school subjects across the curriculum. Moreover, using storybooks creates language experiences that help learners to acquire language, due to the activities that engage them in the use of natural, meaningful, and functional language (Malu, 2013). As an example of such activities, using storybooks offer the pupils different possibilities of viewing and analyzing critically some common characteristics in the storybooks: text/print, colour, pictures, icons, photographs, graphics, movement, sound and music. The critical analysis of these aspects by the pupils, help them not only to comprehend the texts but also to improve their reading skills as they are immersed in activities that are related to natural language production.

Benefits of Story Books

Confidence Levels

Children who can read well are more likely to have higher confidence levels. This will benefit them in school as they'll feel able to participate fully in activities. Another part of building confidence and self-esteem is knowing where you fit into the world. Storybooks can help with this process by showing children what people's lives are like where they live (Balcazar, 2021).

Language and Learning

Storybooks are a great way to introduce new words and ideas into a child's language; starting with picture books for the very young, working up to more complex novels for teenagers. Storybooks can help children learn about concepts such as shape, size, space and colour, up and down, inside and outside, numbers and the names of objects. They can also teach children about everyday tasks, such as how to brush their teeth, taking care of animals,

cleaning and tidying, and preparing food. Storybooks are also useful for teaching more complex ideas, such as the importance of sharing, the passage of time, compassion for others. They can be useful when trying to explain traumatic events, such as family break-ups and bereavement. Fiction based on real life can also help children with their own life experiences. It shows them how diverse the world is and that some people's lives are vastly different to theirs. And what's so great about learning through storybooks is that the process is done naturally. There's no actual teaching involved at all, they learn from simply reading the story (Corneal, 2021).

Relaxation

Reading storybooks can be helpful for relaxation, before bedtime for example. They allow children to forget the stresses and strains of the day and indulge in fantasy for a while. The soothing familiarity of a much-loved story, the rhyming and repetition in a picture book, plus the sense of security that time spent reading together can foster, all help the child to relax (Starke, 2020).

Development of Imagination

Storybooks help to develop a child's imagination by introducing new ideas into their world, ideas about fantastical worlds, other planets, different points in time and invented characters. It'll encourage the children to realise that they can, and should, imagine anything they want. The beauty of storybooks is that they can be super realistic or incredibly fantastical.

Coping With Feelings

When children read storybooks that contain feelings it can help them understand and accept their own feelings. It helps them understand that other children feel the same way and they are not alone. This helps the child understand that feelings are normal and should be expressed. Watching their responses to the feelings of the characters in the storybooks will

give them some idea of how a child feels about certain situations and emotions. For example, how the child responds to the character in the story feeling sad or scared will give them some idea of how the child thinks (Corneal, 2021).

Importance of Story Books

Giving children access to all varieties of storybooks is extremely important for their school success. Educators, parents, and community members should help pupils develop a love and passion for reading. Not only is reading a storybook important in developing cognitive skills to be able to succeed in school, but it is valuable for other reasons as well. Although, there are countless values in exposing children to storybooks (Norton, 2010). The author identifies the following values of storybooks for young people:

Provides Pupils with Opportunities to Respond to Literature

This strengthens the cognitive-developmental domain as it encourages deeper thought about literature. Quality literature does not tell the reader everything he/she needs to know; it allows for some difference in opinion. One reader may take something completely different away from the piece of literature than the next reader, based on the two personal viewpoints and experiences. Pupils can learn to evaluate and analyze literature, as well as summarize and hypothesize about the topic. Norton (2010) opined that for children, wordless picture books are excellent stimuli for oral and written language. Pupils reading wordless books like *A Ball for Daisy* (Raschka, 2011) will be able to analyze the illustrations and develop their own dialogue for the story. This strengthens pupils' cognitive functions in being able to form opinions on their own and to express themselves through language in summarizing the plot of a wordless book.

Gives students appreciation about their own cultural heritage as well as those of other

Storybooks provide an avenue for pupils to learn about their own cultural heritage and the cultures of other people. It is crucial for children to learn these values because developing

positive attitudes toward our own culture and the cultures of others are necessary for both social and personal development (Norton, 2010). Some storybooks help in teaching the cultural differences of others, pupils learn about their guests and accept the differences between their cultures. It enables a positive message about encouraging acceptance of the cultural differences between people, which is something that will help nurture our pupils. Many storybooks are available that depict culture as an important piece of society that is to be treasured and valued, and those storybooks can have great value for pupils (Balcazar, 2021).

Helps pupils develop emotional intelligence and creativity

Storybooks help pupils develop emotional intelligence. Storybooks have the power to promote emotional and moral development. Storybooks contain numerous moments of crisis when characters make moral decisions and contemplate the reasons for their decisions, an important skill for children to model (Norton, 2010). *The Scar* (Moundlic, 2007) is an effective book to read with pupils in order to teach them about responding to grief, as it is about a boy whose mother dies. This requires a complex level of emotional intelligence, as many young children do not understand death. The topic of death would be more appropriate for an older grade level, but it is an important topic to discuss with pupils. Another book that encourages emotional intelligence is *Selma* (Bauer, 2002), which discusses what it takes for a young sheep to be happy. It is a philosophical story within a picture book and challenges students to think about what happiness really is. *The Big Box* (Morrison, 1999) is a story about children who have their freedom taken away by being put into a box and the deeper problems that exist with not being given one's freedom. Storybooks encourage students to think deeper about their own feelings.

In addition, storybooks also encourage creativity. Norton (2010) stresses the role that storybooks play in nurturing and expanding the imagination. *The House in the Night* (Swanson, 2008) depicts the creativity that a young girl has in her dreams at night, as she

flies about the dark neighbourhood on the wings of a bird. *The Amazing Pop-up Music Book* (Petty, 1999), *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin* (Moss, 1995), and *Look Closer: Art Masterpieces Through The Ages* (Desnoettes, 2006) are imaginative and original books that encourage pupils to learn about music and art, and they are engaging in their design and interactivity. Storybooks promote the development of pupils' internal imaginations.

Nurtures growth and development of the pupil's personality and social skills

Storybooks are of value because it fosters personality and social development. Children are very impressionable during their formative years, and storybooks can help them develop into caring, intelligent, and friendly people. Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget says that when pupils move from the pre-operational to the operational stage of cognitive development, they become less egocentric. Whereas pupils in preschool and kindergarten may be entirely focused on themselves, as pupils grow older they begin to take into account the feelings and viewpoints of others. Being able to understand other people's viewpoints and to not be selfish are important skills that adults must nurture in children, as Norton says that acceptable relationships require an understanding of the feelings and viewpoints of others (2010). Storybooks can foster social development by encouraging pupils to accept other people and their differences. Storybooks like *And Tango Makes Three* (Parnell & Richardson, 2005), *Molly's Family* (Garden, 2004), present situations that might encourage pupils to become more open-minded to different types of families and understand that love is the most important thing in a family. Storybooks can also encourage pupils to develop relationships with people, encouraging social contact. An atypical friendship is depicted in *Loop the Loop* (Dugan, 1992), where a young child and an elderly person become good friends and share the common joy of playing with yo-yo's. Storybooks encourage pupils to be considerate and friendly people, and these traits may be consistent with developing students into quality citizens.

Transmits important literature and themes from one generation to the next

Finally, storybooks are of value because it is a timeless tradition, one in which books are the major means of transmitting our literary heritage from one generation to the next (Norton, 2010). Classic stories like Dr. Seuss' *And to Think That I Heard it on Mulberry Street* (Geisel, 1989) and *The Cat in the Hat* (Geisel, 1957) are important books to read to children because of their literary heritage. For a younger audience, children could build their cognitive and language skills through exposure to Mother Goose rhymes. One example of a good collection of these classic rhymes is *Hey Diddle Diddle and Other Mother Goose Rhymes* (dePaola, 1998). Children in older grades can learn to appreciate the classic plays and messages of William Shakespeare in picture books that aim to make the plays more accessible. Many versions of Shakespeare's works are available in abridged and picture book formats, including *Romeo and Juliet* (Coville, 1999) and *The Tempest* (Mayer, 2005). Children are only young for a short time, and so we must give them access to a basic literary heritage of timeless books. Quality storybooks have the great power to captivate audiences for many generations. Table 1 and Table 2 demonstrate the outcome of studies on the use of storybooks and exploration of students' reading culture respectively.

Table 1 Empirical Results on Use of Story Books

Authors	Objective	Method/ sample	Results
Keat and Wilburne (2009).	To understand how storybooks might influence both achievements of learning objectives and positive approaches to mathematics learning in three kindergarten classes.	Quantitative and Qualitative design. sample of 70 pupils	The results of the study show an impact on students' mathematical achievement as well as the identification of four themes that emerged on how students' approaches to learning were influenced when storybooks were integrated into the mathematics unit.
Robb (2010).	To examine the role	A survey design. A	Results revealed that

	of a screen-based interactive book on 4.5- to 5.5-year olds' emergent literacy skills, including story understanding, story sequencing ability, and ability to freely recall story narrative.	sample of Ninety-six children	the use of interactive features was unrelated to children's story understanding, free recall, or sequencing abilities. Increased use of seductive details in the interactive book was also unrelated to emergent literacy outcomes. Parental involvement was significantly related to children's story understanding, but not to children's free recall or sequencing abilities. Although the types and frequencies of parental dialogic reading behaviours differed by reading group, they were unrelated to children's individual performance on the story comprehension variables.
Kotaman (2019).	To compare the impact of two storybooks; one with realistic and one with non-realistic characters on children's comprehension performance.	Experimental design. a sample of 100 public kindergartens children.	Findings revealed that realistic and non-realistic groups' comprehension performance did not significantly differ for post-test. From post- to follow-up tests, the non-realistic group's mean scores significantly decreased while the realistic group's mean did not decrease significantly.
Turan and Ulutas (2016).	To investigate the views and implementations of preschool teachers in	Descriptive review method. A sample of 245 teachers was selected using the	Results show that character education is important for the teachers, teachers use

	giving character education through picture storybooks.	volunteering technique.	picture storybooks that support character education, however, they find themselves partly competent in giving character education with picture storybooks, and think storybooks useful and effective in terms of character education, believe that teachers should be a role model in character education and methods like drama, play, question-answer, and brainstorming are much preferred for effective character education.
Anna <i>et al.</i> (2020)	To investigate the learning effectiveness of reading picture books with empathic elements using dialogic reading techniques in enhancing young children's English language learning and creativity.	a quasi-experimental design, and randomly selected 78 kindergarten children which comprise the sample size.	Results indicated there were significant differences only in the interactive effect on syntactic complexity. Children in the experimental condition gave responses with more complex syntactic structures. Significant time effects for receptive vocabulary, syntactic complexity, and verbal creativity were observed in all children.
Roslina (2017).	To investigate the effects of picture storybooks on the students' reading comprehension and to clarify students' perception of the utilization of picture storybooks in	Experimental design. a sample of 15 children and 15 students randomly selected.	The results revealed that picture storybooks were able to improve students' reading as well as the students' interest in reading. The result showed that the

	teaching reading.		utilization of picture storybooks had an effect on the students' reading comprehension that revealed the value of 0.025 with higher scores found in the post-test.
Jimenez and Saylor (2017).	To examine the effect of word learning and story comprehension during shared book reading among Preschoolers'	Experimental design. a sample of 87 kindergartens children.	Children were then tested on their ability to identify the named items, generalize to unfamiliar exemplars, and comprehend the story. Word learning and story comprehension were above chance and similar across the inside and outside conditions. Memory skills were stronger predictors of word learning in the inside condition than the outside condition.
Palenfo (2018).	To examine the effect of short story books on students' attitudes and motivation toward reading comprehension	A quasi-experimental design.	Results showed that students' attitudes and motivation improved. They were more confident and autonomous, and they participated more actively.
Karabacak and Erdem (2015).	To examine the effect of using English storybooks on English language education success of students.	A quasi-experimental design.	Results showed that using English storybooks in English courses by adapting them to different activities increased the success when compared with traditional methods and techniques according to the findings.
Ivan <i>et al.</i> (2020).	To improve the	A quasi-	The results showed

	reading ability of students through English-language storybook media.	experimental design with a sample size of 26 students.	that before treatment was given using the English-language storybook media, after reading comprehension learning using English-language storybook at the first cycle, the average value of reading comprehension skills of students increased still in the medium category. In cycle 1, the researcher discover that 70% or 18 out of 26 students got the score under KKM, and learning was done on the second cycle was found that 86.20% of the students or 25 out of 26 students got the score more than or equal to 70 related to the Minimum Mastery Criteria of reading comprehension ability of students experienced an increase in average value with a very high category.
Gati (2018)	To examine the effectiveness of using picture books as instructional materials in teaching preschool pupils English oral skills	descriptive survey research	The result revealed that teachers are aware and appreciate the pedagogical value of picture books for training but had mixed attitudes toward its use. The result also revealed that picture books were effective in teaching preschool pupils English oral skills but was poorly

			utilized for teaching oral skills.
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Table 2 Empirical Results on Reading Culture

Authors	Objective	Method	Results
Wamani (2016)	To assess the impact of reading culture on academic performance of pupils in selected primary schools.	A cross-sectional survey	The findings of the study showed that poor reading culture is caused by the absence of well stocked libraries, lack of or limited parental involvement in the education of their pupils, negative attitude by pupils towards reading, lack of commitment and motivation among teachers and limited time for reading; poor reading culture affects pupil's academic performance through repetition of classes, school drop out of pupils.
Odusina and Oloniruha (2020)	To find out the relevance of school libraries and reading culture among secondary school students in selected schools in Lagos.	a survey research	The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the students patronize the library to enhance knowledge and examination preparation.
Okwilagwe and Duke (2020)	To investigate teachers' attitude and reading culture of pupils in selected staff primary schools in Ibadan	descriptive survey research	The findings revealed that pupils read storybooks and textbooks the most. Findings revealed that teachers were deeply concerned about the development of pupils reading; they encourage pupils to use the library; consciously stimulate pupils to read.
Hanifi <i>et al.</i> (2017)	To investigate the methods of developing book reading culture among elementary schools' students in Tehran.	A descriptive survey research design.	The result showed that according to Tehran city elementary teachers' point of view each of the mentioned methods as family's culture enhancement, students' personality traits, the level of teachers' scientific attitude and improvement of schools facilities and equipment confirmed as the main ways to develop book reading among the elementary school's students.

Davis and Andala (2021).	To investigate the relationship between parental involvement and reading culture among secondary school students.	Descriptive and correlational research designs	The study findings indicated that 41% and above of parents, teachers and children supported that parents are involved in various learning practices which include joint reading, donating books and teaching aids to school, going through students' homework, buying recommended books to the children, encouraging technology use in reading and offering reading incentives to the children. Additionally, findings indicate that between 36% to 51%, 39% to 61% and 41% to 57% of teachers, parents and students respectively agreed that students engage in various reading culture practices including having favourite storybooks, spending free time reading, love for reading, talking about books they have read, creative and writes something on what they have read and making consultations from teachers and parents for clarifications. Moreover, the findings indicated that there is still a great percentage of parents who don't engage themselves on students learning matters supported by 17%-40% of respondents and also a greater percentage of students having poor reading culture in secondary schools supported by at most 45% of respondents.
Fabunmi and Folorunso, (2010).	To find out the causes of poor reading culture and the negative effect it has on the patronage of libraries.	descriptive survey	Results of the analysis show that computer and other media, harsh economic reality, societal dem and for materialism, inadequate library materials are causes of poor reading culture of students in secondary schools. It was also revealed that materials in secondary school libraries are not organized, inadequate, not relevant, school librarians not readily available which constitute the reasons for poor patronage of secondary schools libraries.
Oyewole,	To investigate the	descriptive survey	Results indicated that students from

(2017).	effects and remedies of poor reading culture among secondary school students.	design	educated homes read fluently than students from uneducated homes, it also revealed that 80% of the respondent believed that parent's inability to set a high standard for students affects their reading performance, it also indicated that students do not read as much as they are expected to read, and also students do not have well-equipped libraries to aid effective reading performance.
Ukpebor and Okwilagwe, (2019).	To investigate the perceived availability of print and Internet resources as factors that might explain the reading habits of secondary school Students.	The descriptive survey and correlational research design	There was a significant correlation between reading habit and perceived availability of print reading resources ($r=0.156$, $p < 0.05$), and between reading habit and perceived availability of Internet resources ($r=0.104$, $p < 0.05$), as well as significant joint prediction of perceived availability of Print and Internet resources on students' reading habit ($F(2,816)=12.55$, $p<0.05$). However, the associated R square value of 0.03 implies that only 3.0% of the variance in reading habits among the students is explained jointly by perceived Print and Internet resources availabilities.
Onuoha <i>et al.</i> , (2013).	To investigate the reading habits and library use patterns of Information Resources Management students at Babcock University.	A descriptive survey design. A sample of 210 students was selected by purposive technique.	Findings indicate that majority of the respondents spend more than an hour reading every day. The purpose of reading was found to be mainly for entertainment. Respondents were also found to read mostly newspapers and other general interest magazines. In the area of library use, the majority of the respondents browse the shelves in search of reading materials; consult library staff and make use of online databases. The least used library resource was found to be e-books. Despite using most library resources, respondents affirmed that a visit to the library was not a popular activity.

Based on the previous studies on the effect of storybooks on students' reading culture, Keat and Wilburne, (2009) study show an impact on students' mathematical achievement as well as the identification of four themes that emerged on how students' approaches to learning were influenced when storybooks were integrated into the mathematics unit. Robb (2010) study revealed that the use of interactive features was unrelated to children's story understanding, free recall, or sequencing abilities. Increased use of seductive details in the interactive book was also unrelated to emergent literacy outcomes. Parental involvement was significantly related to children's story understanding, but not to children's free recall or sequencing abilities. Although the types and frequencies of parental dialogic reading behaviours differed by reading group, they were unrelated to children's individual performance on the story comprehension variables. Kotaman (2019) study revealed that realistic and non-realistic groups' comprehension performance did not significantly differ for post-test. From post- to follow-up tests, the non-realistic group's mean scores significantly decreased while the realistic group's mean did not decrease significantly. In a similar study conducted by Roslina (2017), picture storybooks were able to improve students' reading as well as the students' interest in reading. The result showed that the utilization of picture storybooks affected the students' reading comprehension that revealed the value of 0.025 with higher scores found in the post-test. Karabacak and Erdem, (2015) asserted that using English storybooks in English courses by adapting them to different activities increased the success when compared with traditional methods and techniques according to the findings. Gati, (2018) study revealed that teachers appreciate the pedagogical value of picture books for teaching but had mixed attitudes toward its use. The result also revealed that picture books were effective in teaching pre-school pupils English oral skills but was poorly utilized for teaching oral skills. Wamani (2016) study showed that poor reading culture is caused by the absence of well-stocked libraries, lack of or limited parental involvement in the education

of their pupils, negative attitude by pupils towards reading, lack of commitment and motivation among teachers and limited time for reading; poor reading culture affects pupil's academic performance through repetition of classes, school drop out of pupils. Odusina and Oloniruha (2020) opined that the majority of the students patronize the library to enhance knowledge and examination preparation.

Improving the reading culture of pupils is tantamount to their growth in society. Therefore, school librarians should play an active role in order to cultivate and inculcate a good reading culture into pupils through promoting their cognitive ability, emotions, attitude, developmental value and broadening their mental horizon through projecting the library as a valuable source of teaching and learning. However, librarians should help to assist in the selection of relevant information resources that meet the school's curriculum. Also, they should help in creating easy access to information-rich materials that appeal to pupils' development and comprehension. More so, there should be a strong focus on the acquisition of relevant and interesting materials for pupils with low vocabulary and poor reading skills. School librarians should carry out orientation programmes to keep pupils abreast with the availability, accessibility and use of information resources in the library. Librarians should be user friendly so that pupils will have high zeal to use the library. The role of school librarians in the elementary sector cannot be underestimated. Their understanding of different learning styles and collaboration with teaching colleagues enables them to act as a bridge between young people, teachers, information and the curriculum. Their potential contribution towards meeting the National Priorities for education is therefore considerable (SLIC and HMIE, 2005). Teachers also have a great role to play in developing and improving pupils reading culture through assisting to imbibe reading interest to pupils by encouraging them to use the library effectively. Also, government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should endeavour to establish children's libraries and equally enlighten the rural communities about

the importance and value of the library in early child development. Also, parents have a greater role to play in developing the reading skills of their children at home, by exposing them to relevant storybooks and also assisting in providing an enabling environment that will promote their reading culture. Exclusively, the government should establish well functional modern libraries all over the federation in public primary schools in Nigeria and fund them adequately.

Conclusion

Storybooks are extremely valuable in both the school setting and at home. Teachers and parents should provide storybooks in order to give pupils access to the best books and to encourage important values of literature for developing good reading culture among pupils. Storybooks are important for providing an opportunity to respond to literature, as well as cultural knowledge, emotional intelligence, creativity, social and personality development. Exposing children to storybooks can contribute to the development of responsible, successful, and caring individuals and the promotion of positive reading culture among students.

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