



HARK! Hands up who really *loves* their classroom reading program? TRI this: three approaches to reading instruction

Mel Green¹

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Abstract

There is unequivocal evidence that student engagement in reading for enjoyment has many wide-ranging and long-term benefits. Yet, obstacles are mounting in terms of complexities, constraints and contentions. In light of growing concerns around students' reading attainment and the place of contemporary children's literature, as well as the imminent release of the *Australian Curriculum: English Version 9.0*, this article is well-timed to elucidate reading instruction. As educators prepare for the revised curriculum, it is important to examine reading demands, student entitlements and classroom practices. In this article, I consider and categorise curriculum content for coherence and cohesion. I outline different facets of reading instruction. I emphasise the vitalness of student engagement in reading for enjoyment (RfE) and the need for a dedicated RfE program. With reference to Dewey's (1934) theory of aesthetic experience, Maxwell's (1974) definitions of reading and Kalantzis' et al. (2016) *Learning by design* model, I address complications and impediments. I situate RfE as one of three different but concurrent approaches to the teaching of reading. I position children's literature at the heart of reading instruction. I aim to expand understanding around reading instruction with improved outcomes for students and teachers alike. In the spirit of promoting high-quality children's literature, I employ playful palimpsests from prized picture book *Hark. It's me Ruby Lee!* (Shanahan & Binny, 2017). I draw on literary devices from children's literature to encourage its classroom usage. My hope is that this article not only advocates enjoyable reading experience, but also constitutes one.

Keywords Reading engagement · Reading enjoyment · Reading instruction

✉ Mel Green
Mel.Green@acu.edu.au

¹ School of Education, Faculty of Education & Arts, Australian Catholic University, 1100 Nudgee Road, Banyo, QLD 4014 (McAuley Campus), PO Box 456, Virginia, QLD 4014, Australia



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1 Introduction

Dear educators, as classroom practitioners, literacy specialists or school leaders, are you happy with the way reading is being taught and assessed? Are you pleased with the results of your reading program? Are you confident that every student is making remarkable progress in all aspects of their reading? Are your students really *enjoying* their reading? Or are these matters the cause of consternation? Are you caught up in convoluted conflicts between the science of reading standardised basals and the art of reading *real* books? Are you perhaps a pre-service or graduate teacher perplexed at the prospect of raising good readers?

If you are feeling apprehensive about the reading demands of the *Australian Curriculum: English*, as Shanahan and Binny's (2017) ever-eager children's book character *Ruby Lee* decrees, "Fear not! I am the bearer of good news". I bring a very special message that will help to fathom, familiarise and facilitate the curriculum reading components from Foundation to Year Six. In this article, I outline different facets of classroom reading instruction. I describe some of the impediments to pedagogic practice. Importantly, I emphasise the vitalness of student engagement in reading for enjoyment (RfE) and the need for a dedicated RfE program. I situate RfE as one of three different but concurrent approaches to the teaching of reading. I position rich literature at the heart reading instruction. Drawing playfully on a treasured children's book, I weave literary techniques for your reading enjoyment.

1.1 Hark!

I am really hoping that the old English intransitive verb *Hark!* meaning “to pay close attention” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) has piqued your interest here. It is such a striking yet underutilised word, demanding a wide-open vocal proclamation and urgent summons to take heed. You may have admired its plucky use in Shanahan and Binny’s (2017) award-winning children’s book *Hark. It’s me, Ruby Lee!* in which the eponymous schoolgirl displays a fearless, playful, fertile imagination as well as thoughtful, ecological guardianship. For classroom teachers, it really is a glorious read-aloud. It’s literally one of my all-time favourite picture books. My own harken hitherto dear readers similarly concerns children’s imaginative ingenuity and educators’ environmental responsibilities. The “spockled frocklewockle” (Shanahan & Binny, 2017, n. p.), however, in my mind’s eye is the current state of reading instruction. Even more explicitly, one particular *AC:E* pronouncement and its pedagogic presentiment.

The *Australian Curriculum* (Version 8.4) has been reviewed. Version 9.0 is scheduled for imminent release and the wait is worrisome. The update has been conducted “to ensure it continues to meet the needs of students now and into the future” (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2021). The aim of the review is to refine, realign and reduce the existing content. Like many inspired and passionate educators, I care very deeply about this matter. I contributed to the consultation process. My input was a professional petition for one special inclusion to remain intact. This short statement is arguably the most crucial and consequential prerogative in the entire national programme of study. It is a demand that holds immense consequences for the potential success of every student—in all aspects of the curriculum. But, you may ask, what is this indispensable assertion? You will find it in the first line of the third paragraph of the *AC:E Year Level Description* across all year levels from Foundation to Year Ten;

“Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment.”

Many decades of empirical research demonstrate significant academic, personal and social benefits of reading for enjoyment (RfE). In the UK context, the reading for pleasure (RfP) research and movement, spear-headed by Professor Teresa Cremin (Cremin et al., 2008), has been gaining great traction over the last decade. In this article, I draw on recent research and American education reformer John Dewey’s (1934) seminal text *Art as experience* to describe the educative vitalness of RfE. With reference to Maxwell (1974) and Kalantzis et al. (2016), I position student engagement in RfE as an explicit part of well-structured English teaching blocks. This article comes from my PhD study (Green, 2022), which explores a RfE pedagogy in the Australian primary school context. This essential curriculum entitlement needs to be understood in the broader context of all *AC:E* reading requirements and policy directives.

1.2 Reading enjoyment: an endorsed entitlement

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989)—an international agreement on childhood, contains a clear affirmation of children’s right to read for enjoyment. *Article 17* identifies the importance of mass media material created to promote “social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health” (UNCRC, 1989, 17), which specially comprises “the production and dissemination of children’s books” (UNCRC, 1989, 17c). *Article 17* clarifies students’ right to read children’s books for their personal and social prosperity.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Council of Australian Governments Education Council [CAGEC], 2019) reaffirms the significant *Right of the Child* to broad and balanced learning in its decree, “Education plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians” (p. 3). The emphasis here on students’ *aesthetic* growth in relation to *wellbeing* is particularly important.

The *Australian Curriculum: English* (ACARA, AC:E, Version 8.4, , 2018a) recognises *aesthetic appreciation* of literature as one of six key overarching ideas (ACARA, AC:E Key ideas, , 2018b). As we have seen, from Foundation to Year Ten, the *AC:E* stipulates “Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment” (ACARA, AC:E, , 2018a). Furthermore, from Year Three upwards, the *AC:E Year level description* (para. 3) subsequently stipulates student engagement:

“...in texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic.”

This statement is brilliant and whoever originally crafted it is a genius. It does not distinguish between the text primarily having aesthetic qualities or the reader’s purpose being emphatically aesthetic. Propitiously, we can assume both. Professor Bence Nanay (2019) writes about aesthetics as “one of the most important aspects of our life” (p. 10)—it comprises our deepest-seated cares and concerns. Nanay cautions, “If we take the importance of aesthetics in our life seriously, we need to shift the emphasis away from aesthetic judgements to forms of aesthetic engagement that are more enjoyable, more rewarding, and happen to us more often” (p. 38). Enjoyment of high-quality literature, then, holds vital aesthetic importance for our students.

1.3 The bad news

In the Australian education context, the first report on performance against the goals set out in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration* (Lamb et al., 2020) paints a perturbing picture. By Year Seven, nearly 25% of students are reported below the expected level of literacy. By senior years, a reported 27.8% of students do not meet the international benchmark for reading. A recent report on Australia’s performance in the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* (Thomson et al., 2019) found only 59% students attained the National proficiency standard in reading. Between 2000 and 2018, reading literacy performance in Australia declined by 26 percentage points. Research findings indicate a concerning trend of decline in reading for enjoyment (e.g. OECD, 2011; Twenge, 2018), with potentially dire consequences as the many benefits of RfE, described in the following section, are diminished.

1.4 The good news

As young *Ruby Lee* would say, “Fear not! I am the bearer of good news” (Shanahan & Binny, 2017). Many decades of research on children’s reading unequivocally validate and verify the vast benefits of RfE. So very many studies have found that reading enjoyment is an influential factor in improved reading attainment (e.g. Sullivan & Brown, 2013). The reciprocal relationship between reading enjoyment and reading achievement has been described as the *Matthew Effect* (Stanovich, 1986), by which children exposed to positive experiences of reading from a young age enjoy greater reading habits and achievement. The connection between reading attainment and enjoyment is so strong that the *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) *PISA* tests include measurement of both and state that “students who

read daily for enjoyment score the equivalent of one-and-a-half years of schooling better than those who do not” (OECD, 2011, p. 2).

Research has also demonstrated that enjoyment of reading is a major contributory factor in wider academic success (e.g. Clark & Teravainen, 2017; Cremin et al., 2014; Sullivan & Brown, 2013). Significantly, research findings show that students’ reading for enjoyment is a foremost predictor of academic attainment at age 16 (Sullivan & Brown, 2013). Reading for enjoyment (RfE) contributes to personal and social development (e.g. Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018; Manuel & Carter, 2015). Studies have also recognised the significant power of reading engagement to enhance emotional literacy and empathy (e.g. Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Nikolajeva, 2013). Research supports a strong connection between children’s reading enjoyment and their wellbeing (e.g. Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018). In the Australian context, research (e.g. Barton et al., 2019; Merga & Gardiner, 2018) demonstrates that engaging students in RfE supports development of the *Australian Curriculum General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2018c). RfE is a significant factor in social and economic mobility, narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged and privileged students (e.g. Sammons et al., 2018) and leveraging social change (Kirsch et al., 2002).

Forming the life-long habit of reading for enjoyment has been associated with broad societal benefits—providing a remedy for rising problems. Studies have found that recreational reading helps defend against loneliness (e.g. Renaisi, 2018; Toepoel, 2013). Reading fiction has been positively correlated with social ability and support. This is particularly noteworthy as the increasing loneliness epidemic is predicted to increase to catastrophic figures by 2030 in terms of population and costs (Hilhorst et al., 2018). Recreational reading has been shown to improve dementia and mental health (e.g. Billington et al., 2013). Collectively, these studies unanimously support students’ classroom entitlement to RfE.

For further comprehensive reviews of the research literature on the significance of student engagement in reading for enjoyment, please refer to Clark and Rumbold’s (2006) *Reading for pleasure: A research overview*, or the *Literature Review: The impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment* (BOP Consulting, 2015), or the *CLPE Reading for pleasure 2021* (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, 2021). Both reviews report the positive potentiality and power in students’ reading for enjoyment. The ongoing research findings justify the need for a dedicated RfE program in which students are engaged in reading for enjoyment, particularly in texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic.

1.5 Readicidal raze

Despite decades of overwhelming empirical support for students’ aesthetic reading enjoyment, there appears to be a questionable gap between academic research and classroom practice. In the worst cases, schools are being accused of destroying the joy of reading through a process of *readicide*, “the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in school” (Gallagher, 2009, p. 2). It is a disturbing problem many scholars seek to address (e.g. Marlatt, 2020; Ziegler & Solebello, 2017). The research literature on possible obstacles to students’ engagement in reading for enjoyment connotes a conglomeration of contrary conflicts. I have compiled the key documented encumbrances into four conspicuous categories of conceivable: complexities, constraints, challenges and contentions.

1.6 Conceptual complexities

The concept of *reading* itself is extremely problematic, with widely divergent definitions of the dynamic and multifaceted process (e.g. Downing, 1972; Maxwell, 1974). Each encompasses varying emphases on the technical processes, textual deconstruction and readerly meaning-making. The concept of *enjoyment* is also problematic (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Tomkins, 1962). *Reading enjoyment* specifically is complicated in its dependency on countless subjective factors (e.g. Barthes, 1975; Bruns, 2011). In terms of reading, *enjoyment* is often used interchangeably with pleasure, despite distinctive educative differences (Barthes, 1975; Dewey, 1934). The concept of *engagement*—specifically reading engagement—is problematic too. Reading engagement is a multi-dimensional construct encompassing cognitive, behavioural and affective processes (e.g. Guthrie et al., 2012).

The concept of *literature* is problematic (Caracciolo & Van Duuren, 2015), particularly in the context of the *AC:E*, which refers most commonly to the term *text* (Gardner, 2017). Notions of *high-quality* literary texts, traditional canons, contemporary book trends, representative media, and historically or culturally significant stories are ambiguous. The *AC:E Foundation to Year Six* provides no helpful recommendations (Spurr, 2014), and teachers' knowledge base, preparedness and competency in relevant literature selection and literary instruction are often insufficient (e.g. Clark & Teravainen, 2015; Cremin et al., 2014; Paatsch et al., 2019). The concept of *aesthetic* purpose is problematic in terms of both theory (e.g. Dewey, 1934; Nanay, 2019) and educational practice (e.g. Belas, 2019; Smith, 1971). There is an indisputable lack of clarification regarding its vital educative value in connection with children's reading.

1.7 Contextual constraints

The current neoliberal political-economic processes of globalisation, particularly in the promotion of prescriptive literacy programs (e.g. Powell et al., 2017), heavily impact school policy and practices (e.g. Bousfield & Ragusa, 2014; Jackson, 2016). The pressures of performative standards and accountability impact on teachers' professional knowledge, agency and identities (e.g. Holloway & Brass, 2018), reducing capacity for creativity (e.g. Knight, 2020). High-stakes tests such as the *National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) have a detrimental impact on teaching and learning (e.g. Cumming et al., 2018; Queensland Teachers Union, 2018), often leading to a narrow view of test-oriented reading instruction (Hardy, 2019) and dulled reading experience (e.g. Davies & Sawyer, 2018). Despite intense emphasis on improving reading skills, reports have identified a downward trend in students' reading attainment (e.g. Gonski et al., 2018; McGaw et al., 2020). The NAPLAN results for Year Nine students' reading show little statistical improvement between 2008 and 2021 (NAP, 2021). Responsibility for student engagement in RfE is sometimes controversial and misconstrued, orphaned from parents, teachers and librarians (Merga, 2017).

1.8 Curriculum challenges

At 429 pages, the *Australian Curriculum: English* is considerably lengthier and wordier than comparative international curriculum documents (Mueller, 2014; Spurr, 2014). It has had over 22 reiterations since its outset in 2010. This raises concerns about curriculum overcrowding (Australian Primary Principals Association, 2014;

Davies & Sawyer, 2018), accessibility and coverage (Mueller, 2014), and teacher fatigue (Willis & Exley, 2016). Of the three *AC:E* organisational strands, *Literature* has the least content (Spurr, 2014). Of the 238 content descriptions for Foundation to Year Six, 111 are in *Language*, 78 in *Literacy* and only 49 in *Literature*; across which, there is a technical emphasis on skilled word reading and textual analysis (Gardner, 2017; Sawyer, 2015). Prominence is given to how language is used rather than aesthetic experience as a way of knowing (Davies & Sawyer, 2018). The associated predicates of reading for aesthetic purpose, such as *enjoy*, expected in the response sub-strand of literature appreciation are misplaced (Sawyer, 2015) by learning verbs such as *analyse* and *evaluate*, *identify* and *explain* (ACARA, 2018a; Year Six ACELT1614, ACELT1615). Response to reading is largely restricted to discussion (Gardner, 2017; ACARA, 2018a, ACELT1584/1591/1599/1605, 2018) with little reference to opportunity for creative and aesthetic acts of expression. Despite upper primary years being well-documented as a drop-off point in reading engagement (e.g. Merga, 2014), there is no mention of book(s) in the *AC:E* for Year Five or Six. There are no literature recommendations for Foundation to Year Six. The rigour of a well-scoped and sequenced program for the enjoyment of significant and varied forms of literature seems absent (Spurr, 2014), with only one reference to literature across all *Achievement Standards* from Foundation to Year 10, in Year One (Davies & Sawyer, 2018), which debatably further diminishes literature’s aesthetic purpose and value (Spurr, 2014).

1.9 Communicative contentions

The *Australian Curriculum: English* contains an extensive coverage of reading behaviours in the *content descriptions*. The privileging of reading as a *mechanical process* is, however, a major concern for literacy teachers in Australia (e.g. Ewing, 2018a, 2018b). The *AC:E Glossary* (ACARA, 2018d) definition of the term “*read*” begins with this synonymous procedural learning verb:

“*To process words, symbols or actions to derive and/or construct meaning.*”

The *AC:E Glossary* definition then continues with a broader statement of meaning; “Reading includes interpreting, critically analysing and reflecting upon the meaning of a wide range of written and visual, print and non-print texts” (ACARA, 2018d, *AC:E, Glossary, Letter R.*). This determination does not offer much clarity to early career teachers faced with the task of planning reading instruction—especially one that includes RfE. Research demonstrates emerging issues surrounding rates of pre-service teacher aliteracy and post-literacy teachers (e.g. Chong, 2016), as well as scant knowledge of contemporary children’s literature (e.g. Yates et al., 2019). We might be more than a little concerned about this lack of role models for future generations of readers.

1.10 Fear not! Intrepid decipherment of reading demands in the Australian Curriculum: English

As our intrepid *Ruby Lee* would reassure, “Fear not! I am the bearer of good news” (Shanahan & Binny, 2017). Herewith, I offer a special message: a ternary way of thinking about

curriculum reading behaviours. I aim to clarify what is too often confused and situate the need for a RfE program in the wider context of classroom *AC:E* enactment.

The *AC:E* content is organised into the three inter-related strands of *Language, Literature* and *Literacy*. Each statement of content has a signifier(s) of mode—W for writing, L for listening, S for speaking and R for reading. As an example, Prep students' understanding of the language used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes (ACELA1429), needs to be learned in all four modes W, L, S, R (see Fig. 1).

As a measure of the quantity of *AC:E* reading demands, I will hereby provide a couple of statistical facts. For Foundation (Prep) students, of the total 37 English Curriculum content description statements, 25 indicate R for reading. For Year Six, 25 of the total 31 content descriptions indicate R for reading (ACARA, *AC:E*, version 8.4, , 2018a). Reading indisputably accounts for a considerable proportion of *AC:E* content. This prevalence, however, is unsurprising given the importance of reading attainment to long-term academic success (e.g. Clark & Teravainen, 2017; Cremin et al., 2014; Sullivan & Brown, 2013). Enactment of the curriculum becomes problematic when teachers need to navigate the obstacles described previously and do not allocate sufficient time and resources and pedagogic practice to this sizeable prerogative.

Appropriate pedagogic knowledge is particularly important in the current milieu of *Intentional and targeted teaching* (Fisher et al., 2016), and “planning with purpose” (p. 83) to maximise the impact on learning and effect size in student progress. For pre-service and graduate teachers especially, the work of reading instruction may seem overwhelmingly awash with widespread scholarly wisdom on *rigorous literacy* (Lemov et al., 2016), *empowering engagement* (Ng et al., 2018), *motivational interventions* (Karabenick & Urdan, 2014), culturally responsive (Kourea et al., 2018) and *deep roots* learning (Rupley et al., 2020). I contend here that in the face of so many credible claims and complications, betterment of teacher understanding around curriculum reading behaviours may be more conducive to improved classroom practice.

1.11 Maxwell's motion

I would like to initiate a closer examination and explication of the *AC:E* reading requirements by drawing on James Maxwell's (1974) work *Towards a definition of reading*. Maxwell proposed that the disparity and difficulties in definitions of reading may actually lie in the lack of adequate vocabulary. In trying to define and explain the act of reading, authors tend to provide variations on two essential endeavours. The first is the linguistic decoding of symbols (e.g. Goodman, 1970) and the second pinpoints comprehension skills (e.g. Tinker & McCullough, 1962). Maxwell makes mention of disagreements between scholars on matters

Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes (ACELA1429 - Scootle [↗](#))




W
L
S
R

Elaborations +

Fig. 1 The Australian Curriculum: English Content Description ACELA1429

of reading but concludes that their dispute is redundant because, actually, they are “talking about different things but each is calling it *reading*” (p. 5).

Maxwell advances the longstanding decoding|comprehension bifurcation by defining three different but interrelated components of reading. For Maxwell, *Reading P (Process)* describes the technical mechanics of decoding: phonic and sight word recognition methods, fluency and accuracy. *Reading C (Content)* describes the reading of material with a focus on the intention of the author. *Reading R (Reader)* concerns the characteristics and interests of the reader: their sentient response, understanding and personal development achieved through reading. The three distinguishable definitions of reading, *process (P)*, *content (C)* and *response (R)* provide a useful way of thinking about pedagogic purpose and practice in the contemporary classroom context.

In Table 1, I have provided examples of how the copious and various *AC:E* reading content descriptions might be designated to align with Maxwell’s three components. Curriculum content pertaining to *Reading (P)*—decoding skills—is shown in blue. Curriculum content pertaining to *Reading (C)*—authorial intent—is shown in red, and content pertaining to *Reading (R)*—reader response—is shown in green. The colours are respectively chosen to replicate those of the *Learning by design model* (Kalantzis et al., 2016).

1.12 Taking a purposive stance

Professor Louise Rosenblatt (1978, 1995) is widely recognised as a leading authority on reading instruction and the teaching of literature in particular. In communicating the different *events* of reading, Rosenblatt (1978) references the reading “stance” (p. 29), which she maintains is “vital not only to the solution of various persistent problems... but, to put it bluntly, essential to the survival of the reading of literature” (1995, p. 293). The reading *stance* refers to the reader’s concerns and purpose in attending to the text and the nature of engagement in “calling forth the meaning from the coded symbols” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 22). In the educative context, the teacher ordinarily selects and adopts the appropriate reading *stance*. Rosenblatt specifies two opposing stances. The first is “effertent” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 22), in which the reader’s focus is on *information* to be carried away. It is “nonaesthetic activity” (p. 24). The second is “aesthetic” (p. 24), with attention centred on a reader’s lived experience of a text. Rosenblatt makes a pivotal point about reading instruction; to engage students effectively with a text, teachers must primarily direct their instructional focus to one purposive stance or another. Without this explicit clarification “teaching and testing methods often confuse the student” (Booth, 1995, p. xvii)—through the implicit implementation of an erroneous or uncertain stance.

1.13 Kalantzis’ key to knowledge progression

I would like hereto advocate the practice of taking a very explicit *stance* in teaching the *AC:E* reading content to advance students’ reading development. Maxwell’s (1974) three components of *Reading (P)*, *(C)* and *(R)* require significantly different stances and pedagogic practices commensurate with their developmental purpose. These three different stances invite careful deliberation of objectives and outcomes in terms of teaching strategies, textual engagement and classroom activities. I draw on Kalantzis’ et al. (Kalantzis et al., 2016) *Learning by design model* (LbD) to drill down into and put forward specific pedagogic approaches for each purposive stance.

Table 1 *Australian Curriculum: English—reading skills, knowledge and understanding*

Year/AC:E Strand Sub-strand/ Reading behaviour	P	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Language:</p> <p>Alphabet and phonic knowledge</p> <p>The relationship between sounds and letters (graphemes) and how these are combined when reading and writing</p> <p>Reading (P) Processes</p>	<p>Recognise and name all upper- and lower-case letters (graphemes) and know the most common sound that each letter represents (ACELA1440)</p>	<p>Use short vowels, common long vowels, consonant blends when writing, and blend these to read one-syllable words (ACELA1458)</p>	<p>Use most letter-sound matches including vowel digraphs, less common long vowel patterns, letter clusters and silent letters when reading and writing words of one or more syllable (ACELA1824)</p>	<p>Understand how to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships, syllables, and blending and segmenting to fluently read and write multisyllabic words with more complex letter patterns (ACELA1826)</p>	<p>Understand how to use phonic knowledge to read and write multisyllabic words with more complex letter combinations, including a variety of vowel sounds and known prefixes and suffixes (ACELA1828)</p>	<p>Understand how to use phonic knowledge to read and write less familiar words that share common letter patterns but have different pronunciation (ACELA1829)</p>	<p>Understand how to use phonic knowledge and accumulated understandings about blending, letter-sound relationships, common and uncommon letter patterns and phonic generalisation to read and write increasingly complex words (ACELA1830)</p>
<p>Literacy:</p> <p>Interpreting, analysing, evaluation</p> <p>Comprehension strategies</p> <p>Strategies of constructing meaning from texts, including literal and inferential meaning</p> <p>Reading (C) Content</p>	<p>Use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently (ACELY1650)</p>	<p>Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view, and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features (ACELY1660)</p>	<p>Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features, and print and multimodal text structures (ACELY1670)</p>	<p>Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features (ACELY1680)</p>	<p>Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas, and analysing and evaluating texts (ACELY1692)</p>	<p>Use comprehension strategies to analyse information, integrating and linking ideas from a variety of print and digital sources (ACELY1703)</p>	<p>Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts (ACELY1713)</p>
<p>Literature:</p> <p>Responding to literature</p> <p>Personal responses to the ideas, characters, viewpoints in texts</p> <p>An individual response... relating texts to their own experiences</p> <p>Reading (R) Response</p>	<p>Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors, and illustrators (ACELT1577)</p>	<p>Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences (ACELT1582)</p>	<p>Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts (ACELT1589)</p>	<p>Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596)</p>	<p>Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view (ACELT1603)</p>	<p>Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage and reflecting on the viewpoints of others (ACELT1609)</p>	<p>Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots (ACELT1614)</p>

Note: The content in ACELT1609 and 1614 should ideally be shown in green. However, the knowledge, skills and understanding, pertaining to this curriculum learning, align more with the criticality of *Reading (C)* than the experiential activity of *Reading (P)*. Hopefully, the revised *AC:E* (Version 9.0) will contain learning verbs more fitting to transformative aesthetic purpose

In contemporary curriculum terms, the theory presented in Maxwell's (1974) *Reading (P)*, *(C)* and *(R)* can be applied to three of the four orientations to literacies learning as described by

Kalantzis et al. (2016) in their *LbD* model. Of particular relevance to our consideration of classroom reading behaviours is the *LbD* calibration of teaching approaches to *knowledge processes*—that is, the “different ways of knowing and learning” (p. 119).

The four *LbD* orientations to learning are:

- Experiencing (the known or the new)
- Conceptualising (by naming or with theory)
- Analysing (functionally or critically)
- Applying (appropriately or creatively)

(Kalantzis et al., 2016, p. 73).

1.14 Perspicuous pedagogic approaches

Matching the appropriate *knowledge process* to curriculum learning intentions supports classroom teachers’ work in making meticulous and consequential “epistemic moves” (Kalantzis et al., 2016, p. 75). The four epistemic orientations are not constructed as sequential or balanced. They are, rather, well-defined classifications of learning, which support precise curriculum planning, recording and reporting. They comprise a strong foundation for a more exact three-pronged approach to reading instruction that obviates the detrimental risks of: enacting *readicidal* practices (Gallagher, 2009), or operating redundant and abstruse procedures (Maxwell, 1974), or pursuing discordant objectives and outcomes (Rosenblatt, 1978). In the alignment of knowledge process to reading purpose (*P*), (*C*) and (*R*), students’ trains of thought, knowledge, skills and understanding can be more tightly tailored to curriculum reading learning intentions and likely achieve greater outcomes.

1.15 Conceptualising for decoding processes

Using the knowledge process of *conceptualising* (Kalantzis et al., 2016), students come to recognise the symbols—or “metarepresentations” (p. 78)—of texts. Typically, a technical metalanguage is taught and used to name, classify and generalise. Specific examples of this epistemic orientation are as follows: phonics learning, grammar conventions and spelling rules. Kalantzis et al. (2016) explain how and why the teaching strategy most appropriate to the knowledge process of *conceptualisation* is explicit or direct teaching. This approach aligns with Maxwell’s (1974) *Reading (P)*—decoding processes. In classroom practice, we might expect the relevant reading curriculum content to be enacted in the form of highly structured and sequential phonics, grammar and spelling programs/lessons.

1.16 Analysing for content critique

Analysing functionally or critically (Kalantzis et al., 2016) comprises “processes of reasoning, drawing inferential and deductive conclusions” (p. 79). Students deduce, analyse and evaluate connections made in texts. Typically, students might consider the contextual purposes of texts and evaluate their degree of success. They regard “communicative intentions and reasons for producing the text” (p. 148). The teaching approach most appropriate to this type of *critical thinking* is described by Kalantzis et al. as *functional*. Students learn to investigate and

interpret how a text's social and cultural purpose shapes the text structure as well as other authorial choices. This approach draws on Halliday's (1975) systemic-functional linguistics and develops critical literacy skills through appraisal of how texts work to convey meaning. This approach aligns with Maxwell's (1974) *Reading (C)* with the focus on content and "the intention of the writer" (p. 7). In classroom practice, we might expect the relevant curriculum content to be enacted through the deconstruction or deep read of texts, to analyse how language and image choices convey ideas, dynamics and evidence (e.g. Derewianka & Jones, 2012).

1.17 *Experiencing evocative encounters*

The knowledge process of *experiencing the known and the new* (Kalantzis et al., 2016) encompasses engagement with texts that appeal to students' interests and developing identities. Reading experiences are designed to be enjoyable and personally meaningful. Typically, students are immersed in literary texts that evoke social sharing of the perceived meanings, responses and connections made. The teaching strategy most appropriate to experiential reading is recognised as "authentic" (Kalantzis et al., 2016, p. 120). Students are motivated to read, and then share personal responses to the texts. This approach draws on Dewey's philosophy of experiential education, which satisfies students' social, emotional and aesthetic desires. This approach aligns with Maxwell's (1974) *Reading (R)*, with the pedagogic focus on sensitivity to students' developing reading interests and identities and opportunity for aesthetic expression.

1.18 *Applying reading engagement to writing activities*

The fourth orientation of the *LbD* model (Kalantzis et al., 2016)—*applying*—is also conducive to understanding the reading requirements and student entitlements of the *AC:E*. In all three *AC:E Strands*—*Language*, *Literature* and *Literacy*, the majority of content descriptions for writing **W** also contain a reading R instructional focus. Long-standing scholarly research on the connection between reading and writing (e.g. Alves et al., 2020) supports this receptive-productive reciprocity. As international award-winning, best-selling fiction author and distinguished masterclass guru William Bernhardt (2017) asserts, "The way to become a good writer is to read voraciously" (p. 17). In fact, most of the *AC:E Language Strand* content descriptions comprise both reading and writing instruction. The *Literature* strand content descriptions include a sub-strand of *Creating literature*. From Foundation to Year Six, the two content descriptions in this sub-strand, although demanding the productive mode of writing **W**, also signify an instructional focus on reading R. Similarly, in the *Literacy* strand, in the *Expressing and developing ideas* sub-strand, there is both a productive writing **W** and reading R demand in nearly all of the content descriptions across the year levels. The *LbD* model (Kalantzis et al., 2016) recognises that, in the act of creative application, students work innovatively to express themselves and transfer "one's knowledge of text to a different context" (p. 345). This is particularly important to a RfE pedagogy as aesthetic engagement in literary texts naturally impels an imaginative, expressive response (Dewey, 1934). The *AC:E* content descriptions that prompt a creative application of reading to writing are shown in yellow in Table 2.

Table 2 Australian Curriculum English: categories of reading skills, knowledge and understanding

Stance/ Year	Strand	P	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reading (P) – decoding skills	Language	ACELA1439 ACELA1440 ACELA1432 ACELA1433 ACELA1434 ACELA1435 ACELA1817 ACELA1818	ACELA1822 ACELA1659 ACELA1449 ACELA1450 ACELA1455 ACELA1821 ACELA1822	ACELA1474 ACELA1824 ACELA1465 ACELA1466 ACELA1467 ACELA1468 ACELA1471 ACELA1472 ACELA1823 ACELA1824 ACELA1825	ACELA1475 ACELA1479 ACELA1480 ACELA1481 ACELA1482 ACELA1484 ACELA1485 ACELA1826 ACELA1827	ACELA1487 ACELA1488 ACELA1491 ACELA1492 ACELA1493 ACELA1779 ACELA1799 ACELA1828	ACELA1500 ACELA1506 ACELA1507 ACELA1508 ACELA1513 ACELA1514 ACELA1829	ACELA1515 ACELA1517 ACELA1520 ACELA1521 ACELA1526 ACELA1830
	Literacy	ACELY1649	ACELY1659	ACELY1669	ACELY1679	ACELY1691	ACELY1702	ACELY1712
Reading (C) – analytical understanding of text	Language	ACELA1430 ACELA1431 ACELA1437 ACELA1786	ACELA1443 ACELA1446 ACELA1787 ACELA1447 ACELA1448 ACELA1451 ACELA1454	ACELA1640 ACELA1462 ACELA1463 ACELA1464 ACELA1469 ACELA1470	ACELA1477 ACELA1478 ACELA1790 ACELA1483	ACELA1489 ACELA1490 ACELA1494 ACELA1495 ACELA1496 ACELA1498 ACELA1793	ACELA1501 ACELA1502 ACELA1504 ACELA1505 ACELA1512 ACELA1797	ACELA1518 ACELA1522 ACELA1523 ACELA1524 ACELA1525
	Literacy	ACELY1645 ACELY1648 ACELY1650 ACELY1652	ACELY1662 ACELY1658 ACELY1660 ACELY1662	ACELY1665 ACELY1668 ACELY1670 ACELY1672	ACELY1680 ACELY1675 ACELY1678 ACELY1683	ACELY1686 ACELY1690 ACELY1692 ACELY1695	ACELY1698 ACELY1701 ACELY1703 ACELY1705	ACELY1711 ACELY1713 ACELY1715 ACELY1708 ACELY1801
	Literature	ACELT1575 ACELT1578 ACELT1785	ACELT1581 ACELT1584	ACELT1587 ACELT1591	ACELT1594 ACELT1599 ACELT1600	ACELT1602 ACELT1605 ACELT1606	ACELT1608 ACELT1609 ACELT1610 ACELT1611	ACELT1613 ACELT1614 ACELT1615 ACELT1616 ACELT1617
Reading (R) – aesthetic	Language	ACELA1429						
	Literature	ACELT1783 ACELT1577 ACELT1579 ACELT1580 ACELT1831	ACELT1583 ACELT1582 ACELT1586 ACELT1832	ACELT1589 ACELT1590 ACELT1592 ACELT1593 ACELT1833	ACELT1596 ACELT1596 ACELT1598 ACELT1601 ACELT1791	ACELT1603 ACELT1604 ACELT1607 ACELT1794	ACELT1795 ACELT1612 ACELT1798	ACELT1618 ACELT1800
Reading for writing	Literacy	ACELY1651	ACELY1661	ACELY1671	ACELY1682 ACELY1685	ACELY1694 ACELY1697	ACELY1704 ACELY1707	ACELY1710 ACELY1714
	Literature	ACELT1580 ACELT1831	ACELT1586 ACELT1832	ACELT1592 ACELT1593 ACELT1833	ACELT1601 ACELT1791	ACELT1607 ACELT1794	ACELT1612 ACELT1798	ACELT1618 ACELT1800

Key: Reading stance Epistemic pedagogic approach	
(P)	Conceptualising through direct and explicit instruction
(C)	Analysing through critical inquiry
(R)	Experiencing through authentic instruction
(R)	Applying through inspired, creative, expressive response

1.19 Classroom classification of reading content

In Table 2, I have attempted to classify the *AC:E* reading content descriptions into the three components of reading (P), (C) and (R) and their accordant knowledge processes. At the time

of writing this article, some of the *content descriptions* are not displayed on the Australian Curriculum website with the reading symbol **R** even though they directly indicate a reading requirement. Examples include ACELA1458, ACELY1648 and ACELT1575 (ACARA, 2018a). I propose that all reading content shown in blue relates to decoding skills, to be explicitly or directly taught from a conceptual stance. All reading content shown in red relates to critical literacy, to be taught from a functional|analytical stance. All reading content shown in green relates to experiential encounters of reading, to be taught from an aesthetic stance. These classifications are not set in stone, but rather provide a starting point for school discussions about classroom reading instruction, reading programs, appropriate resources, and the most effective and impactful pedagogic approaches.

1.20 Special texts for special reading purpose

For greatest reading outcomes, there really needs to be a cohesive alignment of curriculum learning intention(s), knowledge process, pedagogic approach, textual engagement and classroom activity. A teacher's capacity to design and structure teaching and learning sequences is a highly significant professional responsibility (AITSL, 2017). In the current climate of targeted, precision, powerful and empowering pedagogic practice, teachers need well-designed, impactful teaching plans. When it comes to making decisions about curriculum enactment, the choice of texts in which students are to be engaged is critical. Like Shanahan and Binny's (2017) ratiocinative teacher *Mrs Majestic-Jones*, we need special people, such as teachers and children's authors, to do special jobs, such as reading role-modelling and crafting writing practices.

When we consider the proposal of a three-pronged *Reading (P), (C) and (R)* program, the oppositional determination of prescriptive schemes versus real books can be curtailed. The resources needed to explicitly teach conceptual *Reading (P) decoding skills* can come from a prescriptive purchased program, if needs be. A list of these programs can be found here. Of course, they can also be taught in context of/with children's books (e.g. Exley et al., 2015; Hornsby & Wilson, 2010) and real-world texts. However, it cannot and must not be presumed that this activity constitutes educative reading enjoyment. It does not. Even if the lessons begin with a jaunty read-aloud.

The analytical and critical skills of *Reading (C)* are arguably best taught through immersion in the genuine works and expertise of published authors and real-world texts using a critical literacy lens (e.g. Fisher et al., 2020; Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2019). Again, this cannot and must not be presumed to constitute student engagement in reading enjoyment—no matter how enjoyable the investigative activities are.

The experiential encounters of *Reading (R)* are undisputedly best taught through immersion in the authentic works and expertise of published authors—preferably using high-quality high-interest children's literature. The curriculum, in fact, quite rightly demands student engagement “in texts in which the *primary purpose* is aesthetic” (ACARA, AC:E, 2018). I must acknowledge here that non-fiction texts can be read for enjoyment (Alexander & Jarman, 2018; Cremin et al., 2019). This article, however, is focused on children's books created primarily for aesthetic purpose. For many wonderful aesthetically engaging, literature-based activities, see Professor Jeffrey D. Wilhelm's (2016) wonderful body of work and Ewing and Saunders' (2016) sensational *School drama book*.

1.21 Perceptive and poetic personal preferences

We want children to love reading, do not we? We want to see students engage volitionally and habitually and enduringly in beautiful books. A key point of the proposed three-pronged approach to classroom reading is that reading for enjoyment (RfE) requires its own, separate and distinct program of instruction. Just to be absolutely clear on this point, reading enjoyment—as aesthetic experience—should not be enacted as an *examination* of authorial word choices. That is the business of *Reading (C)* instruction. Nor should student engagement in a text for the development of comprehension skills be classed as reading for enjoyment. Even if it entails a wonderful read. That is also the business of *Reading (C)* (or possibly, perhaps, sometimes *Reading (P)* instruction). Student engagement in reading for enjoyment should not be limited to an oral, written or digital presentation of an imposed response to required reading. That is the business of learning to write and create texts. As a particular and vital *way of knowing*, RfE requires dedicated time and space as well as more communicable terms of reference for *Reading (R)* instruction. The educative, transformative power of a RfE pedagogy involves aesthetic perception and sense-meaning. Unfortunately, research literature on students' aesthetic development, despite its essentiality, is scant. Fortunately, John Dewey's (1934) *Art as experience* remains a seminal text in this endeavour. Despite its vintage, it is recognised as an “extremely influential” masterpiece (Shusterman, 2010, p. 26).

In *Art as experience* (1934), Dewey explains both what aesthetic experience is and is not. In its application to classroom reading instruction, it is helpful here to consider Dewey's ideas on aesthetic perception and sense-meaning in relation to Maxwell's (1974) later work on the three components of reading. In terms of the mechanics of decoding *Reading (P)*, Dewey contends that aesthetic experience is *not* about the following: automatic activity or procedure, pedantic definitions nor technical recognition and response to conventional symbols. These activities are not part of a RfE pedagogy. In the matter of authorial choices *Reading (C)*, Dewey contends that aesthetic experience is not about the following: observation of rules, convention or stereotype, nor imposed order or classifications, nor intellectual justification. These activities are not part of a RfE pedagogy. In consideration of the characteristics and interests of the reader *Reading (R)*, Dewey contends that aesthetic experience is not about the following: excessive emotional outburst, nor forcing sensory qualities, nor coercing evocative occasion. This sentimental activity holds little-to-no educational value.

According to Dewey, aesthetic experience is transformative, emotionalised and imaginative thinking. The human desire for interactive relations impels, serves and is satisfied by aesthetic engagement with literature. In reading from an aesthetic stance, students' prior experiences are stirred. Through receptivity and extraction, understanding is renewed, recreated and refined. Dewey describes aesthetic engagement as being moved to action by an art-object—such as literature. There is a searching out of meaning and pressing forth of response. This involves perceptive attention being drawn to the sense qualities of texts and their consequential bio-mediated affect—that is responsive activity of both body and mind. There is an undergoing of feeling and an outgoing in which the emphasis is on expressiveness of meaning. He describes aesthetic *purpose* as working emotions evoked into artistic expression. The desire to respond prompts and satisfies creative and inspired urges. As teachers, we must guide and support the acts of engagement and expression. These are the activities of a RfE pedagogy. A wonderful place to begin planning for RfE is the Open University (UK), RfP website here, and its four key strategies: social reading environments, reading loud, independent reading and informal book talk.

1.22 A call to action

Like *Ruby Lee*, I offer this trilateral message as a “special emergency officer” (Shanahan & Binny, 2017, n. p.). The problems identified previously in reading instruction and student outcomes justify the need for educators to unite in the urgent need for more defined and effective, as well as affective, reading programs. The curriculum content that describes the knowledge, skills and understanding of reading can be better understood in terms of a three-pronged approach to reading instruction. In this way, students potentially develop better accuracy in their decoding skills, greater analytical understanding of the texts they engage with and deeper aesthetic appreciation for literary reading experiences. They develop a wider reading repertoire and different ways of knowing the texts, books and world around them. They engage in a wide variety of high-quality, rich literature for enjoyment.

The *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (CAGEC, 2019), as we have seen, acknowledges the vital role that education plays in promoting students’ aesthetic development. The *AC:E* demand for students to engage in a variety of texts for enjoyment is an evidence-based curricular entitlement. In light of the vast benefits of increased academic attainment as well as greater personal and social capabilities, I wonder what feelings you might have about joining a movement towards an avid RfE pedagogy. We will definitely see improvement in learning outcomes. A sensitively engendered love of reading holds lifelong potential too—meeting the needs of students now and well into the future.

And so dear classroom practitioners, school leaders and literacy educators, as Mrs. Majestic-Jones (Shanahan & Binny, 2017) might say, please allocate special time and choose especially rich resources for special reading purpose! And please, for the sake of all our very special young students,

“Do not dawdle!”

(Shanahan & Binny, 2017, n. p.).

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