THE EMPATHY LIBRARY:

CONCEPTUALISING A SELECTION

RATIONALE AND INTERVENTION DESIGN.

INTRODUCTION

The Empathy Library project aims to encourage young readers, aged 15-25, to engage with reading in order to develop empathy. Supported by the UNCFRC social empathy programme and following on the report published by the Irish Research Council, 'Empathy, Social Values, and Civic Behaviour Among Early Adolescents in Ireland: Composite Report' it is clear that empathy education is invaluable to early development in young people. It is important to keep in mind, however, that education can also be practiced informally, out of the classroom. The Empathy Library looks to formulate an intervention plan on how to best engage young people in reading outside of the classroom and amongst peers. The literature review preceding this paper has shown that there are a number of tentative links between reading for pleasure and empathetic response in readers. This paper aims to answer what recommendations should be followed in order to create a reading intervention that will best illicit empathy among young readers drawing on previous research conducted on literary theory and reading interventions.

EMPATHY AND LITERARY THEORY

When considering written materials to be selected for a reading intervention as planned, it must be made clear the sheer enormity of texts that can be offered. Anything in writing could potentially be a candidate for prescribed reading, and it is this broad spectrum of material which may lead book selection to become arbitrary. Therefore, we must look beyond how reading links to empathy and begin to discuss what it is in the texts that creates an empathetic response. Literary technique is where we will find these answers, the styles and uses of writing which distinguish themselves from others through narrativity, fictionality and foregrounding to connect with readers in a way which boosts an empathetic response. Once these features can be established and their effects understood, we can begin to form a rationale behind selecting texts based on these features.

NARRATIVITY

The most significant distinction that can be drawn in literary style is that of narrative versus non-narrative writing. A narrative text is one that, through a sequence of events, tells a story with a structured beginning, middle and end. Narrative texts will tend to focus on plot, characters, and dialogue. Non-narrative texts, contrast to this, being by and large aiming to inform a reader. Non-narrative texts will use the language of persuasion and lean heavily on statistics and

empirical truths in an expository manner. We do not have much in the way of systemic comparisons between these two styles of writing however we can draw some contrasts between them and make some conclusions based on how one may be more useful than the other in terms of narrative empathy. Non-narrative texts are informative materials which discuss factual accounts of events, if looking for an example, one could think of a news article or investigative journal on the migrant crisis, one that presents the truth surrounding the situation. Matthija and Veltkamp (2013) have discussed how, in contrast to this, narrative texts aim to form a 'truthlikeness'. The sequence of events does not have to be factual, but the world in which the characters live in is believable to the extent that the reader can view it as an authentic portrayal of real-world events. Continuing our example, a narrative text would be a novella or autobiography about the experiences of a migrant seeking asylum.

Narrative texts hold a number of techniques that distinguish themselves from their non-narrative counterparts which can be shown to have tentative links to empathetic responses. They present the reader with a point of view, a stream of consciousness, dialogue and coherent goals that all work to allow the reader to gain an emotional insight into the character (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). By and large, they will feature many characters, but they will only divulge the thoughts and emotions of a select few, in most cases, only one. With access to only one stream of consciousness, the reader is compelled to draw inferences about other characters feelings and emotions, thereby training their theory of mind (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017). Although all of these techniques are important, it is unclear what features in narrative texts best result in role-taking. Techniques which would logically seem influential such as the use of first-person narratives have been shown to have little impact on a reader's level of empathy. Third-person narratives have been shown to make readers view the texts as more objective and therefore more reliable resulting in a more believable narrative (Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2020). More than likely, all these techniques in tandem result in an empathetic response, but it is important to note that they appear only rarely in expository texts.

One could be led to believe that giving a reader a factual account of the world they live in would be sufficient to lead them to understand the hardships of others but, on the contrary, it appears that readers find it more challenging to experience a positive effect to reading about groups as a whole, especially when quantified into percentiles and datapoints (Matthija and Veltkamp, 2013). It is a logical style and therefore inherently distanced from identification and empathy. The narrative style is the antithesis to this, being focused on the perspectives and emotions of an individual, the reader can move to identify with the characters in a novel in a way that they simply cannot with a newspaper. This is in part, to do with narrativity's association with role-taking. Role-taking is the process by which a reader imaginatively believes that they are or could be the character they are reading about. It is an emotional connection between reader and narrative that bridges the divide between fact and fiction. In terms of empathy, it can be argued that role-taking is one of the essential effects of reading literature and one that is entirely necessary for creating an empathetic response. In its simplest terms, the reader is putting themselves in the shoes of the characters and recognising their struggle. Texts that are narrative in nature can present readers with multiple complex perspectives on a topic, allowing them to take on a perspective of events outside of their own (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). The reader stops feeling for characters and begins to feel with them, in effect, evoking empathy where a non-literary text may at best only result in sympathy. Fostering role-taking should be one of the principal aims of a reading intervention looking to improve empathy among readers. If it can be said that narrative texts are more likely to evoke role-taking, then the reading selection should

focus texts that are narrative in style. Knowing this, we can begin to look at the different types of narrative texts.

FICTIONALITY

When we think of narrative, we are immediately drawn to think of fiction writing. However, fiction is one of many different narrative styles. Others would include creative non-fiction, screenplay and poetry. As these are all to some extent narrative in style, possessing the features that result in narrative empathy, they are all adequate choices for empathy reading. Not much research has been conducted comparing these styles in their empathetic effect however some have been used separately. For example, research done by Xerri & Xerri Agius (2015) showed that poetry reading interventions to students in Malta, an island with significant tensions over migration, made participants more empathetic towards asylum seekers. Understanding that these are all viable resources in empathy education, we will focus on features of fiction specifically and its effects on reader empathy.

Narrative fiction is a genre of writing which sets out a series of events which are almost entirely non-factual but may be inspired by factual occurrence. As a narrative text, they maintain the key features of point of view, dialogue, goals and consciousness, which allows a reader to connect emotionally with a character and empathise with them. It has been shown that reading narrative fiction causes a 'simulation process' in the reader's mind running on a 'planning processor' which is used daily to plan actions and attain goals (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). The reader is simulating the events of the novel in their mind, assessing the story's reliability and factoring themselves into the equation on how they would react when placed in similar circumstances. Studies performed by Kidd and Castano (2013) found that it is specifically literary fiction that evokes the most empathetic response as opposed to 'popular' fiction. The discussion of what is literary fiction is something that is much debated in the literary world however for a simplistic explanation we can say that literary fiction is a type of writing that pays more attention to character and theme than a central plot (Collins, et al. 2020). Typically these texts are more complex in narrative style and literary technique and feature higher levels of ambiguity and complexity in characterisation. Through these techniques, reading becomes an exercise in theory of mind (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015).

When looking at the effects of fiction and non-fiction on empathetic response, results appear to be mixed. Koopman and Hakemulder (2015) have argued that narrativity is more important than fictionality in bolstering reader empathy, and this has been shown in further studies by Koopman (2015). However, Junker & Jacquemin (2017) found that fiction trumped non-fiction. As Bruner (1986) has argued, there is no separating narrativity from fiction, and an auto-biography will, to some extent have a biased narrative. Fiction, although having this same narrative does not pretend to be factual, it presents information as a story and therefore can be believable to a reader enhancing the 'truthlikeness' of narrative style. It is this inherent fictionality that allows readers to suspend disbelief and immerse themselves in a word different from their own. Knowing that they are not reading about the real world allows a reader to ignore their own biases and opinions of a topic and reintroduce themselves to it from a new perspective (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). This is where the importance of a theme-driven narrative can be seen as a reader is now able to look at a social or political commentary from new eyes and learn about a point of view of the world which they would never have otherwise considered.

Another effect of reading fiction that we may discuss is that of 'transportation' or the reader's 'emotional involvement in a story' which comes about as a result of fictional narrative's ability to elicit narrative emotions such as surprise or joy (Matthija and Veltkamp, 2013). Numerous studies have shown the positive association between empathy and self-reported levels of transportation within a narrative. If a reader is not able to identify with a text, then they will become disengaged and stop reading. Matthijs & Veltkamp (2013) have shown that transportation into a fictional narrative was shown to positively influence empathy over time, whereas a lack of transportation leads to lower empathy. A result reflected in studies conducted by Walkington et al. (2020) on empathetic responses in reading. Returning to what we have discussed about the importance of simulation to reader identification within the narrative Johnson (2012) has argued that readers are less likely to simulate the experiences depicted in a narrative if they are not transported within. Therefore, the extensive use of narrative emotion may result in higher levels of empathy among readers.

Thompson and Melchior (2020) in discussing the effects that literary fiction has on empathy have argued that literary texts have tentative links with self-reflection through a process they define as 'stillness'. Stillness is 'an empty space or time that is created as a result of reading processes'. The assumption being that as a piece of literary fiction is less plot-driven than popular fiction, a reader will likely take more time to finish the narrative. The more spaces and rest between continuing the novel result in more time spent on the readers' behalf thinking about the narrative itself, its meaning, and its broader implications on the real world. These reflections can either be thoughts and opinions about the wider world or on their own actions. The space itself can be relatively minute, for example, mind wandering during reading or extensive interruptions in reading. These reflections on how the narrative imitates the real world may have less to do with evoking empathy and more to do with personal growth, change and prosocial behaviour on the reader's part (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). In this way, self-reflection is a secondary goal of reading for empathy that could potentially bring the reader's empathy for characters into the real world and translate to empathy for others. If this is the case, then there is an argument for encouraging slow, thoughtful reading of narrative texts. This slowing down can also be aided in literature through the literary technique of foregrounding.

Foregrounding can be considered to be one of the defining features in what makes a text 'literary', it is the striking features in the use of language (e.g. unconventional syntax and semantics) which evoke aesthetic emotions, the feelings felt in response to exposure and appreciation of art (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). A literary text, in effect, draws attention away from the story and narrative emotion and towards the use of language itself by departing from what would be considered 'ordinary' language usage. In theory, this striking use of language will compel a reader to slow down their processing of a text and make the content within more vivid (Koopman, 2015). If we accept that the speed of reading is a barrier to stillness and self-reflection, we can then say that texts which feature more literary foregrounding will result in more time spent on the text. The aesthetic emotion which would be desired of foregrounding is 'defamiliarisation', or the process by which the reader steps out of the mundane normality to the world around them and begins to look at things differently. This mixture of narrative emotion from transportation and aesthetic emotion from foregrounding will be informed by the reader's personal experiences and result in self-reflection (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015).

However, there is also evidence that too much foregrounding can lead to textual difficulty that will impair the reader's ability to comprehend the text. What is more, if a text focuses too

much on aesthetic emotion over narrative emotion then the reader will likely lose an emotional connection with the characters of the narrative, becoming 'aesthetically distanced' (Koopman, 2015). Junker & Jacquemin (2017) have shown that textual difficulty is the most significant predictor of empathetic response in readers, where textual difficulty was higher, empathetic response tended to be lower and that participants scored higher in empathy when they 'could easily follow the action and events of the book.' If too much time is spent by the reader analysing the language of a text, there appears to be little desire to analyse the emotional complexities of reading, thereby stunting transportation and inhibiting empathy. If a reading intervention is to be designed off of literary texts for school-aged participants who may not necessarily be accustomed to reading, it would be best to avoid texts that have widely different language usage compared to everyday speech. There will have to be a balance in a selection which reflects both foregrounding and transportation. This may put non-contemporary texts, with older, more arcane language usage under some scrutiny in the selection process.

EXTRA-TEXTUAL FACTORS TO FORMING A RATIONALE

Now that we have established the intra-textual factors that will influence the selection of materials of a reading intervention, we can look at the considerations that are particular to the intervention itself. In doing so, we can piece together what shape the prescribed reading will take in the final intervention. The factors to consider in these topics are theme selection, youth participation, library size and target audience. The reading intervention's aim is to promote young people to engage in discussion about thematic social issues and foster empathy for characters in novels that they reflect. Careful consideration should be taken in what those social issues should be.

THEME SELECTION – YOUTH PARTICIPATION

It should be emphasised that the desire of the intervention is not to teach a particular viewpoint but instead to be pleasurable and engaging to a young reader. Therefore, the selection of these themes should not be chosen from a top-down perspective but instead from the bottom up, making the reading selection more youth-led. A focus group of young people which suits the intervention's age range can be organised in order to choose five topics that interest them, which they would like to read about and see discussed in an intervention. Once this youth participation is established, we can choose texts based on their perspectives, characters and cultural frameworks that best suit the study's aims of exposing young people to issues pertinent to youth in society and provoke empathy across differences. No narrative is going to give a truly accurate account of a social issue, and in some cases, they may reinforce harmful stereotypes about that issue or the people that it effects (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017). To counteract this effect, three novels should be offered on each topic selected. This way, a reading intervention will allow a diverse perspective of the topics chosen and allows the reading participants to discuss how portrayals of a social issue can differ between texts. As no one text holds the whole truth on a narrative, the reading intervention will give young people an opportunity to analyse what they have read in different texts and see the similarities and differences between the depiction of thematic issues and how they relate to the real world. Selection of texts based on these thematic issues may include representation of diverse people groups, for example, people in ethnic or LGBT+ communities. Before texts are selected that pertain to these social groups, they must be

shown to be 'community-conscious' as highlighted by Clarke and Blackburn (2009). Community Conscious texts show diverse characters interacting with both their immediate communities and society as a whole in order to demonstrate that members of these communities hold complex relationships within society. Their relationship with a diverse community can neither be disregarded to imply that community relationships do not matter nor take up so much attention that it appears they belong to a 'clique' and do not take part in a broader societal community.

LIBRARY SIZE

After the selection of five topics with three books in each, we can plan a 'library size' of fifteen texts. What we will determine next is the length of these proposed texts. The intervention design is limited to an eight-week period in which reader engagement may vary. As we have seen in our discussion of stillness our aim should not be to have young people read as many texts as possible, however, it will likely be beneficial to a reading participant to feel as if they are making progress within the intervention. Selection of excessively long texts may result in readers losing interest or skimming the narrative in order to reach an end and begin a new book. Texts that are too short, however, will not allow a reader to spend enough time on the narrative to emotionally connect with the characters or engage in 'stillness' and self-reflection. A benchmark of 350 pages can be placed on texts to disqualify those that are too large for the intervention. If it's deemed that a book that exceeds this limit is none the less significant in evoking empathy it could be added to the reading list but given in extracts for the pilot intervention in order to prevent reader fatigue.

AUDIENCE AGE AND APTITUDE

As the intended age range for the reading intervention is between 15-25, careful attention must be paid to ensuring a diverse range of age and reading levels will be able to access these texts. A relatively simplistic way of doing so is by ensuring that the principal characters in the texts offered are age-appropriate for the readership (Hughes & Laffier, 2016). It has been shown that young people tend to have difficulty empathising with those they see as different from themselves. The inclusion of characters that are of a similar age to reading participants will make building empathetic links more comfortable overall. We must also be careful to select texts that offer a wide range of reader difficulty. Some students may be naturally more accustom to reading while others may not. To ensure accessibility, texts selected should reflect this diversity in reader aptitude. With these considerations in mind, the rationale design behind the reading intervention can be drawn (Fig. 1) and a prescribed book list formed (Fig. 2)

Fig. 1. Book Selection Rationale.

15 texts selected (5 groups of 3 books – each group pertaining to a thematic issue determined by a youth lead focus group.)
Texts should not exceed a maximum of 350 pages.
Themes in texts should be easily identifiable to a young reader.
Texts should be narrative is style over informative (discussing statistics and generalised grouping)
Texts can be; short stories, novellas, book extracts, graphic novels, poetry collections, narrative biographies and screenplays.
Fiction narratives should be prioritised over non-fiction in order to increase likelihood of narrative role-taking
Books should not be too narratively complex – insuring reader accessibility.
Texts must be chosen to avoid perpetuation of stereotypes.
Books should be age appropriate for 15-25 year olds and feature age appropriate characters.
Contemporary novels, written in the last century, should be prioritised over older narratives.
Efforts should be made to ensure texts are 'community conscious' eg. Aware of the ways in which diverse groups interact with society as a whole and their own communities.

INTERVENTION DESIGN

With an 'Empathy Library' determined we can begin to look into the design of a reading intervention and draw on examples of past interventions in the literature to predict what shape an eight-week intervention may take. The intervention design relies on four major categories: lesson layout, directing discussion, activities and data collection. Each session of an intervention must have clearly defined purpose, objectives, procedures, materials and evaluations as shown by (Thompson & Melchior, 2020) (Fig. 3). This ensures a coherent set of goals to each lesson without which conduction of the discussion may become confused or misguided.

Fig. 3. Proposed Intervention Plan.

Date	Day One

Purpose	It is important to conduct this reading intervention to encourage participants to engage with literature through open discussion and activities, focusing on the explicit and implicit emotions of others to build an understanding of empathy.
	The purpose of day one is to familiarize students with the intervention's goals, the key concept of empathy, complete the pre-questionnaires and begin the selection of reading materials.
Objectives	The participants will fully understand the intended outcomes of the reading intervention.
	Participants will be made familiar with the concept of empathy.
	The participants will complete the pre – questionnaires.
	Participants will have chosen their first book they would like to read for the intervention.
Procedure	Introduction:

- The researcher will introduce the Empathy Library and discuss how texts were selected and how topics were chosen via youth participation.
- The researcher will explain to participants that they will be learning and discussing emotions and empathy through the texts.
- The researcher and participants will work together to define the key concepts of the intervention. Topics to be convered are, youth as researchers, narrative empathy and pro-social behaviour.

Development:

- The researcher will briefly introduce the selected reading topics and the three tests concerning each topic.
- The participants will be asked to select which text they would want to read.
- The researcher will give out and explain personal journals to participants.

Summary:

- After the texts are selected the researcher will discuss the planned outline of further sessions. It will be explained to participants that they are to read as much of their text before the next week's meeting. It will be explained to youth participants that each weak discussion will be focused on what has been read and drawing comparisons between texts focusing on emotion and empathy. It will be explained how to use the personal journal and that activities will be carried out weekly to promote empathy.
- Participants will be asked to do some cursory research into their chosen text or topic in whatever may interest them about it to discuss for next week.
- After this, the researcher will explain and administer the pre-questionnaires.

Materials:	Selected Empathy Library texts for readers to select.
	Pre-questionnaires and writing materials.
	Chart paper and markers. (to display information to participants)

LESSON LAYOUT

PRE-INTERVENTION

As this intervention is designed and will be piloted on young people under the age of eighteen, researchers must remain transparent with their intentions throughout and seek consent from a parent or guardian before any sessions are carried out (Burke & Greenfield, 2016). Parents and guardians should be presented with an outline of the lesson plan, prescribed textbooks, and a

clear explanation that the research aims to ascertain the association between reading for pleasure and empathy among young people. It must be made clear that young people will be discussing a number of social themes, some of which may be controversial, and that the intervention aims to open discussion about these topics as opposed to teach any particular viewpoint or lesson (Burke & Greenfield, 2016). It will also be made clear that morality regarding topics will not be discussed, instead focusing on how topics relate to real-world social issues. It will be up to the discretion of parents and guardians to measure a young person's emotional maturity to discuss these topics before giving consent to take part in the intervention. Motivation for taking part in this intervention will also have to be predicted. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) have discussed how readers with low reading ability may be 'extrinsically rather than intrinsically motivated', only reading in order to achieve a grade in lessons over enjoyment. If the reading intervention as planned, only motivates those who already enjoy reading, results will be skewed towards young people who are already adept in reading. Motivating factors in completing a task include the importance of doing well on a task, task enjoyment, relationship to future goals and negative factors such as failure (Cockroft, Charlotte & Atkinson, 2017). We should look at what ways we can aim for the reading intervention to carry value for the participants involved in order to influence engagement and persistence.

FIRST MEETING

The first session of the intervention will be focused on explaining the research intentions to young people. Key concepts such as empathy will be explained and discussed in full as will the Youth as Researchers Programme and the importance that youth agency will take over the eight weeks of lessons. The fifteen prescribed books will be introduced to the young people, and each will be given the chance to choose which book they would like to read first. The decision to avoid having young people all read the same book to discuss is inspired by Guthrie & Wigfield's (2000) study which showed that student choice allowed participants to have more control over what they were reading. As our desire is for reading to be a pleasurable experience that is informative and opens discussions, it is more logical for young people to choose what they want to read. Doing this has an additional effect, as Ivey (2014) has shown, having young people read and discuss a diverse number of books allows a young person to compare what they have read with what their peer talks about reading. It encourages critical thinking about similarities and differences between topics and themes portrayed in novels. Peer recommendation can inspire young people on what book they would like to read next after they have finished their own. In this way, avoiding having one group read the same book opens a broad range of discussion opportunities and gives young people more agency in their reading, allowing them to find genres that they enjoy and thereby making reading a more pleasurable experience.

After the young people have selected the first books they would like to read, they should be given a personal journal with which they can write down their observations, reactions and thoughts to what they are reading. Keen (2007) has highlighted how although group discussion on personal opinions to a text can be very informative, it may none the less be subject to biases due to peer pressure. A blend of personal response and group discussion allows young people to reflect on what they have read in a safe space and only divulge their opinions on a topic with peers when they feel safe to do so. It should be made clear that everything written within these journals will be kept confidential and that they will only be used for analysis within the research.

Participants should be allowed to use their journal in as creative a manner as they wish as long as its contents are focused on the reading. For example, an artistic young person could use the journal to draw or doodle scenes, characters and settings from the book they are reading.

The final aim of the intervention's first session should be to encourage the participants to research what they are going to be reading about. It has been shown that readers can be uninformed, and when this is the case, they will find it more difficult to interpret texts outside of their own worldviews and experiences (Cai 1995). Although the participants' experiences are essential to foster role-taking in a narrative, it can none the less be limiting, and contextualisation may be necessary to connect with a character's perspective effectively. Some studies, such as Casale et al. (2018) have looked to frame this contextualisation in pre-reading lessons. However, this was done in a classroom setting which had an additional aim of teaching students history and was focused solely on one book. A different approach is necessary in order to properly contextualise what may be fifteen books outside of a classroom. If participants are encouraged to do a cursory search about the book they are about to read, they may pick up information they would not have had without such an activity. The research could take the form of learning more about the author, the physical and historical setting, the underlying theme, or the text's impact in the real world. As we wish to avoid any activity in this intervention being academic in nature students will not be asked to write anything about what they discovered, although they may be asked to discuss what they researched in the next session.

METHODS OF DIRECTING DISCUSSION

CHARACTER AND EMOTIONAL DISCUSSION

Each session following the first will be focused on reader engagement and discussion of the themes at hand in the novels they are reading. Participants will reflect on what they have read and discuss what they enjoy about the novels. Discussions may take place in pairs, groups or as a whole. In order to encourage empathetic response and role-taking, participants will be asked to highlight their thoughts and emotions on the characters in their novels. Potential discussion questions may include 'What kind of world does this character live in?', 'What are the daily struggles that this character has to live with.', 'How well does this character cope with these struggles and what are the strongest emotions that come across in your reading.'. From this surface-level discussion around character and emotion, participants can be led to compare the experiences of characters with their own, relating to how they felt in similar situations. Readers should be encouraged to think of the characters in a text as 'mirrors and windows' (Clark & Blackburn, 2009). When a reader thinks of a character as a window, they look at what makes the character different from themselves, what societal, cultural, and historical backgrounds distinguish them and what can the reader learn about these backgrounds through reading them. Thinking of a character as a mirror has the opposite goal, it looks to search for the similarities in characters with the self and shows the experiences and backgrounds that are common between reader and character. If readers are encouraged to do both, they will be better able to understand that difference is not a barrier to identification and that there is a commonality to all people, allowing for more in-depth emotional connection and role taking in readers. It has been demonstrated by Koopman (2015) that some emotions such as grief are easily identifiable and relatable to a reader; they are relatively easy to understand and empathise with. Other emotions,

such as depression are more complex and rely more heavily on reader experience to become identifiable. Participants will be encouraged to discuss how they identify and empathise with characters in novels, only when they feel comfortable in doing so publicly.

SOCIAL CONTEXT AND REAL-WORLD DISCUSSION

Discussion may also turn away from character and towards societal controversy. When this happens, it must be ensured that participants, including the researcher, will not pressure readers to change their beliefs on any topic. All students will be encouraged to read into their chosen texts and discuss in what ways they give a perspective of a topic that they had not considered beforehand. In doing so, participants will be brought to think about a point of view of the world different from their own and ideally discuss the merits to that world view which they would not have had without their discussion. Through this consideration of opposing viewpoints, readers may be able to empathise with characters who do not think about the world in the same way as them. The designed reading intervention and the discussions surrounding it will likely heighten participants awareness about a topic; however, a discussion around these topics must also reflect the possibility for change (Burke & Greenfield, 2016). A common trap in mental reasoning, especially in the discussion of texts that may be set in a different period, is that readers may critique characters or societies for moral or intellectual deficiencies (Casale, et al. 2018). Prior research on the novel and discussions may focus on how cultures and people, may not have the same perspective on a topic that we would think to be common sense contemporaneously. This opens an opportunity for discussion about how societal mindsets change for better or worse and that political, cultural, and societal issues that we face now can change for the better in the future, participants will have the opportunity to take an active part to find solutions to the topic at hand.

CHALLENGES FACING DISCUSSION

A significant challenge that may likely appear during these discussions is reader engagement. Books that participants selected initially may not be suitable for them. Readers should be encouraged to find new books if they do not enjoy the ones they are currently reading and the researcher must be prepared to take time and outside effort to ensure readers stay engaged. One way to keep readers engaged with their materials is through regular use of solitary or group activities throughout the intervention. Not alone can these activities be enjoyable, but they may also have links to higher levels of reader empathy overall. Any activities that are undertaken should be interactive and youth-centred designed to promote empathy. We have already discussed the benefits to pre-reading research on a topic, but others may include creative writing exercises, dramatic enactment, and visual arts. Regardless of the type of activity that is undertaken, they must avoid being similar to classroom assignments such as personal statements and analytical essays on a text. It has been shown that these didactic methods of engagement can destroy the pleasure of reading despite initial interest in a novel (Clark & Blackburn, 2009).

CREATIVE INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES

Encouraging students to be creative with what they are reading may have more beneficial effects that simply being enjoyable to participants. Research such as Yaniv (2011) has shown that creativity is linked with empathy and Junker & Jacquemin (2017) have studied how students

being given particular writing instructions helped in training theory of mind and improved role-taking. Creative writing may have the most obvious links with role-taking if participants are given a writing prompt that encourages them to take on the role of another character, they will be actively taking part in the mental frameworks necessary for being empathetic. To bring this to a higher level, if a participant is asked to write creatively about a character other than the protagonist they will have to draw on mental inferences about what they believe a non-point-of-view character is thinking or feeling in any one scene, thereby training a participant's theory of mind. Junker & Jacquemin (2017) using this method constructed some rules around their creative writing prompt, participants could not change the events, plot elements or characterisation in the writing exercise as they wrote a scene from a text in a different perspective. This writing was graded, and it was found that participants with higher grades were shown to be more empathetic. Although the loose rules around creative writing are beneficial and a useful framework for writing exercises the grading of the work may lead participants to be motivated by their grades instead of their enjoyment of taking part in a creative exercise. For the reading intervention, it may be beneficial to maintain the writing exercise but limit its usage to be a personal exercise in the intervention and not an activity to be shared and critiqued.

If the importance of role-taking is to be considered, then there is an argument for including dramatic re-enactments of scenes from a text, using Junker & Jacquemin (2017) writing limitations. Participants will quite literally be taking on the role of the characters they are portraying and get first-hand experience of what characters may be thinking or feeling in any given text. This could be done personally, in small groups or as a whole, however keeping in mind that participants could be embarrassed to put on a public performance for a group of their peers it may be best to ask participants if this is something they would like to take part in before committing to its inclusion. In their studies on reading interventions about bullying, Hugh and Laffier encouraged participants to be creative by designing posters, campaign buttons, slogans and infographics to bring awareness to bullying in schools. Although this kind of activity does not link to role-taking precisely, it none the less encourages activism and discourse around issues that are important to young people, allowing them to take part in society. It is an activity that shows young people how to be active members of society and raise awareness for those who may not have a voice. If a reader takes what they have read as inspiration for the design of a poster then in effect, they are drawing their empathy for characters in-text towards empathy for those whom the characters represent in the real world.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The final aspect of the intervention design that must be discussed is methods of data collection. In order to maintain accurate and fully comprehensive results to the research, a mixed-method approach will be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data will be taken through the use of pre- and post-questionnaires. The questionnaires that will be used is the Author Recognition Test and the Basic Empathy Scale. The author recognition test is designed to determine how familiar a participant is with authors. Participants are given a list of names, both real and imaginary, and choose which names they know to be that of authors (Koopman, 2015). Higher results in an author recognition test demonstrates a participant's familiarity with reading. The test that will be used will be adapted for a younger audience, including children and young adult authors in 'popular' and 'literary' fiction (Fig. 4). To ensure that the authors selected in this adaptation is recognisable to a younger audience they will be selected from bestselling authors of the last ten years (Irish Bestselling Lists, 2020). The Basic Empathy Scale is a questionnaire that

ascertains a participant's level of empathy through self-assessment (Fig. 5). Through the use of these two questionnaires, we will be able to set a baseline of whether participants that are more accustomed to reading have a higher level of empathy from the start. In the post questionnaire, we will be able to determine whether or not the eight-week intervention had a positive effect on reader empathy. During the intervention, a researcher journal will be kept and written in at the end of each session to reflect on achievements and barriers that had been reached, participant engagement can be assessed in a number of ways for example attendance at meetings. The research journal will use these observations and incorporate them into the following meeting to improve the overall experience of the intervention. After the intervention, semi-structured interviews will take place that will allow young people to give their personal opinions on the intervention and the Empathy Library. They will be asked to discuss what they liked about the project, what they disliked and where there was need for improvement

Fig. 4. Author Recognition Test

Literature Quiz A

Below is a list of author names. Some names refer to popular authors of novels, poems and dramas. Other names are fictitious. Please read through the list and tick those that you know are to be real. Please do not guess - only tick the names that you know. Since the list also contains names that do not refer to known authors, guesses will be easily recognised. Please decide spontaneously and without use of aids.

I Know		I Know		I Know	
Chelsea Garcia	☐	Niamh Ward	☐	Veronica Wroth	☐
C. S. Lewis	☐	Liam Cunningham	☑	David Walliams	☐
Terry Pratchett	☐	Patrick McCabe	☐	J. D. Salinger	☐
Ross O'Carroll-Kelly	☐	Shane Hart	☐	Bekky Albertalli	☐
Patrick Kavanagh	☐	Alannah Butler	☐	Anthony Burgess	☐
Katelyn Romero	☐	Jemima Clark	☐	Margaret Atwood	☐
Jessica Stone	☐	Derek Landy	☐	Michael Bond	☐
Matthew Henderson	☐	Cassandra Clare	☑	Andrian O'Reilley	☐
James Joyce	☐	Douglas Walsh	☐	George R. R. Martin	☐
John Wells	☐	Deborah Baker	☐	Seamus Heaney	☐
Agatha Christie	☐	Carla Jones	☐	Richard Adams	☐
Beatrice Kelly	☐	Jeff Kinney	☑	E. A. Blease	☐
Delia Owens	☐	Gail Honeyman	☐	Anthony Horowitz	☐
Stephen King	☐	Bannie McPartlin	☐	James Reid	☐
Martin Handford	☐	Kayleigh Bennett	☐	Rick Riordan	☐
Jacqueline Wilson	☐	Sarah Price	☐	Jennifer Niven	☐
Veronica Wroth	☐	Lew Wallace	☐	Enid Blyton	☐
Declan Cooper	☐	William Golding	☐	Charles Dickens	☐
George Orwell	☐	Charlotte Bronte	☐	Adrian Reed	☐
James Dashner	☑	Andy Weir	☐	John Milton	☐
Nannue Jordan	☐	Louisa May Alcott	☐	Louise O'Neill	☐
Albert Camus	☐	Claire Keegan	☐	Vanessa Lawerence	☐
John Boyne	☐	Lillian Fischer	☐	Miguel De Servantes	☐
Craig Smith	☐	Bailey Evans	☐	Ray Bradbury	☐
Dav Pilkey	☐	John Boyne	☐	Samuel Beckett	☐

There are some limitations to the designed intervention which must be acknowledged before the pilot can go ahead. Eight weeks is quite a short time for a reading initiative, and it cannot be

expected that participants will have read more than two or three books, however, as has been shown, slower reading of a select few texts may be more beneficial to empathetic response than a large number. We must also accept that due to time constraints effects of the reading intervention may be minimal. Junker & Jacquemin's (2017) study of reading empathy in a classroom took place over fifteen weeks and showed no effects of empathy over time. They have hypothesised this to mean that substantial shifts in empathy are a glacial process that takes a long time and constant reading. We may therefore look to one of the benefits of the Empathy Library to be enjoyable and engaging for young people in order to create avid, and in time empathetic, readers. In the context of the reader's environment, we must also consider that as they are school age, participants may be more pre-occupied with examinations and study than the intervention leading to lower levels of engagement. In a broader context, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, higher levels of stress and anxiety may lead readers to disengage with the materials. Should interventions be conducted online, this may also result in lower levels of participation on the parts of recipients as well as limit the selection of participants to those with access to adequate technology to attend. On the other hand, frequent lockdowns in the country may mean that young people have more free time to begin and engage with reading which they may not have otherwise had.

This intervention is designed for young people between the ages of 15-25 in order to encourage reading and promote empathy amongst young people. If this intervention is shown to be a success, the Empathy Library may be adapted in a number of ways to be more flexible to a designated audience. Age-appropriate texts can be selected if there is a desire to introduce empathy to either an older or younger audience. If there is a particular aim in teaching empathy, for example, teaching empathy to student nurses, then additional topic groupings can be added such as narratives written by patients in care. Using the rationale behind text selection, the empathy library can be adapted to other languages for a broader use outside of an English speaking context. In this way, the empathy library is a modular design that can be adapted and changed to suit and teach empathy to any audience.

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