

Creative reading for students' engagement with literary texts

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ieva Margeviča-Grinberga
University of Latvia



The reading ability of Latvian primary school students has deteriorated; girls read much better than boys

May 16, 2023 No Comments



Study: 6% of fourth graders' reading skills do not reach the minimum level; they can't read.

REI Ģimenes studija
Dalīties: [social media icons]

12. jūnijs, 15:47 | Vecāki un bērni |
Autors: LSM.lv Bērnu satura redakcija, "Ģimenes studija" (Latvijas Radio raidījums ģimenēm)

Latvian pupils' reading skills on the wane, study suggests

Share [social media icons]



<https://baltics.news/2023/05/16/the-reading-ability-of-latvian-primary-school-students-has-deteriorated-girls-read-much-better-than-boys/> Photo: Freepik

Outline



Why creative reading?



What is creative reading?



How to use creative reading with students?



What are the benefits for students of using creative reading?



Why creative reading?

Inspired by American essayist, poet, and popular philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Creative reading as a survival necessity in the BANl world

The desire to reduce the psychological barriers of students

Long time ago

- American essayist, poet, and popular philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

"The book must be good, but the reader must also be active." 'Active' means 'procreative' rather than superficial, original rather than quotable.

To read well, one must be an inventor. . . is creative reading, like creative writing" (Emerson's essay "The American Scholar," 1837)



Ralph Waldo Emerson, c. 1875.

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

BANI (Jamais Cascio, 2020)



B

Brittle (The Illusion of Strength)

A

Anxious (The Illusion of Control)

N

Nonlinear (The Illusion of Predictability)

I

Incomprehensible (The Illusion of Knowledge)



BANI and creative reading

- **Brittleness** could be met by resilience and slack → Immerses readers in diverse narratives and perspectives, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of others' experiences and viewpoints
- **Anxiety** can be eased by empathy and mindfulness → Empowers individuals to find comfort, solace, and inspiration in literature amid the anxieties and uncertainties
- **Nonlinearity** would need context and flexibility → Encourages out-of-the-box thinking and problem-solving
- **Incomprehensibility** asks for transparency and intuition → Encourages readers to embrace and appreciate the ambiguity

Psychological barriers to students' reading



Reading is crucial to fostering a positive and effective learning environment. Psychological barriers to reading can hinder students' motivation, engagement, and comprehension, impacting their overall academic performance and enjoyment of learning.



Observed psychological barriers to reading that students experience: negative beliefs about reading, lack of motivation to read and explore literature, feeling overwhelmed by challenging texts etc.

The topicality of the research



Reading plays an undeniably crucial role in higher education, as it directly impacts students' success in various academic activities. Effective reading and comprehension skills are integral to excelling in higher education.



For teachers, the ability to read scientific texts can affect how they can motivate students to become avid readers and increase their literacy over time (Akyol & Ulusoy, 2010).



Teachers with strong reading skills are better equipped to model proficient reading behaviors, provide effective instruction, and support their students' literacy development.

Problem statements



Growing concern regarding students' declining comprehension of texts, lack of motivation to read, and decreased engagement with literary works. (Thompson, McInay, 2019; Fujimoto et al., 2011; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2006).



My observations in the study process revealed a significant lack of reading comprehension and creative reading skills among students. Many of them read only to answer questions without using any creative reading techniques.



Creative reading is rarely used as an approach to foster student interest in literary and scientific texts and foster meaningful engagement.



The aim of the study

is to investigate the impact of creative reading strategies on students' interest in literary texts and their comprehension.



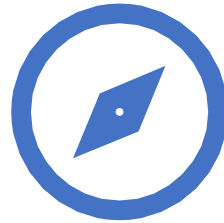
Research questions

- How does creative reading promote students' engagement with literary texts?
- What are the benefits of using creative reading in the study process?
- What are students' experiences and perspectives on creative reading?

Research methods



Literature review

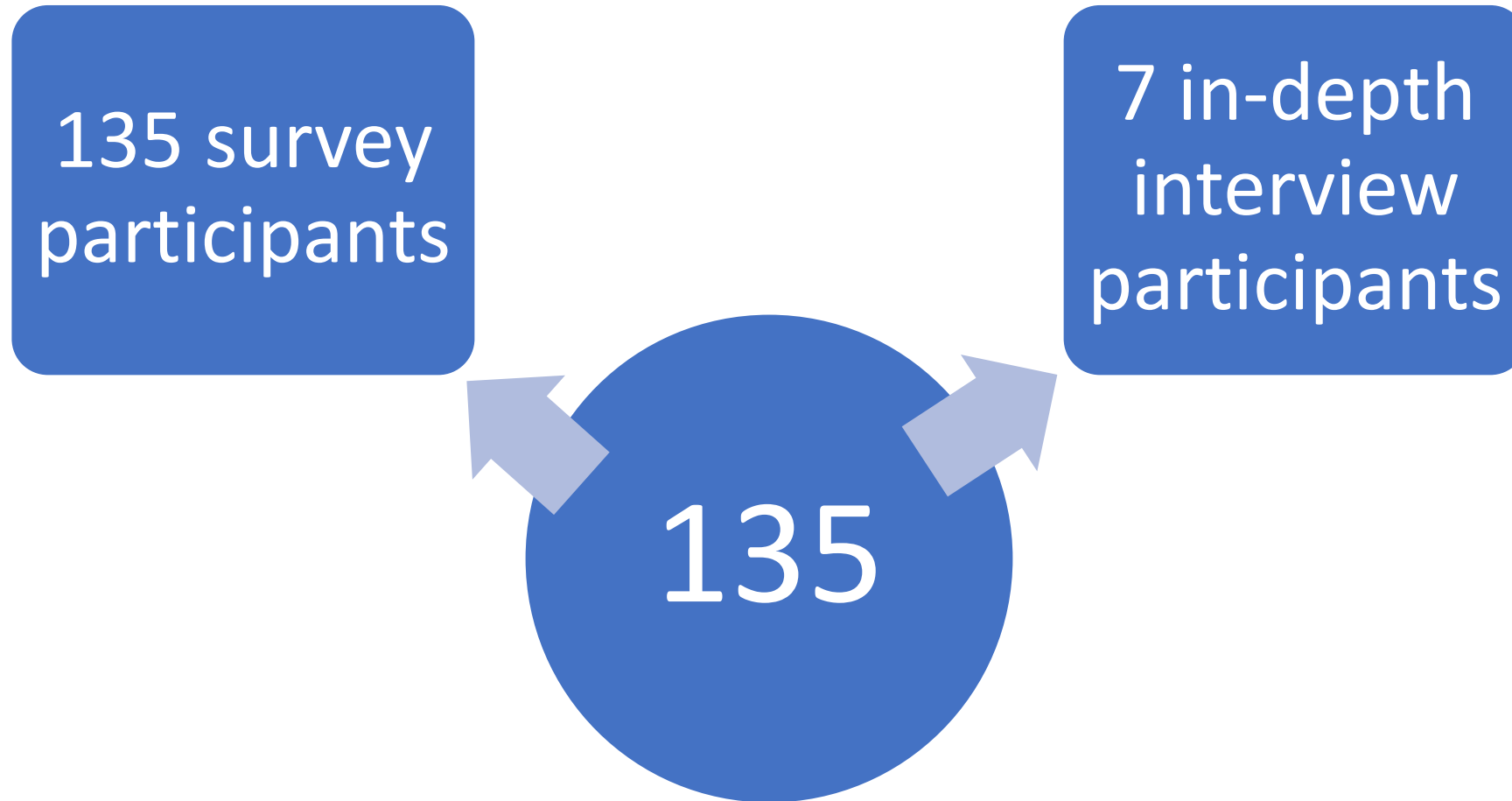


Survey



In-depth interviews

The study population





What is creative reading?



Creative reading involves a process of personal interpretation, making connections, and generating novel insights. (Emerson, 1837)



Creative reading is composed of divergent and convergent reading. Convergent creative reading is concentrated on meeting the individual's and writer's thoughts on common ground. Divergent reading, which is the main aim of creative reading, is aimed at producing extraordinary, unique and creative ideas by using the writer's ideas (Smith, 1965)



Creative reading is reading for implied and inferred meanings, appreciative reactions, and critical evaluation. The act of critical reading goes beyond literal comprehension to the demand that the reader produce fresh, original ideas not explicitly stated in the reading material. The reader becomes an active participant and adds to what the author has written. (Adams, 1968)

What is creative reading?

Strong reading is not for the pleasures of the text alone, but also for meaning, for intellectual power, which is always aversive and revisionist.

(Lothstein, 2008, 96)





Creative Reading Young People, Reading and Pub Libraries

Holden, John

Creative reading is a creative activity in itself and is the cornerstone of other creative processes. It facilitates connections and provides incentives. It connects with other cultural expressions and other art forms. It helps young people explore the world and enriches them mentally and emotionally. A love of reading can influence young people's success at school more than parental wealth or social class. (Holden, 2004)

Note: This is not the actual book cover



Research on creative reading

- Creative reading has contributed to the developing of several interdisciplinary studies, such as media, cinema, and drama studies. (Bruyère, 2012)
- Creative reading empowers individuals to contribute to online discussions, write reviews, and even produce their own content, promoting a participatory culture of engagement. “Creative reading” entails in information-intensive, multimodal environments. (van de Ven, 2017)





How to use creative reading with students?

«Creative Reading»
(Burroughs, 1979)

The Creative Reading
Methodology
(Ada, 1988)

«Creative Reading» (Burroughs, 1979)



Transforming Reading according to the existing situation: creative readers can find relevance and meaning in texts by applying them to their own lives and experiences.



Making Your Own "Movies" according to experience: readers can visualize the narrative and events in their minds, essentially creating mental cinematic experiences based on their unique perspectives and experiences.



Time Travel: It enables readers to "time travel" by immersing themselves in the settings and contexts of various literary works.



Making Photographs: creative reading can enable readers to capture vivid and memorable images from the text in their minds, creating mental snapshots of significant scenes or passages.



Record Making: creative readers can document their reactions, thoughts, and insights as they engage with a text, effectively creating their personal records or annotations. These records can serve as valuable reflections on the reading experience.



Description of Parts: creative reading involves thoroughly examining and exploring a text's various components and details. This process helps readers gain a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities of the material.



Imagining Yourself as a Character's Bodyguard ("Look into Every Corner"): Readers can immerse themselves in the narrative by assuming the role of a character's bodyguard. This approach allows readers to actively engage with the text, scrutinize every aspect of the story, and gain a more intimate understanding of the characters and their motivations.

The Creative Reading Methodology (Ada, 1988)



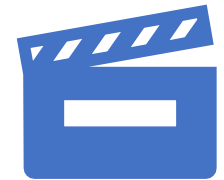
Descriptive Phase: During this phase of reading/learning, the content or information is shared by teacher, text, media, etc.



Personal Interpretation Phase: Students grapple with new information based on their lived experiences. This phase moves us beyond what, where, when, how, who questions to questions which invite reflection of the new knowledge.



Critical Analysis Phase: After comprehension of knowledge and the creation of linkages to the student's lives, the students are now encouraged to reflect critically, draw inferences, seek implications, and analyze. Is the knowledge valid? For whom? Always? Why? Is it applicable for all cultures, classes, ethnicities? Is it gender-free?



Creative Action Phase: This is the action phase of learning. How can students take the theory or new knowledge and use it to improve the life of the community? How can learning move from the classroom to the real world of the students?

CREATIVE READING

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION



ALMA FLOR ADA

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Creative reading technique examples I

- 1. Brainstorm the Content of the Text:** For example, readers may brainstorm associations, previous experiences, and knowledge related to the text title.
- 2. Writing Notes and Ideas:** While reading the text, readers may take notes on their thoughts, questions, and insights. For instance, they could write down interesting quotes from the text, make connections to personal experiences, and formulate questions they have about the concepts presented.
- 3. Fictitious Dialogue with the Author:** Readers might engage in a fictitious dialogue with the author, imagining an exchange of ideas and perspectives. This allows them to explore the author's intentions and motivations behind the text. For example, "What inspired you to write about this topic?" or "How do you want readers to interpret this character's journey?"
- 4. Mind Maps, Schemes, and Tables:** To visualize the structure and connections within the text, readers can create thought maps or schemes. For instance, they might draw a mind map to depict the relationships between characters in a story or create a table to compare and contrast different arguments presented in an essay.
- 5. Composing a Poem:** Using the themes and emotions evoked by the text, readers may compose a poem inspired by their reading experience. This allows them to express their understanding and emotions creatively. For example, they might write a poem about the beauty of nature described in a literary work.
- 6. Searching for Aphorisms:** Readers may identify meaningful or thought-provoking statements in the text and search for aphorisms or memorable quotes that capture these ideas concisely. They can use these aphorisms as a basis for deeper reflections or share them with others to spark discussion.

Creative reading technique examples II



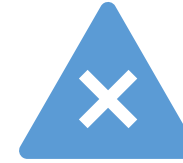
Different Reading (Omitting, Adding, Changing, Repeating Words): In this technique, readers experiment with the text by omitting, adding, changing, or repeating words to explore new meanings and interpretations. They can uncover alternative perspectives and emphasize different themes or ideas by altering the text.



Improvisational Reading: Improvisational reading involves spontaneous and unrehearsed text interpretations. Readers allow their creativity to guide their understanding of the material, making on-the-spot connections and drawing upon their personal experiences to enrich their reading experience.



Emotional Reading (Decontextualization, Shifting Emphasis): Emotional reading entails exploring the emotional aspects of the text by decontextualizing passages or shifting emphasis on specific words or phrases. Readers may focus on the emotional impact of certain sections to connect with the characters' feelings or the underlying themes.



Delayed Reading (Skipping Passages, Decontextualization, Shifting Emphasis): In delayed reading, readers may intentionally skip certain passages or sections of the text, decontextualize them, or shift emphasis to create suspense or generate different interpretations. This technique can lead to surprising insights and encourage active engagement.



Creating Performances: Through performances, creative reading involves bringing the text to life. Readers may act out dialogues, recite poems, or use dramatic techniques to convey the essence of the text to an audience. This approach allows for a more immersive and dynamic reading experience.

Creative reading technique examples

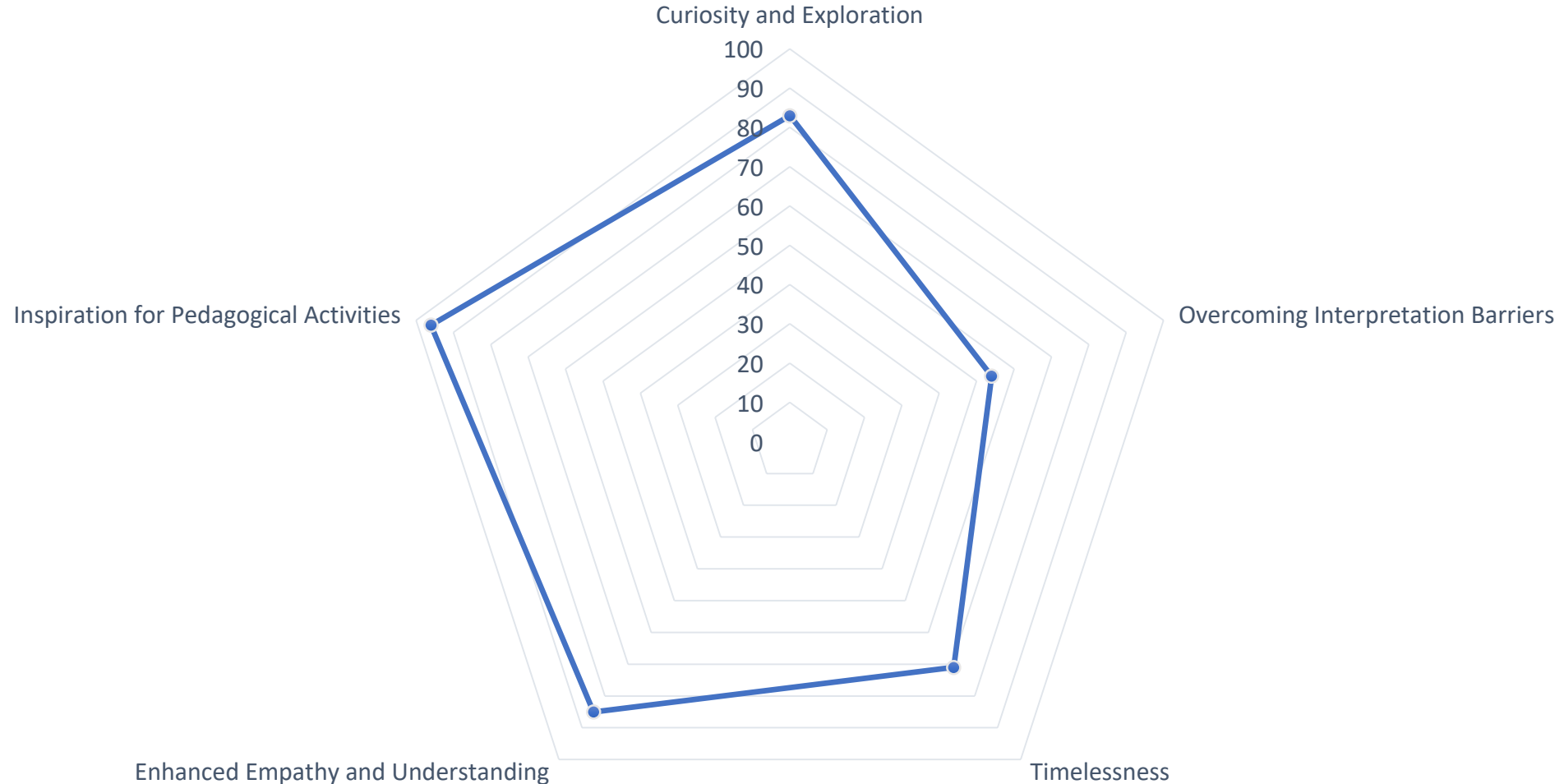
III

- 1. Adding New Facts:** readers can augment the text by adding new facts, details, or events to the story. This technique allows them to extend the narrative or explore alternative plotlines, contributing to developing their creativity and storytelling skills.
- 2. Inaccurate Retelling of Content** (What would I like to see happen in this story?): readers can purposely retell the content inaccurately to create alternate versions of the story. By imagining alternative outcomes or turns, they open up new possibilities for the narrative, fostering a sense of wonder and creativity.
- 3. Inventing New Characters:** readers can invent new characters that interact with the existing ones in the text. These new characters might introduce fresh perspectives, motivations, or challenges to the story, enhancing the reader's understanding of the original characters.
- 4. Writing Text Criticism:** Readers can critically engage with the text by writing reviews or critiques. Expressing their opinions and evaluations allows them to articulate their thoughts, analyze the text's strengths and weaknesses, and consider alternative viewpoints.
- 5. Creating Frozen Images:** Frozen images involve pausing while reading to visualize significant scenes or moments in the story. Readers can draw or sketch these images, capturing the essence of the text in a visual representation, which aids in memory retention and deeper understanding.
- 6. Greeting the Heroes:** Readers can imaginatively interact with the characters in the text by greeting or conversing with them as if they were real. This technique fosters empathy and a deeper connection to the characters, enabling readers to explore their motivations and emotions more intimately.

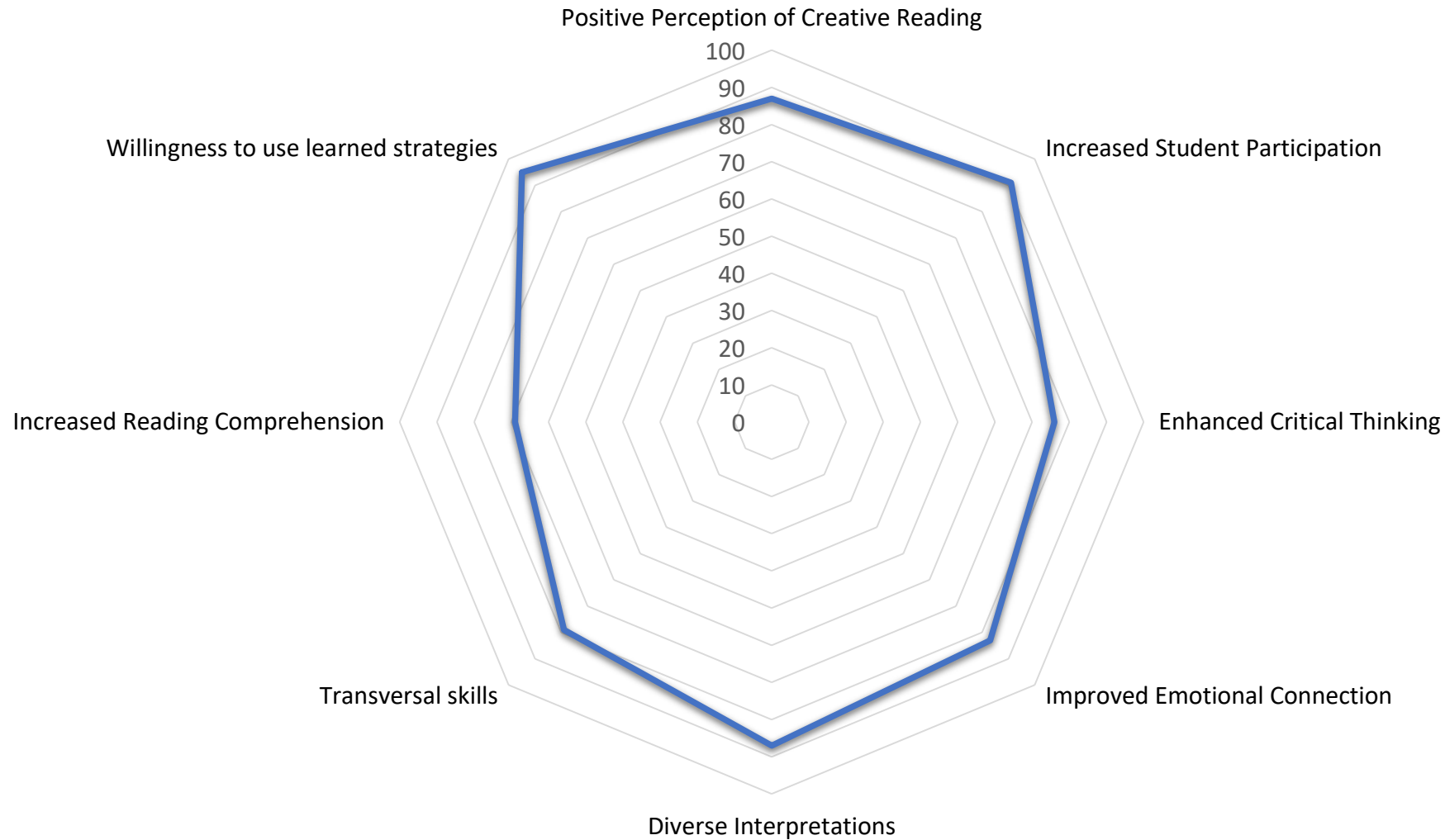
Creative reading techniques IV

- 1. Creating Reading Diaries:** readers record their thoughts, reflections, and reactions to the text as they progress through it. Writing in a reading diary encourages self-expression and fosters a deeper connection with the material.
- 2. Making Video Films:** readers can adapt the text into a short video film or book trailer. This multimedia approach challenges them to think creatively about the narrative, characters, and themes and provides an opportunity for collaboration and digital storytelling.
- 3. Speed Dating with Heroes:** readers personify the characters from the text and engage in "speed dating" interactions with each other. They answer questions like the characters, giving deeper insights into their motivations and personalities.
- 4. Reading in a Circle** (Everyone reads the passage they want): In a collaborative reading circle, participants take turns reading passages of the text that resonate with them. This technique encourages active participation, shared exploration, and diverse perspectives on the material.
- 5. The teacher reads** aloud the selected literary text as a film artist. In this way, the learners are enabled to benefit from the musicality of the text and enjoy the content

RQ1: How does creative reading promote students' engagement with literary texts? (N=135)



RQ2: What are the benefits of using creative reading in the study process? (N=135)



RQ3: What are students' experiences and perspectives on creative reading? (N=7)

- It's interesting that I had never heard of creative thinking, I thought that only creative reading existed. (S4)
- Each time I waited for the next strategy to know what else is possible. I discovered so much about my ability to «create». I discovered the potential in myself. I especially liked turning literary texts into poems. It boosted my self-awareness. (S7)
- I must honestly admit that I had never worked with text on so many levels before. The text opens like an onion, layer by layer, for example, a conversation with the author, replacing text fragments with your own, changing the meaning, and reading in different intonations. (S3)

RQ3: What are students' experiences and perspectives on creative reading? (N=7)

- I was inspired to learn more about creative reading. I will probably write my bachelor's thesis about it. Several strategies include dialogue with the text and transforming the text into a different genre. (S6)
- Through creative reading, it is possible to look at things flexibly. I realized that understanding can come from playing with text without being afraid to transform. I overcame the abnormal, learned, unnecessary reverence for the text that prevented me from fully understanding the more profound meaning. In the past, there was only one way to look at literary works in schools, i.e., the teacher's point of view. (S4)
- I observed that we all were emotionally uplifted during creative reading, a wide range of emotions appeared. For example, grief when you put on nostalgic-sad music and asked us to read a passage of text. (S2)



Examples of student creative reading outcomes



Example of the creative reading process

Activity



Blackout poem

like a tunnel
falling down was
very deep, very slowly, plenty of time
tried to look down
here and there
'ORANGE
MARMALADE',
killing somebody,
'after such a fall
tumbling down

Original text «Alice in Wonderland»

Created with: <https://blackoutpoetry.glitch.me/>

likely Down, down, down. very
no one to listen
wonder 'I
falling through the air!
Down, down, down.
couldn't answer either question,
just begun to dream
Now,
suddenly,
the down fall was over.

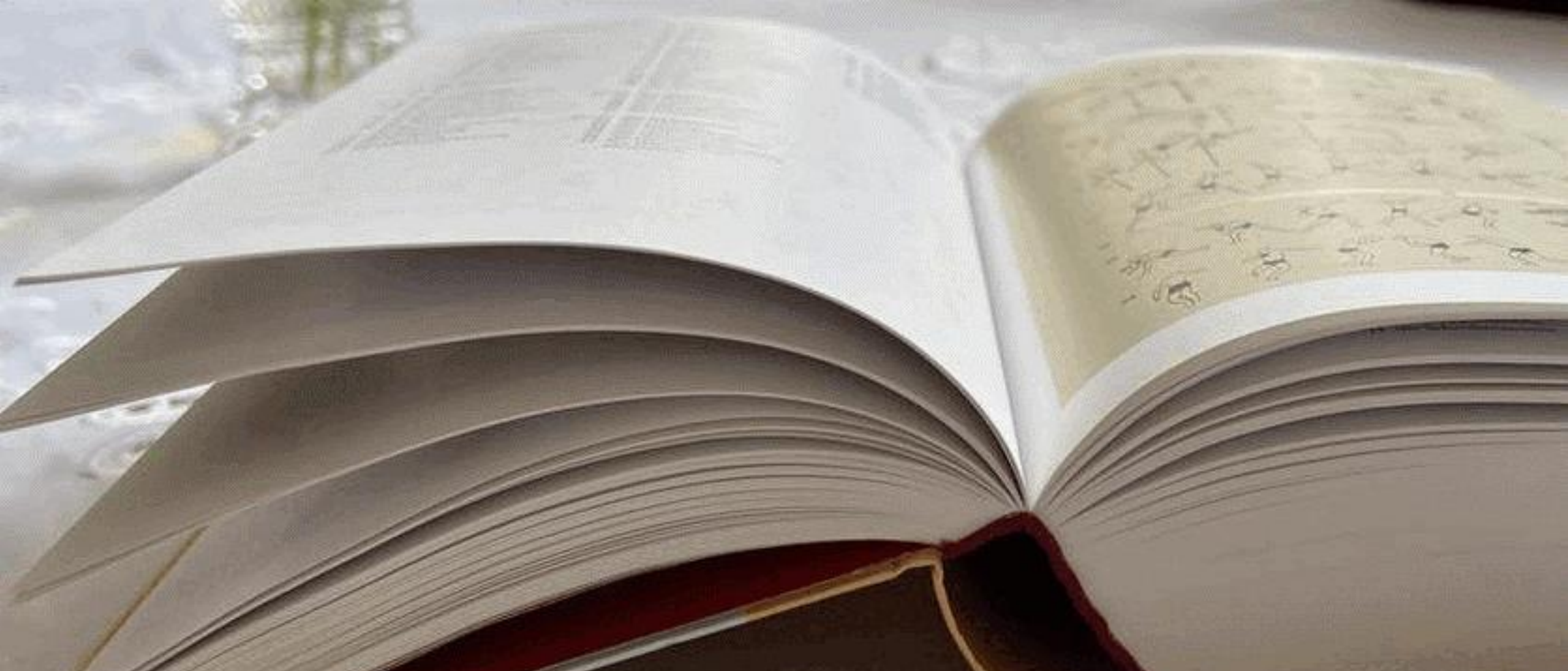


Conclusions

- Creative reading cultivates a love for literature and enables students to unleash the full potential of their imagination and intellect.
- When students learn to engage creatively with texts, they cultivate a deeper understanding of the material, develop critical thinking abilities, and become more adept at connecting different ideas and concepts.
- The study's results revealed that including creative reading strategies significantly increased students' engagement with the literary text. Participants reported higher motivation levels, better comprehension, and greater satisfaction when using creative reading methods. Qualitative data highlighted the importance of creativity in promoting students' emotional connection with the literary text and personal contribution to the interpretation of literary texts.
- Teachers who are proficient readers are more likely to have a deep understanding of reading processes and strategies. This knowledge enables them to design and deliver targeted and evidence-based reading instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students.

References

- **Adams, P. J.** (1968). Creative reading. International reading association. Boston.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED020090.pdf>
- **Burroughs, W.S.** (1979). Lectures on Creative Reading. <https://allenginsberg.org/2017/01/saturday-jan-28/>
- **Barrett, K. B.** (2001). Using technology and creative reading activities to increase pleasure reading among high school students in resource classes. Online: ERIC document.
- **Bruyère, C.** (2012). Creative Reading, or the New Life of Literary Works: American Instances. Erudit.
<https://www.erudit.org/revue/memoires/2012/v3/n2/1009345ar.html>
- **Lothstein, S.; Brodrick, M.** (Eds.) (2008). *New Morning: Emerson in the Twenty-first Century*. Albany: State University of New York (SUNY) Press. <https://vdoc.pub/documents/new-morning-emerson-in-the-twenty-first-century-3r731k5o70mg>
- **Smith, E.H.** (1965). Developing creative reading author. *Journal of Reading*, 8(4), 278-282.
- **Thompson, R.; McIlnay, M.** (2019). Nobody Wants to Read Anymore! Using a Multimodal Approach to Make Literature Engaging. *Children's literature in English language Education Journal*. <https://clelejournal.org/article-4-nobody-wants-read-anymore/>
- **van de Ven, I.** (2017). Creative Reading in the Information Age: Paradoxes of Close and Distant Reading.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jocb.186>



Happy reading, and may you all become avid and creative readers!