

# INTERACTIVE READING: MAKING SPACE FOR STORIES

WRITTEN BY GEORGINA YOUNG OF THE YOUNG ONES CHILDMINDING  
FEBRUARY 2026

## HOW A LOVE OF READING BEGINS

There is a moment I come back to again and again.

A child is holding a book – not sitting “neatly”, not waiting for me to start, not even looking at the words. They’re turning pages back and forth, pointing, using props, commenting, laughing, retelling the story in their own way. The book may be upside down at times. The story is out of order. And yet, somehow, it is completely right.

This is interactive reading.

Not the kind that asks children to be still and quiet.  
But the kind that invites them in.

## PLANTING A LOVE OF STORIES THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

Reading in the early years isn’t just about words on a page. It’s about how a child feels when they are invited into a story.

When reading is calm, connected, and responsive, children begin to associate books with warmth, safety, curiosity, and belonging. And those feelings stay with them long after they leave our settings.

This is where interactive reading lives.

Not in silence or stillness, but in shared moments – where stories are explored together, shaped by conversation, movement, imagination, and connection.

As early years professionals, we are in a unique position. We often become a child’s first experience of reading beyond home. The way we hold books, share stories, and respond to children’s ideas can shape whether reading feels joyful or pressured, inviting or intimidating. When stories are experienced as something relational – something that happens with an adult, not to a child – we begin to nurture not just literacy, but a lasting love of reading.



## WHEN READING DOESN'T LOOK "RIGHT"

Many of us were taught that reading should be calm, contained, and complete. But young children don't always experience stories that way.

They bring their whole selves:

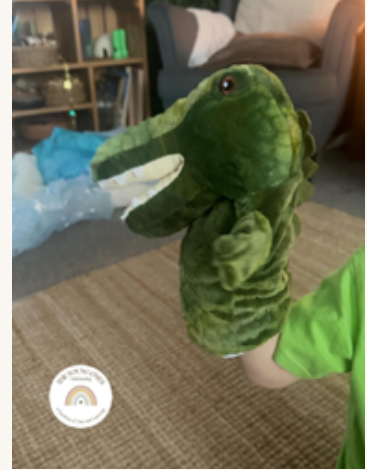
- their bodies
- their curiosity
- their emotions
- their need to connect

Interactive reading asks us to loosen our expectations.  
To notice the child who wants to linger on one page.  
The child who tells the story in their own words.  
The child who brings a book into their play rather than sitting down to listen.

*These moments matter.*

Because when children feel ownership over stories, they don't just learn to read – they learn that reading belongs to them. And stories don't belong to one place. They can unfold indoors, in quiet corners or busy play spaces. They can stretch outside, carried by movement, imagination, and shared experiences. They can travel between home and setting, building connection and continuity in a child's world.

When we allow stories to move with children, rather than asking children to stay still for stories, reading becomes something lived – not just taught.



## HOW CAN WE CREATE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH STORIES?

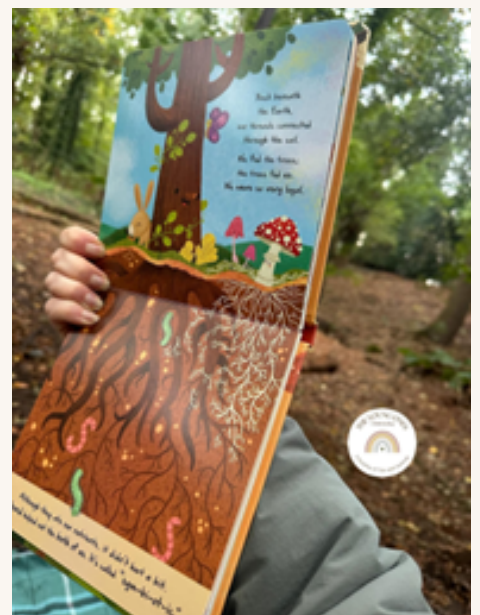
Interactive reading doesn't ask us to add more to already full days.

Instead, it invites us to slow down – long enough to notice the stories that are already unfolding. In play. In conversation. In the way children return to the same book again and again.

Over two upcoming sessions, I'll be exploring how interactive reading can be supported both indoors and outdoors, looking closely at environment, interaction, and the small, often overlooked moments where reading naturally lives in early years practice.

In these early years, we have a rare and precious opportunity. Not just to teach children how to read, but to shape how reading feels. And when reading feels safe, joyful, and shared, it can become something children carry with them long after they've outgrown our settings.

That is the heart of interactive reading – and it's a conversation worth continuing.



## WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

*'There is strong evidence that interactive reading can improve language and communication in the early years.'*

*'Successful interventions usually involve spoken interactions between the reader and child that go beyond the text in the book; the more the child participates or responds, the more their oral language skills develop.'*

You can read more about approaches to supporting **Communication and Language development** through further exploration of the **Early Years Evidence Store on the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) website**: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/communication-and-language?approach=interactive-reading>.

### EY Interactive Reading Technical Summary:

[https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/EY\\_Interactive\\_Reading\\_Technical\\_Summary.pdf](https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/EY_Interactive_Reading_Technical_Summary.pdf)

## JOIN US TO DISCOVER MORE

Georgina is leading two webinars after February half term, dates below:

- Wednesday 25th February 6.45-7.30pm
- Tuesday 10th March 6.45-7.30pm

To book your place or to find out more please email [natalie.sph@childhaven.n-yorks.sch.uk](mailto:natalie.sph@childhaven.n-yorks.sch.uk)

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## THANK YOU FOR READING

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Georgina Young is an experienced early years educator and the founder of The Young Ones Childminding and Guiding The Young Ones. Having worked across the sector in both nursery and home-based settings, she is passionate about supporting high quality practice, rooted in child development, emotional wellbeing, and meaningful relationships. Georgina is committed to reflective practice and professional collaboration, and enjoys supporting other educators to feel confident, valued, and empowered in their everyday practice.