

Children’s and Young People’s Reading 2021: English summary

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Preface

Children’s and young people’s reading in a world of digitisation and easy access to lots of different media is a subject that has garnered a lot of attention lately – not least in the wake of the research project “Children’s Reading 2017.” That report - along with similar studies e.g. *PIRLS 2016* – was a clear call to action if Danish primary school children were to ever move their attention from YouTube and digital games to books.

There has been no shortage of initiatives; from grants from The Ministry for Culture and The Ministry for Children and Education to a host of reading for pleasure projects in day care centres and classrooms, so-called Educational Resource Centres (Danish: PLCs) and public libraries.¹ Danish Library Association’s “Towards a National Reading Strategy” from 2019 and The Danish Association of Public Library Managers’ so-called handshake for children’s joy of reading are examples of strategic documents that several municipalities are presently using as starting points for local initiatives.

The agreement across professions and sectors is still remarkable. Reading is a foundational competence that stimulates both the imagination and a critical sense. Reading enhances the ability to focus, to

¹ Translator’s note: PLC is for “Pedagogical Learning Centre” in Danish, but it’s a somewhat grandiose term for the place. The translator has determined they would more precisely be called “Educational Resource Centres” in lieu of an official translation. They are school libraries sometimes tasked with additional, didactic functions. The acronym PLC has been kept, because it is a very established acronym in Danish.

concentrate and to acquire knowledge. At the same time, reading is a cultural benefit with a world of experiences that more people deserve to get to know better. But special efforts are needed to get to that point and one of the means is an updated foundation of knowledge to act from.

Therefore, The Danish Think Tank – Libraries of the Future along with Centre for Applied School Research have conducted the study “New Knowledge: Children’s and Young People’s Joy of Reading and Reading Communities.” The project is supported by Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces’ development funds, The Danish Union of Cultural and Information Academics, and The Danish Association of Public Library Managers.

During 2021-22 the project’s researchers have collected new knowledge about the reading and media habits of 5th to 8th graders all over the country and the connection between the habits. The data validity of the findings is rock solid with answers from over 8,000 pupils. A subsection of the main findings has been examined further with qualitative research consisting of interviews with 8th grade pupils.

“Children’s and Young People’s Reading 2021” contains findings from the quantitative and the qualitative research. With the report we wish to contribute with new and nuanced knowledge from an important field of study with many different actors as stakeholders. We hope that teachers, pedagogues, library people and decision makers will use the report and its recommendations as a shared point of departure for the continued work with children’s and young people’s joy of reading and reading communities.

The project partners wish you happy reading!

Lotte Hviid Dhyrbye & Lisbet Vestergaard
The Danish Think Tank – Libraries of the Future

Recommendations

Based on the findings in “Children’s and Young People’s Reading 2021” The Danish Think Tank – Libraries of the Future and Centre for Applied School Research have formulated five recommendations primarily for public library staff, pedagogues and Educational Resource Centre (Danish: PLC) staff.

1. Be proactive; start the conversation about reading, literature and books yourself

The research shows that children and young people rarely seek out adult staff at public libraries or the Educational Resource Centres at the schools for inspiration and help with reading, even though a majority of them considers staff very friendly and approachable with any questions. 50% of all pupils never visit the public library and the older pupils only rarely. There is a need for a more direct approach to conversations about literature with pupils; an approach with clear backing from management and a good setup for school and public librarians enabling them to seek out and initiate conversations with children and young people. The study has produced lists of children’s and young people’s preferred genres and titles that may serve as inspiration.

2. Adjust literature promotion and discovery² to the individual pupil

Children’s and young people’s reading habits are differentiated and their desire to read is driven by many factors. Their interest in different kinds of texts and genres as well as their sources of inspiration for reading vary with gender, grade and reading culture at home. Some are very motivated to read. They have established their own reading routine and they consider reading entertaining and recreational. Others are not motivated to read. They find it difficult to concentrate and they associate reading with school and chores. It is still the case that more girls than boys read in their free time. This difference is evident across all grades and increases with age. Together these findings call for initiatives focused more on individually targeted, tailor-made promotion of literature and reading to the individual pupil. Here the lists of popular genres and titles can once again be used for inspiration coupled with the individual pupil’s reading ability and purpose of course.

3. Create a setting for reading and enable the good, deep reading experience

Our qualitative study shows that many pupils do not have any experience in creating a good setup for deep reading. They need help to lower their tempo, to find quietude and to create a setting for reading experiences without digital distractions. These responses show how crucial the setup is. Therefore, public schools and libraries can benefit from a focus on actually setting a stage for reading to facilitate more positive experiences with reading for children and young adults – especially with long texts. The older the children, the more they tend to read short, digital texts on social media, which lend themselves to skimming rather than deep reading.

² Translator’s note: Much to the chagrin of every poor translator in the field of libraries, literature and reading, the Danish word “formidling” (corr. German “vermitteln”) is as popular as it is untranslatable into English. It means conveying something (a message, an opinion, an emotion, information, knowledge) to someone – e.g. conveying the ins and outs of a literary genre or an author’s body of work from the library’s literature specialists to library patrons - or mediating between two parties in the sense of translating messages one or both ways. The translator is most often stuck with “literature promotion,” “discovery” or some such words and phrases not quite adequate or fitting.

4. Use an expanded language about reading for pleasure, the desire to read and reading interest

The desire to read is one element among others when it comes to children's and young people's development of a joy of reading and a long-lasting interest in reading and literature. Children and young people do not always want to read or they want to do other things more. Especially in a professional context it is important to use a more nuanced language. It is still relevant to talk about the desire to read, but it is also important to focus on joy, motivation, engagement and developing an interest in reading when the goal is for more children and young people across different backgrounds to experience becoming part of a reading culture.

5. Speak with children and young people about advantages and disadvantages of social media

Social media are important sources of reading inspiration. This might be an argument in favour of increasing the use of social media in reading professionals' work with children and young people. However, "Children's and Young People's Reading 2021" contains indications of a negative correlation between use of social media, reading frequency and attention spans. The more time children and young people spend on social media the less likely they are to read. Social media use is also negatively correlated with attention span. It constitutes a good reason for having an ongoing dialogue with children and young people about the opportunities and pitfalls of different digital activities such as social media, gaming, streaming and skimming of web texts.

Children's and young people's reading and media habits 2021

If you are reading this report – “Children's and Young people's Reading 2021” – as a physical book, chances are you will read about half of the text in the most relevant chapters for you. If you are reading it in a digital format, you may well only read about a fifth of the same chapters – that is, if you are reading in the same way that most people read digital texts.³ The thing is, the degree of concentration, attention and immersion depends on several circumstances including your purpose of reading, the format of the medium, time and setting for your reading, design, graphics and of course the way we have written the text.

Conditions for reading are undergoing a change. According to new reading and media research it affects children and young people in particular. They have to develop strategies for attentive deep reading of longer, continuous texts in a time of great struggle for their attention and exposure to a plethora of short texts lending themselves to quick surface reading and exchanges of opinions.⁴ In 1997 only 16% of internet users read web texts as linearly continuous texts word for word. The tendency to scan, skim and skip texts has not changed significantly since then in spite of the technological development of increasingly readable and reading worthy screen formats, in part due to internet access to innumerable resources and an increased use of links, hypertext and extremely short web texts.⁵ Instead of reading deeply we increasingly skim digital texts and we approach the many different kinds of texts and sources with a more or less critical mind.

In “Children's and Young People's Reading 2021” we present the findings from a representative study of all in all 8,542 pupils in 5th – 8th grade showing how their desire to read and reading and media habits are undergoing change. We have asked about reading and media habits in the same questionnaire. This means that the pupils have been asked not only about their reading but also about gaming, streaming, TV, social and digital media use. This gives us a unique opportunity to examine links between children's and young people's reading and use of media and the evolution of the desire to read and reading and media habits over time by comparing with other related studies.

We have followed up on the questionnaires with qualitative interviews with 8th grade pupils who were either highly motivated to read or showing no motivation at all respectively.⁶ This gives us a deeper insight into the ways in which new conditions with new formats (ebooks and audiobooks),⁷ new text types, new social media and easier access to everchanging content affect young people in their daily lives where their time and attention are scarce resources.

We have attempted to present the study in a way that allows you to immerse yourself in linear reading, but it is also possible to read parts of the book independently depending on particular interests. The book is composed of four thematic chapters; the desire to read, reading habits, media habits and libraries and a closing chapter where we present our take on an expanded language for the desire to read and the joy of reading. The four thematic chapters have the following structure:

³ Nielsen Norman Group (2020). *How People Read Online: The Eyetracking Evidence*. NN/g.

⁴ Hauer, K. (2020). Læsning og fordybelse: En teoretisk og empirisk undersøgelse af fordybet skønlitterær læsning med særligt fokus på unge læseseres romanlæsning i faget dansk. Ph.d.-afhandling, Det Humanistiske Fakultet, Københavns Universitet

⁵ Nielsen Norman Group (2020). *How People Read Online: The Eyetracking Evidence*. NN/g.

⁶ Bråten, I., Braasch, J.L.G. and Salmeron, L. (2020). Reading multiple and non-traditional texts. I E.B. Moje, P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso og N.K. Lesaux (red.), *Handbook of reading research*, vol. V, s. 79-98. New York: Routledge.

⁷ Translator's note: Throughout the text audiobooks means digital audiobooks.

- An introductory page with general findings where you can quickly get your bearings with our summaries of the findings.
- Contextual background meant for deep reading.
- An expanded presentation of the findings in the chapter.

In “Children’s and Young People’s Reading 2021” we examine the reading of a broad spectrum of different types of texts and formats. That is why we are able to compose an updated snapshot of children’s and young people’s reading in the spectrum between analogue and digital formats with slow, deep reading of printed, linearly continuous and finished books as one pole and quick skims of very short, digitally branching and unfinished texts as the other. There are many nuances and subtleties of this division. Both poles are associated with pros and cons, opportunities and challenges. Additionally, the increased use of ebooks and audiobooks is an example of a reading habit more related to the classical reading of physical books than e.g. communication on social media. Consequently, we put a novel perspective on the study in chapter 5 with both our take on an expanded language for the desire to read and the joy of reading connecting the joy of reading with the development of habits and interests as well as an expanded perspective on children’s and young people’s reading and media habits 2021 attempting to contribute to a more nuanced perception of both opportunities and challenges.

Main findings

“Children’s and Young People’s Reading 2021” contains both quantitative and qualitative findings presented in the following four chapters. Every chapter is prefaced by a summary of findings, while in this part we formulate the ten main findings synthesising the most important tendencies in children’s and young people’s reading and media habits as well as their library use.

1. Children’s and young people’s desire to read drops with age

64% of the pupils in 5th grade enjoy reading, but the desire to read drops gradually for every grade until 8th grade where 49% enjoy reading. Especially the desire to read for pleasure is lower in the higher grades while the desire to read to learn is stable across grades. The purpose of reading changes with age and shifts in the 8th grade so that more pupils read for pleasure in the 5th – 7th grade but more pupils read to learn in the 8th grade.

2. Children and young people spend the same amount of their free time reading as in 2017⁸

Children and young people read books in their free time as often as they did in 2017 according to “Children’s Reading 2017.” In the 5th grade 54% read books during their free time several times a week compared to 34% in the 8th grade. So, the youngest children read more often than the young people in the 8th grade but across the age categories they spend the same amount of time reading when they read; i.e. less than 30 minutes a day. Additionally, more girls than boys read in their free time and the study shows that this difference exists in all age categories and increase with age.

3. Children’s and young people’s desire to read varies with gender and reading culture at home

Across all grades more girls than boys enjoy reading and the difference increases from the middle to the higher grades. In the 5th grade 72% of the girls and 57% of the boys enjoy reading while it falls to 60% of the girls and 38% of the boys in the 8th grade. The desire to read falls for both girls and boys with age. The desire to read also vary with reading aloud and conversations about literature at home. Listening to reading aloud is positively correlated with the desire to read in the middle grades. For instance, 75% of those pupils who are read to in the 5th grade express a desire to read compared to 61% of those who are not read to at home. Conversations about literature at home is positively correlated with the desire to read in all grades.

4. Children’s and young people’s use of ebooks and audiobooks has grown

There has been considerable growth in children’s and young’s people’s use of ebooks and audiobooks. 11% of the pupils in 5th grade in 2017 were frequent readers of ebooks, and this share has grown to 19% in 2021. The similar increase percentagewise is 7% to 17% in the 6th grade and 5% to 17% in the 7th grade respectively. For audiobooks the development is equally evident with a rise in the share of frequent listeners from 13% to 21% in 5th grade, 8% to 19% in 6th grade and 5% to 15% in 7th grade respectively. Children and young people still prefer physical books though. The group who frequently reads physical

⁸ Translator’s note: The 2017 findings were widely regarded as catastrophic with huge drops in reading especially for the girls. The fact that 2021 does not show a further deterioration should be seen in that context.

books are at least twice as big as the group who frequently reads ebooks or listens to audiobooks across all grades. Furthermore, audiobooks appeal more to those pupils who read physical books rather infrequently.

5. Children's and young people's reading habits and sources of inspiration change with the digital transformation

A majority reads short texts especially on social media. 41% of the pupils in the 5th to 8th grade read text on social media almost daily, while the corresponding percentage is 10% when asked about stories and novels. In the 5th grade 28% read text on social media daily while it is 54% in the 8th grade. It indicates that children's and young people's reading habits develop from the reading of formats requiring linear, deep reading to digital formats that lend themselves to surface reading and quick orientation. The importance of digital is also evident in the sources of reading inspiration for children and young people. A majority of pupils in the 5th to 8th grade emphasise movies (47%), the internet (46%) and series (40%) as important sources of inspiration and for many the internet as well as movies have become a central source of inspiration since 2017. When asked about the internet as inspiration, social media are the most important sources of inspiration.

6. Children and young people prefer humour as genre

Humour is the most popular genre across gender and age. In total, 52% of the target group prefer humour and its popularity has risen uniformly across all grades since 2017. Book series (43%) and fantasy/science fiction (43%) also score well in aggregate, and the interest in book series especially has grown in the 5th – 6th grade. Boys are special by preferring humour even more so than girls. On the other hand, more girls than boys prefer realistic stories of children's and young people's lives - not least with romance as a cardinal point. This is especially evident in the high grades.

7. Children's and young people's use of digital media is on the rise

There has been a considerable increase in children's and young people's use of digital media from 2017 to 2021. Use of digital games has increased the most but also use of social media and streaming services. In 2021 most pupils spend at least an hour on digital games (59%), social media (60%) and/or streaming services (71%) and many spend several hours. The older pupils spend more time on social media while the younger ones spend more time on digital games. Especially the boys spend their time on digital games, while the girls spend their time on social media.

8. Use of social media is negatively correlated with reading during free time and attention span

The children in the study who spend a lot of time on social media are less likely to read in their free time. Of the pupils in 5th grade who do not spend time on social media 59% of them are weekly readers. For the pupils in 5th grade who spend three or more hours on social media daily that percentage drops to 39%. A similar correlation is evident in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Use of social media is also negatively correlated with attention span. For example, of those pupils who only spend little time on social media in 5th grade, 70% have the ability to keep their attention on something. This drops to 60% for those who spend a lot of time on social media. We cannot identify any causality but the finding is remarkable, because we have not found the same correlation between the use of streaming or gaming on one hand and attention span on the other.

9. The oldest pupil still do not come to the school library

36% of all pupils regularly visit the school library. This means at least several times a month. That percentage drops with age and in 8th grade 72% of the pupils seldom or never visit the school library as self-reported. 30-39% only visit the school library, because their teacher orders it. 50% of the 5th grade pupils agrees with the statement that they never talk with the PLC-staff despite 91% of them believing PLC-staff to be very friendly. In 8th grade the percentage of pupils never speaking with PLC-staff rises to 61%. In 2021 fewer pupils borrowed books from the school library than in 2017. 61% of the pupils in 5th grade borrowed books several times a month in 2017. In 2021 that percentage has dropped markedly to 53% in 2021. In 6th grade the percentage has dropped from 54% to 48% while it is status quo in 7th grade.

10. Half the pupils never come to the school library but most of the pupils know eReolen GO!

Just under 20% of the pupils visit the school library regularly; i.e. several times a month. The number of visits drop with age, and about half of all pupils in the study never visit. The percentage of 5th grade pupils who borrow books regularly has fallen from 32% in 2017 to 26% in 2021, while the percentage is unchanged for 6th – 7th grade. On the other hand, in 2021 a lot more of the pupils who visit the school library think that the school librarian is friendly and that you can ask them anything than in 2017. This is in spite of the majority not being in contact with the librarian when they visit the library. 69% of all pupils know the public library's digital service for children - eReolen GO! - while the percentage visiting the service is somewhat lower. Visits drop with age. 25% of 5th - 6th grade pupils visit eReolen GO! several times a month. The percentages in 7th – 8th grade are 19% and 14% respectively.

Children and young people's desire to read – an overview

What are the characteristics of children's and young people's desire to read?

- The desire to read diminishes with age. In 5th grade 64% of the pupils enjoy reading, while it is 49% in 8th grade.
- It is the desire to read for pleasure during free time that diminishes with age. The desire to read for information and learning is stable across grades.
- The purpose of reading during free time changes between 7th and 8th grade. A majority reads for fun during free time up until 8th grade, where it changes and a majority reads to learn.
- A majority of all pupils enjoy reading something that stimulates the imagination (73%) or encourages thinking (69%).
- A minority of 5th graders agree with the statement that they would like more time to read (37%).

How is the desire to read correlated with gender and reading culture at home?

- In all grades more girls than boys enjoy reading and the difference increases in the transition from the middle grades to the high grades. In 5th grade 72% of the girls and 57% of the boys enjoy reading, while the percentages for 8th grade are 60% and 38% respectively.
- The desire to read falls for both girls and boys with age however.
- In the middle grades there is a positive correlation between the desire to read and reading aloud at home.
- There is a positive correlation between the desire to read and conversations about literature in the family at home.

What separates pupils with high and with low desire to read? (Qualitative interviews)

- Pupils with high motivation to read regard reading as recreational while those with low motivation regard reading as a chore and related to school.
- Pupils with low motivation express an inability to keep their attention on reading and are easily distracted by other, digital activities.
- Pupils with low motivation do not have positive experiences with deep reading and have typically not encountered literature they found intriguing.

Children's and young people's reading habits – an overview

Frequent readers = at least several times a week

How much time do children and young people spend reading?

- Time spent reading has not changed from 2017 to 2021
- Younger pupils read more frequently than the older ones. In 5th grade 54% are frequent readers while 32% in the 8th grade are
- Across grades most pupils read less than 30 minutes a day

Which formats do children and young people prefer?

- Most pupils still prefer physical books 39% of the 5th – 8th graders read physical books several times a week. The corresponding figure is 17% for both ebooks and audiobooks.
- There is a significant use of ebooks and audiobooks across all grades.
- The interest in physical books decreases with age, but the figures for ebooks and audiobooks show more resilience. For example, 52% read physical books in 5th grade compared to 26% in 8th grade. However, for ebooks the figures are 19% and 13% respectively.

What do children and young people read?

- A majority reads short digital texts – especially on social media. 41% of the 5th – 8th grade students read text on social media nearly every day while the corresponding figure is 10% for the category Stories or novels.
- Among the various types of texts the pupils prefer *Stories or novels* and *Books that explain things* when they have to read longer, cohesive texts. The least preferred categories are *newspapers* and *poetry*.
- Humour is the most popular genre in 5th – 8th grade, but series books, fantasy and science fiction are also popular across all grades.
- “Checkered Ninja” and the Harry Potter books are popular across all grades.

What are the most important sources of information?

- Most pupils in 5th – 8th grade point to films (47%), the internet (46%) and series (40%) as important sources of inspiration. In comparison 16% point to the school librarian and 13% to the public librarian respectively.
- Social media are the biggest source of inspiration on the internet.
- Mothers play a larger role than other adults when it comes to reading inspiration.

Children's and young people's media habits – an overview

How much time do children and young people spend on digital media?

- 71% of the students in 5th – 8th grade spend at least an hour a day on streaming, 60% spend at least an hour on social media and 59% spend at least an hour a day on digital gaming.
- There is an increase in children's and young people's use of digital media from 2017 to 2021. Use of digital games has increased in particular with more spending at least an hour a day in 5th grade (from 52% to 63%), 6th grade (from 55% to 63%) and 7th grade (49% to 58%). There is also an increase in the use of social media and streaming while the use of flow TV is stable.
- The older pupils spend more time on social media (5th grade: 40% at least an hour a day, 8th grade: 51%), while the younger ones spend more time on digital games (5th grade: 63% at least an hour a day, 8th grade: 51%).

Which types of media do they use?

- At least 8 out of 10 watches series on a normal day across all grades.
- YouTube is popular with children and young people across all grades.
- TikTok is also popular across all grades but appeals especially to the older pupils in the higher grades, where 52% in 7th grade and 58% in 8th grade use just that service at least an hour a day.
- Snapchat and Instagram have their users primarily in the older grades.

What are the differences between boys and girls?

- A lot more boys than girls spend time on digital games, while more girls spend time on social media.
- YouTube and TikTok are popular across all ages and genders with YouTube being more popular with boys and TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram more popular with girls.
- More girls than boys watch series daily and the difference increases with age.

Which connections exist between media use, reading and attention?

- The more time children and young people spend on social media the less they read
- Especially time spent on social media is negatively correlated with lacking attention span. We do not find the same correlation between other digital media and attention span.

School libraries and public libraries – an overview

The school's library

- 36% of 5th – 8th graders borrow books at the PLC⁹ at least several times a month
- The higher grade the less visits to the PLC. 72% of 8th graders rarely or never visit.
- Out of the possible answers most pupils in 5th – 7th grade answer that they visit the PLC to borrow books, but that tendency decreases with age. 57% and 55% in 5th – 6th grade respectively gave that answer, with 37% and 26% in 7th – 8th grade respectively. In 8th grade most pupils answer that they don't visit the PLC.
- The second-most popular answer across all grades is that the pupil visits the PLC because their teacher tells them to; 30%-39%
- Significantly more pupils in 5th – 6th grade (25% and 19% respectively) visit the PLC to read than pupils in 7th – 8th grade (10% and 6% respectively)
- Only 2% of pupils across all grades visit the PLC to talk with PLC staff and about half of all pupils never talk with PLC staff.
- 87% of all 5th – 8th grade pupils find PLC staff to be nice.

The public library

- Almost 20% of the 5th – 8th grade pupils borrow books at least several times a month. The percentage falls with age.
- Out of the possible answers most have answered that they do not visit the public library. The percentage rises with age. It is 43% and 45% in 5th and 6th grade respectively and 51% and 59% in 7th and 8th grade respectively.
- The second most frequent answer is that they visit the library to borrow books. The frequency falls with age. It is 48% and 45% in 5th – 6th grade respectively and 38% and 30% in 7th – 8th grade respectively.
- Very few visit the public library to do homework or hang out with friends. For example, 4% of the 5th graders come to the public library to hang out with friends. 6% of 6th – 8th graders do.
- More pupils from the 5th – 6th grade visit the public library in order to read than 7th – 8th graders (10% and 7% respectively)
- Only 1% of 5th – 8th grade pupils visit the public library in order to talk with the librarian. Over half of all pupils never talk with the librarian.
- 88% of 5th – 8th graders find the public librarian to be nice.

What does the development look like?

- More pupils checked out books at the PLC in 2017 than in 2021. In 2017 48% checked out books at least several times a month versus 43% in 2021. The drop is due to fewer borrowers in 5th – 6th grade in 2021.

⁹ Translator's note: In this section PLC = school library for all intents and purposes.

- More pupils checked out books at the public library in 2017 than in 2021. In 2017 25% checked out books at least several times a month versus 21% in 2021. The drop is due to fewer borrowers in the 5th grade in 2021.
- More pupils find the PLC staff to be nice than in 2017. This holds for both 5th, 6th and 7th grade.
- Significantly more pupils across all grades in 2021 believe that they can ask the public librarian anything than in 2017.
- Significantly more pupils in the 7th grade in 2021 find librarians to be nice than in 2017.
- Approximately 70% of all pupils know about eReolen GO!
- The older the pupil the less they visit eReolen GO! 25% and 24% of 5th – 6th graders visit eReolen GO! respectively and 19% and 14% of 7th – 8th graders visit respectively.

An expanded perspective on challenges and opportunities

“Children’s and young people’s reading 2021” points to both challenges and opportunities for reading in context of the digital transformation, the changed media landscape and the growth in digital media consumption. With the background we have formulated an expanded perspective on what we summarise here as six challenges and opportunities.

Six challenges and opportunities for children’s and young people’s reading in 2021

1. New reading habits, tempo and reading speed

Reading is still the most important source of learning.¹⁰ People read often and in many different situations, but they are reading in different ways than before. To a large degree they read digital types of text that require of the reader an ability to get a bearing on the text and make quick judgements about relevance and reading mode.¹¹ The increasing stream of digitally connected resources requires of the reader the ability to scan, skim and skip texts. High reading speed has become an important factor. Training speed reading as well as tests, evaluations and timed reading activities lend value to sheer tempo in school. Research points to the resulting added demands on the reader. Readers need to be conscious of tempo, change in tempo and reading modes. They also need to remember to prioritise slow reading of longer texts that enable them to practice concentration, tenacity, empathy and a discerning attitude.

2. Depth and surface

The understanding of text’s depth and surface levels is interconnected. This applies to both short and long texts, fiction and non-fiction. Deep understanding requires slow reading where the reader takes their time experiencing the work, reflecting, immersing themselves, understanding the use of individual words and sentences. It can be a novel, where the reader becomes occupied with a certain situation, but also ultrashort web texts where the reader takes their time to understand the context of emotional outbursts and uncompromising viewpoints. The study allows for a distinction between aesthetic and analytical deep reading. Aesthetic deep reading consists of a three-dimensional perspectivation starting from the reader’s experience: 1) to experience perspective (the young readers experience a different perspective), 2) to put into perspective (the young readers have a reflective relationship with the very fact of the different perspective, 3) to expand one’s perspective (the young readers are curious about other perspectives on the world and expanding their horizon). The analytical deep reading meets the text starting from theory and analytical models. Aesthetic and analytical deep reading may be combined but seldom is in primary school.¹² Unfortunately, young people associate analytical deep reading with the mechanical use of questions and answers in primary school. However, deep reading is required for an understanding of what the surface level is about. Skimming techniques require an understanding of what you are skimming the essence of. On the other hand, it is necessary to get your bearings among many texts you cannot deep read to put your understanding into perspective.

¹⁰ Barzillai, M., Thomson, J., van den Broek, P. and Schroeder, S. (eds.) (2018). *Learning to Read in a Digital World*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

¹¹ Bråten, I., Braasch, J.L.G. and Salmeron, L. (2020). Reading multiple and non-traditional texts. I E.B. Moje, P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso og N.K. Lesaux (red.), *Handbook of reading research*, vol. V, s. 79-98. New York: Routledge.

¹² Elf, N. og Hansen, T.I. (2017). *Hvad vi ved om undersøgelsesorienteret undervisning i dansk*. Odense: Læremiddel.dk.

3. Games, films and series

Reading cohesive text for the fun of it competes with other fun-based experiences like gaming or watching movies or series. Most children and young people spend several hours daily gaming or streaming. It does not leave much time for reading. On the other hand, there are qualities associated with games, movies and series that are significant to an overall evaluation of a versatile media consumption pattern. Games demand and develop concentration and attention. Movies and series offer recreation, diversion and empathy and may contribute to the viewers' narrative imagination. Taken as a whole, games, movies and series can be thought of as longer, cohesive, aesthetic texts when using an expanded concept of aesthetic texts. According to our study the negative correlation between precisely these media and reading is limited.¹³ Media and hobbies are also sources of inspiration. Consequently, there are several reasons for being attentive to the productive interplay between these types of media.

4. News, commercials and information streams

Reading cohesive texts to learn something competes with reading short and easily available texts and information on the internet. Never before has there been this kind of competition for children and young people as media consumers. Their time is a limited resource, and their attention is increasingly being commodified by personalised marketing. The internet gives children and young people easy access to a huge digital market with a comprehensive offer of news, updates and services, but the market also gains access to stimulate and affect their consumption patterns from an early age. Therefore, the children and young people develop increasing target group based media habits in an exchange between their own needs, social adjustment and the market's designed solutions. The benefit of short web texts is that children and young people can easily stay informed and keep themselves updated, but it rarely contributes to deep reading. Therefore, it is important to foster both a critical-analytical as well as an empathetic-aesthetic deep reading of cohesive texts, so that children and young people not only develop their critical thinking and learn to distinguish between different types of texts' function and purpose as well as getting the opportunity to participate in a diversity of cultural communities.

5. Social media

Reading cohesive texts as recreation and as access to and participation in cultural communities competes with easily accessible online communities and social media. From research into young people's well-being we know that a high consumption of social media can be associated with a couple of negative developmental tendencies if young people are caught in a game of popularity, social positioning and comparison with others. According to our results there is also a clear negative correlation between social media and both reading longer cohesive texts as well as attention span. We see a less clear picture when we compare well-being with use of social media; there is a clear negative correlation between TikTok use on one hand and how healthy and content the pupils feel on the other. The same correlation does not hold for using Instagram for example. In that light there is a need for being more critical of social media's impact while we keep an eye on the potential. For example, our research points to social media such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube having become sources of inspiration and the launch of new writing careers.

¹³ Authors' note: We do not find large systemic correlations between reading during free time and time spent on gaming and streaming respectively. The correlations found show that a fall in reading frequency generally happens, when the time spent on these media types is considerable.

Looking broadly at the entire eco system of texts and media that children navigate, social media can also contribute to a constructive interplay between the different types of media.

6. Social acceleration and digital distraction

Deep and slow reading of cohesive texts is – as mentioned above – challenged by both demands for tempo and digital distractions. It is connected with what the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa calls social acceleration.¹⁴ The present is characterised by an increasing tempo in three different regards according to Rosa: the tempo of life, social change and technological progress. When you have become accustomed to high tempo and your body being flooded by dopamine, it can be difficult to slow down, shut out the world and immerse yourself in a text. Therefore, there is a need to focus on shielding and framing. Children and young people need help finding quietude and creating a setting for their reading experiences. They need to know about the meaning of digital distraction and social acceleration and literature's offer of slowing down the tempo, shielding from the world and taking the time to existential examinations of problematics in the world while at a distance from the world.

¹⁴ Rosa, H. and Trejo-Mathys, J. (2013). *Social Acceleration: a New Theory of Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.