

The (absence of) literary reading in the careers of three teachers¹

Mellina Silva²

Norma Sandra de Almeida Ferreira³

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify aspects related to the reading of literary books to the reported by three literacy teachers at two distinct moments: as students and as educators. The central problem is to examine how these experiences with literature, throughout their family, school, and professional trajectories, affect the ways in which they interpret and engage with literary reading in the classroom. Studies related to cultural history and the teaching of literature in schools contribute to the understanding that the formation of readers in literature occurs through the ways—erratic, diverse, and exemplary—learned and taught in specific communities (primarily schools), where reading practices and representations are embedded, serving to “educate” and shape readers, who participate in them as students or teachers.

KEYWORDS: Education. Literature. Reading. Literacy teachers.

A (não) presença da leitura literária na trajetória de três professoras

RESUMO

O presente trabalho tem como objetivo identificar aspectos ligados à leitura de livros de literatura relatados por três professoras alfabetizadoras em dois momentos distintos: como estudantes e como

¹ English version by Arthur Welle. *E-mail:* arthurwelle@yahoo.com.

² Ph.D. candidate in Education. State University of Campinas – UNICAMP, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0165-9133>. *E-mail:* mellina@unicamp.br.

³ Lecturer in Education. State University of Campinas – UNICAMP, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3078-2168>. *E-mail:* normasandra@yahoo.com.br.

docentes. Tem como problemática interrogar como essas experiências com a literatura, ao longo de suas trajetórias familiares, escolares e profissionais, afetam modos como elas interpretam e se apoderam da leitura literária, em sala de aula. Estudos ligados à história cultural e ao ensino da literatura na escola colaboram para a compreensão de que a formação dos leitores em literatura se faz nos modos – errantes, diversos, modelares - aprendidos e ensinados em determinadas comunidades (principalmente a escola), onde as práticas e representações da leitura se inscrevem, sendo responsáveis por “educar” e formar os leitores, os quais participam delas como alunos ou professores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Literatura. Leitura. Professoras alfabetizadoras.

La (no) presencia de la lectura literaria en la trayectoria profesional de tres profesoras

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo identificar aspectos vinculados a la lectura de libros de literatura relatados por tres profesoras alfabetizadoras en dos momentos distintos: como estudiantes y como docentes. Plantea como problemática interrogar cómo esas experiencias con la literatura, a lo largo de sus trayectorias familiares, escolares y profesionales, afectan los modos en que ellas interpretan y se apropian de la lectura literaria en el aula. Los estudios vinculados a la historia cultural y a la enseñanza de la literatura en la escuela colaboran para la comprensión de que la formación de los lectores de literatura se realiza en los modos — errantes, diversos, modelos — aprendidos y enseñados en determinadas comunidades (principalmente la escuela), donde las prácticas y representaciones de la lectura se inscriben, siendo responsables de “educar” y formar a los lectores, quienes participan en ellas como alumnos o profesores.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Literatura. Lectura. Profesoras alfabetizadoras.

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- Mom, what are you writing?
- I'm writing an essay about books, reading...
- But what?
- I want to know why people read (I said this in a very simplified way, so my 4-year-old daughter could understand what I was writing about)
- Do you know why people read?
- Well, I know!
- Why do they read?
- Because what we already know is old, right?! We read to learn new things!
(Elis, age 4 – January 15, 2024)

Introduction: Reading, Literature, and School

The teaching of literature and the development of readers in school have been frequent topics in teacher professional development programs, and they are equally present as areas of research interest in studies conducted in the fields of education and the humanities⁴. The continued relevance of these themes seems to indicate that this debate is neither concluded nor exhausted, nor has it been resolved. When it comes to Reading and especially the teaching of this practice as it relates to literature we seem to face a complex and diverse challenge: vast and dense, yet scattered and multifaceted, traversed by different theoretical and methodological perspectives, and expressed and realized in distinct

⁴ In *The State of the Art: Academic Research and Theoretical Works on the Teaching of Literature in Brazil (2010–2021)*, a doctoral dissertation defended by Cleide Jagher (2024), the author constructed a corpus for analysis, using data from the CAPES and Brazilian Institute of Science and Technology (IBICT) Catalog of Dissertations and Theses, compiling 535 dissertations and 98 theses defended in graduate programs in Language and Literature and Education between 2010 and 2021. This extensive collection of academic research spans a variety of graduate institutions and programs across the country, encompassing theoretical and methodological perspectives that cover all levels of Basic Education and university training. The studies address the teaching of literature in the school curriculum and official programs (such as the BNCC); (new and productive) pedagogical experiences and practices with literary reading; didacticization (and inefficiency) in classroom reading practices; (good) proposals for the formation of the literary reader; the (inadequate and traditional) way in which literature and its teaching are presented in textbooks; (poor) literary training of teachers, among others.

discourses and practices that intersect with schools and the histories of diverse communities of readers across many times and places.

We know, as teachers and researchers, that literature has long been present in and with the school. An alliance built (in tension) between the ambiguous, complex, and multifaceted nature of literary language— —and the force of what has been established by tradition in the school.

The (non)presence of literary reading in the school institution constitutes one of the great challenges of education. Its importance is generally reaffirmed by what it can offer — in an entertaining and playful way — as subject-specific instruction or as a process of identification for readers in relation to the behaviors of characters presented to them as examples to be followed or rejected. Also for what it can teach regarding proper writing through the study of grammar and/or as a preferred medium in the initial literacy process for teaching the written form of letters, syllables, and words.

Its presence (that of literature) persists. In part, due to canonical works, which endure through the influence of university entrance exams and schools, thanks to the advocacy of its importance by scholars in the field of reading and its inclusion in the basic education curriculum, which drives teacher training programs⁵ and the expansion of school library collections.

On the other hand, studies on the subject persist. Literature is essential to human development, as it satisfies the universal need to fantasize and expand the capacity to understand reality (Candido, 2002). Franchetti (2021) recognizes it as a cultural asset that must be integrated into the education of every citizen “(...) not only for what it may be worth today as an object of pleasure and knowledge, but also for what it was worth in its own time!” (Franchetti, 2021, p. 29). A type of literature capable of promoting in the reader “a shift in perspective, a surrender to everything

⁵ For decades, at least since 2008, the continuing education courses for teachers offered by the Ministry of Education (MEC), for example, have used “pleasure reading” as a pedagogical practice that encourages a love of reading literature. (BRAZIL. Ministry of Education. Secretariat of Basic Education. *Pro-Literacy: Continuing Education Program for Teachers of the Early Years/Grades of Elementary School: Literacy and Language*. Issue 1: Linguistic Skills: Literacy and Reading. Brasília, 2008).

that moves within the text (...)” (Franchetti, 2021, p. 29), stimulating the relativization of certainties and the awareness of (our) human possibilities and limitations. Ferreira (2012), in turn, understands literature as a linguistic practice that can establish unique modes of dialogue, bring together imaginaries, sensibilities, and sociocultural values, and encourage distinct and shared ways of reading and understanding reading.

Amid the tensions between the institutions that legitimize literature, the publishing market, the media, public policies focused on reading, etc., the school recognizes itself as one of the primary venues responsible for the formation of the literary reader and for the reading practices that facilitate the encounter between the text (in its medium) and the subject (the reader as a real individual) who reads it, under specific conditions of meaning-making attributed to literature and diverse appropriations that shape and define this encounter.

In this context, this article aims to identify aspects related to experiences with literary reading reported by three literacy teachers at two distinct stages: as students and as teachers. It poses the following central question: to understand and examine how these experiences with literary books — or the absence thereof — affect reading practices in these teachers’ classrooms.

We hope to contribute to the debate on teacher training, which unfolds throughout one’s entire life trajectory, in different contexts and communities that socially and culturally share values, practices, and conceptions, among other things. We believe that training, specifically related to literary reading, is decisive in fostering (or not) pedagogical practices surrounding the (non)presence of literature during literacy development and in cultivating readers who, with competence and interest, can delve into the vein that shapes life.

Pathways to understanding reading, literature, and the teachers

This article stems from doctoral research aimed at understanding the legacy of three retired literacy teachers through the reconstruction of their personal and professional trajectories, with a focus on their practices and conceptions regarding literacy. Oral history (Amado, 1995; Bosi, 2023; Guedes-Pinto, 2002; Portelli, 2001) was adopted as the methodological approach, combined with contributions from cultural history (Chartier, 1998; 2002; Certeau, 2014) and language studies (Bakhtin, 2016), considering memories as interpretable and meaningful documents for understanding the teaching experience.

The research was conducted with three teachers residing in cities in the interior of São Paulo (Itapira, Holambra, and Hortolândia), through four individual sessions held in the second half of 2023 and the first half of 2024. Each session was organized around a thematic axis — childhood, education, teaching practice, and legacy Building — facilitating a chronological journey through memories. In the first two sessions, we sought to evoke memories related to their schooling, with an emphasis on the 1970s, when they likely attended their early years of school; in the last two, we explored their teaching practices throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

The interviews did not follow fixed scripts; we prioritized narrative freedom, an essential characteristic of working with memories, which, as Bosi (2023, p. 53) states, do not follow a linear timeline⁶. Nevertheless, the workshops began with a brief introduction by the researcher, in order to set a direction for the conversation. In the first workshop, for example, we asked participants to recall their experiences learning to read and write, the books that marked their childhood, the people who read to them, and their access to comic books, music, and cultural activities at home or at school.

⁶ The four sessions (which we refer to as “workshops”) were scheduled in advance, and during them we used the “memory aids” technique (Von Simson, 2006) to activate and elicit the interviewees’ memories. In the first session, we used a letter written by the researcher about her own childhood, her reading education, and her literacy process; in the second, the teachers were invited to bring an object that evoked their own educational background; in the third, the researcher presented various examples of written pedagogical activities commonly used in literacy classrooms; and, in the final session, the researcher read aloud an excerpt from a children’s book that featured nostalgia and heritage as its main themes.

In their accounts, connections emerged spontaneously between the literacy process and the (lack of) development as literary readers, both in childhood and in teaching. For this article, we selected only the excerpts that referred to reading practices, as well as to readers and settings linked to the world of literary books. We focused on those excerpts that could reveal how, in each trajectory — family, school, and professional — literary reading was remembered and highlighted in some of its aspects. In analyzing these excerpts, we sought to infer, through representations and practices related to school methodologies, everyday experiences, institutions that legitimize knowledge, and discourses surrounding the reading of literary books, among other things.

Teachers, Literature, and Reading

To understand the question “why do people read?”— presented in the epigraph at the beginning of the article — we must consider that each reader has a unique cultural trajectory, though shared in certain aspects and communities in which they participate. In this sense, we present the stories of Lourdes, Mara, and Rita⁷, literacy teachers with over 20 years of experience (two already retired and one about to retire), whose experiences with reading literature constitute the corpus of this study. The fact that all three remain in the teaching profession, even after formal retirement, reveals not only physical and intellectual stamina but also the need to supplement the family income — a common condition in the Brazilian teaching landscape. Mara, for example, expresses a desire to reduce her double workload, while Lourdes, already retired, plans to continue teaching for at least another two years.

⁷ The three teachers, whose first names have been changed in this article, were selected for the interviews based on recommendations from professionals who recognize them for their classroom performance and as effective literacy teachers—commitment to students and a high rate of children becoming literate each year.

The three teachers shared similar educational trajectories. They studied to become teachers and later earned bachelor's degrees in Education at private institutions, attending night classes and funding their own education. In their recollections, they highlight the early stages of their careers, marked more by empirical practice than by a solid institutional foundation: they taught family members to read and write, substituted for colleagues, or gave private lessons, and learned by observing more experienced teachers. In their accounts, they also highlighted structural challenges faced throughout their schooling — moving to different cities, walking long distances to school, lack of preschool⁸, early work, and their parents' low educational attainment.

All three were taught to read using the Caminho Suave primer, attended public schools, and are the first in their families to complete higher education. Their parents were illiterate or had little schooling, and they see teaching as a concrete path to social mobility and professional stability. The description of these trajectories allows us to understand the cultural, emotional, and professional foundations that underpin their practices with reading literature and, therefore, their interactions with students.

When Teachers Are Child Readers

For Hébrard (1996), “reading is an art of doing that is inherited rather than learned” (p. 37), as it is rooted in the social groups that practice it, revealing, in fact, unequal relationships with literate culture. This suggests that one does not learn to read solely through technical instruction or a natural gift, nor through isolated individual initiative, but through the sharing of symbolic and material resources — collections, media, practices, codes, and dispositions — which vary according to reading communities (Chartier, 1998). Thus, what is inherited is a situated cultural practice,

⁸ With the 1996 Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB), early childhood education (ECE) came to be considered a (mandatory) stage of education. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an expansion of services for children aged 0 to 6, aimed at supporting the majority of women entering the workforce (Kramer, 2003). (Kramer, S. *Preschool Policy in Brazil: The Art of Disguise*. 7th ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2003).

associated with modes of sociability, values, skills, expectations, and preferences, among other factors, that define and distinguish certain groups. Hence the relevance of the quality, diversity, and frequency of the reading practices in which each individual is immersed. Hence the relevance of the quality of the mediations intentionally provoked by the and other readers who mobilize, within the text, the sensitivity, memory, and subjectivity that can lead us to the “terrain of adventure” (Petit, 2009, p. 282).

In this vein, in the reading(s) and analysis(es) of the testimonies produced in workshops 1 and 2, in which the teachers evoked childhood memories — within the family and at school — we sought out elements of the cultural environment (objects, spaces, practices) that might have marked the (non)presence of reading literature.

First, we identified an absence of books in the childhoods of these three teachers, as Mara states: “I had no contact with books, none at all. There were no books in my house.” And Lourdes adds: “I never had a book at home (...) until fifth grade (...) and there were no books, just newspapers used to wrap meat, wrap things up, old newspapers.” Only a vague reference appears in Rita’s account, as she recalls having had and “liking to own books” at home, though she does not attempt to identify which ones they were, nor to detail the quantity, origin, or circulation of her collection.

Domestic spaces dedicated to storing (some/other) books were also not mentioned in the interviewees’ accounts of their childhood. In these accounts, there is an absence of references to a setting with books stored on shelves, in cabinets, or in bookcases — remembered for the physical spaces they occupied in the home — a corner of the bedroom or living room, on a table near an armchair; used by other readers at a certain time of day or under specific conditions. There is an erasure of a setting that suggests gestures, rituals, and propositions linked to reading situations in which, for example, model readers familiar with books and quite at ease in that scene are exposed. A silence regarding the “appearance” of these places and forms

that engage with readers' memories and that could set in motion a literary education program broader than mere access to literary books.

The few books recalled by the interviewees are linked exclusively to school and no longer to the family environment. Lourdes cites, for example, two titles from the Vagalume Collection⁹ : *A ilha perdida* and *Vinte mil léguas submarinas*. The first — *A ilha perdida* — was written by Maria José Dupré (1898–1984), while *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* is by the French author Jules Verne (1828–1905) — both gifted to her by her teacher, Ms. Sonia, only in the 4th grade.

In Lourdes's account, these and other books came through the teacher's hands: "(...) she would give me those books (...)" as a form of recognition for her good academic performance linked to reading "because I... I always really liked to read, and I always read very well." Her memories primarily highlight the initiative of a single (special) teacher and refer to a traditional school practice that values books as rewards for deserving students (...) and as incentives to encourage their behavior "so she encouraged that." On the other hand, the memories are evoked as if she had "always" possessed a natural and individual gift for reading, despite the absence of a family or institutional context that would have fostered a broader literary education.

For the three teachers, the most memorable book and one that holds a special place in their Hearts is the primer *Caminho Suave*¹⁰ . For them, this book holds symbolic and emotional value, especially because they spent their childhoods in social contexts where access to books and reading was limited. Escolano (2017) highlights primers as "the textual crystallization or representation of educational rationale" (p.199) of a historical moment, of a time, which can be associated with the value the interviewees place on this

⁹ The Vagalume series was created by the publisher Ática in 1973, bringing together Brazilian authors and targeting a young audience attending school. Today, it is considered one of the collections that has shaped the most generations of readers.

¹⁰ *Caminho Suave*, developed by teacher Branca Alves de Lima, is a primer that has been in circulation in the educational publishing market for over 60 years. It is currently in its 133rd edition, with 30,000 to 50,000 copies published every two years.

“book.” And, in fact, Mara recounts that “it was my first book! My first contact with letters. That was the most wonderful, exciting thing for a poor child. (...) it was something I valued; I loved it all.”

As we have seen, in the interviewees’ memories of their childhood — in the family and at school — few (literary) books are mentioned, and these are remembered even less by their titles and authors or by being arranged in spaces designed for reading. The books are mixed with other objects of the culture of writing, such as primers and school notebooks, testimonies of learning to read with emotion and pride, like the old newspapers mentioned by Rita that served purposes other than reading. Objects that evoke a cultural field shared by the presence of the written word, but not linked to the world of imagination and fantasy.

Second, when we examine the reading practices to which these teachers were subjected in childhood, the absence is repeated. There are no memories of shared reading within the Family — a practice historically recognized as central to the formation of readers (Chartier, 2002, 1998). There is no reference to reading a book aloud in a circle of readers and listeners or to a situation where a child listened to an adult reading aloud. Rita, for example, remembers books in her home, but attributes the lack of reading practices to the fact that her parents worked too much and therefore had little time to read to their children: “I liked my books, but my mother didn’t read to us” (...) “we just had to figure it out ourselves and read!”

A lack of time for reading books, for frequenting environments where works circulate and are preserved, for a network of readers that fosters belief in the value of this cultural object — the book — (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 240) or in the quality of the practice that stimulates conversations and desires regarding the plot or theme are aspects of the formation of the literary reader not mentioned by the interviewees. These are important conditions in this literary education which, as we know, goes beyond understanding reading as a gesture of intellectual engagement with the text.

In school, a cultural institution capable of creating spaces and promoting objects and behaviors linked to the formation of the literary reader, the references provided by the interviewees align with long-standing reading practices already widely recognized as characteristic of the school environment.

One of these practices is the oral reading of a text, usually led by the teacher and not always on a regular basis, as Mara puts it: “she would read something, but it wasn’t always; it wasn’t frequent to have that kind of activity” (Mara). A shared oralization of the written text by a reading audience that must assume the posture of listeners, in silence, in a classroom. An act of reading that, apparently, is identical and independent of what, how, and why one reads, which may not leave significant marks on the reader’s memory nor intentionally constitute itself as a “space for exchange and symbolic fictional mediations” (Petit, 2009, p. 288).

Another practice of oral reading is also cited by the teachers. Now the image of oral reading performed by the student, individually, likely holding the text in their hands, in front of the class, standing and facing the teacher, as Goulemot (1996) notes: “a reading, a bodily posture, an attitude toward reading, a model disposition. There is indeed an institution of the body that reads” (p. 109). It is not the oral reading of an unknown text full of discoveries; it is one previously trained and practiced by the reader, done in silence, at another time, as Mara reminds us: “I studied the lessons to read aloud, standing, next to the teacher’s desk.” It is reading fragmented into lessons and controlled by the reader to overcome the levels of difficulty assumed for them, as Lourdes recalls: “you had to memorize the lesson to be able to move on to the next one.” It is the oral reading of a text recognized from memory, performed for a listening audience (the class), accompanied by the feeling of (non)failure in decoding the written text: an object of evaluation by the adult reader (the teacher).

In this context, oral reading evokes less the production of meaning and more a correct, memorized recitation of the written text on a medium that supports it and is socially prestigious, as Mara tells us: “I fell in love with it right away. I took great care of the primer and studied the lessons.” Thus, the reading practice — which is training, study, broken down into parts, and demanded by reader-listeners — is embodied in the physical medium (the primer), treated with care and affection by the beginning reader. A positive memory of a reading practice with a specific text and a medium that distinguishes readers carries the social value attributed to those who master it: the transition from the illiterate world to that of letters.

In the testimonials, the teachers highlight memories linked especially to oral reading practices experienced at school and recognized for the pedagogical purposes and teaching methods they encompass, as Rita recalls: “the teacher would read the text from the primer, and we would memorize the text.” Here, the memory of oral reading performed by the teacher is associated with the students’ visual recognition of the text and with the oral repetition until memorization, repeated and reenacted as many times as necessary, individually or collectively.

This practice of reading, laboriously worked on by the readers, can be identified with what Chartier (1996) calls “intensive reading,” “(...) a way of reading that ensures the text’s effectiveness, thanks to a slow, reiterated, and repeated process of appropriation” (1996, p. 88), fueled by the same few texts that were heard or (re)read. These are reading-study practices recalled without resentment by the readers, but which likely did not intend to offer the construction of meanings that reshape a personal universe or that are linked to the silent and intimate reading characteristic of fiction books (Hébrard, 1996), or of individual study for one’s own interpretation of the world.

Thus, there were few references to the presence of literature in the teachers’ family and school environments. The modes and purposes of reading in the classroom were also quite limited and traditionally formulaic. It is possible that, throughout their lives, the teachers have

engaged with literary works in a casual manner and more frequently than they reported. It is also possible that they may have participated in aesthetic experiences through reading practices focused on appreciating the meaning of the text, beyond those linked to deciphering the written word and for pedagogical purposes.

It is always good to remember what Hébrard (1996) warns us about narratives of cultural trajectories when recalled by the respondents themselves. For him, sometimes these narrators may produce a kind of erasure of moments of oral or written acculturation, of places and objects of writing, of familiar reading practices, and of book circulation networks. Partly because conditions were precarious and truly meager, or because the narrators did not consider them relevant to be shared with others. Partly because these narrators “unconsciously” sought to construct a narrative as the result of a particular sensibility (achieved through great individual effort) that qualifies them for another (higher-quality) cultural and social shift, as we see in studies on readers’ autobiographies (Hébrard, 1996; Darnton, 1996).

When children become teacher-readers

In workshops 3 and 4, we encouraged the teachers to narrate their pedagogical practices, those they carried out in their classrooms. Considering that in their previous accounts of childhood they had stated that they enjoyed reading, despite conditions that were not particularly conducive to their development as readers of literary books, we expected that, as teachers, they might somehow recall the (few) family or school experiences they had had. However, when describing their reading practices and the literary books that might currently be part of their lives, the participants highlighted aspects related to the development of the reader in a different direction.

One of the first observations we made from the interviews is that the texts and books they cited, as well as the ways they put them to use,

date back to the interviewees' professional training period. They drew upon and highlighted knowledge they attributed to having acquired in numerous continuing education courses they had access to during their teaching careers — Letra e Vida, Pró-Letramento, Pacto Nacional na Idade Certa (PNAIC), and¹¹. These courses, according to their accounts, were central to the development of their teaching practices and updated conceptions of teaching, as well as to the expansion of their didactic and pedagogical repertoires, including those related to reading (literature).¹² In their statements, for example, teacher Mara highlights “Letra e Vida” as a program that shaped her teaching training, and Lourdes points to the PNAIC: “one of the best courses I’ve taken. One of the best! It was really good!”, in which she participated as a teacher trainer and was able to integrate what she learned in her role as a trainer with her classroom practice.

Among the important contributions of these courses to their training, the teachers report how they helped them “look at texts” (Mara) in a richer way and generate reflections on written language based on the texts.

In fact, having the text (in its entirety, not just a part of it) as the central focus of reading instruction is one of the key guidelines in the courses mentioned, which at the time were grounded in the work of Geraldi (1986) and Kleiman (1995), among others. Expanding children’s contact with real texts through handling them is another of these guidelines that provide successive generations with cultural references. Furthermore, considering these texts as discursive genres (Bakhtin, 2016) viewed through

¹¹ The Literacy Teacher Training Program—Letra e Vida—was implemented in the São Paulo state public school system in 2003 and was discontinued in 2015. (https://agendapos.fclar.unesp.br/agenda-pos/linguistica_lingua_portuguesa/1748.pdf). Pró-Letramento was a program of the Ministry of Education (MEC) that operated from 2005 to 2013 (<https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/zetetike/article/view/8646798/13700>). The National Pact at the Right Age (PNAIC) was launched by the Ministry of Education (MEC) in 2012 and ended in 2017. (https://agendapos.fclar.unesp.br/agenda-pos/linguistica_lingua_portuguesa/1748.pdf).

¹² It is worth noting that starting in the 1980s and 1990s, a wealth of materials and documents were distributed, and a wide variety of continuing education courses were offered to public school teachers at the municipal, state, and federal levels, with the aim of influencing teaching practices, seeking to resolve long-standing problems related to children’s reading and writing skills, and also to contribute to the development of readers of literary works.

their compositional structure, style, and thematic content is another perspective present in the courses mentioned by the teachers and reinterpreted in classroom practices, as seen in Mara's remarks: "in the classroom, we bring in a huge diversity; we bring nursery rhymes, songs, poetry, recipes; we work on a lot of things with them," and which Lourdes also confirms in a project involving nursery rhymes, poems, and circle songs, such as "fall, fall, balloon, little melon cap (...)".

Unlike the school environment recalled by the interviewees from their childhood, the range of texts they offer their students has expanded to include discursive genres¹³ that are characteristic of popular culture and aligned with children's tastes, rather than those created exclusively for didactic purposes and often devoid of meaning for readers. This is quite different from what they were intensely exposed to in their early school years: the primer (*Caminho Suave*), which aims to follow the alphabetical sequence and graded levels of difficulty for a reader who has not yet mastered the written form of the language (Bakhtin, 2016).

Instead of a single reading material (the primer) or a limited number of printed texts, these teachers stated that they offer their students a diversity of texts, including those that originally belong to the school tradition, which are recognized as belonging to the child's world due to their cultural and playful learning situations, their oral nature, or because they are considered familiar to beginning readers. These are generally short texts in terms of line length, many of them arranged in verses or short paragraphs written in the style of everyday, informal written language, capable of being sung and memorized due to the presence of sound repetition, rhymes, and refrains, catering to the tastes and expectations of child readers, as they can function as "places of textual memory" (Chartier, 1996, p. 130). For these texts, the intended

¹³ We are using the term "genre" (of discourse) as it has been referenced in recent decades in various official documents intended for teacher training and guided by the studies of Bakhtin (2016). For him, language takes the form of relatively stable utterances linked to multifaceted uses that correspond to the specific conditions of various fields of human activity and communication (Bakhtin, 2016).

reader is a beginner in written culture, one who needs to be guided through a reading experience that is less dense, less unfamiliar, and more pleasurable: “I work on the text. I used music.” (Rita).

While in childhood the three interviewees reported that their reading experience was practically limited to the printed primer titled *Caminho Suave*, in their statements as teachers there is no reference to the physical medium that supports these various texts they highlighted for their pedagogical purpose, as Lourdes stated: “the Dona Baratinha teaching sequence. All the work was designed based on the text: the wedding invitation, the guest list, what to serve...” (Lourdes).

The teachers’ failure to explicitly mention the¹⁴ media of these texts leads us to observe an omission on their part regarding the presence of popular and children’s literature books. These books typically contain legends, poems, folk games, and songs, etc., as well as regarding classroom or school libraries, where such books in the genres they cited could be available to readers. In light of these omissions regarding the printed book medium that carries the genres highlighted by the teachers, it is necessary to consider that in the education of readers, texts are not stable because they are disconnected from any physical materiality “(...) that no text exists outside the medium that makes it readable, that there is no understanding of a written text, whatever it may be, that does not depend on the forms through which it reaches its reader” (Chartier, 1996, p. 127).

A second observation we wish to highlight in the teachers’ statements is the network of reading practices related to this broader repertoire of texts compared to what they experienced in their childhood. These practices are now more or less linked to the tradition of school y culture, to the shared modes and modalities of reading “that give form and meaning to individual gestures” (Chartier, 2002, 1996), and at other times more closely linked to

¹⁴ The consistent (and frequent) references in the teachers’ statements to the inclusion of a wide variety of texts and to the specific types of text genres in their lesson plans may suggest the influence of the instructional materials (textbooks) they use in daily school life, which also presents a range of diverse text genres to be worked on and distributed across lessons and activities.

the professional development courses taken by the teachers throughout their careers, in which, for us, knowledge is always a singular (re)application that cannot be reduced to the will of the producers of discourses and institutional frameworks (Chartier, 1996).

One of these practices related to this work with a greater number and diversity of texts could be linked to the form of reading termed “extensive” in the studies of Roger Chartier (2002, 1996). A practice that places a reader face-to-face with a quantity and diversity of texts, and in a reading relationship that “imposes” itself in a silent, individual manner and in intimacy with the (fiction) book. However, despite the varied selection, the reading practices actually reported by the teachers seem to align with “intensive” reading (Chartier, 2002, 1996). With each text selected and proposed for reading, the learners dedicate themselves to a lengthy, meticulous, and detailed engagement with the text, as Mara put it in her testimony: “and, within that text there, the song, we explore everything.”

An intensive reading practice that requires training and, for this reason, the reader confronts the same text multiple times: (re)cognized through memory and orality; recognizable through pleasurable listening, a text heard/read in its entirety or studied in smaller units, in parts: fragmented —“I worked on the text sliced up with the music” (Rita). And this approach reaches, especially readers with limited written reading skills, through the listening to a text set to music, rhythmic, and rhymed, and thus in a more pleasurable and attractive way for them, according to the interviewees themselves.

The reading practice with these (literary) texts¹⁵ most frequently cited by the teachers, with numerous references, is reading aloud, whether performed by the teacher or practiced by the students, whether accompanied by the written text, or through an attentive engagement of the student-reader with their own material.

¹⁵ For the writing of this article, we chose to highlight the teachers’ references to texts that circulate socially and are more closely linked to the world of fantasy and play, identifying them as belonging to the literary field.

According to the interviewees, oral reading by the teacher can be done, for example, with the text written on the blackboard or projected onto a screen: “I would take the short texts and put them on *the projector* and have them read them” (Rita). The students follow the text projected in front of them with their eyes and listen to the teacher’s voice, which provides them with the direction and rhythm of the reading. “So, everyone was reading” (Rita), internalizing the words they read through the repetition of the gesture.

In this reading practice, the written text comes to life because it is visible to everyone and, at the same time, because it is vocalized by the teacher’s voice or through the collective vocalization of the children: an effort to reinforce the correspondence between sound and spelling.¹⁶ This cycle, in which reading aloud is anchored in writing and writing returns to orality (Chartier, 1996), is a method adopted by teachers, based on official guidelines and teaching materials focused on teaching the written form of the language in students’ early years of schooling, such as the PNAIC (2012).

The teachers’ statements do not clarify when the literary text shifted from the students’ field of view (blackboard, screen) to reading in their own materials (book, sheet of paper), at their individual desks. The reading practice that stands out in their statements is one in which a great deal of energy and effort is devoted to memorization and recognizing the association between the sound and the graphic representation, as Rita reports: “I work (...), for example, I gave them the poem ‘A casa’ by Vinicius de Moraes, and they had to find the word ‘casa’” (...), since “I was working on the letter C”; or, as Lourdes puts it, that “we dictate the little word, and they go around or color it blue (...)”. Thus, the reader’s individual encounter with the text is postponed.

¹⁶ In the PNAIC (2015), for example, these practices emphasize reflection on alphabetic writing in the development of phonological and phonographic awareness, with activities such as: words that end the same way, identifying words by their sound, the order and variety of letters, etc.

Although the teachers' statements indicate the use of a varied repertoire of texts (cultural, popular, and those considered closer to the world of children), there is a recurring emphasis on a reading practice predominantly exercised as a pedagogical resource for language instruction, which seems to distance itself from more interpretive or subjective uses in the formation of the reader, in a less pragmatic encounter with literature.

References to work that approaches the practices of "reading for pleasure or reading for enjoyment" are few and vague, as we can find, for example, in the guidelines of the PNAIC and Pró-Letramento programs — nationwide courses in which the teachers reported having participated.

Practices with literature reported as an aesthetic experience or a space for creation, imagination, and provoking reception effects in the reader are peripheral or practically absent.

One such practice of engagement with a fictional text was suggested by Mara: "I tell a story, I show a short film." In this example, reading is a means to break up the routine and access playfulness, prioritizing a welcoming atmosphere. The text appears through the teacher's voice — "I tell a story" — not read from printed or digital books, nor as a reading practice, but as enjoyment or delight. The story (fiction) is, here, justified as a practice or pretext to *welcome* the class, foster friendship, and create (good) behavior in the classroom.

When teachers reaffirm the use of literature books — including those from official programs such as the PNLD¹⁷ — they continue to instrumentalize reading. The central practice reiterates recognition-based, learning, seeking an association between what is heard (reading aloud) and what is seen (graphic configuration), as discussed previously. Rita exemplifies this reduction: "I'm working on the letter J; I read a book from the PNLD."

¹⁷ The National Program for Books and Teaching Materials (PNLD) is focused on the distribution of educational, pedagogical, and literary works in the country's public school systems. Through this program, participating schools receive materials selected by the Ministry of Education on a regular basis and free of charge, encouraging the improvement and promotion of reading. (<https://todospelaeducacao.org.br/noticias/pnld-o-que-e-e-como-funciona-o-programa-nacional-do-livro/>).

Thus, what is evident is that with the intention of offering a broader collection than one composed of a limited number of texts (sometimes only those from the primer) — reading methods turn to *intensive* practices, those in which the reader (the teacher) explores each text in depth, offering readers/listeners recognition in writing of what is culturally familiar to them, with a specific purpose: to teach reading and writing in a playful and enjoyable way.

Perhaps it is necessary to raise some hypotheses that justify or explain the omission or the few references we found in the teachers' statements regarding certain emblematic aspects when discussing the formation of readers of literature.

One hypothesis is that during the interviews we made it clear that the main focus was on literacy, and since these teachers were recommended by their peers as experts in literacy instruction, their statements may have been guided by what is most important and valued by them and for them: the first grade (of elementary school) must ensure that all children learn to read and write. And the best and most productive approach would be one that centers on text, using it as a pretext for more “contextualized” learning and to teach, in a playful way, how to read and write it.

Another hypothesis may be that it has become implicit in their practices that one first learns to write (the graphic representation of sound) so that, in subsequent years, students can read literature books independently (in individual, silent practice) and borrow books from libraries.

And finally, perhaps they consider that reading fiction for leisure and with no other purpose than enjoyment can be left to the family itself, as Mara points out: “not nowadays! They have access to books, they have access to the internet, they have access to comic books.” Unlike the “ ” who told us about her childhood, she now recalls that “in my day, there were no comic books, for example, which are such a delightful read, right? They have access to so much. Many parents bring home, from the moment their child is born, a little book to take into the bath. They’ve been exposed to it since they were babies.”

Final reflections on reading, literature, and school

In this article, we identified and contrasted aspects related to the reading experiences (literary reading practices) of three literacy teachers at two distinct stages of their lives — sometimes as students, sometimes as teachers. Although these testimonies from teachers Lourdes, Mara, and Rita were gathered with the aim of understanding the legacy of their literacy practices for the production of one of the authors' doctoral thesis, it was possible to reveal the ways in which they interpret and engage with the reading of literature.

If reading is an art of doing that is inherited — through which one has the right to take possession of “assets” accumulated by someone or a group, rather than something learned through training or technique, performance or experimentation, capacity-building or skill development — we can conclude that in these teachers' accounts there are few signs of an inheritance rooted in the main reading communities (family and school, as cited by them) linked to literary reading practices, as we had imagined might be possible. There were few indications of a heritage embedded in literary reading practices that drive the aesthetic-literary use of language (Ferreira, 2012) and that can offer and promote an aesthetic experience that is a source of life and learning (Britto, 2024, p.49) for the reader through the other(s). There were few indications of reading practices recognized as more individual, silent, and private in nature, which welcome the mediation of the adult reader in conversations, exchanges of meaning, and acceptance.

We have observed that the testimonies of the three teachers point to a lack of access to (literary) books — the first prerequisite for fostering a culture of reading, both as students they once were and as teachers they are now. There is a lack of opportunities for contact, handling, exploration, and reading/listening to stories that use printed books as text carriers. And, finally, a silencing of potential readers who might have contributed to the

enjoyment of reading, the ways of reading, the practice of reading, and the mediations that shape the encounter between readers and books.

As teachers, they point to short texts and genres that are part of the child's cultural universe and have been offered for decades through school teaching materials. Recalled as pretexts — more playful, less tiring, more pleasurable — these texts are valued for their diversity of genres, in line with their perceptions of what constitutes a more up-to-date and contextualized education for children.

They emphasize ritualized reading practices (oral and intensive), closer to the field of literacy, as the best they can offer their students, allowing them access to what was fundamental to them in their own narratives: the importance of this learning and of mastering reading and writing for the individual's social and cultural mobility. A transition that, according to these teachers, was possible almost entirely on their own, through their own efforts, despite the many adversities they faced. In life. At school.

Recurring, reiterated, and valued in the testimonies we collected, reading practices serve as a means to support the teaching of the written form of the language. A call to schools as the (privileged) place where time, frequency, and value should be dedicated to becoming a reader (collectively and individually) with/through (literary) texts and their media, in diverse and plural forms of reading.

The results of this research reiterate that literature and life do not occupy distinct spaces in the trajectories of the literacy educators analyzed. Art and poetry manifest themselves in everyday school life through the memories and sensibilities of these teachers, confirming that the practice of reading and literature requires careful attention to the experiences that precede and sustain it.

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