

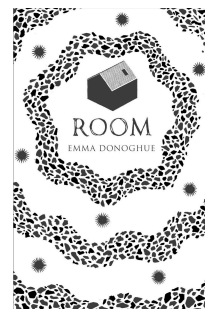
Examples. Teacher's Work on Emma Donoghue's *Room* by MF (2019)

Here is an example of how I work with a novel, to expand my world and improve my English. Then I always think of sharing. If other people thought of this too, lessons would be amazing! If each person brought to class just one sentence of UL, one passage with a narrative or a description, and one fav quote or passage that made you think, become more human, wouldn't that be something?

About not being able to read the book: it's out of the question. I know it's hard to read from a 5-year-old perspective, not knowing what's happening like you do every day. So focus on learning language then & be patient. Just do it, please. EXPERIENCE the wide range of emotions this book will make you feel, and THINK about the very important human & social questions this story poses.

How I work as I read novels

As I read, I underline and dog-ear pages*: some of the words I don't know, not all. The ones I consider most interesting or necessary for my English; favorite quotes and passages. I have different ways of underlining, to find things faster later on. I also have a set of abbreviations to indicate categories like Narr (UL, language good for narratives), Descr (UL for Descriptions), the star indicates it's a most favorite quote of mine, C1 means it's an advanced language item I may want to group with others of this kind to practice and master or understand its use, and so on.

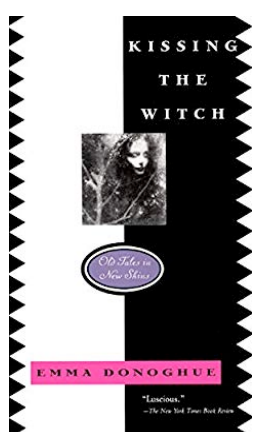


*My dog-earing is not to know where I should pick up my reading later on, but as a kind of highlighting where I have selected key passages. Anyway, for the dog-ear vs. bookmark debate please, read this article! <https://www.bustle.com/p/11-things-people-who-dog-ear-books-will-never-understand-about-people-who-use-bookmarks-75481>

Then, once in a while, I sit to work on my underlinings. It is only then when I stop to look up words I don't know, or do some research on sociocultural information: etymologies, info related to places and communities in the book, lifestyles, etc.

Finally, I create my worksheet to share. I usually publish them on Talking People (my website) or on the blog Language Learning from Reading (a free wordpress blog I created as quick reference for my students).

My little story of how I found this book



I discovered Emma Donoghue my last year in Madrid because I was giving one of her books as a goodbye present by a teacher in the last school I worked: *Kissing the Witch*, a collection of retellings of classic tales, feminist retellings. An extraordinary book. My life is hectic, so I kept discovering women writers and forgot about this one until a teacher in our school, who unfortunately left, showed me *Room* and asked me about it. She was using it in her groups. I hadn't read it to I jotted it down in my To Read summer list. Again, I find the story has a precious point of view or approach to events, and that people should read this author and reflect upon her work because it's relevant for us to learn about our cultures and human nature, our potential and the obstacles we face.



It will come as no surprise to those of you who know me I sent her a Thank you email plus an attached three-page letter inviting her to share whatever she wished with my prospective students, those who would be reading *Room* this year. But it was clear she has far too much on. She *did* reply. Aug 19, 2019: "So sorry, Michelle, but I'm mad busy publicizing my new novel - I hope you understand. Thanks so much for teaching ROOM... Emma."

My First Notes on *Room* for C1.2 students

Taking notes on Useful Language and sociocultural information, to expand, to practice retelling, so as to learn and use in my personal life.

Donoghue has created one of the pure triumphs of recent fiction: an ebullient child narrator, held captive with his mother in an 11-by-11-foot room, through whom we encounter the blurry, often complicated space between closeness and autonomy. In a narrative at once delicate and vigorous — rich in psychological, sociological and political meaning — Donoghue reveals how joy and terror often dwell side by side.' — Note on *Room*'s choice as one of five best fiction titles of 2010 in the *New York Times*

Source: <https://www.emmadonoghue.com/books/novels/room-the-novel.html>

Useful Language from reviews in the link above

Adjectives & Adverbs: Astounding, terrifying... / One of the most affecting and subtly profound novels of the year / For such a peculiar, stripped-down tale, it's fantastically evocative... / Heart-stopping... Donoghue's utterly gripping plot / In a narrative at once delicate and vigorous — rich in psychological, sociological and political meaning — / Donoghue navigates beautifully around these limitations / Thrilling and at moments palm-sweatingly harrowing... / Powerful, tension-filled and takes a big risk... Highly recommended / Both gripping and poignant, it's a tribute to human resourcefulness and resilience / Riveting and original... a page-turner... / Inventive and disturbing... compellingly subversive / Charming, funny, artfully constructed and at times almost unbearably moving, (verbs) Donoghue mines material that on the face of it appears intractably bleak and surfaces with a powerful, compulsively readable work of fiction that defies easy categorization

Verbs: she is able to fashion radiance from such horror / (plot) may sound as if it has been ripped from headlines / (narrative) Donoghue reveals how joy and terror often dwell side by side / It presents an utterly unique way to talk about love, all the while giving us a fresh, expansive eye on / what makes the emotion possible is that this book is built like a / It kept us utterly hooked

Clauses: Without denying Jack's vulnerability, (Verbs) Donoghue allows an almost terrifying resilience to seep into his narrative / As a life-affirming fable, / Both hard to put down and profoundly affecting

The Novel

The epigraph of this novel reads:

*My child
Such trouble I have
And you sleep, your heart is placid;
you dream in the joyless wood;
in the night nailed in bronze,
in the blue dark you lie still and shine.*
Simonides (c. 556-468 BCE), "Danaë"
(tr. Richmond Lattimore)

The **epigraph** sets us up for a superhuman origin story. Simonides was a Greek poet and this poem, the *Lamentation of Danaë*, is about a woman trapped in a chest and set afloat at sea.

Being trapped in a small space and feeling lost and set adrift in the world... The child Danaë is Perseus ... the same Perseus who killed Medusa (beheaded a gorgon), slayed a sea monster, and married Princess Andromeda.

Source: Information from <https://www.shmoop.com/room-emma-donoghue/epigraph.html>

Emma Donoghue: *Room* was inspired by... having kids; the locked room is a metaphor for the claustrophobic, tender bond of parenthood. I borrowed observations, jokes, kid grammar and whole dialogues from our son Finn, who was five while I was writing it. *Room* was also inspired by... ancient folk motifs of walled-up virgins who give birth (e.g. Rapunzel), often to heroes (e.g. Danaë and Perseus). *Room* was also inspired by... the Fritzl family's escape from their dungeon in Austria.

Source: <https://www.emmadonoghue.com/books/novels/room-the-novel.html>

Useful Language

- the tooth fairy (88)

From **wikipedia** (practice explaining traditions): The Tooth Fairy is a fantasy figure of early childhood in Western and Western-influenced cultures. The folklore states that when children lose one of their baby teeth, they should place it underneath their pillow or on their bedside table and the Tooth Fairy will visit while they sleep, replacing the lost tooth with a small payment.



More... The Ratoncito Pérez (Pérez Mouse in English) is popular in Spanish and Hispanic American cultures. Similar to the Tooth Fairy, it originated in Madrid in 1894 (?!). As is traditional in some English-speaking countries, when a child loses a tooth it is customary for him or her to place it under the pillow, so that Ratoncito Pérez will exchange it for a gift. The tradition takes different forms in different areas. He is known as Ratoncito Pérez in Spanish speaking countries, with the exception of some regions of Mexico, Peru and Chile, where he is called "el Ratón de los Dientes" (The Tooth Mouse).

In **Italy**, the Tooth Fairy is also often replaced by a small mouse named Topolino.

In **France** and French-speaking Belgium this character is called *la petite souris* (the little mouse).

From parts of Lowland **Scotland** comes a white fairy rat who purchases children's teeth.

In **Catalonia**, the tooth is placed under the pillow in exchange of a coin or a little token brought by *Els Angelets* (little angels) and *Les animetes* (little souls).

In the **Basque Country**, especially in Biscay, there is Mari Teilatukoa (Mary from the roof), who lives in the roof of the *baserri* and catches the teeth thrown by the children.

In some **Asian** countries, such as India, China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, when a child loses a tooth, it is customary for him or her to throw it onto the roof if it came from the lower jaw, or into the space beneath the floor if it came from the upper jaw. While doing this, the child shouts a request for the tooth to be replaced with the tooth of a mouse. This tradition is based on the fact that the teeth of mice grow for their entire lives, a characteristic of all rodents. In some cultures in India, children bury their teeth in the soil near big trees.

In **Middle Eastern** countries (including Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and Sudan), there is a tradition of throwing a baby tooth up into the sky to the sun or to Allah. This tradition may originate in a pre-Islamic offering, and dates back to at least the 13th century.

Children's rhymes: Night night / sleep tight / don't let the bugs bite (bugs or bedbugs) [Other versions of who bites: the angels (traditional), the missiles (Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp)] (89)



Page 341:

"Growing up without LEGO" she tells Steppa, "I literally can't imagine it."
"Bet there's a couple billion children in the world managing somehow," says Steppa.
"I guess you're right." She's looking confused.



Privacy & Law (248): "This paper that's printed your fifth-grade photo, for instance," he's saying, "we'd have a strong case for **breach of privacy** there."

- breach of duty = incumplimiento del deber
- a breach of contract = incumplimiento de contrato
- they breached the agreement = rompieron, infringieron el acuerdo
- After the riot, protesters were accused of breach of the peace = (perturbación del orden público)
- Sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions is among the most appalling forms of breach of trust (abuso de confianza, prevaricación)

Describing physical things people do. Holding, letting loose (287):

"They'll be waiting..."
"I want to come too." I *sit up* and *wrap* around Ma. ...

"You'll be exhausted if you don't have a nap. *Let go of* me, please." Ma's *taking my hands off* her. I *knot* them around her tighter so she can't. "Jack!"

"Stay."

I *put my legs around* her too.

"*Get off me*. I'm late already." Her hands are *pressing* my shoulders but I *hold on* even more.

"You're not a baby. I said get off--"

Ma's *shoving* so hard, I suddenly *come loose*.

Ma *grabs me* by the hand and *yanks*. (265)

- There's *a* somebody standing* in the door, I *jump***. (275) *a somebody (possible, yes) ** to jump = to be startled, to be given a fright

For reading aloud in class. Sharing passages to collect UL

Visit to a mall (302) * Toilet (307) * Bee sting (335)

The kid's language:

Using expressive language is a key aim for advanced learners, so it might be interesting to consider what children do with language, how creative and expressive they are and how they do that! Some of these sentences could have been stated by adults too. Sort that out!

- I'm being scave* but a bit more brave than scared because this isn't as abad as pretending I'm dead in Rug. (302) Lexical creativity workshop & *scave*. What's the name of this kind of word formation?
- Traffic lights changing to green and a woman with crutches *hopping* (302)
- I pick up the heart [an object] and put it in my pocket with the other treasures ... / Then I change my mind, I put all my treasures in my Dora bag in *the front zip bit* instead. *My shoes are sore** so I take them off. (305) *the kid's poetic licence! The shoes are personified, pain transferred to them
- She squirts sunblock into her hands. ... That's kind of funny. / She starts rubbing it on my back of hands. ... / She does my face. ... / ... we're all done (333)
- Steppa cracks an egg with one hand so it plops over the pasta. (341)
- She's put *the bud things* in her ears, she's nodding to a music I don't hear and singing in a little voice ... She puts one bud in my ear (275) [earphones]
- *match* (339): He *stamps on* my foot. / I *howl*. / ... He shows me the match all curled up, he rubs my sock where there's a black bit. "Didn't your ma ever teach you not to play with fire?" / "There wasn't." / "There wasn't what?" / "Fire." / He stares at me. "I guess your stove was electric. Go figure."
- I see a gigantic apple made of wood. "I like that." (305)
- Next I find a silver-and-blue thing like a rocket [a coffeepot] ... putting it back on the shelf. (305)
- Our shadows are really long and stretchy. I wave my giant fists. (343)
- "Well, coffee's the most important thing they sell because most of us need it to keep us going, like gas in the car." / Ma only drinks water and milk and juice like me, I wonder what keeps her going. (347)

Other Useful Language

- *Like* it matters (89) = *As if* it mattered. Reply to the question, "What happened?"
- I'm getting good at telling (248) [expanding uses of "to be good at"]
- Go to sleep now (287) vs Go to bed. What's the BIG difference?
- Go back to sleep (271) [transparent phrasals]
- When we jump back through the revolving door I'm blurry in my head. (265)
- Let's get you inside (265)
- Donations are pouring in (248)
- *How's it going?* ...
- I don't think this is going to *work* (287) [A plan]
- Bronwyn *keep* going "Hi Jack, Hi jack." (302)
- I *kept* the sixth ... You can have [keep] as many as you like. (271)
- ... we'll be fine *as long as* we hold hands (325)
- *Come away from that* (325). How do you say "Aléjate de ahí", see? Think about this. Understand how precious reading literature, underlining UL (to learn to avoid literal translation) & reflecting on functional translation is!



Trees (264): ... a maple key ... "It's the seed of this maple tree ... a sort of pair of wings to help it go far." ... I show her another one *that's something wrong with*. "It's just a single, it lost its other wing"

For classroom discussions. Sharing questions and passages to discuss topics

Questions

- Can you work out a statement where you word the key idea for this story?
- What do you think the mother did right in Room?
- What would you have done in her place?
- What can you say to some people's criticism to her mothering?
- Which scenes or developments in the novel affected you most?
- How do you relate to lying and telling the truth?
- What kind of things do you believe are true on TV?
- How do you feel when adults speak in front of children as if children were not there?

Passages

true, fake, **what's true?** (88) About **the world seen on TV**

Whenever I think of a thing now ... I have to remember they're real, they're actually happening in Outside all together. It makes my head tired. ...

"Are stories true?"

"Which ones?" ...

"not literally." ...

"So they're fake?"

"No, no. Stories are a different kind of true."

About **lying**:

Grandma says she wouldn't lie to me. She lied to Dr. Clay about Checkers. (325)

He didn't tell Grandma about the match, that's kind of lying but not getting me into trouble is a good reason. (339)

When I was four I thought everything in TV was just TV, then I was five and Ma *unlied** about lots of it being pictures of real and Outside being totally real. Now I'm in Outside but it turns out lots of it isn't real at all. [in the playground, a pole imitating that of fire fighters] (345)

*Lexical creativity workshop. What kind of wordformation is this?

Page 297. Discussing the role that the news media play in the novel. **TV crew** (286) (the media) & **brutality** in **understanding** of things:

... "But did you ever consider asking your captor to take Jack away?"

"Away?"

"To leave him outside a hospital, say, so he could be adopted. As you yourself were, very happily, I believe."

I can see Ma swallow. "Why would I have done that?"

"Well, so he could be free."

"Free away from me?"

"It would have been a sacrifice, of course -- the ultimate sacrifice -- but if Jack could have had a normal, happy childhood with a loving family?"

"He had me." Ma says it one word at a time. "He had a childhood with me, whether you'd call it normal or not."

"But you knew what he was missing," says the woman. "Every day he needed a wider world, and the only one you could give him got narrower. You must have been tortured by the memory of everything Jack didn't even know to want. Friends, school, grass, swimming, rides at the fair ..."

"Why does everyone go on about fairs?" Ma's voice is all hoarse. "When I was a kid I hated fairs."

The woman does a little laugh.

Ma's got tears coming down her face, she puts up her hands to catch them. I'm off my chair and running at her ...

"The boy is not to be shown" (298)

Page 360, about **love**:

"Remember," she says on the way to the white car, "we don't hug strangers. Even nice ones."

"Why not?"

"We just don't, we save our hugs for people we love."

"I love that boy Walker."

"Jack, you never saw him before in your life."

RESOURCES - Film/Movie (2015)

Full **Audiobook** on YouTube: https://youtu.be/la_ZF5I3RQ

Oral Book Review: <https://youtu.be/8BtiGypyKwU> that later compares it to the movie

Discussion Panel: An in-depth 40-minute audio discussion of *Room* by the Slate Book Club, <http://www.slate.com/id/2286457/> CONTAINS SPOILERS

Radio interview. Emma Donoghue on The Guardian Book Club <https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2014/apr/18/emma-donoghue-room-books-podcast>(30')

Articles: 850-word article by Emma Donoghue on *Room* published in The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/mar/21/emma-donoghue-room-book-club>

Articles: 1,500-word article by Catherine Conroy on Donoghue published in The Irish Times <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/emma-donoghue-when-i-have-an-idea-i-hurl-myself-at-it-1.3121057> + musical 2017

