

read and write beside them

increase confidence & independence with daily reading,
writing, & revising

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I write to hold my life in my hands and to declare it a treasure. ~Lucy Calkins

Never hesitate to imitate another writer. Imitation is part of the creative process for anyone learning an art or a craft. Bach and Picasso didn't spring full-blown as Bach or Picasso; they needed models. This is especially true of writing. ~ William Zinsser

Exercise the writing muscle every day, even if it is only a letter, notes, a title list, a character sketch, a journal entry. Writers are like dancers, like athletes. Without that exercise, the muscles seize up. ~Jane Yolen

If you tell your students what to say and how to say it, you may never hear them, only the pale echoes of what they imagine you want them to be. ~Donald Murray

Supporting Independent Reading

to increase Stamina, Fluency, & Joy

Time

Students need time to read in class in order to create a habit of reading and set the stage for homework reading, and teachers need reading time to confer individually with students about their choices, stamina, engagement, and goals. Students need time to discuss choices with classmates, time to analyze their progress, and time to practice fluency & comprehension strategies under the direction of the teacher.

Choice

Students need to make choices in reading that reflect their interests because interest drives engagement. Teachers should encourage wide reading in all genres as well as students who pursue an author or genre study. Allow students to reread favorite books and to abandon a book that no longer interests them.

Response

Teacher conferences are the primary tool for assessing progress, encouraging goal-setting and reflection, and analyzing student needs. Students will reflect on reading in writing (themed notebooks & writing notebooks), facilitate discussions in small groups, join blogs or reading sites for discussions outside of class, and respond regularly to other readers in the room.

Vision

Daily book talks present a wide range of voices, styles of text, categories of interest, etc. and are essential for helping students develop their own 'to read next' lists. We must commit to helping students define themselves as readers who like...

Expectations

All readers will develop the stamina to read longer and with greater fluency with daily practice. A reading rate is calculated regularly and students are expected to meet a weekly goal based on the challenge of the current selected text. All readers will update book lists, set goals, and read regularly each week at home.

Challenge

Monitor reading lists & teach all students to analyze choices and increase challenge; set goals based on progress towards college expectations: 200-600 pages/week; create reading ladders that help students find books of increasing difficulty within a genre; book talk a wide variety of choices including classics and world literature.

Modeling

Use short mentor texts to increase complexity & demands on readers; model storyboarding to help students understand the craft construction in short stories & novels; model your choices as a reader: post your reading list, share books you love; show thinking & annotations in a mentor text and model "fix-it" comprehension strategies.

Find Your Reading Rate

Find out how many pages you can read in 10 minutes by timing yourself.

$$\frac{x \text{ pages}}{10 \text{ min}}$$

×

Have some extra time this week? Stretch yourself and read an additional 30 or 60 minutes per week.

$$\frac{120 \text{ min}}{1 \text{ week}}$$

=

$$\frac{\# \text{ pages}}{\text{week}}$$



Remember that your reading rate is personalized to you and the book you're reading. Calculate a new reading rate each time you start a book.

Finished your book?

Record your book online.

Write a reflection for this week (if you haven't already), and . . .

Start reading another book!

Use this number to estimate how long it should take you to finish your book. For ex, if your reading rate is 150 pgs/wk and your book is 400 pages long, then it should take you between 2-3 weeks to finish your book.



Don't forget to think about how you will grow and challenge yourself as a reader. Pick a reading challenge to tackle.

Possible Conference Questions

Questions that Monitor a Reading Life:

What are you reading? How did you choose it?
How do you find good books?
What's on your Next list?
Which authors are your favorites?
How much did you read last year?
Do you consider yourself a reader?
Where do you read at home?

Questions that drive a Teaching Reading Strategies conference:

How is the reading going for you?
Is this an easy or a hard read for you? How do you know?
Tell me about a time when this book has confused you and what you've done to get yourself back on track in your understanding.
Tell me about these characters—who they are, what do you think of them?
What questions are at the heart of this book? What questions might the author be trying to answer through the struggles of these characters?
I see you're almost finished with the book. When you think back over the way a character has changed in this story, can you point to specific moments when something was revealed about this character? Could you make a claim about this character and support it with evidence from the text?
How is this book different from the last book you read?

Questions that drive a conference to Increase Complexity and Challenge:

What else have you read by this author?
What other books have you read that are as difficult as this one?
Which books on your next list are challenging?
Have you considered how to push yourself as a reader?
Which genres have you read this year?
Tell me about a genre you don't usually read and let's think about books that might ease the transition from what you love to what will challenge you to think differently.
Tell me about a book you've dropped this year. Why did you drop it?
How are the books you've been reading this year similar?

Analyzing Writing Craft in Independent Reading

This is called 'rhetorical reading' and it means to break the text down into the sum of its parts... to determine what the writer was trying to achieve and which writing strategies he/she used to try to achieve it. A rhetorical analysis is always looking at the why and the how of the writing.

1. Read one whole chapter of your book today. When finished, go back and skim read to map out what happens in this chapter in your notebook. Write about how the author put the chapter together. Consider what we've studied that writers do to move the action: flashback, zoom in, zoom past, narrator aside, etc.
 - a. **Day 2:** consider the development of the chapter above and explain why you think the author wrote this chapter at this point in the story in this way.
2. Find several interesting sentences and copy them into your notebook. Annotate them to show what makes them interesting to you. This is an author's craft question, so I am looking for observations you can make about a writer's choices in this section that you find interesting.
3. Focus on one of the lenses for reading that we have focused on so far in second and third readings of poetry: word choice, voice, sensory details, tone, or pace. Now apply that to a section from your independent reading book. Write about what you noticed when you reread the section with this lens.
4. Make observations about punctuation today. Does your author favor short or long sentences? What moves in writing craft would you say are common for this particular writer?
5. Take one section of dialogue from your reading today. Analyze what is said (what you learn about plot or character) and then what is NOT said. What are these characters withholding?
6. Style is tricky... sometimes we love the way a writer writes and sometimes we get irritated by too many narrators or moments when we lose our way... how was the reading of this book for you? Explain what you loved/grew frustrated with/etc. What would you say to the author (if you could) about how this was written?

Analyzing Text Structures in Independent Reading

1. How important are time and place (setting) in your book? Would anything be lost if your novel were set in a different period of time or in a very different location?
 - a. If you are currently reading non-fiction, consider the date of publication of the book. If the book is more than two years old, search online for how the field studied in this book has changed in the last two years.

- b. If you are currently reading non-fiction that is place-specific (memoir, war stories, etc.) consider how the setting impacts your understanding of the book. Did you come to the book with strong background knowledge in the area? If not, how did you overcome your ignorance?
- 2. Consider the narrator of your story. What do you know about him/her? Do you trust him/her? Explain what makes the narrator reliable or not. What do you question about what the narrator says at this point in the narrative? How does the narrator affect your sympathies for other characters?
 - a. If the narrator is the author (often true in non-fiction), do you trust this author? Why or why not? What do you think this author does not see clearly or should research more thoroughly?
- 3. Consider the title of your book. Explain why you think it was chosen. How does the title give meaning to the work?
- 4. How does the writer arrange ideas in this text? Is there any pattern to this arrangement?
- 5. Consider the arrangement of ideas in this text. Is it chronological? Alternating between a forward chronology and flashbacks? (If so, why so?)

Analyzing Literary Elements in Writing

1. Skim reread sections of your book. Look for repeating images, motifs, or repetitions and consider their implications on the larger body of work here. What can you find? What might you continue to pay attention to as you read?
2. Literature often uses a specific story to explain something larger about humankind. Can you see connections between the story you are reading and the characters' conflicts, revelations, or insights that might also be true for all people?
3. Conflicts in literature can be internal, external, or both. Which do you see in your book at this point? Explain how they contribute to your overall engagement with the text.
 - a. Writers are skillful with weaving in sub-conflicts and multiple story lines. If you see this in your story, explain how this has impacted your understanding and engagement with the story. (*Game of Thrones* readers—I don't mean ALL of them!)
 - b. Writers create conflicts on three levels in literature: conflicts within the character, conflicts between characters, and conflicts with something outside the character: the world or God, perhaps. What do you see happening in your book?
 - c. Have you ever noticed how authors put obstacles in the way of characters resolving conflicts? Find them in your book.
4. Language is central to writing and it is chosen with care. How does this writer use language? Is it formal? Informal? Technical? Slang? Does the language change throughout this piece?

5. Some writers use humor to identify one character or to present ideas in a text. Do you see evidence of humor? Puns? Irony? Sarcasm? Why might the author have used them in this book?
6. There are several comparison devices available to writers: similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, etc. Can you find examples of any of these in your text? If not, why not?

Vocabulary

You know I believe that the single best way to increase your vocabulary is through wide reading. Now I want you to show me how...

1. Find a word that you didn't know before you read, but feel you understand after reading it in this book. Write the passage where the word occurred and then explain how the words around the word you didn't know helped you understand it.
2. Collect at least four words a week from your writing. Keep them in your vocabulary section of your notebook. Look up the definitions and then determine how it was used in the book you're reading. Here's the big challenge: start using them! See if you can slip them into conversation. (I suggest you pay attention to pronunciation keys in the dictionary or ask me for help. Many words sound differently than they look.)

9th Grade Book Clubs

Read all of the pages assigned each week before your Book Club meets.

Goals: to encourage thinking about the ideas in these books and to broaden understanding of themes and the development of characters by discussing these books with others; to participate in an online community book club, learning from the perspectives of others, something both of your teachers have found valuable in our reading lives.

Bring 1 question and 1 comment to each book club meeting. If you are absent on the day the group meets, we expect you to join the discussion online.

Thought Log writing for 1st meeting:

1. Who's here, how are they connected, and what are they like?
2. What kind of place is this?
3. What's the trouble?

Thought Log writing for 2nd meeting:

1. What's the trouble?
2. What are the obstacles?
3. How do the characters deal with them?
4. How do the characters interact?
5. What's the impact of setting on character, plot, and conflict?

Thought Log writing for 3rd meeting:

1. What is changing?
2. What is propelling the change?
3. Who wins the conflict?
4. How is the conflict resolved?

Thought Log writing for 4th meeting:

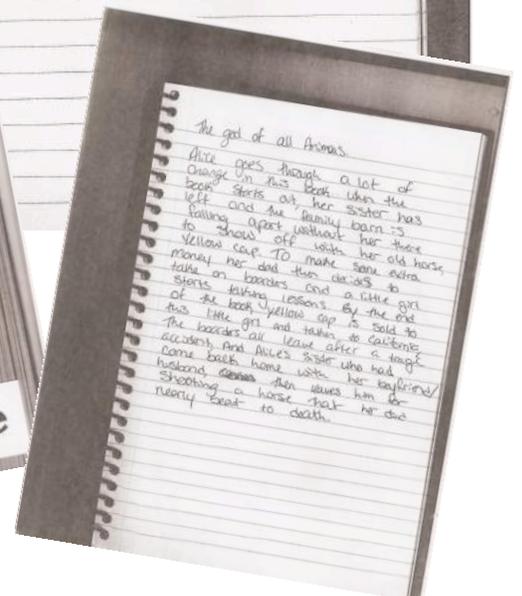
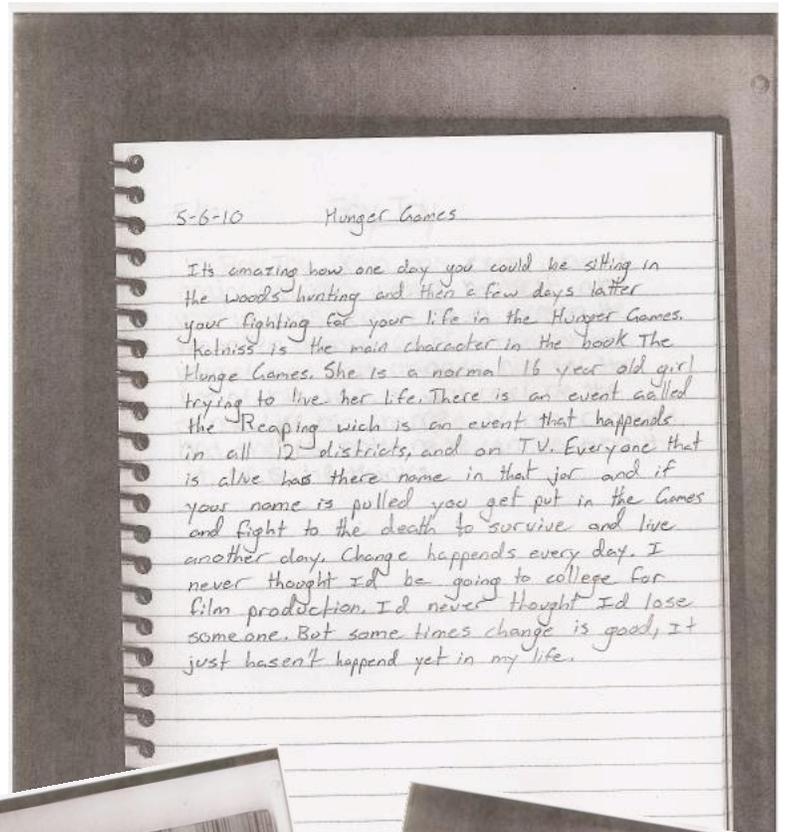
1. What loose ends are tying up?
2. How are the characters affected by the change?
3. How will life go on (or not)?

~thought log questions adapted from Donna Santman, NCTE presentation 2015

Possible Topics for Reading Responses 6 [X] Notebooks

These come from commonly taught themes in literature

Belief
Forgiveness
Oppression
Discipline
Decisions
Death & Dying
Love
Acceptance
Courage
Change
Empathy
Life Lessons (like Crime Doesn't Pay)
Overcoming Adversity
Man Struggles Against Nature
Man Struggles Against Societal Pressure
Man Struggles to Understand God
Friendship
Sacrifice
The Bonds of Family
Yin & Yang
Suffering
Conflict
Abandonment
Alienation
Ambition
Coming of Age
Freedom
Gender
Justice
Isolation
Cruelty
Fate
Hope
Guilt



Big Idea Books

These notebooks are for us to share. I write in them; you write in them. A Big Idea Book is a multi-year conversation because I keep these and recycle them each year. You're talking across time to students who are stumbling along through elementary or middle school right now, but will one day sit where you are.

The meat of a Big Idea Book is **your thinking**. I want you digging for what is beneath the story you're reading. You chose this book (this theme) for a reason. You can see how it connects to what is happening or what is explored in the book you're reading. You might connect the ideas or situations in the book to something in yourself or another book you've read. You might take the ideas in the book and go farther with them... thinking as you write.

You are doing a mini-book talk for someone who comes upon your words later. Try not to give away anything important that the reader would rather discover on his own: you know how you hate that! You can skim a Big Idea Book and find a dozen book talks from students like you. Add the titles to your NEXT list and you'll have a supply of answers when you've finished one book and can't decide what to read next.

RULES FOR CIVIL DISCOURSE IN COMMUNITY WRITING:

- 1. BE RESPECTFUL. DO NOT USE PROFANITY. DO NOT USE SOMEONE ELSE'S NAME WITHOUT PERMISSION.**
- 2. YOU ONLY NEED TO SIGN YOUR ENTRY IF YOU WANT TO. SOMETIMES WE SEND WORDS OUT INTO THE WORLD AS A GIFT WITHOUT ATTRIBUTION.**

TRUST THE WRITER INSIDE OF YOU. JUST WRITE.

Select sentences and passages to study from writing in the world:

I have broken my wrists, fingers, tibia, a fibula, chipped a handful of teeth, cracked a vertebra and snapped a collarbone. I have concussed myself in Tallahassee, Fla., and Portland, Ore. I've skittered across the sooty hoods of New York cabs and bombed down many of San Francisco's steepest avenues.

For many years I was a professional skateboarder. I first stepped on a skateboard at 11. The nomenclature—switch-stance frontside tailside, kickflip to nose manual—was the language of my first friendships, with wild, strange boys who were as ill-suited for school and team sports as I was. They were from broken homes. Poor homes. Group homes. We were like little cement mixers, keeping ourselves in constant motion, our skateboard's movement the only thing preventing us from hardening into blocks of pure rage.

~Michael Christie, "All Parents are Cowards," *New York Times*

Certainly there are more interesting, more original, and more accurate ways to answer the question how are you? How about: I'm hungry for a waffle; I'm envious of my best friend; I'm annoyed by everything that's broken in my house; I'm itchy.

Yet busy stands as the easiest way of summarizing all that you do and all that you are. I am busy is the short way of saying—suggesting—my time is filled, my phone does not stop ringing, and you (therefore) should think well of me.

~Amy Krause Rosenthal, *Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life*

Someone asks, "How do you evaluate multigenre papers?"

"Thanks for coming today," I say. "I'm afraid we're out of time."

Brief laughter. I've just suggested what many teachers wish they could do: avoid evaluation. Regardless of subject area, many of us grapple with evaluation: We want to be rigorous, yet fair; we want to set high standards, yet be true to our beliefs that learning is a matter of growth and development; we want to hold students accountable yet be sensitive to legitimate needs; we want to alert students to error, yet reward what's done well."

~Tom Romano, *Fearless Writing*

Passage/Craft Study from *This is the Story of You* by Beth Kephart

The guy turned his head inside his hoodie. He crammed his fists inside the pockets of his green-and-purple madras shorts. He slapped the heel of one flip-flop, then *slapped slapped slapped* toward the single extra chair, sat his long self down, hood still up, eyes averted. He was a transfer from someplace.

My prime business in Haven concerned my brother, Jasper Lee, who was Home of the Brave to me, whose disease I knew all the long words to, because knowing the names of things is one small defense against the sad facts of reality.

Worrying was Deni's Job Number One. She'd lost the big things in life. A brother first (Afghanistan) and then a father (hole in the heart). The news that had changed Deni's life and consequently had changed Deni had arrived in suits seven months apart, a knock on the door—the army people, the police—and who could blame her for the thoughts she had, the days she didn't trust, the plans she was forever putting into place, the precautions she took. Shore Up. That was Deni's Project Flow. Dams, dikes, levees, green-blue corridors, sea gates, surge control, blue dunes, oyster reefs, wrap the city of Manhattan up in plastic, float Venice on buoys. Do something. Mitigate the risks. Do not disappear. Deni was cautious on behalf of every one of us. Deni was taking care.

We looked. We drew. We listened. We walked deeper in. Through the green shade, beneath the tree cover, into the smell of pine, old moss, cracked shells, root rot.

The atmosphere zinged with blue.

I stood looking out for a while, watching the inscrutable dark. The white teeth on the black sea seemed closer than before.

Consider how these claims in a book of fiction focus the story:

What are our responsibilities? A Ms. Isabel question. To pay attention. To love the world. To live beyond ourselves.

I thought of the bigness of Mickey's heart and the bigness of this sorrow, and how anger ruins everything, and how much chance in life is lost.

Only thing in this world isn't replaceable is people. Find your family.

A study of dialogue:

"Yo," Deni said to Eva, practically accosting her. "You coming to Rosie's?"

Which wasn't usually a question anybody ever asked, because Slurpees in off-season was our best-friend tradition. Slurpees was our gathering hour, our talk-it-over time, our gossip. Slurpees was unhitching our Modes from the racks at school, strapping our backpacks to our shoulders, and going.

But there was something about the way Eva was standing there, her ribbons of blond hair twining around her neck, her color high, her hands distracted, and Deni knew. She had her antennae way up, she was expecting as much, she was on the defense, standing close.

"Not so sure," Eva said.

"Not so sure?" Deni pressed.

"Think I'll skip it today."

"Something else to do?"

"Maybe?" Eva shrugged. She looked at Deni, looked at me, looked at her ten sparkle-decaled fingernails. "You have a Slurpee for me, okay?" Eva said to Deni, sweet as Eva always was, because Eva wasn't the kind of girl who would hurt on purpose. She was just the kind of girl who loved too much, stretched too thin, went way out of proportion too quickly, saw things that weren't there. The kind of girl who would loan her best find to a guy who'd kept his hood up all day.

“I think you would look beautiful with a giant pink Afro,” he says.

Sincerity is sexy, and my cynical heart notices.

“The whole thing wouldn’t be pink. Maybe just the ends.”

He reaches for the box, so now we’re both holding it and facing each other in an aisle that really only has enough space for one.

“It would look like strawberry frosting,” he says. With his other hand he pulls a few strands of my hair through his fingers, and I find that I don’t mind, not one little bit.

“Oh, look. My. Little. Brother is here,” says a voice from the end of the aisle. Daniel jerks his hand from my hair. We both let go of the dye at the same time, and the box clatters to the floor. Daniel bends to pick it up. I turn to face our interloper.

He’s taller and broader than Daniel. On his face, the family bone structure seems even sharper. He rests the broom he was holding against a shelf and saunters down the aisle toward us. His wide, dark eyes are filled with curiosity and a kind of mischievous glee.

I’m not sure I like him.

Daniel stands up and hands the dye back to me.

“What’s up, Charlie?” he asks.

“The. Sky. Is. Up. Little brother,” says Charlie. I get the feeling he’s been using that phrase that same way for all their lives. He’s looking at me as he says it, and his face is more sneer than smile.

“Who. Is. This?” he asks, still only looking at me.

Next to me, Daniel takes a deep breath and readies himself to say something, but I jump in.

“I’m Natasha.” He stares at me as if there must be more to say. “A friend of your brother’s,” I continue.

“Oh, I thought maybe he’d caught a shoplifting customer.” His face is a parody of innocence. “We get a lot of those in a store like this.” His eyes are laughing and mean. “I’m sure you understand.”

I definitely don’t like him.

~Nicola Yoon, *The Sun is Also a Star*

Understanding How Dialogue & Point of View Reveal Character

What happens in this passage? (what the text says)

What do you imagine the narrator has said to Mrs. Convoy in each exchange? (inferring)

Why would Joshua Ferris (author) write dialogue in this way? (analyzing author's craft)

Say I would come in from outside and go straight to the sink to wash my hands. It didn't matter which sink, Mrs. Convoy would find me. She'd sniff at me like a bloodhound and then she'd say, "What exactly have you been doing?" I'd tell her, and she'd say, "Why do you feel the need to lie to me?" I'd tell her, and she'd say, "Scrutiny doesn't kill people. Smoking kills people. What kind of example do you think you're setting for your patients by sneaking off to smoke cigarettes?" I'd tell her, she'd say, "They do not need a reminder of 'the futility of it all' from their dental professional. When did you take up smoking again?" I'd tell her, she'd say, "Oh, for heaven's sake. Then why did you tell everyone you quit?" I'd tell her, she'd say, "I do not see how the occasional show of concern is 'utterly strangulating.' I would like to see you live up to your potential, that is all. Don't you wish you had more self-control?" I'd tell her, she'd say, "Of course I will not join you. What are you doing? Do not light that cigarette!" I'd put the cigarettes away with an offhand remark, she'd say, "How am I a trial? I am not the one on trial here. The trial is between you and your addictions. Do you want to ruin your lungs and die a young man?" I'd tell her, she'd say, "You are not already in hell. Shall I tell you what hell will be like?" I'd answer, she'd say, "Yes, as a matter of fact, any conversation can turn into a discussion on the salvation of the soul. It's a pity more don't. What are you doing at that window?" I'd tell her, she'd say, "We are on the ground floor. You would hardly manage to sprain an ankle."

~Joshua Ferris, *To Rise Again at a Decent Hour*

At first, Lagos assaulted her; the sun-dazed haste, the yellow buses full of squashed limbs, the seating hawkers racing after cars, the advertisements on hulking billboards (others scrawled on walls—PLUMBER CALL 080177777) and the heaps of rubbish that rose on the roadsides like a taunt. Commerce thrummed too defiantly. And the dense air was dense with exaggeration, conversations full of overprotestations. One morning, a man's body lay on Awolowo Road. Another morning, The Island flooded and cars became gasping boats. Here, she felt anything could happen, a ripe tomato could burst out of solid stone. And so she had the dizzying sensation of falling, falling into the new person she had become, falling into the strange familiar. Had it always been like this or had it changed so much in her absence? When she left home, only the wealthy had cell phones, all the numbers started with 090, and girls wanted to date 090 men. Now, her hair braider had a cell phone. She had grown up knowing all the bus stops and side streets, understanding the cryptic codes of conductors and the body language of street hawkers. Now, she struggled to grasp the unspoken. When had shopkeepers become so rude? Had buildings in Lagos always had this patina of decay? And when did it become a city of people quick to beg and too enamored of free things?

“Americanah!” Ranyinudo teased her often. “You are looking at things with American eyes. But the problem is that you are not even a real Americanah. At least if you had an American accent we would tolerate your complaining!”

~Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*, National Book Critics Circle Award, 2013