

Straw Into Gold: Turning Reluctant and Compliant Readers Into Engaged Readers

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ALITERACY AND ITS ROOT CAUSES

Aliteracy occurs when a student who can read chooses not to read. In choosing not to read, the student does not practice his/her reading skills sufficiently to develop and/or sustain mastery of those skills. As a result, reading proficiency decreases. Aliteracy results from the LACK OF

- choice in reading selections.
- access to interesting and engaging materials students want to read.
- access to materials students can read with success.
- time to read for pleasure.
- being read aloud to.
- positive reading role models.
- emphasis on the intrinsic value of reading and the love of reading.

To increase motivation and engagement, teachers must increase the reader's....

- pleasurable experiences with text through reading aloud and independent reading.
- interest in and engagement with the topic, the text, and/or the reading activity.
- access to interesting and appropriate reading materials he or she can read with success.
- opportunities to self-select reading materials that are personally relevant and engaging.
- knowledge and skills.
- access to effective instructional support and reading guidance.
- exposure to positive reading role models.

MOTIVATIONS FOR READING

Internal motivations

Involvement ("Lost in a book")
 Personal relevance or curiosity
 Social interaction/collaborations
 Personal value
 Challenge
 Self-efficacy

External motivations

Recognition
 Teacher/adult role models
 Rewards
 Competition

Guthrie, J., & Alverman, D. (1999). *Engaged Reading: Processes, Practices, and Policy Implications*. New York: Teachers College Press.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS WITH HIGH READING ACHIEVEMENT

In schools with high reading achievement:

- students have access to an extensive and rich array of quality, engaging, high interest books and other reading materials both in their classrooms and in the school library media center.
- the school climate conveys the message that learning to read and the love of reading are top priorities.
- students are provided with large blocks of time throughout the school day to read for a variety of purposes: for information, for personal enjoyment, and for exploration.
- reading is integrated into the curriculum, and students have many opportunities to read books other than their textbooks during the school day.
- teachers use a variety of strategies, including reading motivation programs, to engage students with books and reading; however, while skills are considered to be important and are taught using multiple strategies, they are not the sole focus of what the teachers are trying to accomplish.
- teachers value a love of reading and broad reading experiences for their students in addition to reading achievement.
- teachers and administrators act as reading role models for their students, openly demonstrating the strategies they want students to know and be able to do.

TWENTY-FIVE BOOK REPORT ALTERNATIVES

1. Conduct an interview with your favorite character in the book. Prepare at least 10 questions to ask the character. Write the character's answers to the questions or answer the questions on tape.
2. Cast the film version of the book. Decide which real life actors and actresses should play the parts of the main characters. Include photos and descriptions of the stars you've selected and an explanation of why each is "perfect" for the part.
3. Create a readers' theater script for a favorite scene or for the book. Perform it with the help of your classmates.
4. Adapt the book into a radio drama. Put it on a CD or tape using sound effects and different voices.
5. Recast the book into a picture book for younger audiences. It could be an alphabet book, a question and answer book, or a storybook, depending on the type of the book you are adapting. Include illustrations and text.
6. Turn the book or a portion of it into a comic book with comic-style illustrations and dialogue bubbles.
7. Create a poem that a character in the book would write. The poem may focus on a situation in the book or describe how the character feels about what is happening.
8. Write a postscript or a continuation to the story, explaining future occurrences in the characters' lives.
9. Create a journal or diary written from the viewpoint of one of the main characters. Include at least five entries that describe key events or happenings and the character's thoughts and feelings about them.
10. Write a letter from one character to another.
11. Design a travel brochure focusing on the setting of the book. Include a map with explanatory notes of significant places. Describe the type of activities that tourists might find there.
12. Create the front page of a newspaper based on the events in the book.
13. Construct a mobile illustrating the book. Include pictures, key words, descriptive paragraphs, provocative questions, symbols, and graphics such as three stars to indicate the book's rating as part of your mobile.
14. Create a book container with items that represent the book. The container should be decorated to illustrate some of the major details, elements, or themes found in the book. Items placed in the container might include questions to prompt the reader's thinking about the book, a glossary of words to be found in the book, and artifacts that are representative of the events, setting, or characters.
15. Develop a fact sheet about the book, listing 10 facts that you learned from reading it. The facts must be written in complete sentences and include details you didn't know before reading the book.
16. Design a book jacket for the book. Include an original book blurb and information about the author on the jacket along with your review comments. The jacket should "sell" the book to other readers.
17. Find a song or a poem that relates to the theme or characters. Write an explanation of how the song or poem connects to the book.
18. Create a collage or a poster illustrating the theme, setting, main events, and characters depicted in the book.
19. Make a timeline of the events in the life of the main character or a timeline of the events in the book. Use drawings or magazine cutouts to illustrate events along the timeline.
20. Create a horoscope for the main characters in your book. Include such things as an explanation of their sign, character traits for people born under their sign, and a prediction for the future.
21. Design a board game based on the events and characters in the book. Your game should include a game board, a rule sheet with clear directions, and any items needed to play the game.
22. Plan a party for the characters in the book. Design the party invitation, plan the menu, and tell what games or entertainment will be provided and why your choices are appropriate for the guests.
23. Make a list of 10 or 15 rules by which the main character in the book lives. Tell how these rules compare to the rules you live by. Tell how the character's life would have been different if you had been living it.
24. Pretend that you are a fortune-teller and predict what each of the main characters will be doing in their lives ten years after the story ends. Explain your prediction for each character.
25. Write a letter of recommendation for one of the main characters in the book. It can be a letter of recommendation for a job or for college admission. Discuss the good and bad points of the character and why you are recommending that character for the job or school.

Reading Response Journal Prompts

Sample Sentence Starters

I began to think....	I wish that....	I wonder why...
I felt _____ when....	I noticed....	This made me think of....
I think....	I like the way....	I realize that....
I was surprised....	I can't believe....	It seems like....
I like the way the author....	This reminds me of....	I'm confused about....
I don't understand....	A question I have is....	I found it interesting when....
I made the following connection....	A question I have is....	
I think that _____ is important because...		

Reading Conference Prompts

- What drew you to this text? Why did you select it?
- Did the text meet your expectations? If yes, If no, why didn't it meet your expectations?
- How did reading this text contribute to your growth as a reader?
- How would you describe the author's style of writing? Did you enjoy it? If so, why or why not?
- What special tools did the author use to make the writing interesting: flashbacks, foreshadowing, descriptive language, engaging questions?
- Discuss a character, event, or idea that you connected to and why.
- Select a favorite illustration, photograph, or passage from the text and explain why it is?
- What did you need to know to understand this text?
- Tell five major events that happened from what happened first to what happened last.
- Would the text be different if it were told in another place, time, or culture?
- How does the main character change over time and what causes this change?
- What you think the author's purpose or message was in writing the text?
- What questions did you want answered as you were reading this text? Did the text leave you with any unanswered questions? If so, what?
- Describe the major problem in the text and how it was resolved. Would you have resolved the problem differently? If so, how?
- Describe how you feel about the characters? Why do you feel that way? Did your feelings about any of the characters change during your reading of the text?
- Do you think the title of the text is good or bad? Would you change it and if so, why?
- What new understandings do you have as a result of reading this text?
- What questions you would like to ask the author about this text if he/she were here?
- What should future readers know about this text?
- If you were recommending this text to others, what would you say about it? How would you rate this text and why would you give it that rating?
- Tell why another person should or should not read this text.
- Would you read another text by this author? Why or why not?
- What words or phrases used by the author stuck with you or made an impression? Share some of the author's language.
- How did the illustrations, pictures or language influence your understanding or enjoyment of the text?
- What problems did you have while you were reading this text? Did you have more difficulty reading the words or understanding the ideas? What are some of the things you did do solve the problems?

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Prompts to Promote Reflection, Discussion, and Sharing After Independent Reading

- What drew you to the book or article that you read today? Why did you select it?
- Has what you have selected to read today met your expectations and if so why or why not?
- Why is what you selected to read today a good choice for you?
- How did you feel about your reading today? What made you feel that way?
- What three words would you use to describe your reading today? Explain why you selected those particular words.
- What went well in your reading today? What didn't go well?
- What problems did you have as a reader today? What will you do differently as a reader tomorrow?
- How is the book or article you read today like another book or article you have read?
- Why should someone else read or not read the book or article you selected to read today?
- What was the most interesting thing you learned today from your reading? Why was it interesting?
- What connection to another person, place, event, or idea did you make as a result of today's reading?
- Did you find anything surprising in your reading today?
- Did anything in your reading today puzzle or confuse you?
- What did you learn today that you didn't know before your reading?
- As you read today, were any questions that you had answered?
- Did you learn any new words in your reading today? If so, what?
- What questions did today's reading prompt for you?
- What questions would you ask the author if he/she were in the room right now?
- Were there any similarities in your reading to your own life?
- Think about what you have read today and draw the picture that appears in your mind.
- What has happened in your reading so far? What do you think will happen next?
- Were you bored with what you read today? What made it boring? If you were the author, what would you do to make it interesting?
- Does the title of what you are reading fit the text? If you don't know yet how it fits, what is your best guess?