Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers

“Between 1996 and 2006, the average level of literacy required for all occupations rose by 14 percent. Both dropouts and high school graduates demonstrate significantly worse reading skills than they did ten years ago.” ~Kelly Gallagher, Readicide, 2009.

"Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him." ~Maya Angelou

“I believe each of my students must craft an individual reading life of challenge, whim, curiosity, and hunger, and I’ve discovered that it is not too late in high school to lead a nonreader to reading. It’s never too late.” ~Penny Kittle, Book Love, 2013

www.pennykittle.net
www.booklovefoundation.org
@pennykittle
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.

www.pennykittle.net
**Book Talk Essentials**

**Hold the book.** I check it out from our school library or pull it off the shelf in my classroom. I hold it so kids can see the number of pages and the cover.

**Know the book.** I have read it (usually), but if I haven’t, I’ll say why I chose to booktalk it when I haven’t read it yet. It might be the newest release from an author that I love or I know students love. Or someone I trust sold me on it. When I know the book I can briefly summarize its theme, central conflict, or other details in a fast summary of a minute or so, like a taste test. I connect the book to other books in my library, ”--if you like Death and Dying books, this one is probably for you,” or “--all action, fast plot, the kind that makes your heart race,” or, “--if you like Sherman Alexie, then you’ll love Jimmy Santiago Baca.”

**Read a short passage.** I preface this by saying, “I think it helps for you to hear a little bit of the text. See if the narrator’s voice appeals to you. Listen to see if this sounds like a book you can see yourself reading.” I have always selected the passage ahead of time and I try to find a place where the action is heated or the prose is breathtaking or the voice comes through with intensity. (Like the list of 10 Things They Don’t Teach You About High School in *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.) And it is critical that I read this slowly, with emphasis and clarity. When I skip this part because I didn’t prepare ahead of time and there’s so much to do that day, fewer kids choose the book. Hearing the voice of a text sells the book and sells kids on reading.

**Keep records.** I walk to the back of the room where I have a poster labeled “Book Talks” near our library. I write down the title and author on this list and return the book to the shelf, or put it on the table to go back to the library. Teachers tell me it is helpful to keep a list with passages from books recorded on notecards for the next round of book talks the following year, which is smart, but I’ve never managed to be that organized.

**Accept help.** Students, parents, fellow teachers, librarians or book store owners as well as administrators can be good sources for book talks. You are not in this alone. There are book trailers on youtube, created by both authors and publishers, and some include quick talks with the author. But you also have to be in this: you have to know books and talk about them. If you’re not leading from your own reading life, not many will follow.

**Remember how important you are.** Your passion is contagious. As Samantha Bennett wrote on her blog, “Sharing things with kids that delight us, make our eyes light up, and our brains cackle, and our hearts grow bigger should be the learning target every day. Don’t dumb it down… make it into the miraculous event it is, every time. Every single time you find a book that moves you, it is a tiny miracle.”

~from *Book Love*, p. 60-61
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 lets 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?
Q1 Reading Ladder:
Analyzing your reading progress

Purpose: to step back and look at what you have accomplished as a reader in order to measure progress and set new goals for quarter two and the rest of the school year.

Process:

1. Create a Reading Ladder to show your progress this quarter. A reading ladder, in this case, is a table with the books you’ve read listed in order of most difficult to easiest reading. There are lots of ways to define ‘most difficult’ but some you may consider: the size of the text and the number of pages, the subject matter (high school romance is easier to follow than a memoir from Iraq since the memoir will likely include references to places you don’t know and require more complex thinking than pleasure reading), the speed with which you finished the book (it is harder to begin again each time you set down reading material and let time pass and pick it up again), vocabulary and/or whether this was a new author or a well-known one to you. I want your gut feel for difficulty in the books you’ve read so far.

2. Write a short (3-8 sentences) review of each book you finished this quarter. Note: if you read more than ten books, you only need to review your top 3. The others will be listed.

3. Add up the total pages read, and divide by weeks in the quarter to determine your average pages read per week. Compare this to your reading rate. Discuss if you are challenging yourself to read more and increase your stamina in order to prepare yourself for complex reading in college or the workplace, or if you are just reading in class and in reading break and a little here and there at home, but not making a significant difference in your stamina and creating a reading habit.

4. Set goals for quarter 2 and the rest of the school year. These should be specific: I will read 15 books by June. I will read at least one non-fiction book. I will read one Jane Austen novel. I will develop an at-home reading habit. I will...

Due: today, at the end of the period

Q2, 3, & 4 Reading Ladders: Answer these same questions, ordering books by complexity, reviewing goals and setting new ones, analyzing reading rate & progress, and answering an essay question about reading:

I am a reader who...

Does choice in your reading matter to you? Why?

Discuss a theme in one of the books you read this quarter. Analyze its development in the book and what you learned from the author's treatment of it.

Analyze the writing craft in a book you read this quarter.

Write about an author’s work if you have read at least two books by one author.
Possible Topics for Reading Response "Big Idea" 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.
Short texts for class study: name the elements of craft in each example and consider what you can teach from studying these short texts with students.

Customizing Your MINI
Swivel-hipped hula girls and bobbing doggie heads are standard equipment in many automobiles. But as a MINI owner, you may want to consider a few accessory options more suited to your motor vehicle’s premium performance prowess.
Fig 10 The G-force Chia Pet; Tilt Chia Pet face down and grow as directed. Then display on dashboard facing forward for realistic pulling-Gs windblown effect.

Jump Starts
Opting NOT to exchange electrical charges with total strangers is up to the individual motorer’s discretion. HOWEVER, random acts of kindness do continue the flow of positive energy. Which adds up to good motoring mojo for you.

The Phantom Spot
A MINI’s stealthy 143” body length makes it adaptable to tight spaces unthinkable for conventional vehicles. It’s optimal for squeezing into half-spots when parallel parking. However, faced with pull-in parking scenarios, MINI owners should try to be considerate of others. In shopping malls, avoid creating “phantom spots”—spaces that look available from afar, but upon closer inspection, reveal MINI nicely tucked away inside. (see Fig. 28.) Instead, align MINI’s rear bumper with the other cars in the row. (See Fig. 29.) It’s the good motoring mojo thing to do. Besides, flaunting one’s small size by pulling all the way up just isn’t MINI style.

Imelda’s Shoes, 3426 SE Hawthorne Portland, OR 97214

Our Return Policy

(THE NOVEL)

Being a small, plucky place our story begins on a sheepish sorry, no refunds note, but lightens up considerably with an offer of store credit or exchange with in 7 days of purchase. The stylish have the unalienable right to reconsider, after all. Then the small print arrives. Ironically, in quite bold letters.

All merchandise must be returned in its original package.
Future shoppers, studies show, frown on new pumps in old 7-11 sacks.
Then the plot thickens: shoes must not show wear.
Lest unscrupulous buyers use the one-date-and-return trick.
And, as much as we’d like to, we cannot guarantee the comfort of a shoe.
So take your fitting seriously. Unlike wedding vows.
Finally, all sale merchandise is final. But, that’s immaterial. You look fantastic!
Like Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck in “Roman Holiday.”

THE END
Cruel as It Is, We Somehow Go On

Sometimes, the earth is cruel.
That is ultimately the fundamental lesson here, as children wail, families
sleep out of doors, and the dead lie unclaimed in the rubble that once was Port-
au-Prince.

Sometimes the rains fall and will not stop. Sometimes the skies turn
barren and will not rain. Sometimes the seas rise and smack the shoreline like a
fist. Sometimes the wind bullies the land. And sometimes, the land rattles and
heaves and splits itself in two.

Sometimes, the earth is cruel.
And always, when it is, we do the same thing. We dig ourselves out. We
weep and mourn, we recover and memorialize the dead, we rebuild our homes.
And we go on. This is the price of being human. And also, arguably, the noblest
expression.

Sometimes, the earth is cruel, and you have no choice but to accept that
as part of the bargain called life. And when it is your turn to deal with it, you do.

But what if it's always your turn?

Surely some homeless, dust-streaked Haitian can be forgiven for thinking
it is always Haiti's turn this morning, two days after the poorest nation in the
Western Hemisphere saw its capital city smashed by the strongest earthquake it
has ever known, a 7.0-magnitude monster. Surely, the rest of us watching from
afar, experiencing tragedy and devastation from the comfort of desk chairs and
living room couches, are tempted to believe the same thing.

Bad enough, Haiti is wretchedly poor. Bad enough it has a history of
political instability and colonialism, of being ignored by the major powers when it
is not being exploited by them. Bad enough, all that, yet at the end of the day,
those are disasters authored by human hands, by human greed, human
corruption, human economic predation.

Sometimes, though, you have to wonder if the planet itself is not
conspiring against this humble little nation.
After 1994, when Tropical Storm Gordon killed several hundred people, after 1998, when Hurricane Georges swept away over 500 lives, after 2004, when the rains of Tropical Storm Jeanne claimed over 2,000 souls, after 2005, when Hurricane Dennis took 25 lives in July and Tropical Storm Alpha snatched 17 in October, followed by Hurricane Wilma which stole 11 more, after the double whammy of Hurricanes Fay and Gustav in 2008 killed over 130 people and destroyed over 3,100 homes, after all that, comes this latest insult -- and a death toll officials cannot begin to even imagine. Perhaps as many as 100,000, they were saying on Wednesday.

Sometimes, the earth is cruel. To crawl the planet's skin, scanning for tornadoes in Oklahoma, charting storm tracks in Florida, running from wildfires in California, is to understand this in a primal, personal way. It is to breathe a prayer that begins, ``There, but for the grace of God . . . '' It is to write relief checks, donate blood, volunteer material and time and to fear, even in the doing, that these gestures are small against the need, inconsequential against the ache of a people whose turn seems never to end.

But what else are you going to do? As the playwright put it, your arms too short to box with God. Even less have we the ability to answer the question that burns the moment: Why are the most vulnerable repeatedly assessed the highest price?

We are hamstrung by our own limitations, so we can only do what we always do, only send prayers and help. And watch, staggered by the courage it takes, as Haitians do what human beings always do, the thing at which they have become so terribly practiced.

Dig out. Weep and mourn. Memorialize the dead. Rebuild. Go on. And show the world once again a stubborn insistence on living, despite all the cruelties of the earth.

By LEONARD PITTS JR. lpitts@MiamiHerald.com
Some Harsh Sentences Prove Unjust
By Leonard Pitts Jr. lpitts@MiamiHerald.com

So the people got sick of it, all those criminals being coddled by all those bleeding heart liberal judges with all their soft-headed concern for rights and rehabilitation.

And a wave swept this country in the Reagan years, a wave ridden by pundits and politicians seeking power, a wave that said, no mercy, no more.

From now on, judges would be severely limited in the sentences they could hand down for certain crimes, required to impose certain punishments whether or not they thought those punishments fit the circumstances at hand. From now on, there was a new mantra in American justice. From now on, we would be “tough on crime.”

We got tough on Jerry DeWayne Williams, a small-time criminal who stole a slice of pizza from a group of children. He got 25 years.

We got tough on Duane Silva, a guy with an IQ of 71 who stole a VCR and a coin collection. He got 30 to life.

We got tough on Dixie Shanahan, who shot and killed the husband who had beaten her for three days straight, punching her in the face, pounding her in the stomach, dragging her by the hair, because she refused to have an abortion. She got 50 years.

We got tough on Jeff Berryhill, who got drunk one night, kicked in an apartment door and punched a guy who was inside with Berryhill’s girlfriend. He got 25 years.

Now, we have gotten tough on Marissa Alexander. She is the Jacksonville woman who said her husband flew into a violent rage and tried to strangle her when he found text messages to her first husband on her phone. She said she fled to her car, but in her haste, forgot her keys. She took a pistol from the garage and returned to the house for them. When her husband came after her again, she fired — into the ceiling. The warning shot made him back off. No one was hurt.
Like Shanahan before her, Alexander was offered a plea bargain. Like Shanahan, she declined, reasoning that no one would convict her under the circumstances. Like Shanahan, she was wrong.

Earlier this month, Alexander got 20 years for aggravated assault. And like Shanahan, like Berryhill, Williams, Silva and Lord only knows how many others, she received that outlandish sentence not because the judge had a heart like Simon LeGree’s, but because he was constrained by so-called “mandatory-minimum” sentencing guidelines that tie judges’ hands, allow them no leeway for consideration, compassion, context or common sense. In other words, they prohibit judges from judging.

Charles Smith, the judge who sent Shanahan away, put it best. He said the sentence he was required to impose “may be legal, but it is wrong.” Amen.

The Eighth Amendment prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment.” In a nation where we execute people based on no evidence save eyewitness testimony, it is hard to imagine what meaning that prohibition still holds. But assuming it means anything, surely it means you can’t draw a 20-year sentence for shooting a ceiling.

Except that Alexander just did. In restricting judges from judging, we have instituted a one-size-fits-all version of justice that bears little resemblance to the real thing. It proceeds from the same misguided thinking that produced the absurd “zero tolerance” school drug policies that get children suspended for bringing aspirin and Midol to class. In both cases, there is this silly idea that by requiring robotic adherence to inflexible rules we will produce desirable results.

By now, it should be obvious how wrongheaded and costly that reasoning was — and how urgently we need to roll back the wave that swept over us in the Reagan years. It is understandable that the nation wanted to get tough on crime. But we have been rather hard on justice, too.
Hello parents of Writing students,

A central goal of Writing is to establish a **reading habit** in the busy lives of seniors in high school. I am hoping we can work together to recapture the pleasure and passion of readers. This letter is long, but the assumptions it rests upon are too important to be treated in a superficial manner. Please take the time to read this and know what you’re signing before you do.

The best books challenge our beliefs by helping us see through different eyes—to live a different life. For example, *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult was wildly popular last year, but it is about a school shooting and I think we'd all rather believe that couldn't happen here and don't want to live the details. Yet reading allows us to confront our worst fears and live through them. Students love this book and I recommend it to them.

I won't know the details of every book students read and refer to this semester, and I won't *remember* the details of all the books I recommend to students. What I seek for all of my students is a compulsion to read—for pleasure—for knowledge—for a passion for story or information that will keep them into the pages of a book past our assigned time for reading—past our goal of eight books read this semester to 25 or 40 books in 18 weeks, as many of my former students have. This has tremendous benefits. Here are a few:

- **Reading relieves stress.** Senior year is stressful. Reading takes you out of the present and into another place and time; it is a perfect escape.

- **Reading builds stamina** to prepare students for college. Reading for an hour or two in one sitting is a basic expectation in college. In this class we will exercise muscles soon to be strained in the coming years. Reading for fluency and stamina has been proven to improve the reading rate for students. Fast reading develops confidence and an appetite for books as well as teaching vocabulary in context, which improves writing, but it only happens when students find books they want to read. But the truth is, some of those books might make you uncomfortable.

- There is a lot of talk in the media that 'students today won't read,' but I believe students substitute all of those other distractions (the internet, TV, etc.) if they feel no passion for the book assigned to them. In my experience, students who haven't been readers since elementary school will suddenly become quite passionate about reading with the **right book** in their hands. But those books might challenge your values. Is that okay with you? Can your child choose to read *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins, which delves into a teenager's drug addiction?

I believe we have to trust these young adults more. We have to trust that books won't corrupt them anymore than the movies *The Dark Knight* or *Jackass* might.
It is more important that they’re reading! So you may pick up a book left behind on a nightstand and open to a passage with the details of a group of child soldiers in Sudan mercilessly slaughtering an entire village (A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah) and wonder why reading it is a homework assignment, and I will answer, “Your son or daughter chose it.” I might have recommended it because I read it and loved it, or the book may be unfamiliar to me because your child borrowed it from another student. The bottom line: I will not place a tight filter on what is read in this class and I’m asking for your support in this. I hope you will talk to your child about what he/she is reading this semester.

I suggest you get a copy of a book and read it if you’re concerned about the content. Two summers ago my daughter read Lolita in the Advanced Studies Program at St. Paul’s School and when I started reading it, I didn’t like it at all. When I discussed it with Hannah, I was amazed at her maturity and deep understanding of the purpose of literature—even controversial literature. As a parent, I resisted how much I did not want Hannah inside the head of a man like Humbert, and instead trusted Hannah to make sense of it in coming to know this world. If you want to know more about a book your child is reading, please try the School Library Journal web site, the American Library Association web site, or even Amazon.com. Or call me—I’ll tell you what I know.

Because I respect your role as parents and the traditions you hold sacred, if you want me to more closely monitor your child’s choices this semester, by all means, call me and we’ll work out a plan that we can both contribute to.

If you sign this, it means you understand books won’t be banned in my classroom and your child will be allowed to choose what he/she reads.

Thanks for your support,

Penny Kittle
September 2, 2010

P.S. Our classroom benefits every year from cast offs. Please send books you no longer need to our library, especially ones you’ve loved, if you can bear to part with them. Better yet… come to class and share a book with us. Share your passion for reading; get to know these amazing students at Kennett. I would love to have you join us some morning. Thank you.

I have read and agree to the contents of this letter.

__________________________  _____________________________
student’s name               parent’s name
Student Favorites (currently) in my Classroom Library

**History and War**
Forge by Laurie Halse Anderson
The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by J. Boyne
Shooting Kabul by N. H. Senzei
Day Into Night by Anita Diamond
The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford
Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Meyers
Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer
A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini
War by Sebastian Junger
The Good Soldiers by David Finkel
Hellhound on His Trail by Hampton Sides
March by Geraldine Brooks
Sunrise Over Fallujah by Walter Dean Meyers
Forge by Laurie Halse Anderson
Copper Sun by Sharon Draper
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lachs by Rebecca Skloot
Between Shades of Grey by Ruta Sepetys
Never Fall Down by Patricia McCormick
The Book Thief by Markus Zusak
The Worst, Hard Time by Timothy Egan
The Cider House Rules by John Irving
Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson
The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan
Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Myers
Purple Heart by Patricia McCormick

**Stories from the World**
Behind the Beautiful Forevers by Katherine Boo
They Poured Fire On Us From the Sky by Benjamin Ajak, Benson Deng, & Alephonsian Deng
Sold by Patricia McCormick
Trash by Andy Mulligan
Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese
A Long Way Gone by Ishmael Bea
The Last Man in the Tower by Aravind Adiga
Little Bee by Christopher Cleave
Prisoner of Tehran by Marina Nemat
Buddah in the Attic by Julie Otsuka
Running the Rift by Naomi Benaren
In the Land of Invisible Women by Qanta Ahmed
The Attack by Yasmina Khadra
The Kite Runner by Kaled Hosseini
The Places Inbetween by Rory Stewart
Under the Persimmon Tree by Suzanne Fisher Staples
Biography/Memoir

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore
Is Everybody Having Fun Without Me? By Mindy Kaling
Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
I am Nujood, Age 10 & Divorced by Nujood ali
Townie by Andre Dubus III
Bossypants by Tina Fey
Always Running by Luis Rodriguez
Life in Prison by Tookie Williams
Knucklehead by Jon Scieszka
A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius by Dave Eggers
Hole in My Life by Jack Gantos
A Place to Stand by Jimmy Santiago Bacca
Wild by Cheryl Strayed
She’s Got Next by Melissa King
Eleven Seconds by Travis Roy
The Boys of Winter by Wayne Coffey
The Tattoo Chronicles by Kat Von D
Townie by Andre Dubus III
Breaking Night by Liz Murray
Couldn’t Keep it To Myself by Wally Lamb
21: Bringing Down the House by Ben Mezrich
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie
Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand
All Souls by Michael Patrick MacDonald
The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X
Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder
The Burn Journals by Brent Runyan
The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls
The Freedom Writers Diary by Erin Gruwell
Running with Scissors by Anthony Burroughs
Into Thin Air by Jon Krakauer
Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer
Angela’s Ashes by Frank McCourt
50 50 by Dean Karnazes
The Last True Story I’ll Ever Tell by John Crawford

Life in High School

Sweet, Hereafter by Angela Johnson
The First Part Last by Angela Johnson
Looking for Alaska by John Green
The Abundance of Katherines by John Green
Willow by Julia Hoben
Wintergirls by Laurie Halse Anderson
Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac by Gabrielle Zevin
Also Known as Rowan Pohi by Ralph Fletcher
Black and White by Paul Violoponi
Life in High School—cont.
 ..or not? by Brian Mandabach
 The Fat Boy Chronicles by Diane Lang
 Everybody Sees the Ants by A. S. King
 Please Ignore Vera Dietz by A. S. King
 Why We Broke Up by Daniel Handler, art by Maira Kalman
 How to Save a Life by Sara Zarr
 Falling for Hamlet by Michelle Ray
 Shine by Lauren Myracle
 Girl in Translation by Jean Kwok
 After by Amy Efaw
 The Miles Between by Mary Pearson
 War Dances by Sherman Alexie
 Head Case by Sarah Aronson
 Thirteen Little Envelopes by Maureen Johnson
 The First Stone by Don Aker
 The Fifth Rule by Don Aker
 Running on Empty by Don Aker
 Winter’s Bone by Daniel Woodrell
 North of the Beautiful by Justina Chen Headley
 Stolen by Lucy Christopher
 Girl, Stolen by April Henry
 Before I Fall by Lauren Oliver
 We the Animals by Justin Torres
 Just One Day by Gayle Forman
 The Wave by Todd Strasser
 Boot Camp by Todd Strasser
 Shattered by Lisa Luedeke
 Scars by Cheryl Rainfield
 Beauty Queens by Libba Bray
 The Interrogation of Gabriel James by Charlie Price
 Mexican White Boy by Matt LaPena
 Dare Me by Meg Abbott
 Rosebush by Michele Jaffe
 Lover’s Dictionary by David Levithan
 Life on the Refrigerator Door by Alice Kuipers
 The Statistical Impossibility of Love at First Sight by Jennifer E. Smith
 What Would My Cell Phone Do? By Micol Ostow
 Crossing by Andrew Xia Fukuda
 Stay by Deb Caletti
 Every You, Every Me by David Levithan
 Stay With Me by Paul Griffin
 13 Reasons Why by Jay Asher
 The Future of Us by Jay Asher
 The Silence of Murder by Dandi Daley Mackall
 My Name is Not Easy by Debby Dahl Edwardson
 Code Name Verity by Elizabeth Wein
 Pride, Prejudice, and Curling Rocks by Andrea Marie Brokaw
Life in High School—cont.

Skinny by Donna Cooner
The Pull of Gravity by Gae Polisner
Go Ask Alice by anonymous
Gym Candy by Carl Dueker
Pop by Gordon Korman
Snitch by Allison Van Diepen
Homeboyz by Alan Sitomer
The Secret Life of Sonia Rodriguez by Alan Sitomer
Swim the Fly by Don Calame
Catalyst by Laurie Halse Anderson
Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson
Hate List by Jennifer Brown
Bitter End by Jennifer Brown
Absolutely Maybe by Lisa Yee
Nineteen Minutes by Jodi Picoult
Prep by Curtis Sittenfeld
Guitar Girl by Sara Manning
Upstate by Kalisha Buckhanon
Black Girl/White Girl by Joyce Carol Oates
Twisted by Laurie Halse Anderson
The Double Bind by Chris Bohjalian
The Rule of the Bone by Russell Banks
The Space Between by Don Aker
Street Pharm by Allison van Diepen
My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult
Push: a Novel by Sapphire
Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie by Jordan Sonnenblick
Paper Towns by John Green
Tyrell by Coe Booth
Alabama Moon by Watt Key
Perfect Chemistry by Simone elkeles
The Nature of Jade by Deb Caletti
jumping off swings by Jo Knowles
What I Saw and How I Lied by Judy Blundell
Define Normal by Julie Ann Peters
Prom by Laurie Halse Anderson
Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants by Ann Brashares
Cut by Patricia McCormick
Story of a Girl by Sara Zarr
The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things by Carolyn Mackler

Grades 11-12+ (mature readers &/or very difficult reading in length, complexity, pace)
Makes Me Wanna Holler by Nathan McCall
Fish by T.J. Parsell
From the Memoirs of a Non-Enemy Combatant by Alex Gilvarry
Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer
Salvage the Bones by Jesmyn Ward
Life in Middle School
Bluefish by Pat Schmatz
Okay for Now by Gary Schmidt
The Wednesday Wars by Gary Schmidt
Rules by Cynthia Lord
Bigger Than a Breadbox by Laurel Snyder
Among the Hidden by M. Peterson Haddox
Gossamar by Lois Lowry
Breadcrumbs by Anne Ursu

Middle School: The Worst Years of Your Life by James Patterson
Wonder by A. J. Palacio
The Mighty Miss Malone by Christopher Paul Curtis
Hound Dog True by Linda Urban
The Wild Things by Dave Eggers
The Chronicles of Harris Burdick edited by Chris Van Allsburg
Red Kayak by Priscilla Cummings
See You at Harry’s by Jo Knowles
One for the Murphys by LyndaMullanyHunt
The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate
Because of Mr. Terrupt by Rob Buyea
Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson

Death and Dying
Deadline by Chris Crutcher
Hold Still by Nina LaCour
Forever Changes by Brendan Halpin
The Sky is Everywhere by Jandy Nelson
If I Stay by Gayle Foreman
Where She Went by Gayle Foreman
The Fault in Our Stars by John Green
Before I Die by Jenny Downham
Me & Earl & the Dying Girl by J Andrews
After the Wreck, I Picked Myself Up, Spread My Wings and Flew Away by Joyce Carol Oates
The Sledding Hill by Chris Crutcher
Ways to Live Forever by Sally Nichols
By the Time You Read This I’ll Be Dead by Julie Ann Peters
The Truth About Forever by Sarah Dessen

Prose-poetry books
Because I Am Furniture by Thalia Chaltas
Shark Girl by Kelly Bingham
The Girl Who Fell From the Sky by Heidi W. Durrow
Inside Out and Back Again by Thanhha Lai
My Book of Life by Angel by Marine Leavitt
Crank by Ellen Hopkins (and all of the other books by this author)
Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse
Graphic Novels
The Complete Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi
Blankets by Craig Thompson
My Mommy Is In America and She Met Buffalo Bill by Jean Regnaud
A.D. New Orleans After the Deluge by Josh Neufeld
Maus I and Maus II by Art Spiegelman
Anya’s Ghost by Vera Brosgol
Blankets by Craig Thompson
My Mommy Is In America and She Met Buffalo Bill by Jean Regnaud
A.D. New Orleans After the Deluge by Josh Neufeld
Maus I and Maus II by Art Spiegelman
Anya’s Ghost by Vera Brosgol
Freshman Tales of 9th Grade Obsessions, Rebellions, and Other Nonsense by Corrine Mucha
American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang
Bleach by tite Kubo
Dramacon by Svetlana Chmakova
Into the Volcano by Don Wood
Naruto by Masashi Kishimoto

Sexual Identity
In One Person by John Irving
Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Saenz
Letters from a Dead Girl by Jo Knowles
Will Grayson, Will Grayson by John Green
Ask the Passengers by A. S. King
Keeping You a Secret by Julie Ann Peters
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Steven Chbosky
Luna by Julie Ann Peters
Rage by Julie Ann Peters
Girl 2 Girl by Julie Ann Peters
Far from Zanadu by Julie Ann Peters

Fantasy
delirium by Lauren Oliver
pandemonium by Lauren Oliver
divergent by Veronica Roth
insurgent by Veronica Roth
The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins
The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing series by M. T. Anderson
How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff
The Scorpio Races by Maggie Stiefvater
11/22/63 by Stephen King
Chime by Franny Billingsley
Zombies vs. Unicorns by Holly Black
The Adoration of Jenna Fox by Marty Pearson
The Fox Inheritance by Marty Pearson
House of Leaves by Mark Z. Danielewski
BZRK by Michael Grant
Safekeeping by Karen Hesse
The Knife of Never Letting Go by Patrick Ness
The Ask and the Answer by Patrick Ness
The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom
The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick
The Road by Cormac McCarthy
Cirque du Freak/Demonata by Daren Shan
Ender’s Game by Orson Scott Card
I am Number Four by Pittacus Lore
The Maze Runner by James Dashner
Ranger’s Apprentice by John Flanagan
Shiver by Maggie Stiefvater
Twilight by Stephanie Meyer

Non-fiction 9-12
Columbine by Dave Cullen
Fifth Avenue, 5 a.m.: Audrey Hepburn, Breakfast at Tiffany’s, and the Dawn of the Modern Woman by Sam Wasson
The Brontes: Charlotte Bronte and her Family by Rebecca Fraser
I am an emotional creature: the secret life of girls around the world by Eve Ensler
Moneyball by Michael Lewis
Juveniles in Justice by
The Shallows by Nicholas Carr
Zeitoun by Dave Eggers
The Honest Truth About Dishonesty by Dan Ariely
Lies Across America: What our historic sites get wrong by James Loewen
Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell
Blink by Malcolm Gladwell
The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell
Drive by Daniel Pink
Start Something That Matters by Blake Mycoskie
Food Rules by Michael Pollan

Rock Memoirs
Can’t Buy Me Love by Jonathan Gould
Life by Keith Richards
Just Kids by Patti Smith
The Rose that Grows From Concrete by Tupac Shakur

Dog Books
The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein
Following Atticus by Tom Ryan
A Dog’s Purpose by W. Bruce Cameron
Inside of a Dog by Alexander Horowitz
The Dogs of War by Lisa Rogak
Sergeant Rex by Mike Dowling & Damien Lewis
From Baghdad with Love by Jay Kopelman & Melinda Roth
Until Tuesday by Luis Carlos Montalvan & Bret Witter
Soldier Dogs by Maria Goodavage
Saving Cinnamon by Christine Sullivan
Humor
Knucklehead by Jon Scieszka
Dead End in Norvelt by Jack Gantos
A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson
Slam by Nick Hornby
The Book of Guy Stories by Garrison Keillor
Don’t Stand Too Close to a Naked Man by Tim Allen
Me Talk Pretty One Day by David Sedaris
When You Are in Engulfed in Flames by David Sedaris
Born Standing Up by Steve Martin
Bossypants by Tina Fey

Poetry
The Poet Slave of Cuba by Margarita Engle
Ode to Common Things by Pablo Neruda
A Wreath for Emmett Hill by Marilyn Nelson
Things I Have to Tell You: Poetry written by Teenage Girls by Betsy Franco
You Hear Me? Poetry Written by Teenage Boys by Betsy Franco

Classics
The Member of the Wedding by Carson McCullers
A Rage in Harlem by Chester B. Himes
Black Like Me by John Howard Griffin
Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy
1984 by George Orwell
Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostovesky
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Walden by Henry David Thoreau
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen
Persuasion by Jane Austen
The Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
Big Sur by Jack Kerouac
Franny and Zoey by J. D. Salinger
A Lesson Before Dying by Ernest Gaines