

Reader's Workshop Starter Kit

Jacqueline Catcher, ThreeTeachersTalk.wordpress.com

Jackie.Catcher@gmail.com ~ [@JackieCatcher](https://twitter.com/JackieCatcher)

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❖ **Introductory Materials**

- *Elements of a Reading Workshop to Increase Stamina, Fluency, and Joy*
 - This handout will provide you with the basics of the reader's workshop model as outlined by Penny Kittle, author of *Book Love*.
- *Reader's Workshop Permission Letter*
 - *Freshman/Sophomore Letter*
 - *Junior/Senior Letter*
 - This letter describing the reader's workshop model should be sent to parents prior to the start of the program. Have students return the permission form at the end of the letter specifying that you, the teacher, will not censor any reading materials unless asked to do so.

❖ **Reading Log Sheets**

- *Reading Rates Log*
 - Track students reading rates in this log. Use the formula to help students calculate their reading rate for every book they read.
- *Weekly Reading Record Sheet*
 - Use this log to record students' weekly reading progress. Check the page number students are on during the ten minutes of reading on Monday. I follow a Monday-to-Monday schedule for their reading.
- *Excel Weekly Reading Record Sheet*
 - I transferred my weekly log sheet into excel so I could both record and calculate students' page totals on my computer. This screenshot shows you how I set up the document.

❖ **Conferencing**

- *Book Conference Log*
 - Jot down notes from book conferences with students to track their progress and reading. I conference with students during their 10-20 minute reading time.
- *Questions to Ask While Conferencing*
 - While book conferences should develop as a natural conversation between you and the reader, it never hurts to have a list of questions to jumpstart the discussion.

❖ **Sharing Books**

- *Book Talk Outline*
 - Use this outline to help you initially develop your book talks. I personally found it useful to jot down notes on the book, including a summary of the book, the page numbers of the excerpt I read, and what students' responses were. I placed these notes in a separate binder to use for future book talks.

- *Resources for Helping Students Find New Books*
 - Hand this out to students to help them find a book to read. This list includes helpful websites and an application they can download to their smartphones.

Elements of a Reading Workshop

to increase Stamina, Fluency, & Joy
By Penny Kittle

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 of 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 & writers' 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; creative 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 own choices as a reader: post your reading list, share books you love; show thinking & annotations in a mentor text and model "fix-it" strategies.

READER'S WORKSHOP PARENT LETTER: FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORE

Dear Freshman/Sophomore Parents and Guardians,

A central goal of this English class is to establish a **reading habit**. Therefore, your student is participating in the Reading Initiative, a program developed to inspire students to become stronger readers and writers. I am hoping you and I can work together to help our students recapture the pleasure and passion of reading.

I hope to challenge each of my students to foster a reading life that takes place outside of the classroom. I expect them to grow as readers, increasing their stamina and the complexity of the books they choose. With those goals in mind, I am urging students to visit our school's library, which is filled with a wonderful assortment of titles that seek to engage readers. The ultimate intent is to recommend books that interest all students so that they enjoy the books they choose—that they read for knowledge and read for pleasure.

According to Penny Kittle, author of *Write Beside Them*, here are a few of the benefits reading offers:

- **Reading relieves stress.** School can be 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. Continuous 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.
- 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.

Here's the disclaimer: Knowing every book in its entirety or remembering every detail of each book in the library is near impossible. You may pick up a book your child left behind 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. 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 or public library. The bottom line: **I will not censor what is read in this class. Please support me in this. I hope the books your student chooses will generate conversation between you and him/her.**

Because I respect your role as parents and the traditions you hold sacred, please let me know if you would like me to more closely monitor your child's choices this year. I am more than happy to work out a plan for us to work together.

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.

Thank you for your support,

Teacher

Principal

Department Chair

Please detach the below portion of this letter and send it in with your student:

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

Student's Signature Date

Student's Name Printed Legibly

Parent's/Guardian's Signature Date

READER'S WORKSHOP PARENT LETTER: JUNIOR/SENIOR

Dear Junior/Senior Parents and Guardians,

A central goal of CP Advanced Composition is to establish a **reading habit**. This year they will take part in the Reading Initiative, a program that will be piloted in multiple Advanced Composition courses this year. As a writing teacher, I fervently believe that to write well, students must be exposed to a wide variety of books; this is particularly difficult when so few students enjoying reading. I am hoping you and I can work together to help our students recapture the pleasure and passion of reading.

My goal is twofold: not only do I hope to challenge each of my students to foster a reading life that exists outside of the classroom, but also, I hope to give my students an upper edge as they work their way towards college. I expect them to grow as readers, increasing their stamina and the complexity of the books they choose. With those goals in mind, I am urging students to visit the school's library as well as my own classroom library, both of which are filled with a wonderful assortment of titles that seek to engage readers. The ultimate intent is to recommend books that interest all students so that they enjoy the books they choose.

Studies have shown that independent reading has tremendous benefits. According to the American Learning Association:

- **Independent reading is linked to “growth in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information,” all skills that are assessed on the SATs.**
- **Students who read independently “score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas and have greater content knowledge than those who do not.”**
- **Reading builds stamina to prepare students for college course loads.**
- **Reading for an hour or two in one sitting is a basic expectation in college, and continuous reading develops confidence, focus, and endurance.**

Here's the disclaimer: Knowing every book in its entirety or remembering every detail of each book in the library is near impossible. You may pick up a book your child left behind 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. 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 or public library. The bottom line: **I will not censor what is read in this class.**

Please support me in this. I hope the books your student chooses will generate conversation between you and him/her.

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 year, 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,

Teacher

Principal

Department Chair

Please detach the below portion of this letter and send it in with your student:

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

Student's Signature Date

Student's Name Printed Legibly

Parent's/Guardian's Signature Date

READING RATES LOG

Class: _____

Period: _____

Calculating Reading Rate:

- (Amount of pages read per 10 minutes) x 6 = Total pages per hour
- E.g. If a student reads 10 pages in 10 minutes: 10 pp. x 6 = 60 pp./hr

Name ↓	Reading Rate				
	Date & Rate →				
John Smith	Sept. 1: 30pp./hr	Sept. 15: 36pp./hr	Oct. 2: 36pp/hr	Oct. 23: 42pp./hr	Nov. 10: 42pp./hr
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					
21.					
22.					
23.					
24.					

WEEKLY READING RECORD SHEET

Reading Rate Log

Calculating your overall reading for the week:

(P. you're currently on) $-$ (P. you're on on Monday _____) $=$ Ttl pp. you read in 1 week

****If you finish a book, make sure to write down how many pages there are in the book in total.****

Name	Book Title	Page you're on on Monday	Page you're currently on	Total pages read in one week
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

21.				
22.				
23.				
24.				

BOOK CONFERENCE LOG

Name: _____

Date	Book Title	Notes

READING CONFERENCE QUESTIONS

Reading conferences are largely based on the students and what they are reading. Still, sometimes it can be tricky to jumpstart your discussion, particularly with a reluctant reader. Here are some questions to ask when approaching students during reading conferences.

- Describe yourself as a reader? In the past have you liked/disliked reading?
- When was the last time you read a book for personal enjoyment outside of school?
- What genres do you tend to gravitate to?
- How did you choose this book?
- Tell me what the book is about so far.
- Tell me about the main character. What do you think about him/her/it?
- What is the structure of the book? Does it jump around a lot or does it tend to follow chronological order?
- Are there any parts that confuse you?
- Can you explain the book title?
- As you read, what do you wonder about?
- What do you think will happen next?
- How do you think the book will end?
- Did you see that event coming?
- What was your favorite part of the story?
- What was your least favorite part of the story?
- How would you describe the author's voice?
- What do you think the author wants you to take away from this book?
- Did you like the book? Why or why not?

BOOK TALK OUTLINE

Book Talks

Book Talk Number: _____

Date: _____

Book Title: _____

Author: _____

Summary:

Excerpt: pp. _____

RESOURCES FOR HELPING STUDENTS FIND NEW BOOKS

Reading Initiative: Reading Resources to Help Students Find their Next Book

Book Suggestion Websites:

- What Should I Read Next (whatshouldireadnext.org)
 - Enter a book title and this website will “analyze [their] huge database of real readers’ favorite books to provide book recommendations and suggestions for what to read next.”
- Open Library (openlibrary.org)
 - “Open Library is an open, editable library catalog, building towards a web page for every book ever published.”
- Your Next Read (yournextread.com)
 - This site asks visitors to type in the title of a favorite book, and it will generate a web of suggested titles for your "next" book.
- Goodreads (goodreads.com)
 - Students can join to track their reading, write reviews, and receive book recommendations.

Book Trailers:

- Book Trailers for Readers (booktrailersforreaders.com)
 - This website provides trailers and teasers to help you find a new and interesting book.

Smartphone Apps:

- YALSA's Teen Book Finder
 - Find the best books and media for teens, as selected by library staff and educators across the United States! The Teen Book Finder, generously funded by a grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, offers easy access to the titles honored each year by the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library