

Raise Your Reading Game

Exclusive Teacher's Guide

**Active
Reading
Paired
Reading**



Bonus!

“A Year In Books” Timeline

PERMA-BOUND

THE STRONGEST BOOKS YOU CAN BUY

“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. ...”

- **Sir Francis Bacon**, *English philosopher and author (1561-1626)*

Raise Your Reading Game: Helping Your Students Get the Most Out of Fiction

Introduction

As an English/Language Arts educator, one of your challenges is to foster your secondary students' engagement with classroom texts, particularly fiction. How can students read assigned books in such a way that they are able to identify key characters and plot points, and understand important ideas?

Two important strategies to help your students get the most out of reading are **active reading** techniques and using **paired texts**. Below are some suggestions for incorporating both of these approaches in your classroom.


Strategy 1: Encourage Active Reading

What is active reading? Quite simply, it is reading with the determination to understand the text, evaluate its relevance, and extract its key points. Passive readers read words, while active readers read *ideas*. Active reading can enable students to better recall and understand what they read, and to apply it to their own experience. The tools required for active reading are simple: a book; a means of recording observations (pen/pencil/highlighter, notebook/paper, or a tablet or similar electronic device); and an active mind. Here is the process students should follow. (Note: This is an expanded version of the steps spelled out on the “Raise Your Reading Game” poster.)

1) **Step 1: Get an overview.** When you first pick up a book, quickly read the front and back covers, the inside covers or book jacket, the title page, the copyright page, and the table of contents, and quickly leaf through the book itself. If you are reading for pleasure or trying to pick between several options, this seemingly simple step will give you a quick idea of what the book is about and a feel for if it's right for you. Even the copyright page is important: it tells you when the book is written, so you'll have an idea if the sensibility is modern or if it's rooted in another historical era.

2) **Step 2: Take a closer look.** Now that you've chosen your book and have a general feel for it, go deeper into the book's language and meaning by reading the introduction and epilogue (if any), and the first and last paragraphs of each chapter. Scan through the pages to pick out recurring words, names, and other clues (such as unusual formatting or graphic elements) as well. Doing this will enable you to pick up cues, both consciously and subconsciously, as to what the book is about, including its main themes and characters. Try to get a general feeling for what the book is about and what will happen to the major characters. (These techniques can also be adapted for nonfiction books.)

3) **Step 3: Take notes.** As you read, reinforce your learning and understanding by taking notes in a form that's comfortable for you. This can include highlighting, underlining, and writing marginal notes (if the book belongs to you), or keeping a notebook with brief, chapter-by-chapter observations. Do this for important



characters, plot developments, pieces of dialogue, or sections that just stand out or seem interesting. Partially, this technique is to help you keep track of important ideas, themes, character developments, etc., in the book you read. Partially, it's to reinforce learning by engaging motor activities—research shows that the more senses and muscle groups you engage in a task, the better you learn it. Finally, this technique helps trigger unconscious associations that will inform your understanding of the book.

4) **Step 4: Reflect and review.** Once you're done with the book, take some time to think about what you've just read. Think about the action of the book—the overall arc of the plot—and the characters, including their personalities, actions, and how they interacted with each other. Then, dig a little deeper, pondering the book's meaning. What do you think the author was trying to say? What did the book mean to you? Did you learn something new? Did the book make you laugh or cry? Did it make you aware of issues you hadn't thought about before, or persuade you of anything?

5) **Step 5: Summarize.** Once you've read the book and really thought about it, the final step—especially if you're reading for a test or essay—is to create your own written summary of the book. Using your notes, and while the book is still fresh in your mind, write down a one- to three-page summary of the story. Include main characters, the setting, the story's main conflict, the main events, and the conclusion. Doing this final step will help deepen your recall and understanding.

Strategy 2: Paired Texts

Using paired texts—pairing related fiction and nonfiction books—is another technique proven to enhance students' understanding and enjoyment of what they read. Pairing creates a synergy that helps achieve curriculum goals and improve learning outcomes, teaching students to evaluate multiple sources of information by requiring them to analyze two or more texts on the same topic, in either print or digital format. Doing this reinforces independent critical thinking and research skills.

Here's how it works: Say, for instance, students have been assigned the novel *Salt to the Sea*, by Ruta Sepetys. This novel concerns the harrowing experience of Eastern European civilian refugees during World War II, and their desperate fight for survival on a German ship that was sunk as it was attempting to transport them to safety. You might pair this text with a related nonfiction title such as *Death in the Baltic: The World War II Sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff*, by Cathryn J. Prince, or *All But My Life*, by Gerda W. Klein. Doing so reinforces cross-curricular lessons in history and social studies, while giving students greater insight into the human cost and emotional impact of historical events through the lens of fiction.

There are nearly endless ways in which fiction and nonfiction titles can be paired for maximum impact. Some suggested pairings (at multiple reading and interest levels) are available at <https://www.perma-bound.com/paired-titles/>. Another resource is <https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/everyday-use/paired-texts>.

Bonus: *The Year in Books Timeline*

This month-by-month listing of important dates and observances in the world of secondary fiction includes book-themed holidays and birthdays of some of the most important and/or popular fiction writers in the secondary English curriculum, from Shakespeare through the present day.

January

National Braille Literacy Month

- 1/2 - Isaac Asimov
- 1/3 - J.R.R. Tolkien
- 1/4 - Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- 1/6 - Carl Sandburg
Wendelin Van Draanen
- 1/12 - Jack London
- 1/15 - Martin Luther King Jr.
- 1/16 - Rebecca Stead
- 1/26 - Shannon Hale
- 1/27 - Lewis Carroll
- 1/30 - Lloyd Alexander
Michael Dorris

February

Love Your Library Month

- 2/1 - Meg Cabot
Langston Hughes
- 2/7 - Charles Dickens
Laura Ingalls Wilder
- 2/8 - Jules Verne
- 2/9 - Matt de la Peña
- 2/11 - Jane Yolen
- 2/12 - Jacqueline Woodson
- 2/18 - Toni Morrison
- 2/25 - Cynthia Voight
- 2/27 - Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow
- 2/28 - Lemony Snickett
(a.k.a. Daniel Handler)

March

- 3/2 - Read Across America Day
(Dr. Seuss's Birthday)
- 3/12 - Virginia Hamilton
Carl Hiaasen
- 3/16 - Freedom of
Information Day
- 3/20 - Lois Lowry
Louis Sachar
- 3/25 - Gondorian New Year
(the day that the One Ring
was destroyed in the fires
of Mount Doom)
- 3/26 - Robert Frost
- 3/27 - Julia Alvarez

April

National Poetry Month

- 4/1 - Anne McCaffrey
- 4/2 - Hans Christian Anderson/
International Children's
Book Day
Washington Irving
- 4/4 - 1984 Day
(1st day in protagonist's diary)
Maya Angelou
- 4/5 - Richard Peck
- National Library Week (second
Week of April)**
- 4/9 - Margaret Peterson Haddix
- 4/12 - Beverly Cleary/DEAR Day
Gary Soto
- 4/23 - William Shakespeare/
World Book Day
Coretta Scott King

May

- 5/1 - Ingrid Law
- 5/2 - Harry Potter Day 1
(date of the Battle of Hogwarts)
- 5/10 - Christopher Paul Curtis
- 5/11 - Mike Lupica
- 5/14 - Eoin Colfer
Kadir Nelson
- 5/17 - Gary Paulsen
- 5/22 - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Scott O'Dell
- 5/25 - Towel Day (Hitchhiker's
Guide to the Galaxy Day)

June

Audiobook Appreciation Month

- 6/5 - Rick Riordan
- 6/6 - Cynthia Rylant
- 6/7 - Gwendolyn Brooks
Nikki Giovanni
- 6/12 - Anne Frank
Harriet Beecher Stowe
- 6/18 - Chris Van Allsburg
- 6/29 - Antoine de Saint-Exupery

July

- 7/9 - Nancy Farmer
- 7/11 - E.B. White
- 7/12 - Joan Bauer
- 7/14 - Isaac Bashevis Singer
- 7/17 - Chris Crutcher
- 7/19 - Garth Nix
- 7/22 - S.E. Hinton
- 7/24 - Alexandre Dumas
- 7/28 - Natalie Babbit

- 7/29 - Sharon Creech
- 7/30 - Ann Brashares
- National Paperback Book Day
- 7/31 - J.K. Rowling/Harry Potter
Day 2 (Harry Potter's birthday)

August

- 8/2 - James Baldwin
- 8/9 - Book Lovers' Day
- 8/12 - Walter Dean Myers
- 8/21 - Kwame Alexander
- 8/24 - John Green
- 8/29 - Karen Hesse
- 8/30 - Mary Shelley

September

Library Card Sign-Up Month

- 9/9 - International Literacy Day
- 9/11 - O. Henry
- 9/13 - Roald Dahl
Mildred Taylor
- 9/15 - Agatha Christie
James Fenimore Cooper
- 9/17 - Gail Carson Levine
- 9/21 - Stephen King
H.G. Wells

Banned Books Week (last week of September)

- 9/24 - F. Scott Fitzgerald
- 9/25 - William Faulkner
Andrea Davis Pinkney
- 9/26 - T.S. Eliot

October

10/4 - Karen Cushman

10/8 - R.L. Stine

Teen Read Week (week of Columbus Day)

10/16 - Joseph Bruchac

10/19 - Philip Pullman

10/21 - Ursula K. LeGuin

10/23 - Gordon Korman

10/29 - Nancy Werlin

10/31 - Katherine Paterson

November

National Family Literacy Month

11/4 - M.T. Anderson

11/7 - Armstrong Sperry

11/8 - Brandon Mull

Bram Stoker

11/10 - Holly Black

Neil Gaiman

11/12 - Neal Shusterman

11/13 - Robert Louis Stevenson

11/14 - William Steig

11/18 - Margaret Atwood

11/21 - Elizabeth George Speare

11/24 - Frances Hodgson Burnett

Ben Mikaelson

James Ramsey Ullman

11/27 - Bill Nye

11/29 - Louisa May Alcott

Madeleine L'Engle

C.S. Lewis

11/30 - L.M. Montgomery

Jonathan Swift

Mark Twain

December

Read a New Book Month

12/10 - Emily Dickinson

Cornelia Funke

12/13 - Tamora Pierce

12/16 - Jane Austen

Arthur C. Clarke

12/20 - Sandra Cisneros

12/24 - Mary Higgins Clark

Stephenie Meyer

12/25 - Pam Muñoz Ryan

12/30 - Rudyard Kipling

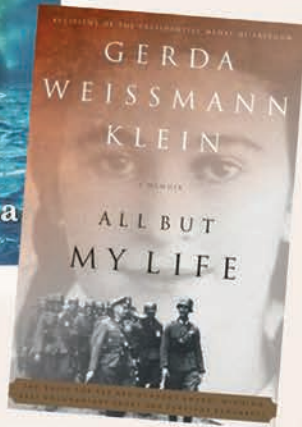
12/31 - Cynthia Leitich Smith

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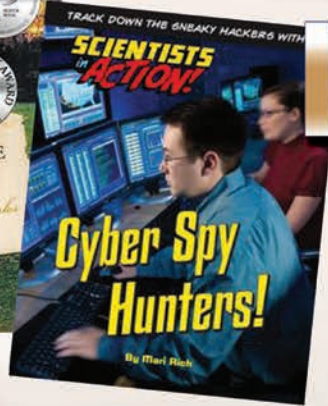
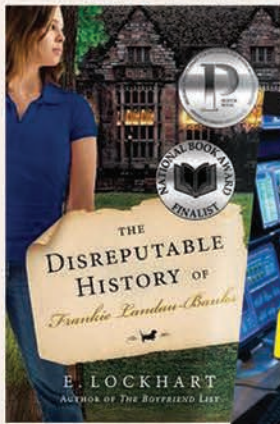
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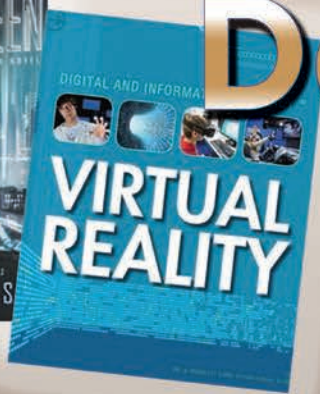
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