

Independent Reading Practice

Mr. Thompson encourages and expects students to read at school and at home from a variety of sources for both academic development and entertainment. Reading is a critical life skill and the single most important academic skill for students to practice and master. Students who read well get better grades in school, score higher on standardized tests, and are better able to focus on, draw conclusions about, and make sense of their world. There is no substitute for reading, so plan to do it every day!

Instructional/Content Reading is the reading that takes place in the classroom under the guidance of a teacher. Instructional/Content Reading is expected in almost all classrooms (not just Language Arts). When a science or social studies teacher assigns students to read a chapter in the textbook, this is an example of Instructional/Content Reading.

Independent Reading Practice is self-selected reading that a student completes outside of school on his/her own time to develop and maintain reading competency. In other words, students choose books based on their own reading ability and interest, and they spend some time every day reading those books. Independent Reading Practice increases vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension in all curricular areas. Independent Reading Practice not only helps students build skills and learn information but should also be a source of enjoyment. Twenty percent (20%) of the grade in this Language Arts class will be based on the Independent Reading Practice students complete each term. Students will track their Independent Reading Practice and write brief reviews of the books they read using a program called Goodreads (<http://www.goodreads.com>). Parents are also encouraged to join the group in order to share and discuss the reading their students are doing. Internet-ready computers are available for student use at the school, but students may also choose to update their online bookshelves from home. Mr. Thompson will monitor student accounts, and points will be assigned based on any or all of the following: regular (daily) reading as evidenced by the number of books (or pages) completed each term, length and difficulty level of books read, completion of Goodreads book reviews, participation in online reading discussions, and face-to-face conversations with Mr. Thompson about the books. Here are some of the questions students should be ready to address in their reviews and conversations:

- Why did you choose to read this book?
- What other books or stories does this one remind you of? Why?
- Identify a theme and explain how it is developed in the book.
- List five questions you would like me to ask you about this book.
- Identify something about the book you did not understand.
- Describe a character in the book that reminds you of someone you know.
- To whom would you recommend this book? Why?
- Should this book be taught in class as a “classroom novel” that all the students read? Why or why not?
- Read your favorite passage aloud and tell me why it was your favorite.
- If this book were a movie, what rating (*G*, *PG*, *PG-13*, *R*) would it get? Why?

Steps to Reading Success

- READ.
 - Read every day. Always carry a reading book.
 - Choose books you haven't read before.
 - Choose books that you like and understand.
 - Read in distraction-free zones. (Don't "multitask" when you are reading.)
 - Read enough that you can get into the "flow" of the book.
 - If a book does not interest you after 40 pages, select a different one.
- Join Goodreads and update your online bookshelf regularly. (Instructions for joining and for writing the book reviews are on a separate handout.)
- Submit Goodreads book reviews and/or talk to Mr. Thompson (even if you haven't finished the entire book) by the midterm and end-of-term deadlines.
- Have a copy of the book you are reading with you (in class) at all times.
- Don't be surprised when I ask you about your Independent Reading Practice during class.

Reading is its own reward. My ultimate goal is to create life-long readers. While this becomes more difficult as modern culture and technology often encourage fast-paced distractions, parents and teachers can help students develop an intrinsic motivation to read widely and much. Such motivation stems from choice, goal setting, feedback, and being part of a shared community of readers. I hope such a community will include families as well as schools.

Independent Reading Practice Contract

I, _____, have read the guidelines for Independent
(Print name legibly.)

Reading Practice, and I agree to read books of my choice (with the approval of my parents) on a regular basis. I will carry a reading book with me at all times, and I will update my Goodreads account regularly and write reviews on all the books I read. I understand that failure to do so will have a profoundly negative effect on my grade in this class. I understand that any form of cheating in my attempts to earn reading points will result in the loss of all reading points and a poor citizenship grade. I understand that reading is the single most important thing I can do to improve my academic standing, my general intelligence, and my chances for success in school, and I will endeavor to read widely and much in my daily life. I understand that there is nothing Mr. Thompson wants more than for me to become a lifelong reader, and I will try not to let him down in this respect.

Student Signature

Date

Parents: Please sign below to indicate that your student has informed you of the reading requirements and that you have discussed with your student his/her reading choices.

Parent Signature

Date