

## Engaged Reading and Engaged Classroom Communities

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“Free-flowing.” “Passionate.” “A rush.” These are just a few of the words students who have been in classrooms prioritizing engaged reading and conversation use to describe their experiences in literacy and with each other. We will examine the properties and activities of classrooms that produce these experiences, all of which are based on research in which teachers made it their central mission to help students feel a sense of relevance and autonomy around reading. Students can become not only more proficient readers, but can also experience shifts in their academic identities, sense of agency, personal relationships, and future life narratives.

### Here are a few guiding principles for thinking about this:

- Learning about and through literacy must be meaningful to students
- It is possible that our thinking about what it means to “comprehend” complex texts is far too narrow.
- Complex literacy practices are social. Students can and should learn with and from each other.
- Students who thrive have a sense of agency about their literate and social lives.

### Here are some things we have written that relate to this topic:

- Ivey, G. & Johnston, P. (2017). Emerging adolescence in engaged reading communities. *Language Arts*, 94(3), 159-169.
- Ivey, G. (2016). Young Adult Literature and Classroom-Based Research. In K. Hinchman & D. Appleman (Eds.), *Adolescent Literacy: A Handbook of Practice-Based Research*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Ivey, G., & Johnston, P. H. (2015). Engaged reading as a collaborative transformative practice. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 47(3), 297-327.
- Ivey, G. (2015). To motivate, or to understand motivations? *Voices from the Middle*, 23(1), 83-85.
- Johnston, P. & Ivey, G. (2015). Discursive contexts, individual differences and reading. In: P. Afflerbach (Ed.) *Handbook of Individual Differences in Reading: Reader, Text and Context*. Routledge.
- Johnston, P. & Ivey, G. (2015). Engagement: A hub of human development. In M. Glover & E. O. Keene & (Eds.). *The Teacher You Want to Be: Essays about Children, Teaching, and Learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ivey, G. (2014). The social side of engaged reading for young adolescents. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(3), 165-171.
- Ivey, G. (2013). Developing an intervention to increase engaged reading among adolescents. In T. Plomp & N. Nieveen (Eds.). *Educational design research- Part B: Illustrative cases* (pp. 235-251). Enschede, the Netherlands: SLO.

- Ivey, G., & Johnston, P. H. (2013). Engagement With Young Adult Literature: Outcomes and Processes. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 48(3). 255-275.
- Johnston, P. H. (2012). *Opening minds*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Ivey, G. (2012). "In this little town nothing much ever happens, but someday something will": Reading young adult literature from the Blue Ridge foothills. In D. Alvermann & K. Hinchman (Ed.). *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives* (pp. 181-197). NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Johnston, P. H., Ivey, G., & Faulkner, A. (2011/2012). Talking in class: Remembering what is important about classroom talk. *The Reading Teacher*, 65(4), 232-237.
- Ivey, G. (2011). Opening up the conversation on literacy, college and career. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55, 96-99.
- Ivey, G. (2011). What not to read: A book intervention. *Voices from the Middle*, 19, 22-26.
- Ivey, G. (2010). Texts that matter. *Educational Leadership*, 67, 18-23.
- Johnston, P. H., (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children's learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

**How you might start a conversation in a one-to-one reading conference:**

- Catch me up!
- Is this book turning out to be all that you hoped it would be?
- What problems are you encountering in your reading today?
- Is this book something I should read?
- Who else in the class would probably like reading this book?

Why? Because these are all open questions that allow the reader to respond in many different ways, ways that will open up a conversation that will reveal the extent and ways in which the reader is engaged. Such conversations also reveal what support might be needed and establish a positive, symmetrical relationship within which support might be provided.

**What you might say to invite group conversation about/through texts:**

- Is anyone itching to say something about their book?
- Does anyone have a character in need of our help?
- Have any of you come across a character recently who is helping you out with a problem?

Why? These sorts of questions are invitations for students to open conversations with classmates. They show an expectation that such conversations are normal, particularly if the teacher offers sometimes starts such conversations while the class is thinking together around a book. The second of these questions invites conversations that draw readers into characters' heads – into their thoughts and feelings. Also, along with the third question, help readers come to see the practical value of reading narrative texts, and help students to become more reflective in their own lives.

### **Examples of talk that invites children to imagine others' thoughts and feelings**

- I wonder what she's thinking right now?
- How do you think she feels? Why do you think she feels angry?
- If you were in his position, what would you be feeling right now?
- Show me with your face how he feels.

These conversations expand children's social imaginations - their ability to imagine themselves into others' thoughts and feelings. Children with stronger social imaginations not only understand complex narratives better, but have stronger social skills, they interact more positively and cooperatively with others, misbehave less, have better self-regulation and stronger moral development.

### **Examples of talk/questions that invite children to consider multiple perspectives:**

- Are there other ways people might think about that?
- What do you think your friends/family members might say about that?
- Does anyone have a character from another story that could give this character some good advice?
- We don't hear from the character's mom in the story, but what do you suppose she's thinking?
- Your character is certainly in a dilemma. Let's think of all the different ways he needs to think about his problem.
- What's a book your character could read to help him think differently about that problem?

Why? These questions invite dialogic engagements with books, characters, and others that provide the foundation for readers' inner dialogues that are the stuff of deeper understanding not only of the book, but also of others and of themselves. These conversations expand children's social imaginations and allow them to see themselves from another's perspective, which is a foundation for their expanded self-regulation. Because these kinds of talk invite multiple perspectives, they invite uncertainty, which keeps students returning to reconsider their thinking and deepens their understanding. We can also ensure uncertainty, or indicate that the conversation is still open by prefacing our contributions with "I wonder," "perhaps," "I think." We can help students take up each others' different perspectives by pointing out when students have competing theories about what is happening, prompting students to look for support for their theories and showing them how their different perspectives produced deeper thinking.

### **Examples of books to inspire robust conversations generated by the students:**

#### **PICTURE BOOKS THAT INSPIRE CONVERSATIONS**

*Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson  
*Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting  
*Getting' Through Thursday* by Melrose Cooper

*Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild* by Mem Fox  
*Have You Seen My Hat* by David Klassen  
*If the World Were a Village* by David J. Smith

*Julias, the Baby of the World* by Kevin Henkes  
*Last Stop on Market Street* (Matt de la Pena)  
*Lenny & Lucy* by Philip Stead  
*Miz Berlin Walks* by Jane Yolen  
*Mr. Putter and Tabby* by Cynthia Rylant  
*Mr. Tiger Goes Wild* by Peter Brown  
*Mrs. Katz and Tush* by Patricia Polacco  
*My Friend John* by Charlotte Zolotow  
*No David!* By David Shannon  
*One* by Kathryn Otoshi  
*Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco  
*Say Something* by Peggy Moss  
*Sheila Rae, the Brave* by Kevin Henkes  
*Sidewalk Flowers* by JonArno Lawson  
*Something Beautiful* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth  
*The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig  
*The Hickory Chair* by Lisa Rowe Fraustino  
*The Lion and the Bird* by Marianne Dubuc  
*The Lion and the Mouse* by Jerry Pinkney  
*The Memory String* by Eve Bunting  
*The Moon Was the Best* by Charlotte Zolotow  
*The Three Questions* by Jon J. Muth  
*Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts  
*Tight Times* by Barbara Shook Hazen  
*Voices in the Park* by Anthony Browne  
*William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow  
*Wings* by Christopher Myers  
*Zen Ghosts and Zen Ghosts and Zen Ties* by Jon J. Muth

INTERMEDIATE BOOKS THAT  
INSPIRE CONVERSATIONS

*As Brave As You* by Jason Reynolds  
*All the Broken Pieces* by Ann E. Burg  
*Anything But Typical* by Nora Raleigh Baskin  
*Because of Mr. Terupt* by Rob Buyea  
*Booked* by Kwame Alexander

*Chicken Boy* by Frances O'Roark Dowell  
*Crenshaw* by Katherine Applegate  
*Counting by 7's* by Holly Goldberg Sloan  
*Courage for Beginners* by Karen Harrington  
*Defiance* by Valeria Hobbs  
*Discovering Wes* by Wes Moore  
*El Deafo* by Cece Bell  
*Firegirl* by Tony Abbott  
*Four Mile* by Watt Key  
*Gaby, Lost and Found* by Angela Cervantes  
*Ghost* by Jason Reynolds  
*Half a Chance* by Cynthia Lord  
*Hold Fast* by Blue Ballet  
*House Arrest* by K. A. Holt  
*I Heart You, You Haunt Me* by Lisa Schroeder  
*Jake and Lily* by Jerry Spinelli  
*Kinda' Like Brothers* by Coe Booth  
*Laminar* by Skila Brown  
*Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Gephart  
*Mockingbird* by Kathryn Erskine  
*One for the Murphys* by Lynda Mullally Hunt  
*Orbiting Jupiter* by Lisa Schroeder  
*One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams-Garcia  
*Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper  
*Paper Things* by Jennifer Richard Jacobson  
*Pax* by Sara Pennypacker  
*Playground* by 50 Cent  
*Rain Reign* by Ann M. Martin  
*Ruby on the Outside* by Nora Raleigh Baskin  
*Serafina's Promise* by Ann E. Burg  
*Still a Work In Progress* by Jo Knowles  
*The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander  
*The Fourteenth Goldfish* by Jennifer Holm  
*The Honest Truth* by Dan Gemienhart  
*The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate

*The Red Pencil* by Andrea Davis  
Pinkney  
*The Seventh Wish* by Kate Messner  
*The Swap* by Megan Shull  
*The Thing About Jellyfish* by Ali  
Benjamin  
*Twerp* by Mark Goldblatt  
*Upside Down in the Middle of Nowhere*  
by Julie T Lamana  
*Unbound* by Ann E. Burg  
*Unfriended* by Rachel Vail  
*Unlocked* by Ryan Van Cleave  
*When Friendship Followed Me Home* by  
Paul Griffen  
*Wonder* by R. J. Palacio  
*Wolf Hollow* by Lauren Wolk

#### YOUNG ADULT BOOKS THAT INSPIRE CONVERSATIONS

*All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds  
and Brendan Kiely  
*All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven  
*All We Have is Now* by Lisa Schroeder  
*And We Stay* by Jenny Hubbard  
*Because I Am Furniture* by Thalia  
Chalets  
*Before I Fall* by L. Oliver  
*Bitter End* by Jennifer Brown  
*Black and White* by Paul Volponi  
*Boy 21* by Mathew Quick  
*Bronxwood* by Coe Booth  
*Bruiser* by Neal Shusterman  
*Challenger Deep* by Neal Shusterman  
*Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell  
*Every Day* by David Levithan  
*Everything, Everything* by Nicole Yoon  
*Falling For You* by Lisa Schroeder  
*Freakboy* by Kristin Elizabeth Clark  
*Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero  
*Girls Like Us* by Gail Giles  
*Glimpse* by Carol Lynch Williams  
*Gutless* by Carl Deuker  
*Gym Candy* by Carl Deuker  
*How It Went Down* by Kekla Magoon  
*Identical* by Ellen Hopkins  
*If I Grow Up* by Todd Stasser

*If I Stay* by Gayle Forman  
*If You Find Me* by Emily Murdoch  
*Jumping Off Swings* by Jo Knowles  
*Keeping You a Secret* by Julie Anne  
Peters  
*Knockout Games* by G. Neri  
*Lessons From a Dead Girl* by Jo  
Knowles  
*Leverage* by Joshua Cohen  
*Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott  
*Love You Hate You Miss You* by  
Elizabeth Scott  
*Luna* by Julie Anne Peters  
*Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Perez  
*Paranoid Park* by Blake Nelson  
*Payback Time* by Carl Deuker  
*Pointe* by Brandy Colbert  
*Reality Boy* by A.S. King  
*Response* by Paul Volponi  
*Rucker Park Set Up* by Paul Volponi  
*Snitch* by Allison Van Diepen  
*Street Pharm* by Allison Van Diepen  
*Swagger* by Carl Deuker  
*Sway* by Kat Spears  
*Takedown* by Allison Van Diepen  
*Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher  
*The Beginning of Everything* by Robin  
Schneider  
*The Bridge From Me To You* by Lisa  
Schroeder  
*The Fault In Our Stars* by John Green  
*The Golden Boys* by Sonya Hartnett  
*The Miseducation of Cameron Post* by  
Emily Danforth  
*The Memory of Things* by Gae Polisher  
*The Scar Boys* by Len Vlahos  
*The Way I used to Be* by Amber Smith  
*Torn Away* by Jennifer Brown  
*Tyrell* by Coe Booth  
*Waiting* by Carol Lynch Williams  
*What Light* by Jay Asher  
*When I Was the Greatest* by Jason  
Reynolds  
*When We Collided* by Emery Lord  
*Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside  
Shorty* by G. Neri

**Great resources for finding engaging children's/young adult literature:**

Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)  
(American Library Association)  
<http://www.ala.org/alsc/>

Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)  
(American Library Association)  
<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/>

Children's Cooperative Book Center  
School of Education  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
<http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu>

World of Words  
University of Arizona  
Focused on books to promote intercultural understandings and global perspectives  
<http://wowlit.org>

School Library Journal  
<http://www.slj.com>

Kirkus Reviews  
<https://www.kirkusreviews.com>

The Horn Book  
[http://www.hbook.com/#\\_](http://www.hbook.com/#_)

Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)  
<http://www.voyamagazine.com>

National Science Teacher Association  
Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K-12  
<http://www.nsta.org/publications/ostb/>

National Council for the Social Studies  
Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People  
<http://www.socialstudies.org/notable>