

WHY should I be reading?

1. Reading is good for your brain – it increases the blood flow and improves connectivity in the brain

2. Reading introduces new ideas – it helps you detect patterns, solve problems and assimilate new information

3. Reading makes you a better writer – you will unconsciously absorb techniques and vocabulary

4. Reading improves your conversational skills – the knowledge you gain gives you lots to talk about

5. Reading strengthens worldview and convictions – texts you agree with reinforce your ideas, whilst texts you disagree with broaden your perspective

6. Reading improves your self-discipline and consistency – it forces you to form deep connections/concentration

7. Reading inspires you – reading a good book is like being around an inspiring person

8. Reading reduces stress – reading can ease tensions in your muscles and heart

WHAT should I be reading?

Choosing texts can be a pain.

Most people don't have any sort of strategy for it. Fiction or non-fiction, there are so many good texts out there and your time is limited, so how do you know which are *worth* reading?

A great reading habit begins with something YOU choose.

Nothing is more important than that. No-one can do it for you. Here are some possible ways to help you find YOUR ideal read...

- **Follow a writer** – if you've enjoyed one text by a writer, particularly their writing style or tone, then try another – it might be better!
- **Personal Recommendations** – you are surrounded by people that could suggest a text to read – ask a friend, teacher, form tutor or family member.
- **Suggested Reading Lists** – the PHS English Department has plenty of reading suggestions, and you can always ask Mr Sheehan in the library!
- **Websites** – in the days of the internet, there are plenty of sites with reading lists – have a look at GoodReads, EpicReads and PenguinTeen (etc.) Panmacmillan has collated a fantastic non-fiction list too!
- **Library and Book Stores** – sometimes surrounding yourself with books can help you find one for you – libraries and shops have displays and sections to help you find areas or writers of interest, plus staff can help!
- **Book Swaps** - This might sound counterintuitive and irrelevant. But if you give away a lot of books, you'll eventually get given a lot of books. Other people might see you in a different way to how you see yourself, so they'll have another perspective on what you might enjoy.
- **Challenge Yourself**– it's great to read about topics you're interested in, but don't forget to push yourself to explore – books are a way of escaping reality so visit as many places as you possibly can!

“If you only read books you don't like that much, you'll end up thinking you don't like reading. So you'll read less and less — and your ability to focus on a book will get worse and worse. So do something about it – NOW!”

HOW should I be reading?

Step One: Create a distraction-free environment

Some distractions are unavoidable but there are plenty of distractions you do have control of – choose a quiet space that holds no temptations.

Step Two: Start at the beginning

It may sound really obvious, but when creating their text a writer has thought long and hard about how they want you to experience their ideas. Follow the text the way your writer intended.

Step Three: Take your time and don't rush

Set a dedicated reading time and stick to it. The opportunities provided at school will help you with establishing this routine. Set aside specific times when you will limit the distractions. 15 minutes before bed takes you away from your phone (no more blue lights!) and can help you relax before you go to sleep.

Step Four: Take notes, read aloud or mouth along with the words

This may annoy others in a public setting, but these hacks can help you better understand the author's message. Speaking aloud develops new conclusions, and increases everything from concentration to focus to retention. Whether you jot down notes in the book margins, or on a Post-it and mouth along whilst in class, don't be embarrassed. This is still going to improve your literacy skills, which in turn will make you a lean, mean reading machine.

Step Five: When you struggle, remember the PHS Reading Strategies:

- 1) Does it sound like a word you know?
- 2) Can you figure out what the word might be by looking at the sentence?
- 3) Can you ask your partner?
- 4) Can you ask someone who has a good vocabulary?
- 5) Can you look the word up in a dictionary?
- 6) Can you ask your teacher?

Step Six: Set goals and stick to them

If you're not a voracious reader then don't commit yourself to reading more than you can handle. In other words, don't set lofty goals that you probably can't achieve. Start by setting a reading goal that is easily attainable - such as reading just one book per month or 10 pages a day. If you're already breezing through a book a month then jump up to two. When you're not over-committing, you'll find that the reading experience is less stressful and more enjoyable.

Short and Simple Activities

Choose the 5 most impressive words in your reading book. Aim to use all of them at least once this week either in discussion or in a piece of writing.

List 4 key pieces of information you learn from reading the current section of your reading book. Has this changed your experience with the book?

Choose a word from your reading choice and then decide on 4 alternative (better!) vocabulary choices. Could you use them in your own work?

List 4 interesting things you know about the main character (protagonist) or idea in your reading. What about the antagonist (main character's enemy)? What about opposing ideas?

Set yourself a reading target. How many pages do you want to read this session? What about today? This week?

Deeper Thinking Tasks

What impression does the writer want us to have about the characters or ideas they have created? What methods does the writer use to develop this impression?

In fiction, what is significant about the setting? Has the writer deployed pathetic fallacy (where the weather/setting reflects the emotions of the characters)?

Where does the text change? What is significant about that moment in the text? Does the change further the issues of the text or solve them?

How has the writer structured the text for your benefit as the reader? Where are the chapter breaks? The paragraphs? The moments of highest tension? Where does the tone change?

What are the problems in the text? How are they similar to other situations you have read about (or even experienced!)? How are they different? Would you solve the problem in the same way?

Beyond the Text...

Have you read any other texts like this one? What sort of audience would you recommend it to? What would you read next? Why should people know about this text?

What is the writer's motive? Why did they decide to create this text? Could you be tempted to research the text and find out more about the inspirations behind it?

Why does this text work? Is there a formula to the text that you think could be applied to other texts? What structures can you recognise?

How does this text relate to real life? Can you identify with the issues raised in the text? Do they reflect experiences you have felt yourself? How does that help you engage with the text better?

How did reading this text benefit you? What have you discovered as part of your reading journey? What progress have you made personally by reading this text?