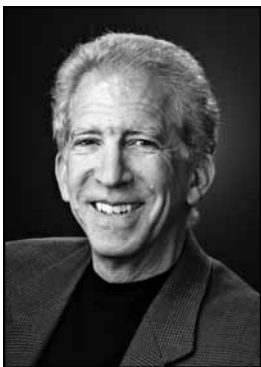




## Junko Yokota

Junko Yokota, PhD, is professor of reading and language at the National College of Education, National-Louis University, Chicago, and director of the Center for Teaching through Children's Books. A former elementary classroom teacher and school librarian, she has served as a consultant to numerous school districts, guiding curriculum development and providing professional development for teachers. She speaks on the topics of multicultural and international literature, literacy development of students of diversity, and improving literacy instruction through quality

literature. Her publications include a coauthored college textbook, *Children's Books in Children's Hands*; columns that review children's books; journal articles; and book chapters. Yokota is past president of the U.S. national section of the International Board on Books for Young People, and is active in the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English. She has served on the Caldecott, Newbery, Batchelder committees, and the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award jury. She is a recipient of the Virginia Hamilton Essay Award, and the Reading the World Award.



## William H. Teale

William H. Teale, EdD, is professor of education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The author of more than one hundred publications, his work has focused on early literacy learning, the intersection of technology and literacy education, and children's literature. Teale has worked with organizations such as Children's Television Workshop, RIF, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Reach Out and Read, and on productions like *Between the Lions*, *Sesame Street*, and the National Head Start Association's *HeadsUp!*

*Reading* program. He is a former editor of *Language Arts* and a member of the Reading Hall of Fame. His current focal research projects are two U.S. Department of Education–funded Early Reading First projects that involve developing model preschool literacy curricula for three- and four-year-old children in urban Chicago schools ([www.uic.edu/educ/erf/](http://www.uic.edu/educ/erf/)).

In this chapter, Yokota and Teale present general guidelines for choosing classroom reading materials, and then they outline age-specific ideas about key materials for elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

## Chapter 3

---

# Materials in the School Reading Curriculum

Junko Yokota and William H. Teale

Walk into any good teacher’s classroom and look around—carefully. The closer you look, the more materials you’ll see that support student literacy learning. These materials are thematically rich, grounded in conceptual knowledge, support a wide variety of learning goals for a wide range of learners, and are present in both print and digital formats.

To do justice in discussing the wealth of materials related to reading in a literacy-rich classroom environment from kindergarten to high school would require a book-length manuscript; we have only a chapter. Therefore, we focus our remarks about this topic on the key materials that we believe teachers at different levels of schooling should have in their classrooms to provide the best support for reading growth. Since there are some general principles that apply to reading materials no matter what the grade, and there are also significant differences, in this chapter we (1) examine what research says about overarching issues related to the role, nature, and importance of materials for reading instruction, no matter what the age or grade level of the student, and (2) present more age-specific ideas about key materials for reading in three sections: elementary (kin-

dergarten through grade 5), middle school (grades 6 to 8), and high school (grades 9 to 12).

## General Principles for Reading Materials

Materials matter—they impact how teachers teach and how readers read (Hoffman & Schallert, 2003). However, if teachers rely on materials to guide their decisions about how they teach reading, the needs of learners become secondary. Our position is that teachers first need to clearly define their own teaching philosophy and determine the learning standards that apply in their situation, then consider student assessment information (current achievement levels, needs, interests, and so on), and at that point select reading materials that align with results of the first two steps. Selecting materials is a very important part of planning and teaching, but the materials need to be understood in the context of the classroom. The materials a teacher uses in his or her classroom ultimately impact not only what students read about, but also how and how well they read and learn.

---

The materials a teacher uses in his or her classroom ultimately impact not only what students read about, but also how and how well they read and learn.

---

### A Range of Materials Is Important

Given the relationship between materials and students' reading habits, processes, and skill levels, it is important that teachers at all grade levels ensure that students have ready access to a range of reading materials. It is helpful to keep in mind the following dimensions to provide such a range for your students.

**Readability.** How easy or hard a particular text is for a student to read is affected by a myriad of factors, some within the text (vocabulary load, syntactic complexity of sentences, and so on) and others within the reader (background knowledge, interest in the topic, how tired the reader is, and so on). Teachers are always trying to find materials that are at a “just right” reading level for a student (also known as the *instructional level*). Instructional-level materials are important because they allow students to have success in reading (in other words, the text is not at the frustration level), but they also stretch students a bit to develop new skills for processing texts.

Also important are materials that are at the student's independent reading level. These texts provide students with opportunities for a lot of practice reading. As with any activity (basketball, knitting, dancing, and so on), practice helps one develop fluency in orchestrating the actions that comprise the activity—in the case of reading, such factors as speed, accuracy, word recognition, phrasing, decoding, and so on.

**Content.** An aspect of level of difficulty that is frequently not considered but we believe is most important to consider is that students need to interact on a regular basis not only with materials at their reading level, but also with materials at their grade level. By grade-level materials we mean texts that contain the concepts and content in all subject areas that represent the achievement standards for that grade. This is, of course, especially critical for students who are reading below grade level. Consider that when we provide instruction for struggling readers at their reading (instructional) level (which, we have just said, is a good idea), they won't be encountering content at their grade level. Students progress in school (and in reading) by learning reading skills and strategies and by mastering content, or background knowledge. Without adequate background knowledge, all the reading skills in the world won't get students far enough. Thus, it is critical that even if a student is two or three years behind grade level in reading, that the student be exposed in some way—perhaps through read-alouds, perhaps through computer-assisted means—to texts at grade level.

**Topics.** There is a definite link between student interest and comprehension in reading (Anderson, Shirey, Wilson, & Fielding, 1987). A major factor contributing to student interest (or lack of it) is what the text is about. Certainly, when it comes to school, not every text that students read will be interesting to each individual reader. However, it is extremely important that there are many texts of interest to students in the overall collection of texts they read. Therefore, it is extremely important that texts on a variety of topics be part of the reading experience at each and every grade level and for each and every student.

**Genres.** Closely related to the need for variety in reading topics is the issue of variety in genre. Some students just love reading

biographies, others go on science fiction or fantasy binges, and contemporary realistic fiction might capture the attention of others. Therefore, we highly recommend availability of a range of genres—realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, science fiction, poetry, biography, informational texts, memoir, mystery, and so forth—at all grade levels. Keep in mind, however, that genres may be differentially appropriate and appealing across grade levels. For example, science fiction is not very central in the primary grades, and memoir generally works better with high school students, whereas fantasy is popular from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

**Appeal.** Even with our society’s broadened conceptions of gender roles, there is still a degree of truth in the idea that some reading materials appeal more to males while others are significantly more appealing to females. “Chick lit,” for example, is a well-documented phenomenon, and a number of programs and texts have cropped up recently on boys and reading. Examples include Guys Read ([www.guysread.com](http://www.guysread.com)), a web-based literacy program for boys; *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males* (Tatum, 2005); and *For Boys Only: The Biggest, Baddest Book Ever* (Aronson & Newquist, 2007). Gender, culture, and individual interest all influence appeal. It is worth keeping this in mind as you think about the provision of reading materials, especially since the overwhelming majority of teachers at the elementary level are female. Likewise, readers may feel personal connection and motivation to read when the reading material aligns with their own cultural heritage or appeals to their personal interests.

**Format.** In addition to conventional texts (novels, informational books, and so on), we want to draw attention to three text formats that we recommend be included among a teacher’s reading materials at any grade level: graphic novels, picture books, and multimedia texts. Graphic novels have grown significantly in use and stature during the past decade as reading materials for the classroom. A graphic novel is “a fictional or non-fictional book-length story told with images and verbal text using the conventions of a comic book” (Boerman-Cornell, Kim, & Teale, 2010, p. 1). Graphic novels have become quite popular with teens and are catching on more and more with younger readers. We recommend graphic novels as important materials because

they offer readers opportunities for a unique, multimodal literary experience by immersing them in processing both text and images to create meaning. Such experiences can both extend children's responses to literature and enhance their dispositions toward reading. A few graphic novels are being taught with some regularity in the high school English curriculum (such as *American Born Chinese*, Yang, 2006, and *Persepolis*, Satrapi, 2003), and many school librarians and classroom teachers recommend them to students of all ages for independent reading. No collection of twenty-first-century reading materials should be without graphic novels. (See Serchay, 2008, for recommended titles for middle and high school and Teale, Kim, & Boerman-Cornell, 2008, for recommended elementary titles.)

Learning to "read" and interpret the images in picture books is part of visual literacy. Of course, picture books are a staple in the primary grades, but they can also play a very important role in reading for grade 3 through 5 students because many picture books deal with sophisticated literary themes (such as *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, 2007), complex scientific information (such as *The Tree of Life* by Peter S's, 2003), and historical information (such as *Hiroshima No Pika* by Toshi Maruki, 1982). Realize also that certain picture books can be used to good effect with middle and high school students; there are various websites and professional books and articles focused on picture books as reading material for students of these ages (see Pearson, 2005). The California Young Reader Medal is even given in the category of Picture Books for Older Readers (see California Young Reader Medal, 2010, for a list of winners).

The final format for reading materials we suggest as critical for inclusion across all grades is multimedia texts. Multimedia texts combine the written word with still or moving images and/or audio to convey information or provide literary and artistic expression. Such texts are increasingly available on the Internet. We believe informational multimedia texts will soon completely replace the traditional print-based, content-area textbook (in history, biology, general science, geography, and so on) at all levels since complex concepts (such as DNA, westward expansion, or economic markets) can be conveyed to readers so much more effectively and with the most up-to-date

interpretation with text, images, and sound rather than through a static image alone, as is the case with textbooks.

### **Reading Involves Knowledge, Not Just Skills and Strategies**

Many educators, especially those at the elementary level and those working with struggling readers at the middle and high school levels, view learning to read as primarily a process of developing the skills and strategies involved in reading. Competence in skills, such as phonics and sight-word recognition, and in strategies, such as comprehension monitoring and questioning, are central to becoming a capable reader. However, it is important to regard reading as involving content (knowledge) as much as it involves skills and strategies. That is to say, all the reading skills in the world do little good without the accompanying world knowledge and content knowledge to go with them—especially for students beyond the primary grades. In fact, one of the strongest findings from the past half century of reading research is the close relationship between background knowledge and reading comprehension (Israel & Duffy, 2008).

---

One of the strongest findings from the past half century of reading research is the close relationship between background knowledge and reading comprehension.

---

It is extremely important to include informational materials—from the various realms of the sciences and social studies, especially—as part of the reading/language arts curriculum as well as in our classroom libraries and in our recommendations for home and leisure reading.

It is interesting to note the role of informational text reading in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Common Core State Standards. In the NAEP, materials on which students are tested shifts from 50 percent narrative/50 percent informational in grade 4 to 30 percent narrative/70 percent informational in grade 12 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The recent Common Core State Standards include separate standards for literature and informational texts (Reading Standards for Literature K–5 and Reading Standards for Informational Text K–5) (Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, 2010).

## **Cultural Content Is Critical**

Likewise, it is important that reading materials are diverse in voice and content. Multicultural literature and international literature depict histories, stories, and experiences that are uniquely embedded within specific cultures or countries, yet they contain universal truths and themes for students to explore (Temple, Martinez, & Yokota, 2010). Multicultural literature is particularly important for students outside of mainstream culture who need to see their heritage reflected in the reading materials; however, all students need to be exposed to diversity through reading. Diverse literature expands readers' perspectives and aids in developing their critical understanding of the world around them.

## **Materials Should Meet Language Needs**

Although most reading material in U.S. schools is in English, there is a need to include materials in other languages when warranted by the student population and the nature of the curriculum. Materials in languages other than English meet the needs of English language learners, and they offer additional support for those who are bilingual. Of course, for a school that has a bilingual education program or dual immersion program, materials in different languages (most typically English and Spanish) are essential. An added bonus of multiple language reading materials for all learners is that seeing text in different languages can impress upon students the importance of learning more than one language and of cross-cultural understanding.

## **Materials Matter**

*What* students read impacts *how* they think; teachers need to be diligent in keeping the aforementioned criteria in mind as they select the highest quality and widest range of reading materials for their classrooms. It can be overwhelming, so it is helpful to partner with knowledgeable specialists, like the school librarian, whose job it is to know a wide range of good reading materials.



## Implications for All Students

The thoughtful selection of reading materials manifests itself differently at the various grade levels. We find it useful to consider the implications of the previously elaborated criteria at three different levels: elementary school (kindergarten through grades 5 or 6), middle school (grades 5 or 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9 through 12).

### Elementary School

Elementary school is traditionally thought of as the heart of reading instruction. The elementary years include what is for most students the most critical time in reading development in an alphabetic language like English or Spanish: beginning reading (typically grades K–2). The latter years of elementary school are very important as well. It is during grades 3–5 that readers consolidate their early skills to become fluent and comfortable engaging in higher levels of reading comprehension in both narrative and informational texts.

**Basal reader programs.** Basal reader programs continue to constitute the core reading materials in most elementary schools today. The appeal of such programs stems largely from the organized, complete package that they offer: carefully selected reading materials that are balanced for genre and provide lesson plans for teaching the skills that accompany each selection along with periodic assessments that document progress in reportable ways—all matched to learning standards for which teachers are responsible. The comprehensive preparation of such series appeals to administrators who often see them as fail-safe approaches and to many teachers because the lesson plans and materials are handed to them, ready to go. Recognizing the enormous impact of these series, the International Reading Association (IRA) has prepared guidelines for evaluating and selecting basals (IRA, 1994).

But are these series the best materials through which readers learn? Basal readers assume a grade-level audience, weighing the needs of the national range of students who represent each grade level. The programs are geared for a probable audience, with reference made about how to accommodate English language learners,

students with disabilities or exceptionalities, and others with special needs. These programs generalize grade-level interests and predict curricular teaching goals from the norm. But in reality, nobody knows the needs of an individual, specific reader like a student's own teacher. A well-prepared teacher with sensitive ability to adjust and accommodate can use his or her knowledge, imagination, and innovation to motivate and instruct learners by offering reading experiences closely matched to what each student needs.

---

Nobody knows the needs of an individual, specific reader like a student's own teacher.

---

**Trade books.** In well-stocked elementary classrooms, both variety and quantity are important in the materials the teacher uses for instruction and those available for student's independent use. Research suggests that making both narrative and informational texts readily available in a classroom library positively impacts students' reading habits and attitudes (Morrow & Weinstein, 1982). Intended to serve as an "at hand" library to augment the school library, the classroom collection should be relatively wide in scope, considering readers' needs and interests that span a range of readability and interests. As for quantity, a collection that includes four books for every child in the room is considered to be good, and one that has eight or more books per child is in the excellent category (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, & Teale, 1993). In no way should such a collection replace the even wider collection available in the school library; however, classroom library collections provide the immediacy and proximity necessary for promoting children's independent reading behaviors. The primary intent of these materials is motivation and engagement; therefore, they should include books, magazines, and audiobooks, as well as more traditional texts such as picture books, chapter books, informational books, and children's poetry —every possible reading material that could be of interest to students.

---

Classroom library collections provide the immediacy and proximity necessary for promoting children's independent reading behaviors.

---

**Guided reading and leveled readers.** An outgrowth of the mid-1990s call for refocusing elementary reading instruction on the practice of guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), "leveled readers"

emerged as a way to provide students with reading material at their specific instructional reading level. These materials are written to or selected as conforming to a formula that limits the rate and number of words introduced. They are used in sets for small-group instruction. The aesthetic qualities of leveled readers are often lower than those of trade books created for literary and artistic intent. Guided reading is more widely defined than by merely using leveled readers, and offers lists and systems to level trade books. These systems of leveling books vary so widely, though, that the same trade books may be ranked anywhere on a range of difficulty depending on the system. Leveled readers are useful for offering students materials at their instructional reading level; however, care should be taken to allow and encourage students to read a wider range rather than just those texts that strictly adhere to a particular level.

**The Accelerated Reader phenomenon.** In many schools today, the use of Accelerated Reader, Reading Counts!, and other such programs has increased exponentially since the early 1990s. These programs use trade books, and in many cases the trade books are of high quality. That is the good news about the Accelerated Reader phenomenon—students are introduced to a range of high-quality books. These programs, based on the premise that readers become better by reading more, also offer tests for purchase to assess whether students have read and understood a particular book. Each book

---

Extrinsic motivation increases a student's volume of reading in the short term, but how will it help readers develop intrinsic motivation to become lifelong readers?

---

carries points for length and the publishing company's algorithm for measuring difficulty. The motivation for students to read and pass the tests comes from earning the points. That can be bad news for students: those who pass 70 percent of the quiz questions may not even bother to finish reading their books because

they lack the motivation to do so (since the motivation is extrinsic and outside of the book itself). There are no consequences built in for repeatedly taking a quiz, so students may retake a quiz until they have read enough of the book (or guessed well enough) to pass and move on. Perhaps this extrinsic motivation increases a student's volume of reading in the short term, but how will it help readers develop intrinsic motivation to become lifelong readers? Another

troubling aspect of Accelerated Reader is that it has become so deeply rooted in some schools that it is considered to be “the reading program,” a highly problematic situation because even the Accelerated Reading program itself clearly recognizes that what it does is focus only on literal level of comprehension of details in a book, not on overall reading comprehension.

**Materials for struggling readers.** There is considerable debate about the kinds of materials that help struggling readers at the elementary level. One school of thought advocates that students be given highly decodable texts, books in which the vast majority of words are written in phonic patterns that have been taught in the reading program; another champions the use of leveled readers. In fact, the kinds of materials that prove to be successful with struggling readers are highly dependent upon the age of the student. Early reading intervention has proven more successful in helping struggling readers than attempts that begin in the later grades. Thus, materials for struggling students need to be especially helpful in promoting decoding and word recognition skills. Reading Recovery® has been shown to be an effective early reading intervention program (IES What Works Clearinghouse, 2008), so the kinds of materials it utilizes—texts that are (a) sequenced in terms of difficulty using a wide range of textual features (not merely what is measured by a readability formula) and (b) chosen for content that will appeal to the child reader—can be recommended. There are also a range of computer software programs and websites designed for struggling readers. These vary greatly in quality and effectiveness. We advise teachers to consult the IES What Works Clearinghouse for evaluations of these materials (see <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports>).

### **Middle School**

With respect to reading materials, middle schools truly are in the middle in many ways. Although it used to be that basal reading programs were developed for grades K–8, virtually all such programs these days extend through grade 5 only. Many high school English classes use literature anthologies that contain a variety of literary genres as well as a range of topics and authors, but such anthologies are not nearly as widely used in middle schools. Another factor contributing

to the types of reading materials found in the middle school classroom is the design of the curriculum: is the curriculum integrated across traditional content areas, or does the school maintain a more high-school-like, subject-area approach with one period/teacher for English, another for social studies, and so on. Curricula that stress integrated studies tend to use more materials from magazine and Internet sources in addition to both informational and narrative trade books, whereas in the more traditional subject-area approach, one would tend to find novels in the English classroom and textbooks in science, social studies, and other content-area classrooms.

In middle schools, the fact that we are in the golden age of young adult literature means that the wealth of materials available for instructional as well as recreational reading is at a peak. This growth is not only in terms of the sheer amount of trade books being published with an older tween and teen audience in mind, but also in terms of the breadth of topics the literature addresses. Interestingly, the very topics that engender intense interest among middle school readers—sexuality, coming of age, identity, adult authority, death—are also the very ones that cause adults to engage in censorship of reading materials.

Censorship is a significant issue when considering reading materials for both middle school and high school students. The National Council of Teachers of English has a wealth of information on the topic of censorship and reading materials for this age group (see [www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship](http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship)), as does the American Library Association (see [www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/index.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/index.cfm)).

**Materials for struggling readers.** The issue of struggling readers is a significant one for middle schools. This is often regarded as a critical time for overcoming reading problems. If a middle school student doesn't get up to grade level proficiency, it is felt, the chances of his or her dropping out of school or continuing to experience extreme difficulty in school achievement are considerable (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). A significant effort aimed at addressing this issue has been the Striving Readers initiative from the U.S. Department of Education. This program targets both middle and high schools with significant numbers of struggling readers. The materials used through this program are quite varied, but one of the successful approaches

is the use of short materials of high interest, such as articles from magazines, excerpted pieces from the Internet, relevant blogs, reviews, and shorter graphic novels (D. Ogle, personal communication, June 19, 2010). What these materials have in common is that (1) they are short enough to be used in targeted lessons—they don't need to be assigned for students to read at home, (2) they are selected to be at a readability level that is appropriate for these readers, and (3) they are of high enough interest that even if some of the vocabulary is challenging to be struggling readers, there is enough personal interest to keep readers engaged and willing to work to comprehend the message of text.

### High School

For many years, virtually all of the discussion about the critical time for reading focused on the primary grades and beginning reading. During the late 1990s and through the early 2000s, a host of reading educators sought to bring attention to the extreme importance of adolescent literacy (for example, Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999), the efforts of which culminated in the influential report *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). The research of this era had enormous implications for reading materials, many of which are being realized in high schools today.

**Materials for English and the humanities.** Without doubt, the major debate related to materials in the discipline of English centers on the canon. Since the beginning of English studies in the United States, scholars, teachers, and the public have weighed in on the merits of, and problems with, centering the high school curriculum on a core set of classic pieces of literature (Applebee, 1974, 1992). Most recently this debate has centered on refocusing the materials of high school English studies in two ways: making them more inclusive (having students read more multicultural literature, as well as works by women, more contemporary works, and so on) and including young adult literature as an integral part of the curriculum.

Restructuring English materials to include works by authors of color and by women started in the 1970s with texts used in college

English courses and has affected the teaching of high school English in a significant way ever since. Both literature anthologies and departmental reading lists have expanded reading requirements for students beyond what was typical in high school freshman

---

High school students need a blend of both canonical literature and literature representing other perspectives, both in what they study in the classroom as well as what they choose for personal reading.

---

English, and American and British literature classes in the 1960s. For example, the literature of the Harlem Renaissance is widely studied in American high schools today. However, as Applebee's research has shown, the canon continues to dominate the materials assigned in English in most high schools today. We believe it is critically important for students to study the Anglo-American literary heritage as well as

classics from around the world; however, we cannot overemphasize the importance of giving students opportunities to read and discuss the voices and stories traditionally underrepresented in English studies. High school students need a blend of both canonical literature and literature representing other perspectives, both in what they study in the classroom as well as what they choose for personal reading.

The issue of including young adult literature as part of the curriculum is in some respects even more contentious. The rise of young adult books can be traced to the 1970s, with such authors as S. E. Hinton and Paul Zindel. Young adult literature can be defined as "literature written for young people ages 11 to 18 and... marketed as 'young adult'" (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2010, p. 4). Currently, young adult publishing is one of the most robust sectors of the book industry, but such works typically have been given little role in the

---

A substantial number of young adult authors are creating works with considerable literary merit and thematic depth.

---

curriculum, probably for several reasons. One is the pure conservatism just discussed in relation to the canon—clearly, young adult literature is not part of those works. Also, there is the lingering belief that young adult literature is written "down" to a teen audience and therefore is not of high literary quality. It is true that many

young adult books are written for popular appeal, but it is also the case—especially with works published in the past fifteen years—that a substantial number of young adult authors are creating works with

considerable literary merit and thematic depth. Walter Dean Myers, Laurie Halse Anderson, Marc Aronson, and Jacqueline Woodson are several whose fiction and nonfiction books have been recognized by the National Book Award, Printz Award, and Margaret Edwards Award committees, not to mention teen readers themselves (with the International Reading Association's Young Adult Choices list, for example).

We believe it is extremely important that secondary teachers become familiar with the body of young adult literature so that they can selectively include high-quality young adult selections in their classroom teaching and be able to recommend such books to individual students for their personal reading.

The growth of the International Baccalaureate Programme has meant an increasing awareness and call for books that support student learning in three core areas that "broaden the educational experience and challenge students to apply their knowledge and understanding": the ability to write extended essays, show understanding of theory of knowledge, and actively learn through real tasks and service beyond the classroom (International Baccalaureate, 2005-2010).

**Materials for struggling readers.** In the 2000s, it has become increasingly common practice that programs for struggling high school readers are focused on first-year students so that students can succeed in reading across all subject areas in their high school curriculum. Teachers constantly voice their concern about a lack of suitable materials to accomplish such a goal. They are correct: there are relatively little high-interest/low-readability materials for these students. The American Library Association's Young Adult Library Services section produces a list of recommended titles called "Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers" that teachers can access to help identify high-interest/low-readability materials. The Striving Readers initiative by the U.S. Department of Education (described previously in the section on middle schools), advocates using short materials of high interest, such as articles from magazines, excerpted pieces from the Internet, relevant blogs, reviews, and shorter graphic novels.



## New Developments in Materials for Reading: Digital Literacy

Writing about the quickly changing world of digital materials for reading is tricky; it is impossible to stay current in a world in which text can change instantaneously, and even the delivery systems for providing digital texts undergo major changes periodically (think Kindle™ or iPad). We have chosen to focus on two types of digital materials relevant to K–12 readers: audiobooks, digitized books/digitally developed books.

### Audiobooks

Audiobooks—recordings of texts being read—have the potential to draw student readers into a story, and to support them as they follow along with the text. Audiobooks have become increasingly accessible; in many areas of the country, a public library card gives students access not only to boxed audio CDs that can be checked out of the library, but also to a huge range of textual MP3 files through an Internet connection. Many children’s chapter books (both narrative and informational) and young adult novels are available as audiobooks.

Educators need to be aware of the literary merit as well as production quality of audiobooks because both impact engagement for readers. Journals such as *Booklist* and *School Library Journal* and in specialized sources such as *Audiophile* regularly review audiobooks. Awards also help to identifying quality: the American Library Association’s Odyssey Award is given to the producer of the best audiobook for children and/or young adults with a focus on literary merit. The Audio Publishers Association’s Audies has a longer history but focuses primarily on the merits of the technical aspects of the audio production.

---

Educators need to be aware of the literary merit as well as production quality of audiobooks because both impact engagement for readers.

---

Although still costly, all-in-one audiobook players such as the Playaway® have been popular, especially with readers of young adult literature. The audiobook is preloaded onto a small MP3 player that hangs on a lanyard. Devices such as the Playaway are available at many public libraries, and some libraries also loan

audiobooks that patrons can download onto their iPods or other devices for the duration of the loan.

### **Digital Books/Digitally Developed Books**

Digital books are books in some sort of digitized format—readers can view them online on a computer, with a smartphone, or on an MP3 player. Digital books for adults are a strong presence in the market, and digital informational books and reference books are becoming increasingly more sensible in retrieving the most current information, but digital children's books are not yet as plentiful. Digitized textbooks have particular potential for school markets as they would limit the physical weight of traditional textbooks that students take to and from school for homework. The interactive potential of digital books also makes them appealing for schools because traditionally students are not given permission to mark their books up for studying. With respect to digitizing trade books, companies are experimenting widely but most are digitizing traditionally printed books. Perhaps when a new generation of creators of reading materials leads the way, there will be people who conceptualize, create, and teach through materials that are to be read from a different mindset than now, creating unique digitally developed books rather than merely adapting print books to a digital format.

### **Implications and Possibilities for the Future**

Materials are changing greatly, both in system of delivery and in the nature of the materials themselves. Access to and types of reading materials are likely to be different in the future. Already, the emphasis on 21st century skills is leading teachers toward focusing on how students should access, consider, and process information in ways that are different than in the past. Kindles, nooks®, iPads, and other new technologies have already impacted our relationship to some reading materials.

How we consider materials that might be deemed traditional (such as print books) is also changing. In 1999 in her book *Radical Change*, Eliza Dresang asserted that readers need to be prepared for different literary experiences due to changes in materials. Dresang

characterized changes in form and format as unusual graphics, nonlinear organization and format, multiple layers of meaning, and interactive format. She also noted the increase in unheard voices, multiple perspectives, unexplored settings, and unresolved endings. Such changes are profoundly evident today. For example, picture books characterized as “postmodern” in format have appeared increasingly in recent years. Such books present challenges to readers that differ from the visual understanding of traditionally created picture books (Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008).

---

Readers today need to be prepared for different literary experiences due to changes in materials.

---

In the past, literary reading materials have often been taught through a genre orientation. But increasingly, there are books that cross genre boundaries, leading to “genre blurring.” This leads to the question of what organization is more valued or meaningful to student learning.

Is understanding genre the most important element? Or is it more important to learn through the analysis of character development? Or perhaps theme wins as an organizer. For example, Brian Selznick’s masterfully created book, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), is a thick book, incorporating pages of black-and-white line drawings that weave through fast-paced pages, some with minimal text and others with a fair amount of text to read. If you go to the website for the book, you find the film that inspired Selznick as well as the music that could be used as a backdrop, and you quickly realize that this cinematic experience is somewhat akin to a silent film set to music. What, then, is this book? Is it historical fiction? Is it a picture book (after all, it won the Caldecott Medal)? Perhaps the implication for the future is that genre is not the primary organizer for teaching about literature; rather, educators should be seeking lasting ways to consider what’s important in what these new works offer readers.

Books like these inspire greater possibilities for literary response in new ways that take advantage of web 2.0 technologies. These days, the impact of technology on student learning is such that educators must allow learners the opportunities to engage in and show their learning through interactive technology options. For example, literary response might have been through paper and pencil or dramatic

or artistic expression in the past. While those formats continue, the possibilities have grown far beyond keyboarding and scanning, early steps in technology integration. These days, social media and web 2.0 technologies mean integrating visuals, video, and other formats and creating interactive spaces in virtual communities.

### **Teachers as Readers: Past, Present, and Future**

Teachers need to be readers themselves (of a wide range of materials) if they are to make decisions about what to teach from and what to recommend to students; but more importantly, teachers need to experience for themselves the power of aesthetic and efferent reading. Only by being personally engaged in reading experiences that inspire and inform can teachers fully realize the intrinsic motivation to read for intellectual stimulation and emotional engagement. Although most teachers have studied literature for children and adolescents in teacher-preparation programs, they must have a continued commitment to reading and knowing books as literature as the types of available reading materials change. Through their engagement as readers, teachers will be serving as models for their students, but also experiencing firsthand what it means to be a reader in a fast-changing world of new materials for readers.

### **Books for Children and Adolescents**

Aronson, M., & Newquist, H. P. (2007). *For boys only: The biggest, baddest book ever*. New York: Feiwel & Friends.

Maruki, T. (1982). *Hiroshima no pika*. New York: HarperCollins.

Satrapi, M. (2003). *Persepolis: The story of a childhood*. New York: Pantheon.

Selznick, B. (2007). *The invention of Hugo Cabret*. New York: Scholastic.

Sis, P. (2003). *The tree of life: A book depicting the life of Charles Darwin, naturalist, geologist and thinker*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Tan, S. (2007). *The arrival*. New York: Levine/Scholastic.

Yang, G. L. (2006). *American born Chinese*. New York: First Second.

### **References and Resources**

Anderson, R. C., Shirey, L. L., Wilson, P. T., & Fielding, L. G. (1987). Interestingness of children's reading material. In R. E. Snow & M. J. Farr (Eds.), *Aptitude, learning, and instruction: Vol. 3. Cognitive and affective process analysis* (pp. 287-299). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Applebee, A. N. (1974). *Tradition and reform in the teaching of English: A history*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Applebee, A. N. (1992). Stability and change in the high-school canon. *The English Journal*, 81(5), 27–32.
- Biancarosa, C., & Snow, C. E. (2006). *Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Boerman-Cornell, W., Kim, J., & Teale, W. H. (2010). *Secret identities: Graphic novels help students explore themes of self-discovery*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- California Young Reader Medal. (2010). *Booklist: Picture books for older readers*. Accessed at [www.californiayoungreadermedal.org/booklist\\_picture-books\\_older\\_readers.htm](http://www.californiayoungreadermedal.org/booklist_picture-books_older_readers.htm) on June 19, 2010.
- Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. (2010). *Common Core State Standards*. Accessed at [www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI\\_ELA%20Standards.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf) on August 17, 2010.
- Dresang, E. (1999). *Radical change: Books for youth in a digital age*. New York: H. W. Wilson.
- Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fractor, J., Woodruff, M., Martinez, M. G., & Teale, W. H. (1993). Let's not miss opportunities for promoting voluntary reading: Classroom libraries in the elementary school. *The Reading Teacher*, 46, 476–484.
- Hoffman, J., & Schallert, D. (Eds.). (2003). *The texts in elementary classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- International Reading Association. (1994). *Guidelines for the evaluation of commercial reading programs*. Newark, DE: Author.
- IES What Works Clearinghouse. (2008). *Reading Recovery®*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. Accessed at [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning\\_reading/reading\\_recovery](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning_reading/reading_recovery) on July 4, 2010.
- Israel, S. E., & Duffy, G. (2008). *Handbook of research on reading comprehension*. New York: Routledge.
- Moore, D., Bean, T. W., Birdyshaw, D., & Rycik J. A. (1999). Adolescent literacy: A position statement. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 43(1), 97–112.
- Morrow, L. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (1982). Increasing children's use of literature through program and physical design changes. *The Elementary School Journal*, 83, 131–137.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *National assessment of educational progress: The nation's report card*. Washington, DC: Author. Accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/distributequest.asp> on August 7, 2010.

- Pearson, M. (2005). *Big ideas in small packages: Using picture books with older readers*. Santa Barbara, CA: Linworth.
- Serchay, D. S. (2008). *The librarian's guide to graphic novels for children and 'tweens*. New York: Neal-Schuman.
- Sipe, L., & Pantaleo, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Postmodern picturebooks: Play, parody, and self-referentiality*. New York/London: Routledge.
- Tatum, A. (2005). *Teaching reading to black adolescent males*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Teale, W. H., Kim, J., & Boerman-Cornell, W. (2008). It's elementary—Graphic novels for the K–6 classroom. *Book Links*, 17(5), 6–13.
- Teale, W. H., Yokota, J., & Martinez, M. (2008). The book matters: Evaluating and selecting what to read aloud to young children. In A. DeBruin-Parecki (Ed.), *Effective early literacy practice: Here's how, here's why* (pp. 101–121). Baltimore: Paul Brookes.
- Temple, C., Martinez, M., & Yokota, J. (2010). *Children's books in children's hands: An introduction to their literature* (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Tomlinson, C., & Lynch-Brown, C. (2010). *Essentials of young adult literature* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Yokota, J., Teale, W. H., & Quiroa, R. (2008). Literacy development for culturally diverse students. In S. B. Wepner, D. S. Strickland, & J. T. Feeley (Eds.), *The administration and supervision of reading programs* (4th ed., pp. 170–185). New York: Teachers College Press.