

Why Read?

In *How to Read and Why* (Touchstone, 2001), Harold Bloom writes, "It matters, if individuals are to retain any capacity to form their own judgments and opinions, that they continue to read for themselves. How they read, well or badly, and what they read cannot depend wholly upon themselves, but why they read must be for and in their own interest [. . .]. One of the uses of reading is to prepare ourselves for change, and the final change, alas is universal [. . .]" (21).

Students come into classes with different interests, needs, and abilities and bring a variety of experiences and attitudes toward reading. It seems important to me that more teachers have recognized the importance of using a thematic approach, thus allowing students to choose from a variety of books in studying a particular theme. As another year rolls around, I offer some suggestions of some themes and titles worthy of exploring. Please remember that some students and teachers may not enjoy a particular author's style or even the book itself. There is a subjectivity in listing so few books per theme. This is just to provoke thought about the possibilities available. But the more, the merrier.

Sports

- Butler, Dori Hillestad. *Sliding into Home*. Peachtree, 2003.
- Deuker, Carl. *High Heat*. Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
- Draper, Sharon. M. *Double Dutch*. Atheneum, 2003.
- Lipsyte, Robert. *Warrior Angel*. Harper Collins, 2003.
- Murphy, Claire Rudolf. *Free Radical*. Clarion, 2002.
- Ritter, John H. *The Boy Who Saved Baseball*. Philomel, 2003.

War

- Breslin, Theresa. *Remembrance*. Delacorte, 2002.
- Hahn, Mary Downing. *Hear the Wind Blow: A Novel of the Civil War*. Clarion, 2003.
- Hughes, Pat. *Guerilla Season*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2003.
- Spinelli, Jerry. *Milkweed*. Knopf, 2003.
- Wilson, John. *And in the Morning*. Kids Can Press, 2003.
- Zephaniah, Benjamin. *Refugee Boy*. Bloomsbury, 2001.

Cultural Diversity

- Carvell, Marlene. *Who Will Tell My Brother?* Hyperion, 2002.
- Danticat, Edwidge. *Behind the Mountains*. Orchard, 2002.

- Ellis, Deborah. *Parvana's Journey*. Groundwood, 2002.
- Holt, Kimberly Willis. *Keeper of the Night*. Henry Holt, 2003.
- Rockwood, Joyce. *To Spoil the Sun*. Henry Holt, 2003.
- Stenhouse, Ted. *A Dirty Deed*. Kids Can Press, 2003.

On the Lighter Side

- Baker, E. D. *The Frog Princess*. Bloomsbury, 2002.
- Brashares, Ann. *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood*. Delacorte, 2003.
- Horvath, Polly. *The Canning Season*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2003.
- Korman, Gordon. *Son of the Mob*. Hyperion, 2002.
- Rennison, Louise. *Knocked Out by My Nunga-Nungas*. Harper Tempest, 2003.
- Sheldon, Dyan. *Planet Janet*. Candlewick Press, 2003.

Beyond Here and There: A Touch of Fantasy

- Colfer, Eoin. *Artemis Fowl: The Eternity Code*. 2003.
- DuPrau, Jeanne. *The City of Ember*. Random House, 2003.
- Goodman, Alison. *Singing the Dogstar Blues*. Viking, 2002.

- Hoffman, Mary. *Stravaganza: City of Masks*. Bloomsbury, 2002.
- Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Scholastic, 2003.
- Yolen, Jane. *Sword of the Rightful King*. Harcourt, 2003.

Once Upon a Time: Historical Fiction

- Avi. *Crispin*. Hyperion, 2002.
- Donnelly, Jennifer. *A Northern Light*. Harcourt, 2003.
- Holeman, Linda. *Search of the Moon King's Daughter*. Tundra, 2002.
- Ingold, Jeanette. *The Big Burn*. Harcourt, 2003.
- McCaughrean, Geraldine. *Stop the Train!* Harper Collins, 2003.
- Rinaldi, Ann. *Or Give Me Death*. Harcourt, 2003.

School Days

- Frank, E. R. *Friction*. Atheneum, 2003.
- Grimes, Nikki. *Bronx Masquerade*. Dial, 2002.
- Korman, Gordon. *No More Dead Dogs*. Hyperion, 2002.
- Mack, Tracy. *Birdland*. Scholastic, 2003.
- Nelson, Blake. *The New Rules of High School*. Viking, 2003. P
- Prose, Francine. *After*. Harper Collins, 2003.
- Sweeney, Joyce. *Waiting for June*. Cavendish, 2003.

Thrillers and Chillers

- Horowitz, Anthony. *Skeleton Key*. Philomel, 2003.
- Karr, Kathleen. *The Seventh Knot*. Cavendish, 2003.
- Nixon, Joan Lowery. *The Trap*. Delacorte, 2002.
- Shan, Darren. *Cirque du Freak: Trials of Death*. Little, Brown, 2003.
- Stine, R. L. *Dangerous Girls*. Harper Collins, 2003.
- Springer, Nancy. *Blood Trails*. Holiday House, 2003.

Short Stories

- Bagdasarian, Adam. *First French Kiss and Other Traumas*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2002.
- Cart, Michael, ed. *Necessary Noise: Stories about Our Families as They Really Are*. Harper Collins, 2003.
- Gallo, Donald R., ed. *Destination Unexpected*. Candlewick Press, 2003.
- Naidoo, Beverley. *Out of Bounds*. Harper Collins, 2001.
- Paulsen, Gary. *Shelf Life: Stories by the Book*. Simon & Schuster, 2003.
- Saldana, Jr., Rene. *Finding Our Way*. Random House, 2003.

Teens: Trials and Tribulations

- Frost, Helen. *Keesha's House*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2003.
- Myers, Walter Dean. *The Dream Bearer*. Harper Collins, 2003.
- Peters, Julie Anne. *Define "Normal."* Little, Brown, 2003.
- Rottman, S.L. *Shadow*. Peachtree, 2003.
- Wittlinger, Ellen. *Razzle*. Simon Pulse, 2003.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. *Locomotion*. Putnam, 2003.

Nonfiction

- Aronson, Marc. *Witch Hunt: Mysteries of the Salem Witch Trials*. Atheneum, 2003.
- Cooper, Ilene. *Jack: The Early Years of John F. Kennedy*. Dutton, 2003.
- Fradin, Dennis Brindell, and Judith Bloom Fradin. *Fight On! Mary Church Terrell's Battle for Integration*. Clarion, 2003.
- Kamen, Gloria, ed. *Heading Out: The Start of Some Splendid Careers*. Bloomsbury, 2003.
- Murphy, Jim. *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793*. Clarion, 2003.
- Orgill, Roxane. *Mahalia: A Life in Gospel Music*. Candlewick Press, 2002.

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That's why we call the times before reading and writing prehistoric. In this day in age, we still read for information. Often times it is easier than sitting for hours and listening to someone speak to you, it's much less expensive, and there's no risk of stories being stretched or false information being portrayed, because information is recorded. There are so many reasons why humans read, and all of them parallel the reason why humans write! It's so lovely- thank you for asking this question! It was a blast to write! This is why reading can improve your mental power and make you more creative. Not only that, reading will be able to boost your memory as well. You use your mind to imagine what you read. This is why I love to read personal development books. They inspired me. People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing - that's why we recommend it daily. Zig Ziglar. Of course, it depends on what kind of books you're reading. One of the basic reasons why reading is important is that it helps you grow mentally, emotionally, and psychologically. Every book provides you an opportunity to learn and explore new ideas. Reading books increases your knowledge and makes you smarter.