

Still Learning to Read: 100 Things About Me as a Reader Revisited

Article



In 2010, I wrote a post about a lesson I did that I called 100 Things About Me as a Reader.

A few years later Scholastic included it in their amazing collection, *Open a World of Possible* and repurposed it on their blog. I've always shared lots about myself as a reader and this week I started by sharing my 100 Things About Me as a Reader list. I shared the one from my blog that I had printed off. Then I sent the kids off to begin to create their own lists.

Starting Conversations

When we pulled back together to share, kids had pencils in hand. I let them know that when someone shared a list and it reminded them something that they didn't think to write down yet, that they could add it to their list. So sharing helped us learn about each other and think about things in our reading lives that we may not have thought about before. I know that this is the first day of a yearlong conversation about who we are as readers and the conversation opened up so many possibilities.

Thinking About Ourselves as Readers

The conversation was casual and fun. When one child shared that she liked to read on her Kindle, another asked her what a Kindle was and why she liked it. When a child mentioned her favorite chair for reading, another mentioned a little reading loft area that he had created to have a quiet spot for his books and reading. My goal in this conversation is for kids to begin thinking about themselves as readers, knowing classmates as readers and beginning to build on one another's conversations.

Readers Grow and Change

I took a turn to share and shared a few things I had added to my list. I wanted my students to know that as an adult reader, I am always changing and growing. I want them to know that all readers change and grow throughout their lives. I shared the new things I realized about myself as a reader. Some things I added to my list on this day were:

- I read on my Kindle and there are certain kinds of books that I read on my Kindle.
- I read the news on my phone daily. I have 2 apps (CNN, Local News) and I subscribe to The Skimm.
- I keep track of my reading on Goodreads.
- I read lots of online reviews when deciding on what to read next.
- I am on the Charlotte Huck Award committee and love reading with that lens.
- I tend to buy more than one copy of books I like.
- I reserve books with my Columbus Library app and pick them up weekly.
- I LOVE to tell others about great books I've read recently.

Then I revisited my old list with my students and told them how much I had changed and that I am constantly revising my list.

I quickly talked to my kids about the things that I realized had changed about me as a reader and that I knew this list would continue to grow and change:

- I've realized that I love fantasy and some of my favorite books are dystopia fiction and rewrites of fairy tales.
- I'm getting better at enjoying audiobooks and paying attention better. My friend, Teri has helped me find narrators that I enjoy and I know how to choose audiobooks better now so that I can enjoy them on long car trips.

- I get recommendations from friends but I also pay attention to recommendations that I see on Twitter or Goodreads.
- I love to share my favorite books, even though my friends know that my very favorites need to be read quickly—I don't like to be without them for long!
- I have learned to love graphic novels and they aren't hard for me once I understood how they worked.

Seeing Patterns: What Did I Notice That Would Help Me in my Teaching?

As a teacher, this is one of my favorite beginning-of-the-year mini lessons. Although it takes a long time, it sets the stage for talk about Reader Identity for the whole year. It sets us up to talk to other readers and to continually reflect on our own reading. It gives kids the message that readers always change and grow and that things that are hard or boring for readers one day might be different for them in a few weeks.

This time also gives me the opportunity to listen for patterns and to find out what I can learn about the class as a whole. I saw several patterns in the talk last week. I discovered that:

- Several students had favorite authors whose names they knew. I want to help them build the number of authors they know and love and that now seems like something I can do starting soon.
- Several kids have experience reading on Kindles or tablets. Others are interested in giving that a try. Once our BYOD policy is explained to parents, I'll be able to support kids reading ebooks.
- A few kids stated that they did not enjoy poetry and others agreed verbally. That will inform how I introduce poetry this year.
- Graphic novels are popular although most students who loved graphic novels couldn't name authors or series that they enjoyed. We read *The Adventures of Beekle* on Friday so I took that as an opportunity to intro Dan Santat and his amazing graphic novel, *Sidekicks*.
- No one had trouble thinking of a few things about himself/herself. Some years I have a few kids who are hesitant to write anything. This group seems confident in this kind of thinking.
- Most kids enjoy fiction over nonfiction. Very few students mentioned nonfiction books, authors or topics. That will be something I need to address soon. I'll build in more nonfiction early.
- Many kids had something on their list that implied that they talked to others about books ("I read to my little brother." "I borrow books from my friend." etc.)
- Very few (if any) mentioned any online reading that they do. (Luckily, that was already in the plans for next week; I'll begin introducing reading sites on our classroom website.)

Next Steps

We talk a lot in the book about having other adults come in to talk about their lives as readers. Next week, adults from our school will be starting to come in to talk to our class about their reading lives with us. We have three adults coming in this week and a few more after that. Later this fall, I'll invite parents from our classroom to do the same. I'll be listening in to see the kinds of questions the kids ask, the connections they make, and the new ideas that the readers bring into our conversation. As readers visit, kids will sit on the floor with lists and pencils in hand in case they have something new to add to their list.

I have found that agency and identity are two of the most important things for readers in grades 3-6. When a child does not see him/herself as a reader, it is hard to engage and to grow. So I spend a great deal of time throughout the year helping children know themselves as readers and to see the ways they are changing. These first steps are so important. As Peter Johnston says in his book *Choice Words*, "Building an identity means coming to see in ourselves the characteristics of particular categories (and roles) of people and developing a sense of what it feels like to be that sort of person and belong in certain social situations."

Even though to an outsider, this "100 Things" list might look like a "cute" getting to know you activity, we know that it is far more than that. It is a powerful activity that begins a yearlong conversation around reader identity.

Reprinted from *The Year of Reading* blog: <https://readingyear.blogspot.com/2016/08/still-learning-to-read-100-things-about.html> where it appeared as one of a series of blog posts around Still Learning to Read: Teaching Reading to Students in Grades 3-6.

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