



## Building a Love of Reading Takes a Schoolwide Effort

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As a former English teacher, school librarian, and literacy coach, it is probably obvious that I love reading. I did not wake up one day and suddenly love reading; this love was built over time. When I hear children and adults say they hate reading, part of my soul feels shattered. I wonder what went wrong that prevented them from loving reading. Maybe some people feel like they can never love reading, but I would want them not to hate it; hate is such a strong word.

Children spend a lot of time at school, and it is not only the English teacher's responsibility to build a love of reading. All teachers must be involved. With today being National Book Lovers Day, I assert all teachers and parents can help students fall in love with reading.

As an 80s kid, I loved "Reading Rainbow." When that tv cart came down the hall, the teacher turned on the tv, and I heard those first few beats and then "butterfly in the sky," I was ready to learn which book LeVar Burton would read. There is this false narrative that boys, especially Black boys and even Black men, don't want to read and don't like reading. In my life, Burton's presence reinforced my reality. My dad was an avid reader. Until he died last year, he saved articles and magazines for me to read. I would recommend books for him to read. I knew reading was important because I saw it was important to him.

Having my dad buy me books constantly as a kid helped me discover which genres and texts I liked. Currently, as an adult, I love reading articles. I also love following along in a book while listening to the accompanying audiobook. I also love reading just about any kind of book except for romance novels ... probably why an English teacher was a good job.

Every kid doesn't have parents providing books consistently, and that is where teachers come in. The school librarian can rotate featuring different teachers and what they are reading. The science and social studies teachers can recommend various magazines and primary and secondary sources in addition to giving students access to the material in the classroom. Elective teachers like art, music, and physical education can recommend books that expand students' knowledge on topics covered, whether studying a person, learning about the history of a sport, or learning different techniques.

There should not be any class a student should go in where a teacher is not talking about books. Teachers should not see this as another task but instead as a way to elevate their content and help students discover what they want to do when they graduate high school.

If you are a teacher, please talk about books with your students regardless of the subject you teach. You might be the only person who is championing books in your students' lives.

Of course, I couldn't resist on the National Book Lovers Day from sharing my ten favorite books which are listed below in no particular. (Yes, if you have seen my list before, it has changed a little)

1. "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave" by Frederick Douglass

2. "Treasure Island" by Robert Louis Stevenson
3. "Nothing General About It: How Love (and Lithium) Saved Me On and Off General Hospital" by Maurice Benard
4. "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens
5. "Where the Sidewalk Ends" by Shel Silverstein
6. "The Escape of Robert Smalls: A Daring Voyage Out of Slavery" by Jehan Jones-Radgowski
7. "New Kid" by Jerry Craft
8. "Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky" by Kwame Mbalia
9. "Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents: How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting, or Self-Involved Parents" by Lindsay C. Gibson, PsyD
10. "Fallen Angels" by Walter Dean Myers