

Units of Study for Teaching Reading
A Workshop Curriculum, Middle School Grades

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Question: *What should teachers consider when provisioning classroom libraries?*

Mary Ehrenworth:

Classroom libraries are going to be critical to reading workshop on teaching reading. Teaching reading is really easy when you've got great books and when you've got great books, kids fall in love with reading, and they'll read the rest of their life. If you're trying to teach reading with old books and books that kids aren't going to really love it's going to be a really uphill battle and you won't, first of all it won't be convincing and second, it won't turn kids into readers. So you really want to be working on your classroom libraries.

So let's talk about some options so, one option is, you might actually look at, study and invest in the TCRWP libraries which are really carefully curated by reading specialist by teachers, we had kids involved, we had staff developers involved, from all over the country really studying, and publishers as well sending us the newest books, and reading and thinking which of these would be right for 6th grade for 7th grade, for 8th grade, which might be below benchmark for kids who read below grade level, but they still want books that are about teenagers.

So those kind of decisions, it takes a lot of work to do but it's really beautiful work and you can profit from that, so you could say maybe we want to look at the classroom libraries and basically there's high interest classroom libraries that would be your general collection for kids to be reading from most of the year fiction and non-fiction, and then there's individual shelves and an individual shelf, would be like a book club shelf a shelf of books that goes with social issue book clubs or a shelf for historic fiction book clubs or dystopian books, and those are set up so that we picture that in a typical book club unit each book club will read three to four books so you might have four kids in a club and they're each going to read three to four books and those books need to get a tiny bit harder across the unit, so we set them up so we're imagining, like a classroom with four to five book clubs, and then each one you need four copies of those books. So that would really help you get started.

If you want to be thinking of where else to find books, it's good to involve kids in getting books. It's always useful to look at Good Reads. And look at like, best historic fiction or top fantasy novel, or best new graphic novels. Definitely following the Good Reads recommendations will always take you to some great books. It's interesting to look at both the ALA recommendations and Amazon. 'Cause sometimes, like two years ago when *The Hunger Games* first came out this was now six or seven years ago *The Hunger Games* first came out the top 25 teen books on

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Amazon or the top 25 books on ALA, non of them intersected. It was like what adults wanted kids to read and what kids actually wanted to read were not the same. But frankly, in the last few years they've coincided a lot more, partly because all adults are studying life. When we look at what has changed reading for kids what has turned kids into readers because there are hundreds of thousands of kids now who read a lot. The people who really did that were J.K. Rowling and Susan Collins, they turned a generation of kids into readers. Harry Potter and The Hunger Games turned kids into readers. So part of what we want to do, is capitalize on that. So we do a lot of studying of what kids read by just interviewing kids, giving kids money to go to book stores.

So you could look at Good Reads, you could look at ALA, you could look at Amazon you could look at the TCRWP libraries, all of those will help you get started in building classroom libraries. And in the end, also talk to your kids. If you've got a great bookstore in town. Give kids a little bit of your school money go have them figure out, like what are some of the new books because basically Ellington talks about how every year you have to replace about a third of your libraries and listen, better to lose a book than to lose a reader. Like we should be so lucky that kids keep books. It means that they've now made reading part of their lives but it does mean that every year you need to replace books anyway because you don't want to be in 10 years you don't want the same books in your library they'll be new books, you want to be getting new books into your library every year.