

# Americans Don't Read... and That's Affecting Our Elections

In 2013, the [Nation's Report Card](#) showed that only 38% of high school seniors were proficient in reading. With scores like that, the U.S. isn't likely to earn the "most literate country" award any time soon.

So what is America's international literacy ranking? According to [The Washington Post](#), the U.S. places seventh behind Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Such a [score is obtained](#) by looking at newspaper circulation and readership, library availability, education access, reading scores, and computer usage in each nation.



*The Washington Post* bemoans the fact that the leading nation of the free world ranks so low in such an important area. And well they should, particularly as the following U.S. literacy statistics are even more alarming:

- [14%](#) of adults can't read.
- Only [13%](#) of adults can read at a proficient level.
- [28%](#) of adults didn't read a book in the last year.
- [50%](#) of adults can't read a book written at an 8th grade level.

But so what, right? In our enlightened digital age, what harm does it really bring if American literacy is tanking?

A lot of harm, according to John Adams, particularly when it comes to elections. In 1761, he [noted](#):

*"The very Ground of our Liberties, is the freedom of Elections. Every Man has in Politicks as well as Religion, a*

*Right to think and speak and Act for himself. No man either King or Subject, Clergyman or Layman has any Right to dictate to me the Person I shall choose for my Legislator and Ruler. I must judge for myself, but how can I judge, how can any Man judge, unless his Mind has been opened and enlarged by Reading. A Man who can read, will find in his Bible, in the common sermon Books that common People have by them and even in the Almanack and News Papers, Rules and observations, that will enlarge his Range of Thought, and enable him the better to judge who has and who has not that Integrity of Heart, and that Compass of Knowledge and Understanding, which form the Statesman."*

Considering the state of the modern election circus, would you say it's high time for Americans to step up their literacy game?

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