

Teacher: Busy Work is Killing Love for Reading

The other day, a judge used a [unique punishment](#) for a handful of teens who desecrated a historic school building with derogatory statements: read books.

The novelty of the sentence testifies to the fact that kids simply don't read very much anymore.

But why this dearth of reading? After all, parents try to get kids to read. Teachers bend over backwards to get their students into books. Politicians and other public figures continually tell us that "readers are leaders." Why then, with all this encouragement, are only [37 percent](#) of high school seniors proficient in reading?

The answer may be in the way our education system approaches reading instruction. According to public school teacher and author [Donalyn Miller](#), today's schools are so concerned with the method of reading instruction, that they totally kill student love for books:

"I believe that this corporate machinery of scripted programs, comprehension worksheets (reproducibles, handouts, printables, whatever you want to call them), computer-based incentive packages, and test-practice curricula facilitate a solid bottom line for the companies that sell them. These programs may deceive schools into believing that they are using every available resource to teach reading, but ultimately, they are doomed to fail because they overlook what is most important. When you take a forklift and shovel off the programs, underneath it all is a child reading a book."

Miller goes on to say:

“The fact that educators coined the terms real reading, authentic reading, and independent reading to differentiate what readers do in school from what readers do in life is part of the problem. Why does it have to be different? Why is the goal of reading instruction disconnected from reading in the rest of a student’s life? When did reading become such a technocratic process that we lost the books and the children in the debate? I am convinced that if we show students how to embrace reading as a lifelong pursuit and not just a collection of skills for school performance, we will be doing what I believe we have been charged to do: create readers.”

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Miller’s observation is plain and simple common sense. Which of us has not found our love and interest for something killed by the extra hoops we have to jump through or the new requirements it’s demanded we meet? Can anyone really blame children for not wanting to read when they have to dissect every book through busy work which prevents them from getting to the actual story and letting their imagination take flight?

Perhaps we would see a generation of better readers – and by implication, better thinkers – if we stopped bogging children down with the method and form of reading and simply gave them good books to enjoy, ponder, and digest.