Literacy Tips

Tips for middle school educators on various topics such as grammar, writing, reading, spelling, vocabulary, cooperative learning and more.

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Tip #71: Reading Reasons

Ask students why they should read and see how they respond. Can they come up with ten reasons for reading? Kelly Gallagher asked this question of his struggling high school students in California and then turned their answers into a professional book called *Reading Reasons*. Compare your student answers to the ones in his book. Look for his introduction and chapter 1 to give you a sneak preview.

He and his students narrowed down their answers into the following nine reasons, and then he created mini-lessons to support each. I will highlight one mini-lesson for his first five reasons for reading. To get his complete list of ideas, check out the book from the Literacy Lending Library along with many other excellent titles. Here is a current spreadsheet of the titles in our *Literacy Lending Library*.

Reading Is Rewarding

The Reading Minute is a ritual to use at the beginning of class. Share a piece of interesting text with the class with no follow-up activities. Consider poetry, newspaper/magazine clippings, speeches, essays, Internet material, maps, graphs, charts, and even manuals. "All the Reading Minutes should share one goal: to demonstrate to our students that there is a world of reading richness out there."

Students are expected to listen to the Reading Minute and keep a daily log of what is read. They write the date and a one-sentence summary to remember the Reading Minute.

By October, you can have students prepare the Reading Minutes. Organize a sign-up sheet and set the expectation that each student will share 5 times before the end of the year. At the end of the year, students will have 150-180 summary sentences of interesting reading that were shared. Ask students to reflect on which Reading Minute taught them something and which Reading Minute was their favorite.

Reading Builds a Mature Vocabulary

To teach students the importance of using context to decipher unfamiliar words, have students use nonsense words from which to build contextually rich sentences. Begin with the demonstration of on the word *gliff*.

> It was so gliff outside, I had to wear two sweaters and a jacket.
>
> Gliff most like means:
>
> a) warm
> b) cold
> c) bright
> d) dark

Good readers use the context instinctively, but for many struggling readers this skill needs to be pointed out to them frequently. Although we often remind students to use the rest of the passage to help them figure out the new word, most students don't attempt to do so and miss a valuable opportunity to increase their vocabulary. Giving students the responsibility for inventing some nonsense words and creating contextually rich sentences will heighten their awareness about the importance of this skill.

Reading Makes You a Better Writer

Ask students to brainstorm a list of ways for how to become a good chef. Then proceed to a list for how to become a good musician. Finally, do the same for how to become a good artist. Writing is a form of art and the processes are very similar. Students will quickly recognize the need to immerse themselves in models of good writing, which ultimately will help them find their own writing style. And of course, all of this can only happen with students immersing themselves into books.

Reading Is Hard, and "Hard" Is Necessary

Most students will be able to relate to the concept of reading fine print in advertisements and contracts. A good example is to ask students to compare advertisements for cell phone rates. Students will be instantly motivated because of the subject matter, which is important to point out. When readers have a real purpose for reading, they will navigate through the text because the stakes are high for learning the material. Why do they think companies use fine print? Find an example of a cell phone advertisement and ask students to write down the things they understand after reading the fine print. Then ask them to write questions they might still have about the terms of the cell phone agreement. Finally, have them list the reading strategies they used when reading the fine print.

Reading Makes You Smarter

Discuss with students what happens when they don't use their muscles for a period of time. Then have students take the four-question Brain Maintenance Quiz.

True or False?

A. Your brain stops growing after age five.
(False. Researchers now believe the brain has the potential to grow throughout your life.)

B. Television provides good brain exercise.
(False. TV puts your brain in neutral.)

C. The lower your education level, the higher your chances may be that you will suffer from dementia later in life.
(True. One study showed that those who read fewer books were more likely to develop problems as they aged.)

D. If you exercise your brain a lot when you are young, you build up reserves to fight brain problems later.
(True. Researchers now believe how much you read between the ages of six and eighteen are predictors of how well you'll think decades later.)

Discuss the reasons for their answers in small groups and then as a whole class. Students should be able to infer the importance reading plays in keeping one's brain sharp.

The last four chapters in Gallagher's book are below. I didn't want to drone on and on in this tip, so I hope that I have at least whetted

your appetite for more. Remember that you can check out a copy of his book through me. I am currently conducting a study group with some teachers who have chosen to read this book together. Mears, Hanshew, Wendler, and Central have reading teachers in this study group, so perhaps you can borrow the book from one of them, too.

6. Reading Prepares You for the World of Work

7. Reading Well Is Financially Rewarding

8. Reading Opens the Doors to College and Beyond

9. Reading Arms You Against Oppression

Middle School Literacy Lending Library

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Book Title	Author(s)	Literacy Focus	Source
Learning On Their Feet	Glynn, Carol	Content area teaching	Middle school
Subjects Matter	Harvey, Daniels and Steven Zemelman	Content area teaching	Middle school
Teaching Reading in Science	Barton, Mary Lee and Deborah L. Jordan	Content area teaching	Middle school
Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math	Robb. Laura	Content area teaching	Middle school
Teaching Reading in the Content Areas	Billmeyer, Rachel and Mary Lee Barton	Content area teaching	Goodman
Writing in Math Class	Burns, Marilyn	Content area teaching	Goodman
Writing to Prompts in the Trait Based Classroom – Content A	Culham, Ruth and Amanda Wheeler	Content area teaching	Middle school
Chicken Soup for the Teacher's Soul	Canfield, Jack	General literacy	Goodman
Engaged in Learning - Teaching English, 6 - 12	Strickland, James and Kathleen Stricklan	General literacy	Middle school
Methods That Matter	Daniels, Harvey and Marilyn Bizar	General literacy	Goodman
Nonfiction Matters	Harvey, Stephanie	General literacy	Middle school
Pathways to Thinking	Ross, Elinor Parry	General literacy	Goodman
Tools for Thought	Burke, Jim	General literacy	Middle school
What Adlescents Deserve	Rycik, James A.	General literacy	Goodman
Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites	Tate, Marcia L.	General literacy	Goodman
The Grammar Bible	Strumpf, Michael	Grammar	Goodman
Image Grammar	Noden, Harry R.	Grammar	Goodman
Lessons to Share on Teaching Grammar in Context	Weaver, Constance	Grammar	Middle school
Nitty-Gritty Grammar	Fine, Edith H. and Judith P. Josephson	Grammar	Goodman
Getting Started with Literature Circles	Schlick, Katherine L. and Nancy J. Johns	Literature circles	Middle school
Literature Circles in Middle School	Hill, Bonnie and Katherine Noe/Janine Ki	Literature circles	Middle school
Day 1 & Beyond	Wormeli, Rick	New teachers	Middle school
Meet Me in the Middle	Wormeli, Rick	New teachers	Middle school
Survival Kit for New Secondary Teachers	Hershman, Dyan and Emma McDonald	New teachers	Teacher mentoring
The First Days of School	Wong, Harry and Rosemary Wong	New teachers	Teacher mentoring
7 Keys to Comprehension	Zimmermann, Susan	Reading instruction	Middle school
Comprehension Instruction: Research-Based Best Practices	Pressley, Michael and Cathy Collins Bloc	Reading instruction	Middle school
Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6	Fountas, Irene C. and Gay Su Pinnell	Reading instruction	Goodman
I Hear America Reading: Why We Read- What We Read	Burke, Jim	Reading instruction	Middle school
Make It Real	Hoyt, Linda	Reading instruction	Goodman
Making the Match: The Right Book for the Right Reader at th	Lesesne, Teri S.	Reading instruction	Middle school
Mosaic of Thought	Keene, Ellin and Susan Zimmermann	Reading instruction	Middle school
Read and Retell	Brown, Hazel and Brian Cambourne	Reading instruction	Middle school
The Read Aloud Anthology	Allen, Janet and Patrick Daley	Reading instruction	Middle school
Reading and the Middle School Student	Irvin, Judith L.	Reading instruction	Middle school
Reading and Writing in the Middle Years	Booth, David	Reading instruction	Middle school
Reading Reasons	Gallagher, Kelly	Reading instruction	Middle school
Reading Rules!	Knowles, Elizabeth and Martha Smith	Reading instruction	Middle school
Reading with Meaning	Miller, Debbie	Reading instruction	Goodman
Spotlight on Comprehension	Hoyt, Linda	Reading instruction	Goodman
Strategies That Work	Harvey, Stephanie and Anne Goudvis	Reading instruction	Goodman
Teaching Reading in Middle School	Robb, Laura	Reading instruction	Middle school
The Gift of Reading	Bouchard, David	Reading instruction	Goodman

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Book Title	Author(s)	Literacy Focus	Source
The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists	Fry, Edward Bernard et al	Reading instruction	Goodman
Tools for Teaching Content Literacy Flipchart	Allen, Janet	Reading instruction	Middle school
40 Reproducible Forms for the Writing Traits Classroom	Culham, Ruth	Six trait writing	Middle school
6 + 1 Traits of Writing	Culham, Ruth	Six trait writing	Middle school
Books, Lessons, Ideas for Teaching the Six Traits (elem.)	Spandel, Vicki	Six trait writing	Goodman
Books, Lessons, Ideas for Teaching the Six Traits (middle/hig	Spandel, Vicki	Six trait writing	Goodman
Creating Writers	Spandel, Vicki	Six trait writing	Goodman
Picture Books	Culham, Ruth	Six trait writing	Middle school
303 Dumb Spelling Mistakes	Downing, David	Spelling/vocabulary	Goodman
Bringing Words to Life - Robust Vocabulary Instruction	Beck, Isabel et al	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
Demonic Mnemonics	Suid, Murray	Spelling/vocabulary	Goodman
Easy Mini-Lessons for Building Vocabulary	Robb, Laura	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
Spelling K-8	Snowball, Diane and Faye Bolton	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
The Spelling List and Word Study Resource Book	Fresch, Mary Jo and Aileen Wheaton	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
Teaching and Assessing Spelling	Fresch, Mary Jo and Aileen Wheaton	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
Teaching Vocbulary in All Classrooms	Blachowicz and Peter J. Fisher	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
They Still Can't Spell	Sipe, Rebecca Bowers	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
Voluminous Vocabulary	Nickelsen, LeAnn	Spelling/vocabulary	Goodman
The Word Wall - Teaching Vocabulary Through Immersion	Greene, Joseph	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
Words Their Way	Templeton, Shane	Spelling/vocabulary	Middle school
Words, Words, Words	Allen, Janet	Spelling/vocabulary	Goodman
I Read It, But I Don't Get It	Tovani, Cris	Struggling reader	Middle school
I Won’t Read and You Can’t Make Me	Reynolds, Marilyn	Struggling reader	Middle school
It’s Never Too Late	Allen, Janet	Struggling reader	Goodman
On the Same Page	Allen, Janet	Struggling reader	Middle school
Reading Don't Fix No Chevys	Smith, Michael W. and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm	Struggling reader	Middle school
REWARDS	Sopris West	Struggling reader	Goodman
REWARDS Plus	Sopris West	Struggling reader	Goodman
The Six-Minute Solution	Adams, Gail and Sheron Brown	Struggling reader	Goodman
There's Room For Me Here	Allen, Janet	Struggling reader	Goodman
What Really Matters for Struggling Readers	Allington, Richard L.	Struggling reader	Middle school
When Adolescents Can't Read	Curtis, Mary E.	Struggling reader	Goodman
When Kids Can't Read	Beers, Kylene	Struggling reader	Middle school
Yellow Brick Roads	Allen, Janet	Struggling reader	Goodman
100 Quickwrites	Rief, Linda	Writing instruction	Middle school
After the End	Lane, Barry	Writing instruction	Goodman
Craft Lessons	Fletcher, Ralph and Joann Portalupi	Writing instruction	Goodman
Creating Classrooms for Authors	Harste, Jerome C. and Kathy G. Short	Writing instruction	Goodman
Discovering the Writer Within	Ballenger, Bruce and Barry Lane	Writing instruction	Middle school
Lessons That Change Writers	Atwell, Nancie	Writing instruction	Middle school
Nonfiction Craft Lessons	Fletcher, Ralph and Joann Portalupi	Writing instruction	Middle school
Pass the Poetry Please	Hopkin, Lee Bennett	Writing instruction	Goodman
Poetry Everywhere	Collom, Jack and Sheryl Noethe	Writing instruction	Middle school

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Reviser's Toolbox	Lane, Barry	Writing instruction	Middle school
Sentence Composing for Middle School	Killgallon, Don	Writing instruction	Middle school
Side By Side: Essays on Teaching to Learn	Atwell, Nancie	Writing instruction	Goodman
Sports Writing	Craig, Steve	Writing instruction	Middle school
Teaching Writing in Middle School	Means, Beth and Lindy Lindner	Writing instruction	Middle school
Vision and Voice	Rief, Linda	Writing instruction	Middle school
Weekly Writing Prompts - American Literature	Perfection Learning	Writing instruction	Goodman
Weekly Writing Prompts - Young Adult Literature	Perfection Learning	Writing instruction	Goodman
Why We Run with Scissors	Lane, Barry and Gretchen Bernabei	Writing instruction	Middle school
Writer's Desk Reference	Scholastic	Writing instruction	Goodman
Writing as a Road to Self-Discovery	Lane, Barry	Writing instruction	Middle school
Writing for Real	Burkhardt, Ross M.	Writing instruction	Middle school
Writing the Natual Way	Rico, Gabriele Lusser	Writing instruction	Goodman
Writing to Prompts in the Trait Based Classroom – Literature	Culham, Ruth and Amanda Wheeler	Writing instruction	Middle school