



My name is Meghan Look. I have taught in self-contained elementary classrooms and in subject-specific middle school classrooms. One of my greatest joys, whether as a third grade teacher or a 6th grade math teacher, has been helping students connect with a book or series that takes them on a journey to another place, another time or even another world. It has made me a firm believer that every classroom should have a current library (yes, even the math and science classrooms!), every teacher should have the opportunity to share their passion for reading regardless of the subject area they teach, and every school's goal should be to connect its students with books that they'll love.

*While I am an absolutely insatiable reader now, it wasn't always that way. Here's what happened, what changed, and what I learned along the way.*

My desire to read came to an abrupt halt in middle school. I hated being told what to read, when to read it and how many pages I had to read before the next class. That truth is, I do not think I read a single assigned book from start to finish all through middle school and high school. Only one series kept the ember of passion I had for reading from extinguishing entirely: Harry Potter. If I had never found that series, I truly wonder what kind of reader I would be today.

In college, I took a children's literature class and reread many of the books I was supposed to have read in middle school and high school. Truthfully, most of them weren't too bad. I also discovered gems I had never even heard of. Books were suddenly great and I couldn't get enough of them. So where had all of these books been when I was a middle schooler dragging my feet to pick a book of the prescribed list to get enough AR points? It was then that I realized not only the power of choice in reading, but the importance of allowing students and teachers to recommend a good book to one another.

This was reaffirmed during my student teaching. We had a half hour of sustained silent reading every morning, and I had run out of books on my list. I asked my students for some book recommendations, and I had many of them emphatically recommend The Hunger Games. I gave it a whirl, and I finished the entire series in a weekend. Not only were my students thrilled that I had taken their recommendations, but we had really great, authentic conversations about what happened in the books, what surprised us, and which characters we loved (and which we did not love).

Then there's my husband: an engineer, a career military serviceman, and... comic book enthusiast? Surely one of the smartest people I ever met doesn't read silly picture squares for pleasure. That's when another piece of the puzzle fell into place for me as a reader and as a teacher: being a reader isn't only about consuming lengthy novels and complicated texts. It truly is about reading what brings you joy, relaxation, enjoyment and escape from this crazy world.

And let us not forget people like my mother, who hadn't read a single book from start to finish since grammar school. That is, until she discovered audiobooks. She's not a quick reader and she would often get distracted and discouraged while reading a traditional book, but once she discovered audiobooks, it opened up a whole new world of reading to her. Because being read to is still a way to consume the written word. In my opinion, it is one of the most underappreciated forms of reading. It is the earliest way we all experience books, and it is incredibly important that we all recognize that it may be the best way for some people to enjoy them.

*And all of these experiences have led me to this.*

Bringing books in any form into the classroom- novels, comic books, cookbooks, magazines, and even audiobooks- is an investment in our students; connecting students with those books is an investment in our future. Working with students in an extremely rural area, many do not have the means to experience the world beyond the nearest city. And sadly, these students do not have free access to a public library. I am so very thankful to the Book Love Foundation for the important work it is doing and I am endlessly grateful that it will help me to connect my readers with books that will fuel their passion for books.