

Amanda Potts

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Twenty-some-odd years ago, a student handed Amanda Potts a book one Friday afternoon and begged her to finish it by Monday. He explained that he was in the middle of reading it and, “I can already tell that I’m going to need to talk to you about it when I’m done. So you need to finish first.” Of course she read it. Today, she teaches students at Gloucester High School in Ottawa, Ontario, where all of her English classes start with independent choice reading and writing practice. To help make this successful, she reads regularly and gathers books any which way she can; her classroom library is full of texts that invite people to both recognize themselves and learn about others. She figures her plan to grow readers must be working because at the end of each semester students ask if they can return for more books. Sometimes, students bring their friends, assuring them that these books are really good. Occasionally, a former student shows up just to read for a few minutes or a student Amanda has never seen asks to borrow a book a friend has mentioned. Amanda looks forward to many more years of helping students discover their reading identity because, as Thomas King says, “The truth about stories is, that’s all we are.” And yes, students are still handing her books to read, often on a Friday afternoon.