

# NO MORE FAKE READING

MERGING THE CLASSICS WITH INDEPENDENT READING  
TO CREATE JOYFUL, LIFELONG READERS



## Thank you

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INTEREST IN  
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *No More Fake Reading* by Berit Gordon.

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## Tips for Managing Independent Reading Time

### Give students breaks.

Give them little breaks as soon as they start to lose focus. When you notice heads coming out of books, pencils being sharpened, or bathroom requests being made, call a break. This doesn't have to be like a cigarette break where everyone chills and nothing happens. Take just a minute or two to share out something great from students' notes, give them another example from the class novel, model your reading or thinking on the document camera, ask a question to help guide their thinking, or, most helpful of all, give them a strategy for staying focused. Jennifer Serravallo's *Reading Strategies Book* (2015) suggests explicit strategies for staying focused in reading. If your students are not yet readers, they'll benefit immensely. After a minute or two of coming out of their books, send them back. Keep up the reading time interspersed with breaks as long as needed.

### Set timed goals.

Students may respond well to a little competition. "My Period 7 class is up to eighteen minutes of quietly reading. Think we can beat that?" Or, just time them for how long they quietly read, and put that number on the board. It might be painful, but put it up and celebrate it even if it's just three minutes! Remember, that's three minutes more than they were doing with SparkNotes. Let them know you'll be adding a couple of minutes every day to the timer, using their baseline time as a starting point. I know bribery is an amateur teaching method, so I would never suggest donuts for the class that gets to twenty minutes first . . .

### Use silent management.

Every time you call out across the room to say, "Devon, your book is upside down. I can tell you're not reading" or "Michaela, please get out your book/put away your phone/stop talking to your friend," you pull everyone out of their reading. If you use your supersonic teaching voice to manage the class, students will see this as time to talk. Treat reading time like time in church or in a snooty spa, and never talk above a whisper. They'll follow your lead.

### Keep a stack of sticky notes in hand.

When someone is off task, write a short message (*Read!*) on a sticky note and put it on the student's desk as a reminder to get back on track. I know one teacher who laminated a

bunch of index cards with a drawing of an eyeball and a book on each. She quietly places them on students' desks like a waiter dropping the check at a fancy restaurant. It reminds them: eyes on the page.

### Remove the easy temptations.

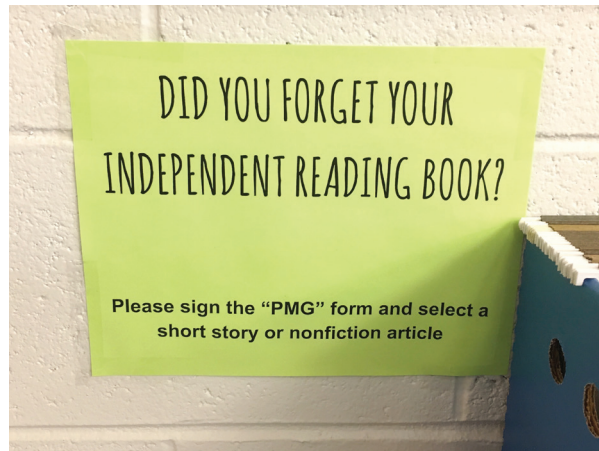
Students are so smart. They are pros at avoiding what they're not good at or don't enjoy (usually the same thing) and will sharpen pencils, look through books on the shelves, ask for paper or to go to the bathroom, sneak peeks at their phone, and more. Until reading routines are solidly established, let them know that the only pencil sharpening happens before class starts, and after that it's get a pencil from a designated spot or do without. Or, put the sharpener in a drawer. Same with limiting bathroom breaks. Phones go in the shoe holder at the door. The only time to abandon a book is before class starts.



- This teacher knew her students felt like a limb was being lopped off if she kept phones at her desk. Plus, she knows there are purposeful ways to occasionally use phones in class. For these reasons, she put these holders on each desk. Students know screen side faces away during all times other than when she approves their use. Notice she also gave visual reminders on a laminated card to remind them what they're working on as readers.

## Eliminate reading avoidance.

Think of the apps that get us to pay money to keep us off the Internet in order to get our work done. I'll often pick the dead leaves off my houseplants before getting work done, and I don't even like my plants. My goal is to end the useless time I spend checking Facebook, sales at J.Crew, or the long-range weather forecast, and just . . . work. If we struggle to focus, why shouldn't our students? Take a few days to see all the ingenious ways they avoid reading, then shut them down. Eliminate as many ways to avoid reading as you can. One simple solution, for instance, is to provide back up reading material so there's no legitimacy to the excuse: "I forgot my book."



## Help them with what is hard.

As readers, this all feels so easy to us. We know the utter joy of getting totally lost in a good book. My fantasy is someone booking a fancy hotel room for me and . . . no George Clooney, no bubble baths, no filet mignon room service. Just reading. I don't have to check out until I've finished a stack of my favorite books. When you aren't familiar with that feeling of getting lost in a great book, that fantasy feels like a torture chamber. Empathize with students who avoid reading, because they don't know how to do what good readers know how to do. Then show them. Pull groups of readers together who struggle with the same thing, and show them what they can do. I can anticipate right now that the majority of your avoiders need help finding the right books, so start there. Know it might demand



many times of helping them before they get good at this, but when you show them you're on their side, they'll get there faster.

### **Hold them accountable, too.**

Keep a clipboard or iPad handy with a class roster. Let students know that you are keeping track of who is reading and who is not. Don't call out anyone's name or even let students know whom you're monitoring. Just put a symbol next to the names of those who are and aren't reading every few minutes and show them individually at the end of class. (Show them privately, as there's no need to humiliate anyone.) Use this information to figure out who needs help, and also to show your students that this is an easy way to get or lose points in your class. I work with several teachers who used this clipboard technique in September and gave bonus points to anyone reading for a certain amount of time. They also assigned small tasks such as library organization to those who didn't. By October, one teacher told me she didn't even have anything on her clipboard. She'd just have it in her hand, and suddenly everyone's eyes were on books.

### **Praise.**

Mother Teresa said, "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." If you've tried all these things and your students are still driving you bonkers, check how often you've praised them for what they're doing well. Show a little love. Teens can get the short end of the stick with praise. We might assume they don't need it, but I'd argue that teens crave praise, have a harder time trusting it, and respond to it more than any other age group of students. Make it genuine, because they smell BS a mile away, and then say it over and over again. "Love to see you reading." "You've come so far." "I'm so proud of this class." "Seeing you all read makes my heart sing." And, it will be true.

## What Students Are Doing in Addition to Reading: Writing, Thinking, and Questioning

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A room full of students reading is a marvelous thing. When you get them there, remember that is a massive accomplishment. Celebrate it, take pictures, call your friends, email me, and get a fancy coffee to toast yourself.



**Learn more about the book this lesson is from: <http://bit.ly/2OA1Be3>**