**Independent Reading:**

**The 40 Book Challenge!**

One of the major differences between the Advanced Language Arts classes and the regular language arts classes is the amount of reading required. My primary goal as a teacher is to encourage my students to become life-long readers. The more students read, the more they like to read. Today there are so many books available to middle school students that there are books for every interest! While many of my students come into my class loving to read already, some students do not share that love. My goal is to find books that they will enjoy based on their reading abilities and interests. This year I challenge all students in my Advanced Language Arts classes to read 40 or more books.

**Why 40 books?**

In *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research* by Stephen Krashen research suggests that, “No single literacy activity has a more positive effect on students’ comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, spelling, writing ability, and overall academic achievement than free voluntary reading [independent reading].” Developing readers, including Advanced Language Arts readers, need to read and read often. A heavy dose of independent reading, paired with explicit instruction, can transform non-readers, or those indifferent to reading, into readers. Students must be reading everyday to keep up with this requirement and without the expectation of reading 40 books, some students would read much less. To keep students on track the students will be required to read a minimum of six or seven new books each half of the trimester and will be graded on their progress.

**When will my child have time to read all of these books?**

Due to the importance I place on reading, I set aside time in class to read every day. I also frequently read aloud to my students and those books count as part of the 40. Students should always have a book going or be seeking one to read. I have a class library with hundreds of titles and our school library has thousands more! Students will NOT be required to keep a reading log for every minute they read, which means parents will NOT have to sign anything! I will monitor students’ reading progress in class. If they are reading at home (30 minutes each night), their progress will reflect that. They will keep a record of all the books they have read.

**My child likes to read long books. Do they still have to read 40 books?**

More and more Young Adult authors are coming out with longer books. I have a few books in my classroom over 800 pages. These books obviously require more time to read, so to be fair I credit their effort by making books with more pages worth more than one book.

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| --- | --- |
| **Number of Pages…** | **Number of Books…** |
| 0 – 349 | 1 book |
| 350 – 699 | 2 books |
| 700 or more! | 3 books |

**How will you be checking that students have read the books they claim?**

I’ll have the students apply what they’re reading independently by connecting to the reading and writing skills they are learning. There will also be book teasers, literary letters, essays, and regular conferences about their reading.

**My child only reads one genre. Will they be reading 40 books of only their favorite genre?**

I realize that students prefer to read novels of their own choosing, so I have left almost half of the required books completely up to their discretion. However, learning about a variety of genres is important to their education. Furthermore, it can open their eyes to books they might not have discovered otherwise. Over the course of the year, the students will study a wide variety of genres. As we study, students will be expected to choose independent novels from these genres to fulfill their reading requirement. I have many suggestions within each genre to appeal to a wide variety of readers.

**My student is an advanced reader. Should they only be reading books at a particular level?**

Limiting students to one reading level drastically limits their choices. Higher-level books often include advanced content or limit readers. Research shows that the more students read, the more their reading skills will improve. As long as students are reading middle school appropriate books, their skills will continue to develop. Therefore, I do not limit students to particular levels. Instead, I prefer students choose books like adults: by choosing ones that they find interesting.

***\*\*Middle school appropriate book donations are accepted happily!***

***Any student who brings in popular titles will be given a Pride Award!\*\****