**Independent Reading:**

**The 40 Book Challenge!**

One of the major differences between Advanced Language Arts and regular language arts is the amount of reading we do. My primary goal as a teacher is to encourage you to become life-long readers. The more you read, the more you will like to read. At PLMS, we have books for every reading interest! While many of my students come into my class loving to read, some students do not share that love. My goal is to find books that you will enjoy based on your reading abilities and interests. This year I challenge all of you in my Advanced Language Arts classes to read 40 or more books. That’s a lot of 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 good teaching, can transform non-readers, or those indifferent to reading (take it or leave it), into readers. You’ll need to read every day to keep up with this requirement and without the expectation of reading 40 books, some students would read much less. To keep you all on track, you’ll need to read a minimum of six or seven books each half of the trimester (every nine weeks). I’ll be checking on your progress and you’ll receive an effort grade.

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

If I’m going to place such a high importance on reading, I better give you time to read! I’ll give you dedicated class time to read, but you’ll also need to find time on your own (during passing, when you first walk in, when you finish an assignment, on the bus, etc). I will also read one book out loud this year, Freak the Mighty. This will count as one of your 40. You 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 you read, which means parents will NOT have to sign anything! However, we will track your “pages read” each day/night in class. My minimum requirement is that you read at least 2 hours at home during the week. You’ll set personal reading goals that work for you, so some of you will read much more. Two hours is the minimum, however. Finally, you will keep a record of all the books you’ve read in your Writer’s Notebook and on your Reading Genre Chart.

**I like to read long books. Do I 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 your effort by making books with more pages worth more than one book.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 I have read the books I claim?**

The biggest way will be to talk with you during your reading conference. I’ll also ask you to share some books via book talks, book teasers, etc. Plus, if I give you time to read, I’ll see you reading in class!

**Yo, Ensey! I only read one genre! Do I really have to read other genres besides my favorite?**

I realize most readers have a preferred genre of choice. That’s why I have left almost half of the required books completely up to your discretion. However, learning about a variety of genres is important to your education. Furthermore, it can open your eyes to subjects you might not otherwise discover. Over the course of the year, you will study a wide variety of genres. As we study, you’ll most likely want to choose independent novels from these genres because they are so interesting! I have many suggestions within each genre to appeal to a wide variety of readers.

**I consider myself a fancy-pants advanced reader. Should I only be reading books at a particular reading level?**

If I limit you to one level, I limit your choices. I don’t want that. However, higher-level books often include advanced content. While I don’t limit your choices, you need to be real with yourself. Ask yourself, “Am I reading a book that is too hard for me?” “Am I reading a book that has content that is not appropriate for me?” If this is the case, I might have mom or dad send in a note giving you permission. Let’s call this a case by case basis!

***\*\*Middle school appropriate book donations are accepted happily! Do you have books you’ve read that are collecting dust on the shelf? I’ll bribe you to donate books.***

***Any student who brings in popular titles will be given a Pride Award! (up to two pride awards…no matter how many books). Five Pride Awards get you an ice cream sundae and you get to skip class!***

***Let’s Do This!***