Creating a Reading Community at SJP

*Libraries Matter*, a collection of studies published by the American Library Association, documents the economic, educational and social value of libraries. A significant amount of the research addresses the value of reading for pleasure. The ALA purports that children who read for fun every day score higher on reading assessment tests and those who talk about their reading with family and friends also excel on such tests. (*Libraries Matter*)

The infographic to the right illustrates the results of a 1987 study conducted by William E. Nagy and Patricia A. Herman of the University of Illinois. Reading for just 20 minutes per day can improve students’ vocabulary and academic success. Reading for fun also piques their curiosity.

**Blind Date with a Book**, Award Winning novels, March Book Madness and Pi Day book displays.

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and encourages students to become life-long learners.

As part of our culture of scholarship here at SJP, we must create a community of readers. We can accomplish that goal in many ways, both large and small. Several of our teachers are taking a giant step in the right direction to building our reading community. Ms. Mueller and Mr. Pasquinelli have consistently brought their English Writing students into the LC to borrow books. Many of the freshmen have posted reviews of the books they have read on the LC website. Ms. Gipson has also assigned supplemental reading to her seniors in Anatomy and Physiology. At the end of first semester, they each read and wrote about a contemporary non-fiction title pertaining to the medical field. Mr. Roberts plans to have his U.S. History students do some supplemental reading during the spring semester. They will review the titles they select. Kudos to all of these teachers!

We can also promote reading in subtle ways. Many of the librarians I receive messages from through the Massachusetts School Library Association note what they are currently reading at the end of their email signature. What a great idea! I have edited my signature to indicate what I am reading. If all the SJP faculty and staff follow suit, we can share book recommendations with colleagues and students alike every time we send an email.

Please encourage your students to read as much as possible. After all, "The more you read, the more things you’ll know. The more that you learn the more places you’ll go." (Dr. Seuss)

What are you Reading?

Ms. Gipson is reading The House of Silk by Anthony Horowitz

As a teacher, most of the reading that I do is for a purpose: Napoleon’s Buttons by Jay Burreson and Penny Le Couteur for insight into how simple molecules and compounds have had on the course of civilization, or The Ghost Map by Steven Johnson as background research into a unit on epidemiology.

In a time where reading is work thinly veiled in the guise of recreation, it is always a great treat to sink down into a good book purely for pleasure, and The House of Silk by Anthony Horowitz certainly delivers on all that the book jacket promises. In a modern retelling of Sherlock Holmes, Horowitz does immense justice to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s original narrative, preserving the world that Doyle created with a careful portrayal of his most iconic characters in London’s era of industrialization.

In The House of Silk, we follow the world’s greatest consulting detective and his faithful companion, Dr. Watson, as they seek to identify a mysterious stalker and burglar from America who is targeting an English art dealer. Their inquiries lead them deeper into London’s criminal underworld, causing the death of a 13-year-old street urchin in the process. I left off the investigation at the door of an opium den, and I cannot wait until I can sink back into its pages and let the world of Sherlock Holmes wash over me.

“The game is afoot!” Happy Reading! ~ Ms. Gipson

What’s Happening in the Book Club?

Members of the Book Club have also been swept away in the investigations of Sherlock Holmes this month. For our meeting on February 23, we read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s first Holmes novel, A Study in Scarlet. We talked about Doyle’s background as a medical student and were interested to learn that the Holmes character is based on one of the author’s quirky medical school instructors. Some of our readers are fans of the BBC television series, Sherlock. We watched a clip of the first episode and compared the book to the popular television show.

In March, we will have a Free Choice meeting. We will each create an Animoto book trailer for the title we want to recommend.
Advice from the AEC
Annotation Tips For the Reluctant Reader

Make sure students understand why they are being assigned the reading in the first place and give them an idea about what they are going to do with the reading once it is completed.

Many students are hesitant to open a book, let alone annotate, if they cannot make a connection with why school matters in the first place. Why this novel? Help students to understand the importance of making an argument, no matter what path they take in adulthood. Furthermore many students need to understand the end task (e.g., writing prompt) so they are aware of what they need to look for as they read.

Teach the idea that annotation helps students to “work smarter not harder.”

There are always a few students per class who insist that they just can’t annotate while they read. More often than not, these students tend to “zone out” and not read with purpose. These students benefit from knowing the end task, as annotation can give them a stronger purpose while reading. On the other end of the spectrum, there are students who can just read, understand, and retain it all. Teach these students that annotating makes post-reading work both stronger and more efficient as annotating saves time when compared to having to access information held in memory systems after the reading is complete.

Offer students annotation directions/tips that they can keep on hand, especially for a late night (unenthusiastic) reading session.

Many students feel they know how to annotate. “My teacher from last year made us do that.” However, it doesn’t hurt to offer students directions/tips to keep on hand that convey teacher expectations. Simplifying the coding/abbreviations and allowing students to access the tips right in the inside cover of their paperback novel is only going to reinforce working smarter not harder.

~ Mr. Poponyak

Read for the Fun of It
Mystery and Suspense

The Innocent by David Baldacci
A professional assassin teams up with an orphaned teen to figure out who killed her parents.

And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie
Ten unsuspecting men and women are lured to a deserted island. One by one they are killed off because of an immoral decision in their past.

A is for Alibi by Sue Grafton
Private investigator, Kinsey Milhone, takes on her first case. She helps a wrongly convicted wife find the culprit who murdered her husband.

Death Comes to Pemberley by R.D. James
The idyllic charm of the Darcy estate is shattered by the shocking murder of the dastardly Wickham.

Face Time by Hank Phillippi Ryan
An investigative reporter tries to solve a Boston murder when new evidence arises.

She is not Invisible by Marcus Sedgwick
A blind girl and her younger brother travel to New York City to find their missing father.

The Pelican Brief by John Grisham
A law student is swept into a murder mystery involving the deaths of two Supreme Court justices.

Sydney, Emma, Sara, Taylor and Cailey read for the fun of it!