



Y Read? Participant's Guide

exploring why and how to support young people
to read with pleasure & purpose

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about this course

This course is designed to be delivered *by* and *for* educators¹. Here's how it works:

- 1) You identify educators who are interested in pushing their learning and expertise around reading – why it matters; how a reading culture is developed; strategies for promoting reading with pleasure and purpose; and strategies for engaging parents in creating a literacy-rich home environment.
- 2) As a group, you figure out when and where you will meet for the learning sessions. (Note: We've designed four sessions that run about 1.5 to 2 hours in length – but you could break the sessions up to cover the same material over eight sessions for example. The course is adaptable – make it your own!).
- 3) You identify someone to facilitate the sessions. (A Facilitator's Guide is provided, and the extra work involved is minimal).
- 4) You commit to completing all of the preparatory activities before each session. (This usually involves reading a couple of short articles, viewing videos, and writing your responses to a few questions).
- 5) You make it happen!

You *could* just do the assignments on your own – but you'd be missing out on a big part of the learning. The value of this approach is that you can bring your ideas forward in a group of other thoughtful educators in an environment where you can test and extend your ideas and learn from one another. It's also way more fun to do it this way.

¹ It is specifically designed for elementary school teachers, but junior and senior high teachers will also benefit.

course objectives

This course is designed to help educators:

- Understand what reading is for and why it's important
- Develop strategies for cultivating a reading culture in your classroom and school
- Understand the importance that pleasure plays in reading
- Understand how reading contributes to autonomy, ethics, and engaged citizenship
- Develop strategies for engaging parents in creating a literacy-rich home environment

course content

The four sessions are:

1. *Why Read?*
2. *Reading for Pleasure*
3. *Reading With Purpose – How Reading Connects with Ethics, Citizenship and Autonomy*
4. *Supporting Literacy-Rich Environments at Home*

assignments & commitments

Recognizing the time limitations that often constrain educators, we've tried to keep the homework to a minimum.² All of the reading assignments are under ten pages *total* per session – so they shouldn't take long. The videos we've assigned are also short – with one exception: we are asking you to watch a two-hour movie (*Freedom Writers*) for Session #3. You'll need to schedule more preparation time for that session, and will need to get hold of the movie in advance. (You can find it on iTunes). One option is to watch the movie as a group for one session and then continue with the discussion questions at the next one. Everyone loves a movie night. Don't forget the popcorn!

² For this reason, we have not assigned any books. However, we would encourage you to read Jim Trelease's *Read-Aloud Handbook*. It serves as a great foundation for this course.

We strongly recommend that you make time for the homework – and not just time for the reading and viewing (which shouldn't take too long), but also time to really think through the reflection questions outlined for each session. **As with anything, the more you put into this, the more you'll get out of it.**

when you've finished

Calgary Reads would love to hear from you when you've completed the course. We welcome any feedback, encouragement or suggestions! We'd also love to hear about any insights and breakthroughs that emerge through your learning. Feel free to contact us at info@calgaryreads.com

Session One: Why Read?

This session explores the role that reading plays in our lives and why it's worth making time for.

read...

- ❑ National Reading Campaign Fact Sheet <http://www.nationalreadingcampaign.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/ReadingFacts1.pdf> (6 pages)
- ❑ Why to Read: 10 Reasons Why Reading Books Will Save Your Life <http://whytoread.com/why-to-read-10-reasons-why-reading-books-will-save-your-life/> (1 page)

watch...

- ❑ “How Books Can Open Your Mind” by Lisa Bu <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ibCtsHgZ3Y> (6 minutes)
- ❑ “Can a Children's Book Change the World?” by Linda Sue Park <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40xz0afCjnM> (13 minutes)

think & write...

- Why is reading important? Why does it matter if children develop literacy skills and come to associate reading with joy and empowerment?
- Is reading important to you personally? Why/why not?
- What would it look like if we really valued reading? What would it look like...
 - In your own home?
 - In your classroom?
 - In your school?
 - In our broader society?

- Imagine that an alien – we'll call her Stella – is conducting a research project on behalf of the Intergalactic Anthropologists' Association. The Association is trying to understand human values and priorities. Stella is tasked with observing a small sample of humans and documenting how they spend their time. (This methodology is based on the assumption that humans make time for what they value). You have been selected for observation. Stella is going to document your waking hours for a period of two weeks. What activities are likely to make the top of the list in Stella's report? Would reading make the list? What would the Intergalactic Anthropologists Association say are your priorities, the things you value most in life? Does this line up with what you *think* your priorities are?

do...

- Think about a book that has played an important role in your life. Bring a copy (if possible) to the group session and be prepared to talk about the following:
 - Context: When did you read this book? What made you pick it up? What was going on in your life at the time that made this book such a good fit?
 - Impact: What impact did this book have on you? Why was it so important to you at the time? Is it still important? (Why/Why not?)

Session Two: Reading for Pleasure

Not surprisingly, children and youth who enjoy reading do more of it – and the more they do, the more proficient they become. However, children’s enjoyment of reading tends to fall off sharply as they progress through their schooling. How do we cultivate reading for pleasure? We’ll be exploring that question in this session.

read...

- “The Most Important Lesson Schools Can Teach Kids About Reading: It’s Fun”
<http://m.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/11/the-most-important-lesson-schools-can-teach-kids-about-reading-its-fun/281295/>
(1 page)
- Pages 7-14 from *Reading 4 Pleasure* - www.neelb.org.uk/resources/assets/attachment/full/0/8610.pdf (7 pages - Note: We encourage you to read the whole guide if you can!)
- “What Kind of Book Reader Are You? A Diagnostics Guide” - <http://www.thewire.com/entertainment/2012/08/what-kind-book-reader-are-you-diagnostics-guide/56337/> (1 page)
- Read something for pleasure!

think & write...

- How would you describe your relationship with books? What kind of book reader are you? (You can select from Jen Doll’s “Diagnostic Guide” or create a category of your own).
- In his book *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Jim Trelease cites an education adage that goes: “*What we teach children to love and desire will always outweigh what we make them learn.*” (p. xxi) Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- What strategies in the *Reading 4 Pleasure* guide seem promising? What strategies could you integrate in your classroom? Make a plan for how and when you’ll do that.

do...

In his Introduction to *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Jim Trelease talks about doing a 'book commercial' in classrooms. A book commercial is just like it sounds: a short pitch for a book, enticing prospective readers with a few details that help to convey why they might want to pick it up. Whether or not you've used this strategy in your classroom, we'd like you to try it out at the next learning session: Pick a book and develop a book commercial to share with the group. If you want to practice for the classroom, you can choose a children's book – but you're welcome to pitch an adult book as well. Costumes, props and/or sound can bump up the excitement - but you're welcome to keep it simple as well – just as long as you have fun.

Session Three: Reading with Purpose – How Reading Connects with Ethics, Citizenship and Autonomy

Reading for pleasure is necessary, but not sufficient. To really tap into the power that reading offers, you also have to know how to read with purpose, how to navigate the vast field of cultural resources in a way that supports your life journey. This session explores how reading can support the development of ethical reasoning, engaged citizenship and healthy autonomy in both young people and adults.

read...

- ❑ “Becoming the Authors of Our Own Lives”, an excerpt from *How Holocausts Happen: The United States in Central America* by Douglas Popora <http://calgaryreads.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Becoming-the-Authors-of-Our-Own-Lives.pdf>

watch...

- ❑ *The Freedom Writers* (Available on DVD from the Calgary Public Library and on iTunes) - (2 hours)³
- ❑ Interview with Kelly Gallagher, author of *Readicide* (3 minutes) – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlyqSvht4z4>

think & write...

In *The Freedom Writers*, the students are initially trapped in highly destructive stories that have been passed on to them by their ‘tribe’. How does Erin Gruwell use reading to help the class connect to the larger human story and become the authors of their own lives?

What is the connection between reading and autonomy? How do Porpora’s ideas about individuality fit in with this?

Porpora writes “Right action requires right belief, to do the right, we must know what the right is.” How is reading connected to ethical reasoning or ‘knowing what right is’?

³ And/or read Erin Gruwell’s book: *Teach With Your Heart: Lessons I Learned from the Freedom Writers*.

Almost a decade ago Walter Lippmann warned of the dangers of “manufacturing consent.” His argument was basically this: Democracy is based on government by consent – but if a nation’s citizens do nothing to develop *informed* consent (and particularly if their consent is ‘manufactured’ or manipulated by vested interests and powers), then democracy becomes a farce.⁴ Do you agree or disagree? Why?

How have you used reading to get behind the spin and understand the paths our municipal, provincial and federal governments are taking us down? To what extent do you see this as your responsibility as a citizen? What would happen if every citizen saw deep reading and critical reflection as part of their responsibility as a citizen?

The assigned reading/viewing this week centres on adolescents and young adults. What are the implications for working with younger children? How do you plant these seeds early so that the children you work with develop an appreciation for the role that reading and reflection plays in developing their capacity for ethical reasoning, citizenship and autonomy? Be prepared to bring some of your ideas forward in the group discussion.

do...

What happens to the bears in Banff National Park when people consistently leave their garbage lying around? The bears become accustomed to the easy acquisition of food and lose their capacity to hunt. Something similar happens to us when we consume a steady diet of infotainment: We become Intellectual Garbage Bears – we lose (or never develop) the capacity to seek out quality information and develop a robust understanding of what is happening in the world.⁵

Pick an issue to explore more deeply. Observe yourself as you’re exploring. What are you learning? What kinds of skills or capacities does it take to navigate the vast sea of information and identify promising leads and quality resources? What are the barriers or challenges associated with this kind of exploration? What are the benefits of deep and wide reading?

⁴ This idea is central to many of Lippmann’s books – but one that deals directly with the issue is *Liberty and the News*, which was first published in 1920. This slim volume is available for free download at: <https://archive.org/details/libertyandnews01lippgoog>

⁵ I’ve stolen this analogy from my friend and colleague Ken Low of the Action Studies Institute (Calgary, Alberta).

Session Four: Supporting Literacy-Rich Environments at Home

*There is a clear correlation between literacy-rich environments and reading proficiency and enjoyment.
How can educators help to engage parents in their children's learning and support the development of literacy-rich environments at home?
These are the types of questions we'll explore in this session.*

watch...

- ❑ "The Postal Code Lottery" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdNbqJJKx-8> (5 minutes)

read...

- ❑ Research Brief: "Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement –Do Parents Know They Matter?" by Alma Harris and Janet Goodall www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RBW004.pdf (3 pages)
- ❑ Tips for Teachers - <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/SuccessTeacherTips.pdf> (2 pages)
- ❑ "A Welcoming Environment for Families" <http://calgaryreads.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Welcoming-Families.pdf>

think & write...

- What would a literacy-rich home environment look and feel like? What would you see? What would you hear? What would be happening?
- Think about the home you grew up in. Was it a literacy-rich environment?
 - If yes, what impact did that have on you?
 - If no, what impact did that have on you?

- *The Postal Code Lottery* tells us that, on average, children from lower income families have heard 30 million fewer words by the time they are three – and points out that this gap has a significant impact on reading scores in grade three.⁶ All of this research points to the importance of a learning-supportive, literacy-rich home life. What role can educators play in helping parents to understand the importance of a literacy-rich home? What are some practical strategies you can implement to support parents in cultivating literacy-rich homes?
- What strategies have you found successful for cultivating parent engagement in learning? Be prepared to share some of your ideas with the group.

do...

Complete the “Welcoming Environment for Families” checklist. Identify areas that could be strengthened in your school. What small steps could you take today to enhance parent engagement in your school? Come to the session prepared to discuss your ideas.

Note: At the end of this guide, you’ll find a feedback form. (Your facilitator will also have copies available at the session). Please take some time to reflect on your experience of this course and offer us some feedback. Your input will help us to improve this course and design new ones. If there’s not enough room on the form, please feel free to add a page. We look forward to hearing from you!

⁶ *The Postal Code Lottery* draws on research by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley presented in an article entitled “The Early Catastrophe.” If you’d like to read this important work, you can access it here: <https://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/spring2003/TheEarlyCatastrophe.pdf>

Y Read Participant Feedback Form

Thank you for offering your feedback. This information will help us to improve this course and others like it.

1. Please indicate the total number of Y Read sessions you attended.

1 2 3 4 Other _____

2. How much of the assigned reading and viewing did you complete?

None of it Some of it Most of it All of it

3. Please indicate your level of satisfaction by checking off one response for each of following:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not a tall satisfied	Comments
Participants' Guide					
Reading/Viewing Material					
Reflection Questions & Activities					
Group sessions (flow, structure, content)					
Facilitation					

4. What was your favourite session? What was your least favourite session? Why?

5. What did you like best about Y Read?

6. What could we improve?

Thank you for your feedback! This form can be submitted to your facilitator or returned directly to:
Calgary Reads, 105 12 Ave SE, Calgary, AB T2G 1A1