

Making the Most of Silent Reading

Make time for silent reading every day

Silent Reading is 20 minutes of quiet time spent one on one with self-selected books. Also known as *D.E.A.R. Time* in many classrooms, my students *drop everything and read* immediately following lunch as a way of regrouping for the afternoon ahead, of seeing reading skills used by authors in the pages of books, and most importantly, as a way of enjoying a book chosen all by themselves. Although the only items you really need for silent reading are children, books, and quiet time, here are a few helpful hints to make the most of this one-on-one time with books:

Tips for a Successful Silent Reading Time

Before Silent Reading:

- Have students select two to three books that will "keep them happy" for the entire silent reading period so that time is spent reading, not going back and forth to the classroom library.
- The teacher should take a quick glance at books selected in order to help students reselect books at a more appropriate level if necessary.

During Silent Reading:

- *The teacher reads, too!* To model good silent reading practices and to demonstrate an interest in books and a love of literature, spend the first five minutes looking at books, too.
- Encourage those students who struggle with reading or are prereaders to picture-read the story and connect words from the text to the pictures.
- Remind those readers who say, "I've read all the books in the room" that favorite books can be enjoyed again and again to make new discoveries on every page.

After Silent Reading:

- Permit students to keep *one* book from the classroom library in their desk that they have not yet finished.
- Remind students to return books they have finished to the classroom library so that it remains as well stocked as possible.
- A few times a week make time for students to recommend books from the classroom library to classmates.

In the five minutes before lunch, I take a quick stroll around the room commenting on students' silent reading selections of the day. Not only am I ensuring that they have made appropriate choices according to abilities, but I let students know I am interested in the books they choose to read.

When Stocking a Classroom Library, Be Sure to Include:

- Books from a range of reading levels
- Picture books
- Rhyming word books
- Books of all genres
- Magazines such as *Sports Illustrated for Kids* and *Ranger Rick*
- Extra copies of favorite books
- Classics, Caldecott and Newbery winners
- Collections of student-published stories