

Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers

Penny Kittle.
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2013.

Reviewed by **Hilary Elmgren**
University of Saskatchewan

Book Love: *Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers*, written by Penny Kittle, provides literacy educators with an overview of strategies and techniques that have been proven to increase the desire to read, and to encourage students to become readers for life.

One of the reoccurring themes throughout the book is the power of choice. Kittle (2013) argues for allowing students to choose their own books, as opposed to reading traditional classic literature, in order to increase reader engagement and stamina: “Reading classics rarely develops commitment, stamina and pleasure in reading that will last” (p. 19). She repeatedly argues the need for extensive classroom libraries where students can have current, young adult fiction and non-fiction readily available. Kittle argues that the age-old novel study should be abolished, and that these types of reading, often accompanied by quizzes, “often breed resentment, even from compliant readers” (2013, p. 21).

In the next portion of the book, Kittle sets out to provide strategies that will enhance stamina, fluency, and students’ connection to books. There are several examples given on how to build a classroom library, how to conduct a reading / writing workshop, how to deliver a powerful book talk, why reading conferences are beneficial, how to create powerful reader response questions, and how to increase the literacy community at both the classroom and school levels. Most of these examples come straight from Penny Kittle’s own personal classroom teaching experience. She provides copied pages from her own notebook, as well as student examples to illustrate her points.

Kittle’s work in *Book Love* (2013) can easily be placed alongside other publications on similar themes such as *Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading and What you Can do About It* (2009) written by Kelly Gallagher and Richard Allington. Kittle, Gallagher and Allington

argue that traditional novel studies, comprehension questions, and quizzes often assigned with reading are not increasing reader engagement, but rather turning students' off of reading completely. They would all argue that while these traditional methods are geared toward measuring students' comprehension abilities, they do not actually teach the student *how* to comprehend. Both Allington (2012b) and Kittle (2013) call for focused, explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies to better address the needs of the struggling and reluctant reader.

Alfie Kohn is also known for his crusade against grading, as seen in his book *Punished by Rewards* (1999). Kittle and Kohn both argue that the traditional methods of motivating students extrinsically will not increase learning, or engagement. Kohn focuses mostly on grading as the system of rewards, which can be linked to Kittle's argument for increasing motivation by increasing student choice. The traditional rewards of reading are receiving credit in the way of a mark or grade based on a reading quiz or a book report. Kohn would argue that a student's desire to read should be intrinsic and not motivated by a grading system. Kittle (2013) argues that by giving students choice in what books to read, taking away book reports and quizzes, and focusing on powerful methods of reader response, students gain a greater connection to a reader identity.

Richard Allington, Professor of Education at the University of Tennessee, and co-author of *Readicide* (2009), is known for his work on motivating struggling readers. In one of his many articles, titled "Every Child, Every Day" (2012a) he argues for teacher modeled reading instruction similar to the book talk or think-alouds discussed by Kittle (2013). He advocates that children should have easy access to books at appropriate reading levels and enough to allow for choice. Kittle also argues for this in the form of a full classroom library. Allington (2012a) stresses the importance that students be able to talk to their peers about what they are reading, which Kittle echoes in her call for more peer and teacher-lead reading conferences and in building a community of readers (2013). The idea of reading communities originated with Smith in his work promoting the *literacy club* (1988, p. 215). According to Smith (1988), when children are members of a club, they will learn to act and behave like the other members in the same club. Being a member of a *literacy club* in the classroom will assist students in learning effective behaviours of good readers, as well as feeling a sense of community and belonging.

Book Love (2013) is useful for those in the field of literacy education who want to assist the un-motivated, adolescent reader. It is most useful for educators teaching a standard sized English Language Arts classroom, with a mix of abilities. The strategies discussed by Kittle provide the literacy educator with practically supported ideas, many tried by Kittle herself, to help increase student engagement with books. The primary achievement in *Book Love* is the creation of a simple template for teachers to follow, including specific daily strategies to implement into classroom routine and tips for conducting and delivering lessons geared to increase reader engagement. Kittle does not address issues pertaining to teaching students with reading or learning disabilities, but rather addresses the challenges in motivating able, disengaged adolescent students to read more and to read better. *Book Love: Increasing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers* certainly has a place in the Reading Teacher's professional collection.

References

- Allington, R. (2012a). Every child, every day. *Educational Leadership*, 69(6),10-15.
- Allington, R. (2012b). *What really matters for struggling readers, designing research-based programs*. (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Gallagher, K. (2009). *Readicide: How schools are killing reading and what you can do about it*. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Kittle, P. (2013). *Book love: Developing depth, stamina, and passion in adolescent readers*. (1st ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kohn, A. (1999). *Punished by rewards*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Smith, F. (1988). *Understanding reading*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hilary Elmgren is a M.Ed. Student at the University of Saskatchewan.