

Not “Lose yourself in a book” but “Find yourself in a book”

Not lose yourself in a book but FIND yourself in a book – the book as an enlightening experience. Show the reluctant reader that they can find themselves in a book.

Why do we want kids to read

A – We’re librarians and teachers.

B – Many of us are also parents

C – We love books and have trouble imagining people going through life without this joy

D – → We want them to develop **empathy** and **critical thinking** ← Books, especially fiction, teach us about ourselves and others, teach us empathy. We get to try out moral issues/dilemmas from the safety of the pages of a book or the screen of an eReader.

E – People who don’t read well can end up being left behind by society

Definitions

A reluctant reader is anyone who does not show interest in reading.

“Demographically, reluctant readers are three times more likely to be boys than girls. They also tend to have a narrower reading focus, subject matter-wise.” Eugie Foster. Writing for Reluctant Readers. <http://www.writing-world.com/foster/foster03.shtml>

Kids love story time – after all, it can delay bed time. But mostly they like books, and love being read to. K-3 classroom are filled with eager readers. The drop off in reading occurs as kids grow older, with a gender discrepancy that widens significantly as kids reach the middle grades years:

- At ages 6 to 8, 52% of boys and 59% of girls read books for fun five to seven days a week.
- By ages 15 to 17, only 17% of boys and 31% of girls do so.
- At ages 15 to 17, 49% of kids visit social networking sites five to seven days a week.

<http://blogs.wsj.com/juggle/2009/08/07/harry-potters-magic-how-to-get-boys-to-read-more/>

What happens in adolescence? Why do kids stop reading?

First, if there is no reading disability or physical problem, they don’t really “stop.” But the perception can be self-fulfilling.

- Kids do not develop literacy skills at the same rate. What is “grade appropriate” may not be developmentally appropriate for different kids of the same age.
- Some students need more one-on-one “teacher time.” Especially in larger schools, as students get to middle school, that time isn’t there, so a student’s progress may slow.
- Students who read less have less practice and improve more slowly. Boys of all ages generally read less than girls. Plus, middle school aged boys indicate that they believe reading is much harder than it was in elementary school, and less enjoyable.
- Many adolescent boys need to see real life applications in what they read. Books that tell “stories” rather than providing useful information don’t feel seem to be of any practical value.
- More and more kids stop considering themselves readers. That’s the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Fear and embarrassment are the enemies. If a child reads below grade level, give him/her those books. People become better readers by doing more reading. If the seventh grader is having trouble reading 7th grade books, they will not become better readers by handing them an 8th grade book. But they might become better with 6th grade books they keep reading. If they read more, they WILL improve. We must keep them from thinking they can't/don't read. And realize that one solution will not fit all.

Finding the solution set

Begin by asking students why they don't read

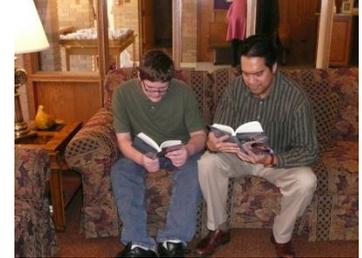
- No time to read
- No desire to read
- Reading isn't cool
- Reading is for girls
- Community/cultural pressure
- Closet readers – prefer that their peers not know they read

Once you know, you can start choosing a solution.

1. There are kids whose community or culture say it's not cool to read, so they intentionally won't. Or, reading is sometimes stereotyped as a "feminine" activity. When boys reach adolescence their gender identification becomes more important; if they believe reading is not masculine, they will abandon it for alternative activities that demonstrate masculinity. Remember that a large number of today's books are considered girl books.

Give them role models

Dare parents to read with their child and/or have their child read to them aloud or silently. Especially dads. Men should read with their sons to model that reading is also a male activity. A male role model jumpstarts boys and encourages both genders to read and to think of themselves as readers. Read to children. Read with them. Read enthusiastically with intonation and character voices.



2. Encourage older kids to read to younger kids. This gives them non-threatening practice time and provides them with the inner reward of helping someone else.
3. Size **does** matter to reluctant readers. Don't give struggling readers books that are too long. We want them to think of reading as enjoyment, not a chore to get done with and forgotten about. Reluctant readers are more likely to want to read in small spurts. Give them something they can finish quickly.
4. Define reading loosely. Include magazine and newspaper articles, non-fiction books. Take into account the web and digital literacy. And audio books.
5. Things like the *Wimpy Kid* books or the *AYA* graphic novels by Marguerite Abouet & Clément Oubrerie (translated by Helge Dascher), work well for the REALLY reluctant readers. Many also enjoy short stories, magazine articles, manga, graphic novels, poetry and books in verse, like *All The Broken Pieces*. Or something with short chapters so they can put it down and pick it up again later. Provide short "chunks" or "episodes" of text to allow them the opportunity to read for a focused period of time that doesn't feel like "too much" to them.
6. Accept that some may only be interested in non-fiction; things like true crime, sports etc. Make sure those books are on your reading shelves.
7. Let students do book reviews. Not essays, just something short and sweet. (Many secretly love it) Once one student starts talking about how action packed a book is, reluctant readers are more willing to give it a try. Keep the reviews in an easily accessible binder, or post them on your school website/blog.

Example reviews:

“This book is better than cable.”

"It's an amazing book."

“Alex Cross, best detective series *ever!*”

“woow im totally obsessed with david now i love the guy! everyone in class wants to read the book too. im going to let them read it so they too can obsess over the wonder david albacore and the seemly perfect mighty mite.”



“When I went to the library I took 'Pull' out because on the cover there was a cute boy, and the synopsis looked interesting as well. But what I didn't know was that I'd find myself falling in love with the book its self and David as well. He kind of reminded me of myself, losing someone you love such as a parent hurts, and you always hear their voices in your head before you make a decision; that David was able to give up so much for the well-being of his family was truly admirable. 'Pull' can't compare to any book I have ever read, it shows life's difficulties and just because it is difficult doesn't mean you have to give in to its bad influences.”

8. Use Technology – a school website or blog to hold the book reviews/discussions/information on books read for fun. Add in activities such as
 - a. Book Trailer project
 - b. Class Blog/online discussion group
 - c. Twitter - Follow those hashtags
 - d. Facebook - Does your class/library have a page?
 - e. Texts - Let him sign up for book messages/suggestions
9. Ask your reluctant readers for input into the selection of new items for the collection. Let them read what speaks to them.
10. Encourage them to write their own stories
11. Author visits. I have never done an author visit where the students didn't get turned on. That includes a visit to a juvenile correctional facility and one to a therapeutic school for troubled kids. Meeting people makes a difference.



Resources:

YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult readers. The committee “seeks books that teens, ages 12-18, will pick up on their own and read for pleasure.” The list is geared toward teenagers who don't like to read for any of a variety of reasons.

<http://harperwriterstogether.blogspot.com/search/label/Boy%20Books>

<http://www.boysread.org/>

<http://www.guysread.com/>

<http://www.k12reader.com/strategies-to-help-engage-reluctant-readers-in-reading/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/21/books/review/boys-and-reading-is-there-any-hope.html>

SCBWI – Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

- Speakers bureau <http://www.scbwi.org/Pages.aspx/Speaker-Bureau>
- Northern Ohio chapter <http://www.nohscbwi.org/>
- Central and Southern Ohio chapter http://www.coscbwi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=5

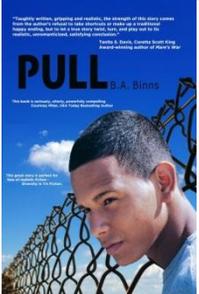
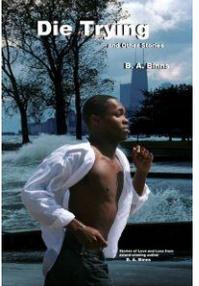
BIO

B. A. Binns is a Chicago Area author who writes stories about of “real boys growing into real men...and the people who love them.” She finds writing an exercise in self-discipline, and the perfect follow-up to her life as the eldest of five children, an adoptive parent, and a cancer survivor. Her writing skills were honed at Chicago State University and Harper College. She does talks and classes on domestic violence and teens, attracting teen boy readers, and multicultural literature.

She is a member of the Romance Writers of America, the Chicago Writers Association, the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, and YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association). In 2009 her work won the Oklahoma Romance Writers Finally a Bride Contest and the Rose City Golden Rose Contest. In 2010 she was a finalist in the RWA Golden Heart® contest. Her debut novel, PULL is the winner of the 2010 National Readers Choice Award for Young Adult fiction presented by the Oklahoma Romance Writers of America. PULL was named to the [2012 YALSA list of Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers](#) and [School Library Journal’s 2011 Best Books for Youth In Detention](#) list.

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BOOKS

<p><u>PULL</u> copyright 2010 ISBN 978-0988182103 The world implodes for seventeen-year-old David Albacore and his younger sisters when their father kills their mother. Stuck in a cramped apartment with an aunt he suspects is only interested in the money from his after school construction job, all David wants to do is separate himself from the violence in his past. Guilt drives him to concentrate on fulfilling his mother’s last wishes for him – that he prepare for college. But he is happier working with his hands under the tutelage of his crew boss than sitting in classrooms that feel like a prison. David deals with homework, and hormones that draw him ever closer to Yolanda, the hottest girl in the “in” crowd. When Yolanda and David finally come together, sparks fly. But she means trouble, because she’s pack leader Malik’s girl. Malik has it out for David, not only as a romantic rival, but also on the basketball court and -- most importantly -- as a threat to David’s freshman sister.</p>	
<p><u>Die Trying</u> copyright 2012 ISBN 978-0988182196 Fourteen stories for adults and young adults, showing the sometimes humorous, and sometimes tragic facts of life. Conflicts between fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, and of course, the people we fall in love with. Fourteen stories of mother/daughter and father/son relationships, friendships, and breakups that will make you remember what it was like to be in love...and to have to say goodbye. In the title story, Juvon, a former Olympic hopeful, has to decide how to face the “terminator cancer” that is ending his life.</p>	
<p>Being God copyright 2012 ISBN 978-0-9881821-1-0 Malik Kaplan, bad boy of Farrington High School, has more than just David Albacore to worry about. He has his own cross to bear, or maybe it’s a Star of David, or maybe both. Being the black teenaged son of a Catholic and Jew can make life confusing. He has to deal with an “offer he can’t refuse” from a gang leader, handle parents who do not understand him, learn how to get close to an angry ten-year-old who hates the world, and discover there’s more to life than just crushing all opposition. Especially when the opposition is a fourteen-year-old with an awesome left hook – David younger sister, Barney. Both Malik and Barney have some growing up to do, as Malik learns he may not be a god, but he’s not the devil either.</p> <p>Coming in December, 2012</p>	