

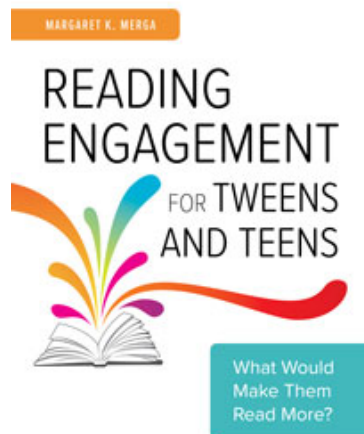
Reading Engagement for Tweens and Teens: What would make them read more

Merga, Margaret K. (2018)

Santa Barbara, CA, ABC-CLIO,

174 pages

ISBN: 9781440867996



In her highly readable book, Margaret Merga focuses on the concept of reading 'will' not skill. She uses her extensive research findings to explore the influencing factors in fostering a love of reading in tweens and teenagers.

Merga is an academic researcher who focuses on book reading as an educational and social practice. Her goal is to make her research useful and practical for 'someone, somewhere'. This accessible book is designed to appeal to teachers, parents, librarians and other literacy advocates, who Merga identifies as 'social influencers' – advocates for book reading.

Identifying reading 'will' as well as skill is essential to becoming effective readers, Merga begins by highlighting why book reading is still important. Her research is concerned not with why some young people cannot read (due to cognitive or physical disorders) but why young people with established reading skills, choose not to.

In Chapter 2, Merga explores the notion of 'expired expectations', where young people believe that reading is no longer important once they are able to read independently. Merga's research showed that the young people felt that the 'social influences' no longer reinforced the importance of reading for pleasure and this became a significant factor in decreased reading engagement. The following chapters challenge different 'assumptions' of young people's experience of reading such as whether books are uncool, boys and reading, the role of parents and the myth of digital natives. Merga finds that these myths continue to determine policy and practice around reading. She then turns her attention to what would make young people read more books, considering reading for pleasure, the role of choice, before finally discussing the role of libraries and other reading spaces.

Merga's many research studies have involved speaking to the young people and she shares their responses as well as the relevant data and research by others. This book is an excellent resource for school library staff, providing compelling evidence and data to demonstrate the importance of the school library as both a physical resource and a social influence.

Reviewed by Ruth Woolven, Kew Primary School, Primary representative on the SLAV Council

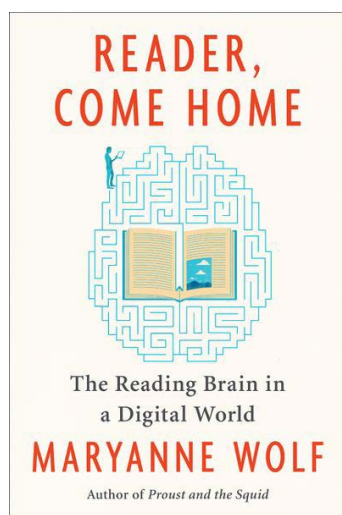
Reader come home: The reading brain in the digital world

Wolf, Maryanne (2018)

New York, NY, HarperCollins,

260 pages

ISBN 9780062388780



In her first book, *Proust and the Squid*, Maryanne Wolf explored the science of the reading brain and traced the literacy arc over six thousand years, including the puzzle of dyslexia. When she finished that book, she realised we were moving into a digital based culture and set about finding how the digital medium would alter the circuitry of the reading brain.

In *Reader, Come Home* Wolf presents her work as a series of letters, believing the genre allows for a 'cerebral pause' to think with each other and bring 'lightness' to a heavy subject.

After using Letter One to discuss her purpose and general concerns, Letter Two considers the plasticity of the reading-brain and how its circuits are changing in the digital age. Letter Three explores the processes required for deep reading. By Letter Four, Wolf is asking whether as a society we are losing the quality of attention necessary to sustain deep reading? Ironically, research shows that in this digital age with the proliferation of information we are actually reading more, on average 34 gigabytes a day but this reading, often skimming, is chopped into shorter intervals.

In her 'self-appointed role as reading worrier', Wolf uses her next three letters to consider the effect on children. What happens when children are exposed to digital devices before they have built the reading circuit, what happens to language development and attention and memory? She calls for longitudinal research to understand the positive and negative effects of the various media and mediums on development.

Such research would assist in understanding the limits and possibilities of a 'biliterate brain'. Wolf points to research on the flexibility of bi-lingual and multi-lingual adults in retrieving words and concepts. Wolf conceptualizes that children will need to become fluent in each separately in early childhood to then become expert code switchers between print and digital mediums.

In her final chapter, Wolf issues a final plea for 'cognitive patience', that is recovering the rhythm of time to attend with consciousness and intention.

This book offers extensive research as well as historical and life lessons about the evolution of the reading brain. This is valuable reading for all library staff and literacy educators, celebrating the joy of reading and while it does argue for caution, it also provides a vision for the path ahead.

Reviewed by Ruth Woolven, Kew Primary School, Primary representative on the SLAV Council