

Motivating Boys to Read: Inquiry, Modeling, and Choice Matter

We found that creating an inquiry-based English class, with teacher modeling and choice, created the conditions necessary to facilitate reading in adolescent males.

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Although much has been written in the popular press about the “boy crisis” in reading (Tyre, 2006), the subject is far more nuanced than this treatment suggests (Brozo, 2006, 2010; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Getting boys to read is not simply a matter of locating texts with a male protagonist in an action-oriented setting or stocking libraries with graphic novels.

As teacher leaders in a small, urban high school, we wanted to learn what curricular and instructional practices in the English classroom served to motivate students. Using the collective works of literacy researchers such as Atwell, Ivey and Broaddus, and others, we designed an intensive ninth-grade English curriculum intended to get students reading and writing daily.

In late spring, we examined students’ reading logs and contacted their middle school English teachers to discuss their reading histories. We paid close attention to what we learned from the boys given the attention that literacy resistance by males has received in national press.

In this article, we begin by discussing issues of reading motivation for adolescents in general, and then examine more closely the subject of boys and reading. We do so because acknowledgement of the former is necessary to understand the complexities of the latter.

We report on what we learned from 115 ninth graders who told us what mattered to them in their English classes, specifically the effect that inquiry, modeling, and choice had on their reading behaviors. We compare these findings with the students’ experiences from middle school and note the structural differences that seem to result in improved reading habits and achievement.

We spotlight the literacy practices of three boys who provide different perspectives on their experiences with reading. We finish with a discussion of the implications for curricular innovations at the secondary school level that are useful in motivating students to read.

The implications of a gender gap in literacy learning should not be ignored.

Motivating Adolescents to Read

Unlocking the secret of motivation for reading among adolescents has been of interest to educators, librarians, and families for decades (Malloy, Marinak, & Gambrell, 2010). This has led to the development of useful survey instruments such as the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher, Albright, & Delaney, 2007), borne out of

acknowledged fundamental differences among adolescents about what is read and when and for what purpose the reading occurs both in and out of school. Given the role of self-regulatory skills needed by middle and high school readers, students must find the intrinsic motivation needed to engage in literacy activities (Klassen, 2010).

Reading takes on an increasingly prominent role in learning during middle and high school, as the ability to acquire, synthesize, and evaluate information becomes a deciding factor in who will succeed academically (Draper, Broomhead, & Jensen, 2010). As well, one's motivation to do well in school is a predictor of academic achievement (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009). It's this nested nature of motivation and reading that is so vexing: How can these complex constructs be translated into viable classroom practice?

Ivey and Broadus (2001) addressed this problem in their examination of factors that motivated middle school boys to read. Their survey of more than 1,800 students, and interviews with dozens of them, revealed that these students valued a sense of purpose for the reading, a physical and temporal space to engage in independent reading, and lots of choice among diverse text types to do so. These three areas together appear to have a positive impact on the reading volume of both genders.

Supportive classroom practices for reading have also been developed through programs such as Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), described by Guthrie, Alao, and Rinehart (1997) as theme-based units designed to motivate adolescents to engage in the exploration, questioning, and evaluation of complex concepts.

These practices include active teacher involvement as a fellow learner, use of resources deemed relevant by the learners, and opportunities for self-directed learning to foster autonomy. While these classroom practices are not identified as gender-specific, they mirror the needs of many adolescent male learners.

Motivating Adolescent Males to Read

A gender gap in reading has existed for decades and is cause for legitimate concern among educators, families, and communities (Gates, 1961). Evidence of this can be seen on the reading scores on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), where eighth-grade girls outperformed boys (NAEP, 2009).

However, the good news is that boys as a group made more progress when compared to girls on the 2009 exam, and they have made steady progress since 1992. The surface logic of biological differences has been used as a way to paint with broad strokes a dark portrait of boys as more violent, less able to sit still, and lacking the teacher-pleasing behaviors that are valued by their predominantly female teachers.

Watson, Martino, and Watson (2010) cautioned that these easy explanations obscure factors such as poverty, language factors, classroom practices, and family influences that cause some boys to lag behind some girls. In addition, they note, "it is important to understand that not all boys are at risk and that their poor performance is not inevitable" (p. 357).

The implications of a gender gap in literacy learning should not be ignored; neither should they be conflated with other curricular and instructional practices that have a negative impact on members of both genders. Newkirk (2000), in his article "Misreading Masculinities," recommended understanding the genres of reading, writing, and viewing that boys engage in, such as cartoons, television, and video games, in order to better understand and appreciate when male students emulate these forms in their writing.

While sensible, it is in line with best practices for teachers to do their best to know about the lives of all of their students (International Reading Association,

2010). Watson et al. (2010) proposed examining the curricular and instructional approaches that provide boys and girls with the means to engage in reading in ways that “make learning active and purposeful” (p. 360). Using this as inspiration, we sought to discover what inspired ninth-grade boys and girls whose previous middle school reading lives were underwhelming. Rather than analyze the curricular and instructional elements directly, we allowed their insights to tell us where to look.

Having designed an English curriculum a few years earlier to increase reading and writing achievement, we wanted to know if it also had a positive effect on student motivation. We first looked at the ninth grade as a whole and then selected three boys for a more in-depth examination of their literacy practices.

Inspiration for the Study

This study grew from a simple review of students’ reading logs in late spring of the school year. When we examined the logs of 115 students (61 males and 54 females) enrolled in the ninth-grade English classes, we were surprised that there was little difference reported in the number of books read. We first asked ourselves if we just got lucky and had a group of students who really liked to read. That seemed unlikely, so we set out to test this theory by asking students how many books they read in ninth grade versus their previous year in middle school.

We designed a simple electronic self-report survey asking students how many books they read (by title) during the current year and how many they read (by title) the previous year. The survey was on their school login page and all of them completed it. Of the 61 male students, the average number of books read during their ninth-grade year was 11.2, compared with the average from eighth grade, which was 2.5. The girls offered similar statistics: 11.7 books in ninth grade versus 3.8 books in eighth grade.

This led us to question students’ self-reports. We wondered if students were reporting reading more because they understood that their teachers liked to read. We decided to interview each of the students during independent reading time, using a semistructured interview protocol (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The interview lasted between five and 12 minutes, depending on how much the student had to say about specific books. It took just over three weeks for us to interview all of the students. The questions included

- How many books did you read this year?
- How many books did you read last year?
- If you read more books this year, why? If you read fewer books this year, why?
- What was your favorite book this year? Why?
- What have your teachers done to encourage or discourage reading?
- What’s your favorite part of the English class?

Understanding that our students might be responding in ways that they felt were socially desirable, we decided to contact their middle school teachers. We e-mailed every middle school teacher of our students that we could find, and 37 of them responded. (The high number is due to the large geographical area that our school draws upon.) We furnished the name(s) of their former students and asked them to recall about how many books a specific student had read.

We also asked how the teachers selected books for their English curriculum and about the ways the books were used. We tallied the results by title and by student and compiled the results. Although middle school teachers’ and students’ self-reports were based primarily in recollection, they provided us with a general sense of an increased volume for both girls and boys in their first year of high school.

These middle school teachers also confirmed what our students told us—specific texts were generally assigned and students didn’t read much. At each of the middle schools we contacted, grade levels had assigned book lists for their English curriculum.

Our review of the lists didn’t unearth any particular patterns that seemed to work against boys. The list included classics and contemporary novels, many of which we thought students this age would find interesting. There were a fair number of titles that had a male protagonist, most of them being young adolescents. It didn’t appear that the problem was the book per se, but rather the way in which it was being used.

We wondered if there were components of our curriculum that were facilitating students' reading and achievement. We purposefully selected three boys with different achievement, language, and experience profiles to tell us what contributed to their increased interest in reading.

School and Student Profiles

Our school is demographically diverse: 48% Latino/Hispanic, 20% African American, 19% White, and 9% Asian/Pacific Islander. In addition, 48% of our students speak at least one language in addition to English and 62% of our students live in poverty. Overall achievement is impressive, with 63% of our students scoring proficient or advanced ratings on state assessments, with no differences between boys and girls in terms of achievement.

Take Nico (all names are pseudonyms), for example. Nico is a high performing student, with straight A's in middle and high school and excellent scores on state tests. He reports reading 14 books in ninth grade but only having read two in eighth grade. As he said, "You didn't really have to read. The books were just assigned, but you could pass without reading." When asked for details about this, Nico reported that he was assigned to read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* in eighth grade. "I didn't read it because I found all of the answers to the worksheet on the Internet."

But the same is true for Eric, an Asian/Pacific Islander who has a learning and behavioral disability. He says that he was assigned three books to read in middle school but didn't read any of them. In ninth grade, he read nine books "because they needed to be read for me to understand the [essential] question. I didn't know the answer and the books helped me think of my answer." When asked about his middle school experience, Eric provided the following example:

I had to read this book my teacher really liked about a girl who had to live alone in the country (*Hattie Big Sky* by Kirby Larson). She [the teacher] talked about the book every day, so I didn't read it, I just listened to her.

Claudio, a long-term English learner and struggling reader who was labeled "unmotivated" in middle school, reports reading 11 books in ninth grade

and confirms the experiences of both Nico and Eric; reading was assigned in middle school and there was little relevance for him. Claudio says, "I never got why the books got picked. They weren't too interesting anyway."

Data Analysis

The interviews with 115 students yielded a large data set. We used a constant-comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002) to identify themes. Three dominant themes emerged: inquiry questions that captured their interest (175 statements), teacher modeling of skills and strategies (84 statements), and opportunities for choice (212 statements).

Using these themes from the entire ninth grade, we met individually with the three boys to discuss their views. The interviews lasted between 19 and 28 minutes and were recorded and transcribed so that we could accurately quote them. In the next section, we will explore each of the identified themes from a curricular viewpoint and then use the written and spoken words of the boys to further illuminate these ideas.

Essential Questions Create Inquiry Opportunities in English

Curriculum Supports

The curriculum at our school is organized around essential questions that students select through a schoolwide vote. In April of each year, students, alumni, teachers, and parents submit questions for consideration. One of the English teachers organizes the questions and reviews them to ensure we are not repeating ones from previous years. Students then vote and the top four are used the following school year.

Posters of the questions are hung in every classroom as well as in public areas of the school. Every teacher addresses the essential questions through integrated curriculum units and class discussions. For example, the Biology teacher taught genetics using the question, "What is beauty and/or beautiful?" During Algebra, students were introduced to lottery winners who were miserable as part of the question, "Can you buy your way to happiness?" In Art, students produce a visual representation of their thinking about each of the questions.

The purpose of these schoolwide essential questions is to prompt inquiry and promote interdisciplinary knowledge (Wilhelm, 2007). Onosko (1992) described thought-provoking questions as a practical means for organizing curriculum around issues of importance to adolescents.

For each question, English teachers provide students with a list of independent reading books that address the question in some way. Students select a book and read it in class each day, often meeting in discussion groups with other classmates who are reading the same title. In addition, the English teachers model their thinking by reading a passage from a touchstone book aloud each day in response to the essential question.

At the end of each nine-week term, students write an essay in which they answer the question drawing upon personal experiences, content learned in this and their other courses, and the books they've read. Some of the questions that have guided our curriculum are as follows:

- Does age matter?
- If we can, should we?
- What sustains us?
- Can you buy your way to happiness?
- Who am I? Why do I matter?
- What is race and does it matter?
- What is beauty and/or beautiful?
- What is gender?
- What's worth fighting, or even dying, for?

In each case, the question generates student interest. There isn't an easy answer to the questions and class time is spent talking about different perspectives on the questions. In addition, it's not easy to look up an answer to these questions on the Internet.

What the Students Had to Say

Nico noted,

I thought you could buy your way to happiness and was going to write that. But then I read [Aldous Huxley's] *Brave New World* and it changed my thinking. I don't think anyone else picked my book, but I ended up telling people about it and I think they will read it next.

Eric read several books for the question "Does Age Matter?" As he noted,

I didn't get it at first because I thought age just mattered. Then I read [Angela Johnson's] *The First Part Last* and [Ishmael Beah's] *A Long Way Gone* and those books made me think. But I wasn't really ready to talk about it until I read [John Boyne's] *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and then I was ready. Age doesn't matter; it's what you do and what happens to you that matters.

The essential questions were critical in creating a need to read.

After talking with our students, we came to realize that the questions did more than guide curriculum development efforts. They also served to create an inquiry orientation for students and their reading (e.g., Burke, 2010). To a student, the essential questions were critical in creating a need to read. Students found the questions interesting, didn't have an easy answer, and knew that reading would help them answer the question for themselves.

In turn, inquiry resulted in meaningful discussions inside and outside of the classroom. Students used books as vehicles for discovering what they thought about the world. Interestingly, every student we interviewed talked about at least one of the essential questions that captured their interests and hooked them into reading several books on the topic.

They also talked about the essays they wrote and how they saw the connection between the essential question and the book they were reading. For example, Claudio, an English learner who speaks Spanish at home, wrote his essay in response to the question about happiness.

Claudio's essay includes information about texts he read in class with his peers as well as the book he read on his own. As is evident from the first two paragraphs included below, there is room for improvement. However, this quote does demonstrate an understanding of the topic and represents his ideas rather than a regurgitation of a book that he wasn't interested in reading.

**Writing aloud,
like reading aloud
or thinking aloud,
invites the student
into the teacher's
mind.**

No. No. And no again. Money cannot buy happiness. I used to think it could, but being forced to go to Mexico made me realize that other things, not money, made me happy. When I was deported, I was comparing people from Tijuana, and people from San Diego. I saw people from Tijuana who didn't have money, but they did have a family and that made them happy because they saw that their kids weren't on drugs and involved in gangs. There are other reasons that I know believe that money can't buy happiness, including

the fact that people who become rich aren't always happy and people didn't always have money but were happy.

One reason that I say money can't buy happiness is because people who get money don't become happy. For example, we learned about people who won the lottery but they didn't become happy (Granato, 2006). They thought that they would have a new life, a better life where they were happy, because they were rich. But they didn't become happy. What happened to them is that they had to pay more taxes. They also got asked by other people, like their friends, for money. They didn't know who was their friends because everyone wanted their money. Another example is the spoiled, rich kid who does a lot of drugs because he or she is not happy. They have a lot of money, but they aren't happy because they keep wanting things that they don't have.

Teacher Modeling and Public Composition

Curriculum Supports

Another aspect of the school's structure that facilitated reading for both boys and girls is teacher modeling. Our students told us that this aspect of our instruction makes content "more understandable" and that they like hearing what their teachers think about. Teachers model their thinking while reading or problem-solving such that students hear experts and how experts process information (Davey, 1983; Wilhelm, 2008). In terms of reading, teachers model their comprehension, word solving, and their use of text structures and text features.

For example, during the essential question "Does Age Matter?" English teachers modeled their thinking

using a variety of informational texts and the classic *Peter Pan* (Barrie, 2003). Early in the reading, the teacher read, "While they talked, they heard a distant sound. You or I, not being wild things of the woods, would have heard nothing, but they heard it, and it was the grim song" (p. 47). She then said,

I appreciate how the author is making a connection with the reader here. Authors have different ways of doing this, but this one speaks directly to me. I'm now part of the story and I know that I'm not one of the bad guys, or wild things.

Teachers also write aloud to model their composing processes, which is important. This public composing of essay responses, part of our modeling efforts, allows students to witness how their teachers draw upon knowledge from books and personal experience to formulate a coherent argument. Writing aloud, like reading aloud or thinking aloud, invites the student into the teacher's mind.

In the case of writing, students get firsthand experience of the composing and editing process that a skilled writer uses. As Duffy (2003) pointed out, "The only way to model thinking is to talk about how to do it. That is, we provide a verbal description of the thinking one does or, more accurately, an approximation of the thinking involved" (p. 11). For example, one of our colleagues wrote aloud about *Peter Pan*. The first paragraphs of his paper follow, with brackets marking his spoken words during his write aloud:

In our society, age is often used as a way to measure one's maturity and capability of handling increased responsibility. [I am trying to draw my reading in. I'm thinking that I'll make a general statement about society so that my reader won't argue with me.]

In Neverland, age signifies the difference between the youthful *Peter Pan* and his Lost Boys and their aging counterparts, Captain Hook and his pirates. In the real world, it is difficult to forget that age is inevitable. [I want to let my reader know that I'm comparing the book *Peter Pan* to the world today that we all know. Our society is so focused on age that I think my reader will understand.]

However, J.M. Barrie, the author of *Peter Pan*, imagined a world where the process of aging did not exist. In this world—Neverland, that is—*Peter Pan* and the Lost Boys exemplify eternal youth, while

Captain Hook and his pirates represent the effects of time and the process of growing older. Much like the pirates of Neverland, we too are affected by the aging process, and unlike Peter and Lost Boys, we grow older with every waking moment. [I need to provide a little summary of the book, at least as it's connected to my essay, for people who haven't read it.]

Instead of viewing age as a negative aspect to our lives, as does Peter Pan, I see it as an opportunity to gain knowledge, respect, and wisdom. [And there's my point: I don't see age as negative. I want my reader to know my perspective within the first paragraph, but I wanted to lead them to it rather than just start with my idea. Can you reread my paragraph and talk with your partner? Review what I did to number one, capture my reader, and number two, make my perspective on the question clear.]

[Welcome back. I heard many of you analyzing my writing and some of you were taking notes about how you wanted to start. Well done. Now, I have to transition from my main idea to some specific points.] As children, age matters a great deal. Ask any kindergartner how old they are and they'll tell you precisely what their age is. To them, they are not five or six years old, rather, they are "five and a half" or "one month till six." [I like taking something that is common for people and explaining it. That's what I'm doing here, talking about kindergarteners.]

Throughout our childhood, we are reminded of how old we are most often by the restrictions placed upon us by the society that we live in. [I like my word choices. I think starting here with "throughout" is great and I like the idea of restrictions because it makes a connection to kids being on restriction, you know when you're in trouble. But I use the word differently.]

This becomes an increasingly important topic when we reach adolescence and we enter into high school. During this period of time, much of what we are allowed to do revolves around what age you are. Societal pressures to grow older can seem overwhelming at times, and some cannot help but wish they did not have to take on the added responsibility that ensues with age.

What Students Had to Say

Claudio said, "I never knew that they [teachers] had to think about what they were reading. I thought they just got it. And then I didn't just get it, so I quit."

Both Eric and Nico focused their comments on public composing. "It's really hard to write something and make it sound good, like you're not just dorky writing," said Eric. "I like it when she writes and tells us what she's thinking 'cause then I can see that it's not all smooth and everything." Nico remarked, "I can see how everything you put down is for a reason. You don't just write sentences to fill up the page. They have to be in an order that makes sense to the person who's reading it."

As students experience the public composing process and begin to write on their own terms, they draw on the modeling that their teachers have provided as well as the thinking processes demonstrated for them. As an example, Eric wrote the following opening paragraphs in his essay about age:

16 Going on Father

Do you think you are ready for a kid? The book that I am reading is *The First Part Last* by Angela Johnson and according to this book age does matter. In this essay, I will show how age matters for the characters in the book. I think this because of Bobby's interactions with the other characters, his words related to age, and because of the decisions that he has made in his life.

One example where age matters is shown as Bobby finds out that he is going to be a father. This happens on Bobby's 16th birthday when Nia, his girlfriend, comes over to his house to share the news with him. Bobby is having to take a big turn in his life, and has to prepare himself for a child. Bobby has to demonstrate more responsibility now that he is a father. Kids his age often don't know how to handle all this responsibility.

Students write their essays based on the books they've read, which leads to the last common theme from our discussions with students: choice. Every one of the students we interviewed named choice in reading as one of the reasons they read as much as they did.

Choice in Reading Materials

Curriculum Supports

The curriculum organization is designed to give students significant choice of reading materials. They can select any book from a list developed by

the English teachers to represent a range of text difficulty, genre, and type. For instance, choice books available in the classroom during the “Does Age Matter?” unit included short stories like “Thank You, M’am” by Langston Hughes, poems such as “My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke and “Queries to My Seventieth Year” by Walt Whitman, and nonfiction such as Russell Freedman’s *Kids at Work*.

Take Action!

There are a number of ways to encourage boys in your class to read. First, there must be texts worthy of reading made available for them. But the evidence from this study suggests that simply having texts available is not enough. In addition to interesting and relevant texts, we suggest you do the following:

1. Poll students about interesting questions, questions that they want to know the answers to. These should be questions for which there is not a clear-cut answer. When students generate questions, and want to know the answers, they’ll read more to find out.
2. Find literature that will help them answer the questions. This can include classics, contemporary, and young adult fiction and non-fiction. Increasing choice, along with the inquiry offered by essential questions, will increase students’ reading.
3. Invite students to talk about the books they are reading. This peer-to-peer sharing will encourage students to read the books their peers are reading, thus increasing reading volume and building background knowledge.
4. Model from a text that you read aloud that helps answer the essential question. Students appreciate hearing your thinking and how you are figuring out what you think about the essential question.
5. Ask students to write about their readings. We are fond of literacy letters in which students compose a weekly friendly letter to their teacher, but others have students write in their journals or blog. The idea is that students need to write about their reading.

While teachers help students choose books they can read, what they select is really up to them. No colored dots are affixed to the spines of books, and students are not told that a selection is too hard or easy for them. Over the course of this study, we came to realize that this is the key to inviting students into reading.

What Students Had To Say

Nico said,

I get a little stressed when I have to pick a new book. I want to find one that will help me answer the question and one that I’ll like. I start a book and then hear my friends talking about their books. I want to hurry up and read my book so that I can read what they’re reading. It’s how I read so many books this year. I didn’t mean to or anything. It just happened because we were talking about the question and the books all the time. I didn’t ever know that there were so many good books out there.

Eric had a similar experience. He also couldn’t imagine reading the number of books that he had read or liking it that much. He said,

I didn’t know that I liked to read. It used to be really hard for me and I would fight with my parents about it. They made me read those books from the teacher and I wouldn’t. Then they would yell at me. It’s not like that anymore. Like when I read [Pete Hautman’s] *Godless* for “If We Can, Should We?” I was telling my dad what was happening in the book every day. Then he got me [Pete Hautman’s] *Invisible* and I read that because I wanted to. That’s the first book I ever read not for school.

Choice was important to the students we interviewed. This is consistent with the findings of Ivey and Broaddus (2001) who found that choice was a strong motivator for middle school students. Whether this was due to the students’ need to exercise some control over their destiny or a matter of selecting topics that resonated with their experiences, we aren’t sure. What we are certain about is that choice, rather than assigned whole class novels, is an important aspect in reaching students and engaging them in learning. The touchstone text that the teacher read was viewed as a platform for making connections to other pieces.

Myth Busting

There is no debating the outcome data that clearly indicates that boys don't perform as well in school as girls do (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). However, as one of our colleagues recently said, the difference is probably not due to "that pesky Y chromosome." Perhaps it is time to challenge the prevailing myth of boys and their disinterest in reading.

Boys want the same thing from books that girls do: "they want to find themselves and lose themselves in books" (Miller, 2010, personal communication). Perhaps it is time to move beyond the boy versus girl debate about achievement and focus on structures that motivate and engage readers.

To do so, we need to consider classroom structures that invite all students into reading (Brozo, 2006). We need to engage students through inquiry (Onosko, 1992), apprentice them into expert thinking (Wilhelm, 2007), and develop their habits (Atwell, 2007). In doing so, we might influence the achievement data and create schools where learners want to spend time.

The students in this study pointed us to where we should look. They told us about the importance of choice as a defining quality in their motivation to read. Despite evidence to the contrary, the prevailing practice in English classrooms is to assign a single text, regardless of interest, typically as homework.

This leads to a second conundrum, which is that the assignment becomes the purpose, with little regard for the act of finding one's truth within the pages of the book. The students in this study told us that the essential question gave them a reason to read, and the policies of the class gave them the freedom to find their truths.

Finally, the teachers in this study positioned themselves as fellow learners, modeling for students that one's truths continue to be shaped by close readings. In this way they demonstrated that expertise isn't an endpoint, but rather is continually fostered.

For too many boys, classroom practices that limit choice, value compliance over purpose, and place the teacher as the keeper of all the knowledge, squeeze the vital juices out of the act of reading. It's time that we showed students that reading can be a subversive act, a play for power, a crime of passion, a line in the

sand. By equipping them with the tools they need to wrestle with larger questions, we can turn the "reading crisis" on its head.

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More to Explore

ReadWriteThink.org Lesson Plan

- "Boys Read: Considering Courage in Novels" by Helen Hoffner

IRA Book

- *To Be a Boy, To Be a Reader: Engaging Teen and Preteen Boys in Active Literacy* (2nd ed.) by William G. Brozo

IRA Journal Articles

- "Books Like Clothes: Engaging Young Black Men With Reading" by David E. Kirkland, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, November 2011
- "Gendered Literacy Experiences: The Effects of Expectation and Opportunity for Boys' and Girls' Learning" by Kathy Sanford, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, December 2005
- "'Not Just Boring Stories': Reconsidering the Gender Gap for Boys" by Donna Lester Taylor, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, December 2004