



# Between

## Reading for enjoyment linked to higher levels of thinking, post high school success rates

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Reading enriches the soul. It fills one with knowledge and lets one wander off into someone else's life and forget about their own hectic life, even if it is only for a few pages. Still, many high school students have stopped reading for enjoyment, and it affects them more than they know.

According to *Reading Between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals About College Readiness in Reading*, about half of ACT-tested high school students are prepared for college-level reading, based on 2005 ACT-tested students. It showed that students who do not read have low levels of preparation for when they go to college the next fall. Their "college readiness...is currently inadequate," said the study. Student readiness for college-level reading is at its lowest point in more than a decade. It is currently 51 percent, the lowest in the past 12 years, according to *Reading in Between the Lines*.

"Not reading affects [students'] literacy. To put it quite simply, if you do not read, whatever brain connections that might be made by the act of reading simply do not occur," said Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Composition teacher and College Board trustee Bernie Phelan. "While [a student] may not notice the loss because [they] become increasingly dim over time, nevertheless the loss takes place. [Students] do not have to notice the loss for the loss to take place," said Phelan. Poor readers have trouble learning in text-heavy courses. Their low literacy levels prevent them from understanding challenging subjects.

Knowledge and skills needed for college are

comparable to the knowledge needed in the workplace. Reading is extremely important for college and a working environment. "Most jobs require you to be able to think on your feet [and] to be able to respond very quickly. They do not give you two weeks to respond to a memo. To put it quite simply, you are expected to know what you think, why you think it, and what should be done on a moment-to-moment basis," said Phelan.

Low literacy levels not only affect students once they graduate, but it also affects them while they are in high school. Many students are reading below their grade level, and more than 3,000 students drop out of high school everyday. The most common reason: their literacy skills are not high enough to keep up with the curriculum, according to *Reading Between the Lines*.

One reason for the extremely low literacy of high school students is because they stop reading outside of school. Required reading affects students' desire to read. "[Students] stop reading because it has turned into a chore. It is something they have to do in order to write papers, and whatever the joy that might be present in reading is removed from reading," said Phelan.

Another problem that creates the low literacy of high school students is that some high schools feel that they do not need to teach reading in high school. Phelan believes that a high school that does not teach reading is a high school that is making a huge mistake. "The more we teach reading all the way into high school, if not into college, the better off students are going to be. We need to teach reading directly. [Teachers and administrators] cannot say, 'Teach people how to decode language and after third grade tell them to read silently.' It makes no sense. Essentially, while they may have

had more difficult books put in front of them, no one has given them any kind of instruction what might have been appropriate strategies to reading more difficult books," said Phelan. Phelan believes that teaching high school students strategies on how to read will help improve students' literacy.

An appropriate strategy to aid in reading more difficult books is the distinction between genres. "Understanding that non-fiction works differently than imaginative literature is important. The more you have a broad definition of literacy, that includes reading across the curriculum, the better," said Phelan.

Another strategy is to have a note taking technique so that students mark the text in a way that they understand it more clearly. "In other words, it is clear to [students] that [they] are having a kind of rhetorical triangle experience. That [they] are having an interaction among reader, writer, and text, as opposed to 'I have read the words and I know what they mean,' which does nothing for actual reading," said Phelan. According to *Reading in Between the Lines*, the clearest differentiator between students who are college-level reading ready and those who are not is the ability to comprehend complex texts.

Phelan also suggested to summarize, paraphrase, or precede writing in order to grasp difficult text. "That is trying to put [the text] into [the student's] own words what someone else is saying," said Phelan.

"I do not think people that have not read *Moby Dick* cannot live a life. I think they can lead a less rich life than I can for having read the book. And so, it is a matter of what you want your life to be like because, finally, the quality of life is not determined by objects, but by what is inside your head," said Phelan.

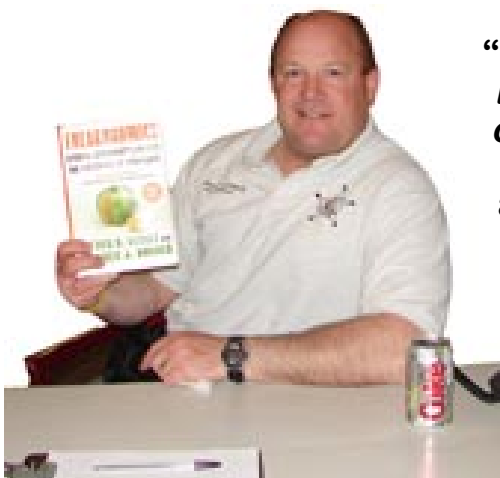
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## What is H-F reading?



"I am reading *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner. [It is] a different approach to economics and the way things are viewed."

-Officer Mark Phalen



"I am reading a book called *Crossing the Rubicon*. It's about the decline of the American empire at the end of the age of oil. The U.S. must lessen its dependence on foreign sources of energy."

-Harold Johnson, '06

# the lines...

Studies show that high school students are no longer reading. However, the benefits of reading are immense, and there are plenty of good books out there.

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## Marley and Me tells story of love, relationships with family, dogs

AMELIA KANE  
FEATURE EDITOR

"Marley had earned his place in our family. Like a quirky but beloved uncle, he was what he was. He would never be Lassie or Benji or Old Yeller; he would never read Westminster or even the county fair. We knew that now. We accepted him for the dog he was, and loved him all the more for it."

Marley and Me, by John Grogan, is the true story of Grogan and his family's good and bad times with their family pet. Grogan takes readers on Marley's journey from a young and spirited puppy into an old family watchdog, while also incorporating his own growth from a newlywed into a middle-aged father.

The book begins shortly after Grogan marries his long-time girlfriend Jenny. After Jenny nurses yet another houseplant to death, she becomes convinced she will never be able to be a mother and decides she needs to practice caring for something other than a bush. One short trip to the "puppy-farm" later, and the two newlyweds return to their starter home in West Palm Beach, Florida with Marley, their six-week old golden Labrador Retriever.

A dog is supposed to be man's best friend. However, Grogan soon discovers that Marley may be too much of a handful. In one instance, the couple leaves Marley in the garage while they go out to dinner and return to discover that, during a thunderstorm, Marley had shredded everything in sight in an attempt to get inside the house. After one eventful trip to obedience school, Marley manages to get him and his trusted master expelled from the class after the instructor claims that Marley is, "a distraction to other dogs," and "just too excitable."

There are parts of the story that will touch any reader's heart. The book deals quite a bit with the couples desire to have children someday. When Jenny has her first miscarriage,

Marley is a loyal companion, sitting by her side all throughout her recovery process. When the Grogans finally give birth to their first son, Patrick, Marley immediately becomes the baby's new best friend.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book that may not be evident to the reader is how closely Marley's development mirrors Grogan's. It seems that they almost synonymously become more and more mature as they spend year after year together. When Grogan turns 40, he makes a point of calculating Marley's age in dog years, only to find out that his dog, too, is "over-the-hill."

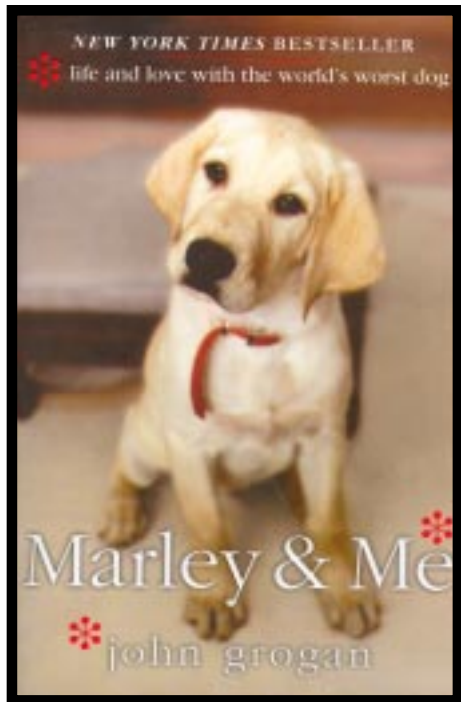
Towards the end of the book, the story becomes increasingly more dramatic. Once Jenny becomes pregnant with the couples third child, they decide to pack up the family and trade the sunny beaches of Florida for the quiet countryside of Pennsylvania. Just as the family's surrounding atmosphere seems to settle down and become simpler, Marley becomes the same way. It soon becomes evident that Marley is no longer the feisty puppy he used to be.

"Age sneaks up on us all, but it sneaks up on a dog with a swiftness that is both breathtaking and sobering. In the brief span of twelve years, Marley had gone from a bubbly puppy to an awkward adolescent to a muscular adult to a doddering senior citizen. He aged roughly seven years for every one of ours, putting him, in human years, on the downward slope to ninety."

The last few chapters of the book are dedicated to Marley's sweet, yet final days with the Grogan family.

The conclusion of the book is written with such painful honesty and emotion that it will cause readers to think about just how much their pets are a part of their family.

If readers judge Marley and Me by the cover, they may think it is merely some sappy story made only for dog lovers. However, it is much more than that. The book has the ability to cause outward laughter as well as tears and can make any person think about just how special the bonds are that are made between people and their pets.



Voyager rating (3.5 out of 4)



"I'm currently re-reading Ender's Game. I first read it in fifth grade, and became hooked on the action. Now, I'm reading it again for the sociopolitical commentary I missed when I was younger."

- Charlie Lubeck, '07



"I'm reading Disappearing Acts. It's about a woman who falls in love with a man despite his money problems and actions. I'm reading this because I saw the movie and liked it."

- Jacquelyn Weekley, '09



"I am reading Lifeguard. It is a murder mystery. These are my favorites! I never want to put the book down."

- Toni Ruswick, Guidance Counselor



"I am reading the Da Vinci Code. It's an incredible book that makes you hate to put it down. I would highly recommend this if you're looking for a good book."

- Michael Patterson, Business Teacher



"I am reading Speak. It is about a girl that accidentally got all of her friends in trouble with the law and is now an outcast."

- David Kim, '08