

Do we need summer reading?

Business



Summer is the time where most students ditch their books and put their brains away, including me. For this summer, I read the book *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote.

I read the book in pieces which made it hard for me to understand and appreciate its true literary merit. The valuable time that I waste playing on the computer, conversing on the phone or spending times with my friends could have been used to read the book. My brother told me that I should appreciate the book and not be so easily distracted; I should also read different styles of writing since reading one book for summer vacation is not enough. Reading different forms of writing is critical for students to develop their literary skills, which made me believe that there should be different types of good books. Summer reading policies usually consists of a list of books for grades 9 to 12. Each grade is required to read a specific book that is assigned to them during the summer. After the students finish reading the book, they are required to do an assignment based on the book.

The assignment should be handed in to the teacher when school begins. Although there are no discussions about the book, students should have an intellectual discussion on the style of writing in book. Critic and author, Francine Prose, in “ I Know Why the Caged Bird Can Not Read”, asserted that “ In fact, less and less attention is being paid to what has been written, let alone how; it’s become a rarity for a teacher to suggest that a book might be a work of art composed of words or sentences, or that the choice of these words and sentences can inform and delight us.” Prose criticized teachers not discussing writing for its styles. Instead, teachers use books as a reference to students.

Students make connections to the situations or characters in the book instead of analyzing and appreciating the text. “ And so the roster of literary masterpieces we pass along to future generations will continue its downward shift, and those lightweight, mediocre high school favorites will continue to rise, unburden by gravity, to the top of the list.” Reading good literature should benefit the students; schools should not offer students mediocre literature and talk about only the plot and subject of the book, schools should teach students to appreciate the diction and syntax in the book. Reading different varieties of good books is critical for children to step forward. They will formulate their own opinions on what they think is trash or what is not.

More than 20 percent of adults read at or below a fifth grade reading level and an estimate of 50 percent of American adults can not read an eighth grade level book as shown in a the statistics from the Literacy Company. Half of Americans are already below average readers; we should not raise the percentage any further, therefore we should have more selections of good books. In Cold Blood was a book that was assigned to juniors for the summer. The book was very descriptive, which made it seem like a novel instead of non fiction. Capote’s style and form of words built my ambivalent emotions towards the criminals. I felt pity for Perry because of his inadequate and misfortunate past and hatred for killing an innocent family.

Nevertheless, In Cold Blood is a true work of art. There should be more selections similar to In Cold Blood to arise more discussions in class and increase student’s curiosity and motivation. It is true that policies that require children at the same grade level to read the same book is more

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efficient because every student can discuss his or her opinion on what he or she thinks about the book. Students are able to understand each other's perspectives. It would be easier for the teachers to grade the assignments if students only read one book. However, by only reading one book, students will only see one style of writing.

It is dull and bland. If there were good varieties, students will explore more good literature and be more motivated to read. All policies should consist of a list of books for each grade. Reading a book and discussing about it is a good thing. It enhances the student's thoughts and views.

But reading a book and discussing different types of books is better. It enhances the student thoughts, views, and gives them motivation or sparks their interest to want to read another book. By having more selections, students will be motivated to read because they get to make their own choices and thus their literary skills will increase.