

Reading Reasons: The Reading Minute *Motivational Mini-Lessons for High School*

adapted from Kelly Gallagher

The Reading Minute

At the beginning of each class period, a piece of interesting reading is shared with the class. This sharing usually takes a minute or less, and there are no follow-up assignments. The shared reading can come from a range of sources, from poetry to nonfiction. The selections may be culled from newspapers, magazines, novels, textbooks—anywhere we, as readers, come across interesting text. All the Reading Minutes demonstrate to our students that there is a world of reading richness out there and allow teachers to have a fun, quick way to have students work toward mastery of RL.2 (summary/analysis), RI.2 (central idea), W.10 (write routinely) and get a better understanding of thesis, which was added to the Writing Standards in the 2017 revision.

1. For the first month of school, the teacher conducts the Reading Minute. Pick an interesting passage or article to read to the students. You could pick something from the current book you are reading, or choose something from an online newspaper or current magazine to share (there is always at least one high-interest article in a daily newspaper—if we read the paper from a student’s point of view).
2. After reading the selection, students open their notebooks (traditional or digital) to the “Reading Minute” section. Have them write the day’s date and a one-sentence summary, thesis statement, analysis, central idea, etc. to remember the day’s Reading Minute. (This also helps to make sure they all pay attention during the Reading Minute.) Be strict about one sentence only—this helps develop their summary skills.
3. In October, students can begin leading the Reading Minute. Have students sign-up on a calendar for the remainder of the school year. Each student in each period must sign up for five days between October and June. On the days they sign up, they are responsible for the Reading Minute. Encourage them to spread out their sign-up days to give them the opportunity to read a range of materials. Thus, each student will conduct five different Reading Minutes between October and June. If any open days remain, the teacher conducts the Reading Minute those days.
4. When a student finishes sharing, the class is required to say, “Thank you.”
5. At the end of the school year, students should have written 150-180 summary sentences of all the interesting reading that was shared. This reinforces that reading in itself is a rich and rewarding pursuit. As an end-of-the-year reflective assignment, students can write about the Reading Minutes. Possible topics:
 - Which Reading Minute was your favorite?
 - Which Reading Minute taught you something?
 - Is there value in the Reading Minute assignment?
 - Should I require next year’s students to continue the Reading Minute?
 - How has beginning each day with reading/writing helped you to master standards?
 - What skills were strengthened through the Reading Minute daily activity?

What kinds of passages should you share?

Passages you find beautiful	Passages you find interesting	Passages that exhibit great writing
Passages that anger you	Passages that trouble you	Passages that perplex you
Passages that raise your curiosity	Passages you find humorous	Passages that challenge you to think differently

Where should you find passages?

Books (fiction and nonfiction), Poetry, NewsELA, CommonLit, Newspapers, Magazines, Speeches, Essays, Maps, Graphs, Charts, etc.
Thought Catalog

Some Reading Minute Examples

“I will be very careful the next time I fall in love, she told herself. Also, she had made a promise to herself that she intended on keeping. She was never going to go out with another writer: no matter how charming, sensitive, inventive or fun they could be. They weren’t worth it in the long run. They were emotionally too expensive and the upkeep was complicated. They were like having a vacuum cleaner around the house that broke all the time and only Einstein could fix it. She wanted her next lover to be a broom.”

Richard Brautigan, *Sombrero Fallout*

“You think because he doesn’t love you that you are worthless. You think that because he doesn’t want you anymore that he is right — that his judgement and opinion of you are correct. If he throws you out, then you are garbage. You think he belongs to you because you want to belong to him. Don’t. It’s a bad word, ‘belong.’ Especially when you put it with somebody you love. Love shouldn’t be like that. Did you ever see the way the clouds love a mountain? They circle all around it; sometimes you can’t even see the mountain for the clouds. But you know what? You go up top and what do you see? His head. The clouds never cover the head. His head pokes through, because the clouds let him; they don’t wrap him up. They let him keep his head up high, free, with nothing to hide him or bind him. You can’t own a human being. You can’t lose what you don’t own. Suppose you did own him. Could you really love somebody who was absolutely nobody without you? You really want somebody like that? Somebody who falls apart when you walk out the door? You don’t, do you? And neither does he. You’re turning over your whole life to him. Your whole life, girl. And if it means so little to you that you can just give it away, hand it to him, then why should it mean any more to him? He can’t value you more than you value yourself.” – Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

“If you’re going to try, go all the way. Otherwise, don’t even start. This could mean losing girlfriends, wives, relatives and maybe even your mind. It could mean not eating for three or four days. It could mean freezing on a park bench. It could mean jail. It could mean derision. It could mean mockery–isolation. Isolation is the gift. All the others are a test of your endurance, of how much you really want to do it. And, you’ll do it, despite rejection and the worst odds. And it will be better than anything else you can imagine. If you’re going to try, go all the way. There is no other feeling like that. You will be alone with the gods, and the nights will flame with fire. You will ride life straight to perfect laughter. It’s the only good fight there is.”

Charles Bukowski, *Factotum*