

The Secret to Getting Reluctant Readers Hooked on Books

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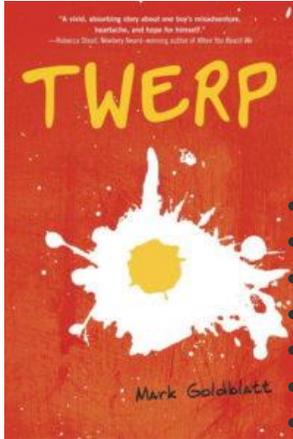


In [Part 1](#), “The Crazy Reading Ladies” explained how they turned Horace Mann Middle School into the school that reads, and in [Part 2](#), they discussed how assistive technology enhances the reading experience and delivers social and academic benefits. In Part 3, “The Crazy Reading Ladies” share tips to get kids reading, favorite books and authors, and more student success stories.

Teachers are incredibly resourceful and creative when it comes to helping students thrive in school. Erin and Mary, affectionately known as “The Crazy Reading Ladies” by their students, have honed their tried-and-true techniques for converting reluctant readers to bookworms.

Top 10 Tips to Engage Reluctant Readers

1. **Have good books available.** Advertise them on bulletin boards, in the cafeteria, and in the bathroom stalls.
2. **Read what the kids are reading.** Allows you to recommend books and engage them in conversation.
3. **Bless their choices.** When a child talks to you about a book, say “I read that too and can’t wait to talk to you about it” or “I haven’t read that one yet. Let me know how you like it!”
4. **Create a culture of literacy** where the expectation is that everybody is reading.
5. **Always have the next book suggestion in mind.** If a student comes to you looking for a book, make sure they don’t leave empty-handed. “If you liked X, then try Y.”
6. **Give them permission to abandon a book.** Life’s too short for bad books.
7. **Use books to build relationships with kids.** Find common ground through books.
8. **Read aloud.** People often assume that middle school students are too old to be read to, or they don’t enjoy it. Our kids love it.
9. **Celebrate successes.** Take a picture of that kid who just finished a book. Tweet it out and tag the author!
10. **Give students time and space to read.** If you’re worried about people seeing kids “just reading,” hang a poster in your classroom proclaiming what’s really happening: kids are practicing empathy, visualizing, learning about history, taking a different perspective, improving their fluency, and developing their vocabulary.



Favorite Titles Guaranteed to Entice Reluctant Middle School Readers

Bookshare has all of these books available for download in a variety of formats:

- [Monster](#) by Walter Dean Myers
- [Speak](#) by Laurie Halse Anderson
- [Holes](#) by Louis Sachar
- [Twerp](#) by Mark Goldblatt
- [Salt to the Sea](#) by Ruta Sepetys
- [The War That Saved My Life](#) by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
- [The Honest Truth](#) by Dan Gemeinhart
- [Out of My Mind](#) by Sharon Draper
- Series such as: [The Hunger Games](#), [Sylo](#), [Harry Potter](#), [The Red Queen](#), [Matched](#)

“Go To” Authors that Teachers Can Recommend with Confidence

- [Margaret Peterson Haddix](#) – teen fiction
- [Ellen Hopkins](#) – teen fiction
- [April Henry](#) – mystery/thrillers
- [Jordan Sonnenblick](#) – “Tuesdays with Morrie” for teens
- [Ruta Sepetys](#) – historical fiction
- [Mike Lupica](#) – novels about sports and athletes

More Student Success Stories

Erin: Dylan, a 7th grader, only read two books last year, one of which was *Henry and Ribsy*, a book for elementary students. So far this year he has read eight books. His oral fluency has increased from 78 words per minute (below 2nd grade level) to 161 wpm (above 7th grade level). This breakthrough isn't the result of extraordinary teaching; it's what happens when kids read (special thank you to author M.P. Haddix, whose books hooked him big time!)

Mary: Can we talk about my son, Vinnie? He's an intelligent kid who just didn't like to be bothered with reading; however, he loves a good story. With the help of the audio narration, he read *Holes*, and he never had a book hook him like *Holes* did. He talked about it daily. A year later, he will still tell you it's his favorite book. He loved the characters, the fight for justice at Camp Green Lake, the serpentine storyline, and how it all came together at the end.

Erin: Sometimes students use Bookshare as the gateway to reading. They let it build their confidence and then find that they don't need it all the time. Alex, a 7th grader, started a book using the audio only and then continued reading on his own about halfway through. He stated simply, “I know how it sounds now.”

Erin and Mary: Every student's needs are different, and Bookshare allows them to customize their reading experience in whatever way works best, whether that's audio only, text with audio, or text only using whatever reading tool or app they prefer. These successes do more than increase comprehension. They heal the relationship these kids have had with books, and once they have a positive experience, they're willing to do it again. We hope that these tips and examples will help your students go “all in” with reading.

