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# Good Books, Good Authors

Sample Pages



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## Course Overview

*Good Books, Good Authors* is a graduate level literature survey course, exploring what makes a “good” book\* and a “good” author. ” Choose good books and good authors from any genre and for any age level, including adult. The intent of this course is to discern what makes a good book and to study the relationship between a good book and its author. As you read, you will choose an author to study in depth. Read many books by the author you have chosen, including an autobiography or biography. Keep a reading log, and explore the connection between reading good books and the life and work of the person behind the pen. Create an author study presentation and a curriculum application that is suitable to your personal and professional purposes.

Good books are well crafted. Good writing is marked by common ideas made new; a strong voice or personality; rich vocabulary; sentence fluency that creates a balance of flow; organization that helps the reader comprehend and a presentation that invites reading, engaging the gifted reader as well as the reluctant reader.

Through exercises in the text, *Good Books, Good Authors* you will be introduced to a wide variety of reading resources and web sites to add to your repertoire for choosing good books and good authors. Choose authors of adult literature, authors of children’s and young adult books. Read fiction and nonfiction to support the content of your curriculum and meet the Common Core State Standards. Reading and studying good books and good authors helps readers to be better readers, and writers to be better writers. Good authors and good books provide mentor texts as co-teachers of reading and writing as mentor texts. Use an author’s expertise and research will help you make the content of any curriculum rich and exciting.

Being able to recommend good books to students builds personal rapport and authenticates the value of reading. To encourage deeper reading and reading of more complex texts, choose texts which are at the reading level of your students and beyond. Stretch your student’s abilities by matching good books to their interests, as way of stimulating and answering questions, and build aspirations. The more students engage with print as a tool for answering their questions and building their knowledge, the more independent they become. It is in this way that reading becomes meaningful, purposeful and a life skill.

Our students need to see us, the adults in their life, reading and talking about our reading, to know that reading is not just a “school activity,” but also a life skill, a way to entertain and inform. Sorting through the plethora of texts, both in print and digital requires tools of discernment. What is worth spending time reading? What texts are reliable sources of information? Passing on the skills of choosing good books by good authors helps provide students 21<sup>st</sup> century reading skills. We must read to our students, we must read what they read, and share with them what we read pleasure and information. Let your students see the continuum of reading in action. We encourage our students to read on a daily basis, and so should we. So, your assignment in this class is, READ, READ, and READ. The text, *Good Books, Good Authors* is divided into four units.

### **Unit 1: Choosing Good Books and Good Authors to Read**

1. Introduction to *Good Books, Good Authors*
2. Great Books about Good Books and Good Authors
3. Resources at Your Fingertips: Reviewing the Internet
4. Have you Read This One? Getting Started
5. It Takes a Good Writer to Make a Good Book
6. It Takes a Good Book to Make a Good Reader
7. Making a List: Choosing Good Books and Good Authors to Read

### **Unit 2: Record Keeping**

8. Authentic Record Keeping: Reading Log
9. Creating the System: A Few Ideas
10. What Do You Want to Remember?
11. Reading Log

### **Unit 3: Author Study**

12. In Their Own Word: Reading Autobiographies
13. Autobiographical Resources
14. Author's Web Sites
15. Creating an Author Study Presentation
16. An Author Study Presentation Example: Lois Lowry
17. More Resources to Help you Build Author Studies: Children's Authors

### **Unit 4: Curriculum Applications**

18. Curriculum Applications
19. K-W-L
20. Using what I Know about Choosing Books to Create Curriculum
21. Using 6+1 Traits to Analyze Writing
22. Imitating Good Writing
23. Using Authors as Co-teachers to Create Writing Curriculum

Complete the exercises in the text. Read good books by good authors and annotate them in a reading log that best meets your needs. Pick one author to study in more depth. Read an autobiography or biography. Create an author study presentation. Include background about the author, a chronological bibliography and a brief review of the books you read by that author. How will you use what you've read in your classroom? Create a curriculum application (e.g. lesson plan). Complete a reflection paper evaluating what you have learned in this course.

But above all, remember this course is for YOU. Tailor designing the course work to meet your needs is invited. Please contact the instructor if you have questions, modifications or ideas that will make this course more meaningful to you.

*This course meets **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** for K-12 Anchor Standards for Reading 1,2,3,4,5,6, and 10, and Anchor Standards for Reading Standards for Informational Texts 6-12, Standards RI, 2,3,4,5,6, and 10, and supports the work for Anchor Standards for Writing 1-10.*

*Teachers taking this course will focus on their grade level or content area expectations of the CCSS and their State Standards.*

**\*Throughout the text, the word “book” may be interpreted to mean any text in print, either hardbound or digital. “Author” designates the person who wrote the text. Some texts have more than one author. Some texts, like picture books have an illustrator and an author, both integral to the creation of the picture book.**

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## Reader to Reader

“Good books, like good friends, are few and chosen; the more select, the more enjoyable.” — Louisa May Alcott

If you love to read, you’ve come to the right course. *Good Books, Good Authors* is all about reading, choosing good books to read, and studying good authors who write them. Many read books before they notice who wrote the book. Liking a book often leads to wondering who wrote the book and seeking out others written by the same author. I think of *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett. I first listened to the book on a long drive. As I finish the book, I notice I am so caught up in the story that I purchased the book and read it again. Even at the end of this second read, I found myself reading the back and the fly jacket again. I think about the characters. I wonder where I can read more about the South and the Jim Crow laws. I want to read more by this author. Who was she? I find out this is her first novel. Has she written anymore? Reading the works by an author leads to discovering the author’s voice and craft of writing. Studying the author’s life offers insight to why the author chooses the topics he or she writes about and adds depth to reading their work. It is like sitting at the kitchen table over a cup of coffee, getting to really know the person who wrote the book. Connecting the person behind the pen to myself, as a reader and a writer, and to students, who are learning to read and write, is what authenticates the reading and writing process. We imitate those we like and admire. Choosing good books, by good authors offers the opportunity to choose a mentor.

The inscription over the Library of Thebes Greece says books are “medicine for the soul.” Mem Fox, author of notable picture books, describes a “good” book as one that provides “solace”. Lois Lowry, young adult writer and Newbery award winner, says a good book is one that creates strong connections and will satisfy a reader’s emotional needs. Seymour Simon, author of over 250 highly acclaimed science books for young adults says, “I’m more interested in arousing enthusiasm in kids than in teaching the facts. The facts may change, but that enthusiasm for exploring the world will remain with them the rest of their lives.” Interest and curiosity are the cornerstones for reading. (Retrieved from [http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/44618.Seymour\\_Simon](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/44618.Seymour_Simon) 4/6/13.) Reading and sharing good books by good authors develops the want to read. Jim Trelease, author of *The Read-Aloud Handbook* says, “What we teach children to love and desire will always outweigh what we make them learn.”

When I was in grade school I remember going to the public library on a weekly basis. We held on to a rope with knots, one on each side, one behind the other, a teacher in front and a teacher in back. We crossed several streets and soon came to the Library. Up the tall flight of broad, cement stairs, into the brick building that smelled of paper and was echo quiet. The teacher hushed us, out of habit, really, as the austerity of large paned-windows and big rooms intimidated my 6 year-old self. We tiptoed on wooden floors, through bookshelves rooms, while the glass eyes of the windows followed us with an austerity that seemed to remind us to be quiet. We sat at the feet of a young librarian, who holding the book of *Ping* waited for our attention. Soon, she had us mesmerized by the

antics of the little duck. Too soon, the story ended. As always, she asked, “Now, would anyone like to check this book out?” Immediately, 25 hands shot straight up. All of us wanted to be the chosen one to carry home the prized possession. No one cared that she had just read the story. We wanted to hold the book, read it again and again, savor the story, the pictures, the dance of words across the page that promised us entrance into imaginings beyond our wildest dreams. Those are the memories that started this journey into the magic of good books and good authors.

Researching good books and good authors leads me to new ideas about reading and writing. I wonder why am I drawn to this “book? Why do I want to read more books written by the same author? What is really important about sharing good books and good authors in the world of teaching and learning?

When I read a book or article that is well written by someone who has done the research and can explain a concept in words so that I get “it,” I get excited about learning. I want to know more! My brain is turned on. I am interacting with the text, making connections, visualizing, predicting, questioning, and wondering. I want to talk to others about what I am reading. Good authors have the ability to weave the craft of words, language and art, to stimulate thoughts, feelings and behaviors. I see that good authors write in a way that enhances reading comprehension. I learn that my boredom and confusion isn’t all about my inability to read, but rather a dynamic relationship between the author and myself, their expertise in content and their ability to write well. I learn to read like a teacher of reading.

But there is more. I notice my excitement about discovering a new author, reading their autobiography, and connecting their life with their work and my life. I learn that getting ideas for writing comes from one’s life experiences, the good, the bad and the ugly. I learn that I can learn about the craft of writing by studying what good authors do. I learn to read like a teacher of writing. I suddenly realize that good books and good authors can be co-teachers in my classroom. They can be the teachers of good writing for reading comprehension and good models for teaching the craft of writing. Hallelujah!

**Exercise 1:** Please introduce yourself, what you teach, and why you are taking this class. What is one of your childhood memories about reading?

**Please preview the text and course requirements before you begin. There are many resources and lists to access good books and good authors. You may want to visit some of the web sites, or order some of the books from your local library.**

# **Unit 1**

## **Choosing Good Books and Good Authors to Read**

## Introduction to Good Books and Good Authors

“It takes a good book to make a good reader.  
It takes a good writer to make a good book.”

Bowker, the world’s leading “book counter”, provider of bibliographic information catalogues the yearly publications of books (print and digital) for publishing industry market research. With the advent of eBooks and self-publishing the number of new titles published in 2008, doubled in 2009. In 2010, Bowker counted over 4,000,000 new book titles published! Nonfiction and informational texts combined dominate the publishing market. The largest single category, fiction, represents 53,000 new titles in 2010; juvenile literature represents 38,000 new titles. (Retrieved from [http://www.bowker.com/assets/downloads/products/isbn\\_output\\_2002-2011.pdf](http://www.bowker.com/assets/downloads/products/isbn_output_2002-2011.pdf) on 4/6/13.)

And those are just the *new* book titles. Walk into any library, bookstore, or surf the book stores online. You will soon be overwhelmed with choices. So many books, so little time. How do you choose good books to read for yourself? How do you choose good books for the children or young adults you work with? How do your students choose good books?

Books can be fiction or nonfiction, picture books, novels or illustrated texts. They can be print or digital. Books can be short or long. The content and purpose of the book will determine its organization, specific text features and readability. There are books and texts in every genre, and on every subject. Some books are old and some are new. Some books earn awards. Some books are classics. But what makes a “good” book?

The search for criteria to determine what makes a book “good” ranges from the opinion of the experts, such as literary critics, book reviewers, literary journal reviews to reports from authors of children’s books to educators, like you, who teach reading and reading comprehension, to the best expert of all, YOU, the reader.

What makes a good book is good writing. The Newbery Award is given to “the most distinguished book of the year”. Committee members consider many criteria in judging how the author’s craft, and choose the one that is “marked by excellence in quality”. “Horn Book Magazine”, a publication dedicated to reviewing children’s and young adult literature, gives the top rating to books that are “outstanding, noteworthy in style, content, and/or illustration”. Judy Freeman, librarian and author of *More Books Kids Will Sit Still For: A Read-Aloud Guide* lists 50 criteria for determining good books, which can be summed up as an author’s ability to weave their craft in unique and memorable ways that capture a reader each time they read the book.

Good writing engages readers through universal themes that connect with our lives. Good authors inform, entertain and enlighten through the medium of their craft-words and language. Good authors make the ordinary extraordinary, leave the reader with characters, plots, scenes that are unforgettable. Good authors inspire us to study their craft, to mimic their style to express ourselves through the art and science of words.

Reading good books is reading good writing. Good writing is what makes a good author. Good authors are co-mentors in the teaching/learning process.

This course is about reading good books and good authors. It is a chance to discover and indulge in reading great writers, their work, study their life and their craft. It is an opportunity to create curriculum that will inspire your students to read good books and good authors.

**Exercise 2:** Think about books you've read. Answer the following questions.

- What are some good books you have read?
- What makes a book “good”?
- What makes a book “bad”?
- What makes a “good” author?
- Name some good authors.
- What is “good” writing?
- What patterns have you noticed answering these questions about good books and good authors?

END OF SAMPLE PAGES.

SEE DETAILS FOR REGISTERING FOR THIS COURSE  
[WWW.COLLEGECOURSESONLINE.COM/](http://WWW.COLLEGECOURSESONLINE.COM/)