



Reading & Writing Skills: Tips for Growth from the Frassati Catholic English Department

Foundational Principles:

1. Reading is a daily habit for the most successful leaders.
2. Developing writing skills helps people to be clear thinkers and communicators.
3. It is a privilege and a joy to read great books.
4. People can learn to love reading, even if they don't initially love it.
5. Reading aloud is a foundational skill for fluency and comprehension in reading.

Practical Tips for adolescent readers (and their families):

1. **Read Aloud:** Reading aloud with fluency and appropriate expression is a sign of a good reader and can also help readers identify areas for growth. Adolescent readers should regularly read aloud. This can be done with books that are slightly below their reading level, but still interesting. Reading aloud also reveals how students attack unfamiliar words: do they guess or sound it out? Families can do read-alouds together, with each person taking a turn.
2. **Limit Audio Books:** Audiobooks are great for car rides, workouts, or chore time, but we do not recommend that audiobooks entirely replace personal reading. This is because when you listen to an audiobook, even with the page in front of you, the audiobook reader is doing the mental work of reading the words and even crafting meaning from them. This allows the listener to be more passive and less active. We learn a lot by having someone read to us (in person or via audio), but this shouldn't be the norm for the adolescent reader.
3. **Limit technology:** Let's return to a time when boredom was filled with creative activity (conversing, writing, creating games, drawing, acting, gardening) or engaging peacefully and thoughtfully in the creativity of others (watching an entire high-quality film, reading a book, reciting poetry). Technology is an excellent tool, but most of it today is designed for addiction, not liberty.
4. **Get help for decoding:** For a variety of reasons (see podcast: [Sold a Story](#)), many children and adults cannot read confidently and effectively. We are currently exploring ways to support students who need help with decoding (sounding it out). Here are few resources (based on online research, no experience yet):
 - a. Book: [Month-by-Month Phonics for Upper Grades](#)
 - b. [Lessons](#) and word [list](#) for students with dyslexia (and others)
 - c. Online phonics practice [program](#)
5. **Writing letters:** Challenge yourselves to start writing letters to people. It is a great way to say things we don't say in text or email, and we can keep letters and re-read them for years to come!

Books lists:

See the back for some suggestions for family read-alouds, reluctant readers, and voracious readers.

Books for Family Read-Alouds:

These are books that could be read and enjoyed by readers ages 10-adult

Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis

Little House on the Prairie by Laura Ingalls Wilder

The Hound of the Baskervilles by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle

All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriot

The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame

Peter Pan by J.M. Barrie

Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli

The Giver by Lois Lowry

Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe

The Prince and the Pauper by Mark Twain

Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson

Anne of Green Gables by L.M. Montgomery

Witch of Blackbird Pond, The Bronze Bow by E. G. Speare

Bridge to Terabithia by Katharine Patterson

The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

Wonder by R. J. Palacio

The Mysterious Benedict Society by Trenton Lee Stewart

Animal Farm by George Orwell

Books for Reluctant Readers:

These are books that can help students learn to love reading.

Any of the read-aloud books above.

The Call of the Wild by Jack London

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

The Three Musketeers by Alexander Dumas

A Journey to the Centre of the Earth by Jules Verne

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne

Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown

Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn by Mark Twain

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne

Screwdriver Letters by C.S. Lewis

The Sherlock Holmes Series by Arthur Conan Doyle

Books for Voracious Readers:

These are classic (or close to classic!) books that we don't read at school—to keep a voracious reader supplied with great texts!

Moby Dick by Herman Melville

The Pearl, Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

Quo Vadis by Henryk Sienkiewicz

The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair by Graham Greene

Gilead by Marilyn Robinson

Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter Miller

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce

The Portrait of a Lady, The Turn of the Screw by Henry James

Mr. Blue by Myles Connolly

The Brothers Karamazov by Dostoevsky

Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy

The Betrothed by Manzoni

Les Misérables by Victor Hugo

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr