

SSR / Independent Reading Activities and Checks:

Holding students accountable for independent reading will improve their level of engagement. They will see that they are reading with purpose. The trick is to keep the accountability quick and easy, so that it doesn't take over the class. The following activities work well as follow-up. Some require a little explanation before they read.

As students read, it is also good to circulate the room and check on them. I often carry a clipboard (it makes things look official). I'll quickly jot down the title of the book next to the name of the student. This way I can track what they have been reading. I will also use this sheet to document if the kid read, stared off in space, or fell asleep.

I will also quietly work my way through the class by asking them to "whisper" a paragraph to me, one-on-one. I circulate throughout the room. Doing this, I can figure out if the book is at their level. I can also quietly converse with them about their book. Maybe, I'll preview the day's lesson—(ie. Can you summarize what you just read? What is one question you would ask the author?) Typically, I will do maybe 5 students a day. Doing this, once again, makes it feel like this is important, that you are watching them and interested in what they are reading. Hearing their thoughts this way also helps you to figure out what they are learning, without having to write a long quiz or test.

Here are some good Independent Reading Checks:

Half sheet writing—can be used as Exit Slips or just as a mid-class check.

- Summarizing—Ask students to write a summary of what they read that day. Ask them to write in complete sentences. And give them a sentence starter. "Today, I read X. It was about. . ."
- Quiz (write one)—Tell students to write a 5 question True / False Quiz based on their reading.
- Text messaging—Tell students that they have to write a quick text message to a friend describing what they read today.
- One Minute Paper—Give students one minute to write about their books. Like the summary, emphasize that they need to write in complete sentences. And give them a sentence starter. "Today, I read X. It was about. . ." However, any prompt could be used.
- 3-2-1: Ask students to identify three things they learned in their reading, two questions they have, and one thing they hope to learn more about.
- What was missing? Before they read, tell the students that they need to be looking for a piece of information that was not covered in the text. What is missing? Then ask them to write about it. Give them sentence starters. "Today I read X. One thing missing was. . ."
- If I were in his or her shoes . . .: Ask students to write about what they would do if they were living in that era. And give them a sentence starter. "Today, I read X. If I had been living then I would have . . ."
- Graffiti Art: Choose a topic from the era and put in on the board. (ie. Clothing, meals, laws, wars etc.) Let them see it before they start reading. At end of

- reading, give everyone a board marker and have them write a reaction on the board to the topic, based on what they read.
- Question the author: Tell students before they read that you would like them to think about what they would ask the author of the book if they had the chance. Tell them to write in complete sentences. And give them a sentence starter. “Today, I read X. One question I would ask is. . .”
 - Venn Diagram: Do a Venn Diagram comparing / contrasting then and now.
 - Graphic Organizers:

Post-it Notes—This is a quicker, sometimes easier option. As students entire the class, hand them a post-it note. As they read, they must stop at one point and do one of the following. You may need to remind them mid-way through to do that.

- Questioning
- Summarizing
- Making Connections

Discussion

- Think / Pair / Share: After students read, give them a prompt (see the prompts above) and ask them to think of their response. (Give them 30 seconds). Then pair them up and have them tell those thoughts to a partner. Circulate, listen and choose a few students to share with the whole class.
- What your partner said: Similar to that of above. The difference is that instead of have individuals share their own thoughts, ask them to paraphrase what their partner said.