

# SUPPORTING ADOLESCENT STRIVING READERS WITH ENGAGING TEXTS

There's an old saying: "Don't judge a book by its cover." This saying is very hard to follow, especially for students in middle and high school. For teenagers, it's all about the look and students want to be seen reading a book that looks intelligent, interesting, and age appropriate. But for reluctant readers who are struggling, it's imperative that students have strong, rich reading material to help build their reading skills and give them the drive to want to read more.<sup>1</sup>

School libraries and classrooms need to be filled with a variety of books that are well written on topics that are relevant. Students at a lower reading level need access to engaging books that they can read with relative ease. There are many different kinds of books that can meet the diverse needs of students. Having a variety of formats of books available to all students will help them succeed. When putting together a library, it is important to include Hi-Lo books and large print texts, as well as illustrated novels, manga, graphic novels, and books in verse.

## Hi-Lo Books

Frustrated tween and teen readers may have given up reading for pleasure all together because they can't find any books that interest them at the grade level they are able to comprehend. Hi-Lo books are a great option for the reluctant reader who reads below grade level. To encourage these struggling readers, Hi-Lo books may spur their interest to try reading for pleasure. Hi-Lo books are written at the student's interest level ("Hi" stands for "high interest") yet they are written at a lower reading level ("Lo" stands for "lower reading level").<sup>3</sup>



Hi-Lo Books

## Large Print Texts

Traditional classics like *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* and *Tuck Everlasting*, and new classics like *Touching Spirit Bear* and *Hatchet*, come in large print editions. Newbery Medalists and Honorees, including the most recent titles like *Hello, Universe* and *Merci Suarez Changes Gears*, are available in large print. Books in popular series by Rick Riordan come in large print, as well as high-interest nonfiction and biographies. Large print texts intentionally have the same book covers as regular font editions. They have approximately the same page numbers which help when using in the classroom—students can track page-to-page with regular font editions.

Preliminary research shows that "large print books can benefit children and teens with learning disabilities, particularly those who have dyslexia. Reluctant readers, and those who are visual learners can also benefit from large print books: the larger font and increased white space can help to improve word recognition, comprehension, and fluency."<sup>4</sup>



Large Print Texts

<sup>1</sup> Mascott, A. (Feb. 09, 2017). *High-Interest Books for Struggling Middle School Readers*. [online] Scholastic Parents. Available at <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/high-interest-books-struggling-middle-school-readers.html>.

<sup>2</sup> (n.d.). *How Can I Encourage A Reluctant Reader*. [online] Common Sense Media. Available at <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reading/how-can-i-encourage-a-reluctant-reader>

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, E. (May 23, 2019). *High Interest-Low Reading Level Books for Reluctant Readers*. [online] ThoughtCo. Available at <https://www.thoughtco.com/books-for-reluctant-readers-627603>

## Illustrated Novels

Illustrated books are written with the reluctant reader in mind. They are engaging and hold readers' interest. Their age-appropriate storylines with illustrations (or photography) help continue the narrative and keep the reader's attention. Illustrated novels lure readers in through pictures, short-form text, and engrossing story lines.<sup>2</sup>



Illustrated Novels



Graphic Novels and Manga

## Graphic Novels and Manga

At times, reluctant readers struggle with the classics. Publishers have released some of these titles in a graphic format which can be more inviting for students who get overwhelmed when words fill an entire page. There is a whole series of Manga Classics, giving readers an opportunity to get exposure to classic text and traditionally taught themes in a different format. Even historical subjects like World War II and the Jewish Holocaust can be taught using graphic novels.

Comic books, graphic novels, and manga have a lot to offer all students. They can entice reluctant readers, motivate kids to read more, and coax kids into looking for deeper meanings (comics are famous for their subliminal messaging).<sup>5</sup>

## Stories in Verse

In a "PBS NewsHour" interview, Jason Reynolds, the award-winning YA author, shares his ideas on how poetry can get more young people interested in reading.<sup>6</sup> Many librarians/media specialists have found these types of novels are the easiest to get a student interested in reading for fun. They usually have a lot of white space on the pages and tend to read quicker than a traditional story in prose.



Stories in Verse

Fostering a love of reading is one of our goals as educators. When building your collection, be sure to include Hi-Lo books and large print texts, as well as illustrated novels, manga, graphic novels, and books in verse. All students benefit from having a variety of different types of texts available, especially reluctant readers. Visit this link to shop a list of titles we started for you:

<https://tinyurl.com/Supporting-Adolescent-Striving>

SHOP TODAY

<sup>4</sup> Neumann, S. (Sept. 26, 2012). *When Bigger is Better : YA Books in Large Print*. [online] YALSA The Hub. Available at <http://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/2012/09/26/when-bigger-is-better-ya-books-in-large-print/>

<sup>5</sup> Filucci, S. (Apr. 17, 2016.) *Does reading comic books and graphic novels count as "real" reading?*. [online] Common Sense Media. Available at <https://www.common Sense Media.org/reading/does-reading-comic-books-and-graphic-novels-count-as-real-reading>

<sup>6</sup> Reynolds, J. (Dec 15, 2017). *How poetry can help kids turn a fear of literature into love*. [online] PBS NewsHour. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsqNaSLziGI>