



# Independent Reading Guide

A Teacher's Guide to Structured Choice Reading in Grades 6–8

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# About this Guide

This guide supports teachers in implementing a structured independent reading program as an integral part of the *Threads & Themes* ELA/ELD curriculum. It provides the rationale, routines, protocols, and tools needed to launch and sustain meaningful choice reading across all three grade levels and all four units of instruction each year.

Independent reading is not supplemental. It is a core responsibility of the ELA classroom, named explicitly in both the California ELA/ELD Framework and the California Common Core State Standards as essential to students becoming broadly literate. This guide shows teachers exactly how to make it work within the *Threads & Themes* program structure.

## How to use this guide

Read Section 1 to build your rationale and buy-in. Read Section 2 to understand how independent reading connects to your unit planning. Use Sections 3–5 to set up and launch the program at the beginning of each unit. Return to Sections 6–8 for ongoing routines, conferencing, and accountability. Use Section 9 for differentiation and Section 10 to monitor student progress.

## Section 1: Why Independent Reading Matters

Reading widely and independently is not a bonus activity, it is essential to building literacy proficiency. The California ELA/ELD Framework is unambiguous on this point: independent reading is a planned, structured component of daily language arts instruction, not something left to chance or available time. The California Common Core State Standards likewise call for students to read “widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts” as a foundational requirement for college and career readiness.

For teachers of grades 6 through 8, this means that independent reading belongs in your instructional plan. It is not optional enrichment. It is part of how students develop the skills, habits, and identities that will carry them forward as readers and thinkers.

### The Research Case

Students who read widely and independently gain across every dimension of literacy. The CA ELA/ELD Framework identifies the following core benefits:

- **Background knowledge:** Wide reading across topics and disciplines builds a rich knowledge base that supports comprehension across content areas.
- **Vocabulary:** Students encounter thousands of new words in context—far more than direct vocabulary instruction alone can provide.
- **Reading stamina:** Regular, sustained independent reading builds students’ capacity to read longer and more challenging texts without losing focus or comprehension.
- **Text structure familiarity:** Exposure to varied genres and organizational patterns makes students more flexible readers.
- **Reading identity:** Perhaps most importantly, independent reading helps students discover interests they can carry into a lifelong relationship with reading.

*The aims of wide and independent reading are many: By reading widely across many disciplines and genres students increase their background knowledge and understanding of the world; they increase their vocabulary and familiarity with varied grammatical and text organizational structures; they build reading stamina and positive reading habits; they practice their reading skills; and perhaps, most importantly, they discover interests they can carry forward into a lifetime of reading and enjoying books and texts of all types.*

—CA ELA/ELD Framework, Chapter 2

## Why It Matters Even More in Middle School

Middle school is a pivotal moment in the development of reading identity. Research on adolescent literacy is clear: students in grades 6–8 are increasingly socially oriented, and motivation to read is closely tied to their sense of autonomy, relevance, and identity. When students get to choose what they read, within a curated, thematically meaningful collection, they are far more likely to sustain engagement.

The CA ELA/ELD Framework for Grades 6–8 specifically identifies the following motivational factors that teachers must actively cultivate:

- **Interest and relevance:** Students need to see themselves and their world reflected in what they read.
- **Choice and autonomy:** Genuine choice, even within boundaries, significantly increases engagement and reading volume.
- **Success and self-efficacy:** Students who regularly complete books and receive positive feedback develop confidence as readers.
- **Social connection:** Book talks, partner shares, and discussion circles make reading a communal activity rather than a solitary obligation.

**Fiction and Empathy:** The Framework cites research (Kidd and Castano, 2013) showing that literary fiction has positive effects on students’ ability to detect and understand others’ emotions and to infer and represent others’ beliefs and intentions. This is not incidental to the *Threads & Themes* program goals, it is central to them.

**Informational Text and Knowledge:** 55 percent of the texts students read across all disciplines by grade 8 should be informational. Independent reading of high-quality nonfiction in science, history, biography, and journalism builds the content knowledge that supports comprehension across the curriculum.

## What Students Need From Their Teachers

The CA ELA/ELD Framework identifies specific teacher actions that make independent reading programs successful. Students need:

- **Clear, structured time:** Both in class and at home, with explicit expectations for each.
- **Access to books:** A well-stocked classroom or school library, with books that reflect students’ cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds.

- **Guidance on selection:** Strategies for choosing books that are appropriately challenging and genuinely interesting.
- **Accountability without overassignment:** Students are responsible for their reading but are not expected to produce a formal assignment for every book.
- **Teacher modeling and enthusiasm:** When teachers read, talk about books, and share their own reading lives, students notice.
- **Conferencing and feedback:** Regular one-on-one conversations about books that probe thinking, celebrate progress, and set new goals.
- **Social opportunities:** Book talks, partner shares, and recommendation rituals that make reading a shared experience.

## Section 2: How Independent Reading Lives in Threads & Themes

A note on program configurations: This guide supports both Program 1 (Basic ELA with Integrated ELD) and Program 2 (Basic ELA/ELD with Designated ELD). In Program 1, independent reading routines and conferences occur during ELA instructional time, with Integrated ELD supports embedded throughout (structured sentence frames, contingent prompts, and look/listen-for noted in Sections 9-10). In Program 2, the same routines operate alongside a parallel Designated ELD block; Lessons in D-ELD cover syntax or vocabulary that students may encounter in their independent reading selections. Unless otherwise noted, guidance in this document applies to both configurations.

Independent reading in *Threads & Themes* is not free reading in the sense of unstructured browsing. It is structured choice reading: students select from a curated collection of books that are intentionally aligned with the unit’s essential question, anchor text themes, and inquiry arc. This design means that what students read independently reinforces and deepens, rather than runs parallel to—the knowledge-building work happening in core instruction.

### Aligned to the Three-Year Inquiry Progression

The *Threads & Themes* program builds students’ knowledge and perspective-taking across three years. The independent reading book lists are curated to mirror this vertical progression:

Grade	Independent Reading Focus
<b>Grade 6 — Story &amp; Self</b>	Books that explore identity, voice, curiosity, and the power of personal narrative. Students encounter characters and authors who wrestle with who they are and where they belong, connecting directly to the unit anchor texts.
<b>Grade 7 — Belonging &amp; Witness</b>	Books that expand the lens outward: stories and accounts that ask students to witness experiences beyond their own, consider fairness and history, and understand how identity is shaped by community and context.
<b>Grade 8 — Systems &amp; Stewardship</b>	Books that grapple with power, memory, civic action, and responsibility. Students read accounts and narratives that ask how systems work, who holds power, and what individuals and communities can do about it.

## Aligned to the Four-Unit Arc

Each grade is organized into four units, and each unit has its own independent reading book list. The lists are built around the unit’s essential question and anchor text theme, and they reflect the four interdisciplinary text categories used throughout the program:

Category	What Students Can Expect
<b>Contemporary</b>	Modern literary fiction and narrative nonfiction that speaks directly to students’ lived experiences and current events.
<b>Traditional / Canonical</b>	Classic and foundational texts that give students access to literary history and the works referenced throughout our culture.
<b>STEAM</b>	Science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics texts that build content knowledge while developing literacy skills across disciplines.
<b>Social Studies</b>	Historical fiction, biography, memoir, and narrative nonfiction that deepens understanding of historical events, civic themes, and diverse cultures.

## Student Agency By Design

A key principle of the *Threads & Themes* program is student agency and choice. The CA ELA/ELD Framework confirms that providing students with genuine reading choices, even within structured boundaries, is one of the most powerful motivational strategies available to teachers. The book lists give students that choice: within each unit, students select the title that speaks most to them, at a complexity level appropriate to their current reading development.

This is choice that matters. Students are not choosing from whatever happens to be on a shelf, they are choosing from a carefully vetted collection of high-quality texts that will deepen their engagement with the unit's big ideas. When a student finishes a unit independent reading book and comes to a Socratic Seminar or a conferencing conversation, they bring knowledge and perspective that enriches the entire class.

## Where Independent Reading Fits in the Day

Given the structured 50-minute lesson design of *Threads & Themes*, independent reading time needs to be thoughtfully scheduled. Here are the primary options:

- **In-class reading:** Dedicated independent reading can be embedded during early-finisher moments when students complete a classroom step ahead of peers. 15-20 minutes of independent reading can also appear during Flex Days when students are not participating in skill-specific Huddle time.
- **Outside-class reading:** 20–30 minutes of at-home reading per night is a reasonable expectation for middle grades students. Communicate this clearly to students and families at the start of each unit.
- **Conferencing windows:** Teacher-student conferences (5–7 minutes each) work well during independent work time within Learning in Action, or during Flex Day Huddles when other students are working in small groups.

### Teacher Tip

Normalize IR as a homework routine from Day 1 of each unit. Have students carry their IR book with them so they can pick it up during early-finisher moments in class. Reserve in-class IR time for students not participating in skill-specific Flex Day Huddles.

## Section 3: The Book Lists—Organization and Use

The heart of the *Threads & Themes* independent reading program is its curated book lists. Each unit at each grade level has a dedicated book list built with the following criteria: alignment with the unit’s essential question and inquiry themes, high literary or informational quality, cultural and linguistic diversity, and appropriate text complexity for the grade band.

### How Each Book List Is Organized

Each unit book list is organized into three columns:

Column	What It Contains	How to Use It
<b>Title &amp; Author</b>	Full title, author name, and a 2–3 sentence annotation connecting the book to the unit’s essential question.	Use the annotation when introducing the book to students in a book pass or book talk.
<b>Text Complexity</b>	Lexile range and consideration of qualitative complexity measures. Book lists show progressive complexity across the three grades, so independent reading aligns with Reading Standard 10.	Use to guide students toward books at appropriate challenge levels during book selection.
<b>Connection Note</b>	A brief note on how the book connects to the unit anchor text, the unit’s essential question, or a key theme.	Use during conferencing or discussion to help students make cross-text connections.

### Guiding Students Through Book Selection

Book selection is a skill that students develop over time. At the start of each unit, teachers facilitate a structured “Book Pass” activity that allows every student to preview multiple titles before making a choice. Here’s how it works:

1. Arrange all available unit books on desks or tables in a circuit.
2. Give students 2–3 minutes with each book: read the back cover, skim the first page, check the complexity indicator.
3. Students use a simple rating tool (1 = Not for me, 2 = Maybe, 3 = Definitely) to track their reactions.
4. After cycling through 4–6 titles, students select their first choice and write it on their Reading Goal Form (See Appendix B).
5. If a student’s first choice is taken, they have a second choice ready.

### Interest Inventory

Before the first Book Pass of the year, have students complete a brief reading interest inventory (included in Appendix A). Ask about genres they enjoy, topics they find fascinating, books they've loved in the past, and whether they prefer fiction or nonfiction. Use this information to make personalized recommendations during the Book Pass and in one-on-one conferencing.

### Text Complexity and Reading Challenge

The Lexile Framework provides a starting point for thinking about text complexity, but it is not the only factor. When guiding students to appropriately challenging books, consider:

- **Quantitative measures:** Lexile scores and word frequency. The grade-specific stretch bands are Grade 6: 925–1070L, Grade 7: 970–1120L, and Grade 8: 1010–1185L. Book lists show progressive complexity across the three grades, so independent reading aligns with Reading Standard 10.
- **Qualitative measures:** Levels of meaning, knowledge demands, language conventionality, and text structure. A book with a lower Lexile can still be cognitively challenging if its themes are complex.
- **Reader and task:** A student's motivation and prior knowledge matter enormously. A highly motivated student can often handle texts above their "measured" level. Meet students where they are while maintaining high expectations.

The book lists include scaffolded entry titles (slightly below the grade band) for striving readers and students developing English proficiency, and stretch titles for students ready for additional challenge. Every student should be reading a book that requires genuine effort and growth.

Every student has opportunities to read grade-level complex text during independent reading.

### Diversity and Representation

The book lists for *Threads & Themes* are intentionally built to ensure that every student can find themselves in the books available to them. Across each unit's list, teachers will find authors of color, books featuring protagonists from underrepresented communities, texts that address race, identity, immigration, gender, disability, and cultural heritage.

The CA ELA/ELD Framework is explicit: teachers should "use texts that accurately reflect students' cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds so that students see themselves in the curriculum." The book lists are built with this mandate at the center.

### Teacher Tip

If you have students reading in a language other than English, invite them to share a summary or key passage with a partner during sharing time. This honors their reading work, supports translanguaging, and often sparks curiosity from other students.

## Section 4: Launching Independent Reading at the Start of Each Unit

A successful independent reading program requires a deliberate, well-structured launch at the beginning of each unit. The first week of a new unit is the window when teachers establish expectations, build excitement, and help every student find a book they genuinely want to read. Investing time here pays dividends for the entire unit.

### The Unit Launch Sequence

Use the following five-day sequence to launch independent reading at the start of each unit. This can flex depending on your class schedule, but the sequence should happen within the first 5–8 school days of the unit.

Day	Activity
Day 1	Introduce the unit theme and essential question. Share 2–3 book titles from the unit list with a brief, enthusiastic book talk for each. Show the covers. Read the first paragraph of one aloud. Build anticipation.
Day 2	Administer the Reading Interest Inventory (Appendix A). Briefly discuss: What do you already know about books you love? What makes a book right for you right now?
Day 3	Conduct the Book Pass. Students circulate through available titles for 2–3 minutes each, use the rating tool, and record their top 2–3 choices.
Day 4	Students finalize their book selection and complete the Reading Goal Form (Appendix B). The teacher circulates to confirm choices and check that complexity is appropriate.
Day 5	First assigned reading session. Begin the reading log.

### Building Your Classroom Library

The classroom library is the infrastructure that makes independent reading possible. Work with your school librarian to build a unit-specific collection for each of the four units. Aim for at least 3–5 copies of high-demand titles and 1–2 copies of a wider range of options.

- **Physical books:** Ideally, a mix of hardcover and paperback. Use book bins or shelves organized by unit and labeled by the interdisciplinary category (Contemporary, STEAM, etc.).
- **Digital access:** Many titles are available through school district digital libraries, public libraries, and apps like Libby/OverDrive. Share access instructions with students.
- **Home copies:** Encourage students to check books out and take them home. Track checkouts with a simple sign-out sheet.
- **Building the collection over time:** Partner with your media center or librarian, apply for classroom library grants, and build the collection year by year. Start with the highest-priority titles for your student population on each unit list.

## Setting Up the Reading Log

The reading log is the primary accountability tool for independent reading. It is low-stakes and should take no more than 3–5 minutes to update. Students record:

- The date and pages read that session
- A one-sentence summary of what happened or what they learned
- A brief response to a rotating prompt (see Section 5 for suggested prompts aligned to the California ELA/ELD Framework)

The reading log can live in the student’s ELA journal, as a separate printed page (see Appendix C), or as a digital document. Teachers review it during conferences. It is not graded for content, it is a tool for tracking progress and thinking.

### Important

The CA ELA/ELD Framework is explicit that students in an independent reading program “are held accountable for reading, but they are not expected to produce an assignment in response to every reading.” The reading log is a tracking and thinking tool, not a formal writing assignment. Keep it light enough that it does not become a barrier to reading.

## Setting Student Reading Goals

At the start of each unit, every student completes a Reading Goal Form (Appendix B). The goal should include:

- **Book title and author:** The book they are committing to read for this unit.
- **Pages/chapters per week:** A realistic weekly target based on the book’s length and the number of school weeks in the unit.
- **A personal reading goal:** Something specific the student wants to work on as a reader (e.g., “I want to pay more attention to how the author builds suspense” or “I want to read more nonfiction this unit”).

Teachers review goals during the Day 5 check-in and revisit them in the first conference of the unit. Goals are updated at the midpoint and the end of each unit.

### Teacher Tip

Post a class “Reading Wall”—a simple display showing each student’s name, their current book title and cover image, and their unit goal. Update it weekly. This creates social visibility around reading and generates organic book recommendations among students.

## Section 5: Sustaining Independent Reading—Daily Routines and Structures

The launch is the exciting part. Sustaining independent reading across a 9-week unit is where the real work happens. Without consistent routines, students drift away from their books, reading logs go blank, and the program loses momentum. The structures in this section are designed to keep independent reading alive and purposeful throughout the full arc of the unit.

## Weekly Rhythm

A predictable weekly rhythm makes independent reading feel like a natural part of the course—not a special event. Here is a suggested weekly structure:

Day / Frequency	Routine
<b>Daily (20+ min)</b>	Have students carry their IR book with them so they can pick it up during early-finisher moments in class. IR reading should be considered homework every night.
<b>Monday (5 min)</b>	Weekly reading check-in: Students share their current page count, note any challenges, and briefly share one sentence about what’s happening in their book with a partner.
<b>Wednesday (3 min)</b>	Mid-week reading log entry: Students update their log with a brief response to the week’s rotating prompt.
<b>Friday (5 min)</b>	Partner or small-group book talk: Students share a passage, a question, or a recommendation. See Section 8 for protocols.
<b>Every 2–3 weeks (approximately 3 conferences per student per unit)</b>	Individual conference with teacher (5–7 minutes). See Section 6 for protocol.
<b>Mid-unit (during Flex Day)</b>	Reserve in-class IR time for students not participating in standard-specific Flex Day Huddles. Goal check-in: Students assess their progress toward their reading goal and adjust as needed. Students respond to the mid-unit reading prompt. Brief whole-class share of “books worth reading.”

## In-Class Reading Time

An in-class reading serves multiple purposes. It models that reading is valued (not just homework). It ensures that students who struggle to read at home still make progress. And it gives teachers a window to conduct informal check-ins and observe students’ reading engagement. You can set the expectation that moments of downtime are the times to pick up a book, or you can schedule Flex Days to implement whole-class independent reading.

During dedicated in-class reading sessions, the teacher should:

- Read briefly alongside students (2–3 minutes) to model the habit, then circulate
- Make eye contact, smile, and briefly note whether students are engaged with their books
- Jot quick notes on students who seem disengaged, they may need a book switch or a check-in
- Conduct very brief (1–2 minute) informal conversations: “How’s your book going? What’s happening?”

## The Reading Log Rotating Prompt System

To prevent the reading log from becoming rote, use a rotating prompt system that varies what students reflect on each week. Prompts are organized into five categories aligned to the CA ELA/ELD Framework's key themes:

Theme	Sample Prompts
<b>Meaning Making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What is confusing you right now? What question do you most want answered?</li><li>● What do you think is going to happen next, and what evidence in the text makes you predict that?</li><li>● Summarize what just happened in your own words. What was the most important moment and why?</li><li>● What is a question you'd ask the author or a character right now?</li><li>● Where did you have to slow down or reread? What helped you understand?</li><li>● What connections can you make between this text and something else you've read, watched, or experienced?</li></ul>
<b>Language Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Find a sentence or phrase you find especially effective or interesting. Copy it and explain why it works.</li><li>● Find a sentence with interesting punctuation (dash, semicolon, ellipsis, etc.). What effect does that punctuation have on how you read it?</li><li>● Identify a sentence that is unusually long or unusually short. Why do you think the author made that choice?</li><li>● Find an example of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification). What two things are being compared, and what does the comparison help you understand?</li><li>● Find a sentence where the word order surprised you. Rewrite it in a more typical order — how does the meaning or feeling change?</li><li>● Choose a sentence you'd like to imitate in your own writing. Write your own version using the same structure but different content.</li></ul>
<b>Effective Expression</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● How does the author make you feel at this point in the text? What techniques are they using?</li><li>● Find a moment of strong imagery. Which senses does the author appeal to, and what picture forms in your mind?</li><li>● How would this scene be different if it were told from another character's point of view?</li><li>● What mood is the author creating in this section? Identify two specific words or details that build that mood.</li><li>● Where does the pacing speed up or slow down? What does the author do to control how fast you read?</li></ul>

Theme	Sample Prompts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Find a moment where the author "shows" instead of "tells." What is being shown, and what would be lost if the author had just told us directly?</li> </ul>
<b>Content Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is something you have learned about the world, about people, or about a topic from this book?</li> <li>● What is something in this text that surprised you or challenged what you thought you knew?</li> <li>● What did you learn about a place, time period, or culture you didn't know much about before?</li> <li>● What is a real-world issue or idea this text is helping you think about more deeply?</li> <li>● Identify something the author seems to be an expert on. What evidence in the writing shows that expertise?</li> <li>● What questions about the world has this text raised that you'd want to research further?</li> </ul>
<b>Foundational Skills / Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify a word or phrase from your book that you didn't know. What did you do to figure it out? What does it mean?</li> <li>● Find a word you've seen before, but that's used in a new or unusual way here. What does it seem to mean in this context?</li> <li>● Choose a word from today's reading that you think is worth knowing. Why is it useful?</li> <li>● Find a word with a prefix, suffix, or root you recognize. What does the word part tell you about the meaning?</li> <li>● Identify a word that sounds or looks like another word you know. Are they related in meaning, or is it a coincidence?</li> <li>● Find a tricky or unfamiliar word. Try three strategies (context clues, word parts, reading on, asking) and explain which one helped most.</li> </ul>

### When Students Abandon a Book

Abandoning a book is a normal part of reading life, even skilled readers put books down. The question is whether a student is abandoning a book because it's not working for them, or because reading is challenging and they're avoiding the challenge. Help students distinguish between the two.

- **It's okay to abandon if:** The book is genuinely not engaging after 50+ pages, the student has a much stronger pull toward another title, or the text is significantly too challenging even with support.
- **Not okay to abandon if:** The student has read fewer than 20 pages, the book is getting challenging at a productive level, or the student abandons books repeatedly without finishing anything.

Keep a small collection of "book emergency" titles near your desk, shorter, high-engagement options for students who truly cannot connect with any of their initial choices.

### Teacher Tip

The “50-page rule” is a useful guideline: give a book 50 pages before deciding it’s not for you. Share this rule with students at the start of the year. It gives them permission to push through the slow start that many books have, while also giving them an out if a book truly isn’t working.

## Section 6: Teacher–Student Conferencing

One-on-one conferencing is one of the highest-leverage practices in an independent reading program. The CA ELA/ELD Framework identifies it as a core component, alongside providing feedback, setting goals, and probing thinking. A well-conducted conference does three things simultaneously: it assesses comprehension, it builds the teacher-student relationship, and it deepens the student’s thinking about their book.

Conferences do not need to be long. A focused 5-minute conversation, conducted every 2–3 weeks (approximately 3–4 conferences per student per unit), yields powerful data and meaningful outcomes. The key is asking the right questions and listening carefully to what students say.

In practice, this rhythm is more manageable than it may first appear. For a class of 30 students, a full round of conferences totals about 2.5 hours, which spreads to roughly 10–15 minutes of conferencing per day, typically 2–3 student conversations during Learning in Action or Look Back time. Across a nine-week unit, that adds up to about 7.5–10 hours of one-on-one contact, ensuring every student is seen, heard, and pushed in their thinking multiple times before the unit ends.

### Conference Structure

Use this four-part structure for each conference. It is flexible—not every conference will include all four parts—but it provides a reliable frame:

Phase	What It Looks Like
<b>1. Connect (1 min)</b>	Open warmly. “How’s the book going? Where are you right now?” The student is doing most of the talking from the start.
<b>2. Explore (3–4 min)</b>	Ask 1–2 probing questions (see question bank below) and listen carefully. Follow the student’s thinking rather than your own agenda. Take brief notes.
<b>3. Teach (1–2 min)</b>	If you notice something the student is ready to grow on—a reading strategy, a comprehension move, a vocabulary approach—offer a brief, specific teaching point.
<b>4. Goal (1 min)</b>	End by setting or revisiting a goal. “Before our next conference, I want you to try... What’s your page goal for this week?” This step produces the student’s individualized reading goal for the next conference cycle. Teachers track these individualized reading goals across conferences to personalize outside-of-class reading recommendations over time.

## Conference Question Bank

Organize your questions by the level of thinking they invite. A good conference usually starts at the retrieval/recall level to establish comprehension, then moves into interpretation and analysis:

### *Retrieval and Summary*

- Tell me what has happened so far in your own words.
- Who are the most important characters or voices in this book, and what do you know about them?
- What is the central problem, conflict, or question the author is exploring?

### *Interpretation and Analysis*

- Why do you think the author made that choice? What effect does it have?
- What surprised you in your reading this week? What did you expect that didn't happen?
- Is there a moment in this book that connects to something you've read or discussed in our unit? Tell me about that connection.
- What is the author arguing, or what do you think the author wants you to feel or believe?

### *Evaluation and Extension*

- Is this book doing what you hoped it would do when you chose it? Why or why not?
- What would you tell a classmate about this book in one sentence?
- How has your thinking changed since you started reading this book?

### **For Multilingual Learners**

Adjust conference questions to the student's English language proficiency level. For **Emerging** students, use sentence frames and visuals: "The main character is \_\_\_ and they feel \_\_\_ because \_\_\_." For **Expanding** students, ask for comparisons: "How is this character different from the one in our anchor text?" For **Bridging** students, use the full question bank and push for analytical depth.

## Conference Tracking

Keep a simple Conference Record (Appendix D) for each student. It should include the date of each conference, the student's current book and page number, your key observations, and the teaching point and goal you set. Over time, this record becomes a powerful portrait of each student's reading development.

Note patterns that emerge across multiple conferences: a student who always abandons books before the climax, a student who summarizes well but struggles to interpret, a student who consistently chooses books below their capability. Use these patterns to inform Flex Day Huddle groupings and to target instruction during Literacy Lab.

### Managing Conference Time

Aim to confer with every student every 2–3 weeks (approximately 3 conferences per student per unit). With 30 students, that is roughly 2 conferences per day during conference weeks. Use Flex Day time and independent work time during Learning in Action to conduct conferences. Keep a clipboard or tablet with the Conference Record handy at all times.

## Section 7: Student Accountability—Writing About Independent Reading

Writing and reading are inextricably linked in the *Threads & Themes* program and in the California CCSS. The standards require students to “write about what they read” and “read in order to write.” Writing in response to independent reading deepens comprehension, builds analytical skill, and gives teachers insight into students’ thinking. But not all writing about reading is created equal—and too much formal writing can actually undermine engagement.

The goal is a tiered accountability system: light-touch, frequent tracking (reading logs) combined with periodic, more substantive writing responses (2–3 per unit). The latter should feel meaningful, not burdensome.

### Tier A: Reading Log Entries (Daily / Weekly) (Appendix C)

Reading log entries are the foundation of written accountability. They are brief (3–5 sentences), informal, and use the rotating prompt system from Section 5. Teachers review logs during conferences, not as standalone graded assignments. The goal is to keep students thinking as they read—not to produce polished writing.

### Tier B: Mid-Unit Reading Response (Once Per Unit) (found in Appendix B)

At the midpoint of each unit, students write a more substantive response to their independent reading—typically a paragraph or two. This is not a formal essay; it is an analytical thinking piece. Prompt options:

- **Theme Connection:** How does your independent reading book connect to the essential question of this unit? Use specific evidence from both your book and our anchor text.
- **Character Analysis:** Choose a character or person from your book. What do they want? What stands in their way? What do they reveal about the unit’s central themes?
- **Author’s Craft:** Identify a technique your author uses (structure, point of view, word choice, imagery). Analyze why they made this choice and what effect it has on the reader.
- **Nonfiction Focus (for informational texts):** What is the central argument or question of your book? What evidence does the author use? Do you find it convincing? Why or why not?

### Tier C: End-of-Unit Book Review or Recommendation (Once Per Unit) (found in Appendix B)

At the end of each unit, students write a brief book review or recommendation for the class collection—a 1–2 paragraph piece that summarizes the book, evaluates it, and makes a recommendation to a specific type of reader. These reviews are posted on the class Reading Wall or compiled into a unit “Worth Reading” guide for future classes.

This writing serves double duty: it is an authentic writing task with a real audience, and it contributes to the class community of readers.

### Connecting IR Writing to Unit Writing Tasks

Look for opportunities to bring independent reading into the unit’s formal writing tasks. Students can use their IR books as additional evidence sources in argumentative writing, as mentor texts for narrative craft, or as examples in research-based writing. This deepens the connection between choice reading and core instruction—and gives students who have read a genuine advantage widely.

### A Note on Grading

Independent reading itself should not be heavily graded. The reading log and mid-unit response can be assessed for completion and evidence of genuine engagement—not for correctness or formal quality. The end-of-unit book review can be assessed more formally, using the program’s writing rubrics, if it is used as a summative writing task. But the program’s primary goal is to develop reading habits and identities, and over-grading independent reading work can undermine that goal.

## Section 8: Discussion and Social Sharing Protocols

Reading is not a solitary act. The most powerful independent reading programs make room for students to talk about their books—to recommend, debate, share, and connect. The CA ELA/ELD Framework identifies “opportunities for social interaction—book talks and reviews, book sharing, partner reading, discussion circles” as essential components of a successful independent reading program. This is especially true for middle schoolers, who are inherently social learners.

### Book Talks (Student-Led)

A book talk is a brief, informal student presentation—30 to 90 seconds—in which a student “sells” their book to classmates. It is low-stakes and high-impact.

**Protocol:** Students share the following details about their book (1) the title and author, (2) one sentence about what it’s about, (3) one sentence about why they’re reading it or what they love about it, and (4) who they would recommend it to. No notes allowed.

### Partner Book Shares

Students spend 5 minutes sharing with a partner. Each partner has 2 minutes to share, and 1 minute for a brief response. Use a simple rotating prompt to give the share direction:

- Share a passage that surprised you this week and explain why.
- Share something your book has taught you that connects to our unit’s essential question.
- Share a question you have about your book that you’re hoping will be answered.
- Share the most important moment in your reading this week and explain its significance.

### Cross-Text Discussion Circles

Organize students into discussion circles of 4–5 students whose books share a common theme, genre, or connection to the anchor text. Each group uses a focus question aligned to the unit’s essential question to guide their conversation. This is a structured version of a book club and works especially well in *Threads & Themes*, where the thematic connections across books are rich and complex.

Students come prepared with their reading log and a marked passage. Discussion runs for 10–15 minutes. The teacher circulates and listens—occasionally noting strong analytical moments for whole-class sharing.

### The Class Recommendation Board

Maintain a running class Recommendation Board, either physically or digitally, throughout the year. When a student finishes a book, they add a recommendation card: title, author, their rating (1–5 stars), and a one-sentence pitch. Over time, this board becomes a rich resource for future book selection and a visible record of the class’s reading life.

### Family and Community Connection

At the start of each unit, send home the pre-populated **Unit Welcome Letter** (Part 3 of the Family and Community Engagement Guide). Each letter previews the unit’s themes and shares the curated list of independent reading titles connected to those themes, along with conversation starters families can use to talk with their student about what they’re reading — in any language. Translated versions are available in Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Tagalog, and Vietnamese, with audio recordings for families who prefer voice communication.

This communication does two things at once: it signals to families that reading is a priority, and it gives students concrete prompts to talk about their books at home — extending the reading community beyond the classroom walls.

## Section 9: Supporting All Learners

Every student in the *Threads & Themes* classroom deserves access to a rich, meaningful independent reading experience. This section provides specific guidance for the four groups of learners who may need targeted support: Multilingual Learners (MLLs), striving readers, students with disabilities, and students ready for an additional challenge.

### Multilingual Learners

For students who are developing English proficiency, independent reading requires additional intentionality. The CA ELA/ELD Framework is clear: “the availability of books in students’ primary languages” and “books that reflect students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds” are core components of a successful independent reading program.

- **Primary language reading:** Actively encourage MLLs to read in their home language. This counts fully as independent reading and builds the literacy skills that transfer to English. Celebrate multilingual reading publicly.
- **Bilingual editions:** Where available, bilingual editions allow MLLs to access texts in both languages simultaneously.
- **Scaffolded Entry texts:** Use the Lexile column in the book list to identify titles with lower Lexile levels but rich thematic content. A text at 700L with deep themes is a better choice for many MLLs than a shallow text at 900L.
- **Scaffolded conferencing:** Use sentence frames, visuals, and the student’s home language in conferences as appropriate. Focus on meaning-making before analysis.
- **Cultural mirrors:** Prioritize books featuring characters and communities that reflect the MLL’s own background. The sense of recognition is a powerful reading motivator.

## Striving Readers

Striving readers often have complicated relationships with books—shaped by years of reading difficulty, low self-efficacy, or limited access to books they truly want to read. The goal is not to lower expectations but to provide the scaffolding that makes genuine engagement possible.

- **Book choice matters most:** A striving reader who is highly motivated to read a book will often outperform their measured reading level. Prioritize genuine interest over Lexile score.
- **Scaffolded Entry texts:** Use graphic novels, shorter texts, narrative nonfiction, and high-interest lower-Lexile titles. These are rigorous choices—not consolation prizes.
- **Audiobooks:** Listening to an audiobook while following along in the print version is a valid and valuable reading experience. It builds fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension simultaneously.
- **More frequent conferences:** Striving readers benefit from shorter, more frequent check-ins (every 1–2 weeks — more frequent than the standard 2–3 week cadence because these students need closer monitoring). Use conferences to troubleshoot comprehension challenges in real time.
- **Reading stamina:** Work explicitly on building stamina. Start with 5–10 minutes of reading and gradually extend. Celebrate incremental progress.

### Flex Day Huddles

Students who are struggling with reading engagement or stamina are a natural focus for Flex Day Huddle groupings. Use reading log data and conference notes to identify students who need targeted support, and use Huddle time to address comprehension strategies, book selection, or motivation directly.

## Students with Disabilities

Independent reading for students with disabilities should be guided by the student’s IEP and supported by UDL principles: multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement. Specific strategies include:

- **Audiobooks and text-to-speech:** For students with reading disabilities, listening to a text read aloud (via audiobook, screen reader, or text-to-speech tools) while following in the text is full participation in independent reading.
- **Extended time expectations:** Adjust page-per-week goals to reflect realistic, standards-aligned progress given the student’s learning profile.
- **Adapted reading logs:** For students with writing difficulties, allow oral or recorded reading log responses, or use simplified log formats with visual scaffolds.
- **Specialized conferencing:** Approach conferencing with awareness of the student’s specific learning needs. Consult with special education staff and use IEP-aligned accommodations.

## Advanced and Extension Readers

Students who are reading significantly above grade level need challenge and depth, not just more pages or extra work. Support them with:

- **Stretch texts:** Use the Lexile column in the book list to identify titles with higher Lexile levels and greater thematic complexity.

- **Cross-unit and cross-year connections:** Challenge advanced readers to find connections between their current book, the anchor text, and books they’ve read in previous units or grades.
- **Critical lens analysis:** Push for analytical depth in conferences and writing responses. “What does this author’s perspective leave out? Whose story isn’t being told here?”
- **Book recommendation leadership:** Invite advanced readers to conduct book talks for the class or write extended reviews for the class recommendation library.

## Section 10: Monitoring Progress and Using Data

Independent reading generates valuable formative data—data that should inform instruction throughout the unit. The goal is not to create a surveillance system but to ensure that every student is actually reading, growing, and developing a positive reading identity. This section describes how to use the data from reading logs, conferences, and writing responses to drive responsive instruction.

### What to Look For in Reading Logs

A quick weekly scan of student reading logs (10–15 minutes for a class set) reveals:

- **Reading volume:** Is the student making reasonable progress? If a student has read 20 pages in two weeks, something is wrong—a book switch, a motivation problem, or a comprehension challenge needs to be addressed.
- **Comprehension quality:** Does the student’s response suggest they understand what they’re reading? Vague or inaccurate summaries signal comprehension difficulty.
- **Engagement:** Are responses enthusiastic, curious, or analytical—or are they perfunctory? Low engagement in writing often signals low engagement in reading.
- **Language development (for MLLs):** Are MLLs using target vocabulary and sentence structures in their log entries? This is informal evidence of language growth.

### Using Conference Data

Conference notes, kept systematically across the unit (see the Conference Record in Appendix D), reveal patterns that are impossible to see in a single conversation:

- A student who summarizes well but never analyzes—needs explicit instruction in moving from “what happened” to “what it means”
- A student who has abandoned three books in a row needs a book recommendation conversation and possibly a genre shift
- A student who consistently makes rich connections between their book and unit themes—ready for a stretch text and deeper analytical challenges
- A student who reads prolifically but chooses only one genre—an opportunity to expand their reading range

### Connecting to Flex Days

Students who are not assigned standards-based huddles during Flex Days can use the day to dig into their independent reading for the unit. This work can be formatted as open time for students to read their chosen text and reflect on various questions that still tie their reading to the standards-based foci of the day. If your classroom population requires more defined work connected to independent reading during Flex Day time, consider implementing some of the following options.

- **Meaning Making Huddle:** Students who are struggling to comprehend their texts. Focus on comprehension strategies: monitoring for confusion, asking questions, visualizing, inferring.
- **Language Development Huddle:** MLLs who need support using academic language in their reading log responses. Work on sentence frames and academic vocabulary.
- **Content Knowledge Huddle:** Students reading STEAM or Social Studies texts who need background knowledge to understand their book. Build shared context before releasing students to read.
- **Effective Expression Huddle:** Students are ready to develop book-talk and discussion skills. Practice book-talk protocols, partner shares, and structured discussion moves so students can recommend, question, and respond to each other’s IR books.
- **Foundational Skills**
- **Huddle:** Students who need targeted fluency, morphology, or vocabulary work in the context of their IR book. Use short passages from their book for repeated reading, morphology sorts, and context-based vocabulary routines.

### Annual Reading Reflection

At the end of each academic year, students should complete a reading reflection (Appendix E) that asks them to look back across all four units and their independent reading. Questions include:

- Which book did you read this year that you would most want to recommend? Why?
- Which book challenged you the most? What did you do when it got hard?
- How have you grown as a reader this year? What are you still working on?
- What do you want to read next year?

These reflections are not graded. They are passed to the student’s next-year teacher as part of a reading portfolio, creating continuity across the three-year progression of *Threads & Themes*.

#### The Long Game

The ultimate goal of the *Threads & Themes* independent reading program is not a higher reading score—though that often follows. The goal is students who graduate from grade 8 with a reading life: a sense of themselves as readers, a set of books that have mattered to them, and the curiosity and confidence to keep reading for the rest of their lives. Every conference, every book talk, every reading log entry is a small investment in that long-term outcome.

## Section 11: Library and Media Resources

Independent reading depends on broad, fresh access to texts, and your school's library-media team is essential to providing it. The Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools (Grades 6–8) describe the information-literacy, inquiry, and media-evaluation skills that a strong library program develops in concert with ELA instruction — skills that directly extend and deepen IR. Digital and audio-first formats matter too: audiobooks, e-books, graphic novels, and verified online sources all count as independent reading and broaden access for students with diverse needs and preferences. Partner with your media center liaison, librarian, or teacher-librarian in the following ways:

- Co-curate IR collections each unit, requesting targeted acquisitions tied to the theme and interdisciplinary categories
- Plan joint library visits where the librarian booktalks new titles, models selection strategies, and connects books to the unit's essential questions
- Use the Model School Library Standards to co-design lessons on source evaluation, search strategies, and information literacy that extend IR into inquiry work
- Partner on reader's advisory — the librarian meets with students individually or in small groups to recommend next reads based on interest inventories and reading history
- Request curated text sets in multiple formats (audiobook, e-book, graphic novel, verified online sources) so every student has an entry point
- Coordinate equitable digital access through platforms like Sora, Libby, or Epic, including troubleshooting logins and supporting at-home access
- Co-plan research extensions where students follow an IR text into deeper inquiry, with the librarian scaffolding database use and source corroboration
- Ask the librarian to vet and recommend culturally responsive and identity-affirming titles that broaden the unit's text set
- Collaborate on schoolwide initiatives — genre studies, reading challenges, One Book/One School — anchored to unit themes
- Share student reading goals and data so the librarian can proactively reserve or recommend titles for specific readers
- Co-design displays, bulletin boards, or digital shelves featuring student reviews, recommendations, and IR reflections
- Plan author visits, virtual events, or book trailer studies that connect IR to media literacy and visual rhetoric work

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Student Reading Interest Inventory

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*Directions:* Answer each question honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. Your teacher will use these answers to help you find a great book.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Part 1: About You as a Reader**

1. On a scale of 1–5 (1 = I really dislike it, 5 = I love it), how much do you enjoy reading?

Circle: 1 2 3 4 5

2. What is a book you have read and loved? (It can be from any time in your life.) What did you love about it?

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3. What is a book you tried to read but couldn't get into? What didn't work for you?

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### **Part 2: What You Like to Read**

4. Check the genres that interest you most (check as many as you want):

- Adventure / Thriller
- Historical Fiction
- Science Fiction / Fantasy
- Realistic Fiction
- Graphic Novel / Comics
- Biography / Memoir
- History
- Science / Nature
- Sports
- Social Justice / Current Events
- Poetry
- Mystery

5. Do you prefer fiction (made-up stories) or nonfiction (true stories and information)? Or both?

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6. What topics, people, or time periods fascinate you most? (For example: animals, the civil rights movement, space, robotics, certain cultures, sports...)

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**Part 3: Your Reading Life**

7. Where and when do you do most of your reading outside of school?

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8. Is there a book you've been meaning to read but haven't gotten to yet?

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9. Is there an author whose books you have really enjoyed?

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10. Is there anything else you'd like your teacher to know about you as a reader?

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## Appendix B: Unit Reading Goal Form

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

### *My Book*

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Genre / Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Total pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Pages I expect to read this unit (including other texts): \_\_\_\_\_

*Why I chose this book:*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### *My Reading Plan*

**My weekly page goal:** I will read approximately \_\_\_\_\_ pages per week.

**When I will read:** (check all that apply)

- During in-class reading time
- At home before bed
- During lunch or free periods
- On weekends

### **My Personal Reading Goal**

As a reader, I am working on:

- Reading more challenging texts
- Paying attention to author's craft
- Making connections between books
- Building reading stamina
- Trying a new genre or type of book
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**My specific goal for this unit:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix C: Weekly Reading Log Template

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Book: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Record the date and the page numbers you read in that session (e.g., pp. 45–72). Write 1–2 sentences about what happened or what you learned in today’s reading. Then respond to the week’s rotating prompt (posted in class). Use evidence from the text.

<b>Log Entry</b>	
<b>Date &amp; Pages Read</b>	
<b>Summary (1–2 sentences)</b>	
<b>Weekly Prompt Response (3–5 sentences)</b>	

<b>Log Entry</b>	
<b>Date &amp; Pages Read</b>	
<b>Summary (1–2 sentences)</b>	
<b>Weekly Prompt Response (3–5 sentences)</b>	

Log Entry	
Date & Pages Read	
Summary (1–2 sentences)	
Weekly Prompt Response (3–5 sentences)	

Log Entry	
Date & Pages Read	
Summary (1–2 sentences)	
Weekly Prompt Response (3–5 sentences)	

Log Entry	Instructions
Date & Pages Read	
Summary (1–2 sentences)	
Weekly Prompt Response (3–5 sentences)	

## Appendix D: Teacher Conference Record

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Class / Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name	Conference 1 Notes	Conference 2 Notes
<b>Student:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____
<b>Student:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____
<b>Student:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____

Student Name	Conference 1 Notes	Conference 2 Notes
<b>Student:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____
<b>Student:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____
<b>Student:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____	<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Book / pg:</b> _____ _____ <b>Observations:</b> _____ _____ <b>Teaching point:</b> _____ _____ <b>Goal set:</b> _____ _____

*Note: Copy this page for each group of 6 students. Keep completed records in your conference binder as a running portrait of each student's reading development.*

## Appendix E: Annual Reading Reflection

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

*Directions: Look back at your reading logs, goal forms, and the books you read this year. Take your time with these questions. Your reflection will be passed to your next teacher as part of your reading portfolio.*

### **Looking Back**

1. List all the books you read independently this year (title and author). Star your favorites.

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2. Which book would you most want to recommend to a classmate next year? Write a 2–3 sentence recommendation explaining what you liked best about the book (no spoilers!).

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3. Which book challenged you the most? What did you do when it got hard?

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### **Thinking About Your Growth**

4. How have you grown as a reader this year? What can you do now that was difficult for you at the beginning of the year?

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5. What is still challenging for you as a reader? What do you want to work on next year?

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### Looking Forward

6. What is a book you are looking forward to reading next? (It can be a book you've heard about, a book by an author you love, or just a genre you want to explore.)

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7. How would you describe yourself as a reader right now? (Circle words that fit your reader persona, or add your own.)

**Curious Growing Confident Still finding my books Adventurous Selective  
Fast Slow and careful Fiction lover Nonfiction explorer Multilingual reader**

Other words that describe your reader persona:

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## Appendix F: Independent Reading Lists

### Independent Reading Selections: G6.U1

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Front Desk</b> <i>Kelly Yang</i>	640L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
2	<b>New Kid</b> <i>Jerry Craft</i>	GN: 320L	Graphic Novel	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>The First Rule of Punk</b> <i>Celia C. Pérez</i>	670L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
4	<b>Seedfolks</b> <i>Paul Fleischman</i>	710L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>Because of Mr. Terupt</b> <i>Rob Buyea</i>	560L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
6	<b>Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus</b> <i>Dusti Bowling</i>	700L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
7	<b>Merci Suárez Changes Gears</b> <i>Meg Medina</i>	700L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>The Stars Beneath Our Feet</b> <i>David Barclay Moore</i>	650L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Amina's Voice</b> <i>Hena Khan</i>	800L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Wonder</b> <i>R.J. Palacio</i>	780L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G6.U2

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>The Kite Fighters</b> <i>Linda Sue Park</i>	880L	Historical Fiction	QT: Within band   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>The Seventh Most Important Thing</b> <i>Shelley Pearsall</i>	760L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>The Invention of Hugo Cabret</b> <i>Brian Selznick</i>	820L	Historical Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</b> <i>Thanhà Lai</i>	820L	Verse Novel	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>El Deafo</b> <i>Cece Bell</i>	GN: 420L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>The Crossover</b> <i>Kwame Alexander</i>	750L	Verse Novel	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High

7	<b>The Wild Robot</b> <i>Peter Brown</i>	740L	Science Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>Hatchet</b> <i>Gary Paulsen</i>	1020L	Survival Fiction	QT: Within band   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime (YA)</b> <i>Trevor Noah</i>	780L	Memoir	QT: Below band   QL: High

### Independent Reading Selections: G6.U3

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Flipped</b> <i>Wendelin Van Draanen</i>	720L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
2	<b>Orbiting Jupiter</b> <i>Gary D. Schmidt</i>	740L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963</b> <i>Christopher Paul Curtis</i>	920L	Historical Fiction	QT: Within band   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Iqbal</b> <i>Francesco D'Adamo</i>	750L	Historical Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>A Wrinkle in Time</b> <i>Madeleine L'Engle</i>	740L	Science Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</b> <i>William Kamkwamba &amp; Bryan Mealer</i>	960L	Memoir/Nonfiction	QT: Within band   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>Mae Among the Stars</b> <i>Roda Ahmed</i>	AD580 L	Biography	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
8	<b>Counting on Katherine</b> <i>Helaine Becker</i>	710L	Biography	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
9	<b>Women in Science</b> <i>Rachel Ignotofsky</i>	990L	Nonfiction	QT: Within band   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>I Am Malala: Young Readers' Edition</b> <i>Malala Yousafzai</i>	830L	Memoir	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G6.U4

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Aru Shah and the End of Time</b> <i>Roshani Chokshi</i>	630L	Fantasy / Mythology	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High

2	<b>The Storm Runner</b> <i>J.C. Cervantes</i>	620L	Fantasy / Mythology	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky</b> <i>Kwame Mbalia</i>	700L	Fantasy / Mythology	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Paola Santiago and the River of Tears</b> <i>Tehlor Kay Mejia</i>	650L	Fantasy / Mythology	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>The Serpent’s Secret</b> <i>Sayantani DasGupta</i>	640L	Fantasy / Mythology	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard</b> <i>Rick Riordan</i>	590L	Fantasy / Mythology	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>D’Aulaires’ Book of Greek Myths</b> <i>Ingri &amp; Edgar d’Aulaire</i>	930L	Mythology	QT: In band   QL: High
8	<b>Treasury of Egyptian Mythology</b> <i>Donna Jo Napoli</i>	≈940L	Mythology	QT: In band   QL: High
9	<b>Melissa (formerly George)</b> <i>Alex Gino</i>	550L	Realistic Fiction	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
10	<b>The Hero’s Guide to Saving Your Kingdom</b> <i>Christopher Healy</i>	640L	Fantasy / Humor	QT: Below band   QL: Mid-Low
11	<b>The Odyssey</b> <i>Homer / Samuel Butler</i>	1080L	Classical Epic	QT: In band   QL: High
12	<b>The Phantom Tollbooth</b> <i>Norton Juster</i>	1000L	Fantasy / Allegory	QT: In band   QL: High
13	<b>George’s Secret Key to the Universe</b> <i>Lucy &amp; Stephen Hawking</i>	N/A*	Science Fiction	QT: N/A (est. 700–800L)   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G7.U1

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Ghost</b> <i>Jason Reynolds</i>	730L	Fiction	QT: Below band (730L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>Apple in the Middle</b> <i>Dawn Quigly</i>	640L	Novel	QT: Below band (640L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>Each Tiny Spark</b> <i>Pablo Cartaya</i>	640L	Novel	QT: Below band (640L)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Stargirl</b> <i>Jerri Spinelli</i>	590L	Novel	QT: Below band (590L)   QL: Mid-High

5	<b>The House on Mango Street</b> <i>Sandra Cisneros</i>	870L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (870L)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>Clean Getaway</b> <i>Nic Stone</i>	610L	Novel	QT: Below band (610L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>Restart</b> <i>Gordon Korman</i>	690L	Fiction	QT: Below band (690L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>The Someday Birds</b> <i>Sally J. Pla</i>	570L	Novel	QT: Below band (570L)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Millicent Min, Girl Genius</b> <i>Lisa Yee</i>	700L	Novel	QT: Below band (700L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Me and Marvin Gardens</b> <i>A.S. King</i>	600L	Novel	QT: Below band (600L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>The Parker Inheritance</b> <i>Varian Johnson</i>	760L	Fiction	QT: Below band (760L)   QL: Mid-High
12	<b>Pygmalion (Drama)</b> <i>George Bernard Shaw</i>	990L	Science Fiction	QT: In band (990L)   QL: Mid-High
13	<b>Hey, Kiddo (GN)</b> <i>Jarrett J. Krosoczka</i>	GN: 510L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: 510L, graphic format)
14	<b>Brown Girl Dreaming</b> <i>Jacqueline Woodson</i>	990L	Verse Novel / Memoir	QT: In band (990L)   QL: High
15	<b>I Am Malala</b> <i>Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb</i>	1000L	Memoir	QT: In band (1000L)   QL: Mid-High
16	<b>Almost American Girl (GN)</b> <i>Robin Ha</i>	GN: ~300L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: ~300L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
17	<b>The 57 Bus</b> <i>Dashka Slater</i>	930L	Fiction	QT: In band (930L)   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G7.U2

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>We Are Not Free</b> <i>Traci Chow</i>	860L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (860L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>Refugee</b> <i>Alan Gratz</i>	800L	Fiction	QT: Below band (800L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>Prisoner B-3087</b> <i>Alan Gratz</i>	760L	Novel	QT: Below band (760L)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Number the Stars</b> <i>Lois Lowry</i>	670L	Fiction	QT: Below band (670L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>The Breadwinner</b> <i>Deborah Ellis</i>	710L	Fiction	QT: Below band (710L)   QL: Mid-High

6	<b>They Called Us Enemy (GN)</b> <i>George Takei, Justin Eisinger &amp; Steven Scott</i>	GN: 680L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: 680L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>When Stars Are Scattered (GN)</b> <i>Victoria Jamieson &amp; Omar Mohamed</i>	GN: 530L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: 530L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees (GN)</b> <i>Don Brown</i>	GN: 860L	Fiction	QT: Below band (GN: 860L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Unbroken (Young Adult Adaptation)</b> <i>Laura Hillenbrand</i>	850L	Nonfiction	QT: Approaching band (850L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Bomb</b> <i>Steve Sheinkin</i>	920L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (920L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</b> <i>Frederick Douglass</i>	1080L	Biography	QT: In band (1080L)   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G7.U3

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</b> <i>Mildred D. Taylor</i>	920L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (920L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>Piecing Me Together</b> <i>Renée Watson</i>	680L	Novel	QT: Below band (680L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>All American Boys</b> <i>Jason Reynolds &amp; Brendan Kiely</i>	HL770 L	Fiction	QT: Below band (HL770L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Esperanza Rising</b> <i>Pam Muñoz Ryan</i>	750L	Novel	QT: Below band (750L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>Only Road</b> <i>Alexandra Diaz</i>	830L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (830L)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>The Benefits of Being an Octopus</b> <i>Ann Braden</i>	770L	Novel	QT: Below band (770L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's Crusade</b> <i>Cynthia Levinson</i>	1020L	Fiction	QT: In band (1020L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>Enrique's Journey</b> <i>Sonia Nazario</i>	770L	Fiction	QT: Below band (770L)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Warriors Don't Cry</b>	1000L	Memoir	QT: In band (1000L)   QL: Mid-High

	<i>Melba Pattillo Beals</i>			
10	<b>Outcasts United</b> <i>Warren St. John</i>	980L	Nonfiction	QT: In band (980L)   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G7.U4

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Other Words for Home</b> <i>Jasmine Warga</i>	930L	Verse Novel	QT: In band (930L)   QL: High
2	<b>Same Sun Here</b> <i>Silas House and Neela Vaswani</i>	890L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (890L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>The Red Pencil</b> <i>Andrea Davis Pinkney</i>	HL620 L	Verse Novel	QT: Below band (HL620L, high-low format)   QL: High
4	<b>A Long Walk to Water</b> <i>Linda Sue Park</i>	720L	Novel	QT: Below band (720L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>When You Trap a Tiger</b> <i>Tae Keller</i>	590L	Novel	QT: Below band (590L)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>Efrén Divided</b> <i>Ernesto Cisneroa</i>	710L	Novel	QT: Below band (710L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>Crenshaw</b> <i>Katherine Applegate</i>	540L	Novel	QT: Below band (540L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>Flying Lessons &amp; Other Stories</b> <i>Ellen Oh (edited by)</i>	800L	Fiction	QT: Below band (800L)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Love That Dog</b> <i>Sharon Creech</i>	1010L	Fiction	QT: In band (1010L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>The Surrender Tree</b> <i>Margarita Engle</i>	NP	Verse Novel	QT: N/A (non-prose / visual)   QL: High
11	<b>The Distance Between Us: Young Readers Edition</b> <i>Reyna Grande</i>	HL580 L	Memoir	QT: Below band (HL580L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
12	<b>Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card</b> <i>Sara Saedi</i>	1030L	Memoir	QT: In band (1030L)   QL: Mid-High
13	<b>Human Body Theater</b> <i>Maris Wicks</i>	GN: 920L	Graphic Nonfiction	QT: Below band (GN: 920L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
14	<b>Genetics: Breaking the Code of Your DNA</b> <i>Carla Mooney</i>	1040L	Fiction	QT: In band (1040L)   QL: Mid-High
15	<b>Blood: The Stuff of Life</b> <i>Susan E. Goodman</i>	Not yet	Nonfiction	QT: Not yet measured (Not yet Lexiled)   QL: Mid-High

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### Independent Reading Selections: G8.U1

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>One Crazy Summer</b> <i>Rita Williams-Garcia</i>	750L	Novel	QT: Below band (750L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano</b> <i>Margarita Engle</i>	NP	Biography	QT: N/A (non-prose / visual)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>All the Stars Denied</b> <i>Guadalupe Garcia McCall</i>	790L	Novel	QT: Below band (790L)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Long Way Down</b> <i>Jason Reynolds</i>	HL720 L	Verse Novel	QT: Below band (HL720L, high-low format)   QL: High
5	<b>Internment</b> <i>Samira Ahmed</i>	HL660 L	Fiction	QT: Below band (HL660L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom: My Story of the 1965 Selma Voting Rights March</b> <i>Lynda Lowery</i>	780L	Fiction	QT: Below band (780L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You</b> <i>Jason Reynolds &amp; Ibram X. Kendi</i>	1000L	Fiction	QT: In band (1000L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>March: Book Two (GN)</b> <i>John Lewis, Andrew Aydin &amp; Nate Powell</i>	GN85 OL	Fiction	QT: Below band (GN850L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>March: Book Three (GN)</b> <i>John Lewis, Andrew Aydin &amp; Nate Powell</i>	GN98 OL	Memoir	QT: Below band (GN980L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights</b> <i>Steve Sheinkin</i>	950L	Fiction	QT: In band (950L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice</b> <i>Phillip Hoose</i>	1000L	Fiction	QT: In band (1000L)   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G8.U2

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>The Giver</b> <i>Lois Lowry</i>	760L	Novel	QT: Below band (760L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>Fahrenheit 451</b> <i>Ray Bradbury</i>	890L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (890L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>Lord of the Flies</b> <i>William Golding</i>	770L	Fiction	QT: Below band (770L)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>The City of Ember</b> <i>Jeanne DuPrau</i>	680L	Fiction	QT: Below band (680L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>Uprising</b> <i>Margaret Peterson Haddix</i>	800L	Novel	QT: Below band (800L)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>Revolution</b> <i>Jennifer Donnelly</i>	560L	Fiction	QT: Below band (560L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>The Time Machine</b> <i>H.G. Wells</i>	1010L	Science Fiction	QT: In band (1010L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>Persepolis (GN)</b> <i>Marjane Satrapi</i>	GN: 380L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: 380L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution</b> <i>Ji-Li Jiang</i>	780L	Memoir	QT: Below band (780L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Night</b> <i>Elie Wiesel</i>	590L	Memoir	QT: Below band (590L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>Maus I &amp; II (GN)</b> <i>Art Spiegelman</i>	NP	Graphic Memoir	QT: N/A (non-prose / visual)   QL: Mid-High
12	<b>The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club</b> <i>Phillip Hoose</i>	970L	Fiction	QT: In band (970L)   QL: Mid-High (contemporary themes, character voice)
13	<b>The Rise and Fall of Senator Joe McCarthy</b> <i>James Cross Giblin</i>	1190L	Fiction	QT: Above band (1190L)   QL: Mid-High (contemporary themes, character voice)
14	<b>Give Me Liberty: The Story of the Declaration of Independence</b> <i>Russel Freedman</i>	1070L	Fiction	QT: In band (1070L)   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G8.U3

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Hoot</b> <i>Carl Hiaasen</i>	760L	Fiction	QT: Below band (760L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>The One and Only Ivan</b>	570L	Novel	QT: Below band (570L)   QL: Mid-High

	<i>Katherine Applegate</i>			
3	<b>Rez Dogs</b> <i>Joseph Bruchac</i>	830L	Verse Novel	QT: Approaching band (830L)   QL: High
4	<b>If I Ever Get Out of Here</b> <i>Eric Gansworth</i>	870L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (870L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>Wilder Girls</b> <i>Rory Power</i>	HL730 L	Fiction	QT: Below band (HL730L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>The Evolution of Calpurnia</b> <b>Tate</b> <i>Jacqueline Kelly</i>	830L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (830L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>The Story of More: How We Got to Climate Change and Where to Go from Here (Adapted for Young Adults)</b> <i>Hope Jahren</i>	1240L	Fiction	QT: Above band (1240L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>How to Be a Good Creature: A Memoir in Thirteen Animals</b> <i>Sy Montgomery</i>	1000L	Memoir	QT: In band (1000L)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>The Brilliant Deep: Rebuilding the World's Coral Reefs</b> <i>Kate Messner</i>	830L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (830L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People</b> <i>Debbie Reese</i>	1220L	Fiction	QT: Above band (1220L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines</b> <i>Paul Fleischman</i>	1080L	Fiction	QT: In band (1080L)   QL: Mid-High

### Independent Reading Selections: G8.U4

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Scythe</b> <i>Neal Shusterman</i>	830L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (830L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>Among the Hidden</b> <i>Margaret Peterson Haddix</i>	800L	Novel	QT: Below band (800L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>Ender's Game</b> <i>Orson Scott Card</i>	780L	Science Fiction	QT: Below band (780L)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Children of Blood and Bone</b> <i>Tomí Adeyemi</i>	HL670 L	Fantasy	QT: Below band (HL670L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>The House of the Scorpion</b> <i>Nancy Farmer</i>	660L	Novel	QT: Below band (660L)   QL: Mid-High

6	<b>Akata Witch</b> <i>Nnedi Okofor</i>	HL590 L	Fantasy	QT: Below band (HL590L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>Tuck Everlasting</b> <i>Natalie Babbitt</i>	770L	Fiction	QT: Below band (770L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>Ship Breaker</b> <i>Paolo Bacigalupi</i>	HL690 L	Speculative Fiction	QT: Below band (HL690L, high-low format)   QL: High
9	<b>The Marrow Thieves</b> <i>Cherie Dimaline</i>	HL810 L	Novel	QT: Below band (HL810L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Horizon</b> <i>Scott Westerfeld</i>	690L	Fiction	QT: Below band (690L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>Feathered Serpent, Dark Heart of Sky: Myths of Mexico</b> <i>David Bowles</i>	1010L	Fiction	QT: In band (1010L)   QL: Mid-High
12	<b>Endurance: My Year in Space and How I Got There (Young Readers Edition)</b> <i>Scott Kelly</i>	1070L	Fiction	QT: In band (1070L)   QL: Mid-High