

**Program: Reading for Empathy**  
**By Lauren Bull and Christine Cousins**

Program	Reading for Empathy	
Target Audience	Teenagers of an age range consistent with the grade of the partner school. This program can be adapted for either middle or high school.	
Purpose	To encourage and support young adults to read for pleasure and promote an interest in diverse and varied types of reading material.	
Benefits	To Teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gain access to a safe, shared space where they can read for fun without judgement</li> <li>● Build literacy and interpersonal skills</li> <li>● Find new reading material, including multicultural literature, graphic novels,</li> <li>● Greater understanding of different people, places, and circumstances</li> <li>● Strengthen text-based literacy, critical thinking, verbal communication, and interpersonal and social skills</li> </ul>
	To Partner School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help build skills and interest of their students</li> <li>● Help foster connections and relationships with students</li> <li>● Aid from the library in the provision of materials and plans</li> </ul>
	To Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Foster interest in reading in teenagers</li> <li>● Build relationships with teenagers and encourage use of library resources</li> <li>● Provide programming or resources for teenagers who may not be able to regularly access the public library</li> </ul>
Features	Description	This program is based on The Reader Organization's <i>Get into Reading</i> (GiR) model for shared reading groups (The Reader, 2017), and involves small groups of teens meeting with a librarian/staff member to read aloud from short texts or excerpts of longer works, and talk about them together. Participants will be encouraged to lead the reading and conversation themselves, with the librarian/staff member acting as a moderator and guide. The emphasis of the discussion will not be on literary

		<p>criticism or technical analysis, but on the teens' thoughts, feelings, and opinions about what they read and hear. Talking will be completely voluntary, however, and participants will be equally welcome to simply come and listen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings can have a single book that all students are to read, or a theme in which students need to read an associated work</li> <li>• Teens could gain an element of control over the program by choosing potential reads or themes, though it is recommended that the librarian running the program has a suggestion list and they may decide whether it makes sense for their group of students to vote on a title or theme, or if the students provide suggestions and the librarian has the final say</li> </ul>
	Length	One lunch or break period. Students will be welcome to bring their lunch or snack to the meetings.
	Delivery Season	The program can be started at any point in the year and should continue as long as there is interest.
	Attendance Numbers	For sessions focused on reading aloud from texts about 10 participants is the recommended maximum. An increase in interest can be accommodated by having two discussion groups, the second led by a reliable and interested student or a partner from the school. On weeks where texts are chosen ahead of time, such as is likely with graphic novels, then these groups can discuss together.
Special Features	Graphic Novels	Due to the nature of this program as focusing on diversity and empathy, it is possible to adapt sessions to other media. One recommended form is the graphic novel, and one session a month can easily be set aside specifically for graphic novels. There are a variety of graphic novels that deal with serious subject matter that can help promote empathy. Additionally, the combination of images and texts aids in the ability of teens to take on the different perspectives of the characters. A session discussing graphic novels would function the same as a tradition

		meeting.
	Adaptations	Different adaptation can also be looked at as a special meeting. This could take the form of movies, plays, anime, or more, depending on what your teens have been reading and enjoying. Discussion questions could connect back to original texts or the strengths and weaknesses of each format.
	Writing/ Drawing	It can be fun to have a writing and storytelling workshop that can help teens think about writing their own story. They could model their work after something they have enjoyed reading and then discuss and share with their peers. This could be a safe way for them to receive feedback on their own work or way to see their favourite stories in a new light.
Resources Required	Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive use will be made of the library's print collection for this reading-based program.</li> <li>• Interlibrary loan may be useful for some works or themes, particularly during graphic novel weeks</li> </ul>
	Staff	One librarian/staff member will be sufficient to act as a moderator. If attendance regularly exceeds this, the group will either be halved and another librarian/staff member brought on to moderate, or an additional meeting time will be offered during the week.
	Staff Time	The librarian/staff member will require around 10 hours of initial preparation time to select readings/excerpts, develop discussion questions before the program's start. Prior to individual meetings about 2 hours for detailed preparation is recommended. This number is reliant on the requirements for specific programs, and may change in accordance with a variety of factors such as number of participants.
	Partners	A middle or high school is crucial to this program for participants and promotion.
	Support Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 Recent Diverse* YA Fantasy and Science Fiction Novels <a href="http://www.diversityinya.com/2015/10/10-recent-diverse-ya-fantasy-and-science-fiction-novels/">http://www.diversityinya.com/2015/10/10-recent-diverse-ya-fantasy-and-science-fiction-novels/</a></li> <li>• 30 Diverse YA Titles to Get on Your Radar <a href="http://bookriot.com/2014/05/22/30-diverse-ya-titles-">http://bookriot.com/2014/05/22/30-diverse-ya-titles-</a></li> </ul>

		<p>get-radar/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latinxs in Kid Lit -Reviewed Books: Young Adult <a href="https://latinosinkidlit.com/reviewed-books-young-adult/">https://latinosinkidlit.com/reviewed-books-young-adult/</a></li> <li>• LGBTQIA YA Novels Where the Focus Isn't On Coming Out (Nita Tyndall) <a href="http://nitatyndall.tumblr.com/post/84519522659/lgbtqia-ya-novels-where-the-focus-isnt-on-coming">http://nitatyndall.tumblr.com/post/84519522659/lgbtqia-ya-novels-where-the-focus-isnt-on-coming</a></li> <li>• Diversity in Young Adult and Middle Grade (Goodreads) <a href="http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/16026.Diversity_in_Young_Adult_and_Middle_Grade">http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/16026.Diversity_in_Young_Adult_and_Middle_Grade</a></li> <li>• Anthologies (The Reader Organization) <a href="http://www.thereader.org.uk/anthologies.aspx">http://www.thereader.org.uk/anthologies.aspx</a></li> <li>• No Flying No Tights <a href="http://noflyingnotights.com/">http://noflyingnotights.com/</a></li> </ul>
	Space	A quiet room available at lunch time for the entire break period.
	Equipment	Books from the library collection, healthy snacks for participants, and a list of questions prepared by the librarian/staff member to guide discussion (optional).
	Estimated Costs	Each week, \$30 will be budgeted for librarian/staff member transportation costs (i.e. gas, bus/cab fare) and \$30 for healthy snacks, to make the setting more inclusive for those without lunches.
Promotion	<p>Since the program will be delivered cooperatively in partnership with a local school, promotion for the shared reading group will happen in both locations. Methods will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print posters (featuring the program name, meeting time and location, "open to all")</li> <li>• Announcements made over the school PA system</li> <li>• In-person promotion through librarian/staff member classroom visits</li> <li>• Posts on YA library website, school website, social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter)</li> </ul>	
Evaluation	<p>The number of participants and the percentage of repeat participants will be counted at each meeting, and participants will be informally surveyed throughout delivery to get feedback on what they like, what they would change, etc. The librarian/staff member will also liaise with members who attend the partner school to gauge the general level of student awareness of and interest in the program, to inform possible changes in promotional methods.</p>	

## References

The Reader. (2017). *What we do and why*. Retrieved from <http://www.thereader.org.uk/what-we-do-and-why.aspx>