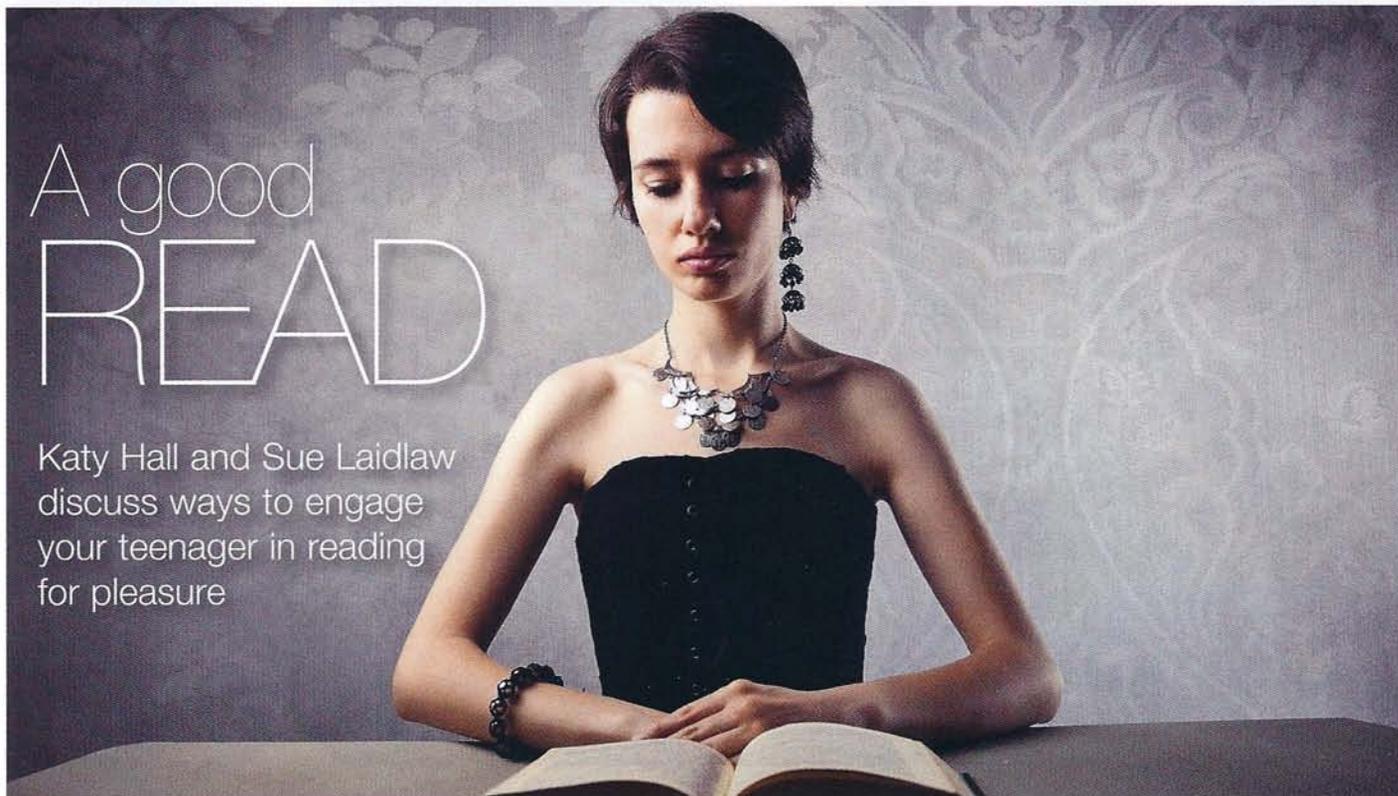


A good READ

Katy Hall and Sue Laidlaw discuss ways to engage your teenager in reading for pleasure



With the never-ending stream of outside influences that teenagers in today's society are faced with, is it any surprise that teachers and parents alike often face an uphill struggle in an attempt to get teenagers to read? By the time teenagers finish school, complete whatever extra-curricular club they might be attending, travel home, eat and complete their homework, the last thing that they seem to want to do is read. Relaxation for many teens seems to come, all too often, in the form of television, video games, Facebook and the like. Many teenagers see reading as some sort of chore, another task on their endless list of things to do for school.

The struggle that we as teachers and parents face is not so much getting them to read, but more showing them that reading is not something which has to be associated with school, that it can be light relief, an escapism, something enjoyable for them to do. Once this is achieved, the reading will complete itself. The skills of speed, accuracy in reading, understanding and retrieval of information that are developed through reading for pleasure aids further development across the curriculum. Reading is key and this is why it is so crucial that we tackle this problem as early as possible with our teenagers.

There is also much to be said for thinking

outside the box when it comes to getting teenagers to read - don't assume you have to stick to novels. A great deal of teenagers respond to reading poetry, plays, short stories, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs... The list goes on. Once again, these can be used as a gateway to more challenging reading later but sometimes, particularly for the less academic child, introducing them to something shorter and more manageable can be encouraging. In addition, they benefit from exposure to different forms of writing. This can be equally beneficial for the brightest of children who yearn to be challenged. We found that one of the most effective methods that I have ever used with one of my most challenging Year 10 pupils was to introduce him to reading new plays. More and more, new playwrights veer towards shorter plays, some with only 75 minute running times. In terms of reading we are given something much more manageable.

So for parents trying to encourage their children to read rather than watch the latest TV programme, the most important thing to remember is to be positive, start small and dispel the myth that it is something which is solely linked to school. Begin by encouraging just 15 minutes at a time and be supportive - help them to choose a book which they feel is something that they would enjoy. Happy reading..

Great Recent Reads



FOR YOUNGER TEENAGERS

Coraline - Neil Gaiman

FOR BOYS

Revolver Marcus Sedgwick

Uncle Montague's Tale of Terror Chris Priestley

Out of Shadows Jason Wallace

Dark Materials Trilogy Philip Pullman

(pictured)

FOR GIRLS

Love, Aubrey Suzanne LeFleur

Chains Laurie R. King

The Vanishing of Katharina Linden Helen Grant

The Bride's Farewell Meg Rosoff

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