

Independent Reading Assignment Overview

I used this assignment with great success when I taught in middle school. I wanted an assignment that would emphasize actually finishing books instead of looking at the number of pages or minutes read.

The system is fairly simple. Students begin the month by completing the Independent Reading Introduction Page. This helps them to think about the books they choose and consider the reasons for their choice. I walk around and talk with them about their choices on the day that this page is due, making sure that they understand the genre of their book and have set realistic goals for finishing it. Then, they have to complete one assignment from the Independent Reading Menu each week. I post the week number in my classroom and allow students to work on the assignment during their reading time. To help them understand each assignment, I model how to do it with our shared reading. Finally, students complete an End of Book form at the end of the month.

Of course, things get complicated sometimes. A student who wants to read an exceptionally long book may get an extension. I am open to students abandoning books, as long as they can give a good reason. For students who like to speed through books, I remind them to do the Introduction Page and End of Book Form on at least one book in the month...having them do multiple copies would be a disincentive for reading many books, which is the opposite of what I want!

I grade the assignments and the forms using the “clipboard cruise” method...while the students read, I check their work. This gives them immediate feedback, allows me to conference with them about their reading, and keeps me from lugging papers home.

I hope that you enjoy this and make it work for you. Cultivating a love of reading in our students is our most important job. Enjoy!

Independent Reading Assignment

Independent reading is an important part of our class. We will begin each class with 10-15 minutes of independent reading time. You are accountable for using this time wisely. Please read the notes below.

Expectation: All students are required to read one grade-level appropriate book every four weeks.

- You will be able to choose your book, but it must be approved by the teacher.
- Many of you will want to read more than one book in a four-week period. That's great! Be sure to complete the "Book Completion Form" for at least one book each month.
- Keep a log of your reading in your binder.
- Bring your book to class each day!

Assignments

- The Independent Reading Introduction page and an End of Book Form should be completed for at least one book each month.
- All weekly assignments should be completed on a blank sheet of notebook paper, unless otherwise noted. You are responsible for showing your best effort on these assignments. Be neat!

Parent signature: I am aware of the assignment

Independent Reading Introduction Page

Date _____ Name _____

Title of book _____

Author _____ Copyright date _____

Genre (circle one)

Science fiction Fantasy Realistic fiction Historical Fiction

Mystery Adventure Biography Thriller

Total number of pages in the book _____

To set a weekly reading goal, divide the number of pages in the book by four. This is the number of pages that you will need to read each week to complete the book on time.

Week 1 _____ Week 2 _____ Week 3 _____ Week 4 _____

Record these page numbers in your agenda book so that you know what to read each week.

Why did you choose this book?

_____ Liked cover _____ Interesting title _____ Read others by same author

_____ Genre _____ Recommended by a friend

_____ Recommended by an adult _____ Other

How do you think this book fits with your reading abilities?

_____ Easy to read _____ Just right _____ A challenge!

Explain your choice. _____

Independent Reading Menu

- Complete your reading goal and one activity for each week. Be ready to hand in your work each Friday at the beginning of class.
- Write your activities on a sheet of clean notebook paper.
- Put the activity number and the title of your book at the top of the paper.

Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four
Reading Goal:	Reading Goal:	Reading Goal:	Reading Goal:
1.1: Make a list of at least three predictions for the book—think about characters, setting, and genre. As you read the first few chapters, write down whether your predictions were accurate.	2.1: List three characters in the book so far. Describe their physical appearance, importance to the story, and character traits.	3.1: Write a letter to a character in the book. Include your reaction to the events in the book, your feelings about the character’s choices, and what you think the character should do now. (At least one page)	4.1: Theme is the underlying message of a piece of text. Write a paragraph to express what you think is the theme of this book.
1.2: Write a list of at least five events that have happened so far. Make a prediction about what the conflict, or problem, will be.	2.2: Make a list of six events in the story. What caused each event? What was the effect of each event?	3.2: Choose five interesting or unusual words from the book so far. Create a semantic map for each, including definition, the word in a sentence, related words, and synonyms.	4.2: <i>Style</i> is the way an author writes a text. How do you feel about the author’s style in this book? Is it formal or informal? Do you like the way the sentences sound?
1.3: The first few chapters of a book often contain a detailed description of the setting. Find a page with many setting details. Draw a picture of the setting. Label at least five specific details from the text.	2.3: Describe an exciting event from the book as if you were a sports broadcaster.	3.3: Think about the relationship of the setting to the story. Could this story have happened in another place? Why or why not?	4.3: Often, characters change as a result of events in a novel. Describe the changes that a character went through in this book.

Name _____

Date _____

End of book form

Complete this form if you have finished an independent reading book.

Title of book _____

Author _____

of pages _____

Would you recommend this book to other students? Why or why not? (Be specific!) _____

What was your favorite (or least favorite!) part about this book? _____

On a separate sheet of notebook paper, complete one of the activities below. (You may do more if you like!)

Option 1 Create a story map for this book. Include the five story elements that we have talked about in class: characters, setting, conflict, plot (at least five events), and theme.

Option 2 Write a letter to me about your reactions to this book. Include information about how the main character changed throughout the book, how the ending was or was not surprising, how the conflict was resolved, and what you learned from reading the book.

Looking for more teaching resources? Check out these books by Emily Kissner.

- In *The Forest AND the Trees: Helping Readers Identify Important Details in Texts and Tests*, you can learn more about helping students use details to understand what they read. With chapters about real-life details, inferences, visualizing, and content area details, you will definitely find resources to use immediately in your own classroom.
- *Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Retelling: Skills for Better Reading, Writing, and Test-Taking* examines how to teach summarizing and why it is so difficult for many students.

Both books are available from Heinemann.