

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts

The vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society. These standards assume that literacy growth begins before children enter school as they experience and experiment with literacy activities—reading and writing, and associating spoken words with their graphic representations. Recognizing this fact, these standards encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. Furthermore, the standards provide ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning. They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction.

How *READ* meets each of the 12 Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

Each issue of *READ* combines classic and contemporary literature. We include nonfiction and fiction texts, as well reader's theater adaptations of classic literature or original plays. We theme every issue and present a variety of texts, using nonfiction and fiction examples of classic and contemporary literature. Each year, we devote at least an issue or two to exploring the literature of another culture with this past year including Caribbean and Irish stories. We have also devoted issues that focus on the diversity within the United States. In the upcoming year we are focusing on the literature of India and the literature of the Midwest/West vis-a-vis a Dust Bowl theme.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

The content of our magazine speaks for our commitment to students' personal growth. Each issue of *READ* is driven by a theme. Past themes have included *Coming of Age*, *Children of the Holocaust*, *Tales of Survival*, *Greek Mythology*, *Women Crossing Boundaries*, *Native American Stories*, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. We use these themes as a means to expose our students to different types of literature, and different periods in history.

It is important to cover the classic foundation of our literary heritage, yet we are constantly seeking to supplement that foundation by promoting various under-exposed cultural literature (eg. issues on Native American Stories and Caribbean Stories). It is also important for us to mix traditional texts with relatable, contemporary work. We connect with many YA authors to produce original stories for our students. In our October 2008 issue, entitled *The Dark Side*, Robert Louis Stevensons' classic Victorian

novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is countered with a modern and scary short story from Roald Dahl. We mix genres, periods, and styles within the themes to help students to build connections between people, historical events, cultures, and their own lives. Our goal is to find new, innovative ways for students to make a personal connection with literature in the hopes of enriching their emotional and intellectual development. Our fiction and nonfiction articles feature the lives of young adults who must make important decisions and/or make sense of their unique challenges. Many of our writing how-to articles ask students to look deeper at their experiences for the purpose of personal understanding and expression.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Each issue of *READ* can be a solo or group experience. Our Readers' Theater plays can be used effectively in the classroom as students can be assigned parts in a play and interact with each other within the parameters of the literature. Each student brings his/her own experiences to the table and every story or article they read will be interpreted in different ways. *READ* encourages students to share their unique understandings of the literature in an open, classroom environment by offering critical thinking and reading comprehension questions as reproducibles in our 8 page Teacher's Guide. *READ* also highlights vocabulary and often showcases sidebars at the end of stories/plays/articles to further the students' grasp of the literature and cultural contexts.

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Each issue of *READ* includes several writing prompts and extension activities that further develop the students' interests in literature. We offer an outlet for all creativity by soliciting student writing, art, even video. We publish student works on our blog, *WORD*, at www.readandwriting.com. There, other students can comment on their peers work.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Every issue of *READ* includes an 8 page Writing section where students can read about all different types of writing styles including (but not limited to) explanatory and persuasive essays, narrative fiction, poetry, biography, memoir, and playwriting. The writing section also discusses conventions of fiction and nonfiction writing. We have covered setting, character development, plot structure, personal response writing, personal narrative, and literature review, among other subjects.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

Each issue of READ contains an article devoted to the learning of grammar and punctuation skills. Our Grammar Slammer feature won the award for “Best Column” at the Association of Educational Publishers (AEP) Distinguished Achievement Awards.

We also regularly feature a Literary Scene Investigation which delves into various genres and uses of language. For example during the 2008-2009 school year, the LSI included the themes of parody, speech writing, newswriting, storytelling techniques, characterization, and imagery and symbolism among others.

Our Teacher’s Guide contains exercises that reinforce spelling, grammar, punctuation, literary genres, and figurative language through self-directed exercises and discussion questions. Our features are paired with writing prompts and critical thinking questions.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

In *READ*, we direct students to sources that complement what they find in the magazine. Author interviews accompany written works presented in the magazine. We include Internet links to carefully chosen video and audio clips. We provide tools for students to learn effective research skills, using a variety of sources, teaching interview skills, and analyzing data. This year we will feature an article about writing from the source to instruct on writing document-based essays.

In recent years, *READ* has embarked on the creation of electronic issues. Using their computers and imaginations, middle-school students will gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the complex storylines of **Macbeth** and **The Tell-Tale Heart**, discover the customs and lifestyles of medieval England as they go on a pilgrimage with Chaucer’s characters, and travel down the Mississippi guided by that former riverboat captain, Mark Twain.

Students’ learning experiences will be enriched and enhanced through the many advantages that multimedia offers: For example, young explorers will hear, as well as read, Middle English, and visit Shakespeare’s Elizabethan England via a time line that provides sound, music, and movement along with visual and textual information.

9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles. We are committed to including the literature of the world in the magazine as we create various themes. We present work that educates and informs, in the form of fiction and nonfiction, plays and essays. We once paired an article about Caribbean poetry in the print issue with an online poetry reading featuring a Caribbean poet, in the hopes that students will gain a layered understanding of written word and spoken word of another culture.

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to

develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

Various magazine departments in *READ* aid in their comprehension, such as Reader's Theater plays and vocabulary pull-outs and the Literary Scene Investigation.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

We offer an open forum of student writing and creativity on our blog. We provide publishing opportunities with two yearly contests and expressions of student writing in the magazine. We frequently feature well-known authors in print and online editions in the hopes of inspiring students and connecting them with the greater publishing world.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

In recent issues, *READ* has covered speech writing and performing. In our Election-themed issue, we covered debate writing as well as communication skills. We featured political cartoons and received an overwhelming response when requesting students to send in their own cartoons (with an impressive selection being featured on our blog). Our Writing section seeks to inform and inspire so that students tackle both class assignments and writing for pleasure with creativity and enthusiasm.