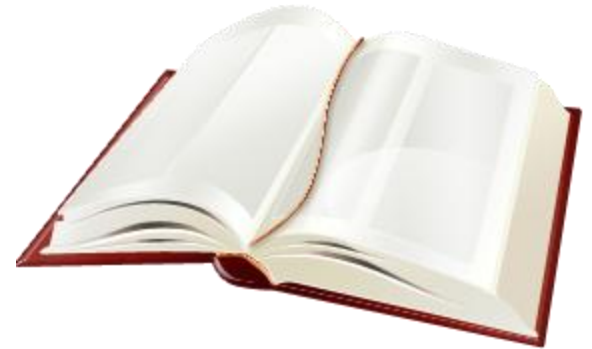


# ***IT'S LONG, IT'S HARD, IT'S BORING: STUDENT VOICES ON READING***

## **2014 QATAR TESOL**



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# OVERVIEW

1. *To read or not to read* (reading-related, meta-cognitive project; ABP Academic Composition students; autumn 2013)
2. What I learnt from my students' papers and comments
3. So what?



# PROJECT'S PARTICIPANTS

- Qatari/Arab/international students
- IELTS 5.5-6.5/7
- Mostly (approx. 70%) graduates of independent schools in Qatar
- Academic Composition course
- Academic Bridge Program (ABP)
- Preparation for university



# PROJECT'S (META-COGNITIVE) OBJECTIVES

- To consider reading
- To consider reading as an academic skill and self-evaluate the strength of own reading abilities
- To consider reading as part of wider human culture and discuss factors contributing to a weak interest in reading in the region
- To re-consider reading



# PROJECT DESIGN

- short initial survey (N=28)
- reading related texts
- class discussion
- writing a response paper



## *In other words:*

- Thinking about reading
- Reading about reading
- Talking about reading
- Writing about reading



# THINKING ABOUT READING



## Survey questions

1. Do you like reading? Why? Why not?
2. Is reading important? Why? Why not?
3. What did you read at school? *Provide the name of the school.*
4. Additional comments/thoughts on reading.



# ANSWERS (1)



YES = 23

NO = 5

- **I like reading because:**

*It's fun, it enhances my thoughts, teaches you about things, changes my attitude, information, imagination, creativity, knowledge, emotions, separate world, different world, feel more active, my own world, helps with writing, **improves my English...***

- **I don't like reading because:**

*No patience to read stories over 50 pages, get bored, waste of time, annoying, boring, hate it*



# ANSWERS (2)

Is reading important? Why? Why not?

27 out of 28 => YES  
1 out of 28 => YES and NO

## Reasons:

YES: Knowledge, imagination,  
understanding, better thoughts, better  
decisions

But mostly because it improves English

NO: “wrong topics”





# READING AT SCHOOL

**5** = didn't read anything

**12** = some reading, but school didn't focus on reading

**11** = read extensively (British, French, international schools in Doha or abroad)



# SOME COMMENTS

- Majority of students avoid reading because it's associated with school.
- *I love reading maybe for no reason.*
- Reading should be a must for students. Teachers should make students love reading in an enjoyable way.
- *I mentioned that I don't like reading. In my literature class I enjoy the stories that we have. And I think I started to like reading somehow.*



# READING ABOUT READING

1. Neil Gaiman, “Why our future depends on libraries, reading and daydreaming”, *The Guardian*, 15 Oct. 2013

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/neil-gaiman-future-libraries-reading-daydreaming>

○ *“Fiction has two uses. Firstly, it’s a gateway drug to reading. (...) The second thing fiction does is to build empathy.”*

○ *“The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to teach them to read, and to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity.”*

2. Additional articles (Doha News, BBC News)



# TALKING ABOUT READING

**Class discussion based on the texts and own experience**

**Reading is...**

- **Long? Hard? Boring?**
- **Forced/encouraged/discouraged by school?**
- **Supported (or not) by school?**
- **Role of parents, society, culture**

**What to read?**

- **Classics or popular fiction?**
- **In what language?**
- **“Wrong” books?**



# WRITING ABOUT READING

- Response essay to N. Gaiman's article

Student essays brought some surprising results and illuminating insights regarding their attitude to reading.



# RESPONSE ESSAYS

- Convince them instead of trying to influence/force them.
- After reading the article, I encouraged my little sister to read.
- If children don't read it's the parents' or the school's fault.
- Kids should be given freedom to choose what they want to read.
- Parents should read to children.
- As an Arab I was born in a culture that does not encourage children or adults to read.
- *Before this day, I've never thought about libraries and reading in this way.*



# SOME COMMON THEMES

- Example, encouragement, support
- “Empty space” = indifference / lack of support
- Obligation vs. pleasure
- Freedom of choice
- Parents
- School
- Society / culture
- **They want someone to *make* them read and get enjoyment out of it 😊**
- *Change*



# SO WHAT?



- **Our role**
- First/second/foreign language
- What texts to choose?
- How to teach reading/literature?
- Does reading matter?

*It does to them, if it does to us.*

- Any other issues/questions?





# I THINK (THEREFORE I AM A TEACHER)... AND CARRY ON REGARDLESS

**I think, the onus is on the teacher, so:**

- I choose texts I am interested in (within institutional boundaries)
- I have banned the words, “hard”, “long” and “boring”
- I read and talk, think, write – with my students
- I ask for their input, value their opinion
- I let them make connections
- I try to “make” them love reading, because no-one else has done or will.
- AND YOU?



