



Reading Ladders: Leading Students from Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be

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Many of us are searching continually for that just-right book for each and every one of our students. It is my hope to help you find those books. More importantly, I hope to help you guide students to the next great book and the one after that. That is the purpose of Reading Ladders. Because it is not sufficient to find just one book for each reader. -Teri Lesesne

"I finished the Twilight Series-now what?"

With Reading Ladders, the answer to a question like this can become the first rung on a student's climb to greater engagement with books, to full independence, and beyond to a lifetime of passionate reading.

"The goal of reading ladders," writes Teri Lesesne, "is to slowly move students from where they are to where we would like them to be." With reading ladders you start with the authors, genres, or subjects your readers like then connect them to book after book-each a little more complex or challenging than the last. Teri not only shares ready-to-go ladders, but her suggestions will help you:

select books to create your own reading ladders build a classroom library that supports every student's needs use reading ladders to bolster content-area knowledge and build independence assess where students are at and how far they've climbed.

"If we are about creating lifetime readers and not just readers who can utilize phonological awareness and context clues to bubble in answers on a state test," writes Teri Lesesne, "then we need to help our students form lasting relationships with books and authors and genres and formats." Use Reading Ladders, help your students start their climb, and guide them to new heights in reading.

Reading Ladders: Leading Students from Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be Details

Date : Published February 14th 2010 by Heinemann Educational Books (first published 2010)
ISBN : 9780325017266
Author : Teri S. Lesesne
Format : Paperback 129 pages
Genre : Education, Teaching, Nonfiction

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We'd Like Them to Be Teri S. Lesesne**

From Reader Review Reading Ladders: Leading Students from Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be for online ebook

Holly Mueller says

This is a must-read for all reading teachers. Lesesne talks about the merits of using contemporary literature in the classroom and building literacy ladders. I have lots of post-it-note flags sticking out of the pages marking great ideas. She's a high school expert, but there is a lot here for elementary teachers, too. One of the ways I'd like to use reading ladders is to build background knowledge using picture books for historical fiction books like *A Long Way from Chicago*, *Wednesday Wars*, *Countdown*, *Moon Over Manifest*, etc. These are some of the best books for kids, but if they don't know enough about the time period, they get lost. Building their historical knowledge could go a long way in helping them appreciate these brilliant books. I think with practice, laddering books can become second nature.

Alyson (Kid Lit Frenzy) says

Lesesne's book captures what I always felt in my gut but wasn't sure how to put it into words. Scaffolding books to keep moving readers along the continuum. Now the challenge - implementing it and providing reading ladders for teachers to help them catch the vision.

Jennifer Brinkmeyer says

Here's my version of the table of contents:

Ch 1: I like that she brings up how response is neglected. I've been thinking about the books students read in my classes and it makes me wonder why I don't make more space to respond. How can they possibly get passed their feelings about a book when their feelings aren't acknowledged?

Ch 2: An affirmation of all that I already believe: read-alouds, access, models, and time are all necessary for building lifelong readers.

Ch 3: Discussing what motivates readers was interesting. She emphasized title, cover, and opening paragraph as book variables of motivation one should consider in book talking. This will help me decide how to go about sharing a book. Her student variable was gender. I can admit certain students gravitate toward certain books based on title, genre, etc. and that one should be aware of if they are only sharing a certain type of book with students, but it stalled me out in the book because I'm not sure it needed to be addressed this way. Discussing the importance of students to see themselves in the book options would have been more meaningful to me.

Ch 4: Or, ch 2 in detail.

Ch 5 and most of the rest: Examples of ladders. A reading ladder is when you construct a series of books so that when a student finishes one they have something to read NEXT. This is huge. Good readers have plans about what they want to read next. This idea is not something I have to think about. When a student asks me for a recommendation, I have their recent book history flipping through my mind. I scan the booksplosion

that is my room and have a stack of 3-5 for them to choose from within moments. Book talks are also my ladders. I'll share books that springboard from class texts or trends. I do not need to fill out a little ladder picture to do this. Here's what I appreciate:

-Ladders do not just have to be built through genre or same/similar authors. It can be character-driven, style-driven, plot-driven, etc. I do this some, but it's good to be reminded of a wider vision.

-Often we expect middle-school-turned-ninth-graders to be ready for The Odyssey and Romeo and Juliet. This book asks how we scaffold for these experiences, or scaffold students to adult-level reading. Also, not a new concept, but it's a question worth asking.

In reflecting back on the content and organization of this book, I'm seeing that this was predominantly old learning. I feel like I fell for the teacher trap of a book about a great idea. This is a book of self-congratulation for teachers already in the process. It's affirming, yes, but progressive? Nope.

It is rare that I am this negative and cranky about a book, but I paid \$15 for Teri to tell me things she already knew and I already knew. It feels like teacher branding, where she took her book reputation, re-organized and revised some pre-existing notions, and cashed in.

I guess I just need a reading ladder of my own away from books like this.

Vanessa Heller says

Author Penny Kittle (Book Love) suggested on Twitter that I read Lesesne so I picked up Reading Ladders. I had read Donalyn Miller's Book Whisperer and Reading in the Wild, and Kittle's Book Love - and this was the perfect companion. These authors advocate becoming a better reader by reading - a logical yet typically disregarded approach in public schools.

In my quest to rewrite my ELA curriculum, I found Lesesne tips and explanations spot on and in line with what I believe to be best practice in literacy instruction. I love the idea of students constructing their own reading ladders.... I did have a hard time with this part of the book only because I simply have not read enough tween lit lately to put ladders together in my own mind. I do see great benefit in having students build reading ladders as a way to differentiate ELA for them.

Travis says

Such a great resource for teachers, especially when we know we must differentiate instruction for our students and get them to read increasingly complex literature. The stories, strategies, and book lists were excellent. Excited to share this with colleagues!

Alicia says

Scaffolding reading. There are ways to get readers reading and ways to get non-readers reading and then there's the next step. Keeping them reading.

This professional text is short, sweet, and focused. Essentially sharing with teachers and librarians the ways

in which we can get smarter about recommending books, not to get a Diary of a Wimpy Kid reader to be reading Tolkien but instead, thinking about similarities, themes, and text in a way that continues to support the reader. It's a way to refresh what librarians already do in being strategic with a reiteration that the best kind of reading is the reading itself. It starts with reading aloud and ends with empowered readers who want more.

Richard Stange says

Perpetuating literacy growth is to "scaffold readers up through a variety of connectors: books written by all the same author, books written by similar authors, [or] books from a single genre that grow more difficult..." (Lesesne VIII). Engaging in reading ladders is riding a skateboard. It is the experience of first finding balance. Second, one must learn to move. Finally, new and advanced tricks can be learned through experience.

This work of pedagogical literature provides educators with professional development that aims to strengthen the relationship between the teacher, the students, and books.

"Young adult literature provides opportunities for readers to develop relationships with books and to respond to books in ways that are often impossible when they read canonical literature" (Lesesne IX). Becoming an educator is a new lens in which the world is seen through.

The Western canon is a literary Caterpillar, forcing students to inhale its aroma of colonization. But no more! Hans Christian Anderson's glass shard has been yanked from the eye! The authors discussed within my community of learners are all alive and well. My motto is: "If you can't Tweet them, why teach them?"

Books are portals to other worlds. What was once Carroll's rabbit hole, now exists as a painting in Cashore's Tu Reviens. Opening up a book to the first page is to dive in, head first. Lesesne guides teachers on our journey of influencing lifelong readers.

Enchanting and daunting is a responsibility such as this. However, "...the possibilities are, indeed, limitless. Any subject, topic, theme, concept, or idea can morph into the beginning of a reading ladder. And the more we read, the more possibilities are open to us" (Lesesne 116).

Ashley Guilbault says

Reading Ladders by Terri S. Lesesne discussed the importance of developing motivation amongst students to build them into lifelong readers. She revealed three variables that produce the strongest effect on students to spark that motivation within them; these include book variables, student variables, and school variables. These three essential factors all play a significant role in how students perceive books, and affects how students select books as well.

Reading Ladders also provided many examples on how we can help students grow into lifelong readers. Building a classroom library, reading aloud, book talking, and being the go-to-person when it comes to books in your school can do this. Terri then explains the process of building reading ladders for your own students. She explains reading ladders as, "A series or set of books that are related in some way (e.g., thematically) and that demonstrate a slow, gradual development from simple to more complex." This process can help students climb up to more sophisticated and challenging texts one step at a time through

scaffolding. She even provided helpful tips on how to move forward with the basics of a reading ladder as well.

I would use the strategies I have learned about from this book with any grade level. The book provides guidance and tips for not just beginning readers, but for any reading level students progress to. An example from the book that I would love to implement into my own teaching practices includes an activity that has my students create their own reading ladders. I would first prepare my students for such a task by modeling the process of how to create reading ladders. I would also provide resources and activities to help them through this process, as well as reading aloud short stories as a class. While we do these activities, I would have them use sticky notes, highlighters, and annotations to make connections with the text. This allows students to compare and contrast the short stories we have read, and analyze certain themes, issues, and characters. They will then be able to start the process of scaffolding their own reading ladders with these short stories.

Kate says

Full of great ideas for helping kids move from one book to the next and keeping the sustained reading going, this is a must-read for teachers who care about helping kids to become lifelong readers. This one deserves a place next to Atwell's THE READING ZONE and Donalyn Miller's THE BOOK WHISPERER. Highly, highly recommended.

Declan says

I like the concept but there is not enough classroom tested how to here.

Carolyn says

Probably more of a 3.5. I'll come back with more thoughts over the weekend. (I mean, I did take 4 pages of notes while reading this. I do have thoughts.)

Pernia Hassan says

The analogy of helping students climb up a reading ladder is very good as are the examples of reading ladders in the book, the other information was less compelling.

The lack of nuance in terms of gender is also another component that shows very old fashioned thinking.

Heather Munao says

There was nothing really new here for me. The central point is to make connections between books. This is a good book to get for a new 6th-12th grade English teacher or librarian because it references many young

adult books for that age range that could help an early-career educator connect with kids. She did point to many resources to use for booktalks, book trailers, and unique books (such as picture books). As always, my mantra for teaching-related books is take what you like and leave the rest.

Colby Sharp says

Is it just me or does the state of Texas have a stronghold on rockin' author teachers: Jeff Anderson, Terry Thompson, Donalyn Miller, and Teri Lesesne?

Mary Alexandre says

"We need to be able to communicate to the naysayers in our communities and even in our schools that literature for teens is not some sort of dumbed-down version of real literature" (p.1). And so begins Lesesne's in depth explanation of the important role young adult literature should play as part of today's middle school curriculum. She begins by explaining the factors that make YA literature relevant then goes on to explain the foundational pieces used to build lifelong readers. Lesesne transitions from these explanations to teaching the reader how to construct and use reading ladders to move students forward in a subtle yet effective manner. A great read for anyone looking for that "next step" to becoming a lifelong reader.
