2021

"It Depends Where I Am in My Life, Whether I Love Reading or Not": Challenges to Fostering Strong Personal Reading Lives and Why it Matters

Matthew Sroka
Salisbury University, sroka.matt@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm>

Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Secondary Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sroka, Matthew (2021) "It Depends Where I Am in My Life, Whether I Love Reading or Not": Challenges to Fostering Strong Personal Reading Lives and Why it Matters," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 37: Iss. 1, Article 8.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.2304>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Language Arts Journal of Michigan by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

“It Depends Where I Am in My Life, Whether I Love Reading or Not”: Challenges to Fostering Strong Personal Reading Lives and Why it Matters

MATTHEW SROKA

This article stems from a larger participatory action research study involving a 4-month investigation into the reading lives of myself and four other secondary English teachers.

This study illustrates that even for teachers who value reading, there exists a recurring struggle to maintain strong personal reading lives; however, this study also provides examples of transformational teachers and texts that assisted teachers in overcoming these challenges. These transformational experiences led to teachers reading more, which led to changes in their views of reading and their pedagogical decision-making around reading. Specifically, having positive experiences with books inside and outside the classroom opened up opportunities for students to have more positive experiences with books. For this reason, this study calls upon teachers to resituate how they position the role of personal reading in their lives.

Brief Review of the Literature

Though, in general, research reports that many teachers are not avid readers (Pillai, 2015; Rimensberger, 2014; Vansteelandt et al., 2017), we understand less about the specific reading habits of English teachers. Yet, the limited studies focused on English teachers' reading lives hint at discouraging conclusions. For instance, a robust survey conducted by Commeyras and DeGroff (1998) explored the professional reading habits of 1,482 in-service literacy professionals. According to the study, nearly 12% of respondents claimed to have not read a professional

book in the past year and only 39% of respondents had read six or more professional books that year. These results reveal that though the reading habits of literacy professionals are stronger than the overall reading habits of all teachers, they still might not be as strong as one might expect. Despite this lack of reading, Donaldson's (2014) quantitative dissertation, focusing exclusively on the reading habits of secondary English teachers in Texas, demonstrated that the majority of English teachers enjoy reading and discussing what they are reading.

This idea that English teachers enjoy and value personal reading is also supported by the work of Gomez (2009) who concludes, “teachers value literacy, recognize the importance of literacy in their personal and professional lives, and believe that their personal literate selves connect to their professional literate lives” (p. 39). A strong personal reading life can allow English teachers to live out the reading lives that they often desire their students to have, a strong, lifelong love of reading (Jago, 2019; Kittle 2013). In fact, many English teachers' thoughts may echo Donalyn Miller's (2009) when she wrote, “My identity as a person is so entwined with my love of reading and books that I cannot separate the two” (p. 10). Yet, research around teachers' personal reading lives remains nebulous, nor do we have a clear idea about the relationship between reading lives and teaching practices. My study aims to provide more clarity to these aspects of being an English teacher.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing on the work of Street (2003), I situate this research within a sociocultural perspective of literacy as it is “always embedded in social practices” (p. 78). Reading texts is one specific type of social practice and therefore ways of reading and thinking about reading occur in larger cultural contexts that impact how we read and come to our understanding of texts.

This study also assumes that identities are socially situated and enacted in “particular time, spaces, and relationships” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 432). A teacher’s reading life occurs in both their school and home settings. Family dynamics, for instance, play a significant role in the home setting of teachers. Numerous studies examine the home setting for students and its impact on their reading lives and literary practices, but few studies focus on this same dynamic for teachers (Moll et al., 1992; Gomez, 2009). Reading often, by its very nature, becomes a solitary act that is often perceived to be time-consuming and, potentially, a distraction from the work they must do as teachers as well as the attention they must offer to their families. This time-consuming, independent act often forces readers to make tough decisions about when and how to read, especially teachers who continue to report high levels of stress in their work lives.

Methods and Analysis

For this study, I employed a participatory action research (PAR) design that involved my role in the study as an English teacher and a researcher (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As an English teacher, and as someone interested in my own reading life and teaching practice, it would have been impossible to turn off my identity as an English teacher and reader while I conducted this research. Therefore, I embraced my multiple identities through a PAR design. The action research allowed the participants to act as co-researchers as together we explored our teaching and reading lives while continually revisiting how these discoveries impacted our teaching. We were guided by the following three research questions:

- What are the reading histories and identities of in-service secondary English teachers?
- How do secondary in-service English teachers participating in a virtual learning community express, discuss, and enact their reading histories and reading identities?
- How does a teacher’s awareness of these reading histories and identities influence their teaching practices?

Participants

All participants participated in a prior pilot project I conducted that explored their reading histories through a series of three interviews. Therefore, prior to this project I knew each of the four other participants, yet, they had never met each other. There were five participants in this study all of whom taught at different schools: Robert (all names are pseudonyms), a male high school English teacher; George, a male high school English teacher; Cheryl, a female teacher, who at the time of this study, after being a high school English teacher for over 20 years, transitioned to a literacy coach position; James, a male middle school Language Arts teacher; and myself, a male English teacher.

Data Collection and Analysis

Using Zoom, I conducted seven 90-minute bi-weekly group meetings over the course of 4 months focusing on different aspects of our reading and teaching lives. Participants also kept reading journals and submitted a variety of teaching artifacts (course syllabi, lesson plans, worksheets) in order to determine how their personal reading lives may impact their pedagogical choices. Finally, I conducted two semi-structured individual interviews with each participant to ask follow-up questions based on the group interviews and the other artifacts that were submitted.

For coding, I drew upon the work of Saldaña (2016) and his first and second cycle coding. For first cycle coding, I utilized in vivo coding, which attempts to capture the precise language used and “honor the participant’s voice” (Saldaña, p. 106). As

I explored the reading identities of English teachers, it became important to capture their voices and the specific terms they use to talk about their own reading beliefs and experiences. The initial coding of meetings and interviews yielded 267 unique codes. I then coded teacher artifacts, the discussion board, reading journals, and individual interviews using the 267 codes. After, I used pattern coding as my second cycle coding to identifying emergent themes or explanations. Results of this second cycle coding provided me with 26 thematic codes:

- Assumptions about reading
- Culture
- Defining literature
- Distance teaching experiences
- Evolving as a reader
- Family
- Individual act of reading
- Job of an English teacher
- Learning community
- Libraries
- Metaphor
- Non-readers (teachers)
- Pedagogy
- Personal information
- Personal reading
- Reading purposes
- Self-reflection
- Social act of reading
- Students
- Study design
- Teaching context
- Testing and reading
- Text selection
- Text types
- Valuing reading
- Working with colleagues

Several of the thematic codes shed light on the conflicting nature of personal reading lives between stated beliefs and reading habits. These codes led to findings related to how English teachers struggle to prioritize reading and how these English teachers also have moments when their reading lives become re-ignited. Data analysis also occurred throughout the writing process as I began to draw and make connections to how my research fit in with existing

scholarly research. I then sent first drafts of my writings to my advisor, Dr. Judith Franzak, who provided me with feedback on my data analysis, often suggesting further scholarly reading on a given topic. Finally, I went back into my own findings and the scholarly literature to refine my data analysis and re-work my findings. In this article, I will discuss two of these findings.

English Teachers as Readers:

The Challenges in Fostering Active Personal Reading Lives

The teaching of English often centers upon the teaching of books, and relatedly, there is an implied expectation that teachers engage in the activity of reading both inside and outside of the classroom. However, despite society's expectations for the reading habits of English teachers, the teachers in this study often faced challenges in how to prioritize reading amidst their other personal and professional responsibilities. This led to the participants having moments in their lives when they were not avidly reading. Below I explore personal and professional challenges that interrupt one's personal reading life.

Of the five participants, three—George, James, and I—had younger children at home. Cheryl has one child who is grown and out of the house, and, at the time of this study, Robert was expecting his first child. Given this context, perhaps it should not come as a surprise that, according to their reading journals, the participants who read the most and wrote the most about their reading were Cheryl and Robert. This suggests that having young children at home leaves less time for personal reading and journaling.

On multiple occasions, our group discussed balancing personal reading and child-rearing. George shared, "I've got a young son, he's three and I want him to see me reading, but then at the same time, I'm not interacting with him while I'm reading unless I'm reading to him." In a later meeting, James echoed this potential negative side of reading saying, "I think also an obstacle to reading on your own is that sense that I'm being selfish and not doing things for kids." As George and James point out, our own children force us to make decisions about our reading lives. How do we balance independent reading with

spending time with our children? How do we want our children to view us as readers? How do we show our children that we value reading? How do we instill in our children a love of reading?

Of course, these struggles to balance our lives and find time for reading are not limited to challenges in child-rearing. A variety of factors interfere with our reading lives, as James summarized:

I was like, “Oh man, I am neglecting my schoolwork.” But it’s for my family. And then if I’m doing the schoolwork, I’m like, “I’m neglecting my family.” I couldn’t find a really good balance. And so, I think it’s kind of like that with reading, reading for pleasure as an English teacher. I’ve got so much other school stuff to do that if I’m busy reading, is that fair to my students?

Many English teachers understand James’ struggle that an active reading life is important but that the act of reading can be isolating and take time away from immediate relationships and responsibilities.

I expressed sympathy for James and explained how I defended my own effort at maintaining an avid reading life by saying, “I justify to myself that I’m reading this because it might come up as a recommendation for students in the future. Or I’m reading this, trying to figure out where to tie it into my professional life.” Like all of us, English teachers must constantly wrestle with how best to use our time. We often feel like if we are not spending time preparing for class, we should be spending time with our family. Reading often feels like we are neglecting both our personal and professional responsibilities to the point that, here, I find myself needing to defend how my personal reading directly benefits my teaching life or my family.

At our first one-on-one meeting, George described his struggle to foster a strong personal reading life, admitting:

I didn’t tell Cheryl this cause I don’t want her to be all upset. I didn’t start reading as an adult again until I got appendicitis... So, if we had had this conversation a year ago I’d be one of those teachers who teaches English and doesn’t really read, it’d be maybe one book a year, maybe over the summer, and not anything special either.

George believed that English teachers should be those who read and was hesitant to share these feelings with our group for fear that Cheryl, and perhaps others as well, would view him as a non-reader. He understood that, especially in this learning community of English teachers who care about their reading lives, to admit to not reading would potentially bring judgment from the group.

In a later meeting, George must have taken solace in hearing Cheryl reveal that she too did not always prioritize or love reading. As an English teacher, Cheryl described teaching “four or five different class periods” and not having time to read because of her professional responsibilities. Cheryl concluded, “It depends where I am in my life, whether I love reading or not. I mean, I’ve gone up and down with that.” Other participants expressed similar stories of moments when personal reading was not prioritized. James discussed times when “you’re just trying to get by.” George said, “there’s just not time (for reading), you’re up all night, you’re grading papers and it’s just insane.” I agreed, “There’s always something to do... there’s never a day after work where you’re like, ‘ah, I’m good. I’m good.’ There’s always stuff to do. And so sometimes reading things can seem less important than all those other things.” Robert, emphasizing the struggle for new teachers, added, “My first couple years of teaching, I didn’t read anything that was not directly related to my classroom. I mean, there was no way I had time.” Paradoxically, as English teachers asked their students to become active readers, the responsibilities of teaching English led participants to stop taking their own advice as their reading lives floundered under professional responsibilities. These moments of struggling to find time to read occurred for different lengths of time and different reasons, but all participants understood this feeling of having variability and inconsistencies in their reading lives in both feeling (“whether I love reading or not”) and habits (“it’d be maybe one book a year”).

Reasons teachers struggle to maintain active personal reading lives include the following:

- Lack of time
- Younger children at home
- Reading is often an isolated activity
- Grading papers

- Lesson planning
- Other professional responsibilities

However, based on the experiences of the participants, I argue that the lack of reading does not point towards a lack of valuing the importance of reading in their lives, but instead teachers just get distracted by the multitude of professional and personal responsibilities that take priority over their reading lives. As teachers, understandably, often prioritize their more tangible and immediate professional responsibilities, personal reading can appear much less urgent. Notably, students encounter many similar obstacles related to a perceived lack of time to read. Teachers ask students to engage in the act of reading both inside and outside of the classroom, yet often teacher themselves struggle to do what they ask of their students. However, the English teachers in this study also provided examples of having a shift in mindset that led to the re-prioritization of reading in their personal lives.

English Teachers as Readers: Transformational Teachers and Texts that Re-igniting Reading Lives

Just as one's reading life includes moments when they are not actively reading, one can also experience moments when one feels good about their reading life. The following examples describe occurrences when participants encountered a transformational teacher or text that reignited their passion for reading amid a time when they were struggling to prioritize reading.

A Transformational Teacher. Having a teacher who values and demonstrates a passion for reading can potentially influence one's reading life. Teachers who identify as avid and enthusiastic readers often use best practices for literary instruction and promote a love of reading with their students (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; McKool & Gespass, 2009). Positive experiences that promote the desire to read are often associated with "choice, relevancy, and encouragement in reading" (Daisey, 2009, p. 173). Robert and I, for instance, recalled graduate school experiences that profoundly impacted our reading lives and teaching lives. Our stories show the importance of having a teacher who values reading and creates an environment that encourages and cultivates personal reading.

For Robert, it was a children's and adolescent literature course where he recalled his professor stressing the point that "If you are going to be teaching English, at whatever level you are, you have to be reading." This statement emphasizes the importance of English teachers having strong personal reading lives amidst their other often more pressing responsibilities. During this graduate course, Robert had a profound reading experience and shared with me the following story:

One week we had to read *Charlotte's Web* and I could not find a copy of it anywhere. Bookstores were sold out...I finally found it at one library branch, like halfway across the city, picked it up that night. Read the whole thing that night, not that challenging or deep, right. But looking back now, especially, man, I spent hours trying to find this one children's book that I had read 20 years ago. And so, it really ignited a passion in me...I was like, you know, I do enjoy doing this. This is something that I love doing.

Robert walked away from the class so enthused about reading that he brought it back into his classroom and started a book club with his students. Robert recalled, "We started this lunchtime thing. It was just a really special experience. And I think from there...now almost 10 years I've been reading constantly." Robert began reading again not just in the classroom, but also outside of his classroom. Likewise, his students began engaging with texts not just in English but also in other less structured, non-mandatory settings as students joined him during lunch to informally discuss books and what they were reading.

I shared a similar experience with the group about a graduate course I took where the professor emphasized the importance of choice and independent reading, even providing class time to read and journal. I shared with the group:

I read *Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor and journaling about [the book] was such a good experience. And then I took that immediately back to the classroom. I'm like, "I know it's not in the curriculum guys . . . but we're dedicating 15 minutes to just read and then journal. I saw how my professor valued reading enough to bring it

into a graduate-level course and set aside class time to emphasize its importance. In my own teaching life, I knew I valued students reading on their own, but did I prioritize it with my class time? I had not been doing this, but after taking this course, I started to institute daily reading time which led to many of my students—and myself, for I read during this time as well—having positive experiences with texts. Many of these positive experiences involved mirroring what I saw my professor doing, allowing students to choose texts to read and having them write low-stake personal reflections on what they were reading.

In these two examples, it took the urging of passionate professors and the right environment to reignite a passion for reading and cause us to resituate the role of reading in our personal lives. Robert and I both took these positive experiences that we had as students into our classrooms leading to our students having more opportunities for positive experiences with texts.

A Transformational Text. To influence our reading priorities, sometimes it takes a transformational educator and other times, it takes a transformational text. I did not identify as a reader in high school or college until my college roommate introduced me to an epic fantasy series, *Sword of Truth* by Terry Goodkind. I read the first book in the series, which led me to keep reading until I had finished the series. I then went on to read other works in this same fantasy genre, including some classic works like J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. *Sword of Truth* reignited a passion in me for reading, and yet this is the kind of text I would have never been exposed to in the classroom. Often students' engagement with reading outside of traditional classroom spaces occurs with "marginalized genres" such as magazines and comic books, or as in my case, epic fantasy series (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Wilhelm & Smith, 2016). However, for a variety of reasons many English teachers have been reluctant to bring these marginalized genres into the classroom, (Boyd & Darragh, 2019; Darragh & Boyd, 2019; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015).

George had a similar experience with the text *The*

Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon. George explained how he randomly selected the book from his shelf and started to read it and "it had everything you could possibly want in a book." Just as *Sword of Truth* acted as a gateway for me to more positive experiences with reading, *The Shadow of the Wind* served a similar role for George. He said:

I started exploring other things and there's a lot of cool stuff out there...It's fun. You know, it's no longer something I feel like I'm doing to enrich myself intentionally...And that perspective has made it a bit more like I'm free to read things that I wouldn't have. I would've thought were beneath me earlier. So that's been fun.

George felt that his identity as an English teacher limited his reading life, as he felt as if he was supposed to read certain texts and not read other types of texts. However, George's experience with *Shadow of the Wind* reminded him that there were other stories out there, and exploring those stories is part of what makes reading fun.

This idea of how reading non-traditional or marginalized texts can lead to more reading came up several times in our meetings. For example, Cheryl shared about a student who "just hated to read" until Cheryl introduced her to Slam Poetry. This caused the student to read not just Slam Poetry but other poets as well. Cheryl excitedly told us how this student recently graduated and texted her, "I'm bored. I need more to read. What other poets do you have for me?" Cheryl challenged the notion of what real poetry was, and utilizing non-traditional texts in her classroom opened up the opportunity for her student to have a positive reading experience.

Similarly, George's exploration of different texts impacted how he started to view teaching texts in his classroom. He mused, "I'm reading all kinds of different genres right now and I don't know how I want to approach it going forward, but I do think I definitely want some more choice in my curriculum." George's reading caused him to reevaluate his responsibilities as an English teacher as he sought to bring more choice into this classroom, which in turn will potentially lead to more reading for students inside and outside the classroom.

These data demonstrate English teachers

thinking about the priority that reading should have in their own lives in relation to their responsibilities as English teachers. They also highlight how positive reading experiences can lead to more positive reading experiences, both in their lives and in the lives of their colleagues and students.

The ways that teachers' personal reading impacted them include the following:

- More willing to teach marginalized texts
- Better able to recommend a larger range of texts to students
- Exposure to more diverse selection of texts that may not be traditionally taught in school
- More likely to use reading best practices such as providing time to read and choice
- Demonstrates for students that there are different purposes for reading

Implications and Discussion

Research demonstrates the importance of English teachers being avid readers, yet English teachers oftentimes struggle to prioritize reading in their own lives (Commeyras & DeGroff, 1998; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Merga, 2016). The English teachers in this study all valued the role and importance of reading, and data revealed that when they regularly participated in the act of personal reading it provided tangible benefits for students in the classroom. However, participants could also point to times in their lives when they did not read, and they often cited that their professional responsibilities related to being English teachers caused them to have less time for personal reading.

This study confirms that English teachers' professional responsibilities often impede their personal reading lives due to lack of time (Carroll & Simmons, 2009). Therefore, it becomes necessary for English teachers to resituate and prioritize the role of personal reading in their personal and professional lives. The findings in this study corroborates with other research that suggests teachers who are avid readers are more likely to utilize best practices in their literacy instruction and more likely to engage their students with reading (Applegate et al., 2014;

McKool & Gespass, 2009; Merga, 2016). These best practices include: time given for independent reading, read alouds, choice in text selection, dialogue about reading, and reading goals (Beach et al., 2016; Jago, 2019; Kittle, 2013; Styslinger, 2017). An avid personal reading life will allow teachers to more effectively engage in these best practices. For instance, they will be better equipped to offer recommendations for independent reading, and to conduct read alouds with a wider range of texts, and to demonstrate how to go about making and achieving personal reading goals, and to build time in the schedule for in-class reading for both students and teachers (Fisher, 2004).

More generally, the fostering and encouragement of strong personal reading lives can lead teachers and students to a more diverse view of reading that involves more acceptance of a wider range of authors and characters as well as working towards destigmatizing non-traditional texts. Text selection provides a potential opportunity for teacher agency, as teachers have control of what their students are reading (Friese et al., 2008). Traditionally, the texts teachers choose to teach in schools tend to privilege Whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, and physical and mental ability; even as the selection of texts have expanded in recent years, they still privilege White authors and White characters (Borsheim-Black, Macaluso, Petrone, 2014; Borsheim-Black, 2015). Comfort and familiarity hold significant influence over text selection and canonicity (Brauer & Clark, 2008; Stallworth et al., 2006), as research demonstrates that English teachers tend to teach what they are familiar with (Rush et al., 2013; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). That is to say, text selection tends to be self-perpetuating, as students are taught that these traditional texts are culturally important and of high literary value, when these students become teachers they in turn place importance on these same texts (Eaglestone & Field, 2016). Organizations such as #DisruptTexts have been formed in order to "challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve" (Ebarvia, 2021). Newvine and Fleming (2021) suggest teachers begin or continue to read more texts by Black and Indigenous People of Color. My study

supports this suggestion as I argue that to begin to challenge these text selection norms, teachers need to foster active personal reading lives that allow them to continuously explore new and diverse texts. As teachers become more familiar with a variety of texts, they can both bring these texts in the classroom directly through instruction or indirectly through book talks or recommendations to students. This can lead English teachers to make pedagogical and curriculum decisions that allow students to be exposed to a wide range of texts from a multitude of viewpoints (Styslinger, 2017).

Conclusion

This study provides a window into the reading lives of five thoughtful in-service English teachers who value reading in their lives and the lives of their students. Understanding the reading lives, identities, and histories of in-service English teachers provides insight into the alignment and tensions that occur among reading habits, reading beliefs, and teaching practices. Though all participants valued the role of personal reading in their lives and recognized its importance personally and professionally, they still struggled at times to read in their personal lives. These struggles often were the results of personal and professional pressures that felt more immediate than their desire to read. Yet, this study also demonstrates that there are methods to improve reading habits and behaviors through encouraging positive reading experiences. Importantly, this study emphasizes the importance of English teachers having strong personal reading lives and calls teachers to resituate how they position personal reading in their professional and personal life. A strong personal reading life can potentially lead to changes in the classroom from best practices to text selection to the role of reading in our students' lives.

References

- Applegate, A. J., & Applegate, M. D. (2004). The Peter Effect: Reading habits and attitudes of preservice teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(6), 554–563.
- Applegate, A. J., Applegate, M. D., Mercantini, M. A., McGeehan, C. M., Cobb, J. B., Appleman, D. (2017). Literary theory in secondary school. In R. Durst, J. Marshall, & G. Newall (Eds.), *English language arts research and teaching: Revisiting and extending Arthur Applebee's contributions*. Routledge.
- Beach, R., Appleman, D., Fecho, B., & Simon, R. (2016). *Teaching literature to adolescents*. Routledge.
- Borsheim-Black, C. (2015). "It's pretty much white": Challenges and opportunities of an antiracist approach to literature instruction in a multilayered white context. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 407–429.
- Borsheim-Black, C., Macaluso, M., & Petrone, R. (2014). Critical literature pedagogy: Teaching canonical literature for critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 58(2), 123–133.
- Boyd, A. S., & Darragh, J. J. (2019). Complicating censorship: Reading All American Boys with parents of young adults. *English Education*, 51(3), 229–260.
- Brauer, L., & Clark, C. T. (2008). The trouble is English: Reframing English studies in secondary schools. *English Education*, 40(4), 293–313.
- Carroll, P. S., & Simmons, J. S. (2009). A study of English teachers' professional journal reading habits. *English Leadership Quarterly*, 32(2), 3–12.
- Commeyras, M., & DeGross, L. (1998). Literacy professionals' perspectives on professional development and pedagogy: A United States survey. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33, 434–472.
- Daisey, P. (2009). The reading experiences and beliefs of secondary pre-service teachers. *Reading Horizons*, 49(2), 167–190.
- Darragh, J. J., & Boyd, A. S. (2019). Text selection: Perceptions of novice vs. veteran teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, 41(1), 61–78.
- Donaldson, T. C. F. (2014). *An investigation into reading habits of Texas middle and high school English language arts teachers* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi.
- Eagleton, R., & Field, J. B. (2016). *Studying English: A guide for literature students*. Routledge.
- Ebarvia, T. (2021). *January 2021 statement*. disrupttexts.org. Retrieved November 8, 2021, from <https://disrupttexts.org>

- disrupttexts.org/2021/01/02/january-2021-statement/.
- Fisher, D. (2004). Setting the “opportunity to read” standard: Resuscitating the SSR program in an urban high school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(2), 138–150.
- Friese, E. G., Alvermann, D. A., Parkes, A., & Rezak, A. T. (2008). Selecting texts for English language arts classrooms: When assessment is not enough. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 7(3), 7.
- Gomez, K. (2009). “Living the literate life”: How teachers make connections between the personal and professional literate selves. *Reading Psychology*, 30(1), 20–50.
- Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2015). *The action research dissertation*. Sage.
- Hughes-Hassell, S., & Rodge, P. (2007). The leisure reading habits of urban adolescents. *Journal of adolescent & adult literacy*, 51(1), 22–33.
- Jago, C. (2019). The book in question: Why and how reading is in crisis. Heinemann.
- Kittle, P. (2013). *Book love: Developing depth, stamina, and passion in adolescent readers*. Heinemann.
- Moje, E. B., & Luke, A. (2009). Literacy and identity: Examining the metaphors in history and contemporary research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(4), 415–437.
- McKool, S. S., & Gespass, S. (2009). Does Johnny’s reading teacher love to read? How teachers’ personal reading habits affect instructional practices. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 48(3), 264–276.
- Merga, M. K. (2016). “I don’t know if she likes reading”: Are teachers perceived to be keen readers, and how is this determined? *English in Education*, 50(3), 255–269.
- Miller, D. (2009). *The book whisperer: Awakening the inner reader in every child*. Jossey-Bass.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132–141.
- Newvine, K., & Fleming, S. (2021). Changing terms, not trends: A critical investigation into children’s and young adult literature publishing and its effect in curriculum and pedagogy. *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*, 31(1), 2.
- Pillai, P. R. (2015). Assessing reading habits of pre-service teachers in this electronic era. *International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Sciences*, 2(2), 69–71.
- Rimensberger, N. (2014). Reading is very important, but...: Taking stock of South African student teachers’ reading habits, *Reading & Writing*, 5(1), 1–9.
- Rush, L. S., Scherff, L., & Martorana, C. M. (2013). Opening the conversation: Thinking deeper about text selection. *English Education*, 45(3), 211–217.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Stallworth, B. J., Gibbons, L., & Fauber, L. (2006). It’s not on the list: An exploration of teachers’ perspectives on using multicultural literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(6), 478–489. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.49.6.3>
- Street, B. (2003). What’s “new” in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2), 77–91.
- Styslinger, M. E. (2017). *Workshopping the canon*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Vansteelandt, I., Mol, S. E., Caelen, D., Landuyt, I., & Mommaerts, M. (2017). Attitude profiles explain differences in pre-service teachers’ reading behavior and competence beliefs. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 54, 109–115.
- Watkins, N., & Ostenson, J. (2015). Navigating the text selection gauntlet: Exploring factors that influence English teachers’ choices. *English Education*, 47(3), 245–275.
- Wilhelm, J. D., & Smith, M. W. (2016). The power of pleasure reading: What we can learn from the secret reading lives of teens. *English Journal*, 105(6), 25–30.

Matthew Sroka is a high school English teacher on the Eastern Shore of Maryland at Queen Anne's County High School. A recent graduate from Salisbury University's Ed.D. program in Contemporary Curriculum Theory and

Instruction: Literacy, his research interests include the reading habits and identities of English teachers.