

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**READ CLOSELY AND SHOW EVIDENCE OF THINKING BY ANNOTATING. Remember that annotations are about the words you write, not the underlines/highlights!**

# Teenage Reading as Therapy

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Most people see reading as a solitary activity, but the way I see it, when you read, you are suddenly surrounded by people. These people cross the boundaries of geographical location and time as you embark on a journey with them.

When you read, you are listening to multiple points of view on how to tackle different situations. Various characters with contrasting pasts and opinions can tell you how to approach a problem differently. Every time you pick up a book, you're identifying yourself with one of the characters and putting yourself in their shoes. You look at the plot and think, "What would I do if I was faced with this dilemma?" As you keep reading, you see how the characters resolve their conflicts and attain or get closer to achieving their goals.

Reading and interacting with these characters reminds us that we're not alone in what we face. The pains of growing up are experienced by all, and hardships are something we all face. Though at times it may not feel like it, we're not as isolated as we imagine. Reading about characters who confront and overcome similar predicaments and hurdles reminds us that there's always a way through and that we can all survive, and actually enjoy, our teenage years.

They say people learn from hardships, but no one really wants to suffer. In a book, you can experience that same suffering and feel that same pain. The knowledge that you can close the book at any point allows you to read on and endure strong feelings. You can gain unique experiences that would otherwise be next to impossible in real life. No one can experience everything in one life, but with a book you can at least come close.

It's easy for people to listen to a string of facts, but people are usually not affected by them. It's harder to internalize them and make them mean something to you when it's just a number or statistic. You could say that about two million people self-harm in the U.S. alone and one in 12 teenagers self-harm, but what does that mean? You could also make a statement:

Self-harm is caused by feeling hopeless, alone, out of control, and powerless. Even if you accept the statement as true, statements don't often impact you. Through stories, we can live experiences rather than just listen to facts. When we live through books, those stories become part of our memories. You remember feeling a certain way towards something. You remember those emotions and they have meaning to you. They're not numbers and statements without faces anymore.

Reading books that have characters that you identify with is important. The vast majority of books written for teenagers are written by adults who remember or imagine how they would have felt as teenagers, while others are written in the moment by teenagers. Adult authors writing in the young adult genre tend to write about what they would have liked to know or hear when they were younger. Many good books come to mind when thinking about this, such as *Speak* and *Gathering Blue*. Other young adult books are written by teenagers. Not necessarily better or worse, these books tend to discuss the teenage years through fresh experiences and with modern outlooks. When I was writing *All That is Red* and *The Seventh Miss Hatfield*, I knew it was important for me to portray adolescence as how I see it in the midst of growing up – confusing and wonderful. I suggest reading some of each.

Adult writers look back on their adolescence and help put experiences in perspective. While their lessons aren't as neatly packaged as adult writers with years of distance from adolescence, teenagers writing for other teenagers have a unique perspective, because they are still living through their experiences while simultaneously writing about them.

Reading is a form of therapy. It does not solve all problems or treat all diseases, but it gives us hope and enables us to live on, gaining wisdom not bounded by our limited years nor restricted by our personal experiences.

*Need help? In the U.S., call 1-800-273-8255 for the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)*

## **WRITE A REFLECTION**

**One paragraph that reflects on what the writer said**

- **Here's where you summarize the main points of the article**

**One paragraph that reflects on the writer's style**

- **Think about the techniques the writer used, his/her word choice, the way the text was organized, the quality of the evidence (if applicable), tone**

**One paragraph that reflects the reader's thoughts on the content of the article**