

W&R Academy 2026

High School & Middle School Summer Reading Assignment

*****If you are taking AP Lang or AP Lit, do NOT complete this assignment.***



Intro to Summer Reading:

Why We Assign Summer Reading: Reading is one of the most important habits a student can build, especially at a time when many people are reading less. Strong readers develop vocabulary, focus, empathy, and critical thinking skills that lead to success in school, college, careers, and life, and we want to encourage lifelong reading habits.

Why Summer Reading Matters: At a time when many students are reading less, summer reading helps keep minds active and skills sharp.

- 20 minutes of reading per day exposes students to more vocabulary and strengthens comprehension.
- Students can lose reading progress over the summer without regular practice.
- Strong readers often become stronger writers by improving grammar, style, and communication skills.
- Reading builds focus and critical thinking in a world full of distractions.
- Reading supports future success in college, careers, and everyday life.

Final Thoughts: Reading is not just a school assignment—it is preparation for the future. Students who read today are building the skills they will rely on tomorrow.

Assignment Part 1: Summer Pre-Reading Reflection Prompt

After reading the information posted above in the intro to summer reading, **HANDWRITE** one paragraph (at least 8 thoughtful sentences) on a clean piece of lined notebook paper reflecting on the role reading has played up to this point in your life and how it will in the future. Write neatly. (Be honest.)

Address the following:

- How might developing a reading habit benefit you personally or academically?
- Which ideas from the information above stood out to you the most & why?
- Specifically, how could/has reading help (ed) you reach future goals in school, college, or a career?
- What challenges make reading difficult today, and how can they be overcome?
- What does reading look like in your household?

Requirements:

- 8 thoughtful complete sentences
- Use evidence from the information above
- Include personal reflection
- Proofread for grammar and spelling

Assignment Part 2: Choice Book

Requirements: This summer, your goal is not just to read—but to think, question, and prepare to defend your ideas. When you return, you will immediately use your book in writing, discussion, and assessment.

- a hard copy of a FICTION book that is at least 225 pages long,
- approved by your parents and/or guardians,
- not a title you have read previously (this will result in a 0 & Honor Code Violation), and
- not a graphic novel
- If you need help finding a book, start here: [Whichbook](#), [YALSA's Teen Book Finder App & Database | Young Adult Library Services Association](#), [What Should I Read Next?](#)
- Honors: We have not provided a list of required books for you; however, you should select a book that truly challenges you as an Honors student.

Directions for Part 2: Annotations (20 total/Honors: complete 35): see rubric pg. 4 & examples on pg. 5

- Write your annotations in a way that allows your teacher to feel what you feel when you read the book and helps your teacher understand your active reading process.

- **16 (Honors: complete 28) CHOICE annotations:** Choose from a VARIETY of the following to mark & place on a post-it note (may use more than one for each annotation) THROUGHOUT your book. *(showing you annotated throughout the reading process)*
 - *Label by the letter listed below, what # annotation it is, AND pg. #.*
 - A. “This line matters because...” (close reading)
 - B. Text connection (text to world, to self, or text) (must be specific, not vague)
 - C. Genuine question (Ask hard questions that pique your interest) (not answerable by Google)
 - D. Character contradiction moment
 - E. Theme tracker (trace one idea or several across the text)
 - F. Author’s craft move (why did the author do this here?)
 - G. Prediction that later proves right/wrong (must revisit)
- **4 (Honors: complete 7) Golden Lines annotations:** passages students believe are the *most important in the book; especially interesting, powerful, funny, or puzzling passages.*
 - Highlight/Underline the quote in the book then label your post it note as GL (For Golden Lines)
 - Explain: Why it matters, What it reveals, & How it connects to a bigger idea

****If you submit summaries and/or basic details or text identification, no credit will be given.****

Assessment: You will complete in-class assessments WITHOUT your book. If you did not read, it will be obvious. “You are preparing to defend your reading and thinking through discussion, writing, and a live assessment during the first week of school.”

Assignment Part 3: HONORS ONLY

- **Print, read, & annotate the attached transcript from the podcast:** The “Reading Brain” in a Digital World, with Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Season 4, Episode 10, This Is Your Brain, May 19, 2023. This author’s book is the latest assigned reading for the incoming freshman class at Princeton University.
 - Listen here: [The “Reading Brain” in a Digital World, with Dr. Maryanne Wolf](#)
 - Revisit your Part 1 response. Skip a line & add a thoughtful (6-8 sentences) response to the transcript.
 - Do you agree or disagree with Wolf? Explain.
 - What impact does this have on your pre-reading reflection? Explain.

*******EVERYTHING IS DUE ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL*******

My Checklist:

- Part 1: neatly handwritten, thoughtful response
- Part 2:
 - Read my book
 - completed my required annotations neatly on post it notes (labeled them with a #, a letter A-G or GL for Golden Lines & pg. #)
 - HONORS only: Part 3 (printed, annotated article & additional response)

Email Mrs. Yuhas: kyuhas@williamandreed.com with any questions.

Summer Reading Rubric

Part 1: Quiz grade (Part 3 - Honors only)

Addresses the following:

- How might developing a reading habit benefit you personally or academically?, Which ideas from the information above stood out to you the most & why?, Specifically, how could/has reading help (ed) you reach future goals in school, college, or a career?, What challenges make reading difficult today, and how can they be overcome?

Requirements:

- 8 thoughtful complete sentences
- Uses evidence from the information above
- Includes personal reflection
- Proofread for grammar and spelling

Part 2: Annotations .5 major Assessment grade

See pg. 4 for annotations rubric (worth 100 points)

W&R Annotation Rubric

Each thoughtful, neatly written annotation must be labeled correctly.

Write your annotations in a way that allows your teacher to feel what you feel when you read the book and helps your teacher understand your active reading process.

Grade Range: 100-90

The student **included thoughtful annotations**. The student **masterfully** annotated the text. He or she made annotations **throughout** the text. The student has included most of the following at a high level:

- written commentary;
- responded to lines, words, and/or phrases in the text;
- shared a personal connection or shared a connection to other texts;
- commented on the voice (*narration*) of the text;
- analyzed the author's motives;
- analyzed the structure of the text;
- asked questions about the author or text;
- wrestled with confusing aspects of or challenging words in the text; and/or
- made connections to BIG ideas

Grade Range: 89-80

The student **included thoughtful annotations**. The student **proficiently** annotated the text. He or she made consistent markings **throughout** the text. The student has included most of the following:

- written commentary;
- responded to lines, words, and/or phrases in the text;
- shared a personal connection or shared a connection to other texts;
- commented on the voice (*narration*) of the text;
- analyzed the author's motives;
- analyzed the structure of the text;
- asked questions about the author or text;
- wrestled with confusing aspects of or challenging words in the text; and/or
- made connections to BIG ideas

Grade Range: 75-70

The student **somewhat** annotated the text. The student has included some of the following, but the annotations may be vague:

- written commentary;
- responded to lines, words, and/or phrases in the text;
- shared a personal connection or shared a connection to other texts;
- commented on the voice (*narration*) of the text;
- analyzed the author's motives;
- analyzed the structure of the text;
- asked questions about the author or text;
- wrestled with confusing aspects of or challenging words in the text; and/or
- made connections to BIG ideas

Grading Range: 65-50 The student **attempted** to annotate the text; however, the annotations are incomplete or lacking.

Grading Range: 50-0 The student made **little to no effort** on his or her annotations.

****If you submit summaries and/or basic details or text identification, no credit will be given.****

W&R Annotation Sample Annotations

#6 (GL) pg. 26 Golden Line 1 of 4

Quote: "People only see what they are prepared to see."

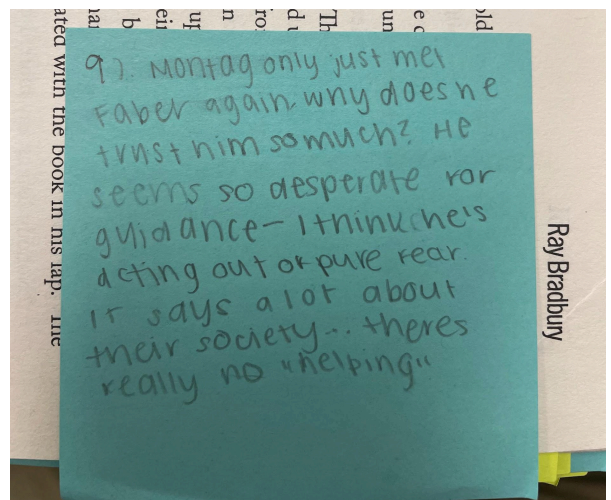
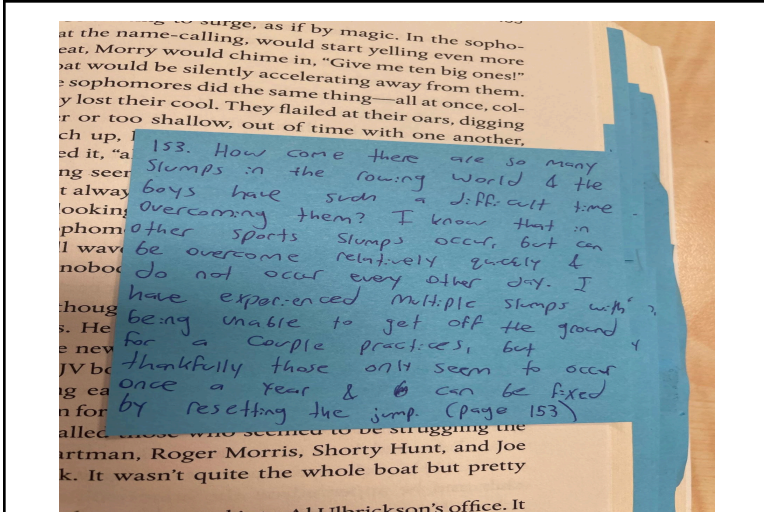
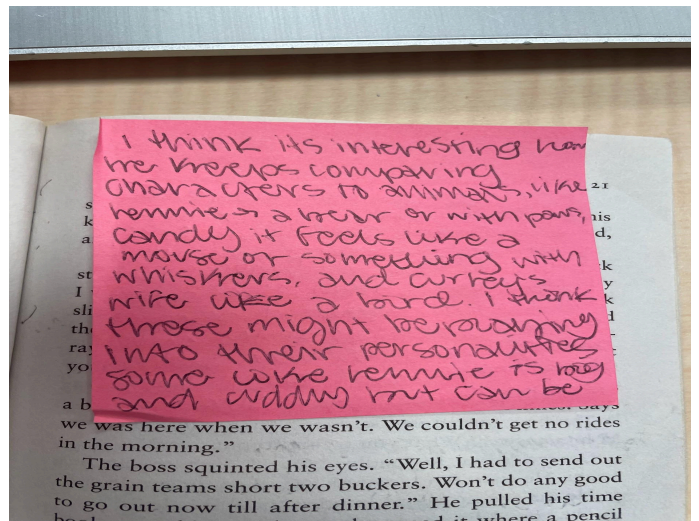
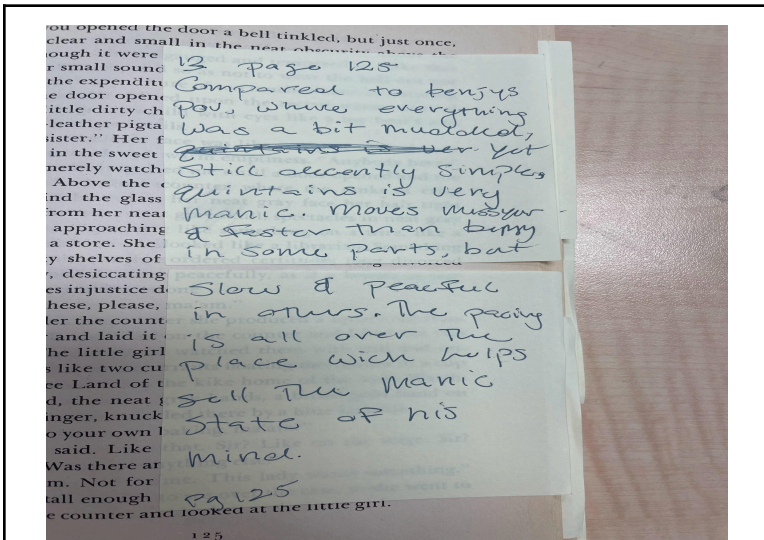
Annotation: This is important because it suggests that perception is limited by bias or experience. It connects to the larger idea that truth is subjective and characters may misunderstand each other. This line helps explain conflicts in the story where characters misinterpret actions or intentions.

#1 (A) pg. 12 - Theme

Quote: "I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become."

Annotation: This line reveals the central idea that identity is shaped by choice, not circumstance. Earlier, the character is defined by past trauma, but here they reclaim control. This suggests the author believes people are not trapped by their past, which connects to the broader theme of personal agency.

More examples of great annotations - they aren't labeled though!



Part 3: HONORS ONLY

The “Reading Brain” in a Digital World, with Dr. Maryanne Wolf

Season 4, Episode 10

This Is Your Brain producer By This Is Your Brain producer May 19, 2023

The human brain did not evolve to read — but reading makes us more fully human as it opens up new worlds of understanding and empathy. Today, as we read so much by “skimming” on phones and tablets, we’re missing out on the sophisticated thought processes that deep reading provides.

Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Director of the Center for Dyslexia, Diverse Learners, and Social Justice at UCLA, and the author of several books on literacy, joins us this week to discuss how reading in a digital era affects our critical thinking and leaves us vulnerable to misinformation.

Plus...is dyslexia actually a superpower?

Phil Stieg: Hello, I’d like to welcome Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Director of the Center for Dyslexia Diverse Learners and Social Justice at UCLA. She is a leading figure in our understanding of dyslexia. Her recent book, “Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World,” explores the impact of digital technology in both adult and developing brains of our children.

Learn from her about the effect of the digital realm on her own reading, concentration, and focus. Marianne, thank you for being with us today.

Maryanne Wolf: What a pleasure to be in New York!

Phil Stieg: Advantages of the digital world, right?

Maryanne Wolf: Advantages — there’s never one story here.

Phil Stieg: What was your goal with the book “Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in the Digital World”?

Maryanne Wolf: There are always layers of goals that one has as an author. But my primary goal was to say we, in this moment of time, exist in a hinge moment historically between what is basically a print-based culture moving into as rapidly as we could imagine into a digital culture. And what are the implications for society in making that great move in how we communicate with each other.

Will this innovation change the reading brain in ways that are pernicious or ways that are advantageous? So the question I had, the central question was, will the changes that a digital medium makes to that reading brain circuit, endanger or potentially atrophy those deep reading processes that we have, over the centuries, learned to build and make part of the circuit?

Phil Stieg: So what do you actually mean by the term the “reading brain?”

Maryanne Wolf: Human beings were never meant to read. And when you realize that there is no gene, no region, nothing set up in the brain for reading, you have to be agog at the beauty of the brain’s design. That it can connect its parts in new ways when demanded by a new invention, a new cognitive invention.

Well, reading is a cognitive invention by the species that’s only 6,000 years old. So, what we had to do, that brain had to learn to connect visual areas, language areas, cognitive areas, affective areas, had to learn how to do that. And it built this basic circuit. Now, we who teach, we who educate the next generation, what we are doing is really helping each individual build a circuit for themselves.

The advantages of having a new circuit that wasn't genetically programmed, like language or vision, is that it's plastic. So that plastic circuit can make us able to read Chinese characters, Japanese Kanji, and Kana and English alphabets, Greek alphabets, etcetera. That's the strength. But the other side of the coin is that the medium will also be reflected in what the circuit emphasizes. And there's where we get to the nub of my concerns.

With print, we've developed this circuit that expands over time, that adds, what I call, the "deep reading processes," like empathy and critical analysis. We learned how to do that. We learned how to be, in essence, truly good readers who are capable of all these very sophisticated thought patterns and insights.

The advantages of print are that it gives us the time through almost the physicality of the printed page, whether it's a book or a piece of paper. The physicality is part of the of the set of reasons that enable us to give more time and attention to the content of that page.

Now, the digital screen, which advantages us immensely in being able to handle the bombardment of information we are given any given day, that's a true advantage. But that very advantage of almost the defense strategy that we've come up with is skimming.

And my eye movement research colleagues show us that when we read on a screen, most of us, myself included, are skimming with an F pattern or Z. We sample the first part, we zoom down whether we're word spotting or just moving fast to the bottom and then we get the bottom of the message. We do that on a page. And I will even say that our college students do that to articles. But that mode of reading, that skimming, that word spotting, that scrolling, enhances our ability to go through multiple aspects of information, but it disadvantages the attentional focus we need with print.

This is not a binary situation. We can use those deep reading processes on the evanescent screen, but the reality is that we are almost given a mindset of continuous change. Go to the next, go to the next. And so what we're doing is we're advantaging speed and disadvantaging the time-consuming, sophisticated deep reading processes. So, my major concern is that.

Phil Stieg: Speed reading is kind of skimming that we used way before we had the digital network. So how is that comparable?

Maryanne Wolf: The obvious is that it doesn't work. It works at a certain level, and you could certainly, what we call shallow read, superficially read. But what goes missing, Phil, is what I'm interested in.

Phil Stieg: Right.

Maryanne Wolf: Do we have the ability when we skim to truly take on an alternative perspective, to have empathy with another's feelings? Do we take the time to discern the truth of what we're reading? And finally, and I'm quoting David Brooks, an essay years ago, he said "something has gone missing and it's beauty." The authors at their best, are trying to find those very words that will express as best they can the essence of their thought. Well, we are skimming all those precious chosen words.

Phil Stieg: I don't think we've communicated how adaptable the brain is. It adapts to reading in depth, but it also adapts to skimming and the impact that that has on brain structure and function and the long term implications. And that's somewhat brought out by your personal episode where you went back and read. Was it "Magister Ludi"?

Maryanne Wolf: Yes.

Phil Stieg: And the impact that you noted that the digital world has had on your concentration. Maybe you could go through that.

Maryanne Wolf: I had two degrees in literature, and one of my favorite authors was Herman Hesse, and “Magister Ludi” was one of my favorite books. And I decided that as a test of my own reading immersive capacities, I can just test myself by going back to a favorite book, that I had no need to worry about the plot, or what would happen to the characters, so that I could truly immerse myself. And the reality Phil, was that it was as if I was walking in a foreign land.

The words were dense. It was causing me no end of consternation. I was impatient. Why is Herman Hesse writing in this dense style? Why in the world did he get a Nobel Prize for literature for all these books? And then I realized I couldn’t read it the way I had before. I was too impatient to go through the circuitry of the words that he chose to elicit the particular labyrinthine thoughts he wanted us to take.

It was frustrating. And then I felt a wave of guilt. How many children with Dyslexia had I told to persevere and not give up? And here I was – failing in front of my own eyes my ability to immerse myself in reading the way I had. And so I decided to see what I could do about this. Whether there was an antidote that I would tell no one, just to figure it out for myself. I disciplined myself almost like a literary boot camp. 20 minutes a night to put aside everything, not allow myself to be distracted and just immerse, try to immerse myself. And it took two weeks, Phil, for me to slow down, for me to have my digital mode of reading not bleed over into how I was reading everything else.

Phil Stieg: So is that the problem, we just can’t slow down? Reading is incompatible with that. So you go to the digital and the skimming.

Maryanne Wolf: You are absolutely correct. It is a cultural phenomenon. And I know there are many people who will argue with me and say, technology is the best thing that’s happened to my reading, and for good reason. There are wonderful aspects of being able to look at Wikipedia when you don’t know something or when you can’t pronounce a word. There’s so many wonderful aspects.

But the reality that I want everybody to examine for themselves is that the time it takes for us to really enter a text is something that will not survive if all we do is skim and word spot. So much will go missing, including the very efforts of authors to portray different realities. And here’s where I do have to link it, Phil, to what’s happening in a polarized country like ours in which people are so bombarded with information and they have so little time that they end up going to their most familiar silos of information, and there they simply accept what’s there. They read it quickly, they accept it. They don’t use their critical analytic or inferential powers, and therefore they become susceptible to not just misinformation and errors, but disinformation consciously chosen information that can mislead or in fact cause behaviors that are really detrimental to society.

Phil Stieg: So it’s not the digital world that’s affecting our ability to contemplate. It’s really the mental state that affects our ability to contemplate. I think that would happen whether an individual read the printed word or a digital word. Do you think that we’ve become literally intellectually lazy?

Maryanne Wolf: I would say that we have become cognitively impatient. And that is slightly separate from laziness, because laziness has an intentionality about it. And I think what’s so dangerous is that this is imperceptible. The screen itself has affordances that we need to reflect upon as we use it. It’s a tool. A book is a tool. A screen is a tool. It’s how we use it. This entire environment of the digital culture is one of the causes that exaggerates our sense of lack of time and necessity to go ever faster and thus not develop the quality of attention needed for truly critical thought.

Phil Stieg: And because we’re so busy, you talk about going from the need to remember mode to the need-to-know mode.

Maryanne Wolf: Yes. The need-to-know is what we do every day, Phil, you and I and everyone, we quickly skim whatever we are given in that day, and we are trying to highlight or underscore what’s most

important. We want to be in the know. But that is a different step from true knowledge that's absorbed, that's consolidated, that is a platform for our contemplation.

So there are different ways of knowing. And there's the shallow way that I think most of us spend about eight to 10 hours a day on, and that there are moments each, even in that day on the screen in which we are aware we must go deeper, we must freeze.

Bruce Sunstein is an intellectual property lawyer in Boston whom I admire very much. And he wrote about the fact that he must use the screen. And when he does, he metaphorically freezes those aspects of contracts, for example, that he must understand every word. So it's not that we can't use these deep reading processes on the screen. It's just that the nature of the beast is that it encourages us to hasten along, and it's evanescent. And so our attention is evanescent along with it.

Phil Stieg: So what is it that we're experiencing by deep reading?

Maryanne Wolf: Deep reading is a set of processes. It's not one thing. It's the ability to take background knowledge that the individual has accumulated and matching it by a very particular skill called analogical thinking, in which we match what we know with what is new here.

So this background knowledge is being, if you will, tested, when we are saying this is a match with what we know this is true, or the hypothesis is that it's true, but my knowledge refutes this. We have almost like a play, a dance that is happening in testing whether or not what we are reading is matching what we knew before refuting and requires inference by us, induction.

What are all the details that can help us make this critical judgment? So critical analysis is the sum of all these other processes that are helping us discern what is the truth, what is the real meaning in what we are reading.

It's not only cognitive information. The affective component in the reading brain is powerful. It allows us to step outside ourselves into that world of fairy tales and trolls, and prince and princesses. It allows us to take on a different viewpoint. And so whether it's a novel or a fairy tale, the empathy that allows us to take on something outside ourselves to imagine, that also contributes to this ability to discern what is that text telling us?

And then at our best, we're taking all of those processes background knowledge, inference, deduction, induction, perspective taking and empathy, and we're making these critical analytic judgments. This is true. This is something I have to think about. And that leads us to the ultimate or the acme of reading, which I've been calling the reading sanctuary. But it's the place where we contemplate and where we go beyond that text, that author, and think for ourselves. What does this mean to us? What is the epiphany that can help us think in a whole new way about what we just read?

Phil Stieg: You so eloquently touch upon the societal implications of this in terms of the lack of in depth analysis of critical issues that are affecting our society right now.

Maryanne Wolf: The tendency to see others as enemies is the greatest threat to a democracy. Reading at its best, gives us a chance to leave ourselves, to pass over into the thoughts and the feelings of others, and come back enriched and enhanced, but changed.

When we have empathy and perspective taking in our reading, we do not accept simply the previous thinking that is often biased inside ourselves. But empathy is one half of that coin. The other half is critical analysis in which we take the time to go below the surface, to infer the meanings or the lack of meaning, the truth or the lack of truth, in that text.

And in that discernment process, we become more informed and more capable of true problem solving and good decision making, if you will. It's the proof moment that occasionally comes to all of us. The heart of reading is when we leave the wisdom of the author behind to discover our own. That is the ultimate aspect of reading I don't want lost.

Phil Stieg: For the parents that are listening, what advice do you have? They take this to heart and they go, "oh, my God, my child's on the screen too much!" What do you recommend to moms and dads? And that regarding raising their children and trying to help them achieve the highest level of literacy.

Maryanne Wolf: I have had to struggle when I was writing this book about just that question. What can I tell parents, because they are the best advocate for our children? What I realized was, that it's not just depending on the educational system to teach our children. It's about what we model, how we live our lives. Are we always talking to our children while simultaneously on our cell phones? Are we modeling multitasking rather than the focusing of attention? Are we reading to our child every night, showing them what an exciting world this can be, that they can enter?

So I always say reading begins at infancy. It's infancy that we are associating touch and love and affection with the reading of that book over those first five years. We are giving them an interactive sense of what words do, how books work, and how that little mouse in "Goodnight Moon" can't be skipped or the kids will know it. And that these are the aspects of life, the reading life that we can convey.

And it doesn't stop at five when teachers are supposedly taking over. No. We model reading ourselves, and reading in enjoyment, and talking to our children and reading to our children at night still, as long as we can, and during vacations, so that we teach as we model.

And I want to have children entering a world in which language is appreciated, emotions are appreciated, other viewpoints are appreciated, and that books can convey all of this in a wonderful way. Modeling is teaching.

Phil Stieg: Dr. Maryanne Wolf, I had an enchanting time speaking with you today. I hope our listeners will come away with a deeper understanding of how reading fosters our abilities in critical thinking and encourages empathy. You've also raised our awareness of how digital technology threatens to alter our "reading brains," and may be promoting the "information silos" of our politically polarized society.

Thanks so much for being with us today.

Maryanne Wolf: Thank you, Phil. It was a true dialogue.