

# Sustained Silent Reading

## Purpose

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) can be used in any academic discipline to develop students' reading abilities, to build their vocabulary, to cultivate their enjoyment of reading, and to enable them to read at their own pace. In an SSR session, the students are given 10 to 30 minutes to read a book they select or a book you designate. At the conclusion of the session, the students may be required to make a brief entry in a log or journal reacting to or reflecting on what they read.

Several principles can help to make SSR effective in your classroom.

## Consistency

Once you have committed yourself to SSR, make it a standard part of your classroom routine. It is important not to sacrifice it, even if the schedule gets busy or other needs and demands intrude on your class time. Students will come to expect it and even enjoy it.

## A Relaxed Tone

Within the consistent structure of SSR, allow the students to read at their own pace, without following a predetermined schedule. This low-pressure approach can help all your students to read successfully: those who struggle with reading, those who excel at it, and all those in between.

## Modeling

During an SSR session, everyone in the room should be reading—you included. No amount of words about how important reading is can match the power of your example in modeling this behavior for your students. An SSR session is not the time to catch up on grading or other paperwork or to check e-mail.

## Assessment

An SSR reading log is an effective means of assessing your students' engagement in the SSR process. Simply scan these logs occasionally; to ease the burden on your time, collect a few each week rather than collecting them all at once. Look for particularly insightful reactions and reflections, and write a comment or question to continue the dialogue. This affirms the students' developing critical thinking skills and cultivates their intellectual curiosity.

