

Boys and Reading

In the News – Published Articles

The following provides some links to news coverage on the topic of boys and reading:

Boys and Books

READING TODAY / DEC. 2008/JAN. 2009

New IRA title offers idea for engaging young boys in reading

“Boy Trouble.” “Struggling School-Age Boys.” “The Boy Crisis.” These are the titles of three recent articles in the latest flurry of attention to the gender gap—the stark reality that, on average, boys in the United States read less often and less well than girls.

Much of the coverage revolved around Peg Tyre’s new book, *The Trouble with Boys*, an expanded version of the ideas stated in her article by the same title, which created quite a stir when it was published in *Newsweek* in early 2006. Although the mass media attention to boys and reading may be recent, teachers have been struggling to help boys find pleasure in reading and researchers have been studying this issue for many years now.

http://www.reading.org/publications/reading_today/samples/RTY-0812-boys.html

Awesome Ambassador

INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION / READING TODAY / OCT./NOV. 2008

Jon Scieszka may write funny books, but he takes his role as National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature quite seriously





In his role as National Ambassador for Young People's Literature in the United States, bestselling children's author Jon Scieszka has the opportunity to do even more of what he loves most — promoting quality children's literature, encouraging youngsters (especially boys) to read, and praising teachers' work.

http://www.reading.org/publications/reading_today/samples/RTY-0810-scieszka.html

Boys and Books

READING TODAY / AUGUST 2008

Boys' education stirs much debate, brings little consensus

The cover of the January 30, 2006, issue of *Newsweek* trumpeted "The Boy Crisis." A front-page story in the March 15, 2006, issue of *Education Week* proclaimed "Concern Over Gender Gaps Shifting to Boys." Indeed, even U.S. First Lady Laura Bush has gotten involved, telling National Public Radio she feels as though "we've sort of shifted our gaze away from boys for the last several decades."

http://www.reading.org/publications/reading_today/samples/RTY-0608-boys.html

Scoring With Reading

READING TODAY / OCTOBER 2007

To engage adolescent African American males in reading, books must reflect their lives, say author Walter Dean Myers, educator Alfred Tatum

Author Walter Dean Myers recalls how he got into reading at school. He was reading comics during class, and the teacher caught him. She tore up his comics, but she replaced them with a stack of books. She promised him that he could keep reading if he didn't talk in class.

"In selecting these books, she was showing something about what she saw in the young man," says educator Alfred Tatum, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "Instead of getting on him, she found a way of getting with him."

For more than 20 years, Myers has been producing award-winning books that have enthralled a wide range of readers, but his work holds special appeal for adolescent African American males.

http://www.reading.org/publications/reading_today/samples/RTY-0710-scoring.html

Craziness Required

LOS ANGELES TIMES / AUGUST 24, 2008

A talk with Jon Scieszka, National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, about getting kids to read

"Mr. Ambassador" as a title sounds dignified, statesmanlike. But for Jon Scieszka, it's all about anarchy. As national ambassador for young people's literature, a position instituted jointly this year by the Library of Congress Center for the Book and the Children's Book Council, he considers it his job to bring craziness to his domain, to shake things up a bit. "Crazy" is one of his favorite words, and it means something good, something unleashed: unfettered and uncontrollable creativity.

"Crazy," according to him, is where kids' minds will go when you let them.

<http://www.latimes.com/features/books/la-caw-word-play24-2008aug24,1,5568320.story>



Author's Mission is Child's Play

MIAMI HERALD / NOVEMBER 15, 2008

The power may have gone to Jon Scieszka's head. Halfway through his two-year term as the first-ever national ambassador for children's literature, he wonders why his car has no flags flying from the antennas. Where is his motorcade?

"I want those flags they fly on limousines and diplomatic plates," he said. "And I'd like to be exempt from taking off my shoes at airports."

Scieszka, already a revered figure among millions of third- and fourth-graders, is the author of several classic picture books — *The Stinky Cheese Man*, *Math Curse*, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, and the new *Truck Town* books featuring anthropomorphized backhoes, front-end loaders and the like.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/living/story/770702.html>

Jon Scieszka, A Seriously Funny 'Knucklehead'

NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO / WEEKEND EDITION SATURDAY / NOVEMBER 29, 2008

Children's author Jon Scieszka has written two dozen children's books, including *The Stinky Cheese Man* and the *Time Warp Trio* series, but his most recent work is a memoir. *Knucklehead*, an autobiography for young readers, details Scieszka's experiences growing up in Flint, Mich., where he was the second-oldest of six brothers.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95104334>

Girls Still Top Boys in Writing, Reading

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS / JULY 29, 2008

Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent Cindy Stevenson sums up the gender gap in writing this way:

Put a blank sheet of paper in front of a girl and ask her to write about three things she did over the summer. She might think it's a dumb assignment, but she'll do it.

A boy, on the other hand, might go blank as he struggles to assign words to complex scenes and emotions. But let the boy draw a picture of his memories first, then hand him a pen. The words just might flow.

Many researchers have come to believe the educational establishment in large part caters to female learning styles in reading and writing. A movement is afoot to try new approaches to make sure classrooms are "boy-friendly." What that means exactly is open to debate.

<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/jul/29/girls-still-top-boys-writing-reading/>



Boys generally take longer than girls to develop comparable literacy skills. What is considered a grade level appropriate reading skill for a girl cannot always be considered the same for a boy.



We're Teaching Books That Don't Stack Up

WASHINGTON POST / AUGUST 24, 2008

Browsing in Barnes & Noble one recent afternoon, I found myself drawn to the “Summer Reading” table, where neatly stacked piles of books by Charles Dickens and John Steinbeck and Zora Neale Hurston sat waiting for the teenagers who were supposed to read them by the first day of school. Gazing at the gleaming covers, I had to wonder how many students were in fact turning the pages with any real desire to get to the next one.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/22/AR2008082202398.html?hpid=opinionsbox1>

The Truth About Boys and Reading

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL MAGAZINE / SEPTEMBER 2007

On average, boys don't read as well or as often as girls. What would it take to level the playing field? A vocal group of male authors, academics, and librarians argue that we need to rethink our whole approach.

http://www.msppmag.com/education/raisingreaders/raisingreaderssep07/74542_4.asp





What's to Blame for Differing Test Scores Between the Sexes

NAPA VALLEY REGISTER / MARCH 2008

In an era of high stakes accountability for schools, educators are placing an ever-greater emphasis on raising test scores in English.

For school districts in Napa County, where Hispanic populations are large, this has meant a heightened focus on the needs of English learners, who typically bring down averages on standardized tests. But while the ethnic gap dominates most discussions of Napa's state and federal rankings, there is another set of contrasting scores that crosses all ethnic lines.

It's the gender gap, and at a time when the state and federal government are pushing for improvement in English scores, boys are falling behind. Some say the reason is neurological. Others blame the schools. But whatever the case, evidence suggests that boys score lower on standardized English tests than their female classmates.

<http://www.napavalleyregister.com/articles/2008/03/03/news/local/doc47cb98fd7b93d238964869.prt>

Taking a Reading on Literacy

THE TIMES OF TRENTON / NOVEMBER 18, 2008

It's the annual book fair and most of the kids are writing down a page full of books for a wish list they'll take home to their parents.

But a handful of boys can't seem to find much to interest them and they go home with just one name on their list.

The boys who do fill up their lists choose fantasy books and books about sports and robots, cartoon books and books about nature and animals.

A lot of the boys, including the ones with just one book, choose the Guinness Book of World Records. Meanwhile, there don't seem to be any girls with just one title. They, too, have a variety of books, but they seem to gravitate more to fiction, including the fantasies and adventures the boys love.

<http://www.nj.com/living/times/index.ssf?/base/living-1/1226984741286110.xml&coll=5>