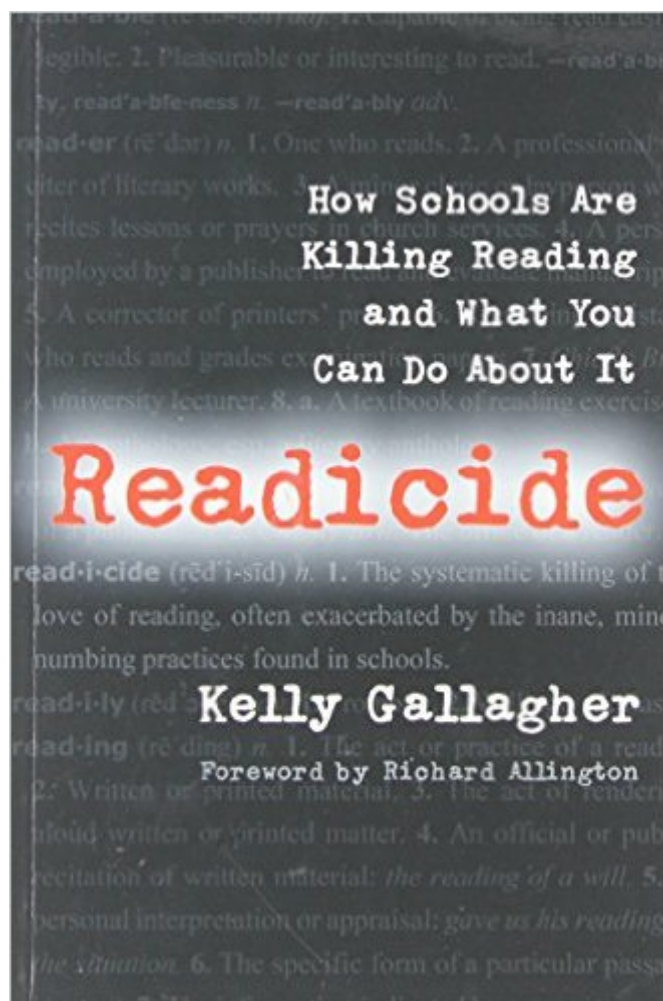


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# Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading And What You Can Do About It



## Synopsis

Readicide: The systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools. Reading is dying in our schools. Educators are familiar with many of the factors that have contributed to the decline: poverty, second-language issues, and the ever-expanding choices of electronic entertainment. In this provocative new book, Kelly Gallagher suggests, however, that it is time to recognize a new and significant contributor to the death of reading: our schools. In *Readicide*, Kelly argues that American schools are actively (though unwittingly) furthering the decline of reading. Specifically, he contends that the standard instructional practices used in most schools are killing reading by: valuing the development of test-takers over the development of lifelong readers; mandating breadth over depth in instruction; requiring students to read difficult texts without proper instructional support; insisting that students focus solely on academic texts; drowning great books with sticky notes, double-entry journals, and marginalia; ignoring the importance of developing recreational reading; and losing sight of authentic instruction in the shadow of political pressures. Kelly doesn't settle for only identifying the problems. *Readicide* provides teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators with specific steps to reverse the downward spiral in reading steps that will help prevent the loss of another generation of readers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm going to admit something to you that I probably ought to keep to myself: I'm ashamed of who I am, both as a reading teacher and an outspoken member of the Teacher Leaders Network. You

see, over the past five years, I've changed my instruction in an attempt to see my students score better on standardized reading tests despite a strong belief that what I'm doing is bad for kids. Now, don't get me wrong: I'm not doing anything illegal---This isn't Houston, after all!(Sorry for dragging you into this, Rod.)It's just that reading isn't ever a pleasure activity in my room. Instead, it's an opportunity for intense, skill-based instruction and multiple choice questions. Even the teaching innovation that I'm proudest of---a daily current event lesson integrating language arts and social studies that gives my students a broad understanding of the world that many adults would envy---has morphed into just another opportunity to show my kids how to eliminate wrong answer choices. Everything I do seems to be overtaught. In fact, I can't remember the last time that I DIDN'T stop my students in the middle of a passage that we were tackling together to ask a few random question about tone, author's purpose, bias, main idea, fact/opinion----or any of the other 47 reading skills that my kids are expected to master by May. We take prepackaged assessments every three weeks, dissect the results of each exam, deliver remediation and enrichment worksheets mini-lessons, and then start preparing for the next assessment. That's reading instruction in my room. While I haven't asked because I'm afraid of the answers I'll get, I'd bet that my kids can't stand reading. To them, reading can't be fun.

Kelly Gallagher is the author of two excellent books on reading, "Deeper Reading: Understanding Challenging Texts 4-12" and "Reading Reasons." Now, in addition to those, he's the author of a classic volume of inconvenient truth that belongs on the shelf right next to Nancie Atwell. Simply put, the way schools teach reading makes kids not want to read. Twenty-five years ago, when I was in middle school, I could have attested to that personally. A highly intelligent, highly verbal and highly motivated student, I nevertheless grew to resent and detest my English classes. How was this possible? It was the accumulated result of the pure artificiality of how reading and literature were taught, combined with a few instances of underteaching. If I had been taught according to the workshop method advocated by Atwell and others today, I might well have gone on to become an English major. So now, knowing what I know about the state of reading research and my own experiences as a frustrated student, I want to teach kids a different way, a way that will keep them intrinsically motivated to read and continually pushing themselves to greater, more satisfying challenges. But guess what? Twenty-five years later, schools are STILL DOING THE EXACT SAME THINGS that turned me off way back when. If anything, matters have gotten somewhat worse, as the curriculum is purged of its few authentic elements to make room for standardized test preparation. Have we learned nothing at all? In his recent book "Outliers: The Story of Success,"

Malcolm Gladwell makes a simple point: To master anything, no matter what it is, you need to spend about 10,000 hours doing it.

I found this book as I was looking for Aimee Buckner's new reading notebook title and thought...this sounds interesting. As a teacher of 7th graders in a middle school focused on reading and writing workshop models, I bought this hoping to motivate and energize my readers. These are wonderful students who just are not motivated to read. I wondered why...when I teach a text as a class, they can discuss and analyze in such rich ways but they wouldn't do the same on their own. After reading this, which is an easy weekend read, I realized I was committing...readicide. I was expecting kids to be critical analysts in their own reading. I was asking for pages and pages of thoughts and quotes, and reflections on each book they read when really, I just wanted them to read more. In a building where we only grade on standards and students lack accountability, we cannot grade them on "participation", so I felt forced to create assessments in which the analysis of their reading was graded. But I lacked the 50/50 balance that Kelly discusses. From now on, I am changing my requirement to build in accountability, without drowning students in responses to a novel. I like and will try the one pager. I also was guilty of reading and dissecting class novels for...ughhh...months. :( No wonder they hated it..."when is this book gonna end???" they would say. I also found, thank goodness, that I was doing somethings naturally too! The lenses for reading, the reflections, and the focusing in part on skills and meta cognition. What I like is that Kelly gives real advice to build instruction...this is not just a book filled with theory, but gives simple ideas to implement.

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