



Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Volume 32

Issue 1 *September/october 1991*

Article 1

10-1-1991

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Richard D. Robinson
University of Missouri

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, R. D. (1991). Commentary: A Pledge of Responsibility for Children by Teachers of Reading. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 32 (1). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol32/iss1/1

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COMMENTARY

A Pledge of Responsibility for Children by Teachers of Reading

Richard D. Robinson

We accept responsibility for children

*...who think reading is the greatest activity in the world,
...who want to read just one more book before they go to bed,
...who only want to read about Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.*

And we accept responsibility for children

*...who know more about drug addiction than you know
about the double vowel rule, ...who never write anything true in
their journals because they're ashamed of what they would
write, ...who never bring something to share during reading
because they have nothing to share.*

We accept responsibility for children

*...who would rather watch the video than read the book,
...who turn over the corner of the pages to mark where they
have quit reading, ...who only want to read books that have big
pictures.*

We accept responsibility for children

*...who never answer how they feel about what they have
read because they believe no one cares how they feel, ...who
after they have read "Why the Daffodil Loves Spring" are
unable to write a short essay because they have never seen a
daffodil nor do they know what the word love means, ...whose
parents believe reading is something you only do in school.*

We accept responsibility for children

...who believe being a member of the "high group" in reading is the best status symbol of all, ...who after reading about Paris, London, and Freezewater can tell you all about them because they have been there, ...who when they hear you say, "let's go to the library," think you are talking about their personal collection of books at home.

And we accept responsibility for children

...whose only experience stories are based on beer commercials, gang names, and TV sitcom adventures, ...who don't participate in sustained silent reading at the end of the day because they are scared to go home to an empty house, ...who can't tell about a circus or a birthday party because they have never been to a circus or had a birthday party.

We accept responsibility for children

...whose only goal in reading is to read more books than Mary Jane, ...who in first grade are concerned about how well they have read so they can go to medical school, ...who in class discussion about what they have read can quote from Ranger Rick, National Geographic, and the Wall Street Journal.

And we accept responsibility for children

...who say we "love to read" when they have only known failure, fear, and disappointment with reading, ...who have never had a book of their own, ...who have never experienced the joy of reading.

For those who have never had a teacher who understood and cares ...for those who smile with eagerness when you say "let's read" ...we accept all of these children.

The idea for this commentary is based on *A Pledge of Responsibility for Children* by Ina J. Hughs, original source unknown.

Richard D. Robinson is a faculty member at the University of Missouri, in Columbia Missouri, and a member of the Reading Horizons Board of Editorial Advisors.