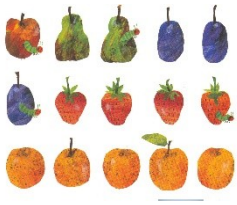
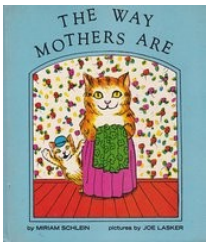
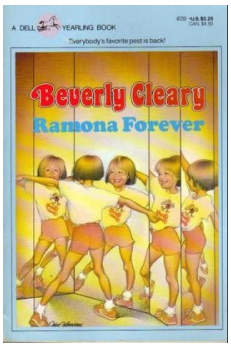
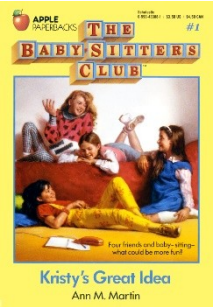
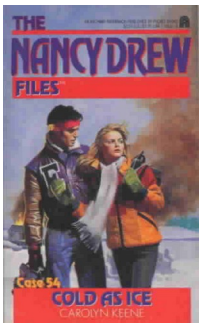
Katie Sheehan (rows read top to bottom)

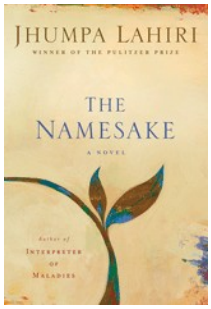


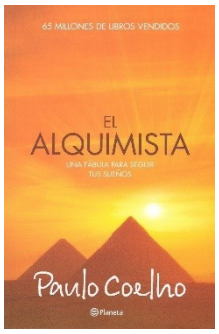


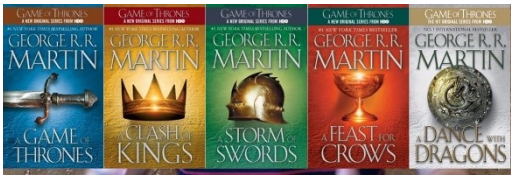


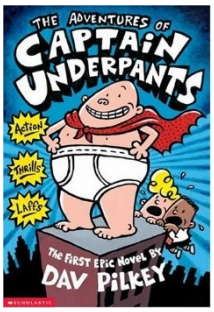


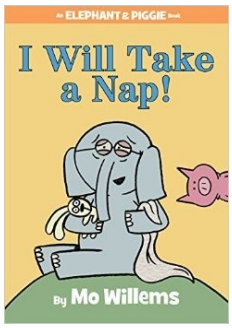












I definitely identify as a reader. Although its role has changed, reading has always been an important part of my life. I remember being read to as a child, doing fun projects in elementary school, reading literature in high school, academically reading during college and graduate school, reading in Spanish, falling back in love with leisure reading, and sharing this love with my children and students.

When I drew a reader, I was compelled to split my paper into thirds. I think of my own reading identity, devouring an e-book on my phone with a coffee in hand on an Adirondack chair on my back deck. I think of my identity as a teacher sharing texts with my students at the table in my office or in their classroom. Finally, I think of my three sons piled on our couch listening to me or my husband read them bedtime stories. Reading is a social and emotional experience for me. I love being able to share this precious gift with my husband, children, and students. I know that I privilege fiction texts because they are my preference. However, I have found that my children and students are enthralled with nonfiction texts. Because of this observation, I definitely explore more nonfiction texts with my children and students but am challenged by introducing them into my own leisure reading. I read and thoroughly enjoyed *Educated* by Tara Westover, but I admit that it read more like a fiction text in my opinion. When I attempted *Packing for Mars* by Mary Roach in order to complete a challenge on my summer reading log, I was reluctant to read it and gave up after three chapters. I understand that I have that right as a reader, but I really would love to expand into more nonfiction; however, I will not do so at the expense of my desire to read.

I found that when students who did not identify as readers heard me speak about the identity that came across to me, they became the type of reader that I described them as. When introducing next year's Literacy Specialist to my students at the end of the year, I made statements such as, "Nolan is an excellent nonfiction reader. He always reads all of the text features, so his understanding of these texts is top notch." I would rather have students see this about themselves, but some students that I teach simply do not see themselves as readers, and this is the biggest challenge that they and I face.

The first books that I remember being read are *The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle and *The Way Mothers Are* by Miriam Schlein. Growing up, my family did not have a lot of money so we did not own many books. Because of this, my mother, brother, and I would walk to the local library on a regular basis so that I could read and take out my two favorites. I am not sure what I actually remember of these trips and what I remember my mom telling me about them, but they are my first valuable memories of literacy. My mom taught me from a young age how important education is and the positive impact that it would have on my life. When I was in elementary school, I remember doing projects surrounding books all the time. A mobile that I made about *Ramona Forever* particularly stood out for me. I do not remember what the book was about, but I remember so many details of my mobile. For this reason, I have introduced and chair a literacy fair at both my own and my children's school. *The Babysitters Club* and *Nancy Drew* represent the first series that I fell in love with. I felt like I could identify with the girls in *The Babysitters Club*, and I lived vicariously through Nancy Drew. I also thought it was really cool that my mom read Nancy Drew when she was a kid. When I was a junior in college, I went to Spain for a semester abroad. I became enthralled with the Spanish culture: books, language, music, food. This deepened my curiosity about, love for, and interest in other cultures. My favorite books to

read are those about other cultures to this day. I think everyone could benefit from “walking a mile in someone else’s shoes”, and an ideal way to do this is by identifying with a character who is entirely unlike oneself. After college, I worked for an independent company and taught SAT prep and study skills classes. I traveled by myself and was always lonely so I found companionship in books. My husband introduced me to *Game of Thrones* and reading on my phone around the same time. Each on their own would have been enough to drastically up my reading, but the combination led to a borderline obsession. I experienced a dearth of reading when my children were born. No matter how compelling or entertaining a book was, every time I picked one up when they were babies, it inevitably ended up hitting me in the face because I would immediately fall asleep. Eventually I gave up. I told myself that I would read again when they were a little older and slept a little better and I had some time to myself. I muddled through a few light reads, but nothing was motivating me to trade sleep for reading until *Game of Thrones*. As much as I have enjoyed and benefitted from reading my entire life, nothing is more rewarding than watching my babies love books! My husband and I read and read and read to all of our kids from when they were babies. We still read books together at bedtime even though they are all old enough to read on their own. This is a cherished part of our bedtime routine. They see it as a privilege, and we do, too.

Because Guilded Reading with Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Instruction (LLI) are expected daily, I do not introduce my own beloved texts as often as I would like. However, I think that my true passion for literacy comes through naturally. I do want to make more of an effort this year to at least book talk or connect outside texts to those that LLI supplies. Last year was my first as a Literacy Specialist, so I already feel more comfortable bringing more of myself into my lessons. As my administrators continue to gain trust in my dedication and expertise, I think that I will be more comfortable straying a bit from the prescribed path.