## MReader

# Hosted by the Extensive Reading Foundation 

Manual for Teachers

admin@mreader.org
See http://mreader.org/info/index.html for further information

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## What is MReader?

MReader was created to allow the Extensive Reading approach to be implemented in any class with access to graded or youth readers. It frees the busy teacher from the necessity of keeping track of what students have read via time-consuming reports and other feedback mechanisms. Even for the teacher already "sold" on the ER approach and who is willing to take the time and effort to counsel students, adoption of MReader presents an additional means of motivation for students, who can confirm their understanding of the books they have read and slowly amass a collection of book covers on their personal page.

MReader has over 4500 quizzes as of this writing (March 2015) and the number is growing. The goal of the project is to have quizzes available on all 'graded readers' as well as the most popular native-speaker 'youth readers'.

## Site-to-site variations

The School Admin has a wide range of settings available to allow the program to fit the school's curriculum. The main ones, along with their rationale follow:

- Automatic promotion after passed quizzes at current level - Once a student passes this set amount of quizzes, their reading level is raised one notch. If it appears that particular students are getting over their depth, you may, after consulting each student, lower the level and set the lock icon to "locked" to prevent further promotions until you deem they are ready.
- Allowed quizzes above current level - This feature allows students to try one or a few books above their current level. These books, if passed will not count towards promotion, nor will they be included in the book number required for promotion once they are 'officially' at that level.
- Percent for marking book as 'read' -- The recommended passing percentage is $60 \%$ but some schools prefer a slightly higher or lower level. Too high a level may be frustrating to the students, particularly since the object of the quizzes is to assess whether they have read the book, NOT whether they have completely comprehended it. Too low a level, on the other hand, allows students to pass by chance, or with only a partial knowledge of the contents.
- Penalty for three quizzes failed in a row - There are options to discourage 'gaming the system' such as a reduction in their word count when the $3^{\text {rd }}$ book in a row is failed. If a student honestly tried to read these books but failed, perhaps his/her level is set too high.


## Getting Started

Your site administrator will usually assign you a username and password. Once you have been assigned to one or more classes, you will be able to log in and view your class pages. You will not see any students if they have not yet been registered. Alternatively, the site admin might supply you with an "access code" that allows you to enter your own personal details and password from the top page of the site.

Registering students - The preferred way is for you to supply the site admin with a student list giving their official student numbers, their given name and surname in separate columns. Email addresses, if known, will allow timely reminders to be sent to students if the site admin elects to activate this function.

An alternate method is to provide students with the access code at the top of the student page so that they can enter their own particulars. We discourage use of this method because students are apt to make errors which are then difficult to repair. For example, they might enter a wrong student number which would block the student with the correct number from registering. The romanization of their names (for Asian cultures) might vary, making it difficult to locate specific students, etc. We have even seen students enter "your student number" instead of their actual student number!

## Explaining the process to the students

Some schools provide a handout, often in the native language, that describes briefly

- The purpose of Extensive Reading
- Where to borrow books
- The leveling system and promotion scheme
- How to read them (quickly, with minimal word look-up, etc.)
- How to take quizzes
- How their work will be evaluated. (We recommend that the ER work should comprise at least $20 \%$ of their final grade if you expect the students to take their reading seriously.)
Any handout that is produced, be it a PDF file, MS Word document or an html page, can be linked by the MReader admin to a button on the students' personal page for easy reference.


## Setting up for a new term

The site admin has a single setting for the date of the first day of the term. Once set, the cover images of any quizzes taken prior to that date will appear in the topmost "Other terms" section. No data is ever deleted from the system thus students cannot take the same quiz again. In fact, quizzes from the same title of other publishers are also blocked.

## The Quizzes

Most quizzes have 10 questions. Some shorter books, particularly those for children sometimes have fewer due to the limited content in the book themselves. A minimum of 20 questions are available for any given book, of which each student receives a random selection. There are four types of items, the exact number of each kind varies from quiz to quiz.

- Multiple Choice (3-5 displayed)
-Who Said? (1-3 displayed)
-True/False (3-5 displayed)
- Ordering (1, last item)

Note the the "Who Said?" questions were not designed to test the memory of the students, but rather whether they can identify who, among the characters in the book, might have said the quoted line. Quizzes on non-fiction books typically contain only multiple choice and true/false items.

Most quizzes have a time limit of 15 minutes, although some books which might be answerable without reading, simply by thumbing through the book during the quiz have shorter time limits. The Cengage/National Geographic "Footprint" series, for example, has a 6-minute limit, while others have a 10 -minute limit. These values have proved to be sufficient for students to answer the questions.

## Time between quizzes

This parameter is set by the school MReader administrator, and can have different values depending on the Reading Level [RL] on the Kyoto Scale. For example, RL-0 and RL-1 books, which are typically "quick reads" can be set to a 3-hour interval, while higher levels set to longer ones. The default setting for all levels is " 24 hours" between quizzes.

Books without quizzes

While new quizzes are constantly being added to the Quizbank, you may well find that there are books available to your students that do not have quizzes. In these cases, you have several options: 1) Check the "Books without quizzes" section on the class page to view what is available there by the publisher in question. If the word count and cover image are available, you can award the words to the student and the cover will appear on his/her page. Instead of "Passed" the quiz will be labeled "Credit". 2) Award a suitable word count using the "Award extra points" function on the class page. 3) Make the quiz and contribute it to the MReader project! See the "Quiz creation info" in http://tinyurl.com/mreaderdox for further information.

## Preventing access

The school administrator can switch off access for all students when the term is over. While there is a setting for "term end" in the settings, this is basically for reference purposes only. It does not interfere with quiz access. Some schools immediately reset the "Term start" to the day after the previous term ends so that students may continue to take quizzes during the term break in order to get a head start on the next term's reading. There is now a "Suspend" feature at the bottom of the class page from which you can prevent specific students from further access to the quizzes.

## The teacher's class page

You may or may not have some of these options available depending on how much control the school site admin takes on. The more done at the administrative level, the simpler management becomes for the individual teachers.

- Allow quiz retakes - Retakes are normally only granted when there is a technical failure of some sort. See the "FAQ" below for further clarification. When the "Retake" box next to a specific quiz is checked, the quiz is grayed out but the effec is the same as if the quiz has been deleted. The student will be able to take that quiz, or another one immediately depending on the site's time restrictions.
- Change student levels - Students may appeal to have their level raised. Often they only request this because they know they can get more points (words) per book at the higher levels. If a student requests a raise in level, check the student's record, viewing the exact percentage scores of recent quizzes by clicking on the "Status" header. If these are all 80+, perhaps a raise in level is warranted. Some schools make a rule that no level changes can be requested in the last few weeks of the term.
- See other teacher's classes - This can be a sensitive issue in some schools.
- Award extra words - Extra words can be awarded for books read that have no quizzes or other work deemed equal to having read a book.
- Award words for books w/o quizzes - The book covers and word counts are available for some books. After ascertaining that the student has read the book, you may then award the book cover and word count.
- Change student passwords - Students are able to reset their own passwords, but instructors can change
them if this is checked.
- Check and mark cheaters - Two functions are available to allow either you or the teacher to view quiz attempts that suspiciously look like cheating.

1) Students who took the same quiz at about the same time are displayed. If they can be identified as friends or classmates, or if they have used the same IP address which is outside the range of your school, there is a strong possibility that one student took the quiz for the other.
2) Clusters of quizzes taken by the same group of students can be flagged. If you only have a limited selection of books, then perhaps no cheating is involved, but if you have a wide selection of titles and a two or more students have read that same set of titles, you might want to query them
In either case, you can mark them as "cheated" by clicking on "OK" which will change it into an "X". If email addresses are registered for the students, a notice will be sent to them indicating that their quizzes have been placed on "Pending" status until they talk to their teacher (or school admin).

- Temporarily turn off time restriction - This allows everyone to take quizzes under class/lab conditions regardless of whether they have recently taken a quiz (which would block further quiz taking for a period of time).



## Top of Teacher's Page

The illustration above shows the current array of functions at the top of the teacher's page (subject to change!). Most of these are self-explanatory, but here is a bit of amplification for some of them.

Tips - New info will be added here as more "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs) become apparent. Please review this info since the answer to your own question might be here!

Class Report - This is a listing of all quizzes taken. Typing a student's name into the search box will filter the data, showing only matching students. You can vary the number of listings displayed and can click on the headers to sort by that item. Clicking on "Include past history" will show all records for a student - useful if you want to see if s/he might have already taken a different version of the same quiz which is causing the cover graphic to retain its red frame.

School Summary - This shows the progress of each class. It can be effectively used to motivate competition between classes as well as a means for the school admin to monitor any classes that might be falling behind.

Extensive Reading Report by Current level

| Level | Percent with quizzes | Average passed quizzes | Average words this term | Average words all terrs | Highest Student this term | Sulame name | Highest Student all terms | Mneme wase |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Level 4 | 80\% | 0.3 | 1158 | 1158 | 4386 | Mene | 4386 | Mman |
| Level 5 | 54\% | 0.5 | 3968 | 5163 | 5732 | Cimein | 5732 | One ine |
| Level 6 | 48\% | 0.5 | 6268 | 6034 | 13587 | Srase | 13587 | Srean fer |
| Level 7 | 37\% | 0.7 | 13665 | 17501 | 17571 | Tution | 17571 | 2000 |
| Level B | 45\% | 0.3 | 6921 | 11627 | 24056 | neme Onen | 24056 | neme Onas |
| Level 9 | SB\% | 0.5 | 12964 | 33710 | 28739 | Hyat ins | 37311 | A-put |

Extensive Reading Report by Class

| Class | Percent with quizzes | Averoge passed quizzes | Average words this term | Average words all terms | Highest Student this term | Thenert wens | Highest Student all terms | Mitant ment |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Class 1A(40) | 43\% | 0.5 | 7950 | 11217 | 75802 | mane ine | 75802 | mane ine |
| Class 2B(32) | 57\% | 1.4 | 24689 | 33695 | 143696 | Arger ine | 277611 | Arye ier |
| Class 1B(48) | 47\% | 1 | 14369 | 21459 | 142476 | Ensin | 280819 | Tnsix |

Leader Board

Top readers in the past 30 days CongratulationsII

| Level 4 | deaen iny | Class 1A | 17,542 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Winker itse | Class 1B | 12,541 |
|  | Rosilim | Class 18 | 9,536 |
| Level 5 | Wate Onen | Class 28 | 29,388 |
|  | desece inf | Class 2B | 27,261 |
|  | Tinery [e] | Class 18 | 25,098 |
|  | Nine Wiany | Class 2B | 12,931 |
|  | fine Wery | Class 2B | 12,370 |
| Level 6 | Orase lin | Class 1B | 41,150 |
|  | Fense lee | Class 2B | 29,534 |
|  | Clawe Onen | Class 1B | 28,124 |
|  | Aile liany | Class 18 | 26,305 |
|  | Meete Itay | Class 2B | 21,227 |
| Level 7 | Clewe Hevey | Class 2B | 79,824 |



The teacher's quiz page -- You will see a tab called "My Student Page". This page allows you to take quizzes at any level so that you can verify that it is working correctly. Naturally, you will not see all of the questions since the items are randomly displayed from a larger database, however.

## The student page - teacher view



Reading Report For: Tomita, Fumi
Don't show my name to other students
© Show this name to other students: Fumi Tomita
Premer


## Your current level: 5

You can take a quiz now.

## The student page - student view

The explanation for the student page is numbered, rather than have English explanations attached so that individual language explanations can be provided, keyed to the illustration. Plans call for a country flag to appear on the student page which would display this information in the selected language. If a local version does not exist, then the English language descriptions will appear. If you would like to help by translating this page into your students' native language, please contact Tom Robb (tom@tomrobb.com). As of this writing translations are only available in Japanese, Chinese (traditional \& simplified) and Farsi.


The Website: Here is an explanation of the main functions of the website written for the students to read, and available from each student's page from the country flag in the upper left corner. The information will eventually be available for all major language groups using the site.
$\mathbf{V} 1$ :Students tend to put the entire title here but one or two key words from the title is enough. Then click "Search"
V2:If you want to see how many words are in some books, change this to "Words".
V3: Click this button to find your books.

V4:A green border means that you can take the quiz. It is at a suitable level for you. Just double-click to start the quiz. A red border means you cannot take the quiz now. The reading level of each book is shown under the picture.

1:This button has extra information about the site in English.
2:If you don't want to show other people your name, you can choose a nickname. Enter it here and hit the "Enter" key.
3:If you are using a smartphone, or your connection is slow, click "Don't show book covers".
4:If your school is using this function, this button will let you report a problem to your teacher.
5:If your school is using this function, you can change your own password here. enter the password and hit the "Enter" key. If you have forgotten your password, ask your teacher.
6:This shows how many words you have read in this class.
7:This shows your current total words on the progress bar.
8:This shows your reading goal that your teacher has set for you.
9:This shows how many words you have read in all classes, all terms.
10:This shows your current reading level. You can read books at this level and also any books at lower levels. If you can see grey boxes in \#13 "L+1" then you can also read some books at one level higher than your current level.
11:Many schools have set a time delay between quizzes, so that students cannot take quizzes too often. This will tell you how long you must wait before you can take another quiz.
12:This is the same as the "View Available Books" function. Don't type the entire title. Just type a major word and click "Search". Then find the cover of your book. If you can't find the cover, it means that you have an old copy of the book and it has a new cover. Look at the publisher and level to find the correct book. Also, please tell your teacher. We will add the cover of your book to the system.
13:Each time you pass a quiz at your level, one box turns green. When all boxes become green you will be moved up one level. If your teacher changes your level, all of the boxes will become grey again.
14:If you see a link here, then you can view information for your own school's extensive reading program.
15:If you see this sentence, then you can post your progress to your Facebook account when you hit certain total word counts, like $10,000,50,000$ and 100,000 . The are 10 levels.
16:If you see this box, then you can change your own password. Hit "Enter" to save your change. If this box does not appear, ask your teacher to change it.

## Donations

Contributions from publishers are regularly solicited. You will see the logos of those who have donated in the last year on the splash page of the site. MReader accepts advertisements from the publishers, but these are only displayed on the teacher's pages, not those for students.

The publisher contributions, however, are not sufficient to sustain the maintenance and development of the site. While MReader is free for any school to use, "heavy users" are encouraged to help support the site through donations. Contributions can be made through PayPal or an invoice can be prepared with whatever format and wording your institution expects. A link to the ERF PayPal account is provided via the "About MReader". Click on "Support".

## Changing your own name and/or email address

These can be changed while logged on by clicking on your name in the upper right corner, editing the desired information and then saving it by hitting the <enter> key.

## Taking quizzes as a teacher

At the top of the class page you will find a tab called "My class page". This page will allow you to take any quiz regardless of level.

Tips for Using MReader Securely \& Effectively

Students can easily create a second username and then retake the quizzes. In order to prevent this, ask the school admin to change your access code once most students have registered. You can always tell the new code to new students and then have it changed again.

Also, scan your class list from time to time to assure that all of the entries are real students in your class.
When you want a student to take a quiz, you can easily allow it by checking the "Retake" on the right side of the book on the student's screen.

It is actually more accurate and effective for the school admin, if s/he is willing, to register all of your students from an Excel .csv file. Ask your school admin about this.

## 2) Dealing with Cheaters

The "Check for cheating" function can be used to ferret out cheaters. If you suspect that two or more students have colluded, you may mark them as "cheated" by clicking on the "OK" mark in the "Check for Cheating" function. Normally both the "helper" and "helpee" are marked. This applies pressure on the students not to cheat since they will be jeopardizing the grade of a classmate.

Another way to determine if students have cheated is to prepare a very simple 5-question quiz that asks general questions about the book - the setting, profession of the main character, etc. and give the quiz as a "surprise" to suspected students. Typically, one will do well and the other will fail miserably, clearly demonstrating that one had helped the other.

## 3) Security issues

The software has been purposely designed to make it difficult for a student, or group of students to harvest the questions, since, once the questions for a quiz have been made public, they lose their value as an assessment tool. Students, for example, can take a quiz only once and cannot backtrack. Students also do not see their final scores so cannot confirm whether all of their answers have been correct. Furthermore, when the level for each student and/or the interval between quizzes is restricted then it makes it impossible for a student to gather much data in a short period of time. For this reason, we strongly encourage all administrators to set either a time or level restriction, or preferably both in order to obfuscate question collection.

## 4) Frequently Asked Questions

## Q: My student can't find a quiz, but $I$ know that it exists because $I$ can see it on my computer.

A: A: There are many possible reasons. Run through the following checklist:
If you can see the quiz from "View available quizzes" before logging in, but not afterwards, it means that your site is using the "Book selection and levels" feature, but that particular book or series has not been included.

Mouse over the book cover image of the book in question. A pop-up will display the reason.
Go to the student's own page. Note the student's current level. Then click on "View available quizzes" and select the publisher/series of the book. Quizzes that the student can take should have a green border around them. If other books at the same level as the problem quiz have a green border, but the problem quiz does not, then there is a specific reason why the student cannot take it. Either s/he has taken the quiz already or perhaps has taken the quiz on a similar title from another publisher. If, for example, the student has taken a quiz on "Tom Sawyer" they will not be allowed to take another quiz on "Tom Sawyer" from another publisher.

## Q: Why can my students only take a specific quiz once?

A: The system is made so that students can take any specific quiz only once. We consider it bad pedagogy to allow them to take it more than one time because the purpose of the quiz is to determine whether they read the book or not. If students know that they can have a 2 nd or 3rd chance, many of the less motivated students will do the minimum, see if they can pass and then try again after they have read it a bit more.

If you want a student to retake a specific quiz, you can click on the "Retake" checkbox on the right side
of the quiz listing.
Another reason for not allowing students to retake quizzes has to do with security of the quizzes. While there are more questions than a student sees at one time, if students can take a quiz multiple times, they will eventually see all of the questions. They could record these and pass them on to friends or, in the worst case, publish them on the Internet. Volunteer teachers have made most of the questions and we do not want to compromise their work.

If, indeed, students are earnestly reading books and still failing quizzes, perhaps they are reading books that are too difficult. Encourage them to go down to a lower level. If they are at the lowest level and still failing, then we've got problems!

## Q: Why can't the students see their scores on the quizzes?

A: MReader has been purposely designed to NOT show the quiz scores to the students because to do so would be against the spirit of extensive reading, which is to read for pleasure and not to worry about understanding every word on the page.

The purpose of MReader is to allow teachers to determine whether their students have read the book or not. It is not designed to test their full comprehension of the story. Thus a simple pass/fail is sufficient.

ER is about "quantity" not "quality". Students in many countries are very examination-oriented and want to make sure that they fully comprehend whatever they read. Doing this slows the student down to the extent that their reading can become "intensive" instead of "extensive". We want them to read quickly and to enjoy the book. Ideally, they should forget that they are studying!

Another consideration involves the security of the quiz items. If students are able to figure out which items are correct they could post them on the Internet in order to "help" other students. This would defeat the purpose of MReader.

Q: We expect the students to reach level 6 of let's say, Penguin readers. However, I remember you saying that rather than the level, word counts are important because levels differ from publisher to publisher. I had a look at The Kyoto Scale, as well. Now, I am not sure of what to write on that level box.
A: If you wish them to reach Penguin Level 6 which is equal to Kyoto " 9 " then I would set them about two levels below that, at "7". This assumes that their English level is around B2 and TOEFL pbt 550 (or IELTS 5.5 ?). See the page on the the Kyoto Scale for further information (From the top page under "About Mreader".)

Q: Do I have to establish a word count goal now?
A: No, but it helps to motivate the less willing students.

## Q: I can see other teachers' classes. Is this intended?

A: The school admin has a setting concerning this. Often it is set so that teachers can see other teacher's classes because it aids in coordination, discovering misplaced students and for many other reasons.

