

# Ben Wilkinson

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*"This semester was weird to me. For the first time in my life I actually enjoyed reading. The Living by Matt de la Peña was by far the best book I have ever read. I would stay up all night reading because the book kept getting better with every page. The last night, I had 180 pages left. I went up to my bed to read at 8:00 pm. The look on my mom's face when I told her I was going upstairs to read was unforgettable. If it weren't for the book talk you gave about The Living, I never would have wanted to read it." - Ethan, Grade 12*

*"When I read Living Dead Girl and Snitch is when I started picking reading over watching Netflix or playing on my phone. I couldn't put those two down. That's definitely what got me hooked." - Allie, Grade 12*

*"So far I've read eight books. Ball Don't Lie, We Were Here, The Living, Mexican Whiteboy, Homeboyz, Snitch, Street Pharm, and The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian. To be honest I've read more books this first semester than I've read in my last three years at this school. Every time I finish a book, I feel a sense of accomplishment. I'm actually starting to like to read. Back in middle school and part of high school, I hated to read anything, especially reading for fun. By the end of the school year, I want to read at least 20 books." - Luís, Grade 12*

*"I never thought the day would come to me admitting that I enjoy reading. Before senior year I read maybe 5 books throughout my whole life, which I know is shocking. My senior year of high school, I have read around 20 books already. I read almost an hour or two every night at home. Sometimes I forget to do my other school work because I will be way into the book." - Bethany, Grade 12*

My classroom library is the most important teaching resource I possess. Only a few of my 100+ seniors are passionate readers when they step into my room on the first day of school. Most are not. The library helps me reach both groups. Passionate readers have the advantage of growing up in homes surrounded by books, with adults who model a reading life. My classroom library allows these book lovers to continue their reading journey. For others, who haven't grown up in reading families or have been taught to hate it through years of being forced "classics" in school, the library helps me connect them with a book that kickstarts their own journey to book love. Maybe it's a graphic novel (like John Layman's Chew) or dystopian sci-fi (like Marie Lu's Legend). Maybe it's funny and touching (like Andrew Smith's Winger) or dark and disturbing (like Elizabeth Scott's Living Dead Girl, one of the most popular books in my class). Whatever the title, whatever the genre, the library helps me put the right book in each student's hand—the book that will begin

(or continue) their love for reading.

At the end of every year, my seniors confess to reading more in my class than they ever thought possible. For many, it's the first time they've read a book cover-to-cover in four years. They're introduced to diverse titles and genres. They build self-confidence. They challenge themselves. All of them read books of their own choosing, because they want to.

I smile, I high five, I celebrate their accomplishment. They are proud of what they've achieved, and so am I. Without my classroom library, none of this would be possible.