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Hiebert, Elfrieda H. (Ed). (2009) *Reading More, Reading Better*.
N.Y: Guilford Press

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Reviewed by Virginia S. Loh
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In *Reading More, Reading Better*, Hiebert makes a strong case for giving our students opportunities to read independently. In doing so, teachers will not only increase students' comprehension and decoding skills, but, most importantly, also increase their motivation to read. As such, the more students read, the better readers they become; and the better readers they are, the better citizens they are. The premise is that proficient readers are successful in school and life; this proficiency is cultivated by teachers who provide students with reading opportunities and choices.

Several scholars contributed to this book, including Hiebert who also served as the book's editor. I appreciated the assortment in research and opinions; of course, all the authors presented variations on a theme:

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the importance of independent reading opportunities. Hiebert cites research showing how little time is spent on actual reading during the school day; this is mainly due to the politics of educational reforms which have demonized practices such as SSR (Silent Sustained Reading) and DEAR (Drop Everything and Read). Hiebert and her colleagues contend that students need opportunities to read in school in order to apply their skills, to exercise power (by being able to select their own texts), and to develop deeper understandings. Hiebert supports the idea of scaffolding independent reading practices by including a measure of accountability.

The concept of reading engagement is a main theme in this book. Hiebert cited research demonstrating the impact of reading engagement on test and classroom performances. According to the contributors, teachers need to attend to the motivational and attitudinal facets of reading; too often, schools privilege certain texts and instructional practices which are disconnected to our students, thus, taking the “fun” out of reading. There needs to be a balance of efferent (reading for information) and aesthetic (reading for pleasure) stances.

I was particularly drawn to the chapter written by McGill-Franzen and Botzakis entitled “Series Books, Graphic Novels, Comics, and Magazines: Unauthorized Texts, Authorized Literacy Practices.” The authors of this chapter strongly encouraged the use of trade books to develop content area literacy; developing a knowledge base is a motivating factor for students. The authors contend that students want to develop expertise and gain knowledge in order to participate in social events. As such, creating reading as a social act is motivating, especially for adolescents. The authors also recommend teachers consider the reading interests of students and consider using more popular (as opposed to literary) texts in the classroom.

The book is well-written and easy to read. Hiebert gives a strong research basis for practical implications promoting opportunities to read. I have used this book as a required text for my Advanced Theories of Literacy course, designed for teachers seeking a graduate degree in education. It was well-received by my students in that it was user-friendly and scholarly at the same time. My only

critique is that Hiebert acknowledged several gaps in the research that left us wanting more.

About the Reviewer

Virginia S. Loh, EdD, is a part-time faculty member at San Diego State University and the University of San Diego, a former K-8 school teacher, and a published author with Candlewick Press. Her MEd is from the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia.

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