

## SELECTING BOOKS FOR YOUTHS IN DETENTION

### 5 E'S: ENGAGE, EDUCATE, EMPOWER, ESCAPE, EXPAND

Note: These are only guidelines. Also, please note that many books fit into more than one category. These are also not intended to be sequential steps; although ENGAGE is the recommended first stage, the other categories are not in any sequential.

For example, if choosing three books for an inmate, select one Engage, one Empower, and one Escape (or another combination).

#### ENGAGE

Many youths in detention have never read a book cover to cover before joining Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop. Our members report that books in school didn't interest them and they couldn't relate to the books. Representation in media is hugely important; the goal in ENGAGE is to show the youths that they can see themselves in books.

Find literature that the youths can relate to, show them that books can be about them and for them.

Suggested titles:

Dark by Kenji Jasper  
Bluford books series  
Stranger in the Streets by Mitch Credle  
Lockdown, Dope Sick, etc. by Walter Dean Myers  
Ball Don't Lie by Matt de la Peña  
Tyrell by Coe Booth  
Pull by B.A. Binns  
Retaliation by Yasmin Shiraz  
Money Hungry by Sharon Flake

#### GATEWAY BOOKS

Mysteries and thrillers are very good books for "the next step" after ENGAGE.

Suggested authors:

Walter Mosley  
George Pelecanos  
James Patterson  
Guy Johnson

#### EDUCATE

This category should be geared towards the inmate's interests. Subjects might include history, social issues, career possibilities, financial literacy, and more.

Suggested titles:

The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley  
A People's History of the World by Howard Zinn  
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot  
The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander  
Rich Dad Poor Dad by Robert Kiyosaki  
The Wealth Cure by Hill Harper  
The Hood Health Handbook by Supreme Understanding

### EMPOWER

These titles are typically memoirs, generally of individuals who have triumphed over adversity. The goal of this category is to demonstrate that people can transform their lives for the better.

Suggested titles:

That Bird Has My Wings by Jarvis Jay Masters  
Grace After Midnight by Felicia Pearson  
A Piece of Cake by Cupcake Brown  
Cooked by Jeff Henderson  
The Pact & The Bond by Sampson, Davis, et al  
The Naked Truth by Marvelyn Brown  
Maybe You Never Cry Again by Bernie Mac  
A Question of Freedom by R. Dwayne Betts

### ESCAPE

This category can include romance, fantasy/sci-fi, poetry, and other books that help the reader temporarily escape their cell.

Suggested titles/series/authors:

Fantasy/Sci-Fi: Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, Twilight, Percy Jackson, Game of Thrones (for advanced readers)  
Romance: Simone Elkeles, Ni-Ni Simone, Power & Beauty by T.I.  
Poetry: R. Dwayne Betts, Langston Hughes, Sonia Sanchez, Major Jackson, Decoded by Jay-Z, Tears for Water by Alicia Keys, Hip Hop Rhyming Dictionary  
Peace: Be Free Where You Are by Thich Nhat Hanh, Keep Going by Joseph M. Marshall III  
Fitness: Gym-Free and Ripped by Nathan Jendrick

Testimony:

“One positive thing did happen to me while locked in my cell. I FOUND A BOOK! And you know of the power that lies in a good book. It can instantly pull you away from all your troubles and take you to a whole other place. The book is titled EAT PRAY LOVE by Elizabeth Gilbert. It's so beautifully written. I cried more than once and laughed. It's so inspiring. I want a balanced life. This book is so wonderful!”

## EXPAND

If the goal of ENGAGE was to show readers that books can reflect their lives, the goal of EXPAND is to show that readers can relate to people from different backgrounds and in different situations. This category can also function as a way to broaden one's horizons and learn about other parts of the world.

Suggested titles:

War Child by Emmanuel Jal

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

Ruined (play) by Lynn Nottage

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Enrique's Journey by Sonia Nazario

Best American Travel Writing

National Geographic: The Photographs

Testimony regarding Enrique's Journey:

"I could relate a lot to that book. I mean, I didn't have to jump no trains and stuff but when I was young I was also separated from my mother."