Honors Language Arts3

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Save Our History

The wind gently blows, ruffling your pages; soft papers flipping slowly under the warm sunlight. The paper is coming alive in your hands. Distracted by the soothing music created by the pages, you quickly scramble to get your spot back, letting the papers flow through your fingers. The book is a part of *you*! Feel the rough and bumpy pages that you accidentally spilled water and juice all over. Observe closely, and you will find cookie crumbs stuck inside the book binding and stains, no matter how good you took care of them. You’ve touched every page of it before; analyzed the contents slowly, even underlining or taking notes in the margin in your slanted and sloppy handwriting.

Have you ever wondered where most of our friends, the paper books, are hiding in the modern world full of electronics? Where did the wonderful print go? What happened to it? What *will* happen to them when books and papers are taken over by eBooks and electronics? Will they be sitting on your untouched shelf or, even worse, thrown under your bed to gain dusts and cobwebs? We shouldn’t let that happen! We should keep the paper books no matter how many new electronics, or styles of presenting text are created. There are many things printed books have that eBooks don’t. Paper books have historical values; they are better for your eyes, and better for your education.

You may hate how many things you have to carry around because of the homework you have, but printed books are better for your education. eBooks or iBooks can only be read on electronics which most schools don’t have the funds for. The prices of the books themselves are the same for both. All the e-readers that we would need for every student to be able to use the eBooks are very expensive. For example, the cheapest Kindle is about $80, tablets are a little less than $200; an iPad costs even more, about $400. Even if you think that isn’t much, think about the size of the schools, and how many students there are. If we had all that money shouldn’t we use it to help the kids that aren’t even able to go to school or don’t even have the money to buy a book? Why waste all that money on eBooks when most of the hardback textbooks are still in good condition?

You might say that when you use an e-reader like the iPad, it’s easier to find the glossary, chapters, or index by just having to click it. I would say it’s just as easy using a good old textbook since the glossaries are always in the back. You will probably be able to find the chapter and page number by the time you open the book on the iPad. For instance, you would need to log on, find the right book in the library, and sometimes the device itself is really slow. Students can always find ways to cheat and play on electronic devices; using electronics will most likely be a distraction. In The New York Times article *Long Live Paper*, an expert on reading, Maryanne Wolf, studied the effects of digital reading and learning; her results are inconclusive so far.

You might want to know before getting e-readers that reading using electronics can cause damage to your eyes. Studies showed that we are exposed to electronic screens for about eight and a half hours each day. You might think eight and a half hours is nothing, but when we ~~look~~ stare at the screens our eyes do not blink enough which can lead to dry eyes. The surface layer of the cornea breaks down and can lead to poor vision and irritation. It’s especially bad for contact lens wearers because bacteria can easily enter. The longer dry eyes continue the worse your eyes will be and the harder they will be to treat. When you read, your eyes make about ten thousand movements an hour so they’re really being strained. You’re probably thinking that reading printed books also strain your eyes, and they do. But when you’re reading a printed book you have a better viewing angle than e-readers and they don’t have screens that need to refresh. The amount of eye-strain it causes depends on the situation and the technology.

Printed books have more historical values. It’s the ancient way for people to record their thoughts using ink and paper. Printed paper books can last a long time and will stay for the future. Lots of historians wish there was more writings left behind by ancient civilizations. You can’t do that with e-readers or eBooks because electronics can disappear or be erased easily and completely. If your e-readers broke you would most likely lose everything in your library. Even with things like iCloud if the internet is down there’s no way for you to read. E-readers may fit millions of books but they aren’t reliable; you don’t know what or when something might go wrong.

In ancient times almost everything we did was for physically recording our thoughts. The Chinese invented paper in A.D. 105 so now we can write on something other than rocks, dirt, tree bark, or papyrus. Ink was first invented by the Chinese in around 2500 B.C. Paper has been around for almost 2,000 years and ink has been around for more than 4,500 years. We invented the printing press in 1440 to improve printed books, though people started using wood blocks and stamps long ago. These are just some things people have used to improve printed books, but it started way back in the B.C. and some people are still improving it now days. E-readers can never compare to the history of printed books.

You might say printing books is a waste of paper, or it’s killing all the trees. Do you ever think about how using e-readers uses other resources like electricity? Most electricity is generated from fossil fuels. The energy required in making and disposing an eBook and e-reader is greater than the trees lost. If books get worn out we can just recycle them. Besides, most people prefer borrowing regular books from the library so we are always reusing the books. I know you will say that we can also borrow eBooks from the library, but libraries only have so many copies of eBooks. Most people don’t have the device for reading e-ink; as our school librarian, Mrs. Garretson said, “We have more control over physical books than eBooks because as soon as the time is up the eBooks automatically deletes itself from your library.”

Using printed books might be harder to carry around. I believe that’s a positive thing. You are exercising and at the same time, you are learning to be more responsible. People might leave books around but when they borrow something from the library they have to return it; an eBooks just deletes itself. It helps make you more responsible by making you keep track of all your books.

For those of you supporting e-readers, you would say using e-readers gives you a choice of changing the font, font size, and color. But if you want to see things bigger, there are things called magnifying glasses and you can move the book farther away if you want to use smaller fonts. As Jonathan Franzen said, “Someone worked really hard to make the language just right, just the way they wanted it. They were so sure of it that they printed it in ink, on paper. A screen always feels like we could delete that, change that, move it around. So for a literature-crazed person like me, it’s just not permanent enough.” I agree with Mr. Franzen and I’m sure most people also agree. Without a real printed book in your hands and being able to feel the paper, I don’t get the feeling that I’m actually reading a *book*.

Some people say that reading from an e-reader and reading eBooks helps you learn faster and learn more. But does it really? Well, according to the scientists reading from an e-reader or regular printed books doesn’t make a difference. Professor Stephan Füssel said, “There is no (reading) culture clash – whether it’s analog or digital, reading remains the most important cultural technology."

There are many reasons why we should save the paper books. But teachers, especially parents, have to realize that you are being replaced by the electronics. Since e-readers nowadays can actually read the book to the kids, it’s taking away parent and children conversations and great childhood memories. While research shows that using e-readers are better for **older** adults, you should realize that mostly younger adults really *use* an electronic device. Just because everything is online now doesn’t mean we should take away the papers. Survey shows that most adults over fifty-five years of age read one or more newspapers per day. According to the Tallmadge Public Library’s librarian Ms. Denise Lee, “When eBooks came out there were even more new users for eBooks…but the percentage of printed books to eBooks are still so far apart. 95% of the total checkouts are still printed paper books.” But we should save our historical friends; don’t let electronics ruin them. We got the chance to use paper books, so why shouldn’t the future generation also get a chance? Will books disappear from print like the newspaper Newsweek?

Is that worth the risk of losing our history?

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