

Irwin Ibarrientos

Manteca, California



Irwin will be entering his 10th year teaching and is currently at his alma mater, Sierra High School. He says he wants to make sure that whichever class activity we work on, whichever course I teach, or whichever trends on Tik Tok become viral, independent reading never goes away. Independent reading offers special moments. It's refreshing to see a struggling reader come back to you two days later finishing a Leigh Bardugo or a Nic Stone, wanting your recommendation for the next good one. It's peaceful to be in a classroom of students focusing on their own books at their own pace; it's fun to observe those same readers suddenly burst out chatting and recommending books to each other. All of this happened with a secondhand classroom library which grew every paycheck a few books at a time. He is really excited about what the Book Love grant will do for his students.

Irwin also says that as technology and social media becomes more and more pervasive in my students' lives, this updated classroom library of books will encourage imagination and empathy again. It's odd the way this works – brand new books offering a timeless experience. Why can't Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* do that anymore? To be clear the classics can, it's just important these students know that there is also a library curated with their special and diverse perspectives in mind. When the next school year starts, I'll share why this library is special. There will be a book for them somewhere in that library. If they feel alone, afraid, angry, or just plain bored with the world around them, I'll point out a few "mirrors and windows" as Emily Style calls them. Books are awesome! On behalf of my students, THANK YOU!