

# HALLIE BALL



## English Teacher – Norton High School, Norton, Ohio *I am a reader.*

Some of my earliest memories are reading at home with my mom, completing summer reading challenges at my local public library, and reading my very first chapter book all on my own in second grade (*Charlotte's Web*, by the way). Whether it was Sarah Dessen books in middle school, James Patterson and Jodi Picoult books in high school, the *Twilight* series and *The Time Traveler's Wife* in college, or anything written by Colson Whitehead, Taylor Jenkins Reid, and Emily St. John Mandel into adulthood, I honestly feel incomplete if I'm not in the middle of a book. This love of reading (and writing, too) is certainly what led me to a career in teaching high school English, and it is providing time for this type of reading in my classroom that has kept me there.

Although I enjoy teaching the classics to a whole group of students, it is my classroom choice reading practice that fuels my passion for teaching. There is nothing I love more than talking about books with my students and helping them see themselves as readers. Students know that I won't give up until they find a book they love, even if it takes numerous calls of "Meet me at the bookshelves!" to get them there. As a classroom group of readers, we are constantly assessing what we like and don't like in books. We give books our best effort, but we aren't afraid to abandon them if we're not enjoying them. We turn and talk to our classmates about our books. We pass a beloved book on to them when we've finished, too. Books and choice reading are the heartbeat of my classroom. Books make us better.

Without a classroom library in my school, I've built up my own collection mainly out of my own pocket, scouring library book sales, Thriftbooks.com, and Half Price Books for great deals (although I am a sucker for ordering the next book in a series with two day shipping if it keeps a student reading). I've used classroom supply budgets for the cause, too, because having diverse, high-interest titles in my classroom is so important to me. As such, I am honored and thrilled to be a Book Love Foundation Grant recipient. I can't wait to get these new books into the hands of students!

