# Fostering reading enjoyment among Dutch adolescents:

# Literary education, reading campaigns, and BookTok through the lens of Self-Determination Theory



Figure 1: A teenage girl reading a book (Source: De Leescoalitie on YouTube).

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*Abstract*

This thesis examines how reading promotion initiatives in the Netherlands foster intrinsic reading motivation among Dutch adolescents against the backdrop of the 2018 PISA results. These results revealed that, alongside declining reading proficiency, Dutch fifteen-year-olds scored the lowest in reading enjoyment out of all participating countries. Given that reading enjoyment and reading proficiency are positively correlated, encouraging positive attitudes towards reading among Dutch adolescents has become increasingly important. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), explains how intrinsic motivation can be fostered through support of the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Through the lens of SDT, this thesis investigates to what extent reading promotion initiatives have evolved to support these values over the past decade. By employing a comparative case study approach, this thesis analyses reading promotion across three contexts: curriculum-based literary education (with the *Lezen voor de Lijst* website as a case study), institutional reading promotion initiatives (with youth reading campaigns *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal* as case studies), and digital, peer-driven reading communities (with BookTok as a case study). The analysis revealed that reading promotion initiatives have evolved in response to the 2018 PISA results in ways that increasingly align with the principles of SDT. Across the three contexts examined, SDT's psychological needs are supported in different ways, often involving trade-offs between these needs. This thesis argues that intrinsic reading motivation is most effectively fostered when all three psychological needs are supported simultaneously. Since no single reading promotion context fully satisfies autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and the strengths of one approach often correspond to the limitations of another, its findings highlight the value of combining educational, institutional, and peer-driven promotion strategies.

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## Introduction

In November 2024, De Leescoalitie [The Reading Coalition] launched a commercial that aimed to promote reading fiction books for enjoyment. The commercial follows a teenage boy who notices that a girl he likes is reading a book. In an attempt to connect with her, he decides to read the same book, culminating in a typical meet-cute scenario—they run into each other and their books fall on the ground—in which the girl put a note in his book that says: '*Zullen we samen lezen*?' [Want to read together?].[1] Shown across television, social media, and even in cinemas, the commercial exemplifies a broader institutional response to a growing concern in the Netherlands: the decline in reading proficiency and reading enjoyment among Dutch adolescents.

The state of reading among young people in the Netherlands has become so alarming that the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science has called for a so-called *leesoffensief* [reading offensive]. This endeavour signifies a joint effort to promote the enjoyment of reading books in the Netherlands, especially among young people.[2] It was declared in 2019, shortly after the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that Dutch 15-year-olds were scoring increasingly lower in not only their reading proficiency, but also their reading enjoyment. Dutch adolescents turned out to be less likely to pick up a book for fun when compared to contemporary peers from other countries; out of all 79 countries that participated in the PISA test, the Netherlands' score in reading enjoyment among the tested age group was the lowest.[3]

### *PISA shock*

Carried out every three years under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the PISA test is an international comparative trend study into 15-year-old students' ability to apply their reading, mathematics, and science skills to everyday situations. PISA's results enable countries to compare the standard of their

[1] De Leescoalitie, 'Wie leest heeft een goed verhaal', YouTube, 30 November 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhMWjNRtdYs&ab_channel=DeLeescoalitie> [accessed 5 September 2025].
[2] Raad voor Cultuur and Onderwijsraad, *Lees! Een oproep tot een leesoffensief* (Raad voor Cultuur and Onderwijsraad, 2019).
[3] Joyce Gubbels and others, *Resultaten PISA-2018 in vogelvlucht* (University of Twente, 2019), p. 34, doi:10.3990/1.9789036549226.

education with those of other countries, as well as examine how the level of education in their own country has developed over the years.[4] The publication of such large-scale assessments can greatly influence a country's educational policy as well as its public discourse. When a country receives particularly disappointing PISA results, like Germany and Ireland in 2000 and 2009 respectively, such a wake-up call is referred to as a 'PISA shock'.[5]

The 2018 PISA results that the Netherlands received were cause for a shock in terms of the state of Dutch adolescents' reading enjoyment as well as their reading proficiency. PISA assesses reading proficiency by gauging ability of surveyed students' 'understanding, using, evaluating, reflecting on and engaging with texts in order to achieve [their] goals, to develop [their] knowledge and potential and to participate in society'.[6] This skill had been a stable variable in the Netherlands' PISA results until a significant decline was identified between 2015 and 2018.[7] Now, the reading proficiency of Dutch adolescents seems to be in a negative trend; the decline that started between 2015 and 2018 proceeded between 2018 and 2022. Moreover, the strength of the decrease in reading skills among Dutch adolescents seems to be increasing.[8]

As reading was the major domain of assessment in the 2018 PISA cycle, reading enjoyment was assessed as an added variable.[9] Not only did the Netherlands score lower than all other participating countries, the reading enjoyment score also showed a decline from 2009, when reading previously was PISA's major domain of assessment. What the PISA 2018 results also showed was that reading for enjoyment was positively associated with reading performance, and that the strength of this association was even higher than average in the Netherlands.[10] Focusing on reading

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[4] Gubbels, 'Resultaten PISA-2018', p. 6.
[5] Florian Waldow, 'What PISA Did and Did Not Do: Germany after the "PISA-shock"', *European Educational Research Journal*, 8.3 (2009), pp. 476–83 (p. 476); Aidan Clerkin and Emer Delaney, 'How Large-Scale Assessments Have Informed Education Policy in Ireland', *IEA Compass: Briefs in Education*, 26 (2025), pp. 1–10 (p. 3).
[6] OECD, *PISA 2018 Assessment and analytical framework* (OECD, 2019), p. 28, doi:10.1787/b25efab8-en.
[7] Martina Meelissen and others, *Resultaten PISA-22 in Vogelvlucht* (University of Twente, 2023) p. 52, doi:10.3990/1.9789036559461.
[8] Ibid.
[9] OECD, 'PISA 2018 Assessment', p. 21.
[10] OECD, *21st-Century Readers: Developing Literacy Skills in a Digital World* (OECD, 2021), p. 80, doi: 10.1787/a83d84cb-en.

enjoyment could, therefore, help turn the tide of the decline in reading skills among Dutch adolescents.

*The positive reading spiral*

A large achievement gap in reading proficiency has been identified between secondary school students who read books for enjoyment (voluntary reading) and those who do not.[11] More proficient readers often read more frequently than less proficient readers.[12] The likelihood of engaging in reading for enjoyment is closely linked to having a positive reading attitude.[13] Reading attitude can be understood as a person's learned tendency to think, feel, and behave in certain ways toward reading.[14] A positive spiral of reciprocal causation seems to explain this pattern: students who read in their leisure time develop skills essential to reading proficiency, such as their vocabulary and comprehension. In turn, stronger reading skills increase enjoyment, encouraging continued voluntary reading and further improving proficiency. As enjoyment and ability grow, so does the inclination to read more.[15]

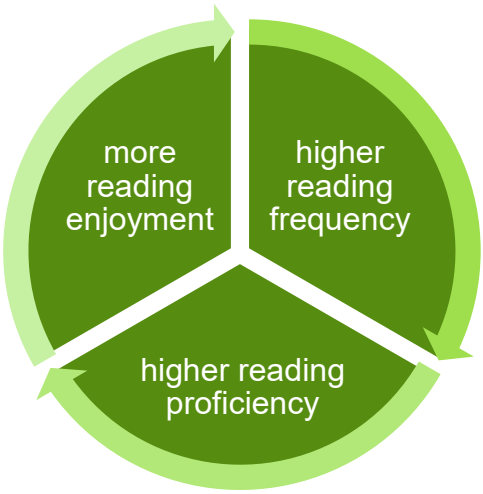



Figure 2: Simplified representation of the reading spiral.

[11] OECD, *PISA 2009 Results: Learning to Learn – Student Engagement, Strategies and Practices (Volume III)* (OECD, 2010), p. 34, doi:10.1787/9789264083943-en.
[12] Suzanne Mol and Adriana Bus, 'Lezen loont een leven lang: De rol van vrijetijdslezen in de taal- en leesontwikkeling van kinderen en jongeren', *Levende Talen Tijdschrift*, 12.3 (2011), pp. 3–15 (p. 11), https://lt-tijdschriften.nl/ojs/index.php/ltt/article/view/23.
[13] Ibid., p. 11.
[14] Mia Stokmans, 'Reading attitude and its effect on leisure time reading', *Poetics*, 26.17 (1999), pp. 245–61 (p. 246).
[15] Mol and Bus, 'Lezen loont', p. 11.

Unfortunately, this spiral can also operate the other way around. Weaker readers are more likely to develop negative reading experiences and resistance to reading, which may lead them to read less or even avoid it altogether.[16] As a result, their reading proficiency develops more slowly, reinforcing a negative spiral in which reading enjoyment continues to decline.[17] Weaker readers may benefit from leisure reading even more than stronger readers do, as reading books has a positive impact on vocabulary, reading comprehension, and technical reading skills regardless of a student's initial level.[18]

In the Netherlands, children's enjoyment of reading tends to decline with age. While Dutch seven-year-olds generally report high levels of reading enjoyment and a positive reading attitude, this view often shifts to a more neutral or even negative attitude by the age of fifteen.[19] As they transition into young adulthood, their motivation to engage in voluntary reading during their leisure time further decreases.[20] This decline in reading motivation is frequently attributed to the growing association of reading with academic requirements and expectations, as reading becomes a more compulsory than a voluntary activity.[21] It is therefore—keeping the reading spiral in mind—the less proficient readers who are more likely to experience a greater decline in reading enjoyment throughout adolescence.[22] This trend highlights the importance of encouraging adolescents to read more books outside of school requirements.[23]

As this thesis will illustrate, various extracurricular reading promotion initiatives already seek to encourage reading enjoyment among Dutch adolescents.

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[16] Thijs Nielen and Adriana Bus, *Onwillige lezers: Onderzoek naar redenen en oplossingen* (Stichting Lezen, 2016), p. 15.
[17] Christel Dood, Joyce Gubbels and Eliane Segers, *PISA-2018 De verdieping: Leesplezier, zelfbeeld bij het lezen, leesgedrag en leesvaardigheid en de relatie daartussen* (Expertisecentrum Nederlands, 2020), p. 8.
[18] Mol and Bus, 'Lezen loont', p. 10.
[19] Stichting Lezen, 'Verkorte landelijke rapportage dBos po 2024-2025', p. 2; Stichting Lezen, 'Verkorte landelijke rapportage dBos vo 2024-2025', p. 2.
[20] John Guthrie, Solomon Alao, and Jennifer Rinehart, 'Literacy Issues in Focus: Engagement in Reading for Young Adolescents', *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40.6 (1997), pp. 438–46 (p. 438).
[21] Frank Huysmans, *Van woordjes naar wereldliteratuur: De leeswereld van kinderen van 7-15 jaar* (Stichting Lezen, 2013), p. 6.
[22] Nielen and Bus, *Onwillige lezers*, p. 43.
[23] Mol and Bus, 'Lezen loont', p. 10.

The term 'reading promotion initiative' is understood here as referring to campaigns that aim to 'increase the desire to read and strengthen the reading culture among young people'.[24] Such initiatives may provide important chances to foster positive reading experiences, especially as reading becomes more and more associated with school the older children grow. By cultivating reading enjoyment outside of the school context, these initiatives could help prevent adolescents from becoming caught in a negative reading spiral.

*Research gap*

The decline in reading enjoyment among adolescents is of international concern.[25] However, this issue is particularly urgent in the Netherlands, as the 2018 PISA results revealed that Dutch fifteen-year-olds reported the lowest levels of reading enjoyment of all participating countries.[26] Moreover, given ongoing pressures on Dutch secondary education, including teacher shortages and curricular constraints, the extent to which positive reading attitudes can be fostered within the school context alone is limited.[27] Because reading enjoyment is closely connected to the development of a positive reading spiral, it is important to identify ways to encourage adolescents' motivation to read beyond the school environment.

To examine how reading motivation may be encouraged across different contexts, this thesis draws on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. SDT explains intrinsic motivation as the willingness to engage in an activity because they derive personal interest, curiosity, or enjoyment from it, without necessarily being motivated by external pressure or rewards.[28]

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[24] Nordic Council of Ministers, *Government Initiatives to Increase Reading and Interest in Reading Among Children and Young People in the Nordic Countries: Policy brief* (Kulturanalys Norden, 2024), p. 4, doi:10.6027/nord2024-037.
[25] Charlotte Webber and more, 'Approaches for supporting adolescents' reading motivation: existing research and future priorities', *Frontiers in* Education, 8.1254048 (2023), pp. 1–15 (p. 1), doi:10.3389/feduc.2023.1254048.
[26] Gubbels, *Resultaten PISA-2018 in vogelvlucht*, p. 34.
[27] Marc van der Meer, Jan van de Poll, and Evelien Ketelaar, 'Het lerarentekort: ongekende ambities en stapeldruk in het voortgezet onderwijs', *Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken*, 41.3 (2025), pp. 397–424 (p. 398), doi:10.5117/TVA2025.3.009.MEER; Theo Witte, Erwin Mantingh, and Marjolein van Herten, 'Doodtij in de delta: Stand en toekomst van het Nederlandse literatuuronderwijs', *Spiegel der Letteren*, 59.1 (2017), pp. 115–43 (p. 129), doi:10.2143/SDL.59.1.3259732.
[28] Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, 'The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior', *Psychological Inquiry*, 11.4 (2000), pp. 227–68 (p. 233), doi: 10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01.

According to SDT, intrinsic motivation is most likely to emerge when three basic psychological needs are supported: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Individuals are more likely to engage willingly in an activity when they experience a sense of choice and agency (autonomy), feel capable of succeeding (competence), and feel socially connected to other through the activity (relatedness).[29] Through these three facets (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), SDT provides a useful comparative framework for analysing how reading promotion initiatives across different contexts foster adolescents' intrinsic reading motivation.

While concerns about declining reading enjoyment among adolescents have generated extensive research on reading motivation, existing studies often focus primarily on how schools can stimulate adolescents' reading motivation.[30] Existing research applying SDT to reading motivation has likewise predominantly concentrated on school-based reading contexts.[31] As a result, less attention has been paid to how reading motivation may be fostered through initiatives operating beyond formal educational settings, as is the case, for example, for many of the reading promotion initiatives that will be examined in this thesis. Furthermore, much of the existing literature examines the effectiveness of reading interventions in terms of motivational outcomes.[32] Less attention has been paid to the assumptions about motivation that are embedded within reading promotion initiatives themselves and the ways in which these initiatives are designed to support motivational needs. This thesis addresses that gap by examining how different reading promotion contexts foster adolescents' intrinsic motivation to read through investigating their affordances from an SDT perspective. In doing so, this thesis explores how reading promotion across different contexts, when linked to a particular conception of how motivation works, may contribute to strengthening adolescents' positive reading spiral.

[29] Deci and Ryan, 'The "what" and "why"', p. 231.
[30] Webber and more, 'Approaches', p. 11.
[31] Ibid., p. 1.
[32] Lisa van der Sande and others, 'Effectiveness of Interventions that Foster Reading Motivation: a Meta-analysis', *Educational Psychology Review*, 35.21 (2023), pp. 1–38 (pp. 20–1) doi:10.1007/s10648-023-09719-3.

*Research question and thesis structure*

This thesis addresses the following research question: To what extent have reading promotion initiatives in the Netherlands implemented the basic psychological needs identified by Self-Determination Theory in order to foster intrinsic reading motivation among Dutch adolescents in response to declining reading enjoyment? Offering a broad view of how intrinsic reading motivation can be encouraged among Dutch adolescents, three contexts of reading promotion are compared, namely curriculum-based reading promotion within secondary education, institutional initiatives that encourage voluntary reading independent of curricular requirements, and the online reading community BookTok. Whereas educational and institutional initiatives represent top-down approaches mainly structured by adults and organisations, BookTok offers a contrast case, by illustrating a more bottom-up form of reading promotion shaped by adolescents' own participation and interaction. The following sub-questions have been formed to guide the analysis:

- How does curriculum-based reading promotion support adolescents' intrinsic reading motivation, across the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness?
- How do extracurricular reading promotion initiatives support adolescents' intrinsic reading motivation, across the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness?
- How does BookTok foster intrinsic reading motivation among adolescents, across the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness?
- How and why do curriculum-based, institutional, and digital reading promotion contexts differ in their support of intrinsic reading motivation?

A comparative case-based approach is used to address these questions. To represent the different contexts in which reading promotion aimed at Dutch adolescents can take place, several case studies were selected. From the perspective of SDT, fostering intrinsic motivation requires sustained support for the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[33] Each case is assessed in these terms, permitting cross-initiative comparison. The selection of case studies is further informed by the acknowledgement that the promotion of reading enjoyment should

[33] Deci and Ryan, 'The "what" and "why"' p. 230.

be approached as a long-term process that requires either extended intervention or recurring initiatives over a meaningful period of time.[34] As research suggests that reading attitudes are generally stable and resistant to change, short-term or one-off initiatives often have only limited effects on adolescents' motivation and reading behaviour, while consistent and systematic investment in reading motivation can lead to positive and lasting outcomes.[35] For this reason, the selected case studies consist of established initiatives that engage adolescents with reading in sustained or recurring ways across educational, institutional, and digital contexts.

The thesis is structured into four chapters. Chapter 1 consists of the literature review, discussing the key concepts relevant to this thesis and outlining its methodological framework. Chapter 2 examines the fostering of reading enjoyment within the educational context. *Lezen voor de Lijst* [Reading for the List] has been selected as its principal case study, as it is one of the most widely implemented didactic approaches to literary education in Dutch secondary schools and has the explicit aim of increasing students' reading motivation. Chapter 3 focuses on institutional, but non-curricular, initiatives centred on reading enjoyment, with particular attention to the youth reading campaigns *De Jonge Jury* [The Young Jury] and *Goed Verhaal* [Good Story]. Both are long-running and prominent extracurricular initiatives that return annually. In addition, they complement one another in terms of age group; *De Jonge Jury* primarily focuses on younger secondary school students, whereas *Goed Verhaal* is aimed at older adolescents. Although extracurricular, their promotion by educational institutions also ensures that adolescents encounter these initiatives regardless of their prior interest in reading. Finally, BookTok represents a largely bottom-up, digital reading community shaped by adolescents' own participation and interaction rather than by educational or institutional guidance. Its popularity among adolescents presents opportunities for reading, and, therefore, BookTok has also been used by institutional initiatives, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Together, these case studies make it possible to compare how intrinsic reading motivation (assessed across the three dimensions of SDT—autonomy, competence, relatedness) is encouraged across educational, institutional, and digital contexts in the Netherlands. Against the backdrop of

[34] Cedric Stalpers, 'De relatie tussen leesattitude en lidmaatschap van de openbare bibliotheek', in *Lezen we nog?*, ed. by Nienke de Vries (Stichting Lezen, 2007), pp. 104–7 (p. 106).
[35] Van der Sande, 'Effectiveness', p. 20.

declining reading enjoyment and reading proficiency among Dutch adolescents, this thesis thus examines how and whether reading promotion in the Netherlands has evolved to prioritise support for intrinsic motivation.

## Chapter 1: Literature review and methodology

It is not only adolescents who are reading fewer books than before; leisure reading among the Dutch population as a whole has shown a consistent decline since the first Time Use Survey conducted in 1975.[36] Both the time spent reading and the proportion of individuals who engage in reading have decreased over time.[37] This decline in reading is widely understood as part of a broad and multifaceted societal issue, often referred to as *ontlezing* [reading decline]. This phenomenon has received a significant amount of attention in both scholarly and public discourse and is attributed to a range of interconnected factors.[38] Commonly mentioned explanations include shortcomings in government and educational policy, such as a lack of funding and inadequate curricula.[39]

While the decline is observed across the population, the downward trend is particularly pronounced among younger generations. This trend is concerning, as reading and literacy are associated with wide-ranging benefits.[40] Adolescents who frequently read tend to perform better academically and often experience improved career prospects later in life.[41] Beyond these performance-related outcomes, engagement with literary texts has been shown to foster empathy, which supports the formation of meaningful social relationships.[42] In addition, reading can be used as a form of self-care and emotional coping, with readers finding comfort, escapism, and temporary relief from everyday stressors, which can support overall well-being.[43] Moreover, regular reading has been linked to improved attention spans and sustained concentration.[44]

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[36] CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding in Nederland 1955-1956* (CBS, 1957), pp. 41–8 <https://historisch.cbs.nl/detail.php?nav_id=0-1&index=3&id=560494489> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[37] Annemarie Wennekers, Franks Huysmans, and Jos de Haan, *Lees:Tijd Lezen in Nederland* (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2018), p. 6.
[38] Jack van der Leden, 'Ontlezing: Samenwerken om het tij te keren', *Boekman Extra*, 40 (2023), p. 3.
[39] Ibid., p. 6.
[40] Wennekers, Huysmans, and de Haan, *Lees:Tijd*, p. 10.
[41] Ibid., p. 111.
[42] Ibid., p. 94.
[43] Mihirini Sirisena and others, '"The book's a conversation starter": a realist exploration of the salutogenic potential of reading for pleasure', *Medical Humanities*, 50.4 (2024), p. 5, doi:10.1136/medhum-2023-012880.
[44] Margaret Merga and Brian Moon, 'The Impact of Social Influences on High School Students' Recreational Reading', *The High School Journal*, 99.2 (2016), pp. 122-140 (p. 122), doi:10.1353/hsj.2016.0004.

The decline in reading and the associated loss of these benefits is therefore closely linked to broader issues of social participation, as it may hinder the development of deep concentration and critical thinking—skills that are 'essential for informed public debate and active citizenship'.[45] Therefore, low literacy in general is understood as an 'urgent societal problem'.[46] This concern is reflected in a parliamentary investigation into declining reading proficiency among Dutch primary and secondary school students, which identifies difficulties with in-depth reading as a key underlying issue of the decline.[47]

### *The importance of long-form reading*

Even though reading books may have become a less popular leisure time activity, it could be argued that Dutch adolescents still read now more than ever. However, much of this reading takes place through social media content and text messaging, forms of short digital text that have been found to negatively correlate with reading comprehension.[48] These brief forms of online content increasingly compete with long-form reading for adolescents' time and attention, contributing to concerns about the overconsumption of fragmented and overstimulating digital media, a phenomenon popularly referred to as 'brain rot', which was named Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year 2024.[49] At the same time, the growing accessibility of AI-generated summaries and automated responses may further reduce young people's need to engage extensively with longer and more demanding texts.[50] As a result, adolescents spend less time 'deep reading', which is defined as 'the concentrated reading of longer texts or books'.[51] Yet it is precisely this leisure reading

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[45] Yra van Dijk and others, *Omdat lezen loont: Op naar effectief leesonderwijs in Nederland* (Pica, 2022), p. 7.
[46] Sociaal-Economische Raad, *Samen werken aan taal: Een advies over laaggeletterdheid* (SER, 2019), p. 20.
[47] Paul van den Broek and more, *Sturen op Begrip: Effectief Leesonderwijs in Nederland* (Leiden University, 2021), p. 3.
[48] Erica Nagelhout, Cary Richards, and Lucy Qing, *In de leeswereld van jongeren: Boeken lezen, lenen en kopen. Themameting 64* (GfK, 2023), p. 12; Naomi Baron and Anne Mangen, 'Doing the Reading: The Decline of Long Long-Form Reading in Higher Education', *Poetics Today*, 42.2 (2021), pp. 253–79 (p. 257), doi:10.1215/03335372-8883248.
[49] Merga and Moon, 'The Impact of Social Influences', p. 122; '"Brain rot" named Oxford Word of the Year 2024', *Oxford University Press*, 2 December 2024 <https://corp.oup.com/news/brain-rot-named-oxford-word-of-the-year-2024> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[50] Michael Gerlich, 'AI Tools in Society: Impacts on Cognitive Offloading and the Future of Critical Thinking', *Societies*, 15.6 (2025), pp. 1–28 (p. 3), doi:10.3390/soc15010006.
[51] Raad voor Cultuur and Onderwijsraad, '*Lees!*', p. 17.

of long-form texts, particularly books, that has been shown to play an important role in the development of reading skills.[52]

In *De lezende mens*, Van der Weel and Hisgen argue that growing up with screens conditions individuals to develop reduced attention spans, which can remain an issue when trying to engage with longer and more complex texts. As a result, the lack in fully developing cognitive structures required for sustained engagement at a young age may contribute to difficulties with deep reading later in life.[53] This concern is also reflected in the work of Baron and Mangen, who emphasise that sustained engagement with long-form texts fosters deeper cognitive processing than fragmented or screen-based reading. Their research highlights how digital reading environments tend to encourage surface-level processing, whereas printed, extended texts support sustained attention and comprehension. In this sense, books typically require a higher degree of cognitive engagement than the short-form content commonly encountered on, for example, social media. Fiction books, for example, require readers to follow extended plotlines, track characters, and interpret narrative developments, while works of nonfiction demand sustained concentration in order to process complex information and evaluate arguments. Although some of these processes may also occur in shorter texts, long-form reading generally requires a higher level of cognitive involvement, according to Baron and Mangen.[54]

In Dutch secondary schools, long-form reading is taught primarily through the school subject Dutch language. Within this subject, however, a substantial part focuses on *begrijpend lezen* [reading comprehension], an approach that has received criticism for emphasising functional reading strategies and test-oriented exercises over sustained engagement with complete texts. Critics argue that this method of instruction can encourage students to focus on information extraction and the application of reading strategies to relatively short texts rather than on sustained immersion in longer and more complex works.[55] At the same time, students are expected to read complete books across secondary school, which still provides Dutch

[52] Baron and Mangen, 'Doing the Reading', p. 257.
[53] Ruud Hisgen and Adriaan van der Weel, *De lezende mens: De betekenis van het boek voor ons bestaan* (Atlas Contact, 2022), pp. 210–12.
[54] Baron and Mangen, 'Doing the Reading', p. 257.
[55] B.B. de Koning and M. van der Schoot, '"Hoe zie jij het voor je?" Een kritische blik op de hedendaagse onderwijspraktijk van begrijpend lezen', *Pedagogische Studiën*, 91.6 (2014), pp. 422–30 (pp. 423–5).

adolescents with structured exposure to extended texts and literary works.[56] Nevertheless, as adolescents become increasingly accustomed to fragmented digital reading practices characterised by scrolling, skimming, and rapid shifts in attention, schools face growing challenges in maintaining students' concentration and comprehension when working with longer texts.[57] This problem is particularly significant in light of the concerns about declining reading proficiency in the Netherlands, as reflected in assessments such as PISA. Against this backdrop, fostering long-form reading habits within education becomes increasingly important. At the same time, the successful development of such habits may depend not only on students' reading abilities, but also on their motivation to engage with long-form reading in the first place.

### *Why intrinsic motivation to read matters*

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, long-form reading increasingly competes with other forms of media that offer adolescents faster and more immediate gratification. Encouraging reading enjoyment among adolescents is therefore not simply a matter of promoting literacy, but of fostering long-form reading motivation despite the growing appeal of short-form digital media. Reading motivation refers to a person's inclination to read, which is shaped by their views on, attitudes towards, and goals regarding reading. As motivation is a complex and multidimensional construct, differing theoretical perspectives have emphasised distinct mechanisms underlying reading motivation.[58]

Concepts originating in the general field of learning motivation have been widely adapted to reading motivation among students.[59] According to Wigfield, motivational theories in reading research can broadly be organised around two questions: 'Can I be a good reader?' and 'Do I want to be a good reader and why?'.[60] Expectancy-value theory, developed within educational psychology by Eccles and her

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[56] Vera van Rossum and Marjolein Nadorp, *Aandacht voor lezen in het voortgezet onderwijs: Een onderzoek onder schoolleiders en docenten Nederlands in vmbo, havo en vwo* (Stichting Lezen, 2025), pp. 37–9.
[57] Raad voor Cultuur and Onderwijsraad, '*Lees!*', pp. 9–10.
[58] Van der Sande, 'Effectiveness of Interventions', p. 3.
[59] Roel van Steensel and others, *Effecten van leesmotivatie-interventies: Uitkomsten van een meta-analyse* (Erasmus University, 2016), p. 8.
[60] Allan Wigfield, 'Reading Motivation: A Domain-Specific Approach to Motivation', *Educational Psychologist*, 32.2 (1997), pp. 59–68 (pp. 60–1), doi:10.1207/s15326985ep3202_1.

colleagues, addresses both dimensions by integrating students' expectations of success with the importance they assign to—in the case of reading motivation—reading tasks.[61] In this way, the theory offers a relatively comprehensive explanation of reading motivation, although its broad conception of value includes a range of motives, from enjoyment to practical usefulness.[62] By contrast, Social Cognitive Theory and Attribution Theory primarily explain motivation through competence-related beliefs.[63] For instance, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, which refers to individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning.[64] Through Attribution Theory, Weiner suggests that students are more motivated when they attribute their success or failure to actions within their own control.[65]

Other theoretical perspectives employed in reading motivation research focus on why students decide to participate in reading activities.[66] Interest theory, for example, views motivation largely through the lens of interest, differentiating, as Krapp states, between enduring personal interests and situational interests that emerge in response to particular contexts.[67] While this approach helps explain emotional engagement with reading, it pays less attention to wider beliefs about competence and achievement. In contrast, Achievement Goal Theory places emphasis on goal orientation, often distinguishing between mastery-oriented and performance-oriented goals.[68] Together, these perspectives highlight different dimensions of reading motivation. Despite their different emphases, many of these theories ultimately distinguish between motivation that is driven primarily by external incentives and motivation that is driven by personal interest or enjoyment.

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[61] Allan Wigfield and Jacquelynne Eccles, 'Expectancy–Value Theory of Achievement Motivation', *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25 (2000), pp. 68–81 (p. 68), doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1015.
[62] Ibid., p. 69.
[63] Van Steensel, *Effecten van leesmotivatie-interventies*, p. 9.
[64] Albert Bandura, 'Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50.2 (1991), pp. 248–87 (p. 257), doi:10.1016/0749-5978(91)90022-L.
[65] Bernard Weiner, 'Integrating Social and Personal Theories of Achievement Striving', *Review of Educational Research*, 64.4 (1994), pp. 557–73 (p. 560), doi:10.2307/1170587.
[66] Van Steensel, *Effecten van leesmotivatie-interventies*, p. 9.
[67] Andreas Krapp, 'Structural and dynamic aspects of interest development: theoretical considerations from an ontogenetic perspective', *Learning and Instruction*, 12 (2002), 383–409 (p. 388), doi: 10.1016/S0959-4752(01)00011-1.
[68] Paul Pintrich, 'An Achievement Goal Theory Perspective on Issues in Motivation Terminology', Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25 (2000) pp. 92–104 (pp. 99–100), doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1017.

As these theories suggest, motivation can be divided into two forms: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation originates within the individual and involves reading out of personal interest, curiosity, or enjoyment, without the need for external pressure or rewards—finding distraction in a story, for example.[69] Extrinsic motivation, by contrast, arises from external factors, where reading is driven by the pursuit of a goal, reward, or recognition from others.[70] Examples include reading to achieve higher grades or meet another person's expectations. Theories on reading motivation do not define intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in a uniform way, but they consistently organise motivational processes around a similar distinction between internally driven engagement based on interest or enjoyment, and externally oriented engagement shaped by utility, reward, or social control.

Schaffner and Schiefele emphasise that adolescents are more likely to read when they are intrinsically motivated than when they rely solely on extrinsic motivation.[71] Therefore, intrinsic motivation is strongly associated with more frequent leisure time reading. While both types of motivation can positively influence reading behaviour, being only extrinsically motivated to read is often linked to lower engagement and weaker reading outcomes.[72] Not every form of extrinsic motivation is negative though; the more strongly someone has internalized a particular drive, the higher the quality of the motivation. For example, there is a difference between a child who reads because he is afraid of being punished by the teacher, and a child who reads out of a conviction that reading is good for furthering their school career. Although both cases involve extrinsic motivation, the latter is more self-determined and therefore of a more intrinsic quality. In other words: the more autonomous and self-directed motivation is, the higher this motivation's quality is.[73] Hence, intrinsic motivation plays a key role in sustaining reading habits and supporting reading

[69] Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, 'Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being', *American Psychologist*, 55.1 (2000), pp. 68–78 (p. 70), doi:10.1037110003-066X.55.1.68.
[70] Edward Deci and others, 'Motivation and Education: The Self-Determination Perspective', *Educational Psychologist*, 26.3–4 (1991), pp. 325–46 (p. 328), doi:10.1080/00461520.1991.9653137.
[71] Ellen Schaffner, Ulrich Schiefele, and Hannah Ulferts, 'Reading Amount as a Mediator of the Effects of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Reading Motivation on Reading Comprehension', *Reading Research Quarterly*, 48.4 (2013), pp. 369–85 (p. 382), doi:10.1002/rrq.52.
[72] Ibid., p. 372.
[73] Ryan and Deci, 'The "what" and "why"', p. 237.

development.[74] But fostering intrinsic motivation can be challenging, as it has to originate from within the individual.

*Fostering intrinsic motivation through the lens of Self-Determination Theory*

A full evaluation of reading motivation theories is outside of the bounds of this thesis. But among the theoretical approaches to reading motivation, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is particularly well suited for examining intrinsic reading motivation because it explains how motivation becomes internalised. Although intrinsic motivation originates from within the individual, SDT argues that it can be fostered through environments that support the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[75] Whereas expectancy-value, interest, attribution, and achievement or other goal-based theories primarily identify different antecedents or components of motivated behaviour, SDT explicitly focuses on the conditions under which external forms of motivation can gain a more intrinsic value. [76] Accordingly, when applied to reading, adolescents would be more likely to develop intrinsic motivation according to SDT when reading activities satisfy the three basic needs, with greater need fulfilment associated with higher levels of intrinsic motivation. From this perspective, reading behaviour is influenced not only by general, habitual reading motivation but also by situation-specific reasons for reading, which may in turn contribute to the development of positive reading attitudes.[77] For this reason, SDT provides the theoretical framework for this thesis, as its focus on the environmental conditions that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness makes it particularly suitable for analysing how different reading promotion initiatives seek to foster adolescents' intrinsic reading motivation.

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[74] Jessie De Naeghel and more, 'The Relation Between Elementary Students' Recreational and Academic Reading Motivation, Reading Frequency, Engagement, and Comprehension: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104.4 (2012), pp. 1006–21 (p. 1017), doi:10.1037/a0027800.
[75] Ryan and Deci, 'Self-Determination Theory', p. 69.
[76] Ryan and Deci, 'The "what" and "why"', p. 237.
[77] Sabina Neugebauer, 'A daily diary study of reading motivation inside and outside of school: A dynamic approach to motivation to read', Learning and Individual Differences, 24 (2013), pp. 152–9 (p. 158), doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2012.10.011.

The need for autonomy is met when an individual has a sense of self-regulation in their action.[78] In the context of reading, this concept can be understood as referring to whether they feel free to choose what and how they read. For example, freedom of choice in secondary education regarding the books adolescents are allowed to read for school could help to motivate them to read books more frequently.[79] Autonomy is also associated with higher levels of engagement. Research by Ivey and Johnston, for example, suggests that students show greater engagement with school reading when whole-class reading instruction is replaced with self-selected reading.[80] Allowing adolescents to choose how they read may also support their sense of autonomy, for instance by providing them with the option to read digitally or listen to audiobooks.[81]

Within SDT, competence refers to the sense of being effective and confident in achieving desired outcomes.[82] When it comes to reading motivation, competence is related to accessibility and the ability to find books that match an individual's interests and reading levels.[83] For example, many young people struggle to find a suitable book because they are unfamiliar with the different types of genres or because a wide range of books are not visible in the media they use (such as on social media).[84] Selecting an unsuitable or overly difficult book may lead to frustration and negative reading experiences, especially for weaker readers. Access to information about available titles helps to increase the likelihood of choosing a book that leads to a positive reading experience instead.[85] The importance of selecting appropriately challenging books is also reflected in Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks that learners can successfully complete with guidance but not yet independently. Applied to reading, this suggests that books should be challenging enough to promote growth while remaining

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[78] Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, 'Self-Regulation and the Problem of Human Autonomy: Does Psychology Need Choice, Self-Determination, and Will?', *Journal of Personality*, 74.6 (2006), pp. 1557–86 (pp. 1557–8), doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00420.x.
[79] Charlotte Webber and more, 'Motivating book reading during adolescence: Qualitative insights from adolescents', *Educational Research*, 67.1 (2025), pp. 7–8, doi:10.1080/00131881.2024.2445618.
[80] Gay Ivey and Peter Johnston, 'Engagement With Young Adult Literature: Outcomes and Processes', *Reading Research Quarterly*, 48.3 (2013), pp. 255–75 (p. 272), doi:10.1002/rrq.46.
[81] Qrius, *De leescultuur van jongeren* (Stichting Lezen, 2021), p. 21.
[82] Ryan and Deci, 'Self-Determination Theory', p. 69.
[83] Webber, 'Motivating book reading', p. 7.
[84] Qrius, *De leescultuur*, p. 22; Ibid., p. 24.
[85] Linda Gambrell, 'Seven Rules of Engagement: What's Most Important to Know About Motivation to Read', *The Reading Teacher*, 65.3 (2011), pp. 172–78 (p. 176), doi:10.1002/TRTR.01024.

accessible enough to avoid discouragement.[86] Positive reading experiences and achievable challenges may strengthen adolescents' confidence and, thus, their motivation for reading.[87]

Finally, relatedness, the third aspect of SDT, is felt when experiencing a feeling of connection and security within one's social environment.[88] With regard to reading, then, relatedness concerns whether an individual feels supported, valued, and connected to others through reading experiences.[89] Books that reflect adolescents' experiences and identities—or, in other words, are relatable—can therefore further increase their connection to reading. Adolescents are also more likely to value reading when parents, teachers, and peers encourage it and model positive reading habits.[90] Peer influence can operate both directly, through book recommendations, and indirectly, through how reading is perceived within peer culture.[91] A positive image—reinforced by popular book series and cultural trends among adolescents—can position reading as a socially valued activity and thus encourage engagement.[92] The power of many forms of media popular among young people, such as social media and multiplayer video games, partly lies in their social character.[93] Shared experiences, such as discussing books together, make reading more social and have the potential to positively impact reading motivation.[94] Together, autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be used as a guiding framework for understanding how intrinsic reading motivation may be supported across different reading promotion contexts.

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[86] Lev Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 86.
[87] Gambrell, 'Seven Rules', p. 176.
[88] Ryan and Deci, 'Self-Determination Theory', p. 73.
[89] Webber, 'Motivating book reading', p. 10.
[90] Susan Klauda, 'The Role of Parents in Adolescents' Reading Motivation and Activity', *Educational Psychology Review*, 21.4 (2009), pp. 325–363 (p. 331), doi:10.1007/s10648-009-9112-0.
[91] Vrailas Bateman, 'Adolescent Peer Culture: Overview', in *Encyclopedia of Education*, ed. by James W. Guthrie (Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), pp. 45–52 (p. 46).
[92] Cassandra Scharber, 'Online Book Clubs: Bridges between Old and New Literacies Practices', *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52.5 (2009), pp. 433–37 (p. 433).
[93] Qrius, *De leescultuur*, p. 31.
[94] Lesya Ganushchak, *Praten over lezen: Een literatuurstudie naar de invloed van gesprekken over teksten en lezen op de leesontwikkeling van leerlingen in het funderend onderwijs* (Stichting Lezen, 2025), p. 19.

## Methodology

By adopting a comparative and longitudinal perspective and analysing initiatives and developments over approximately the past ten years, this thesis explores whether and how the affordances for intrinsic motivation (addressed through the lens of SDT) provided by reading promotion initiatives have evolved in response to concerns about declining reading enjoyment among Dutch adolescents. To investigate these developments, a comparative case study approach is used. This approach is used to gain insight into how intrinsic reading motivation is embedded in the structure, discourse, and design of reading promotion initiatives. Thus, the analysis centres on the motivational strategies and assumptions underlying different forms of reading promotion.

Using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a lens to assess the case studies, the analysis is guided by a deductive approach, as concepts derived from existing theory are used as an analytical framework.[95] Specifically, autonomy, competence, and relatedness—the three needs of SDT—are used to examine how reading promotion initiatives foster intrinsic reading motivation among adolescents.

### *Analytical framework*

To analyse how reading promotion initiatives' designs foster intrinsic reading motivation, this thesis operationalises SDT's three needs as analytical categories, as derived from existing SDT and reading motivation research. Since these categories are used primarily as an analytical framework, it is not the intention of this thesis to provide an exhaustive list of all possible manifestations of the three psychological needs. As pertains to this thesis, SDT's needs have been operationalised as follows:

- Autonomy is operationalised as the extent to which initiatives support adolescents' sense of choice, self-direction, and pursual of personal relevance in reading. This is assessed through key indicators including freedom of book choice, flexibility in reading formats, and opportunities for self-directed reading or participation;

[95] Jeroen Dera and Helleke van den Braber, 'Analysing Elicitation Data in Literary Reception Research', in *Research Methods in Literary Reception Studies*, ed. by Jeroen Dera, Anne Oerlemans, and Frederik van Dam (Leuven University Press, 2026), pp. 63–77 (p. 64).

- competence is operationalised as the extent to which initiatives support adolescents' confidence and sense of effectiveness in reading. This is examined through indicators such as the accessibility of reading materials, guidance in book selection, and the provision of achievable reading experiences; and
- relatedness is operationalised as the extent to which initiatives foster feelings of social connection, support, and belonging through reading. This is assessed through indicators including the presence of relatable reading materials, opportunities for peer interaction, shared reading experiences, and the social framing of reading within communities.

*Data collection*

The selected cases represent three distinct contexts of reading promotion for Dutch adolescents: educational reading promotion within secondary education, institutional extracurricular reading initiatives focused on reading enjoyment, and a digital, peer-driven reading community. These contexts are represented by the following case studies: *Lezen voor de Lijst* (educational context), *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal* (institutional but extracurricular initiatives), and BookTok (digital context). This selection of cases allows for a systematic comparison of how intrinsic reading motivation is supported across several contexts that Dutch adolescents are likely to encounter.

The case studies examined in chapters 2 and 3 were selected because they are established and recurring forms of reading promotion initiatives that operate over a sustained period rather than as one-off interventions. In line with the longitudinal design of this thesis, the analysis focuses on developments over approximately the past ten years (2016–2026), a period during which concerns about adolescents' reading enjoyment and motivation in the Netherlands have become increasingly prominent in educational and policy debates.

BookTok presents a different type of case study, as it is a reading-oriented subcommunity within the social media platform TikTok rather than a formal reading promotion initiative. Unlike the other cases, it does not constitute a bounded intervention or programme; adolescents who engage with BookTok remain

embedded within the TikTok environment and are simultaneously exposed to a wide range of non-reading-related content. Therefore, Chapter 4 does not analyse TikTok as a whole, but instead examines the underlying dynamics of the platform as pertains to fostering SDT's needs for reading motivation.

To capture various versions of the reading promotion initiatives examined in chapters 2 and 3 over time, the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine is used in order to collect archived versions of websites. The Wayback Machine offers a valuable large-scale data source to analyse web information over time.[96] Archived website versions are compared across different time points in order to analyse change. This longitudinal analysis allows assessment of whether and how the representation of autonomy, competence, and relatedness has shifted throughout the years, thus addressing the element of this thesis' principal research question which concerns the evolution of reading promotion. In addition to systematically looking through website data, publicly available supporting documents on these initiatives (such as reports, manifestos, recommendations, evaluations, and journalistic critical commentary), found through directed Google searches, are analysed so that the initiatives can be contextualised appropriately. For the discussion of BookTok in Chapter 4, illustrative examples of reading promotion practices within the subcommunity of TikTok are used to illustrate the ways in which institutional reading promotion initiatives employ its affordances. A comprehensive analysis of all BookTok posts related to reading promotion falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

### *Limitations*

Several limitations to the methodology of this thesis should be acknowledged. Firstly, this thesis' analysis of reading promotion initiatives through the lens of SDT focuses on how the initiatives are designed, not on how they are practically implemented. Publicly available information regarding the way in which adolescents respond to the examined initiatives is not always available. As a result, this thesis' conclusions mainly relate to how the examined initiatives foster intrinsic motivation in theory, rather than their actual effects on users in practice. Nevertheless, by analysing how

[96] Sanjay Arora and others, 'Using the Wayback Machine to mine websites in the social sciences: A methodological resource', *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 67.8 (2015), pp. 1904–15 (p. 1904), doi:10.1002/asi.23503.

reading promotion initiatives frame reading motivation, this thesis provides valuable insight into the underlying assumptions that underpin reading promotion. Thus, this approach complements existing research that mainly looks at effectiveness through changes in reading behavior or proficiency.

A second limitation concerns the availability of historical data. Archived website materials (accessed through the Wayback Machine) may be incomplete or unavailable, which can affect the continuity of the longitudinal analysis. Additionally, differences in the amount and detail of supporting materials across cases may influence the comparative analysis. Such gaps in the data will be addressed per case, but reviewing each case over a ten-year period has still provided substantial material that allows for meaningful longitudinal and cross-case comparisons.

Finally, this thesis' framing of reading promotion initiatives through the lens of SDT necessarily involves interpretive judgement; identifying representations of autonomy, competence, and relatedness cannot be completely objective. To improve analytical rigour, common operational characteristics per motivation needs, as described above, are applied consistently across case studies. This systematic approach provides clear criteria for identifying representations of motivational support that has been derived from established literature. Furthermore, ambiguous instances of SDT support were considered in relation to multiple needs rather than being assigned a single one. The findings should be seen as interpretive but systematically grounded in a recognized theoretical framework, rather than merely as subjective impressions.

*Conclusion*

This chapter has shown that declining reading engagement among Dutch adolescents is part of the broader phenomenon of *ontlezing*, raising concerns about literacy, deep reading, and long-term educational and social outcomes. As long-form reading increasingly competes with digital media, fostering adolescents' intrinsic motivation to read has become a central challenge for reading promotion initiatives. The following chapters investigate how different reading promotion contexts implement the three psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and how

their approaches have evolved in response to concerns about declining reading enjoyment among adolescents.

## Chapter 2: The curriculum and the SDT affordances of *Lezen voor de lijst*

In light of the declining reading proficiency and reading enjoyment identified in the Dutch PISA results, the way schools approach reading becomes especially important, as school is one of the primary environments in which adolescents engage with books on a regular basis.[97] Keeping the positive reading spiral in mind, it is crucial that reading for school does not lead to negative reading attitudes. Yet a substantial proportion of young people in the Netherlands report that academically mandated reading reduces their reading enjoyment, particularly as they progress through secondary school.[98] Fostering student engagement with reading without undermining reading enjoyment is therefore a central challenge for *literatuuronderwijs* [literary education] in the Netherlands.

Unlike voluntary reading practices, school-based reading is largely characterized by top-down curricular requirements and assessment structures. The challenge of promoting reading development while preserving students' enjoyment of reading makes literary education a particularly valuable context for examining the conditions under which the positive reading spiral can be strengthened. Thus, literary education serves as a useful context for exploring how and whether intrinsic reading motivation is supported among Dutch adolescents. This chapter, therefore, examines academically mandated reading in the Netherlands and the development of *Lezen voor de lijst*, a didactic approach to literary education, through the lens of SDT.

### *Academically mandated reading*

Dutch secondary education is divided into three main tracks: *vmbo* [pre-vocational], *havo* [general], and *vwo* [pre-university]. Students are typically assigned to a track at age 12 based on a combination of primary school teacher recommendations and standardized test scores. The system is relatively flexible, as it allows students to

[97] Ineke Nagel and Marc Verboord, 'Reading behaviour from adolescence to early adulthood: A panel study of the impact of family and education on reading fiction books', *Acta Sociologica*, 55.4 (2012), pp. 351–65 (p. 361), doi:10.1177/0001699312456858.
[98] Erica Nagelhout and Robin Nederlof, *Wat vinden jongeren van lezen en het leesonderwijs in Nederland?* (NielsenIQ, 2025), p. 29.

transition between levels as their academic performance develops.[99] Since Dutch 15-year-olds are spread across these different educational pathways, all tracks were evenly represented in the 2018 PISA study which, as noted, found that Dutch adolescents report exceptionally low levels of reading enjoyment.[100] The decline in reading enjoyment therefore appears to be a widespread phenomenon among Dutch adolescents rather than an issue limited to a specific educational track.

While schools themselves are responsible for implementing the national curriculum in practice, they are bound by the statutory requirements and broader educational framework established by the Dutch government.[101] In the Netherlands, the curriculum is divided into obligatory targets for the first and second half of secondary education—or, lower and upper secondary school. The *kerndoelen* [core objectives] form the foundation of the national curriculum for lower secondary school. These objectives, which are the same for all tracks, define what secondary school students should encounter, what is expected of them, and what they are ultimately required to master before moving on to upper secondary school.[102] During upper secondary school, *examenprogramma's* [examination programs] work towards *eindtermen* [attainment targets], which are tested with nationwide standardized exams.[103] These attainment targets differ across tracks.

In the lower years of secondary education, compulsory literary reading is less common, perhaps because it is not explicitly prescribed in the statutory core objectives.[104] Nevertheless, many students are still required to read books, although this expectation has traditionally been stronger for *havo* and *vwo* students than for *vmbo* students.[105] This difference could be explained by the fact that *havo* and *vwo* students have long been legally required to read a prescribed number of literary works as part of meeting their attainment targets. In practice, students in the upper years of *vmbo* have often also been expected to engage in literary reading, but this was not formally mandated.[106] Starting from the 2026–2027 schoolyear, however, a

[99] 'The Dutch education system', SLO, 28 July 2025, <https://www.slo.nl/international/the-dutch-education-system> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[100] Gubbels, 'Resultaten PISA-2018', p. 11.
[101] 'The Dutch education system', SLO.
[102] SLO, *Kerndoelen voortgezet onderwijs* (SLO, 2026), p. 13.
[103] 'The Dutch education system', *SLO*.
[104] SLO, *Kerndoelen*, pp. 21–9.
[105] Van Rossum and Nadorp, *Aandacht voor lezen*, p. 4.
[106] Ibid., p. 5.

revised national curriculum will extend literary reading requirements to all levels of secondary education.[107]

This new curriculum introduces several important changes when it comes to academically mandated reading. Whereas previous requirements specified a fixed number of literary works that only included ones originally written in Dutch, the revised framework allows for a greater inclusion of translated literature. In addition, the former requirement that students read complete works published before 1880 has been removed.[108] This change may increase the relevance of school-based reading for adolescents by allowing greater access to contemporary texts. Although the attainment targets describe the literary competencies students are expected to develop, they do not prescribe specific titles that must be read. The selection of books therefore remains largely the responsibility of schools, teachers, and students within the framework of the curriculum.

### *Views on the use of a literary canon*

As there is no formal national reading list for Dutch secondary school students, the selection of reading material is shaped by differing views on what is considered appropriate and valuable for students. This diversity is illustrated by ongoing debates surrounding the role of a literary canon in education, which have persisted for decades.[109] A literary canon generally refers to a list of books regarded as classic and culturally significant for a given language area. In the Dutch context, the *Canon van de Nederlandstalige literatuur* [Canon of Dutch Literature] identifies a selection of authors and works regarded as Dutch literary 'classics' central to its literary heritage.[110] This *Canon*, however, is not a legally fixed list that every school is required teach. Instead, it is designed to guide teachers, librarians, and others in inspiring and motivating reading choices.[111] However, the composition of any canon

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[107] SLO, *Conceptexamenprogramma Nederlandse taal en literatuur - versie 2 - vmbo-gl/tl* (SLO, 2025), p. 21.
[108] SLO, *Conceptexamenprogramma Nederlandse taal en literatuur - versie 2 - vwo* (SLO, 2025), pp. 22–3.
[109] Witte, Mantingh, and van Herten, 'Doodtij', p. 116.
[110] 'De literaire canon van 2025: criteria', Literaire canon, n.d. <https://literairecanon.be/criteria> [accessed 14 June 2026].
[111] 'Doel', Literaire canon, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250617204636/https://literairecanon.be/nl/over/doel> archived at *Internet Archive* 17 June 205 [accessed 14 June 2026].

remains subject of debate, as decisions about which works are included inevitably raise questions about which voices and perspectives are excluded.[112] Moreover, while canonical texts are widely read, they are generally not particularly enjoyed by Dutch adolescents.[113]

While some scholars and educators mainly argue for the preservation of canonical literary works, others advocate for a broader and more inclusive conception of Dutch literature that better reflects students' lived experiences and contemporary culture. These discussions extend to questions about whether students should be allowed to read young adult literature, translated works, or graphic novels as part of their academically mandated reading.[114] Underlying this debate about the canon are contrasting views on whether literature education should prioritise cultural transmission or student engagement. Verboord distinguishes between student-centred and culture-oriented approaches to literature education. He highlights that while the student-centred approach contributes to more positive attitudes toward reading that lead to higher reading frequencies later in life, highly culture-oriented instruction is linked to reduced reading engagement.[115] Dutch literary education has often been criticised for being more culture-oriented than student-centred, privileging canonical texts at the expense of student choice. Dera, for example, points out that current reading and literature education is largely based on a top-down, theoretical approach in which the student's perspectives receive insufficient attention.[116]

Reflecting the broader debate about which books adolescents should read, the extent to which students are allowed to choose their own reading material varies significantly between schools.[117] Importantly, enjoyment of reading related to school

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[112] John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 5.
[113] Jeroen Dera, *De praktijk van de leeslijst: Een onderzoek naar de inhoud en waardering van literatuurlijsten voor het schoolvak Nederlands op havo en vwo* (Stichting Lezen, 2019), p. 16.
[114] Witte, Mantingh, and van Herten, 'Doodtij in de delta', p. 134.
[115] Marc Verboord, 'Long-term effects of literary education on book-reading frequency: An analysis of Dutch student cohorts 1975–1998', *Poetics*, 33 (2005), pp. 320–42 (pp. 335–6), doi:10.1016/j.poetic.2005.09.007.
[116] Jeroen Dera, 'Het begrip "literatuur" binnen het literatuuronderwijs', *Didactiek Nederlands*, 21 March 2020 <https://didactieknederlands.nl/2020/03/het-begrip-literatuur-binnen-het-literatuuronderwijs> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[117] Anne Wester and Debbie Kooij, *Lezen voor de lijst: onderzoek naar gebruik, ervaringen en waardering* (Oberon, 2024) p. 13.

appears to be closely connected to students' freedom of choice.[118] But even though teachers aim to prioritize reading enjoyment in their literature instruction, they often face structural limitations in addressing them. When asked about bottlenecks in practice, teachers mention difficulties finding suitable books, limited curricular space for literature education, and the relatively low importance assigned to literature within some schools.[119]

### *The* Lezen voor de lijst *approach*

*Lezen voor de lijst*, originally developed by Witte in 2008, is a widely adapted didactic approach for literature education in secondary schools.[120] When Witte examined how teachers can support students with differing initial reading levels, he found that teachers face a challenge when aiming to help students reach the intended literacy level outlined in the curriculum.[121] To address this issue, he developed a set of tools that helps teachers identify different competency levels among students and provide suitable book recommendations and assignments aligned with each student's literary competence. The method is based on the idea that students develop literary competence most effectively when they read books at or just above their current reading level, thus gradually progressing toward more complex literature.[122] In this way, the idea behind *Lezen voor de Lijst* aligns with the previously discussed concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, as the approach intends to support teachers in guiding students toward higher levels of literary competence step by step.[123]

The website for *Lezen voor de lijst*, launched in 2011, is the practical manifestation of the approach.[124] The website is consulted by a majority of teachers, and is mainly used for the title lists it offers.[125] A large proportion of teachers base the selection of books they require students to read on the website's recommendations, even though Witte's intention was not to use *Lezen voor de lijst* as

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[118] Erica Nagelhout and Robin Nederlof, *Wat vinden jongeren van lezen en het leesonderwijs in Nederland? Meting 74 voor SMB* (NielsenIQ, 2025), pp. 32–4.
[119] Witte, Mantingh, and van Herten, 'Doodtij', p. 129.
[120] Wester and Kooij, p. 37, Ibid., p.17.
[121] Theo Witte, *Het oog van de meester: Een onderzoek naar de literaire ontwikkeling van havo- en vwo-leerlingen in de tweede fase van het voortgezet onderwijs* (Stichting Lezen, 2008), p. 35.
[122] Ibid., p. 445.
[123] Vygotsky, 'Mind in Society', p. 86.
[124] Wester and Kooij, p. 17.
[125] Ibid., p. 14.

a mark of a book's quality.[126] In practice, the website does function as a kind of canon in the sense that it offers an established list of books that are read en masse by students.[127]

*Lezen voor de lijst*'s website is currently being redeveloped, as a study by research organization Oberon has identified several issues with its practical implementation.[128] The assignment of reading levels to certain books, as well as some of the themes represented in the selection, has been questioned. Although the diversity of the book selection has improved over the years, experts argue that there is still room for further development.[129] In addition, the degree to which Lezen voor de Lijst successfully instrumentalises the zone of proximal development has been challenged, as the extent to which the website actually motivates students to progress toward more advanced literature is not clear. According to experts, the platform offers little incentive for students to move on to higher-level books after repeatedly reading texts at the same level.[130] As a result, the responsibility for stimulating further reading development largely falls on teachers.[131] Moreover, although *Lezen voor de Lijst* is designed to support the selection of texts based on individual reading levels, teachers frequently assign the same books to all students within a class.[132] Such shortcomings indicate that there is still room for improvement in how the implementation of *Lezen voor de lijst* supports students' reading development. These and other points of critique will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent analysis.

### *An analysis of* Lezen voor de lijst *through the lens of SDT*

Several developments of the *Lezen voor de lijst* website can be analysed regarding their support of SDT's needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

[126] Ibid., p. 17; Ibid., p. 14
[127] Ibid., p. 17.
[128] 'Nieuw aanpak voor Lezen voor de Lijst', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl/nieuws/nieuw-aanpak-voor-lezen-voor-de-lijst> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[129] Wester and Kooij., p. 19
[130] Ibid., p. 24–5.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., p. 17.

Autonomy

The website's title list fosters autonomy through offering a wide range of titles available within each reading level, allowing students to make independent choices based on personal interests. Over time, the number of available titles has increased, further expanding students' opportunities to select texts that may align with their reading preferences.[133] In addition, the use of filters to search for titles to select, which have also become more extensive over time, strengthens students' ability to make more deliberate decisions regarding their school-related reading.[134] A filter option to specifically search for e-books and audiobooks has also been introduced. Being able to select their preferred reading platform gives students additional autonomy by giving them a choice in how they read. These accessibility features may also positively affect students' competence, as formats like audiobooks and e-books can make reading tasks more manageable—as the website puts it, they are '*Heel handig!*' [Very convenient!].[135] Students with a library membership can also easily access these formats via a direct link to the online library.

The website also fosters autonomy by being freely accessible to all users, thereby increasing students' opportunities to independently explore books and reading formats that are suitable for them.[136] In the past, students could create an account that provided additional functionalities, such as maintaining a personal bookcase, compiling a reading list, and making notes on books.[137] This feature has since been discontinued.[138] Although requiring an account may have introduced an additional barrier to access, a suggestion might be to reintroduce such in a more targeted way in order to support students' reading development. For instance, a

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[133] 'Docenten Nederlands - Informatie | Nieuwe titels', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl/docenteninformatie/nieuwe-titels> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[134] 'Nederlands - 12 t/m 15 jaar', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160603205950/http://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl/zoek-een-boek/nederlands-15-tm-19-jaar> archived at *Internet Archive* 3 June 2016 [accessed 12 June 2026]; 'Lezen voor de lijst 12-15 jaar | Alle boeken', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://www.jeugdbibliotheek.nl/12-18-jaar/lezen-voor-de-lijst/12-15-jaar/alle-boeken.html> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[135] 'de Jeugd-bibliotheek 15-18 jaar', Jeugdbibliotheek, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190425200540/https://15-18.jeugdbibliotheek.nl> archived at *Internet Archive* 26 April 2019 [accessed 12 June 2026].
[136] 'Welkom bij Lezen voor de lijst', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170603212621/http://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl> archived at *Internet Archive* 2 June 2016 [accessed 12 June 2026].
[137] Ibid.
[138] 'Wat is er veranderd?', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl/wat-is-er-veranderd/#:~:text=Wat%20is%20er%20veranderd?> [accessed 12 June 2026].

future implementation could encourage students who repeatedly select books at the same level to try more challenging texts. As this discussion has showed, while the level-based system provides useful orientation, it may also limit students' autonomy by subtly directing choices within predefined boundaries that may not always align with their actual reading skills

Competence

In terms of fostering competence, a student not knowing their reading level can negatively affect both confidence and reading performance. The website has improved in terms of how students can gauge their reading level over time. Its division into six levels for upper secondary years is meant to allow them to search for books that are "neither too easy nor too difficult". However, students were expected to understand their current level, which was supported by descriptions of each level they would have to interpret themselves.[139] The suggestion to discuss level selection with their teacher was added later.[140]

Since 2019, however, the platform has included an adaptive self-assessment questionnaire that further helps young people determine their reading level.[141] The test is available for 12-15-year-olds and for 15-18-year-olds. Users respond to statements about their reading habits, preferences, and comfort with dealing with literary complexity, such as challenging themes, multiple storylines, and interpretive reading. Based on these responses, the platform recommends an appropriate reading level and suggests books that match the student's literary preferences. Competence is supported by helping readers select texts that are appropriately challenging. It is worth noting that this questionnaire links to other aspects of motivation, when viewed through the SDT lens. Autonomy is supported by taking students' interests and preferences into account when generating recommendations. Some questions also relate to aspects of relatedness. For example, users are asked whether they prefer reading about adolescents rather than adults because they are better able to

[139] 'Welkom bij Lezen voor de lijst Nederlands 15 t/m 19 jaar', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170528220755/http://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl/zoek-een-boek/nederlands-15-tm-19-jaar/home> archived at *Internet Archive 28* May 2017 [accessed 13 June 2016].
[140] 'Lezen voor de lijst | 12-15 jaar', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190423211123/https://12-15.jeugdbibliotheek.nl/lezen/lezen-voor-de-lijst.html> archived at Internet Archive 23 April 2019 [accessed 13 June 2026].
[141] 'Lezen voor de lijst', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190925022006/https://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl> archived at *Internet Archive* 25 September 2019 [accessed 13 June 2026].

identify with the main character. By considering such preferences, the platform may increase the likelihood that readers feel a personal connection to the characters and stories they encounter.[142]

Furthermore, the editorial staff of the website has indicated that they include young adult literature for 15-18-year-olds in the title lists. This inclusion reflects an attempt to bridge the gap between youth and adult literature, which is a transition that can be experienced as challenging.[143] Young adult literature combines accessible themes with literary quality, supporting students who are not yet ready for more complex adult literature. For students who struggle with reading comprehension, the title list for 12-15-year-olds also includes simplified texts from *Uitgeverij Eenvoudig Communiceren* [Publisher for Easy Communicating]. These are short, accessible books in simple language, often dealing with relatable themes or adapted from well-known stories that can also be found through a dedicated tag.[144] Such texts support competence development by providing manageable reading challenges at lower reading levels. Overall, *Lezen voor de Lijst*'s website offers multiple features that may support students' sense of competence by helping them engage with literature at an accessible level.

Relatedness

In terms of relatedness, *Lezen voor de Lijst* does not offer direct social interaction between users of its website. However, the website does support teacher-mediated engagement, as teachers can use the website's materials and assignments to stimulate classroom discussion about reading. A broader sense of relatedness has also been embedded in a change of the website's structure. Aiming to 'bring together content for youth in one accessible, target group-oriented place', it was split up into a teacher website and a student website in 2019.[145] The student website is integrated into the broader library system and visually aligned with the national library identity, which may contribute to a sense of familiarity with the public library.[146] Colour

[142] 'Niveautest Lezen voor de lijst', Jeugdbibliotheek, n.d. <https://niveautest-15-18.jeugdbibliotheek.nl/2.1> [accessed 13 June 2026].
[143] Linda Ackermans, *Young adult-literatuur op de leeslijst en in de lespraktijk: Een onderzoek naar de inzet en positie van literatuur voor jongeren in de bovenbouw van het havo en vwo* (Stichting Lezen, 2022), p. 30.
[144] 'Docenten Nederlands - Informatie | Titellijsten', Lezen voor de lijst, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20231128192436/https://www.lezenvoordelijst.nl/docenteninformatie/titellijsten> archived at *Internet Archive* 28 November 2023 [accessed 13 June 2026].
[145] 'Wat is er veranderd?', Lezen voor de lijst.
[146] Ibid.

coding per reading level has been replaced by colour coding per age group in line with the national library identity as well; blue for 12-15-year-olds and red for 15-to-18-year-olds.[147] While this improves visual consistency with library identity, it may introduce a potential mismatch between age and reading level. Overall, although *Lezen voor de Lijst*'s website does not facilitate direct interaction between readers, its integration within the public library system may indirectly support relatedness by linking school reading to opportunities for engagement with texts in the extracurricular library context.

*Conclusion*

Overall, this chapter has shown that literary education in Dutch secondary schools exists in a tension between culture-oriented goals that highlight literary heritage and student-centred methods that emphasize students' choice and personal relevance. In the absence of a nationally mandated reading list, *Lezen voor de lijst* has taken on a key role in determining what students read for school. It not only supports their reading choices but also influences shared ideas about which books are seen as suitable, valuable, and acceptable for students to read. Even though its website was created as a flexible guidance tool instead of a strict reading list, its widespread use has made it an accepted standard to use as a sort of informal literary canon within Dutch literary education. This status is reinforced by its employment within the formal curriculum of Dutch secondary education, where attainment targets outline necessary literacy skills to be gained but leave the choice of literary works mostly up to schools and individual teachers.

The analysis of *Lezen voor de lijst*'s website through the lens of SDT suggests that the relationship between the design of the platform and its fostering of intrinsic motivation is not straightforward. Its extensive title database, filtering options, and inclusion of multiple reading formats support student autonomy by providing opportunities for choice and accessibility. But many of the same features that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness also place limits on them. The website's classification of books into levels is supposed to help students identify books that are neither too easy nor too difficult for them, yet it simultaneously

[147] Ibid.

restricts choice by directing them towards books that correspond to a particular pre-determined level. While support for the value of competence has increased through introductions such as the adaptive questionnaire and inclusion of young adult literature in the title lists, the platform itself provides limited incentives for students to move beyond their current level. The initiative's support of the zone of proximal development, therefore, is largely dependent on teacher mediation. Likewise, although the website seeks to help students connect with books and build links to the public library system, opportunities for interaction between adolescents through *Lezen voor de Lijst* remain depend on mediation by teachers. So, the practical implementation of *Lezen voor de lijst* demonstrates the complexity of fostering intrinsic motivation within a formal educational environment.

Hence, the motivational potential of the *Lezen voor de lijst* website must be addressed not only by how it is instantiated by the platform itself, but also in how it is implemented within educational practice. The platform offers tools that can contribute to positive reading experiences, yet the extent to which these tools foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness depends largely on how schools and especially teachers make use of them. As a result, the motivational affordances of the platform cannot be fully understood independently of the pedagogical context in which they are implemented. Whether the website supports or constrains students' SDT needs ultimately depends on how these needs are recognised and supported in the context of the classroom.

## Chapter 3: The SDT affordances of extracurricular reading promotion initiatives *Goed Verhaal* and *De Jonge Jury*

Reading promotion campaigns organized outside the formal school curriculum offer an additional opportunity to stimulate adolescents' intrinsic reading motivation. In the Netherlands, Stichting Lezen [Reading Foundation] plays a central role in this matter. Stichting Lezen's mission is to help young people discover the joy of reading, so that they can grow into lifelong readers.[148] The foundation is part of the Leescoalitie [Reading Coalition], which launched the reading offensive to address declining reading motivation and reading skills among young people.[149] Stichting Lezen explicitly states that, in order to foster reading enjoyment, reading promotion should focus on strengthening intrinsic motivation by taking SDT's three needs into account when designing reading activities and campaigns. [150]

Stichting Lezen indicates that reading promotion initiatives can provide an additional boost to reading motivation, particularly during the first years of secondary education and again midway through secondary school.[151] Among the many campaigns Stichting Lezen organizes, two initiatives aimed specifically at adolescents across all secondary school tracks stand out: *De Jonge Jury* [The Young Jury] and *Goed Verhaal* [Good Story]. Both initiatives seek to encourage reading engagement among young people, although they employ differing strategies and target different age groups; *De Jonge Jury* focuses on younger secondary-school students aged twelve to fifteen, whereas *Goed Verhaal* addresses adolescents aged fifteen to eighteen. The selection of these initiatives allows for a longitudinal comparison across different stages of adolescence, which is particularly relevant given that intrinsic reading motivation can be developed over time. Both campaigns can be analysed through the lens of SDT by examining how they support adolescents' autonomy, competence, and relatedness in relation to reading.

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[148] 'Lees je nu, lees je later', Stichting Lezen, n.d. <www.lezen.nl> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[149] Stichting Lezen, *Het tij keren kan! Activiteitenplan Stichting Lezen 2025-2028* (Stichting Lezen, 2024), p. 9.
[150] Stichting Lezen, *De doorgaande leeslijn: De leesontwikkeling van 0-20 jaar* (Stichting Lezen, 2020), pp. 12–3.
[151] Ibid.

*Other reading promotion initiatives organized by Stichting Lezen*

While *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal* form the main case studies of this chapter, Stichting Lezen organizes a wide range of reading promotion initiatives with adolescents as their target audience. One example is *De Weddenschap* [The Challenge], an initiative that aims to encourage reading among *vmbo* students. Launched in 2011, the program uses Dutch public figures as reading role models who challenge students with low reading motivation to read books over a period of several months. These role models promote books by recommending them through videos, which can be found on *De Weddenschap*'s website.[152] From the perspective of SDT, the initiative seeks to support autonomy by allowing students to choose their own books. It also aims to enhance relatedness by connecting students to public figures who present reading as socially meaningful and relevant.

However, if students do not identify with these celebrities, the capacity for relatedness may remain unfulfilled. For example, in the 2021 edition of the campaign, reading role model Famke Louise (a singer) was perceived negatively by many students and was considered by both teachers and pupils as an unsuitable ambassador for promoting books.[153] In contrast, Jeangu Macrooy (also a singer) and DIO (a rapper) were evaluated more positively by participating teachers and students, yet still failed to sufficiently motivate students to actually pick up a book themselves. Moreover, DIO was unknown to a substantial proportion of participants.[154] These findings highlight the importance of carefully aligning spokespersons with adolescents' lived experiences and interests. Involving students more explicitly in the selection of these spokespersons, as well as investigating their perceptions beforehand, has therefore been recommended.[155] For adolescents with a negative reading attitude in particular, identifying their interests and linking reading

[152] 'De Weddenschap', Stichting Lezen, n.d. <https://www.lezen.nl/activiteit/de-weddenschap> [accessed 13 June 2026]; 'De leescoaches', De Weddenschap, n.d. <https://www.deweddenschap.nl/lc> [accessed 13 June 2026].
[153] Jeroen Dera and Eva Keulen, 'Werkt De Weddenschap? Opvattingen van (v)mbo-docenten en vmbo-leerlingen over leesbevorderingscampagne De Weddenschap en leescoaches DIO, Famke Louise en Jeangu Macrooy', *Nederlandse Letterkunde*, 27.1 (2022), pp. 44–62 (p. 58), doi:10.5117/NEDLET2022.1.004.DERA.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

initiatives to those themes is essential in order to avoid (further) reinforcing negative attitudes toward reading.[156]

Another example of a reading promotion initiative organized by Stichting Lezen is *Read2Me!*, an initiative that started in 2009 in which first-year secondary school students participate in a reading-aloud competition. The competitive element is intended to increase students' reading enjoyment.[157] Leading up to the event, students are taught in class how to read aloud effectively and how to select appropriate texts. They then choose an excerpt to perform, after which each class selects a winner for the school final. The school winner advances to a library round and potentially to provincial finals. Across all stages, the focus lies on enjoyment, expression, and confidence in reading aloud.[158] In terms of SDT, *Read2Me!* supports autonomy by allowing students to choose both their book and excerpt, competence by developing reading-aloud and presentation skills, and relatedness by creating shared reading experiences within classes and across schools and libraries.

In recent years, several other initiatives have also sought to connect reading promotion with adolescents' digital culture, thus appealing to the need for relatedness. *Readification* (launched by Stichting Lezen and other partners of De Leescoalitie in 2021) is aimed primarily at gamers and aims to link reading with gaming culture through a dedicated app featuring interactive stories. By embedding narrative experiences in a format resembling games and interactive media, the initiative attempts to make reading more appealing for young people who like to game.[159] However, a study on the effectiveness of the initiative revealed that many users do not complete the stories, suggesting low engagement. These results have been explained in part by the fact that the stories were not always closely connected to the games that young people actually play, suggesting that effectiveness of the initiative might increase when its narratives are based on popular and widely played games.[160]Additionally, accessibility remains an issue: many young people are

[156] Stalpers, 'Lezen we nog?', pp. 106–7.
[157] 'Read2Me!', Stichting Lezen, n.d. <https://www.lezen.nl/activiteit/read2me> [accessed 13 June 2026].
[158] Ibid.
[159] Qrius, *Jonge gamers stimuleren om te lezen: Een kwalitatief onderzoek naar 'Readification'* (Stichting Lezen, 2023), pp. 4–5.
[160] Ibid., pp. 22–3.

unfamiliar with the app, do not have it installed, or fail to notice the stories once inside the platform.[161]

Another initiative, *Hebban in de Klas* [Hebban in Class], also launched in 2021, is an interactive online environment. It is linked to *Hebban*, a Dutch online community for book lovers that enables users to discover, review, and discuss books, participate in reading challenges, and track their reading.[162] Within the *Hebban in de Klas* environment, students can exchange reviews, discover books through classmates, participate in reading challenges, and follow each other's reading activity, making reading a more social and participatory experience.[163] Importantly, *Hebban in de Klas* draws on affordances derived from social media platforms and thereby supports relatedness, as it allows students to connect their reading experiences with peers and positions reading as a shared and socially meaningful activity. In doing so, it fosters an online reading community that encourages engagement through peer interaction and digital participation.

### *An analysis of* De Jonge Jury *through the lens of SDT*

*De Jonge Jury*, initiated in 1998, is an ongoing reading promotion initiative aimed at increasing reading enjoyment among adolescents aged twelve to fifteen while encouraging them to form their own opinions about literature. Participants are invited to read youth literature published in the previous year and vote for their favourite titles, with the most popular books receiving nominations for the *Prijs van de Jonge Jury* [Prize of the Young Jury]. The winning title is announced during the *Dag van de Jonge Jury* [Day of the Young Jury], a large-scale event featuring workshops, performances, author interviews, signings, and opportunities for adolescents to interact directly with writers and fellow readers.[164] *De Jonge Jury* engages in various practices connected to adolescents' experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

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[161] Ibid., p. 23.
[162] 'Home', Hebban, n.d. <https://www.hebban.nl> [accessed 14 June 2026].
[163] 'Quick tour', Hebban in de Klas, n.d. <https://www.hebbanindeklas.nl/quick-tour> [accessed 13 June 2026].
[164] 'Over de Jonge Jury', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://jongejury.nl/over-ons> [accessed 13 June 2026].

Autonomy

When it comes to supporting autonomy, *De Jonge Jury* encourages adolescents to make their own reading choices and vote independently for their favourite book out of last year's titles. Although recommendation lists and teaching materials are available, participants themselves determine which books they wish to read and support. This focus on adolescents' autonomy is reinforced through the *Jonge Jury Boekgenootschap* [Young Jury Book Society], a group of adolescent readers who curate reading recommendations for their peers. This group is made up of adolescents with a passion for reading who read as much as they can from the available books to make a "well-considered choice" regarding their recommendations.[165] The campaign explicitly argues that young people themselves know best which books are "fun, thrilling, crazy, and surprising".[166] In 2016, the *Wildcardwedstrijd* [Wildcard Competition] was introduced, further strengthening how *De Jonge Jury* fosters autonomy by allowing more adolescents to influence the title selection. For this competition, school classes are invited to advocate for books they believe deserve recognition beyond the *Boekgenootschap*'s nomination process.[167] While the competitive element does appeal to extrinsic motivation, it also enables adolescents who are less engaged with reading to participate in the nomination process. Similarly, *De Jonge Jury* has frequently used prizes to stimulate participation, including rewards such as speakers or escape-room tickets.[168] Although these incentives rely on extrinsic motivation, they may encourage adolescents who would otherwise be less interested in participating to become involved. By positioning adolescents as literary experts rather than passive consumers, the initiative validates their personal tastes and reading experiences.

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[165] 'Leden Jonge Jury Boekgenootschap gezocht', Jonge Jury, 4 April 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160407050128/http://www.jongejury.nl/Lezen/Nieuws/Artikeldetail/tabid/366/Article/jongejuryboekgenootschapledengezocht/Default.aspx> archived at *Internet Archive* 7 April 2016 [accessed 12 June 2026].

[166] 'Het Jonge Jury Boekgenootschap 2020', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190612170125/https://jongejury.nl/lezen/het-boekgenootschap> archived at *Internet Archive* 12 June 2019 [accessed 12 June 2026].

[167] 'Nieuwe wedstrijd: wij weten het beter!', Jonge Jury, 15 September 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170301172319/http://www.jongejury.nl/laatstenieuws/nieuwe-wedstrijd> archived at *Internet Archive* 1 March 2017 [accessed 12 June 2026].

[168] 'Stem en maak kans op een booming speaker!', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111160633/http://www.jongejury.nl/Stemmen> archived at *Internet Archive* 11 January 2017 [accessed 12 June 2026]; 'Stem en maak kans op kaartjes voor een escape room bij jou in de buurt!', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180203101741/http://www.jongejury.nl/Stemmen> archived at *Internet Archive* 3 February 2018 [accessed 12 June 2026].

Young people often respond more positively to reading promotion initiatives when they have an active role instead of a passive one, highlighting the value of such autonomy.[169]

Questions surrounding adolescent's autonomy do emerge regarding the structure of the prize itself. Since 2017, only originally Dutch-language titles have been eligible for nomination. Given the growing popularity of English-language reading among Dutch adolescents, this restriction potentially limits participants' freedom to engage with the books they already read voluntarily outside of the school context.[170] A further question surrounding adolescents' autonomy also arises in debates about the literary value of books recognised by *De Jonge Jury*. Yra van Dijk and Marie-José Klaver argue that frequently awarded titles "confirm sexist and racist thinking".[171] In response, Gerlien van Dalen of Stichting Lezen argues that such books address sensitive themes in order to make them open to discussion among young readers.[172] From an SDT perspective, this discussion reflects a tension between supporting adolescents' autonomy in reading choices and adult guidance; while *De Jonge Jury* is based on adolescents being able to vote themselves and thus strongly supports autonomy, critics question whether such autonomy is necessarily beneficial in the absence of critical reflection on the nominated texts.

Criticism that has been directed at the prize's voting process further complicates its support of adolescents' autonomy in their reading choices. Literary blog *Tzum* argued that the prize had effectively become "corrupt" because authors and publishers increasingly mobilized followers through social media campaigns, encouraging repeated voting for particular titles. For example, Mel Wallis de Vries, a multiple-time winner of the award, used social media to encourage followers to vote for her work. Online comments under promotional posts even included claims by

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[169] Stalpers, 'Lezen we nog?', pp. 106–7.
[170] 'Jongeren lezen graag boeken, maar dan wel in het Engels', *NOS*, 16 April 2022 <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2425380-jongeren-lezen-graag-boeken-maar-dan-wel-in-het-engels> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[171] Bo van Houwelingen, 'Grote mensen genoeg die weten wat jongeren zouden moeten lezen', *de Volkskrant*, 2 July 2021 <https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/grote-mensen-genoeg-die-weten-wat-jongeren-zouden-moeten-lezen~b6df123e> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[172] Jeroen Dera, 'In literatuuronderwijs is weinig ruimte voor gesprek over stereotypen. Ook "pulp" kun je met je leerlingen ontleden', *de Volkskrant*, 23 June 2021 <https://www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/opinie-in-literatuuronderwijs-is-weinig-ruimte-voor-gesprek-over-stereotypen-ook-pulp-kun-je-met-je-leerlingen-ontleden~b8f37c34> [accessed 12 June 2026].

non-adolescent users voting multiple times despite the prize supposedly representing adolescents' preferences.[173] This criticism complicates the notion of reader autonomy within *De Jonge Jury*'s voting process; while the campaign emphasizes adolescents' freedom of choice in the reading material, the voting process may simultaneously be shaped by external influence, where choices are shaped by social media campaigns and the strategic behaviour of publishers and authors.

Competence

*De Jonge Jury* attempts to support adolescents' sense of competence by helping them navigate the broad and potentially overwhelming range of available youth literature. Reading recommendations, compiled by the Boekgenootschap and professionals from the book field, are categorized by themes and difficulty levels, making it easier for participating adolescents to find books suited for their interest and reading abilities.[174] Weekly recommendations, known as *Tip van de week* [Tip of the week], additionally highlight newly available titles.[175] Competence is also fostered through the initiative's framing of adolescents as capable literary participants. By encouraging young people to evaluate books critically, discuss preferences, and vote for award winners, the campaign positions adolescents not merely as students completing school assignments but as readers whose literary judgments are meaningful and valuable.

The initiative additionally provides extensive teaching materials aligned with the kerndoelen for lower secondary education.[176] Since 2017, these materials have been freely accessible, increasing the initiative's usability within schools and lowering barriers for participation.[177] Separate reading lists selected by youth

[173] Coen Peppelenbos, 'Jonge Jury al jarenlang corrupt door mogelijkheid om meer stemmen uit te brengen (door volwassenen)', 27 June 2021 <https://www.tzum.info/2021/06/nieuws-jonge-jury-al-jarenlang-corrupt-door-mogelijkheid-om-meer-stemmen-uit-te-brengen-door-volwassenen> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[174] 'En de 25 leestips zijn…', Jonge Jury, 16 June 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160120091349/http://www.jongejury.nl/Lezen/Nieuws/Artikeldetail/tabid/366/Article/ende25leestipszijn/Default.aspx> archived at *Internet Archive* 20 January 2016 [accessed 12 June 2026]; 'Groslijst', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160120154900/http://www.jongejury.nl/Lezen/Boeken.aspx> archived at *Internet Archive* 20 January 2016 [accessed 12 June 2026].
[175] 'Groslijst', Jonge Jury.
[176] 'Kerndoelen schoolvak Nederlands', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://jongejury.nl/educatie/kerndoelen-schoolvak-nederlands> [accessed 12 June 2016].
[177] 'Algemene informatie', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170302055810/https://jongejury.nl/educatie/lesmateriaal> archived at *Internet Archive* 2 March 2017 [accessed 12 June 2026].

literature experts—with attention to diversity in genre, themes, and reading difficulty—offer teachers additional tools for fostering reading enjoyment among different types of readers.[178] Importantly, *De Jonge Jury* explicitly discourages teachers from grading the accompanying assignments, arguing that "giving grades is demotivating". This approach aligns closely with SDT's emphasis on supporting intrinsic motivation rather than relying on external evaluation.[179]

Relatedness

Relatedness is another central component of *De Jonge Jury*. Reading is consistently framed as a shared social activity through collaborative projects such as the Wildcardwedstrijd. Teachers also use the initiative's lesson materials to encourage conversations about books, with one teacher noting that "reading together and talking about it" creates "a hunger for more".[180] Furthermore, the *Dag van de Jonge Jury* offers adolescents opportunities to interact directly with authors through workshops, interviews, signings, and performances, fostering personal connections with authors.[181] Earlier editions of the event also featured a dedicated app that allowed participants to create personalized schedules, locate authors for signings and selfies, and share experiences online.[182]

In recent years, *De Jonge Jury* has increasingly integrated adolescents' digital lives into its activities through Instagram competitions, TikTok workshops, and collaborations with online influencers.[183] Its partnership with *Hebban in de Klas*, the previously mentioned digital reading promotion platform, further strengthens this sense of community by connecting adolescents' individual reading practices to the

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[178] 'De Jonge Jury 2026 is van start!', Jonge Jury, 1 September 2025 <https://jongejury.nl/2025/09/01/de-jonge-jury-2026-is-van-start> [accessed 14 June 2026].
[179] De Jonge Jury, *Algemene lesbrief* (De Jonge Jury, 2023), p. 7.
[180] 'Duizenden jongeren lezen voor 25e editie van Jonge Jury', Jonge Jury, 24 April 2023 <https://jongejury.nl/2023/04/24/duizenden-jongeren-lezen-voor-de-jonge-jury/> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[181] 'Dag van de Jonge Jury', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170630010202/http://www.jongejury.nl/Vieren/Dag-van-de-Jonge-Jury> archived at *Internet Archive* 30 June 2017 [accessed 12 June 2026].
[182] 'Download de app voor de Dag van de Jonge Jury!', Jonge Jury, 22 May 2017 <https://web.archive.org/web/20170812133908/http://www.jongejury.nl/laatstenieuws/download-de-app-voor-de-dag-van-de-jonge-jury captured> archived at *Internet Archive* 12 August 2017 [accessed 12 June 2026].
[183] 'Download hier de Jonge Jury-Template!', Jonge Jury, 23 August 2019 <https://jongejury.nl/2019/08/23/download-hier-de-jonge-jury-template> [accessed 12 June 2026]; 'BookTok-workshop', Jonge Jury, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220704091906/https://jongejury.nl/performance/booktok-workshop> archived at *Internet Archive* 4 July 2022 [accessed 12 June 2026].

rest of their class.[184] Libraries also contribute to this sense of relatedness. The titles nominated for the *De Jonge Jury* are available in public libraries, where adolescents can not only access the nominated works, but also discover related books that are written by the same authors, have similar genres, or address comparable themes.[185] In this way, *De Jonge Jury* is embedded within the broader library system, which facilitates continued exploration beyond the reading initiative.

*An analysis of Goed Verhaal through the lens of SDT*

*Goed Verhaal* is the current form of a reading promotion initiative formerly known as *Boekenweek voor Jongeren* [Book Week for Adolescents], aimed at adolescents aged fifteen to eighteen. It seeks to foster reading enjoyment by introducing adolescents to stories that resonate with their interests, experiences, and everyday lives.[186] From 2026 on, the campaign will expand from a week-long to a month-long programme at the start of each school year.[187] A central component of the initiative is the *Beste Boek voor Jongeren* [Best Book for Adolescents] award, for which professional judges nominate titles while an adolescent jury selects the winners of both a Dutch and a translated category. In addition to the award, *Goed Verhaal* organizes author visits, educational materials, and events such as the free *BoekTok Live* festival.[188] Like De *Jonge Jury*, the initiative incorporates various practices that may support adolescents' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Autonomy

Autonomy is increasingly emphasized within *Goed Verhaal*. This development was symbolically reflected when the initiative changed its name from *Boekenweek* voor *Jongeren* [Book Week *for* Adolescents] to *Boekenweek* van *Jongeren* [Book Week *of* Adolescents] in 2021. The shift from 'for' to 'of' was primarily symbolic, but reflects

[184] 'De Jonge Jury 2026 is van start!', 1 September 2025.
[185] 'Goed Verhaal', Hebban in de Klas, n.d. <https://www.hebbanindeklas.nl/goed-verhaal> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[186] 'Goed Verhaal', CPNB, n.d. <https://cpnb.nl/campagnes/goed-verhaal> accessed 14 June 2026].
[187] Maarten Dessing, 'Boekenweek van Jongeren wordt Goed Verhaal', Boekblad, 7 April 2025 <https://boekblad.nl/Nieuws/Item/boekenweek-van-jongeren-wordt-goed-verhaal> [accessed 14 June 2026].
[188] 'Boekenweek voor Jongeren', Stichting Lezen, n.d., <https://www.lezen.nl/activiteit/boekenweek-voor-jongeren> [accessed 14 June 2026]; 'BoekTok Live', Bibliotheek Den Haag, n.d. <https://www.bibliotheekdenhaag.nl/activiteiten/activiteiten/centrale-bibliotheek/boektoklive.html> [accessed 14 June 2026].

an intention to position adolescents as active participants in the reading promotion initiative rather than merely its target audience.[189] This emphasis on participation aligns with SDT's notion of autonomy. Since 2021, adolescents have also been more involved in shaping the campaign in practice. Through social media, focus groups, and school-based participation, young people contribute ideas on book selections and influencer collaborations. This approach reflects the initiative's communicated belief that adolescents themselves are best positioned to identify the books as well as the types of reading promotion that resonate with their peers.[190]

The *Beste Boek voor Jongeren* award similarly incorporates adolescent participation. While the nominations are selected by a professional adult jury, the final winners are chosen by a youth jury consisting of readers aged fifteen to eighteen.[191] This approach was introduced in 2018 and further strengthened adolescents' influence on the outcome of the award.[192] This structure allows adolescents to influence the outcome while simultaneously benefiting from expert guidance. Like the *De Jonge Jury*' *Boekgenootschap*, this youth jury panel is composed of adolescents with a passion for books. While *Goed Verhaal* does not incorporate an equivalent to the Wildcardwedstrijd, its youth jury has repeatedly emphasized that they find it important to select a book that is accessible to a wide range of readers.[193] In their view, there should be "something for everyone"—both for avid bookworms and for those who are less interested in reading.[194]

However, full autonomy of the youth jury is affected by the fact that the adult jury initially determines which books are considered suitable for the target audience. The adult jury does attempt to align its selections with adolescents' interests, as reflected in jury reports which note that books submitted by publishers are excluded from being nominated when they are not considered suitable for the 15-18 age

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[189] Dessing, 'Boekenweek'.
[190] 'Over de Boekenweek van Jongeren', Hebban, 26 September 2022 <https://web.archive.org/web/20230711103525/https://www.hebban.nl/boekenweekvanjongeren/over-de-boekenweek-van-jongeren> archived at *Internet Archive* 11 July 2023 [accessed 12 June 2026].
[191] 'Goed Verhaal', CPNB.
[192] 'Meld je aan voor de jury van het Beste Boek voor Jongeren 2019', Boekenweek voor Jongeren, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190724084658/http://www.boekenweekvoorjongeren.nl/meld-je-aan-voor-de-jury-van-het-beste-boek-voor-jongeren-2019> archived at *Internet Archive* 24 July 2019 [accessed 12 June 2026].
[193] Stichting CPNB, *Juryrapport Beste Boek voor Jongeren 2024* (CPNB, 2024), p. 6.
[194] Stichting CPNB, *Juryrapport Beste Boek voor Jongeren 2023* (CPNB, 2023), p. 6.

group.[195] Furthermore, jury reports consistently indicate the adult judges' attempts to align the selection of books with issues that are important to adolescents, such as identity formation, representation, and social themes.[196] The inclusion of a category for translated works, wherein the quality of translated Dutch is explicitly included as a criterion in the assessment, also acknowledges the aforementioned popularity of originally English-language works among Dutch adolescents.[197] Nevertheless, the autonomy afforded by *Goed Verhaal* can be seen as more limited than that of *De Jonge Jury*, as participating adolescents can only choose from books that have first been selected by adults.

Competence

Competence is supported through the educational resources and structured reading guidance of *Goed Verhaal*. Teachers receive lesson plans, classroom materials, and opportunities for author visits linked to the nominated books, providing structured support for literary engagement in educational settings. In addition, the annual *3PAK*-booklet offers three short and diverse stories aimed at young readers and is accompanied by teaching materials.[198] The booklet is additionally distributed free of charge through bookstores and libraries during the campaign period.[199] In 2020 and 2021, a graphic novel was included in the booklet, thus offering an accessible visual entry point into literature for adolescents.[200] These materials help students engage with literature in a structured way while lowering barriers to participation.

Competence is further reinforced through the careful curation of reading material. Youth jury members note that many young people have limited awareness of the range of literature available to them.[201] Against this backdrop, jury reports acknowledge paying attention to developments in youth literature, including the

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[195] CPNB, *Juryrapport 2023*, p. 5; CPNB, *Juryrapport 2024*, p. 5.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Stichting CPNB, *Algemeen reglement: Beste Boek voor Jongeren 2026* (CPNB, 2025).
[198] 'Boekenweek voor Jongeren', Stichting Lezen, n.d. <https://www.lezen.nl/activiteit/boekenweek-voor-jongeren> [accessed 14 June 2026].
[199] 'Goed Verhaal', CPNB.
[200] '3 Korte Verhalen van 4 Toppers', Boekenweek voor Jongeren, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20200817060237/https://www.boekenweekvoorjongeren.nl> archived at *Internet Archive* 17 August 2020 [accessed 14 June 2026].
'3 Auteurs 2 Korte Verhalen 1 Graphic Novel', Boekenweek van Jongeren, n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20210629082218/https://www.boekenweekvanjongeren.nl> archived at *Internet Archive* 29 June 2021 [accessed 14 June 2026]; Stichting CPNB, *Juryrapport Beste Boek voor Jongeren 2021* (CPNB, 2021), p. 6.
[201] CPNB, *Juryrapport 2021*, p. 6.

popularity of young adult fiction, fantasy, graphic novels, and online reading communities. BookTok is also acknowledged as a valuable tool for discovering books.[202] Moreover, both the adult and youth juries consistently emphasize the importance of literature that is accessible yet meaningful, aiming for nominated works to be capable of capturing readers' attention while also providing an appropriate level of challenge. This approach is meant to encourage adolescents in selecting books suited to their current literary reading level while occasionally engaging with more demanding texts, reflecting the idea of the zone of proximal development.[203]

Relatedness

Relatedness is another important dimension of *Goed Verhaal*. The initiative creates opportunities for adolescents to engage with authors and other readers through activities such as author visits and events such as *BoekTok Live*. This free festival, which was hosted in The Hague's public library in 2022 as well as 2024, combines the award ceremony for the *Beste Boek voor Jongeren* with author interviews, discussions, and workshops hosted by influencers.[204] Through such events, reading is positioned not merely as an individual activity but as a shared social activity.

The selection of nominated titles also reflects an emphasis on relatedness. Alongside literary quality, whether books resonate with adolescents' experiences and address issues relevant to their lives are considered important qualities in nominated works.[205] Jury reports frequently highlight the importance of books that connect with young people's lives but also invite discussion and reflection. *Goed Verhaal* thereby promotes reading as a means of fostering empathy as well as social connection. A jury report describes literature as offering both 'mirrors' and 'windows', enabling readers to recognize aspects of themselves while also encountering unfamiliar perspectives and experiences through books. Through this perspective, reading and discussing books with others is presented as a way to stimulate meaningful conversations between adolescents.[206]

[202] Stichting CPNB, *Juryrapport Beste Boek voor Jongeren 2022* (CPNB, 2022), p. 5.
[203] CPNB, *Juryrapport 2024*, p. 4.
[204] 'Over de Boekenweek van Jongeren', Hebban.
[205] CPNB, *Algemeen reglement*.
[206] CPNB, *Juryrapport 2024*, p. 4; CPNB, Juryrapport 2023, p. 5.

In recent years, *Goed Verhaal* has also increasingly integrated adolescents' affinity with digital spaces into its promotional activities. Since 2021, the campaign has been connected to the aforementioned reading platform *Hebban*, linking participants to online reader communities and recommendation systems. The incorporation of *Hebban in de Klas* in 2025 has, as for *De Jonge Jury*, further strengthened such connections. Libraries also contribute to these shared reading experiences in the same way as for *De Jonge Jury*, namely by integrating *Goed Verhaal*'s nominations into the library environment. Collaborations with BookTok creators, influencer campaigns, and initiatives such as *Boekenweek van Jongeren x Storytime*—as will be further discussed in the next chapter of this thesis—further connect books to adolescents' everyday practices.

*Conclusion*

This chapter has examined *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal* through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), showing how both initiatives incorporate elements that support adolescents' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to the analysis, autonomy is a crucial yet complicated aspect in both cases. Adolescents are positioned as active agents in the initiatives through opportunities to select books and participate in award procedures. However, the extent to which autonomy is genuinely supported differs between the two initiatives. *De Jonge Jury* allows adolescents considerable freedom through its voting system, enabling them to determine award outcomes directly. At the same time, this apparent autonomy has been questioned; online popularity dynamics and promotional strategies—rather than adolescents' actual reading preferences—may be influencing outcomes. Nevertheless, *De Jonge Jury* offers adolescents a significant degree of influence over the reading promotion process.

*Goed Verhaal*, by contrast, adopts a more curated approach. An adult jury selects a shortlist of nominated books from which the youth jury can choose the eventual winner of the initiative's award. As a result, adolescents' autonomy is exercised within a framework established by adult gatekeepers. However, the adult jury explicitly states that it seeks to select books that resonate with adolescents' experiences and interests, suggesting an effort to balance guidance with responsiveness to young readers. The criticism raised by Van Dijk and Klaver

regarding titles awarded by *De Jonge Jury* raises the question of whether literary quality or adolescents' preferences should take precedence, echoing the culture-oriented versus student-centred debate discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis. *Goed Verhaal* appears to prioritise books that are both enjoyable and challenging, but achieving this balance requires a greater degree of adult intervention. In this sense, increased curation may support literary development, yet it simultaneously limits adolescents' freedom of choice.

Relatedness also emerges as an important dimension within both initiatives. Both embed reading within social practices through author events, school-based discussions, festivals, and influencer collaborations. However, as was revealed through discussing other activities of Stichting Lezen, such as *De Weddenschap* and *Readification*, the sense of relatedness depends not merely on the presence of social elements, but also on the extent to which initiatives align with adolescents' interests and digital practices. Significantly, both *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal* seek to engage with the way in which young people encounter and discuss books digitally, including through collaborations with online creators and attention to social media reading cultures. Thus, the reading promotion initiatives increasingly recognise the importance of online platforms that facilitate peer interaction and recommendation. One of the most influential of such platforms is BookTok, whose role in shaping adolescents' reading practices and reading motivation will be explored in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4: The SDT affordances of BookTok

When examining reading enjoyment among adolescents, the growing role of book-related social media cannot go ignored. Notably, TikTok's subcommunity BookTok has become a major player in the literary landscape since its emergence in 2020, particularly when it comes to adolescents and young adults.[207] BookTok consists of users who create and consume book-related content under the hashtag #BookTok. This international phenomenon has also gained significant traction in the Netherlands, where adolescents report that it encourages them to read more for enjoyment outside of the school context.[208] So, while social media is often portrayed as competing with reading for attention during adolescents' leisure time, the popularity of BookTok among this age group suggests that such digital platforms also offer opportunities for reading promotion.[209]

Unlike many institutional reading promotion initiatives already examined in this thesis, BookTok has developed as a predominantly bottom-up phenomenon. That is, rather than being established by adults seeking to promote reading, its popularity evolved naturally through the involvement of young readers themselves.[210] As Jerasa and Boffone note, BookTok functions as "a digital space that is not regulated by a teacher or sanctioned by rules", distinguishing it from more traditional approaches to reading promotion.[211] This user-driven nature of BookTok contributes to a sense of authenticity that is particularly appealing to adolescent audiences.[212]

BookTok's influence on reading practices of young people suggests that the phenomenon may offer opportunities for reading promotion. This chapter therefore analyses BookTok through the lens of SDT, focusing on how the dynamics of TikTok as a platform and BookTok users' practices may facilitate or hinder the satisfaction of

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[207] Jeroen Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review of Current Literature and Directions for Future Research', *Literature Compass*, 21.10–12 (2024), p. 1, doi:10.1111/lic3.70012.
[208] 'Jongeren lezen steeds minder? TikTok biedt boekenbranche hoop', *NOS*, 21 August 2022 <https://nos.nl/artikel/2441522-jongeren-lezen-steeds-minder-tiktok-biedt-boekenbranche-hoop> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[209] Thijs Overspelt, 'Sociale media: de wrede vijand van het leesplezier, of toch een zegen?', *Jong Neerlandistiek*, 21 October 2022 <https://neerlandistiek.nl/2022/10/sociale-media-de-wrede-vijand-van-het-leesplezier-of-toch-een-zegening> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[210] Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review', p. 5.
[211] Sarah Jerasa and Trevor Boffone, 'BookTok 101: TikTok, Digital Literacies, and Out-of-School Reading Practices', Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 65.3 (2021), pp. 219–26 (p. 221), doi:10.1002/jaal.1199.
[212] Ibid., p. 220.

the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Unlike the initiatives examined in this thesis' previous chapters, BookTok exists within an open social media environment in which reading-related content constitutes only one part of a much broader digital ecosystem. Consequently, the following analysis does not seek to evaluate TikTok as a whole. Rather, it examines those features and practices of BookTok that are relevant to reading promotion among adolescents and considers the extent to which they support the psychological needs identified by SDT in this context. Additionally, the ways in which the previously discussed cases engage with BookTok are analysed. In doing so, this chapter complements the preceding analyses of reading promotion initiatives by examining how intrinsic reading motivation may also be fostered within a predominantly peer-driven, digital environment.

*An analysis of BookTok's support for autonomy*

One of BookTok's most distinctive features in fostering reading enjoyment among adolescents is the autonomy it affords its users. This subcommunity of TikTok is largely sustained by its readers themselves, many of whom are adolescents and young adults.[213] As a predominantly bottom-up phenomenon, participation in BookTok is entirely voluntary. Users can engage with BookTok in various ways, including watching, liking, and commenting on videos, or even creating content themselves. Participation of any kind is unconstrained by the formal rules often associated with school-related reading or institutional reading promotion initiatives. This autonomy is reflected in the books that receive attention within the reading subcommunity. Rather than emphasizing canonical literature, BookTok discussions often centre on texts that its young audience genuinely enjoys.[214] Young adult literature, for example, is an unsurprisingly popular genre on BookTok given its peer-guided character.[215]

While users experience considerable freedom in choosing how and when to engage with BookTok, their choices are simultaneously shaped by the algorithmic infrastructure of TikTok. TikTok's algorithm has both positive and negative

[213] Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review', p. 5.
[214] Jerasa and Boffone, 'BookTok 101', p. 222.
[215] Jeroen Dera, Susanne Brouwer, and Anna Welling, '#BookTok's appeal on ninth- grade students: An inquiry into students' responses on a social media revelation', *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 67 (2023), pp. 99–110 (p. 100), doi:10.1002/jaal.1303.

implications when it comes to fostering user autonomy. One the one hand, the algorithm that defines the app enables a highly personalized recommendation system. It tracks users' likes and comments, monitoring the type of content they regularly interact with.[216] Consequently, when users consistently engage with book-related content, the algorithm will display similar content on their 'For You Page' (FYP), which is the personalized stream of videos users encounter upon opening TikTok.[217] Users who show interest in, for example, a specific book genre, are also more likely to become immersed in corresponding reading sub-communities within BookTok, resulting in an environment that is catered to their individual interests.[218] As a result, adolescents are more likely to discover books that align with their reading preferences through BookTok.

On the other hand, TikTok's algorithm prioritizes content that has already proven successful in generating user engagement. As a result, users may experience a large sense of freedom in their consumption of BookTok content, while the range of videos they encounter is simultaneously shaped by algorithmic recommendations.[219] This tension between perceived freedom and algorithmic curation can create an illusion of autonomous choice, as users are exposed to a curated selection of content that reflects TikTok's engagement-driven priorities. In turn, this algorithmic direction may influence reading practices by increasing users' exposure to particular books while limiting the visibility of others. On BookTok, this tendency is reflected in the sustained dominance of certain viral titles.[220] Since the algorithm is designed to maximize engagement and retain users' attention, it continually recommends content similar to that with which users have previously engaged, reinforcing the visibility of already popular books. A possible consequence is 'binge-reading', which is understood as the repeated consumption of similar types of books driven by continuous algorithmic recommendations.[221] While such recommendations may

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[216] Ben Smith, 'Plike X Vlike + Pcomment: This TikTok equation keeps users hooked to videos', *The Economic Times*, 6 December 2021 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/how-to/plike-x-vlike-pcomment-this-tiktok-equation-keeps-users-hooked-to-videos/articleshow/88115648.cms?from=mdr> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[217] Jerasa and Boffone, 'BookTok 101', p. 223.
[218] Ibid., p. 221.
[219] Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review', p. 4.
[220] Sophia Stewart, 'How TikTok Makes Backlist Books into Bestsellers', *Publishers Weekly*, 3 September 2021 <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/87304-how-tiktok-makes-backlist-books-into-bestsellers.html> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[221] Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review', p. 6.

encourage adolescents to read more frequently, they can also narrow the range of texts to which they are exposed through BookTok, thus undermining autonomy. Consequently, it remains unclear whether BookTok supports the literary development of adolescents who are willing and able to engage with different kinds of literature that may be more complex or diverse. By repeatedly promoting books that align with users' existing interests, the platform may limit opportunities for readers to encounter texts that challenge them or broaden their literary horizons. From the perspective of the Zone of Proximal Development, such encounters can be important for literary development, as they expose readers to works that are slightly beyond their current level of literary competence.[222] In this sense, BookTok's personalization may sometimes constrain rather than expand readers' autonomy by steering them toward familiar content and limiting their exposure to alternative texts and perspectives.

Thus, from an SDT perspective, the motivational consequences of BookTok's algorithmic structure are ambivalent. While it promotes autonomy through voluntary participation, personalized recommendations, and perceived choice, these same algorithmic mechanisms might only reinforce existing reading preferences and limit exposure to a broader range of texts. As a result, BookTok supports reader autonomy, but in ways that remain shaped by TikTok's algorithmic infrastructure.

*An analysis of BookTok's support for competence*

A way in which BookTok can foster competence is through its accessibility. It should be noted that this accessibility is contingent upon access to digital technologies in itself, and not all adolescents may be able to participate equally due to inequalities in digital access.[223] For those who do engage with BookTok, its accessibility is fostered through the fact that BookTok videos are often structured around affect rather than literary analysis.[224] For example, BookTok creators may tearfully recount their experience of reading a particularly sad book, emphasizing the emotional impact it

[222] Vygotsky, 'Mind in Society', p. 86.
[223] Natascha Notten and more, 'Research Note: Digital Divide Across Borders—A Cross-National Study of Adolescents' Use of Digital Technologies', *European Sociological Review*, 25.5 (2009), pp. 551–60 (p. 552), doi:10.1093/esr/jcn071.
[224] Marianne Martens, Gitte Balling, and Kristen Higgason, '#BookTokMadeMeReadIt: young adult reading communities across an international, sociotechnical landscape', *Information and Learning Science*, 123.11–12 (2022), pp. 705–22, doi:10.1108/ILS-07-2022-0086.

had on them. By foregrounding an authentic and affective reading experience, these creators appeal to emotions that are easily relatable for their audience.[225] Such formats can frame reading as an accessible, emotional experience rather than an academic exercise. For adolescents who lack confidence in their reading abilities, this accessibility may lower barriers to engagement with books, as participation does not require advanced literary knowledge.

At the same time, the limited emphasis on the critical analysis of books can be seen as a constraint on BookTok's ability to support competence. The level of literary competence expected of adolescents within educational contexts extends beyond emotional responses; it includes critical analysis, interpretation, and reflection. Moreover, as previously mentioned, TikTok's recommendation algorithm can limit exposure to diverse and more challenging texts. It is uncertain whether the consequent focus on popular genre fiction can be aligned with the educational objective of fostering engagement with more complex literary texts.[226] While easily accessible recommendations may strengthen reading confidence by matching readers with books they are likely to enjoy, the focus of these recommendations may also restrict the development of broader literary skills such as critical interpretation. Dera raises the possibility that algorithmic recommendations could further disadvantage literary texts through lack of exposure, thereby limiting access to them and increasing the challenges associated with their inclusion in educational contexts.[227] Limited exposure may reinforce perceptions of literary texts as difficult or inaccessible, potentially undermining adolescents' feelings of competence when engaging with such works.

These concerns reflect broader debates about BookTok's influence on reading practices. Among some critics, there is a strong perception that BookTok is "ruining literature".[228] As a platform characterized by short-form content, TikTok is often associated with superficiality and short attention spans.[229] As discussed in this thesis'

[225] Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review', p. 2.
[226] Ibid., p. 6.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Eva Marsden, 'Is BookTok ruining literature?', *Medium*, 8 August 2024 < https://medium.com/@evamarsden07/is-booktok-ruining-literature-713c33eaf713> [accessed 12 June 2026].
[229] Yao Qin, Bahiyah Omar, and Alessandro Musetti, 'The addiction behavior of short-form video app TikTok: The information quality and system quality perspective', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13 (2022), doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.932805.

literature review, this image differs from that of books; long-form reading is typically viewed as fostering knowledge and sustained concentration.[230] Some fear that the form of engagement with books through TikTok has negative effects for literature as a whole.[231] Criticism has not only focused on the dominance of certain genres, but also on the supposedly shallow way in which books gain attention in the BookTok community.[232] The focus on aesthetics marks one of these practices, as BookTokers (the users who make book-related content on TikTok) sometimes present physical books as predominantly decorative objects—through colour-coordinated bookshelves, for example—rather than as texts to be critically engaged with.[233]

In the Dutch adolescent context, BookTok's international and predominantly English-language character may present an additional challenge when it comes to fostering competence. Because viral recommendations frequently centre on English-language titles, Dutch-language books receive less visibility within the subcommunity. BookTok users' preference for books in the English language can be linked to *verengelsing* [anglicization], a broader societal development in the Netherlands characterized by the growing ubiquity of English in Dutch society.[234] A survey by KVB Boekwerk revealed that approximately one-third of Dutch young people aged 16-to-25 prefer reading in English.[235] Adolescents themselves describe English-language books as being more enjoyable and less associated with educational obligations than ones written in Dutch.[236] While some voices from the Dutch literary field welcome the trend, arguing that adolescents' interest in English-language books could help reinvigorate their general interest in books, others express concerns about the declining engagement with Dutch literature potentially leading to reduced interest in the Dutch language and culture as a whole.[237]

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[230] Brenda Wiederhold, 'BookTok Made Me Do It: The Evolution of Reading', *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 25.3 (2022), doi:10.1089/cyber.2022.29240.editorial.
[231] Marsden, 'Is BookTok ruining literature?'.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ann Steiner, 'BookTok Reading Practices. Intensive and Extensive Reading in Display Mode', Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies, 21.2 (2025), p. 7.
[234] Jesse van Amelsvoort, 'On the Unforeignness of English', *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 10.1, 66–89 (p. 67) <https://cms.arizona.edu/index.php/multilingual/article/view/255/328> [accessed 14 June 2026].
[235] Nagelhout, Richards, and Qing, 'In de leeswereld', p. 33.
[236] 'Jongeren lezen', *NOS*.
[237] Lotte Jensen and more, *Against English: Pleidooi voor het Nederlands* (Wereldbibliotheek, 2019), p. 8.

In conclusion, BookTok can support literary competence by making reading more accessible, engaging, and socially relevant to adolescents. However, its emphasis on emotional responses, popular genres, and English-language titles may limit exposure to more diverse and critically demanding texts. Its greatest contribution when it comes to fostering competence in reading therefore lies in motivating young people to read rather than in its support of developing critical literary skills.

*An analysis of BookTok's support for relatedness*

Among the three SDT needs, relatedness is perhaps the dimension most strongly supported by BookTok. Due to its bottom-up nature, BookTok allows readers to engage with content created by relatable peers.[238] The subcommunity of TikTok facilitates social connection by bringing together individuals with a common interest in reading. When adolescents wish to share their book-related experiences with others but lack friends or family who regularly read, BookTok offers them a digital space where they can connect with fellow readers to discuss books and express their literary opinions.[239] Moreover, if adolescent readers' peers dislike reading and openly express such sentiments, BookTok provides a space free from this negative noise.[240]

BookTokers (the users creating book-related videos) develop and express their reading identities online while inspiring fellow readers through discussions, book recommendations, and displays of their bookshelves and collections. According to Maddox and Gill, these interactions and shared displays suggest that hyper-specific objects—in this case, books—can function as 'micro-binds' that create points of connection between individual users.[241] The formation of the BookTok subcommunity can be partly explained by TikTok's algorithm, which connects users using their (perceived) interests as analysed through their activities on the

[238] Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review', p. 4.
[239] Jerasa and Boffone, 'BookTok 101', p. 220.
[240] Margaret Merga, 'How can Booktok on TikTok inform readers' advisory services for young people?', *Library and Information Science Research*, 43.2 (2021), p. 4, doi:10.1016/j.lisr.2021.101091.
[241] Jessica Maddox and Fiona Gill, 'Assembling "Sides" of TikTok: Examining Community, Culture, and Interface through a BookTok Case Study', *Social Media + Society*, 9.4 (2023), doi:10.1177/20563051231213565.

platform.[242] Users with a so-called 'bookish identity'—that is, users who consider books and reading an important part of their lives—are brought together through the algorithm's workings.[243] Although most BookTok users might never meet one another in person, a sense of community emerges through the shared interests that connects users on TikTok and the feeling of relatability these common interests foster.[244]

On TikTok, hashtags provide users with another way to find and connect with communities that match their interests. According to Maddox and Gill, hashtag use 'strengthens the bond of an online community through suggesting similar content'.[245] As Boffone and Jerasa argue, BookTok supports the formation of online communities among historically underprivileged groups, such as the queer community; #QueerBookTok is one of the popular subcommunities on BookTok, for example.[246] However, Maddox and Gill also highlight a significant tension between users' perceived reality—where BookTok is often seen as highly inclusive in its representation of marginalised groups—and the actual way in which the algorithm works. According to them, the algorithm has the tendency to present new users with content aimed primarily at white, cisgender, heterosexual women, consequently focusing on books that are limited in their representation of marginalised groups.[247] As a result, while BookTok can help readers discover diverse reading communities and recommendations, algorithmic biases may also shape and restrict the range of books and perspectives that users encounter.

Overall, BookTok supports the SDT need for relatedness by enabling users to form connections around a shared interest in reading. Through algorithmic recommendations, hashtag practices, and peer-created content, users with similar 'bookish identities' are brought together into communities that foster belonging and relatability, even without offline interaction. Relatedness is therefore strongest among adolescents who actively engage with BookTok, though its youth-oriented nature may still signal to others that reading is a socially valued peer activity. While

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[242] Dera, 'BookTok: A Narrative Review', p. 4.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Maddox and Gill, 'Assembling "Sides"'.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Trevor Boffone and Sarah Jerasa, 'Toward a (Queer) Reading Community: BookTok, Teen Readers, and the Rise of TikTok Literacies', Talking Points, 33.1 (2021), pp. 10–6, doi:10.58680/tp202131537.
[247] Maddox and Gill, 'Assembling "Sides"'.

BookTok can facilitate inclusive and niche subcommunities, a tension remains between perceived inclusivity and the algorithm's tendency to privilege more narrowly targeted content.

*The adoption of BookTok by reading promotion initiatives*

The popularity of BookTok among young people, especially given the reading decline, understandably encourages institutions to employ it for reading promotion as well.[248] Much of the effectiveness of BookTok's SDT affordances in promoting reading enjoyment among adolescents depends on their prior interest in books, as the algorithm prioritizing showing content that aligns with users' existing engagement. As a result, adolescents who do not engage with BookTok book content are unlikely to encounter the reading subcommunity or benefit from its motivational features. While the bottom-up structure that arguably led to BookTok's success might be compromised when adult authorities attempt to use it to this end, reading promotion initiatives' cross-marketing on and use of BookTok could nevertheless provide an opportunity to reach adolescents who do not have a pre-existing interest in reading.

Still, the authenticity of BookTok remains particularly important for young users, who often value peer-generated content and seek book recommendations from relatable readers rather than institutional authorities. As an extracurricular and predominantly bottom-up practice, its sense of authenticity might be weakened when it is formally integrated into, for example, classroom instruction. At the same time, BookTok's potential to inform reading promotion and literary education does not necessarily require direct adult intervention. Young people themselves have already begun connecting BookTok to educational reading practices. For example, adolescents use BookTok to recommend books that are suitable to read as part of *Lezen voor de Lijst*. Presented through a peer lens, these recommendations may foster a sense of relatedness regarding the initiative. Noah (@noahleest), for instance, recommends books that are easy to read and notes in the caption that one of them has been adapted into a film (Figure 3). In doing so, he frames reading for

[248] Sonali Kulkarni, 'Getting a feel for BookTok: Understanding affect on TikTok's bookish subculture', in *Lezen in Beweging: Ontwikkelingen in leesbevordering, lees- en literatuuronderwijs, digitaal lezen en toetsing*, ed. by Jeroen Dera and Roel van Steensel (Stichting Lezen, 2024), pp. 75–86 (p. 82).

*Lezen voor de Lijst* as an accessible activity, which relates to SDT's competence need. Similarly, Silke's (@silkesbooks) video fosters relatedness by recommending books she has personally read and fosters competence by highlighting that one of them is relatively short (Figure 4). While the content of both accounts is primarily book-related, Noah and Silke use the hashtags #lezenvoordelijst and #fyp to increase the visibility of their recommendation videos and potentially reach a broader audience. As such, *Lezen voor de Lijst* is approached in a peer-led and peer-oriented way through BookTok.

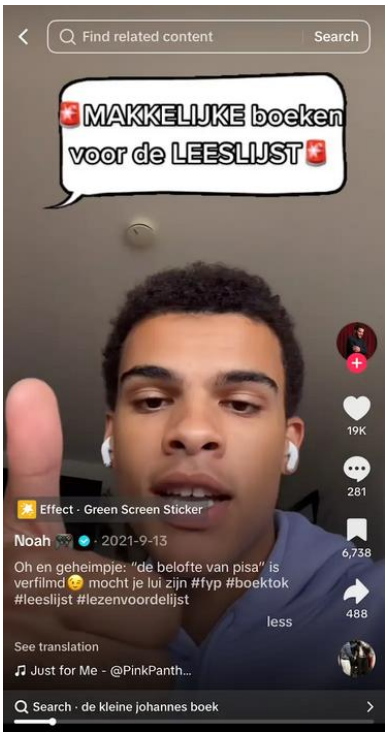



Figure 3: Noah's video (Source: @noahleest on TikTok).




Figure 4: Silke's video (Source: @silkesbooks on TikTok).

These videos do not seem to have been initiated by *Lezen voor de Lijst*; rather, the BookTokers appear genuine in their own enthusiasm for and promotion of particular books. This perceived authenticity may be crucial when initiatives such as *Lezen voor de Lijst* do seek to engage with BookTok by, for example, collaborating with influencers. Research on influencer marketing suggests that authenticity and

relatability play key roles in shaping response to sponsored social media content.[249] Additionally, a post that appears to be highly managed by the paying brand has more negative connotations than when influencers are seen to have more autonomy over their branded posts.[250] So, initiatives may be effective in engaging with BookTok's motivational affordances when they simply preserve the autonomy of content creators and build on the authentic, peer-driven recommendations that characterize BookTok.

The institutional reading promotion initiatives discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis—*De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal*—have directly sought to engage young readers through BookTok. They have done so by collaborating with influencers who align with the initiatives' target audience, fostering relatedness by having peers present reading as an activity shared and enjoyed by other adolescents. In the case of *De Jonge Jury*, the initiative seems to mainly collaborate with Booktokers. Nora (@noraleest) for example, encouraged her followers to cast their votes in the competition and recommend nominated titles (Figure 5). Nora recommends one of the nominated titles and notes that the author is "good at writing books for young people who do not read often", thereby appealing to adolescents who may encounter her video with less interest in reading than her typical audience. By presenting reading as accessible and approachable, such content may support adolescents' feelings of competence. Daniëlla (@daansbooks) has also collaborated with *De Jonge Jury* to promote engagement with the initiative among BookTok users. In one of her videos, she showcases a selection of nominated books that were sent to her by the initiative (Figure 6). Such presentation of newly acquired books, also known as 'book hauls', is a popular format within the BookTok community.[251] Daniëlla thus presents engagement with the nominated titles in an accessible and relatable manner, potentially lowering barriers to participation with the initiative for adolescents. In this way, the video may contribute to adolescents' sense of competence by framing involvement with *De Jonge Jury* as an approachable activity.

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[249] Rang Wang and Sylvia Chan-Olmsted, 'Brand Communication Through Social Media Influencers: Trust Building and Trust Transfer Mechanisms', *International Journal of Business Communication*, 63.3 (2026), 761–82 (p. 764), doi:10.1177/23294884241255911.
[250] Francisco Martínez-Lopéz and others, 'Influencer marketing: brand control, commercial orientation and post credibility', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36.17–18 (2020), pp. 1805–31 (pp. 1819–20), doi:10.1080/0267257X.2020.1806906.
[251] Steiner, 'BookTok Reading Practices', p. 7.




Figure 5: Still from Nora's promotional video (Source: @noraleest on TikTok).

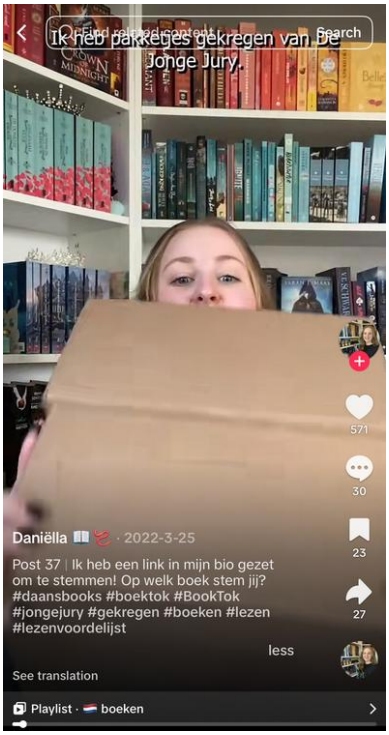



Figure 6: Still from Daniëlla's promotional video (Source: @daansbooks on TikTok).

*Goed Verhaal* seems to collaborate with a broader range of influencers outside of BookTok than *De Jonge Jury* does. The campaign *Story time x Boekenweek van Jongeren*, which started in 2022, adapted the popular TikTok 'storytime' format by having influencers retell the plots of nominated books as if they were personal experiences (Figure 7 and 8). By creating a sense of familiarity and social connection to reading, the campaign fosters relatedness among adolescents. The idea behind the campaign is that, while not all young people may show an interest in reading books, they often do show interest in engaging personal stories on social media. Influencers told such stories on TikTok in their own authentic way, pretending it was an event from their own lives. Once captivated by the story, it was revealed to be the plot of one of the nominees for the *Beste Boek voor Jongeren*, thus introducing adolescents to nominated books through a format they are familiar with regardless of whether they had shown a prior interest in reading.[252]

[252] Rozemarijn Visser, 'Award en bekroning voor campagne Boekenweek van Jongeren', CPNB, 2 November 2023 <https://cpnb.nl/nieuws/award-en-bekroning-voor-campagne-boekenweek-van-jongeren> [accessed 14 June 2026].




Figure 7: Still from promotional 'storytime' video (Source: @jenselmans on TikTok).

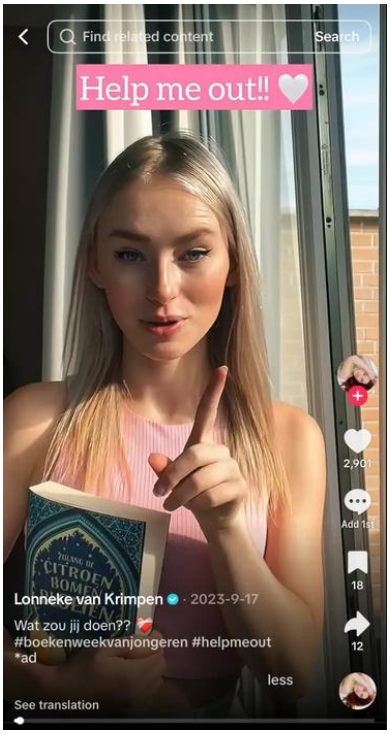



Figure 8: Still from promotional 'storytime' video (Source: @lxnneke on TikTok).

In 2024, *Goed Verhaal* similarly employed influencers who normally do not post book-related content for their reading promotion on BookTok. This iteration placed greater emphasis on promoting reading as an activity in itself, rather than on particular titles. Rather than focusing primarily on specific books, the campaign presents reading itself as a socially meaningful and desirable activity, thus fostering relatedness. Sterre Koning (@sterrekoning), for example, reflects on how endless scrolling on TikTok leaves her feeling tired and explains that she has rediscovered reading, encouraging viewers to 'throw your phone to the side and pick up that book you were curious about' (Figure 8). Influencers Maxime and Sophie (@maximeandsophie) similarly present reading as a favourable leisure activity, using a comedic skit to convey their message (Figure 9).

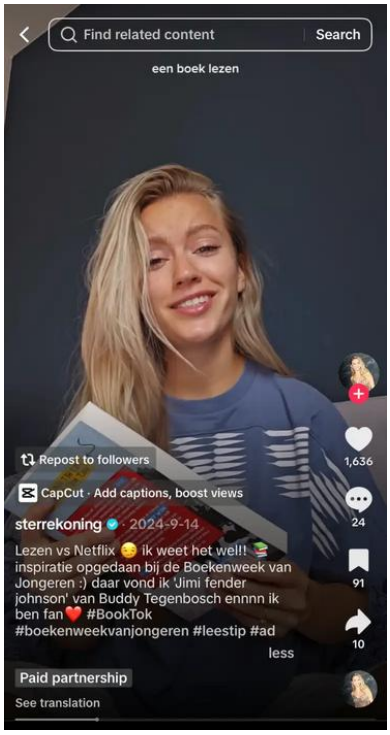



Figure 8: Still from Sterre's promotional video (Source: @sterrekoning on TikTok).

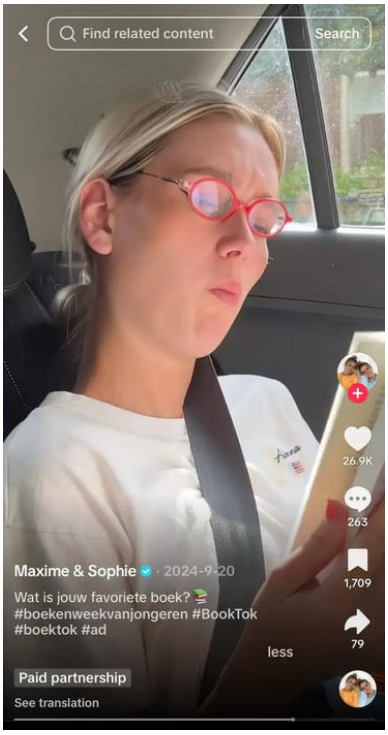



Figure 9: Still from Maxime and Sophie's promotional video (Source: @maximeandsophie on TikTok).

*Conclusion*

This chapter has shown that BookTok offers a complex set of affordances when it comes to fostering reading enjoyment among adolescents. Through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, the subcommunity supports autonomy by allowing adolescents to engage with book-related content voluntarily and according to their personal interests. At the same time, this autonomy is shaped by TikTok's algorithmic infrastructure, which can facilitate book discovery but has the tendency to only reinforce existing preferences. In terms of competence, BookTok lowers barriers to reading participation by presenting books through accessible and emotionally engaging formats. However, the reading practices that BookTok promotes may offer limited support for the development of critical literary skills and engagement with more challenging texts. Relatedness emerges as perhaps BookTok's strongest affordance, as it can serve as a digital space for adolescents to connect with peers who share a similar interest in reading. Additionally, the popularity of BookTok among adolescents helps position reading as a socially acceptable and meaningful activity among peers.

BookTok's motivational affordances and broad reach among adolescents make it an attractive tool for institutional reading promotion initiatives, particularly when seeking to engage young people with limited prior interest in reading. As aforementioned, these are the adolescents who are unlikely to encounter BookTok content organically. However, the bottom-up, peer-oriented nature of BookTok may be compromised when institutional actors attempt to leverage its affordances. This tension might be mitigated in several ways. In the case of *Lezen voor de Lijst*, adolescents themselves have adopted BookTok to recommend books. Institutional reading promotion initiatives that have paid influencers to promote their message, such as *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal*, employ differing strategies. *De Jonge Jury* collaborates with established BookTok creators, while *Goed Verhaal* makes use of broader influencer formats that embed literature within familiar social media practices. Although these practices involve paid partnerships, the ability of peers to communicate with audiences in an authentic and relatable manner may still allow institutions to benefit from BookTok's appeal.

## Conclusion

As established in the introduction, the 2018 PISA results raised concerns about Dutch adolescents' reading enjoyment as well as their reading proficiency. Given the relationship between reading enjoyment and reading proficiency, as described in the discussion of the positive reading spiral, fostering intrinsic reading motivation should be an important objective of reading promotion. This thesis has therefore addressed the following research question: To what extent have reading promotion initiatives in the Netherlands implemented the basic psychological needs identified by Self-Determination Theory in order to foster intrinsic reading motivation among Dutch adolescents in response to declining reading enjoyment? This question is particularly relevant given the established benefits of long-form reading discussed in Chapter 1 and the increasing competition from digital media that encourages more fragmented forms of engagement with text.

By analysing curriculum-based literary education, institutional reading promotion initiatives, and the digital reading community BookTok through the lens SDT, this thesis has shown that intrinsic reading motivation can be fostered through different combinations of autonomy, competence, and relatedness across these contexts. Applying the same operationalised indicators of these three psychological needs across all case studies has enabled a comparison of how reading promotion has evolved over the past decade in response to concerns about declining reading enjoyment among Dutch adolescents.

The analysis of curriculum-based reading promotion in Chapter 2 revealed a tension between educational objectives and adolescents' reading preferences. Literary education has the development of literary competence and cultural knowledge among its goals, but this goal can limit adolescents' autonomy when reading choices are constrained by curricular requirements. As a practical approach to literary education, *Lezen voor de Lijst* attempts to balance its competing culture-oriented and student-centred aims by providing a wide range of reading options organised by differentiated reading levels on its website. Compared to the other contexts examined in this thesis, curriculum-based reading promotion offers strong support for competence because it provides structured pathways for literary development. However, since teachers play a crucial role in guiding students' engagement with the platform, constraints on teachers' time may limit the

effectiveness of these supportive features in practice. So, the extent to which literary education fosters intrinsic motivation depends not only on the design of reading promotion tools but also on how they are implemented in practice. Fostering intrinsic reading motivation among adolescents therefore cannot rely on literary education alone.

The tension between adolescents' reading preferences and the books they are required to read for school is addressed, to some extent, through other institutional reading promotion initiatives. Whereas curriculum-based reading promotion sometimes prioritizes educational objectives over student interests', extracurricular initiatives such as *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal* are less constrained by curricular requirements. Therefore, these initiatives enjoy greater freedom in providing adolescents with choice in their reading material. The way in which the initiatives approach this autonomy, as discussed in Chapter 3, differs between *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal*. The latter's reading material is more curated by adults than the former, revealing that the trade-off between fostering autonomy and fostering competence exists within extracurricular reading promotion as well; autonomy may be limited due to adult curation, but competence may be supported by providing adolescents reading material that has been professionally assessed to be educationally and culturally valuable.

By positioning reading as a social and enjoyable activity rather than primarily an educational obligation, extracurricular reading promotion initiatives seek to bring adolescents who may not otherwise be interested in reading into contact with books in a positive and accessible manner. As was revealed through discussing *De Weddenschap* and *Readification*, the sense of relatedness adolescents experience when it comes to reading promotion depends not merely on the presence of social elements, but also on the extent to which initiatives align with adolescents' other interests and digital practices. The analysis of BookTok in Chapter 4 extended this discussion by noting the way in which adolescent reading practices that are promoted through the subcommunity of TikTok may limit its ability to foster literary competence. Unlike the other contexts discussed in this thesis, BookTok provides little structured support for literary progression and, unlike institutional initiatives, it may fail to reach adolescents who do not already have an interest in reading.

Both *De Jonge Jury* and *Goed Verhaal* have acknowledged the success of BookTok among adolescents and have thus attempted to leverage its affordances for reading promotion by incorporating the phenomenon in their social media activities as well as through collaborations with influencers on TikTok itself. The implementation of BookTok by these initiatives reflects a broader awareness of the importance of prioritizing adolescents' reading enjoyment in reading promotion. Over the past decade, reading promotion initiatives have increasingly sought to align reading with adolescents' interests and everyday experiences while curricular reforms will provide students with greater freedom in their reading choices in the future. The current popularity of BookTok further demonstrates that adolescents' reading enjoyment can increase when they are given autonomy in selecting what they read and can engage with books through peer-driven communities. BookTok's integration into reading promotion initiatives may prove beneficial, provided that its bottom-up character and perceived authenticity are maintained.

The analysis reveals that each context demonstrates specific limitations in its support of SDT's needs. Ultimately, this thesis argues that intrinsic reading motivation among Dutch adolescents is most effectively fostered when autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported simultaneously. No single reading promotion context that has been examined in this thesis fully satisfies all three needs. Recognising the complementary strengths of curricular, extracurricular (but institutional), and digital reading promotion contexts highlights the value of combining elements from these different approaches to support adolescents' intrinsic reading motivation through reading promotion. Reading promotion initiatives that prioritise only one of SDT's needs risk limiting their support of a positive reading spiral among adolescents. The challenge for reading promotion therefore lies not simply in encouraging adolescents to read more, but in creating contexts in which they experience reading as a personally relevant, manageable, and socially connected activity.

This thesis has demonstrated how reading promotion across different contexts can theoretically support SDT's needs. Future research could examine how such support translates into fostering intrinsic reading motivation among Dutch adolescents in practice. Adolescents' perceptions of reading promotion efforts would provide valuable insight into the extent to which these needs are experienced by the

intended audience. Research guided by, for example, a survey-based approach, could explore how adolescents respond to BookTok content and whether such posts would encourage them to voluntarily engage with reading. While this thesis was constrained by time, examining the extent to which influencers increase the visibility and reach of reading promotion content on social media platforms in a more comprehensive way would also be valuable. Finally, analysing reading promotion through the lens of SDT across different national contexts may provide additional insight into how reading promotion can most effectively support the development of intrinsic reading motivation among adolescents.

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