



The two graphs illustrate the average number of books and words read each year by school children from grade 1 (age 5) to grade 12 (age 17) in the USA. The first graph shows the number of books read by all students, while the second graph, which describes the number of words read, makes a comparison between male and female students.

What we observe overall is that the number of books read declines steadily from 55 books a year in 2nd grade to around ten a year in 8th grade, while the average number of words read rises from around 70,000 a year in 2nd grade to around 400,000 in 8th grade. These two trends are not surprising, as, compared to the shorter picture books read by younger children, older pupils tend to read longer texts.

What is perhaps more significant is that the number of words read reaches a peak at 8th grade and then falls away sharply to only 300,000 a year by 12th grade. It is also worth noting that, relative to girls, boys' reading volume is consistently lower from 5th grade onwards, with the biggest difference (about 100,000 words fewer) being recorded at 8th grade. The reasons for this are not clear, but such a large discrepancy ought to be of concern to educators.