

BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH LITERATURE CITY READINGS

Our story begins when a student touches a book. Fingers that wander across the pages gradually turn into words flowing from the mind and emotions pouring from the soul. That book gains meaning through the student—not only leaving a trace in their own world, but also in the minds of dozens of others. One student touches a book, and gently opens the door to a journey where heartfelt bonds will be formed with hundreds of peers.

The soil and water of Kahramanmaraş, which once gave rise to hundreds of poets and writers, now continue to nurture our youth raising them as the poets and writers of the future. On this journey, the City Readings project opens the doors to the mysterious world of books and invites students inside. Then, it calls each one into the magical realm of writing.



A CITY GROWING THROUGH THE LINES OUR STUDENTS READ AND WRITE

The "City Readings" project, carried out in collaboration between Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality and the Provincial Directorate of National Education, first began to bear fruit in 2021 at the Yedi Güzel Adam Literature Museum with panels on Yunus Emre and Mehmet Akif. Following these early successes, the initiative was institutionalized and expanded with readings and panels held in various districts of the city.

The project comes to life each year through the participation of students enthusiastic about literature and reading, from nine different high schools across eight districts of Kahramanmaraş. Participating schools include: Göksun Anatolian High School, Andırın Şehit Tacettin Çeribaş Anatolian High School, Elbistan Mükrimin Halil Anatolian High School and Elbistan Şehit Tayyip Olçok Girls' Anatolian Imam Hatip High School, Afşin Anatolian High School, Ekinözü Multi-Program Anatolian High School, Türkoğlu Yedi Güzel Adam Anatolian Imam Hatip High School, Çağlayancerit Multi-Program Anatolian High School and Pazarcık Anatolian Imam Hatip High School.

At the City Readings panel held on May 15, 2025, at the Afşin Ashab-ı Kehf Complex, eight panelists, two session chairs, and 127 students came together. During these annual provincial panels, students present their readings and discuss a wide array of themes, from literature to philosophy, from societal issues to personal development, through the lens of various books.

SEPTEMBER

A LITERARY JOURNEY BEGINS WITH THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

With the start of the school year in September, the City Readings project also welcomed a new season. Books selected for reading throughout the year were delivered to students through visits to nine schools across the districts.

The reading list, consisting of forty books in genres such as novels, short stories, essays, and literary criticism, invited readers on a broad journey, beginning with the foundational works of Turkish literature and extending to the universal classics of world literature. Covering a wide range of themes from societal issues to personal reflections, these works offered students a rich and multifaceted reading experience.



At the district-level panels held in our schools, students presented the texts they had written drawing inspiration from the books they had read and based on the themes they had selected before their peers and teachers. These presentations underwent a thorough evaluation. As a result, the works of selected students were deemed worthy of being featured in the City Readings Panel. At the end of the year, this major panel offered student participants the opportunity to share their writings with a broader audience.

Ashab-ı Kehf Complex Comes to Life Through Literature

On May 15, 2025, students participating in the City Readings project from the districts of Andırın, Çağlayancerit, Afşin, Ekinözü, Elbistan, Göksun, Türkoğlu, and Pazarcık came together at the Afşin Ashab-ı Kehf Complex for the City Readings Panel. Accompanied by a guide, the students explored the Ashab-ı Kehf Complex step by step, embarking on a profound journey into the mysterious world of this sacred site, enchanted by its historical and spiritual atmosphere.



The Enthusiastic Voices of Youth Echo Within a Century-Old Heritage

In the captivating atmosphere of the Ashab-ı Kehf Complex, nine students, guided by two session chairs, delivered presentations born from the books they had read throughout the year. With original texts written around diverse themes, they created a powerful experience rich in knowledge and emotion, leaving the audience with unforgettable moments.

The first session opened with Reyyan Rabia Demir, who invited the audience into her essay inspired by Samarkand by Amin Maalouf, focusing on Omar Khayyam and the Rubaiyat. The second panelist, Halil İbrahim Hönker. shared reflections on The Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka's deeply influential work. In his piece, Hönker explored the themes of alienation, social the profound pressure, and loneliness of the human spirit through the character of Gregor Samsa.





Next, Ayşe Koca presented her essay titled Indispensable, based on What Men Live By by Tolstoy. She emphasized how Tolstoy underscores that true happiness lies not in material wealth, but in spiritual bonds, an essential value in life. Closing the first session, Hatice Yaren Erdağ took the floor with her piece titled On "The Gambler": An Anatomy of Obsession, drawing attention to Dostoevsky's masterful portrayal of the darker aspects of human nature and the destructive power of obsession.

After a brief intermission, the second session began with Irmak Kancı, who introduced her essay Character Analyses in Sabahattin Ali's "Kuyucaklı Yusuf". She invited listeners to engage with the psychological depth of the novel. Following her, Melike Uzun presented her essay A General Review, which took the audience on a multilayered literary journey through diverse works, including Don Quixote, The Catcher in the Rye, The Metamorphosis, Yılkı Atı, The White Ship, Fatih Harbiye, Bozkurda Altmış Atlı, The Little Prince, and Kuyucaklı Yusuf.

Concluding the panel, Kader Bayraktar presented her essay inspired by Namık Kemal's timeless work Vatan Yahut Silistre, centered on themes of patriotism and sacrifice. Her writing examined the individual's struggle for their homeland and the delicate balance between love and devotion to one's nation, leaving a lasting impression on the audience.

A JOURNEY REKINDLED EACH YEAR THROUGH THE MAGIC OF THE PEN

Through the City Readings project, students have had the opportunity each year to discover new books, gaining a broad literary experience across diverse genres and themes. As a result of these rich readings, they began to express their thoughts and emotions with clarity and strength, skillfully wielding the power of the written word. With every line they wrote, they expanded their own intellectual World and in doing so, became a source of inspiration for their peers who witnessed their progress.

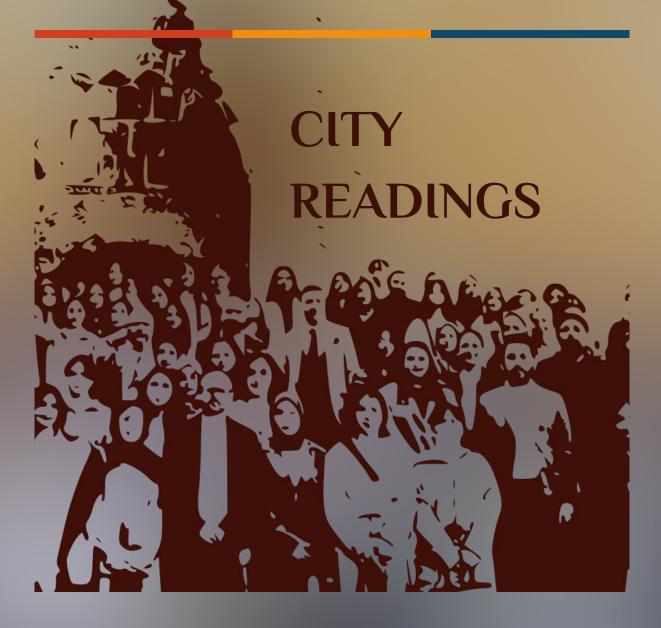
Over time, this project has evolved beyond being merely a panel it has transformed into a powerful and lasting connection among people. A deep, meaningful, and enduring bond, delicately woven through literature.

Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality remains committed to nurturing and preserving this literary connection, continuing to strengthen it across our districts and passing it on to future generations as a profound cultural legacy.



KAHRAMANMARAŞ KULTUR SANAT E-NEWSLETTER













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