Are you a parent of a teenager with high functioning autism or Asperger syndrome? Would your son or daughter be interested in a study of how teenagers read fiction? 

The purpose of our research is to learn about the different ways in which children build up a mental picture of the story when they read fiction. It is important to understand how children interpret the kinds of texts they read in school literature classes. Yet little research to date has examined this, either for typically developing children or children with autism in inclusive classrooms. We would like to work with typically developing children aged 13 and older, and children of the same age who have been diagnosed with high functioning autism (HFA) or Asperger syndrome.

What will children be asked to do?
For this research, children will be asked to participate individually in one 90-minute session. All sessions will be conducted in a small, quiet space. The sessions will be audio-recorded in order to verify the children’s responses at a later point in time.

During the study, children will be asked to read two short texts and talk aloud about their responses as they read. Measures that assess children’s IQ, reading comprehension, and recognition of contemporary authors will also be administered. Finally, they will be asked to complete an online survey at home about their approach to, and their interest in, reading literature.

What are the implications of this research?
The proposed study is expected to help inform teachers about the different strategies children adopt for understanding literary texts. The results of this study will also be published in research journals and/or presented at academic conferences so that others may learn from our findings.

Are there any risks associated with participating?
There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. Children’s responses will always be identified by a randomly assigned number rather than by name. All children’s data, including recordings of the sessions, will be password-protected and any physical records kept in a locked cabinet to which only researchers directly involved in the study will have access.

Compensation
We could not do this research without participants. To thank them for their time and support, we offer a $25 gift card to a store of their choice: Amazon.ca, iTunes or EB Games. They will also have the chance to enter a draw for an additional $30 gift card, once they return an online questionnaire following testing.

If you are interested in having your child participate, please contact Ruth Lee or Dr. Joan Peskin, whose details are below.

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