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Creating a Culture of Reading in High School: Student Book Clubs Work

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by

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Background:

In 2003, I started a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria. My original plan was to look at student literacy on the internet, but when I considered what made me feel passionate about my job as a teacher-librarian and literacy, I realized it was and is my lifelong love of reading and the enrichment my own book club adds to my life. The wonderful English teachers at Parkland Secondary agreed to be the subjects of my study: How teachers integrate book clubs into their classrooms. We started off having our own book club using Harvey Daniels' very practical book *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book clubs & Reading Groups*. What I discovered over the course of a year is that those teachers who were in their own book clubs found it much easier to integrate book clubs because they had experienced the rich conversations that emerge and that some teachers find it difficult for a variety of reasons. Since that time, a core group of English teachers have used literature circles or book clubs. They teach one class novel and then have the students read a second novel or nonfiction book in a book club. The result has been an astonishing increase in our library circulation as some books become "viral" and students hear about and want to read what their friends are reading. Each year, we add new recently published books to our book club sets. There is nothing more exciting than seeing a class of students rush to sign up for certain books or offer to buy their own books if we don't have enough copies.

This is a practical "how to do it" workshop for those teacher librarians and English teachers who would like to know where to start.

LITERATURE CIRCLES/BOOK CLUBS

OVERVIEW:

You will have a choice of a number of books and will be put into a group depending upon the top three books that you choose. You are guaranteed to be in a club for one of your top choices. Your group will then decide on your reading schedule for each of the meeting days. In your groups, you will be responsible for setting deadlines, coming to class prepared for a discussion and compiling a portfolio of your discussions and impressions of the book:

Your book club meeting dates are:

Presentations will be on:

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For each book club meeting, you must come prepared with

- The agreed upon chapters/pages read
- Ideas on what you liked/disliked/or are not sure about to help bring focus to your discussions and clear up any questions you have
- The book itself so you can find passages/information discussed
- If you have a comment/passagage you would like to look at or discuss, mark the page with a post-it note

Meeting Portfolio/Folder:

At each meeting you will be compiling the ideas and comments from your group. One person should act as a recorder of the comments made and the main topics of discussion. Attendance will be taken and recorded at each meeting by the group. Portfolios must stay in the classroom. Marks will be given to your group for each of your meetings on the quality and clarity of the notes. Each session will be marked out of 6.

At the end of each meeting, your group will write down three things about your meeting that either went well or that need to be worked on. You will then adopt a specific goal for improvement for your next discussion (e.g. "Ask more questions" or "Prove it with the book" or "We need to listen to each other better" or "We need to focus more on ...")

Group Presentation:

Your final project will be to present the book to the class in a form chosen by your group. The presentations should be approximately 15-20 minutes long.

BOOK CLUB PRESENTATIONS

Your final project will be to present the main ideas about the book to the class in a form chosen by your group. The presentations should be approximately 15-20 minutes long.

Some ideas for presenting your book-

- Panel discussion
- Artwork interpreting the book
- An advertising campaign for the book
- Interviews with characters from the book
- Fictionalized interview with the author
- Pros and cons of the book
- Any other way of presenting the themes or the characters

You want to think about-

- Would we recommend this to others in the class to read? Why or why not?
- What did we like about the book? Didn't like?
- How do we get this across to the class?
- How can we evoke the moods, themes, important information, or events of the book?
- Some people in presentations have brought in food, music, read parts of the book, shown video clips, etc.)

Marking Criteria:

- Well organized, spoke clearly, clear introduction and conclusion
- Clearly focussed on the themes and important information from the book
- Creative and informative; kept class interested
- Each group member was involved and knew his/her role

Book Club Presentation Evaluation

Names of Group Member: _____

Book being presented: _____

Criteria/Comments

Well organized, clear introduction and conclusion, good speaking skills

/6

Clearly focussed on the themes and important information from the book

/6

Creative and informative; kept class interested

/6

Each group member was involved and knew his/her role

/6

Total: /24

Book Club Presentation Evaluation: 2

Names of Group Member: _____

Book being presented: _____

Criteria/Comments

Introduction and conclusion clearly organized

/6

Storyline/main themes and ideas presented well

/6

Recommendations made? For whom? Why or why not?

/6

Overall organization of presentation

Roles set out and members what who is doing what when.

/6

Other comments:

Total: /24

**BOOK CLUB/LITERATURE CIRCLES
TOP THREE BOOK CHOICES**

Please fill out and give to me today. You will be guaranteed to have one of your top three, depending upon the other students' choices. Book clubs will have 4-5 students in each depending upon the books chosen.

NAME: _____

TITLE: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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Book Club Meeting Reflections Sheets

Use this as a model at the end of each meeting

Date: _____

Meeting # _____

1. Describe in complete sentences three things you accomplished during your meeting
2. What are your goals for the next meeting?
3. What do individual group members need to do to reach these goals? (Include names)
4. What went really well during your meeting?
5. What went poorly? Why did this happen? What do you need to do to prevent it from happening again?

Monthly Book Club Approach

Schedule based on-

- Semester system: 90 minute classes from February to June
- Students read silently for the first 15-20 minutes of every class
- Students meet every Friday for book clubs
- Students select a new book and a new group each month
- Students complete 4 book clubs in each year level

Book Club Organization:

1. Students form groups of 4 to 6 based on a book they want to read.
2. Each month students select a new book and a new group of students
3. Fridays are devoted to book club:
 - First Friday: Choose book and group
 - Second Friday: Discuss the book
 - Third Friday: Discuss book and plan presentation
 - Fourth Friday: Present the book to the class.
4. Each month will focus on a different theme so students can select the same book as a previous group but focus on a different theme:

February: Characters

March: Plot

April: Conflict

May: Theme

Presentations:

- Presentations should be 10 minutes long
How you present your book is up to you
- Include a brief synopsis of the book
- Discuss the character, plot, conflict, or theme
- Include a creative activity or product: poster, debate, interview with characters, dramatization, etc.
- Rate the book for the rest of the class

Assessment:

At the end of each Friday (excluding Presentation days) your group will be responsible for handing in a brief outline of your groups' activities that day. Please include which members were present, what you talked about, and what decisions you made.

Book Club for ESL Students

Overview:

Over the next few weeks you will be working in partners or small groups, reading and exploring a novel of your choice, and using a book club format for discussion. Your book club should consist of between 2 to 4 students. You will be responsible for 3 entries in your response journal every Friday, a one page record of your notes from your Friday discussion group, and a group classroom presentation about the book.

Book Club Discussions

You will have 3 scheduled meetings in class to discuss your book. As a group, you decide how much you will read for each meeting. Individually, you are responsible for having your reading done and taking 3 questions, observations, or ideas to the meeting. At the end of each meeting, your group must submit at least one page of notes that record the main ideas in the meeting. (10 marks each week)

Reading Response Journal

You are responsible for completing response journal entries each week in your journal from the list of Journal Ideas. (15 marks each week)

Class Presentations

When you finish the book, share your reading experience with the class. As a group, you decide how best to present the material. Give your audience something of value. The presentation should include

- An introduction to the characters and plot (not the whole story)
- Discussion about the aspect of the book you most enjoyed
- An excerpt from the book
- Discussion about some of the big ideas about life or issues in the book or as an extension to the book.
- A visual display of some kind (poster, storyboard, object, etc.) It's up to your group! Be creative! (25 marks)

DUE DATES:

In possession of the book

First Friday meeting

1st Journal entry due

one page group notes

Second Friday meeting

2nd Journal entry due

one page group notes

Third Friday meeting

3rd Journal entry due

one page group notes

Presentations

Reading Response to Prepare for Your Discussion: Use Sparingly as Scaffolding When First Introducing to Students

Title: _____ Name: _____

Some connections I made...

Find connections between the book and you and/or between the book and the wider world. This means connecting the reading to your own past experiences, school or community, to stories in the news, to similar events at other times and places, to other people or problems that you are reminded of. You may also see connections between this book and other texts or movies on the same topic or by the same author.

A few questions I had...

Write down a few questions that you have about what you have read. What were you wondering about while you were reading? Did you have questions about what was happening? What a word meant? What a character did? What was going to happen next? Why the author used a certain style? Or what the whole thing meant? Just try to notice what you are wondering while you read and jot down some of those questions either along the way or after you're finished.

A line or passage I liked and why...

Locate a few special sections or quotations in the text for your group to talk over. The idea is to help people go back to some especially interesting, powerful, funny, puzzling, or important sections of the reading and think about them more carefully. As you decide which passages or paragraphs are worth going back to, make a note why you picked each one. Then jot down some plans for how they should be shared. You can read passages aloud yourself, ask someone else to read them, or have people read them silently and then discuss.

A sketch, picture, diagram, chart....

Good readers make pictures in their minds as they read. Draw some kind of picture related to the reading you have just done. It can be a sketch, cartoon, diagram, flowchart, or stick-figure scene. You can draw a picture of something that happened in your book, or something the reading reminded you of, or a picture that conveys any idea or feeling you got from the reading.

Adapted from Harvey Daniels (2002). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs & Reading Groups*. Portland: Stenhouse.

Reading Response

Name: _____

Date: _____

Book Title: _____

From page _____ to _____

Write or draw your response

CONNECTOR: Some connections I made...

QUESTIONER: A few questions I had....

LITERARY LUMINARY: A line or passage I liked and why...

ILLUSTRATOR: A sketch, picture, diagram, chart...