

The Book Talk: An Enticing Invitation to Read

When we read a book that moves us, we often want to share it with someone else. Book talking—taking a minute or two to share our excitement about a book we enjoyed—is a simple and powerful practice that can connect us with our students from a distance. Daily book talks by both teachers and students:

- **Generate options for books to read next.** Book talks can quench readers’ thirst for new books to read from a trusted source—a teacher or peer.
- **Provide an authentic purpose for reading.** A “peer-approved” book may incentivize readers: their reading serves as conversation currency with their teacher and classmates.
- **Cultivate the habits of strong readers.** People who read a lot often talk about books with others to share what they’ve learned from the book or how the book has changed them in some way. Through wide reading and discussion, readers develop identities as they embrace favorite authors, genres, topics, series, and other aspects of books.

We recommend setting aside a few minutes each day for book talks by you and one or two students. Here are some ways you can integrate book talks into your students’ schedules at home:

If students have a device of their own:

- Livestream a daily book talk or videotape one to post on the shared learning site where kids can comment. Also encourage spontaneous individual book talks when you are conferring with students in one-to-one calls, emails, or video chats.
- When selecting titles to book talk, focus on ones that you know students can access through:
 - digital check-out services at students’ public library
 - an eBook platform that students can access, such as Scholastic Literacy Pro
- Consider your audience: Book talks for groups of students should have broad appeal, while book talks for individual students should appeal to their individual abilities and interests.
- Prepare for the book talk by jotting down the points you’ll make: Much like a movie trailer, your book talk should contain enough information to entice the

reader, but not to give away the book. Sharing your honest enthusiasm for the book and why it hooked you will inspire kids to read it.

- If you and your students are new to book talks, model a few and then invite students to tell you what they noticed. You can list their ideas in a shared document posted on the learning platform you use—or you can email it to them. Examples of prompts students might generate include:
 - How I connected with a favorite character
 - What I learned about a place, time, person, or culture that was new to me
 - How this book connects with another book I read/we read
 - What’s exciting about how this book begins—a short summary that doesn’t give away the ending!
 - How the illustrations or design captured my interest
 - What I noticed about the dialogue, language, or other craft elements
 - Who is telling the story or presenting the information and why it matters
- As you and your students become comfortable with book talks, consider interesting ways to approach them. For example, include a link to the publisher’s book trailer. Connect the book to other books by the same author or in the same genre. Read an excerpt from the first chapter, an exciting scene, a fascinating spread from a nonfiction book, or a few poems.
- List recommended titles from book talks in a live shared document. You might include columns such as Title, Author (and Illustrator), Genre, Recommended By, and Who’s Interested? By making the document available to all students, you provide a record of the class’s authentic reading experiences and preferences, and ideas for next-reads. Donalyn shared her class lists with families to show them the range of titles their children were eager to find and talk about.

If students share a device at home:

Follow the steps and suggestions above, but pre-record the book talk rather than livestream it. If possible, have students post their own video book talks, book talk scripts, or blogs to your digital learning platform.

If students have limited or no online access:

If you are creating packets of materials to send home, consider sharing some tips for caregivers on book talking with their children, with the goal of learning more about them as readers and generating ideas for books that might interest them. You might:

- Suggest the caregiver take a minute or two over breakfast or at bedtime to try out a book talk. Share some of the benefits of book talking, such as providing a window into topics and types of books or other texts that their child might be excited to read (or not!), connecting the book-talker and listener in a shared experience around reading and personal reading preferences, and giving the child a reason for reading: talking with someone they love about a book they enjoyed!
- Provide tips for doing a book talk. Remind caregivers that they can talk about a range of texts—children’s magazines, traditional books, and eBooks and articles at websites such as [scholastic.com/learnathome](https://www.scholastic.com/learnathome).
- Provide some pointers for delivery, such as:
 - Choose a text you really enjoyed and that your child might enjoy, too. You might even start with a favorite book from your childhood.
 - Think of the book talk like a movie trailer, giving just enough detail to capture your child’s attention and pique his or her interest.
 - Read a short excerpt or show an illustration or some part the text that caught your attention.
- Provide caregivers with some of the prompts from above. Encourage them to have all family members give book talks when they’ve read something they enjoyed—it’s a great way to start meaningful daily conversations around reading.
- Encourage caregivers to keep an ongoing “What We’re Reading” list and use it to generate ideas for books and other types of texts to borrow from the library.