

# Video Clip 5

## Sharing the Text

Length:	18:55
School:	Punahou School
Location:	Honolulu, Hawai'i
No. of Students in School:	3,700 in grades K-12
Teacher:	BJ Namba
No. of Years Teaching:	20
Grade:	Third
No. of Students in the Classroom:	25

# About This Video Clip

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*"Discussion is really important to the students because they learn from each other.... They may be confused about something, and they may not admit it, or they may not even be aware that they were confused or didn't understand something. But...the discussion really enables them to clarify things that they've read."*

—BJ Namba, Third-Grade Teacher, Punahou School, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Ms. Namba understands that her students are life-long envisionment builders, and her goal during the year is to help them become increasingly independent. By year's end, she wants them to be completely responsible for their own literature discussions without needing her facilitation. Throughout the year, Ms. Namba uses a variety of "engagements"—activities that encourage conversation and focus on learning to use the literature to make personal connections and appreciate perspectives—either those presented in a text or by classmates—other than their own.

Ms. Namba believes in the power of what her students learn from the literature discussions in their book clubs—a sense of responsibility, ways to make meaning from texts and information, connections to themselves, their worlds, and other texts, appreciation and respect for multiple points of view, and cooperation. These, she believes, are life-long lessons.

In this video, you will see Ms. Namba and her third graders working together in literature book clubs centered on five different novels. In this case, Ms. Namba has chosen a number of books that focus on characters and issues quite different from those this group of students is likely to encounter in their own lives.

As you watch, note the ways in which the students assume key roles in the discussion. Ms. Namba's questions typically ask for clarification or development of student-developed lines of thought rather than directing the discussion. Clearly, such discussions are the result of a great deal of previous training. In addition, these discussions take time as students work to develop their understandings of the literature and as well as their skillful use of book club time. Ms. Namba feels that this time is well spent because of the quality of student learning it allows.

Visit the *Engaging With Literature: A Video Library, Grades 3–5* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature) to access the lesson plan BJ Namba used to organize this classroom experience, as well as other related resources.

## Featured Texts

*The Pinballs* by Betsy Byars

The "Pinballs" are three unwanted foster children—Carlie, Harvey, and Thomas J.—who have been abused, abandoned, and bounced around. Carlie trusts no one, believing that as soon as she gets settled, somebody puts a coin in the machine, and she will find herself bouncing from bumper to bumper again. With the support of their foster parents, the Masons, the three children become friends, learn to care for each other, and begin to experience love and trust.

*Just Juice* by Karen Hesse

School lessons are a mystery to nine-year-old Juice who simply cannot manage to understand numbers, letters, and reading although she likes to explore and learn and has a talent as an apprentice metalworker in her Pa's makeshift shop. In spite of her family's persuasions, Juice avoids school as often as possible, choosing instead to work with her father, who has been laid off from his work at the mine. Pa keeps it a secret that he can't read either, and because he can't deal with the official papers regarding past-due taxes, the family could lose their house. When her diabetic mother gives birth, Juice is the only one home. She forces herself to read the sugar monitor, does so properly, and saves her mother's life.

# About This Video Clip, cont'd.

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*The Great Gilly Hopkins* by Katherine Paterson

Gilly Hopkins has been in more foster homes than she can remember and yearns to be back with her mother. She has been unsuccessful in each foster home and has developed a county-wide reputation for being brash, rude, and completely unmanageable—although brilliant. When she is sent to live with the Trotters, she finds them the strangest family she has lived with yet and she devises an elaborate scheme to get her real mother to rescue her. The rescue doesn't work the way she has planned, and when it is time for her to leave the Trotters, she thinks about doing so with regret.

*War With Grandpa* by Robert Kimmel Smith

Peter Stokes is 10 years old when his newly widowed grandfather comes to live with the family. At first he is delighted, because he loves his grandfather, but then he learns that his grandfather will be moving into his own room—the room Peter has had all his life. Spurred on by the urging of his two friends, Peter declares war on his grandfather in an effort to get his room back. After he plays a number of mean tricks on his grandfather, he finally does get his room back—but with his grandfather's help.

*Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli

Jeffrey Magee's parents are killed in a trolley accident when he is three, and he is sent to live with his Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan. His aunt and uncle won't speak to one another, using Jeffrey as their go-between. After eight years, Jeffrey has had enough. He screams, "Talk to each other!" and runs away—literally. He runs, searching for a real home, eventually ending up 200 miles away in the town of Two Mills, a community divided by race into an East and a West End. Jeffrey becomes "Maniac Magee," a legend in the town—a boy who can outrun dogs, hit a homerun off the best pitcher in the neighborhood, and untie the knot no one else can undo. In his search for a place to belong, he begins to unite the town by forcing at least some of the Blacks and Whites to know each other.

Visit the *Engaging With Literature: A Video Library, Grades 3–5* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature) for Web sites related to the featured texts. Go to Additional Resources for this program.

## Learning Objectives

If you are a teacher watching this video for professional development, you will be able to:

- Explain the advantages and challenges of operating several book groups in one classroom.
- Define two criteria for selecting books for multiple book groups in a classroom.
- Create a list of expected classroom behaviors that would facilitate the use of multiple book groups in an individual classroom.

# Viewing Suggestions

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## Who Should Watch This Video

**Teachers and teacher educators** can use it as a professional or preservice education tool that shows how one teacher helps students develop and focus thoughtful discussions around literary texts. Viewers might be especially interested to observe the ways in which one teacher helps students extend and develop their observations about a literary text. The video might also help teachers who reach out to families in the school community at back-to-school events. In these settings, the video can be a vehicle for demonstrating how student-centered literature discussions might work.

**Curriculum planners** can use this video as a springboard for discussion about what skills students need to become successful participants in small-group literature discussions and how these skills might be taught. In addition, curriculum planners might wish to develop a list of activities that teachers could use to help students develop their literary envisionments. Developing a list of appropriate literature titles for use in their classrooms might be a further outcome of such discussions.

**Administrators** can use this video to create a vision of the level of literary engagement even young students are capable of. Additionally, they might use it to spark a discussion of the feasibility of supporting student-centered discussions in their schools.

## Before Watching

Before viewing this program, consider the following:

- What are the characteristics of a "good" discussion about literature?
- How can teachers prepare students to participate in student-centered literature discussions?
- What are the roles teachers might assume in classrooms supportive of student-centered literature discussions?

## Discussion Questions

**Teachers involved in professional development and preservice education may want to discuss:**

- What are the benefits of student-centered literature discussions such as those presented in this video?
- What are the potential shortcomings of such discussion groups? How might they be overcome?
- How would your students be likely to respond to such discussions? How might their parents respond?
- What ideas from the video would you like to try in your own classroom?
- What questions do you have about Ms. Namba's instructional practices?

**Teachers holding PTA meetings and back-to-school events might use these questions to start group discussion:**

- What was your response to the roles assumed by the teacher and by the students in this video? Explain.
- How would your child respond to small-group discussions such as the ones portrayed in this classroom?
- Was there anything about the discussion that surprised or intrigued you? Explain.
- How can discussions such as these help students learn?

# Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

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## **Curriculum planners can discuss:**

- What key strategies do effective readers use when preparing to discuss a literary text? How might they be taught?
- Do the texts you offer provide a balance of themes and topics appropriate for the needs of your student populations and their communities?

## **Administrators can discuss:**

- Do teachers have appropriate resources (book sets, for example) to enable small-group discussions?
- How can physical issues (classroom size and configuration, teacher/student ratio, external distractions, etc.) enable or prevent teachers from facilitating effective discussions?

## **Suggested Activities**

### **For teachers involved in professional development and preservice education:**

- Make a list of strategies you might teach students to help them become successful participants in literature discussions.
- What are some activities you have found useful to help students further their thinking about literary texts? Share them with your colleagues.

### **For teachers reaching out to families:**

- Make a list of ways you can help families support their child's daily reading and their experiences with literature. Consider using brief notes, email, a newsletter, or a course Web site to keep families informed about texts and activities their children will experience in class.
- Invite family members into your classroom to observe, and—if they have read the text—perhaps even to participate in a literary discussion.
- Video your students working in a discussion group and use it to center discussion at parent meetings.

### **For administrators:**

- Share this video with language arts teachers in your school. Discuss the value of student-centered discussion in literature instruction. Ask teachers to consider ways in which this lesson succeeds, and to suggest ways in which it might be strengthened. Provide time for teachers to share their strategies for facilitating literature discussion groups.

# Additional Resources

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The classroom lesson plan, student activity sheets, teacher tools, and links to related resources are accessible at the *Engaging With Literature: A Video Library, Grades 3–5* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature).

## You may also be interested in the following texts:

Atwell, Nancie. *In the Middle*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-86709-374-9.

Bayer, Ann Shea. *Collaborative-Apprenticeship Learning: Language and Thinking Across the Curriculum, K–12*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1990. ISBN 0-87484-882-2.

Bridges, Lois. *Creating Your Classroom Community*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1995. ISBN 1-57110-49-0.

Brown, Rexford G. *Schools of Thought: How the Politics of Literacy Shape Thinking in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991. ISBN 1-55542-314-0.

Buehl, Doug. *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2001. ISBN 0-87207-284-3.

Busching, Beverly A. and Betty Ann Slesinger. "Authentic Questions: What Do They Look Like? Where Do They Lead?" *Language Arts* (September, 1995): 341–343.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. *The Art of Teaching Reading*. New York: Longman, 2001. ISBN 0-321-08059-9.

Close, Elizabeth Egan. "Literature Discussion: A Classroom Environment for Thinking and Sharing." *English Journal* (September, 1992): 65–71.

Commeyras, Michell and Georgiana Sumner. "Literature Discussions Based on Student-Posed Questions." Ed. Jamie Metsala. *The Reading Teacher*. (November, 1996): 262–265.

Daniels, Harvey. *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. 2nd ed. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2002. ISBN 1-57110-333-3.

Evans, Karen S. *Literature Discussion Groups in the Intermediate Grades: Dilemmas and Possibilities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2001. ISBN 0-87207-293-2.

Finney, Susan. *Keep the Rest of the Class Reading & Writing...While You Teach Small Groups (Grades 3–6)*. New York: Scholastic, 2000. ISBN 05-906856-X.

Golub, Jeffrey. *Making Learning Happen: Strategies for an Interactive Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2000. ISBN 0-86709-493-1.

Golub, Jeffrey. NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices. *Focus on Collaborative Learning: Classroom Practices in Teaching English, 1988*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1988. ISBN 0-8141-1753-8.

Golub, Jeffrey. *Activities for an Interactive Classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1994. ISBN 0-8141-0046-5.

Graves, Donald H. *Build a Literate Classroom: The Reading/Writing Teacher's Companion*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991. ISBN 0-435-08488-7.

Keane, Nancy J. *Booktalks and Beyond: Thematic Learning Activities for Grades K–6*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2001. ISBN 15-795006-25.

Kohn, Alfie. *What To Look for in a Classroom...and Other Essays*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998. ISBN 0-7879-4453-X.

Langer, Judith A. "Discussion as Exploration: Literature and the Horizon of Possibilities." *Exploring Texts: The Role of Discussion and Writing in the Teaching and Learning of Literature*. Ed. George E. Newell and Russel K. Durst. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1993. 23–43. ISBN 0-926842-24-2.

Langer, Judith A. *Envisioning Literature*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1995. ISBN 0-8077-3463-0.

# Additional Resources, cont'd.

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- Langer, Judith A., ed. *Literature Instruction: A Focus on Student Response*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1992.
- Lewis, Valerie V. and Walter M. Mayes. *Valerie and Walter's Best Books for Children: A Lively and Opinionated Guide*. New York: Avon, 1998. ISBN 03-807943-81.
- McMahon, Susan I. and Taffy E. Raphael with Virginia J. Goatley and Laura S. Prado. *The Book Club Connection: Literacy Learning and Classroom Talk*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997. ISBN 0-807736-14-7.
- Morgan, Norah and Juliana Saxton. *Asking Better Questions: Models, Techniques, and Activities for Engaging Students in Learning*. Markham, ONT: Pembroke, 1994. ISBN 155-138-0455.
- Noe, Katherine L. Schlick and Nancy J. Johnson. *Getting Started With Literature Circles*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 1999. ISBN 0-926842-97-8.
- Peterson, Ralph and Maryann Eeds. *Grand Conversations (Grades 2–6)*. New York: Scholastic, 1999. ISBN 05-907342-29.
- Raphael, Taffy E., Susan Florio-Ruane, and MariAnne George. "Book Club Plus: A Conceptual Framework To Organize Literacy Instruction." *Language Arts* 79 (2001): 159–168. (Note: for the full text of this article, visit the *Engaging With Literature: A Video Library, Grades 3–5* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature). Go to Teacher Tools for Video Clip 5.)
- Raphael, Taffy E., Marcella Kehus, and Karen H. Damphousse, eds. *Book Club for Middle School*. Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications, Inc., 2001. ISBN 0-96562-112-X.
- Raphael, Taffy E. and Susan I. McMahon. "Book Club: An Alternative Framework for Reading Instruction." *The Reading Teacher* 48 (1994): 102–116.
- Raphael, Taffy E., Laura S. Pardo, and Kathy Highfield. *Book Club: A Literature-Based Curriculum*. 2nd ed. Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications, Inc. ISBN 1-931376-07-7.
- Rief, Linda. *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts With Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. ISBN 0-435-08598-0.
- Rief, Linda. *Vision and Voice: Extending the Literacy Spectrum*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-3250-0097-2.
- Ross, Carol. *Making Your Classroom Work: Tried and True Organization and Management Strategies*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1994. ISBN 1-5513-835-8.
- Routman, Regie. *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. ISBN 0-325-00109-X.
- Routman, Regie. *Invitations: Changing as Teachers and Learners K–12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991. ISBN 0-435-08836-X.
- Short, Kathy G. and Jerome C. Harste with Carolyn Burke. *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996. ISBN 0-435-08850-5.
- Short, Kathy Gnagey and Kathryn Mitchell Pierce, eds. *Talking About Books: Literature Discussion Groups in K–8 Classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990. ISBN 0-325-00073-5.
- Tchudi, Stephen and Susan Tchudi. *The English/Language Arts Handbook*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991. ISBN 0-86709-288-2.
- Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995. ISBN 0-1404-6971-0.
- Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. *You Gotta BE the Book*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8077-3566-3.
- Yokota, Junko, ed. *Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K–8*. 3rd ed. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. ISBN 0-8141-2540-9.

# Notes

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