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# Book Buddy Reading

Book Buddy reading is a term for paired discussions about a book that two students—sometimes from different grade levels—read together. This encounter offers both students an opportunity to experience rich, authentic literary discussions. When two different classes come together for Book Buddy reading, thoughtful logistical planning is the key to success. Choose a book that is accessible to students with a range of reading abilities. At the same time, look for a book with interesting events and universal themes to stimulate rich discussion. Depending on your choice of text, you may wish to divide the reading over two days. Each day the Book Buddies meet to read and discuss the assigned section of the book together. You may ask them to choose a response mode from a suggested list (see the student activity sheet Book Buddy Response Invitations). Finally, both classes met together in one classroom to discuss their reading and their responses.

Providing students with multiple opportunities to experience envisionment building is a central aspect of effective literature classrooms. Book Buddy meetings offer students authentic occasions to do just that.

# Choosing a Good Book: Modeling Text Choices

Some students have difficulty choosing a good book to read—one that they can manage and one that they will enjoy. Sharing the ways in which you choose books to read can show them some things to think about as they approach the task.

Bring in a stack of books to use as examples. These might be books you have just read or books you plan to read. They may be books others have recommended or ones you discovered for yourself. You may wish to include different genres—short stories, poetry, and nonfiction as well as novels. Present a mini-lesson in which you show each book and talk about why you might read it—or why you might choose not to. Show students how you use the cover information and the title page to help you decide. Think about opening the book to a spot in the middle and reading a paragraph or two to help you decide. Expand the conversation to ask students to share their strategies for choosing books.

Other techniques teachers have found helpful:

- Cover a box with attractive paper, fill it with tried-and-true, grade-appropriate favorites, label it “Good Books,” and place it in the library corner where students can browse.
- Begin a chart paper list of “Good Books” and ask students to list titles and authors when they have read a good book.
- When you know a student is enjoying a book, ask him or her to give an informal booktalk to share the title with the class.

# Appreciating Stories

You may find that your students' literary understanding is enhanced if you help them think about their own stories and the stories friends and family members tell. Consider using one or more of the following activities to help students expand their appreciation for the power of stories in their lives.

## **Telling Stories**

- Tell the class a personal story. It might be funny, scary, or sad. It could be a story from your childhood or something that happened on your way to work.
- Ask the students to turn to a classmate and tell a story to one another.
- Ask if anybody heard a story that they think the whole class might enjoy.

## **Collecting Stories**

- Have students ask an adult to tell them a childhood story that they could share with the class.
- Have students ask an older friend or sibling to tell them a childhood story that they could share with the class.
- Have students identify a favorite story from literature and share it with the class.

## **Discussion**

- After the class has enjoyed several of these activities, have them think and talk about what makes a good story. You may wish to list responses on chart paper to hang in the classroom.

## Suggested Text Sets

Here are several suggestions for thematically grouped books for a wide range of reading levels (including picture books). Bibliographies such as *Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K-8* and *Adventuring With Books: A Booklist for PreK-Grade 6*, both published by the National Council of Teachers of English, are useful resources to create such groupings to fit your students and your curriculum.

Contemporary fiction dealing with family relationships:

*Bone Dance* by Martha Brooks  
*Flower Garden* by Eve Bunting  
*Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting

*Anne Is Elegant* by Mary Louise Cuneo  
*Out of the Blue* by Sarah Ellis  
*Yolanda's Genius* by Carol Fenner  
*Breath of the Dragon* by Gail Giles  
*Over the Joshua Slope* by Lyman Hafen  
*Torn Away* by James Heneghan

Historical fiction:

*Tusk and Stone* by Malcolm Bosse  
*So Far From the Sea* by Eve Bunting  
*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis  
*Nim and the War Effort* by Milly Lee  
*Sister Anne's Hands* by Marybeth Lorbiecki  
*Run Away Home* by Patricia C. McKissack  
*Across the Lines* by Carolyn Reeder  
*Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule* by Harriette Robinet  
*A Place Called Freedom* by Scott Russell Sanders  
*The Walking Stick* by Annouchka Gravel Galouchko

Some teachers find author studies appealing to their students. You may wish to refer to *The Allure of Authors: Author Studies in the Elementary Classroom* by Carol Brennan Jenkins to help plan such literary experiences. Almost any author can be focused on productively as long as he or she has published enough books to give your students opportunities for extended exploration.

Mem Fox Author Study

*Koala Lou*  
*Possum Magic*  
*Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*  
*Hattie and the Fox*  
*Tough Boris*

*Sophie*  
*Time for Bed*  
*Night Noises*

Patricia Polacco Author Study

*The Bee Tree*  
*Thunder Cake*  
*Pink and Say*  
*The Keeping Quilt*  
*Chicken Sunday*  
*My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*

# Book Buddy Response Invitations

Choose one of these questions/invitations to respond to each day. Work with your buddy to make your responses as thorough as possible.

1. Written Conversation: Have a double written conversation about the book in which you write back and forth, sharing what you noticed, what you liked, and questions you may have about the book.
2. Describe how the author makes you feel at different parts of the story. How is this accomplished?
3. Describe the changes that took place in the book. What caused the changes and what happened as a result of the changes?
4. Analyze the characters in the story. What made them behave as they did?
5. What lessons have you learned from the story? What lasting memories will you take with you?

# Discussion Etiquette Checklist

After your literature discussion, put a check next to each item that describes how you participated:

- I listened carefully to what others said.
- I took turns speaking and didn't try to "talk over" others in the group.
- I connected my comments and observations to what others had said.
- I asked questions when I needed clarification about a comment somebody else had made or about the literature in general.
- I maintained positive body language when others were speaking—keeping eye contact, leaning forward, and nodding to let speakers know I was following their ideas.



# Attitude Survey

Use the following questions to guide a conversation with your students about classroom discussion. Use what they tell you to plan lessons that will help them develop discussion competence. If, for example, your students tell you that class discussion is a way that teachers test what students know and you envision it as a forum for developing understanding, you will probably need to find ways to broaden their perceptions of discussion to help them experience effective environment-building conversations.

- What do you believe classroom discussion is for?
- What should the teacher do during discussion?
- What should students do during discussion?

# Tracking Student Contributions to Discussion

You may need ways to track the contributions students make during discussion. Perhaps you need to keep a record of several book clubs at once and need to know what topics they are discussing and what key points they have made. Perhaps you wish to chart levels of participation in order to encourage those students reluctant to add their voices to the conversation. Here is a charting strategy that you may find useful.

## Roster Chart

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Comments

Create a chart such as this with your students' names listed and the Comments column blank. Make copies, date the chart, and add brief summaries of student contributions in the Comments column.

# Conversation Strategies: Mini-Lesson Suggestions

As you observe your students interacting during discussion, you may feel you have to offer brief mini-lessons to help them become more productive conversationalists. Sometimes such a lesson will be no more complex than your response to a teachable moment, praising, for example, behavior of the type you hope to encourage.

Some areas that you may need to focus on more explicitly include:

- Showing Respect for Others' Ideas
- Using a Polite Voice
- How To Disagree Politely
- Body Language That Says, "I'm listening to what you say..."
- In an Effective Group Discussion, Everybody...

You may wish to chart and post student responses, using them as visual reminders when needed.

# Thinkmark for Reader Thoughts

Give students copies of this Thinkmark to record responses to their reading. They can use the Thinkmark during their conversations about their reading.

**Side 1**

Name _____
Book Title _____
Author _____
Page:
Page:
Page:

**Side 2**

Page:
Page:
Page:
Page:

# Alternate Response Modes: Some Suggestions

## Using Drama

Divide the class into groups and give each the same scene to present dramatically (they may use language from the book if they choose). Give the groups 5-10 minutes to prepare their presentation. Have all the groups present in turn with no discussion. When they have finished, discuss how the portrayals were similar and different and the decisions each group made in its presentation. Repeat the activity, assigning each group different scenes to present.

## Using Music and Dance/Movement

**Peter and the Wolf:** Play a recording of *Peter and the Wolf*, showing how each character is portrayed by a signature tune. Divide the class into groups, assigning each group a character. Ask them to develop a signature tune for their character (which they can present by humming) and determine what instrument they would use for their tune. During presentations, discuss the choices each group made.

After a brief discussion about how body movement can convey emotion, divide the class into groups and assign each a scene. Give them 15 minutes to prepare a portrayal of the scene through movements alone. After each group has presented to the class, discuss the choices they made and the complexities of turning a verbal art into movement.

Vary the previous activity by asking each group to create a brief dance step emblematic of a scene or a character. After the group presents, have the remainder of the class discuss the presentation, trying to identify the scene or character. When the class has finished discussing, the group members can explain the choices they made as they prepared their portrayal.

## Using Visual Response Modes

**Collage:** Provide students with stack of old magazines, scissors, and glue as well as colored paper. A box of odd "findings" such as buttons, yarn, fabric trimmings, etc. can be a nice enhancement, but is not necessary. Give them 15 minutes to find images from the magazines that suggest the emotion from a particular scene (or that a character is feeling). Give them another 15 minutes to arrange and paste their selections into a collage. Spend another 15 minutes sharing the results.

**Word Collage:** Provide students with stacks of old magazines, scissors, and glue. Give them 15 minutes to cut out words and phrases that suggest a particular character or scene from their reading. Give them another 15 minutes to arrange and paste their selections into a "found poem." Spend another 15 minutes sharing the results.

**Clay:** Ask students to use clay to present the relationship between two characters. Suggest that they focus on the characters' emotional and intellectual relationship.

# Drama in the Classroom

by Karen Smith

*“Education should strive not for the acceptance of one voice, but for the exploration of many voices.”*

—Douglas Barnes

For years I used drama in the classroom. Sometimes students engaged in formal drama that focused on a product, or play for a particular audience. Most often, however, I used drama to help students explore and make sense of their worlds. These enactments were carried out for the benefit of the learner and focused on what was being learned through drama and students’ new understandings about a topic, themselves, and their world.

I was lucky to have a friend, who worked with our local children’s theater, volunteer in my classroom every Friday afternoon for two years. From him, I learned the power of drama to help students reframe their understandings into new perspectives. He also taught me that negotiating and constructing meaning through drama is a gradual process that demands time and attention. I learned that creative drama was most successful and useful when I took time to establish an environment of trust where students were willing to risk sharing their ideas. I also learned about some basic drama skills that enhanced the quality of our dramatic experiences whether improvising a scene from a story, revising a piece of writing to “show not tell,” sorting out understandings about a difficult concept in social studies, like war, or figuring out a concept in science such as the relationship between an atom and electrons. Below, I share some exercises I used to build trust among our learning community members, and to develop the skills we needed to effectively express and make sense of our world through drama.

## Tips for the Teacher

- Create activities where students get to know each other on a personal level
- Make the first drama activities simple enough so all can be successful
- Make evaluation a **necessary** part of each experience.
- Evaluate positively, asking questions such as:
  - What worked well?
  - What did you see, hear or feel that you could believe?
  - What was said that really fit the character?
  - What did you learn from this experience?
- Never allow children to make negative comments or focus on what didn’t work well or what they didn’t like.
- If an activity or drama experience isn’t working right, don’t hesitate to stop in process and discuss the problem with the students.

## Trust

### Activity 1: Getting To Know You

Ask each student to bring a picture of her/himself to class, or draw a self portrait as a class activity.

When this is done, draw a large star in the middle of a large sheet of paper. Draw a name out of a hat that contains the names of all the students in the class. Ask the student whose name is drawn to leave the room for a few minutes. While s/he is out of the room, put this student’s picture (or self portrait) in the middle of the star and brainstorm all the positive things the class has to say about him/her and write them on a separate piece of paper.

Ask the student to return to the room, look at the list, and pick the five words s/he likes the best. Write one of these words at one of the five points on the star. Post the star for the day. Do this each day, until each student has been featured.

## **Drama in the Classroom, cont'd.**

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### **Believability**

#### **Activity 1: Magic Chair Activity**

This activity can be done with the students at their desks or seats. Tell them they are sitting on a magic chair that is going to change into a lot of different things. Each time it changes, their behaviors should reflect the change. Begin calling out a type of chair/seat and give students time to adjust. The person calling out the name of the chair should pay attention to what students do well and point this out during the evaluation.

Possible Chairs:

- The throne in a grand ballroom; you are the king or queen
- A bus stop in the rain
- The first car on a roller coaster
- A chair in the dentist's waiting room; the same chair after 30 minutes; after one hour
- A chair in the principal's office
- A beanbag in front of the television

Evaluation:

- Talk about why students sat the way they did and how it felt. Ask if they have ever been in a similar situation and how it felt.
- Talk about who used gestures, facial expressions, etc. that made their actions believable.
- Ask a couple students who were especially believable to demonstrate their magic chair to the class.
- Have children think of chair for others to sit in.

#### **Activity 2: Pass It On**

Have students sit in a circle in chairs or on the floor. The teacher or student reaches into an imaginary box and picks an object. Through gestures and actions (no words), this person provides information on the objects' size, weight, texture, etc. For example, if she pulls out a long-stem rose, she might grasp it and get stuck by a throne, hold it gently between her thumb and index finger while she smells it, etc. Then she passes the object to the person seated next to her. That person accepts the object in a believable way, does something to signal what it is (e.g., if it's a rose, he might pick off a petal or two) and then passes it on.

Possible Objects:

- Dirty sock
- Hot potato
- Kitten
- Diamond ring
- Game-boy
- Apple

Evaluation:

- Talk about who used gestures, facial expressions, etc. that made their actions believable.
- Have children think of other objects to pass.

### **Concentration and Cooperation**

#### **Activity 1: Imaginary Clay**

Have class sit in a circle. The teacher or student has an imaginary ball of clay. The size of the ball can change as it moves from person to person. The first person with the clay creates an object while others watch. The gestures and actions should provide clues to what is being made. Once the object is complete, the person gives it or sends it to someone in the circle. (If they make an object that is mobile, like a football, bowling ball, or airplane, they may want to throw or roll it to someone.) The person receiving it must be paying close enough attention to make his receiving movements believable. The person who receives the object then uses the clay to create a new object.

## Drama in the Classroom, cont'd.

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Evaluation:

- Talk about who used gestures, facial expressions, etc. that made their actions believable.
- Talk about how the two people cooperated to make their actions believable.
- The evaluation should focus on both those who made the object and those who received it.

### Activity 2: Play It Again

Divide the class into small groups or pairs. Assign each group a game that they will act out, using imaginary equipment. Encourage the students to concentrate and cooperate, and to make their game as believable as possible. Have game should last at least a minute or two. Present each game to the class. The objective is not for others to guess the game that is being played; rather, it is for the students who are not playing the game to focus on what the group did to make the game believable.

Possible Games:

- tug-or-war
- basketball
- skate boarding
- jump rope
- baseball
- soccer
- volley ball
- ping pong
- dodge ball

Evaluation:

- Talk about who used gestures, facial expressions, etc. that made their actions believable.
- Talk about how the two people cooperated to make their actions believable.

### Activity 3: Moving Day

Pair students and tell them they are members of a moving company. Their truck has been backed up to the front door of an apartment house where they are going to deliver several items.

Pick a pair of students to begin the exercise. Give each pair an item they will cooperatively unload. Talk them through the process for moving the object from the truck to the apartment. For example, have them unload a piano: Pick it up, take it through the front door, up a flight of stairs, down a narrow hallway, etc.

Objects for Moving:

- An aquarium full of water and expensive fish
- A very delicate crystal chandelier
- Seven pet cats, uncaged

Evaluation:

- Talk about who used gestures, facial expressions, etc. that made their actions believable.
- Talk about how the two people cooperated to make their actions believable.

### Activity 4: Dramatize a Story

Pick a story that students know well and have them act it out either verbally or non-verbally. (*The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss works well for this exercise.) Divide class into small groups and give them time (approximately 10 minutes) to discuss how they will go about presenting the story to the class. Have them decide who will play each character, what actions or dialogue they will use to make their character believable, how they will cooperate to make the play believable, etc.

Present the groups' interpretations of the story.



## **Drama in the Classroom, cont'd.**

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Evaluation:

- Talk about participants who used gestures, facial expressions, dialogue, etc. that made their actions/dialogue believable.
- Talk about how people cooperated to make the story believable.

### **Conclusion**

During the first couple months of the school year, I spend about an hour, once a week on the above activities. While my goal is not to create actors, I do find that when students internalize these basic drama techniques—trust, believability, cooperation, and concentration— their dramatic interpretations are enhanced and the use of drama as a heuristic for making sense of the world is enriched.

## Sharing Favorite Reads

Asking students to talk about their out-of-school reading is a wonderful way to get a richer sense of them as readers while helping class members begin to get to know one another. Here are some ideas you may want to try.

- Ask students to keep a list of everything they read over a 24-hour period—billboards, cereal boxes, notes from a friend, magazine articles, the TV guide—everything. As you discuss the lists, try to establish some different reasons for reading: to gather information, from boredom, to learn something new, or just for pleasure.
- Ask students to bring in three or four favorite things to read. In groups of four or five, ask them to talk about their choices and why they are favorites (some of the choices may not be books). After groups have had 10-15 minutes to talk, ask each group to choose one or two to share with the entire class.
- Alternately, after groups have discussed favorites, give each student a sticky note on which to list his or her name and chosen titles. Have them come to the front of the room one at a time and attach their sticky notes to a “Favorite Reads” chart, giving the name of just one title.

Ask students to bring in one reading favorite. Give each student a 3” x 5” index card and ask that they write one or two sentences about their choice, signing their name. Create a display area for the texts and the cards and invite the class to browse the display. (If display space is limited, you may wish to divide the class into groups of six to eight and change the display weekly until everyone has participated.)

# Sample Scavenger Hunt

Working as a group, locate each of the following items. Write a brief description of its location in the space provided.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Location</b>
Poetry books	
Dictionary	
Information on how to use class library	
Mystery stories	
Stapler	
Books by Judy Blume	
Non-fiction books	
Art materials for projects	
Costume box	
Writing paper	

# Social Reading Strategies

The following strategies provide structure for students to work together as they read and respond to literary texts. You may wish to introduce them to students one at a time and then encourage them to choose those strategies with which they feel most comfortable and which they feel might be most useful with a particular text.

## **Conversation Partners**

During read-alouds, pause and offer students a question to think about in their journals. After they have had several minutes to reflect in writing, ask them to turn to a conversation partner sitting nearby and share what they have written. After the conversation partners have had time to discuss their individual observations, open the conversation to the entire class, or proceed with the read-aloud.

## **Book Buddies**

Assign two students to read and discuss a shared text. You may ask them to complete a shared response invitation such as the following used by Tim O’Keefe with his students. Alternately, you may ask each buddy group to pair with another buddy group to expand their conversation of the reading.

1. **Written Conversation:** Have a double written conversation about the book in which you write back and forth, sharing what you noticed, what you liked, and questions you may have about the book.
2. Describe how the author makes you feel at different parts of the story. How did she accomplish this?
3. Describe the changes that took place in the book. What caused the changes and what happened as a result of the changes?
4. Analyze the characters in the story. What made them behave as they did?
5. What lessons have you learned from the story? What lasting memories will you take with you?

## **Group Reading**

Join with one or two others to read. You may decide to read out loud together, alternate reading, or read silently until an agreed-upon point. Use sticky notes to flag parts of the text that you have questions about or that you want to discuss. When you have finished reading, use your sticky notes to guide your conversation.

# Suggested Ongoing Assessment Tools

The following tools can help you gather information about your students and their literate behaviors. This information can help you coach individual students, develop instruction for a group of students, or give students and their parents a clear sense of literacy behaviors, growth, and areas of needed development.

1. Use a clipboard with the class roster, and spaces next to each name to jot daily anecdotal notes.
2. Keep a pad of blank sticky notes handy on which you can quickly jot a student's name, the date, and an observation during a discussion. Later, these can be tucked into student assessment folders.
3. Develop a checklist of specific behaviors being assessed (such as listens carefully, connects comments to those that have come before, knows how to disagree appropriately). In the space under each behavior, write the date when you noted it (see sample below).

Student Name	Makes Connections	Summarizes	Refers to Text During Discussion	Makes Inferences
Sara	9/14	9/14	9/14	10/12
Mikiel	11/30	9/16	9/16	11/30
Wendell	10/12	10/12	11/30	12/5
Katelin	9/16	9/16	9/14	11/30

4. Keep a portfolio for each student in which he or she files selected pieces of work that demonstrate mastery or growth.
5. Plan for a series of informal interviews with each student during which you ask them to tell you about their literacy: what books are they reading, what strategies do they use, what help would they like from you.
6. Ask students to read to you. Talk to them about their processes of making meaning.
7. Join book discussions and observe their dynamics: Who speaks? Who is silent? How do the group members interact? What interpretive strategies are they using? What can you learn about their thinking?
8. When your class is engaged in a literacy activity—silent reading, group discussions, social reading—step back and observe, making quick anecdotal notes about the behaviors you note.
9. Use students' self-assessments to alert you to their understandings of themselves as readers and writers.
10. Give groups a rubric and ask that they assess the quality of their discussions.

# Self-Assessment Strategies for Teachers

Ongoing self-assessment is a key factor in any teacher's professional development. Simply reflecting on questions such as, "What do I do well?" "What do I need to learn how to better?" is an important first step. Some teachers rely on the following to make such self-assessment a habitual part of their professional lives.

**Keep a Teaching Journal:** At least weekly, preferably more often, schedule 10-15 quiet minutes during which you can write about your teaching. What is going well? What difficulties have you encountered? Are there students in your class who are not responding to instruction as you might have hoped? What might you do about that? Have you heard about any new professional ideas, books, or in-service sessions that you would like to pursue?

Every few months, review your entries. Are there any patterns you would like to address? What do you think of your teaching now compared to the last time you reviewed your entries? Are you pleased with your development? With the ways in which you respond to classroom difficulties?

**Call on a Trusted Visitor:** Several times a year, invite a trusted colleague to observe your classes. You may wish to ask your visitor to target his or her observations or simply invite general feedback. During the debriefing session, try to accept all commentary (perhaps even taking notes) rather than attempting to explain or respond. Reflect on what you learned.

**Film a Class:** Set up a tripod and video camera, and film a class or two. As you review the tapes, you may wish to consider the classroom's social dynamics, think about the physical arrangement of your room and how it suits your lessons, or key in on what you say and how you sound to students. Whatever your center of observation, be sure to note those things that you are doing well in addition to looking for areas for improvement.

**Ask the Kids:** Ask your students to give you feedback on your teaching. You may wish to do this after you have introduced a new concept as a way of assessing student understanding, or you may request feedback at the end of a marking period. You can design a survey that asks students to respond about a number of areas of interest. A simple form simply asks them, "What have I done to help you as a learner?" and "What else might I do to help you as a learner?"

# Using Sticky Notes

Give students packs of sticky notes, and ask them to use them to annotate their reading. After students have experimented with the process for a chapter or two, ask them to share the kinds of annotations they made. Record their responses.

You may have some of the following:

- Research questions
- Unfamiliar vocabulary
- Information to remember
- Insights
- Questions
- Analysis of particular passages

# Student Survey

Thank you for answering the following questions thoughtfully. Your answers will help me develop teaching strategies to support your learning.

1. What are the one or two most important things you are learning in this class?

2. What activities help you learn best?

3. What activities are not very useful for your learning?

4. What activities do you like best?

5. What do you want to learn next?

6. What else can I do to help you learn?



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## **Opening Titles**

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## **Closed Captioning**

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## **For MPT**

### **Managing Director, Education**

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# Credits, cont'd.

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