

'Book Talk'

Reading and Talk

Positive reading involves becoming engaged in the story, as well as deepening understanding and appreciation through drama, art, music, dance, research and, of course, discussion, in which children talk their way towards deeper comprehension. Talking one's way into a deeper understanding is crucial for developing the ability critically to appreciate literature; answering comprehension questions may test understanding and challenge thinking but it is in the discussion that the ability to think critically can be developed. It is worth remembering that comprehension does not develop on its own. It has to be taught, modelled by 'thinking aloud' and teasing at an issue. In particular, the sort of discussion in which the children have time to think collectively, tentatively proposing and reshaping their understanding, is essential for developing readers.

What is 'Book Talk'?

'Book-Talk' is about the ability to talk about books, developing the confidence to offer ideas and then reshape them in the light of other contributions. It helps children to trust their own ideas and interpretations, to talk effectively about a book, deepening their understanding, shifting their ideas, thinking together as a group and moving comprehension forwards. It is important to accept all answers positively but that does not mean that all comments are necessarily sensible interpretations. Children can and should expect to change their minds in the light of what others say. Children are encouraged to raise questions as well as make points and suggestions. It helps to use a phrase such as 'tell me about...' to invite extended thinking. It also helps to use 'mirroring' to encourage further and deeper thinking, often drawing children back to the text or asking them to dig deeper. It helps if the children is in the habit of using tentative language, for example: I'm not sure but; I was wondering whether; perhaps. These can be used with any book to get interpretation started:

What sorts of things did you like or dislike?

Was there anything that puzzled you?

General Questions

Alongside allowing the children to raise questions you could ask them questions such as:

Have you read any other books like this?

How did they compare?

Which part of the book did you enjoy the most?

How did the main character change?

What surprises are there in the book?

Special Questions

These are specific to the book being discussed and should help to deepen understanding. For example, for *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson:

Where did the story happen?

Which character interested you most?

Who was telling the story?

Who were the animals afraid of? Why?

Talk about the links between the story and the illustrations.