

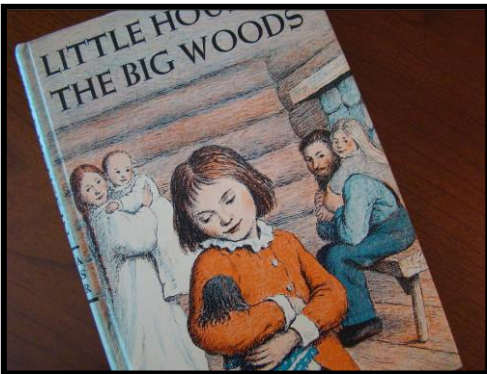
How to Start a Book Club

Reading is a glorious pastime and starting a book club is a great way to promote it in your family. What's a book club? Well, generally it's a mother and daughter or father and son thing but mix it up any way you like. The point is to get into reading, experience all the joy's it has to offer, and share your experiences with others.

Now, you probably understand the "getting into reading" part and the "experiencing the joy" part, but I want to take you to a new level in the "experiencing it with others" part.

Many of the new and successful book clubs that are sprouting up around the country are based on books that offer the ability to *extend* the experience. Let me give you an example. Let's say a moms and daughters book club reads, *Freaky Friday*. Do you all remember this story where a mother and daughter get magically put into each others bodies? Well, when the book club meets to talk about the book, mom's dress and act like daughters and vice versa! Wow! Imagine the conversations and revelations there!

Can you see how taking it all a step further can really enhance the stories read and further the understanding of the topics? Plus, it is just one more way parents and children can spend some quality time together while fostering life long friendships.



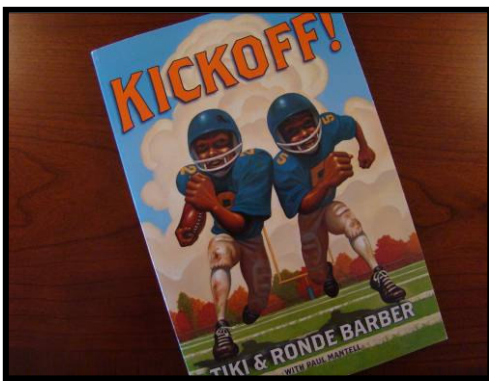
Let's take a look at a couple different ways to bring books to life and have some real family fun at the same time. Food is always a great way to bring people together. Maybe you've been reading the *Little House* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Could everyone bring a dish to the book club meeting that might be something the Wilder's would have made?

Participants could try homemade biscuits, homemade jam and homemade vegetable soup. A younger group might enjoy actually trying green eggs and ham!

Another activity that can really bring reading to life is crafts. Think out of the box on this one too. The story probably isn't about crafts, but you could make something that is an element of the story such as creating paper flowers after reading *The Secret Garden*. Little ones might enjoy coloring bunnies after hearing the story *The Tales of Peter Rabbit*.

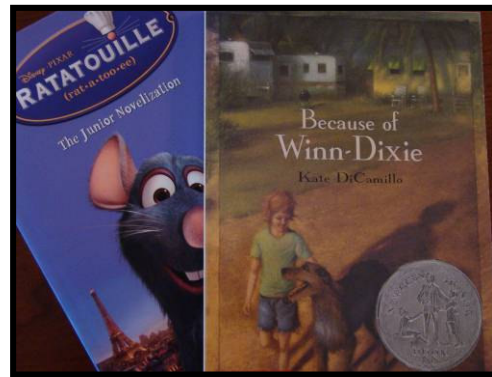


How about making a game of it? Parents can jot down questions about the story that are appropriate for the age of their children. Divide the kids up into teams so they can discuss the answers if they wish. A buzzer or bell to indicate a team has an answer might be fun too. Smaller kids might not like the competition and may have more fun if you bring object from the story to the meeting. The children can explain why the object is important and what it had to do with the story.



Boys don't generally enjoy sitting around talking about books, so if you are considering a mom/son or father/son book club you might want to think about making the meetings active. If you read an adventure story like Huck Finn, how about planning a rafting trip? Sports stories can be followed up by attending a professional sports event. Or, gather together and play a game of football in one of the members' back yard. Do whatever it takes to keep the kids involved and excited about reading!

There are all sorts of books around today that have a movie made after them. This might be a fun way to keep the kids interested. Make them read the book first since that is generally how the process works and then go see, rent or borrow the movie to watch together. It might be fun for everyone to think about the differences between the book and the movie. Which has more details? Has one been more exaggerated? Serve popcorn and include intermissions to keep everyone focused!



Now that you are excited about the idea of a book club, how do you create one that works?

Start by finding a mother/daughter or father/son you know who might be interested. Then, you invite two more pairs and let them invite two more pairs. Consider selecting people out of your current circle of friends to widen your horizons and give your kids a chance to make new friends. This will make you a group of 12 which is just about right.

The adults may want to meet to set up the rules of the club before getting the children involved. Questions need to be answered concerning how the books will be selected, how often the club will meet, where will the club meet, how intense or fun loving will the group be and what happens when someone hasn't read or finished the book?

Most clubs meet once a month but four times a year isn't a bad idea either with the schedules that families keep these days. Rotating around the members' homes allows space for crafting or serving food as mentioned above, but you may prefer to meet at the library or even at a local school.

Let the kids have a big say in the books that are read. You could let each one have a chance selecting a book. Put their names in a hat to get the order of choice. Or, the adults can put together a few selections and let everyone vote. Sometimes the host of the next meeting chooses the book.

Once these questions are answered satisfactorily and everyone agrees, get the kids together and explain how the club will work. They may even have some ideas that change the “ground rules” but isn’t that what makes something like this so much fun?

If you are struggling with book ideas, go on the internet and check out this site. www.teachersfirst.com/100books.htm It gives you a list of books that are just right for certain ages, all on the recommendation of the National Education Association. Or, simply Google, “book club ideas” for pages and pages of information on the topic!

I have a 10 year old boy at home who isn’t all that thrilled about reading so I’m looking into this very idea. He’s at the prime age to instill the joy of reading. I don’t want him to think it’s just more homework, and the whole idea of doing it together with other kids and making more of it than just the reading sure sounds like a winner. I’ll keep you informed on how it goes!

Shari



© 2009. mattandshari.com, all rights reserved.