

Book Report Basics

Teacher's Guide

This is a supplementary guide for the use of educators in instructional circumstances.

Previous to watching the Student Toolbox module entitled 'Book Report Basics,' teachers are encouraged to begin with a class discussion on the topic. Invite students to contribute their thoughts and questions on the subject matter.

This information will reveal what the students already know about the topic. Teachers can affirm correct responses and prepare students for the reception of new information.

Create a list of ideas and concepts under a heading such as "What We Know Already." Invite further comment as this list is assembled. List student suggestions of what they expect or hope to learn from the video they are about to view.

Tell the students that this list will be revisited after viewing the video. Encourage students to view the video closely so as to determine which of their ideas or questions were adequately addressed or not presented within the module.

After watching the module, initiate a brief discussion. Ask your class to confirm whether the content of the module covered the items on the "What We Know Already" list. Ask the students for a new list of new things they learned and ask questions from the question list and initiate activity from the suggestions provided.

Urge students to do follow-up research using the suggested Internet links and by choosing to read from the titles offered.

Program Summary

Writing a book report teaches students to summarize, compare and contrast information, to learn to think ahead, consider different perspectives, gain skills for bigger assignments in higher grades and develop a sense of literary criticism.

There's value in assigning titles to students but when choice is an option it's very important that students be encouraged to choose books to which they can relate and will enjoy reading. That's the first step to successful book report learning. Suggest that students read the cover, the chapter list and the first few pages of potential choices. Students should then choose the book that captured their interest and left them with the desire to read more. The next step is the actual reading of the book. Students should be reminded to find a comfortable place away from distractions. Impress upon students, the value of taking notes and recording key page numbers where excerpts containing useful information for the report can be found. Time management is an important basic and that includes scheduling enough time after reading the book to write the report by the submission deadline. A common structure is to create an outline describing the setting of the book, the time period in which the story takes place, the main characters and the plot. In the case of a non-fiction choice there is no plot as such, so the 'subject' of the book must be outlined.

The circumstances as the story begins and the important events that occur should be noted. The theme of the book should be identified. Students should be invited to offer their thoughts on the objective of the story and whether they believe the author succeeded. Students should be encouraged to comment on the author's style, the setting or overall feeling of the book. The third step to a good book report is the creation of a 'first draft' of the report. This is where the notes are fitted together into sentences and paragraphs under the headings that will be used in the final report. Once the draft has been assembled the final step is to create a nice clean presentation according to the criteria set forth in the original assignment description and that it be submitted on time.

Vocabulary

- **Book Report** - A usually a prolonged homework assignment, in which a student reads a book and prepares a report for submission by a deadline.
- **Criticism** - A written evaluation of a literary creation.
- **Fiction** - A work of the imagination.
- **Submission** - A work submitted for the judgment of others or the act of presenting the work.
- **Deadline** - A date by which specific actions/requirements must be satisfied.
- **Protagonist** - A protagonist is considered to be the main character or lead figure in a book or story.
- **Antagonist** - The character often referred to as the villain that opposes the lead character in a story.
- **Plot** - The action or sequence of events in a story.
- **Theme** - The theme is the principal idea of the story.
- **Biography** - An account of the life of a person written by another person.
- **Draft** - A preliminary version of a written work.

Pre-viewing Discussion

Before the class assemble their list of "What We Know Already" about the basics of creating a book report, stimulate and focus their thinking by outlining the following questions designed to ready them for learning:

- What is a book report?
- Why are book reports important?
- What information should be included in a book report?
- How would you choose the best book for you and your book report?

After the class has assembled their list of "What We Know Already" ask for suggestions of what they expect or hope to learn from the video they are about to view. Tell the students that this list will be revisited after viewing the video. Encourage students to view the video closely so as to determine which of their ideas or questions were adequately addressed or not presented within the module.

Focus Questions

1. What is a Book report?
2. Why are Book Reports useful?
3. What skills are used to create a book report?
4. What is Literary Criticism?
5. Why is it important to choose a book you will enjoy?
6. What are some methods to determine if you might enjoy a possible book choice?
7. What is the difference between a book of fact and a book of fiction?
8. What are some good strategies for reading a book?
9. Why should you keep a pencil and paper handy when reading your book report book?
10. What elements should be in your preliminary outline?
11. Is it possible for a book to have more than one main character?
12. What is a plot?
13. How would you describe a time period or era?
14. What is a 'first draft'?
15. What is the purpose of a deadline?

Follow-up Discussion

Following the viewing it is important to review the beliefs of the class versus the facts revealed by the presentation. Research has concluded that students will maintain their previous ideas and concepts until they specifically recognize and adjust their own mistakes. As such, it is important to guide students toward the correct answers and facts to the questions and issues that they contributed to the "What We Know Already" list.

An effective approach is to pose thought-provoking questions and concepts that lead to fresh thinking. A couple of examples are:

Why is it important that you can demonstrate your understanding of a book?

What skills are used in the preparation of a book report?

What ways could the information in a book report be of value to others?

Follow-up Activities

Have students list the titles of books that they have read and enjoyed. Have them think of words they would use to describe these books, the plots and characters. Follow up their suggestions with an open forum on what sorts of things should be included in a book report. Have the students suggest items for a book report checklist.

Have students meet in small groups to discuss books they have read and to share suggestions with others about books that might be appropriate for a book report assignment. Have a member of each group explain the suggestions that were offered and some of the ideas that each group generated to the rest of the class.

Distribute short stories that can be read quickly and have students make notes and present a 'quickie' book report outlining plot, setting, time period, characters and so on.

Suggested Internet Resources

<http://www.lkwdpl.org/study/bookrep>

This site has a full guideline for effective book reports from start to finish.

<http://www.teachnet.com/lesson/langarts/reading/bookrepts1.html>

This site lists all kinds of activities related to book reports

http://encarta.msn.com/sidebar_701509751/Book_Report.html

Good basic guide to the process of book reports

Suggested Print Resources

Hobson, Margaret & Madden Jennifer CHILDREN'S FICTION SOURCEBOOK Scholar Press Vermont, 1995

Hearne, Betsy CHOOSING BOOKS FOR CHILDREN: A COMMONSENSE GUIDE Delacorte, New York, 1990

Read, Arthea J.S. COMICS TO CLASSICS: A GUIDE TO BOOKS FOR TEENS AND PRETEENS Penguin Books, New York, 1994