

Reframing Student-Selected Reading
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This session is grounded in particular principles about reading and about why we might want kids to read in the first place:

- Most children and adolescents who choose to read do so to make sense of their lives and the world—not to “get better” at reading. We can plan for reading instruction with that in mind.
- What children do as they read, both in their heads and with others outside of books, might matter more than simply how long they read or how many books they read.
- Getting to choose what you read is not just about having control, per se. Rather, it raises the likelihood that you’ll find yourself in a book or conversation that is more meaningful to you.
- Engaged reading is not an individual enterprise—it is heavily social, both inside readers’ heads in conversations with characters and outside of texts in conversations with interested others.

In this session, I’ll talk about how to capitalize on the social dimensions of engaged reading, even when there are multiple books being read in the same classroom. Here are some tips I have observed from teachers who are excellent at this, followed by a rationale for each group of tips¹:

1. How you might start a meaningful conversation in a one-to-one reading conference:

- Catch me up!
- Is this book turning out to be all you hoped it would be?
- What problems are you encountering in your reading today?
- Is this book something I should read?
- Who else in this class would probably like reading this book?

Why? Because these are all open windows that allow the reader to respond in many different ways—ways that will open up conversations that will reveal the extent and ways in which the reader is engaged. Such conversations also reveal what support might be needed and establish a positive, symmetrical relationship within which support might be provided.

2. What you might say to invite group conversation about/through texts:

- Is anyone itching to say something about their book?
- Does anyone have a character in need of our help?
- Have any of you come across a character who is helping you out with a problem?

Why? These sorts of questions are invitations for students to open conversations with classmates. They show an expectation that such conversations are normal, particularly if the teacher sometimes starts the conversation while the class is thinking together around a book. The second of these questions invites conversations that draw readers into characters’ heads—into their thoughts and feelings. Also, along with the third question, it helps readers to see the practical value of reading narrative texts, and helps students become more reflective in their own lives.

¹ Thanks to Dr. Peter Johnston who wrote these with me.

3. Examples of talk that invites students to imagine others' thoughts and feelings:

- I wonder what she's thinking right now.
- How do you think she feels? Why do you think she feels angry?
- If you were in his position, what would you be feeling right now?

These conversations expand children's social imaginations—their ability to imagine themselves into others' thoughts and feelings. Children with stronger social imaginations not only understand complex narrative better, they have stronger social skills, they interact more cooperatively and positively with others, misbehave less, and have better self-regulation and stronger moral development.

4. Examples of talk/questions that invite students to consider multiple perspectives:

- Are there other ways people might think about that?
- What do you think your friends/family might think about that?
- Does anyone have a character from another story who might give this character some good advice?
- We don't hear from the character's mom in the story, but what do you suppose she is thinking?
- Your character is certainly in a dilemma. Let's talk about all the different ways he needs to think about his problem.
- What's a book your character could read to help him think differently about his problem?

Why? These questions invite dialogic engagements with books, characters, and others that provide a foundation for readers' inner dialogues—this is the stuff of deeper understanding not only of the book, but also of themselves and others. These conversations expand students' social imaginations and allow them to see themselves from another's perspective, which is a foundation for self-regulation. Because this kind of talk invites multiple perspectives, it invites uncertainty, which keeps students returning to reconsider their thinking, thus deepening their understanding. We can also ensure uncertainty by using language like "I wonder," "perhaps," and "I think." We can help students take up each other's perspectives by pointing out when students have competing theories about what is happening, by prompting them to look for support for their theories, and by showing them how their different perspectives produced deeper thinking.

Here is a sample list of books that inspire engaged conversations:

Picture Books

14 Cows for America by Carmen Agra Deedy
 A Picnic in October by Eve Bunting
 Birmingham, 1963 by Carole Boston
 Weatherford
 Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes
 City Dog, Country Frog by Mo Willems
 Do Like Kyla by Angela Johnson
 Erika's Story by Ruth Vander Zee
 Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting
 Freedom Summer by Deborah Wiles
 Getting' Through Thursday by Melrose Cooper
 Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild by Mem Fox
 Henry's Freedom Box by Ellen Levine

If the World Were a Village by David J. Smith
 Julias, the Baby of the World by Kevin Henkes
 Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Pena
 Love by Matt de la Pena
 Miz Berlin Walks by Jane Yolen
 Mr. Putter and Tabby by Cynthia Rylant
 Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco
 My Friend John by Charlotte Zolotow
 Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story from
 Afghanistan by Jeanette Winter
 No David! By David Shannon
 One by Kathryn Otoshi
 One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big
 Difference by Katie Smith Milway

Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco
 Say Something by Peggy Moss
 Sheila Rae, the Brave by Kevin Henkes
 Something Beautiful by Sharon Dennis Wyeth
 Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against the
 Odds by Robert Burleigh
 The Bracelet by Yoshiko Uchida
 The Composition by Antonio Skarmeta
 The Faithful Elephants: A True Story of Animals,
 People, and War by Yukio Tsuchiya
 The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig
 The Hickory Chair by Lisa Rowe Fraustino
 The Librarian of Basra by Jeanette Winter
 The Memory String by Eve Bunting
 The Moon Was the Best by Charlotte Zolotow
 The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson
 The Skunk by Mac Barnett
 The Three Questions by Jon J. Muth
 Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts
 Tight Times by Barbara Shook Hazen
 Voices in the Park by Anthony Browne
 Waiting (Kevin Henkes)
 Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from
 Africa by Jeanette Winter
 Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes
 William's Doll by Charlotte Zolotow
 Wings by Christopher Myers
 Zen Ghosts and Zen Ghosts and Zen Ties by Jon
 J. Muth

Intermediate Chapter Books

A Handful of Stars by Cynthia Lord
 As Brave As You by Jason Reynolds
 All the Broken Pieces by Ann E. Burg
 Anything But Typical by Nora Raleigh Baskin
 Because of Mr. Terupt by Rob Buyea
 Booked by Kwame Alexander
 Chicken Boy by Frances O'Roark Dowell
 Crenshaw by Katherine Applegate
 Counting by 7's by Holly Goldberg Sloan
 Courage for Beginners by Karen Harrington
 Defiance by Valeria Hobbs
 Discovering Wes Moore by Wes Moore
 Do Not Pass Go by K. Hill
 El Deafo by Cece Bell
 Firegirl by Tony Abbott
 Four Mile by Watt Key
 Gaby, Lost and Found by Angela Cervantes

Garvey's Choice by Nikki Grimes
 Ghost by Jason Reynolds
 Half a Chance by Cynthia Lord
 Hold Fast by Blue Ballet
 House Arrest by K. A. Holt
 I Heart You, You Haunt Me by Lisa Schroeder
 Jake and Lily by Jerry Spinelli
 Kinda' Like Brothers by Coe Booth
 Laminar by Skila Brown
 Lily and Dunkin by Donna Gephart
 Lost in the Sun by Lisa Graff
 Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine
 One for the Murphys by Lynda Mullally Hunt
 Orbiting Jupiter by Lisa Schroeder
 One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia
 Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper
 Paper Things by Jennifer Richard Jacobson
 Patina by Jason Reynolds
 Pax by Sara Pennypacker
 Playground by 50 Cent
 Rain Reign by Ann M. Martin
 Ruby on the Outside by Nora Raleigh Baskin
 Serafina's Promise by Ann E. Burg
 Still a Work In Progress by Jo Knowles
 The Crossover by Kwame Alexander
 The Fourteenth Goldfish by Jennifer Holm
 The Honest Truth by Dan Gemienhart
 The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate
 The Red Pencil by Andrea Davis Pinkney
 The Seventh Wish by Kate Messner
 The Swap by Megan Shull
 The Thing About Jellyfish by Ali Benjamin
 Twerp by Mark Goldblatt
 Unbound by Ann E. Burg
 Unfriended by Rachel Vail
 Unlocked by Ryan Van Cleave
 When Friendship Followed Me Home by Paul
 Griffen
 Wonder by R. J. Palacio
 Wolf Hollow by Lauren Wolk

7th-8th Grade and Up

Alicia Afterimage (Delacore)
 All American Boys (Reynolds & Kiely)
 Allegedly (Jackson)
 And We Stay (Hubbard)
 Ball Don't Lie (Matt de la Pena)
 Because I am Furniture (Chaltas)

Before I Fall (Lauren Oliver)
 Belzhar (Wolitzer)
 Bereft (Gidney)
 Bitter End (Brown)
 Black and White (Volponi)
 Boy 21 (Quick)
 Broken China (Williams)
 Bronxwood (Booth)
 Bruiser (Shusterman)
 Burned (Hopkins)
 By the Time You Read This I'll Be Dead (Peters)
 Carter Finally Gets It (Crawford)
 Cashay (McMullan)
 Challenger Deep (Shusterman)
 Charm and Strange (Kuehn)
 Chasing Brooklyn (Schroeder)
 Crank (Hopkins)
 Dear Martin (Stone)
 Delirium (Oliver)
 Eleanor & Park (Rowell)
 Everlost (Shusterman)
 Every Day (Levithan)
 Falling for You (Schroeder)
 Far From You (Schroeder)
 Fat Angie (Charlton-Trujillo)
 Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock (Quick)
 Freakboy by Kristin Elizabeth Clark
 Gadget Girl: The Art of Being Invisible (Kamata)
 Glimpse (Lynch-Williams)
 Grace (Scott)
 Gym Candy (Deuker)
 Hate List (Brown)
 He Said She Said (Alexander)
 Homeboyz (Sitomer)
 How it Went Down (Magoon)
 I Heart You, You Haunt Me (Schroeder)
 If I Grow Up (Strasser)
 If You Find Me (Murdoch)
 In Ecstasy (McCaffrey)
 Kendra (Booth)
 Kindness for Weakness (Goodman)
 Knockout Games (Neri)
 Jumped In (Flores-Scott)
 Jumping Off Swings (Knowles)
 I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter (Sanchez)
 Identical (Hopkins)
 Lessons From a Dead Girl (Knowles)
 Leverage (Cohen)
 Light of Day (Van Diepen)
 Living Dead Girl (Scott)
 Living With Jackie Chan (Knowles)
 Long Way Down (Reynolds)
 Love and Leftovers (Tregay)
 Miles Morales Spider Man (Reynolds)
 On the Edge (van Diepen)
 Orbiting Jupiter (Schmidt)
 Payback Time (Deuker)
 Perfect Chemistry (Elkeles)
 Piecing Me Together (Watson)
 Pointe (Colbert)
 Reality Boy (King)
 Response (Volponi)
 Rucker Park Set Up (Volponi)
 Rumble (Hopkins)
 Sellout (Wilkins)
 Shiver (Stiefvater)
 Side Effects May Vary (Murphy)
 Snitch (van Diepen)
 Solo (Alexander)
 Something Like Hope (Goodman)
 Street Pharm (van Diepen)
 Swagger (Deuker)
 Takedown (van Diepen)
 The Beginning of Everything (Schneider)
 The Chosen One (Lynch-Williams)
 The Fault in Our Stars (Green)
 The Final Four (Volponi)
 The Golden Boys (Hartnett)
 The Hate You Give (Thomas)
 The Haven (Lynch-Williams)
 The Living (Matt de la Peña)
 The Miseducation of Cameron Post (Danforth)
 The Sky is Everywhere (Nelson)
 The Way I Used to Be (Smith)
 Thirteen Reasons Why (Asher)
 This Song Will Save Your Life (Sales)
 Torn Away (Brown)
 Try Not to Breathe (Hubbard)
 Twenty Boy Summer (Ockler)
 Tyrell (Booth)
 Unwind (Shusterman)
 Waiting (Lynch-Williams)
 Walking on Glass (Fullerton)
 When I Was the Greatest (Reynolds)

Here are some things Peter Johnston and I have written about this topic:

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