
16 Ways to Bring Books Alive



by Jane Oh

When your child thinks of literature, he probably thinks of hours spent alone, nose in a book. But reading is only one of many ways that literature can come alive for your child, and by responding to what they read, students can deepen their understanding, while also having some fun!

A response to literature is simply communicating what you think and understand about what you read. There are many ways to have your child respond to literature, including discussion, written expression, arts and crafts, and drama. By giving your child multiple opportunities to respond to literature in varied ways, he can construct a more personal meaning for himself. Here are some ideas to explore your child's responses to literature:

Writing

- *Write a different ending.* By encouraging your child to reimagine the story, you are putting her in the shoes of the author, and giving her a taste of the creative power of writing.
- *Write a poem.* Poetry is a wonderful way to let kids use their imagination, and express their thoughts and feelings in an unstructured atmosphere.
- *Complete an author study* to get inside the head of the author. Where is she from? What other books has she written? What do you think inspires her, and what does she like writing about the most? Encourage your child to conduct research into his favorite author and draw conclusions about who that person is.
- *Write a song.* Sometimes setting your thoughts to a tune can free your imagination. But what your child may not know is that composing lyrics involves working with meter, rhyme, and other important composition skills that will help her in every aspect of writing!

Arts and Crafts

- *Design a new book jacket.* How do you imagine the book? Is it dark and scary, or bright and light? Consider genre, such as mystery, romance, historical fiction, and non-fiction. How do you feel these different genres, and the themes that they address, should be visually represented? How about typeface, and color? This activity not only gives your child a creative outlet to express his ideas: it also entails a careful consideration of character, plot, tone, theme, and genre!
- *Draw a cartoon strip.* By encapsulating his ideas into cartoon characters and dialogue, your child will be practicing an important skill: distilling a single theme, scene, or character interaction from a larger work, and using it as a jumping-off point.
- *Create an illustrated-only book.* This will further develop your child's eye for scene and tone, as well as build skills in visualizing literature that are relevant in film, photography, and fiction.
- *Write favorite phrases and make a mobile.* By incorporating favorite phrases, your child is developing one of the most important skills in the study of literature: the identification and extraction of interesting or pertinent quotes from a work.
- *Create a book box diorama.* By using a shoe box or other box, encourage your child to construct a scene from his favorite book. Anything, from doll furniture to popsicle sticks to cotton balls and colored paper, can be used to set the scene. Not only will your child be using her imagination, she'll also be practicing the rudiments of stage-design and direction!
- *Design a storyboard.* Used in film production to plan how a scene unfolds, shot by shot, a storyboard is a great way to get any aspiring movie-maker, or visual learner, into literature. Encourage your child to imagine a scene in a book as if it were a movie, with him as the director. Have him draw as many frames as he wants to use, and encourage him to play with perspective, lighting effects, body language, and more to convey the meaning of the scene.

Drama

- *Give a speech as if you were a character.* Monologues give your child the opportunity to imagine what a character might say in any given situation, and are a great opportunity to experiment with humor and drama!
- *Put on a play.* Staging literature with physical characters can bring it to life like nothing else. Shakespeare, anyone?
- *Make puppets and put on a puppet show.* This activity puts arts and crafts, acting, set design, and more into play, and gives your child a taste of the dramatic power behind every work of literature.

Discussion

- *Child-led book talk.* It's the simplest way to get your child's response to what he's reading, and sometimes, the best. Sitting down with your child to talk about a book or hash out themes and characters together not only helps him give words to his thoughts, it can also lead to important conversations about his life, friends, family, and anything that might come up in conversation. Plus, this activity doubles as good old-fashioned quality time!
- *Book club meetings with peers.* Setting up a book club, or even getting friends together for an informal chat about what they're reading, can help your child communicate her ideas in a stress-free

environment, and can also give her fresh perspectives into the book.

- *Get online.* E-pals provides an online book club popular with kids.
www.epals.com/projects/book_club/

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