



Book Talk cards: top tips from Dawn and Zeena

How to choose a book

Choose a book which you have read and really enjoyed for several reasons - perhaps it had strong characterisation, a gripping plot or a good message, or books which deal with anything current or topical. Then consider if the children in your class will enjoy it as much as you did. Ensure that it is age appropriate and aligns with the interests and reading levels of your class.

Make notes on key points to discuss. Share with the children the main themes of the book, so they have some understanding before reading.

How to engage the children

Give a short presentation of the book without giving too much away, especially the ending. Share with the children the main themes of the book, so they have some understanding before reading. Sell all the best bits of the book! This will convince your class that they must read the book and that the book talk itself is going to be fun.

Ask questions which you know will generate good discussion – so nothing to do with simple retrieval of information, or questions on authorial intent or language, or questions with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ reply. Make sure it’s very different from the comprehension type questions that they are used to answering.

Try to ask questions where the children can bring in their own personal experiences, emotions and understanding of the wider world and develop their own critical thinking skills.

Make the sessions fun and non-threatening. Make it clear to the pupils that there are no right or wrong answers, their opinions will be respected and listened to. You might want to start with ‘what did you like?’ ‘What didn’t you like?’ These talks are meant to generate interest in reading and promote a love of reading. Encourage active participation from all children to make it enjoyable and engaging.

Making connections and further reading

What other books have you or the children read that had a similar story line, characters or problems?

After reading the book, recommend similar books or other works by the same author. This helps expand students’ reading choices and encourages them to explore different genres and authors.