



Booktalking: Transforming Dormant to Passionate Readers

Nothing gets kids to pick up a book faster than hearing about it from a peer or trusted teacher. But before you can teach your students how to read, write, practice, and deliver great booktalks, you have to be the model. Booktalking can be a collaborative process for adults and children, so working with a colleague may be the fastest way to transform your class, grade, or entire campus. Push the boundaries of your favorite genres by discussing books others would want to read. If your students listened to a booktalk a day, they would be introduced to 180 books a year by their peers and you! With this workshop's booktalk tips, lesson plans, and engaging activities, you'll learn how to create an incredible booktalking culture in your school.

Current Research

“During booktalks, students are engaged and want to know more about the books. Most importantly, students are eager to read many of the books their teachers introduce. Teachers believe the booktalks are an effective way to expose students to a wide range of book titles and to share additional information about the literary world.”

– Wozniak, *Voices from the Middle*, Volume 19 Number 2, December 2011,
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Guidebook Resources

- Student Booktalk Tips
- Booktalk Starter Cards
- Top 10 Tips for Coaching Booktalks
- Booktalk Checklists
- Booktalking Activities
- Booktalk in the Classroom: Easy Lesson Plans to Hook Your Kids on Books

Optional Resources

[scholastic.com/bookfairs/books/booktalks](https://www.scholastic.com/bookfairs/books/booktalks)

[scholastic.com/bookfairs/books/podcasts](https://www.scholastic.com/bookfairs/books/podcasts)

[scholastic.com/teachers](https://www.scholastic.com/teachers)

All program resources are available at:

[scholastic.com/bookfairs/reading-summit](https://www.scholastic.com/bookfairs/reading-summit)



Student Booktalk Tips

- 1 Read your book thoroughly.**

You might even want to take notes if inspiration strikes while you are reading! Make sure this is a book you love; if you'd rate it less than an eight out of 10, find a different book!
- 2 Open strong!**

Think about starting your booktalk by asking a question: "What scares you the most?" Or start by giving your thoughts on a character you loved: "This is the bravest dog I've ever met." Don't start with something predictable like, "This book is called..." or "This book is about..." Surprise and excite your audience!
- 3 Find a hook.**

Consider your audience. Is there some element of this story that you know will especially interest your peers? Perhaps there's intense magic, an adorable dog, or a talented surfer? Think about the aspects of the story that made it engaging for you.
- 4 Don't give it all away.**

Think of this like a preview, not a whole movie. Leave them begging for more! End with a cliffhanger such as, "Will he get out in time?" Remember, the idea is to get them interested enough to want to read the book.
- 5 Enhance your presentation with props.**

Carry an umbrella for a book about a rainy day, or wear a cap for a book about baseball. Be creative! Just be sure not to wear anything that will muffle your sound, such as a mask. What you are saying is much more important than how you look!
- 6 Suggest other great reads.**

"If you liked _____, then you'll love this!" Think of a similar book which you know was a hit in your school or classroom.

Booktalk!

Booktalk *noun* (buk)(tawk)

1. A conversation about a book that one has read, infused with joy and emotion. Best if done daily.

Booktalking Tips for Students

1. Choose a book you thought was terrific.
2. Pick a booktalk starter card to help you start your booktalk.
3. Stand up, either at your desk or in the front of the room.
4. Hold up the book so the cover can be seen clearly.
5. Speak with energy and enthusiasm.
6. Smile!



Booktalk!

Starter Card

I loved this book because...

Booktalk!

Starter Card

This book made me laugh like crazy because...

Booktalk!

Starter Card

You have to read this book because it...

Booktalk!

Starter Card

This book made me cry because...

Booktalk!

Starter Card

If you like to be scared, then you have to read...

Booktalk!

Starter Card

A character in this book reminded me of my friend because...

Top 10 Tips for Coaching the Perfect Booktalk

Because you're an educator, we know you want your students to shine. We also know that reading, writing, and public speaking can be difficult for some students. Here are some tips to help students create booktalks they'll deliver with pride:

- 1 Be a booktalk model.** Demonstrate the right attitude toward booktalks by performing them yourself, often, and with enthusiasm. Let them see how much you enjoy sharing books with them in this special way!
- 2 Let students booktalk books they really love.** A genuine recommendation comes from genuine enthusiasm for a book. Although you can certainly guide your students in making their selections, be sure that their choices are ultimately their own.
- 3 Give them time to work on their writing during class.** For some students, writing the booktalk can be the scariest part of the process. If time permits, let them do some of the writing in class when you are available to offer guidance and support.
- 4 Encourage small-group rehearsals.** Speaking in front of large audiences can be difficult for even your most outgoing students. Have them practice in front of just a few other students, or one-on-one, until they feel comfortable enough to share with the whole class.
- 5 Promote strong listening skills.** Performing to a disinterested audience is a challenge. Remind students to be courteous – still, silent, and focused – while others booktalk. Don't forget the applause!
- 6 Ask prompting questions.** Sometimes, even well-rehearsed students freeze up. If a student is struggling to recall his or her booktalk, jump in and ask questions like, "What are some similar books to this?" or "What drew you to pick up and read this book?"
- 7 Allow notes when needed.** Although an ideal booktalk is so well rehearsed the speaker does not need written prompts, it's okay to permit students to read from notes if they need them. Quick notes and bullet points on index cards can be helpful for students to recall character names, dates, and other details they don't want to forget.
- 8 Create a positive booktalking environment in the room.** Post on your door a sign that reads, "Booktalks in Progress." Ask the school office to hold any notes or passes. Avoid interruptions.
- 9 Give positive feedback.** Even if a student forgets her cliffhanger, mispronounces the author's name, or never looks up from her notes, let her know you appreciate her effort and emphasize at least one thing she did well.
- 10 When possible, do not grade booktalks.** Booktalks are best when given as a true, joyful reaction to a book. When students know they are being graded, they may perform booktalks which are technically flawless but also passionless. Let their personalities shine; try using booktalks as a tool only to foster a love of reading.

Booktalking: Have I Chosen the Right Book?

1. Would you rate the book an 8 or higher out of 10?
a. Yes b. No
2. Did the book teach you something (about yourself/the world)?
a. Yes b. No
3. Did you connect personally with the book?
a. Yes b. No
4. Do you feel compelled to share this book with others?
a. Yes b. No
5. Is this a new book for the members of the group?
a. Yes b. No
6. If the book has been booktalked before, can you provide a new perspective on it?
a. Yes b. No
7. Can you give an appealing sneak preview in three minutes or less?
a. Yes b. No

If you answered "Yes" for four or more of these questions, then congratulations!
You've chosen the right book!

If you answered "No" for the majority of these questions, consider choosing a
different book for your booktalk.



Booktalking: Is Your Booktalk WOW-Ready?

Complete this simple five-step checklist to ensure that your booktalk is ready for its debut.

Have you selected your book?

- You can't have the right booktalk without the right book! See "**Booktalking: Have I Chosen the Right Book?**" on page 1 for guidance.

Have you written or typed your booktalk?

- When tested in booktalk groups, even the most theatrical students and adults did better with a written, rehearsed draft. Depending on your writing preference, use full sentences, an outline, or bullets.

Have you practiced it out loud, in front of a mirror or a friend?

- Practice makes perfect ... or at least it makes you comfortable when getting up in front of an audience.

Did it take three minutes or less to share?

- As we mentioned on page 1, less is more! Make sure your booktalk includes intriguing highlights without giving too much away. The goal is to entice your audience to pick up the book ... and read it!

Have you considered adding visuals, such as props or a costume?

- Visuals can be a nice way to immerse your audience even deeper into the story, as long as it fits well into your booktalk and isn't distracting.

**Once you've completed each of these steps, you're ready to WOW your audience!
Shake off the nerves—you've got this!**



Booktalking Recap Survey: How Did It Go?

Congratulations on presenting your booktalk! Please take a couple of minutes to complete this short survey and write down your thoughts about how it went. These notes will come in handy when preparing for future booktalks, allowing you to fine tune your presentation.

How long did your booktalk take?

- Longer than I thought/planned
- The length I expected/planned
- Shorter than I thought/planned

What do you think affected the length of your booktalk?

- I spoke more slowly than I intended
- I spoke the right amount of time
- I spoke more quickly than I intended

How did your audience react?

- They reacted appropriately—laughing, gasping, sighing, etc.
- They were mostly quiet

In one to two sentences, explain any specific reactions from your audience:

When it was over, did your audience: (check all that apply)

- Applaud
- Ask questions
- Write down the name of the book
- Share similar stories/book recommendations
- Ask to borrow the book
- None of the above

Now that my booktalk is over, I feel: (check all that apply)

- Great! I can't wait to do another.
- Relieved. It's nerve-wracking to speak in front of an audience!
- That it could have been better.
- Other: _____

Booktalk!

Educator

Booktalking Activities

Booktalking Buddies: Positive Influences Across Grade Levels

Want your students to model good booktalking skills? They need the right audience! Students in younger grade levels are eager listeners. It's fun for everyone!

What

Rehearsed booktalks performed with gusto. These don't have to be perfect, but they should be polished.

Who

Try to group students with children at least two grades younger than they are. Younger students look up to and admire older readers, and prove to be an enthusiastic audience. Just keep in mind this age difference as your students make their book selections. If booktalking to a kindergarten class, for example, picture books are the most appropriate choice. Remember that a great booktalk convinces the listener to read the book – select books that your audience can read if their interest is piqued.

When and Where

Booktalking can happen anywhere, at any time! However, you'll want everyone to be comfortable; your booktalkers may be nervous and your audience may be easily distracted. This might mean booktalking in a communal space familiar to both of them, such as the media center or cafeteria. It's always a great time to booktalk, but keep in mind that students may get riled up – booktalking is fun! You might find that it's the perfect way to end the school day.

Why

Ultimately, you want your students to feel comfortable performing booktalks for as many types of people as possible. But before they're ready for their peers or their parents, students in lower grades might be a great start: they're a fascinated and forgiving audience. Younger students benefit as well as they see positive role models of reading. They'll begin looking forward to the day when they are the ones performing booktalks!

Booktalks in the Classroom: Easy Lesson Plans to Hook Your Kids on Books

Plan to Share at least one booktalk each day. Great examples are available on our booktalking video site: scholastic.com/bookfairs/booktalk. Check it out!

Picture the Book (all grades)

Objective: Students will learn how to give a basic booktalk.

Divide students into pairs and distribute picture books along with copies of the Student Booktalk Tips. Ask students to read the book aloud together, and then create a simple, but effective, booktalk to “sell” this book to other students. Offer students the opportunity to perform this in front of the class.

Questions: What is the value in learning how to booktalk using books that are below your reading level? How can you apply the skills learned from this lesson to your own peer-to-peer booktalks?

Bonus: Invite your students to booktalk to a younger class.

Booktalk BINGO (all grades)

Objective: Students will learn techniques on how to give a better booktalk.

Build your Booktalk BINGO board: Ask students to help you generate a list of ideas on how to give a great booktalk. Turn this list into short phrases (such as “start with a question,” “wear a costume,” or “booktalk without a script”), and then create BINGO cards online using these phrases (try print-bingo.com).

How to play: Together, watch the booktalk videos featured online at scholastic.com/bookfairs/booktalk. Tell students to mark/cross off each suggestion they see demonstrated in the videos (for example, if a video features a student booktalking while wearing a cape, students can mark off “wear a costume”). The first student to get a line (or a box, or a zig-zag) wins.

Questions: How did this exercise make the videos more effective? Which video was your favorite and why? Does the subject of the book matter if the booktalk is interesting?

Bonus: Have your class create accounts online and upload their own booktalk videos!

Booktalk Improv (upper grades)

Objective: Students will learn to incorporate new elements into their booktalks.

Ask students to come prepared to give a booktalk without using props. Divide the class into groups of four and give each group four random props or costumes (a baseball, a blanket, a shoe, a crown, etc.). Have each student perform his/her booktalk to the group. After everyone has performed, ask the group to work together to figure out how to use the props (one prop per person) in each booktalk. (For example, a student might wear a crown and say, “Sarah felt like the queen of middle school.”) Ask for volunteers to share their new booktalks at the end.

Questions: How did using a prop or costume enhance your booktalk? Why is it more interesting to watch a booktalk that uses some kind of visual aid?

Bonus: Build a Booktalk Box! Give students inspiration to enhance their booktalks by keeping a communal prop box in the classroom. Ask students to bring in small items they are willing to donate (with parent permission).