

experience or evocation. Evocation and analysis cannot occur at the same time. Therefore, it is essential for adults to wait for children to internalize the story before formally analyzing it or its elements to avoid the risk of imposing their own or someone else's analysis of the story. During this time for internalizing, I suggest the teacher do something different with the story; for example, reading something else that relates to the story or connecting the story to another subject area such as social studies by talking about the setting. After a minimum of one day, teachers can return to the book. At that time, children should be able to analyze the book informally and spontaneously.

One way for the teacher to initiate analysis is to ask children to draw a scene as they visualize it while hearing a passage or after they read. This is a most productive activity for all ages, because much will be revealed that the teacher could learn in no other way. Asking children to tell you about their drawings will help them verbalize their personal meanings. Once the drawings and verbalizations have occurred, then small or large group discussions will allow readers to share their various meanings. This sharing allows readers to learn to respect the opinions of others, to ask questions for clarification, and to extend their individual meanings if they so choose. It is usually necessary for the teacher to model for children how to show respect for the interpretations and opinions of others, but this can be done only if the teacher genuinely accepts diverse opinions.

Literature Circles

A great way to turn kids on to books, allowing them to respond to what they read by sharing their thoughts with others, is literature circles. These are small temporary discussion groups that have chosen to read the same book. More is said about literature circles in Chapter 14, but here I offer a brief outline based on *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom* (Daniels, 1994):

- Students choose their own reading materials.
- Small temporary groups are formed, based on book choices.
- Different groups read different books.
- Groups meet on a regular schedule to discuss their reading.
- Students use notes to guide both their reading and discussion.
- Discussion topics come from the students.
- Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations generated through personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions about books.
- In newly formed groups, students play a rotating assortment of task roles.
- The teacher serves as a *facilitator*, not as a group member or instructor.

Developing a Classroom Library

by Susan E. Knell

Imagine wanting to be an excellent basketball player, chef, or musician and not having the tools around that you need to succeed. To become accomplished at anything,

you must have practice tools at hand, such as a basketball hoop in the driveway, cookbooks in the kitchen, or music books at the piano. The same is true with children learning to read. They need the tools nearby that will help them practice to become proficient readers.

Good classroom libraries are not a luxury; they are vital to children's success in becoming lifelong readers. In many schools, classes make only one thirty-minute visit to the school library weekly, and children are typically limited to checking out two books. What happens if they finish their books before the next weekly trip, discover their books are too difficult/easy, or simply find they do not like them well enough to finish? Individual trips back to the library may cause children to miss instruction, or at the very least it will waste part of their free reading period.

So, what does a good classroom library include? It should contain books from all genres, including nonfiction. In fact, I suggest that at least 40 percent of your collection consist of nonfiction because it can increase children's world knowledge base while expanding their curiosities. Be sure to include picture books, quality series books, magazines, newspapers, and reference books (such as atlases, dictionaries, and a space-saving encyclopedia on CD-ROM). Books the children have written and bound should also be included.

The most inviting and attractive rooms are those where books are displayed prominently throughout. Your classroom library should look more like a bookstore where books are displayed everywhere, arranged in interesting ways to encourage children to pick them up and start reading. Wherever possible, display book covers facing the children. A great way to do this is by installing inexpensive rain gutters made of enameled reinforced plastic (about \$3 per ten-foot strip at a home improvement store). They are easily cut to any size, and the plastic support brackets can be screwed into almost any wall, including concrete blocks. (See Jim Trelease's website at www.release-on-reading.com and click on Rain Gutter Bookshelves.)

Following are more ideas for effective book displays:

- Bookshelves on wheels that can be moved to create various learning environments and centers
- Colorful plastic cartons that are labeled for easy identification by titles, authors, themes, genres, or topics
- Baskets of various sizes and shapes
- Empty desks
- Chalkboard trays
- Small tables underneath author or genre bulletin board displays
- Clothes-drying racks for big books, magazines, and newspapers

I suggest starting with about 300 trade books, depending on the children's ages and diversity of reading levels. You may certainly begin with fewer books—just set a goal to add at least two more books per child each year. Building your classroom library takes some time, but it need not take a lot of money. You can borrow books from your school or public library. Though these will not be a permanent part of your collection, they add many choices for children. Most libraries do not have a check-out limit for teachers, so periodic trips can keep your collection new.

School book clubs give free books to teachers, according to the dollar amount ordered. Prices are reasonable and titles include both classic books and new best-sellers, so get your children and their families involved in ordering books.

At the beginning of the school year, send a letter home to parents suggesting they donate books in honor of children's birthdays and in lieu of holiday or end of year presents for you. If parent groups conduct school book fairs, ask them to donate proceeds for classroom libraries or purchase books directly. Paste a bookplate or label in each, acknowledging the person who donated it. (You can print them with any art software program, such as Print Artist.)

Buy used books at garage sales, flea markets, and library sales. You may find books in good condition at a very cheap price. Also, look for bargains in the large discount chain stores, where good titles can often be found among the grocery store books. And if you are lucky enough to live in an area that has a Book Warehouse outlet, you can find new books for half price! Some may be a bit shopworn, but most are publisher overruns or bookstore leftovers that are in new condition.

Alma Flor Ada tells a wonderful story of her son's third-grade teacher who implemented a year-long program called "The One Thousand Book Classroom" (see *A Magical Encounter*, 2003, pp. 18–25). The children in this classroom wrote letters requesting books from publishers, authors, school board members, legislators, and community leaders. They later extended the letters to state, national, and international levels. By the end of the school year, they far exceeded their goal of 1,000 books!

To identify new titles for your collection, you must keep current in the field of children's literature. Frequent the children's section of local bookstores to see what is newly published. Most will allow you to read books without buying them. Read book reviews in professional journals and online (Amazon Internet bookstore at www.amazon.com has reviews of nearly every book in print). Attend professional conferences such as International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English to hear authors speak, browse the book exhibits, and attend sessions on children's literature. Communicate frequently with your school and public librarians to discover new books, to find out which books the children are reading, and to learn new trends in children's literature.

Make building your classroom library a priority that continues throughout your teaching career. Being excited about your library will be contagious, and children will revel in the reading choices they have right in their own classroom—the enjoyable tools they need to learn.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS CITED IN CHAPTER 2

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