

BETTER BOOK REPORTS -- 25 IDEAS!

Make A Book Report Sandwich!

The teacher commissioned a friend to draw slices of ham, tomato, and Swiss cheese; lettuce leaves; a layer of mayonnaise, and a couple of slices of bread. Then she photocopied the drawings onto appropriately colored sheets of paper -- ham on pink, tomato on red, Swiss cheese on yellow, etc. The sheets served as the ingredients for her students' book report sandwiches.

On the top slice of bread, each student wrote the title and the author of the book the student had just finished reading. On the lettuce, the student wrote a brief summary of the book. The student wrote about the main character on the tomato slice. On the mayonnaise, the student described the book's setting. The student shared the book's climax on the Swiss cheese. On the ham slice, the student described the plot. On the bottom piece of bread, the student drew a favorite scene from the story.

Students stapled together their sandwich layers, then slapped their concoctions up on a bulletin board headlined "We're Hungry for Good Books!"

The project made fun out of what can be a pretty hum-drum activity. Even better, the bulletin board served as a menu for students who were ravenous for a good read. All they had to do was grab a sandwich to learn whether a particular book might satisfy their appetites!

Book In A Bag, An Envelope, An Oatmeal Box

After choosing and reading a book, each student selected a book report container. The container could be a plastic bag, a manila envelope, a can, or anything else that might be appropriate for a book. Students decorated their containers to convey some of the major details, elements, or themes found in the books.

When the containers were complete, students went to work on the contents of their containers. They were instructed to include the following:

- **Questions** Write ten questions based on the book. Five of the questions can be about general content, but the other five must require more thinking.
- **Vocabulary** Create a ten-word glossary of unfamiliar words from the book.
- **Things** Include five things that have a connection to the story.

The third and final part of the project was the student presentation. Each student presented a "Book in a..." project to the class. In the presentation, the student explained the connection of the container to the story, conducted a show and tell about the five things, and then shared information about three of the book's literary elements -- setting, characters, conflicts, climax, or resolution.

If you've been working on other literary elements with your students -- foreshadowing, personification, or flashbacks, for example -- you might give extra credit to students for pointing out those elements in their books.

Descriptive writing.

(Use this activity to supplement a class lesson in descriptive prose writing.) Have each student read aloud the best example of descriptive prose found in the book he or she is currently reading. The student should write a paragraph explaining why the excerpt is a particularly good example of

descriptive prose. The paragraph might include some of the adjectives the author used to set the scene.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down!

Each student writes a review of the book he or she just finished reading -- in the style of a movie review. The student concludes by awarding a thumbs up or thumbs down on the book. This activity could be even more fun if two students read the same book. They could plan a lively interaction, ala and Ebert and Roeper, about the book, which could be videotaped for all to see!

Character Trait Diagram.

Each student creates a Venn diagram to illustrate similarities and differences in the traits of two of the main characters in a book just completed. (A student might elect to create a Venn diagram showing similarities and differences between the book's main character and the student!)

Surfing the Net.

Where did the story take place? When did it take place? Each student surfs the Net to find five Internet sites that others might check out before they read the book so they will know more about the book's setting or time period.

Write a Letter to the Author.

After reading a book, each student shares reactions to the book in a letter written to its author. If a student writes to an author who is still alive, you might actually mail the letter.

Sell It!

Each student pretends to be a publicist for the book that's just been read. The student writes and then delivers a 60-second speech that will persuade other students that they should read the book. Writing and speaking persuasively will be especially difficult if the student didn't like the book. If that's the case, the student can share that fact after completing the speech.

Create a Card Catalog.

After reading a book, a student completes an index card with information about the book. The front of the card includes details such as title, author, and date published along with a two- to three-sentence synopsis of the book. On the back of the card, the student writes a paragraph critiquing the book. Students might even rate the book using a teacher-created five-star rating system. Example: A five-star book is "highly recommended; a book you can't put down." Completed cards are kept in a card file near the classroom bookshelf or in the school library.

Interview a Character.

Each student composes six to eight questions to ask a main character in a book just completed. The student also writes the character's response to each question. The questions and answers should provide information that shows the student read the book without giving away the most significant details.

Ten Facts.

Each student creates a "Ten Facts About [book title]" sheet that lists ten facts he or she learned from reading the book. The facts, written in complete sentences, must include details the student didn't know before reading the book.

Script It!

Each student writes a movie script for a favorite scene in a book just read. At the top of the script, the student can assign real-life TV or movie stars to play each role. The student might also work with classmates to perform the favorite scene.

Concentration.

Each student will need 30 index cards to create a Concentration-style game related to a book just finished. The student chooses 14 things, characters, or events that played a part in the book and creates two cards that have identical pictures of each of those things. The two remaining cards are marked Wild Card! Then the student turns all 30 cards facedown and mixes them up. Each student can choose a partner with whom to play according to the rules of Concentration.

What Did You Learn?

Each student writes a summary of what he or she learned from a book just completed. The summary might include factual information, something learned about people in general, or something the student learned about himself or herself.

Glossary and Word Search.

Each student creates a glossary of ten or more words that are specific to a book's tone, setting, or characters. The student defines each word and writes a sentence from the book that includes that word. Then the student creates a word search puzzle that includes the glossary words. Students can exchange their glossaries and word searches with others in the class.

In the News!

Each student creates the front page of a newspaper that tells about events and characters in a book just read. The newspaper page might include weather reports, an editorial or editorial cartoon, ads, etc. The title of the newspaper should be something appropriate to the book.

Create a Comic Book.

Each student can turn a book, or part of it, into a comic book, complete with comic-style illustrations and dialogue bubbles.

Characters Come to Life!

Each student creates life-size "portraits" of one of the characters from a book just read. The portrait should include a written piece that tells about the character. The piece might also include information about events, traits, or conflicts in the book that involve that character. Hang the students' portraits in a class gallery.

Prove It in Five Minutes!

Each student gives a 150-second (2½-minute) oral presentation in which he or she shares information about a book's plot and characters. The student closes the presentation by offering an opinion and recommendation about the book. Then students in the audience have 150 seconds to question the presenter about the book. If the presenter is able to prove in five minutes that he or she read the book, the student is excused from filing a written report about it.

Picture Books.

After reading a book, each student creates a picture book version of the story that would appeal to younger students. The students can then share the picture books with a group of young students.

Resume Writing.

As a tie-in to your career education program, challenge each student to create a resume for a book character. The student should include in the resume a statement of the applicant's goals and a detailed account of his or her experience and outside interests.

Character Trait Chart.

Each student creates a chart with three columns. Each column is headed with the name of one of the book's characters. As the student reads the book, he or she can keep a record of the traits each character possesses and include an incident that supports each trait.

Theme Report.

Challenge each student to select a concept or a thing from the book just finished and to use library or Internet resources to explore it further. The student then writes a two-page report that shares information about the topic.

Setting.

To learn more about the setting of a book, each student writes a one-page report explaining how that setting was important to the story.

"Dear Diary."

Invite each student to create a diary or journal and write at least five entries that might have been written by a character in a book just read. The entries should share details about the story that will prove the student read the book.