

A Parent-Child Reading Project with Classic Novels

With this assignment, I sent a letter home to the parents in November asking if they would be interested in doing this type of assignment with their child. When 26 out of 31 were interested, I let them know I would be going ahead. With the other 5 kids, I scrambled to find parents of people on staff and other older volunteers to work with those kids. It was great.

The few things I would do differently: Give the parents the journal prompts at the beginning, and also check with the kids that need a bit more monitoring. I was trying to be hands-off until the end, and for some kids that wasn't a good idea. I was thinking that maybe the parents would keep them on track, but apparently not.

It was a very successful project and many parents commented on how nice it was to read something with their child.

Hope you enjoy and that it helps. Let me know if you need anymore info.

Kerry
grade 6 in Ontario
mcdonaldatstrath@yahoo.com

Parent letter

January 25, 2003

Dear Parents;

Thank you so much for participating in this novel study project. This is a new and exciting method for exploring a novel – it will be interesting to see how the students respond to a new challenge!

My main goal for this project is to provide you with an opportunity to connect with your child through reading and provide a new audience for your child to write to. My hope is that you and your child will pick a book that you can enjoy together, maybe for the first time for both of you, or perhaps one you remember fondly from your own childhood.

Your child has attached a copy of a list of novels that they know nothing about (they haven't read the book or seen the movie). Together, you can choose a novel you would both like to read from the list. However, there are many other Classic Novels not on this list. If this is the case, I need to make sure the book is new to your child and that it is a "true" classic. Please jot a note in your child's planner with the name of the book and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

I have several copies of Classic novels in class and many are available at the school library. The choice is up to you and your child whether you read from the same book (you could read together at night, or take turns reading the book as your schedule allows), or read from two copies of the novel you have chosen. Let me know what you decide to do.

This year, I have been asking the students to respond to literature that we have read as a class and that they have read on their own. We have been focusing on the "3R's" (Retell, Relate and Reflect). This novel study will follow the same format. You both will be working out of your child's journal where there is a sheet to guide the students. They are very familiar with the 3R's and should have no difficulty completing their writing.

Your role is to respond to what your child has written. You may want to add your thoughts on the events that take place in the novel. When we write our "Relating" part of our journal, we are looking for

connections and comparisons to their own life. I think it will be really interesting to see if you and your child have the same connections.

How The Novel Study Will Work:

Once the novels have been chosen I will have the students break the novel into 3 chunks. (Take the total number of pages and divide by 3.) The students will be responsible for reading 1/3 of the book each week. On Mondays and Thursdays, the students will be given time to write in their journal. One of those days, I will provide a prompt for the students to respond to (e.g. How are you like one of the characters in the novel?). On the other day, the students will be expected to do a 3R's Journal entry. For both of these entries, the students will be asked to write in detail and have a fairly lengthy entry.

On Monday and Thursday night, the journals will come home and you will have a few days to respond to what your child wrote. Please feel free to write what you think. When I mark your child's journal, I will be looking at their writing and the connections that they are making to the text.

As well as responding to your child's writing, please feel free to discuss the entry and the book with your child. If you and your child have an interesting discussion about the novel or what is written, please write about that in your child's journal.

In summary...

It is up to the students to:

- keep up with their reading
- have their journals at school on Mondays and Thursdays
- clearly write their thoughts about the novel, focusing on connections
- give you their journals on Monday and Thursday night so that you have time to respond before they need them back at school

It is up to the parents to:

- keep up with their reading
- respond to their child's journal entry in writing
- discuss the novel with their child

Journal prompts

Pre-Reading:

Predict what will happen in your story.

Entry 1

Who is the main character in your story? Think of 3 words to describe him / her and use examples from the story to prove your point.

Entry 2

3 R's journal response: This was very long. It took them a long time to complete this writing, next year, pick something new.

Entry 3

Before prompt: on black board, kids write words that describe an object (not a living object) use 5 senses to get as many words as possible. Then, have kids close their eyes. Have them become the character in their story. They will then see the main setting in the story. Have them look around, what can they see? What can they taste? What can they smell? What can they hear? What can they feel?

Once kids have visualized all of that, have them open their eyes and begin sketching what they saw. Once they have finished their sketch, they need to write what they saw. They need to describe the setting of their novel, using 5 senses and many descriptive words.

Entry 4

On Monday, you described the setting of your novel. Today, I want you to think about why the setting is important to your novel. Think about where you live/ play/ go to school. Would the story you are reading change if it was set now? Why or why not? Why do you think setting is important to a novel?

Entry 5: **Problem, Actions, Results**

Title and Author: _____

Character's Name: _____

Directions: Think of two major problems the main character faced. State the problems in the first column, write the actions the character took to solve the problems in the second column, and the results of the actions taken in the third column.

Problem	Action Taken	Results

What problems do you and the main character or a minor character have in common? Compare the way you deal with those problems to the way the character dealt with them. Do you think either the problem or the solution changes because of when the book was written? (Since it is a classic) Does setting have anything to do with the types of problems the character faced and how the character solved the problem? Answer these questions on 3-ring binder paper.

Entry 6

If you have any questions about the book you are reading, ask the adult you are writing to. Really try to ask questions that will clarify things, issues, topics you are not sure about. Even if it was mentioned briefly, you can ask about that.

Reread your prediction at the start of your journal. Was your prediction accurate? How was it different? Think back to when you may have changed your mind about what was going to happen. Why did you change your mind?

List of classic novels

- [Little Women](#) by Louisa May Alcott
- [Peter Pan](#) by James Barrie
- [The Wonderful Wizard of Oz](#) by L. Frank Baum
- [The Marvelous Land of Oz](#) by L. Frank Baum
- [Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz](#) by L. Frank Baum
- [The Velveteen Rabbit](#) by Margery Williams Bianco
- [A Little Princess](#) by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- [The Secret Garden](#) by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- [Alice's Adventures in Wonderland](#) by Lewis Carroll
- [Alice's Adventures in Wonderland](#) by Lewis Carroll (with Tenniel's illustrations.)
- [Alice's Adventures in Wonderland \(Multimedia\)](#)
- [Through the Looking Glass](#) by Lewis Carroll
- [Through the Looking Glass](#) by Lewis Carroll (another copy)
- [A Christmas Carol](#) by Charles Dickens
- [Struwwelpeter/Slovenly Peter](#) by Heinrich Hoffmann. Other translations and the German original are also available at [19th-century German Stories site](#).
- [The Jungle Book](#) by Rudyard Kipling
- [The Story of Dr. Dolittle](#) by Hugh Lofting
- [The Light Princess](#) by George MacDonald
- [The Princess and the Goblin](#) by George MacDonald
- [Anne of Green Gables](#) by Lucy M. Montgomery
- [Anne of Avonlea](#) by Lucy M. Montgomery
- [Anne of the Island](#) by Lucy M. Montgomery