

THE PARENT-CHILD BOOK CLUB

CONNECTING WITH YOUR KIDS THROUGH READING

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO ORGANIZING AND
CONDUCTING YOUR FAMILY BOOK CLUB

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for a younger-aged book club. Pick the project that you feel most comfortable doing and that you think your group will enjoy most. Another important consideration is how much time you have that month to organize the activity. Remember, you will have more time some months than others to assemble materials and to go all out on a project. A simple project usually works just as well if it engages the children and helps to supplement their understanding and appreciation of the book.

Additionally, you should decide whether to tell the children what project and activities you will be doing, or to keep the ideas a surprise to create excitement and also leave yourself flexibility to change the program if necessary.

Below, we list concrete ideas for creating projects relating to types of books you may be reading.

Ideas for Theme-Related Projects

The following are some common book themes with suggested projects that you can adapt to the books you may be reading. For each theme, we suggest some excellent books that would relate to these themes and project ideas. See the resource section in Chapter 7 for annotated information about the following books we reference.

- ❖ **Sports:** Decorate a three-ring binder to hold sports trading cards. Buy sports stickers related to your book club selection. You can buy the binder and inserts to hold trading cards at Staples or any other office or stationery supply store. **Book suggestion:** Any of the books written by Matt Christopher in his sports biographies or fiction series such as *Soccer Hero*, or read the Dan Gutman series about baseball,

starting with *Honus & Me*. (Also see the physical activities section relating to sports.)

- ❖ **Gardening:** Decorate a small flower pot and plant beans or other seeds. If the book discusses vegetables, create potato prints. **Book suggestion:** *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart or *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.
- ❖ **Water (oceans, rivers, streams, etc.):** Create an ocean in a bottle. Use a small water bottle filled with oil, water, and blue food coloring, and any other treasures you find such as small shells and sand. You also could buy a sand art kit, or use inexpensive shells to make a shell collage or to decorate a picture frame or small treasure box. **Book suggestion:** *Three by the Sea* by Edward Marshall.
- ❖ **Animals:** Use the internet to research an animal you are reading about, and print out pictures and information about the animal. Make an animal puppet using socks or small boxes. Adopt an animal, such as a tiger, by visiting your local zoo's website and donating money to fund research. **Book suggestion:** *Little Bear* series by Else Minarik.
- ❖ **Dinosaurs:** Buy a dinosaur excavation kit from the *I Dig Series*, or buy a dinosaur model. You also could buy a set of inexpensive plastic dinosaurs and create your own dinosaur diorama scene in a shoe box using clay and other art materials. **Book suggestion:** *Danny and the Dinosaur* by Syd Hoff.
- ❖ **Writing letters:** Ask the children to write a letter to another member of the book club. The children could read the letters at the end of the meeting, or you could mail the letters and let the children have the excitement of receiving mail. The children could

also write a letter to a relative or favorite teacher. For older children, you could research a pen pal organization and start the children on a larger letter-writing experience. **Book suggestion:** *The Jolly Postman Series* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg.

- ❖ **Treasures, detectives, and clues:** Create treasure boxes and then do a treasure hunt leaving clue notes throughout your home. The children hunt to find all the clues until they finally come to a small prize at the end. Design codes and write messages that the children must decode. You could make up your own codes, and also teach the children about morse code. Have the children write their own coded messages that their friends have to decode. Inexpensive magnifying glasses would make a great prop. **Book suggestion:** *Nate the Great* series by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat and Marc Simont.
- ❖ **Electricity:** Make a simple electrical circuit that would make a buzzer sound or light a light bulb. Incorporate the buzzer into something related to the book, and add a decorated paper bag to create a lantern for the light bulb. **Book suggestion:** *The Magic School Bus and the Electric Field Trip* by Joanna Cole, illustrated by Bruce Degen.
- ❖ **The solar system:** Create a mobile of the solar system; decorate poster board with glow-in-the-dark stars; make a paper towel telescope and meet at night to view and learn more about stars (real binoculars or a telescope would be excellent additions too); make a rocket ship using boxes and pretend to land on the moon. **Book suggestion:** *The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System*, by Joanna Cole, illustrated by Bruce Degen; *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney; *Moon Soup* by Lisa Desimini.

- ❖ **Colors:** Do a color mixing study and color experiments. Mix primary color poster paints and make a painting. Use plastic test tubes and mix primary color food coloring to teach the children about experimenting. Use coffee filters to experiment with color mixing. Lay the filters flat, decorate with markers, and spray with water. Watch as the colors mix together. **Book suggestion:** *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by Lio Lionni.
- ❖ **Rocks:** Study rocks and start a rock collection. Decorate a shoe box and supply small plastic bags so the children can categorize and organize their collections. Create a rock mosaic with small pebbles placed in a pattern into hardening clay. **Book suggestion:** *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, by William Steig.
- ❖ **Art collecting:** Help the children start their own art museum collection. The children can draw pictures from their imagination or copy artwork from a book about a famous artist. Have a “museum opening” when the drawings are complete. You also can create any other type of museum collection by using plastic bags filled with various collections and attaching them to poster board. **Book suggestion:** *Macawber* by John Lithgow, or *The Art School* by Tomie de Paola.
- ❖ **Books in the *Cam Jansen* series**, by David A. Adler: Start a photography project. You can give each child a disposable camera and take a walk around the neighborhood to take pictures, or you can take pictures inside the house. The children can take pictures of anything they find interesting. Each parent develops the film in her child’s camera. The next month, the group reconvenes and the children

make simple scrapbooks of their photos with written captions and then have a scrapbook show. Younger children may want to use a Polaroid camera or a digital camera and have a printer available because they may not want to complete a multi-month project. **Book suggestion:** *Cam Jansen and the Mystery of the Stolen Diamonds*.

- ❖ **Books by Eric Carle:** Make a tissue paper cut-out collage in the style of Eric Carle. Other tissue paper projects include: make sun catchers using clear contact paper and tissue paper; use a paint brush and water to “paint” tissue paper onto a t-shirt or cotton handkerchief, and then pull the tissue paper off when it is dry to reveal a colorful design on the cloth. **Book suggestion:** *the Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle.

OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT WILL ENRICH THE DISCUSSION

Include physical challenges and other types of activities in your book club to enhance your group’s experience. Sometimes we mix the art projects with a physical challenge so that the children can expend some physical energy while they are expending so much mental energy. Focus on the needs of your group when determining the level of physical activity. Other times we present an activity instead of an art or science project, such as a game or movement/music activity. Providing varying types of creative opportunities for the group to connect to the books allows for ongoing enjoyment and stimulation.

Here are some suggestions for theme-related activities: