

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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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:

- ❖ **Acting out** portions of the book is always an exciting activity. For example, ask the children to act out a scene where the characters solved a problem, were scared, or where they did something funny. They can act out their favorite scene, or another child in the book club can pick a scene for them.
- ❖ **Play sports during the meetings.** Read *Play Ball Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish, or *Miss Nelson Has a Field Day* by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall. Participate in the sport described, or ask the children to make up a similar sport or game. Create your own mini-Olympics with activities including a long jump, free throw, relay race, and basketball toss. Create medals on a string for each participant. (Also see the sports section above regarding theme-related activities).
- ❖ **Add dancing to the book club.** Read *Open Me I'm a Dog* by Art Spiegelman, or *Go, Dog, Go* by Dr. Seuss, and invent a dog dance. Ask each child to list a dog motion, such as wagging a tail, barking, or chewing a bone, and have the children duplicate the dog motions while dancing under a limbo stick. For additional fun, create a dog model with clay. Or read a book about a ballerina and incorporate ballet stretches into your book club meeting.
- ❖ **Add music to the book club.** Read books such as *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop* by Chris Raschka, or *The Philharmonic Gets Dressed* by Karla Kuskin. Have the children play musical instruments and march in a parade. Supplement the physical activity with a project to create an instrument such as a shaker or a drum.

If you are reading a book about an animal, listen to “Carnival of the Animals” by Camille Saint-Saens, or to

“Peter and the Wolf” by Sergei Prokofiev. Talk about how the different instruments make sounds to mimic the animals in the stories.

- ❖ **Create a simple board game** related to the theme of the book. For example, use a spinner, dice, or a coin to advance players along a simple game path (if using a coin, heads equals one move and tails equals two moves). Create question cards about the characters or themes in the book. Include go back and go ahead spaces on the game board to add to the excitement.
- ❖ **Cooking projects** are popular with children of all ages. Read *Jamberry* by Bruce Degen, and make a berry pie or eat scones with berry jam. Distribute your recipes to the group.
- ❖ **Experiments** are always enriching activities. Read the *Frog and Toad All Year* story titled *Ice Cream*, by Arnold Lobel, and do an experiment about why ice cream is frozen. Keep some ice cream at room temperature, some in the freezer, and melt some in a pot on the stove. Ask the children to predict what will happen to the ice cream in each case, and then to observe and record the actual results. End the experiment by making ice cream sundaes. When talking about freezing, you also could make a connection to dancing by playing the freeze dance game. When the music is playing, the children dance. When the music stops, they must freeze. Whoever doesn't freeze is out. Play until only one child remains, or just play each round with no winners.
- ❖ **Create a multi-media approach to the book.** When reading about a historical topic, consider listening to a soundtrack from an *American Girl* show. You also could watch a *Schoolhouse Rock* episode about history or science. Watch a DVD of a famous ballet

while reading a ballet story, or listen to classical music if that relates to the story. Show the children books or internet sites about related artwork, or maps about places discussed in the book. Any relevant audio or visual connection helps the children relate more to the book.

- ❖ **Book Writing and Publishing** doesn't have to be left to the experts. Readers can also be writers, illustrators, and publishers. A rewarding project can be to encourage the children to write their own books. They can write about a topic present in a book club story, or about anything of interest. The children can work on the book throughout the year or before a break in the book club, such as the summer if your club breaks over the summer. Bind the books using a three-hole punch and ribbon, circular rings, report covers, or professionally at a local photocopy store. The children can also write in hard-backed notebooks. You might want to set aside a special date for a "book publishing party" where the children share their works and celebrate.

LIST OF NECESSARY SUPPLIES

The following is a list designed to give you an idea of some supplies that might be helpful to buy and keep so that you won't have to travel frantically to the art supply store the day before the book club meeting. Most likely, you will already have most of the art supplies handy at your home. You can buy whatever you don't already have at your local store or from mail-order or internet companies that provide inexpensive art materials. Of course, individual projects may require additional materials. We also list basic supplies that every book club home should stock so that the organizer can select an "easy art project idea" and have the materials at hand.