

TO: Book Club Facilitators
FROM: Book Club Coordinator – Marla Vaughn (presmom@aol.com; 818-231-4192(cell))

We are here to support you in your role as a Book Club facilitator. Towards that end, we have provided below a description of your basic responsibilities. If you have questions along the way, please do not hesitate to contact either one of us.

FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Choose a Meeting Date, Time and Place.** You may schedule all of your monthly meetings in advance, or choose a new date each month. Be sure that the date you choose gives the participants plenty of time to read the selected book without putting pressure on their homework time or other activities. When choosing a time to meet, don't expect to accommodate the busy and disparate schedules of everyone in your class. Lunch time or immediately after dismissal are probably the best times to meet. After school clubs can take place on school grounds (avoids transportation issues), at our local Barnes & Noble, or at different participants' homes. You will want to recruit some other parents to attend the book club meeting to help keep order.
2. **Choose a Book.** Books may be borrowed from Lanai's library stock of grade-level appropriate core literature, containing multiple (20+) copies of each title, or they may be purchased from a bookseller. We recommend that you consult your classroom teacher about whether a non-core literature book selection is appropriate for your Book Club's grade level. You may make your book selections with or without the input of the students in your Book Club. To maximize the time for substantive book discussion, pre-select reading material for future meetings; choose March, April and May's titles up front, or come to each monthly meeting ready to announce the next month's book selection.
3. **Invite the Entire Class.** Every student in your classroom should be invited to participate in the Book Club. Obtain your classroom teacher's pre-approval to distribute a written invitation. If you select a book to be purchased by the participants, please notify them that the Library and Literacy Committee will use its discretionary funds to defray all or a portion of the purchase price for any student who is interested in joining the Book Club, but is reluctant to do so for financial reasons. At least one week before the date of your Book Club meeting, issue a reminder notice to all students in your class.
4. **Bring Snacks.** In addition to everyone having their books on hand, snacks are an important ingredient for any good Book Club -- especially if it takes place after school. Rotate the responsibility for bringing something to eat, and if the group is on the larger side, have more than one child share the snack duty for one meeting.
5. **Lead the Discussion.** At the start of every meeting, lay down some simple rules to keep things running smoothly. For your reference, a sample list of discussion guidelines is attached. A prepared list of conversation starter questions will facilitate your role as the group leader. We will supply you with our prepared list of general conversation-starter questions, and discussion questions directly tied to Lanai's core literature books. Non core literature books will not be accompanied by a discussion question template. However, for first grade groups, please note that the Magic Bus book series has discussion questions printed in the back of each book. These books must be purchased from independent booksellers. Feel free to consult these discussion aids to the extent you find them useful, or diverge from them and invent your own questions. Be sure you have read the book in advance, so that you can confidently and spontaneously ask follow-up questions to comments made by the students.

Lastly, and most importantly, have fun! Soak up some of the positive energy and excitement generated by the kids as they explore this new realm of shared inquiry. Enjoy your golden opportunity to actively promote a love of reading and lifelong learning for your child and his or her friends.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR BOOK CLUB FACILITATORS

- a. Ask the kids not to interrupt each other, or dominate the conversation.
- b. Invite, but don't force everyone to contribute to the discussion.
- c. Remind kids to ground their comments in the text; if they have to point out specific examples from the book, they probably won't ramble too much.
- d. You might have a couple of kids who add a lot to the conversation but also have a tendency to get off topic a little. The most important part of a Book Club is the book, so try hard to keep the discussion focused on what you are reading.
- e. Only ask questions, do not answer them. Do not impart information or present your own opinions.
- f. Guide participants in reaching their own interpretations by posing open-ended, thought-provoking questions, and by following up purposefully on what participants say.
- g. Encourage participants to talk with each other, rather than to the discussion facilitator.
- h. General Questions that can be used for any book include:
 - What did you enjoy about this book?
 - What have you read that is similar to this book?
 - What are some of the major themes of this book?
 - What do you think the author was trying to accomplish with this novel?
 - Who was your favorite character? What did you appreciate about him/her?
 - Have you ever experienced anything similar to the action of this novel?
 - Did you find this book a quick read? Why or why not?
 - What were your concerns about this book?
 - How did you feel about the main character?
 - What are the most important relationships in the book?
 - What makes a minor character memorable?
 - Are any of the events in the book relevant to your own life?
 - What did you think of the style of the writer?
 - Was the story credible? Were the characters credible?

General Conversation Starter Questions:

- a. Choose a line of text and ask students what it means.
- b. Ask students about the meaning of the story.
- c. Ask the students to decide whether they agree with the author's ideas or point of view in light of their own knowledge, values, and experience. Have students expound on their own points of view.
- d. Ask students to explore how their own points of view compare to that of the story.
- e. Ask students to weigh the merits of opposing arguments made by them and their peers.
- f. Ask if any student wishes to modify his or her initial opinions based upon evidence derived from a peer's interpretation of the text. Have the student describe the modification and why the student is persuaded to make it.

Discussion Questions Tied to Specific Books:

SNOWY DAY

- Where do you think the story takes place? What are some clues?
- What are some ways you are like Peter?
- Do you remember waking up to a snowy world outside your window? What was it like? What did you do?
- Why do you think the snowball in Peter's pocket wasn't there when he checked before bed? Can you think of a way to save a snowball?
- What do you wonder about the world outside your window?

1. Discuss children's previous experience with the snow. Discuss what snow looks and feels like.
2. Talk about what activities you can do in the snow.
3. Have children draw and write about what they would like to do in the snow.
4. Brainstorm a class list of "snow" words to use later in writing.
5. Have the students compose a story about what might have happened if Peter's snowman was a magic snowman and came to life.

Keats was innovative in his use of minority children as central characters.

Discuss the children's thoughts about the fact that, long before multicultural characters and themes were fashionable, Ezra Jack Keats crossed social boundaries by being the first American picture-book maker to give the black child a central place in children's literature.

Additional questions:

- Can you find examples of the author using words, writing style, and illustrations to make the action in the story come to life? (i.e., "[Peter] dragged his feet s-l-o-w-l-y to make tracks." "Down fell the snow – plop! – on top of Peter's head." The words describing Peter climbing up the mountain of snow is described on the left page, where his ascent is pictured, and the words describing him sliding down are on the right page, where his descent is pictured.)

HAROLD & THE PURPLE CRAYON

Comment:

1. Identify patterns of behavior exhibited by Harold (i.e., Every page has a 'situation', and the readers look forward to discovering what Harold will draw next with his purple crayon in order to get out of it.)
2. Have students describe a dream in which they, like Harold, created a situation and then describe how they took control to get out of it.)
3. Think of many more adventures Harold could have had with his mystical purple crayon.
4. What does the story say about taking short cuts vs. staying on the long straight path. Was that an important element in the story? (i.e., risk getting lost to have an adventure)
5. What was Harold's purpose when he first set out on his walk? Did that purpose change? How?
6. Harold seems preoccupied with not getting lost. Does he succeed?
7. Is the purple crayon symbolic of anything? (i.e. imagination) Harold used his purple crayon to create and control his environment. What tools do you have to create and/or control your environment?
8. Did you understand the author was making a pun when he wrote that Harold got in his bed "and he drew up the covers?"
9. Did you feel a rhythm to the story? How did the author create a rhythm (i.e., using words and concepts repetitively, such as the windows sequence).

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

1. How does the author portray childhood vs. adulthood?
2. What does the story say about Max's relationship with his mother?
3. Describe some emotions Max experiences, how they are portrayed in the text and pictures (wild portrayed by Max wearing wolf suit, acting wild, yelling at mother, hammering nails into the wall, chasing the dog with a fork, and by the monster-filled jungle that fills his room), and how Max handles them (i.e. vulnerability to fear, anger, hate, frustration)
4. With which of these feelings do you identify? Expound.
5. How have the students handled similar emotions in their own experience? Compare with Max. Exercise: Have students fill in the blank: "When I feel wild, I(action) _____, then (this happens)_____." What are some solutions for handling this emotion (suggested by the story, own suggestions)?
6. Describe a situation in which student turned to fantasy to solve an emotional situation to his/her satisfaction.
7. Has anyone ever had a dream with a wild thing? What did it look like?
8. Remind the students that Max was feeling wild and that caused a problem and some things to happen in the story. Identify a problem and its solution (if you find one) in this story. For ex., theme of a boy's struggle for independence and autonomy vs. emotional dependence on his parents.
9. What do the wild things represent?
10. Does the term "wild things" convey a negative, positive, or neutral image as used in this story? Cite evidence.
11. How has Max changed from the beginning of the story to the end? What facts/text supports your answer?
12. To what effect does illustrator use light, shadow, color?
13. What do the first few pages suggest the story is about? How does that expectation change as the story unfolds? Did students' expectations/interpretations change as they read the story?
14. Is this a "good story," and "interesting story," a "well-written story." Why?
15. What parts of a book make up a good story? (i.e., character, setting, problem, events, solution)
16. What is the Setting of the book (i.e. where it takes place)? How does it tell us that?
17. What parts of the story of suggested (shown) rather than told? Why is it conveyed in that way?

How does the author use the concept of "eating?" Does it have one or more meanings throughout the story? What are they? The eating takes on greater significance when the monster's say to Max, "we'll eat you up--we love you so." Here the eating (like Max's challenge to his mother) is like a parent saying, "I love you so much I could just gobble you up"--eating, consuming, surrounding is equated with love and closeness.

18. Did you find the monsters scary? Why or why not? Do you think Mr. Sendak intended for them to be scary monsters?
19. What kinds of feelings do you have looking at these monsters? What if they had mean looks, weren't smiling, etc. How would you feel?
20. How does the author show the transformation from the real world to Max's imaginative world?

(suggested by bits of Max's furniture turning into palm trees and vines. The relation of illustration to white space is also suggestive. While Max is in the world of his mother's control, the pictures are small, and the surrounding white margins huge. As his imagination takes over, the pictures push away the margins and even the text--there are six full pages of wordless pictures near the middle of the book, at the peak of Max's wild imaginings. As he starts to miss his mom and his dinner (it's the smell of food from far away that draws Max back), the text and margins come back. The final page, once Max has come back to find his dinner waiting for him, has no picture, just text: "and it was still hot.")