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SONJA CHERRY-PAUL | DANA JOHANSEN

Foreword by Cornelius Minor

Breathing
New Life
into
**Book
Clubs**

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

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Foreword

by Cornelius Minor

When I was a kid, I used to love it when my aunts came over for my mom's book club gatherings. They would come by the carload. This group of radiant women would enter the house and fill it with warmth. And food. And laughter. And hugs. And brilliance. And stories. And the kind of grown-folks' talk that kids like me always wanted to hear, but could never understand.

I would hide out at the top of the stairs—long after I had been sent to bed—straining my ears to pluck a phrase or a sentence from the affable, brainy cacophony of sound emitted by my aunts and their books in the dining room below me. If I was lucky, I would catch the recitation of an entire passage of text or the telling of a deeply personal anecdote.

If you know Liberian women, you know that these women were not my aunts by blood or by marriage. They were my aunts because they went to college, attended church, shared offices, endured husbands, and navigated life with my mother. They were my aunts because when they occupied the same space as my mom, worries were shed, challenges were overcome, and doubts were erased.

Those stolen moments at the top of the stairs were my early introduction to the reality that my mom—the spiritual and physical center of my family—was not just a caregiver, problem-solver, or juice-box purveyor. She is beautifully and completely human. Similarly, children are not levels or behaviors or the complicated pasts that sometimes follow them into our classrooms. We do not group them to keep them quiet. And quiet does not mean “good.” Each young person that we serve is beautifully and completely human. Dana and Sonja know this.

They teach us what years of eavesdropping on my aunts taught me—that book clubs are not merely about books and discussion protocols. They are about the humans that come to them, the people that we become when we are in them, and the powerful people that endure—long after we put the texts down—because we have read together.

Book clubs are not quiet. They are not passive. They are not about filling in the blanks, answering the question, or being the “recorder” or “discussion leader.” Book clubs are about finding meaning in texts and finding community in others. Dana and Sonja know this.

Though I did not have the words for it at the time, I loved seeing my mother come to life around my aunts. When they came over to talk, my mom seemed taller, happier, *more alive*. This is what book clubs do. **They make us more alive.**

Dana and Sonja's work is powerful because beyond guiding us into the structures, routines, and lessons that ensure meaningful reading and purposeful talk, they expertly guide us toward crafting the experiences that give children multiple opportunities to live as readers, as thinkers, and as members of a community. Dana and Sonja understand that whenever our society has been confronted with big questions, well-read young people have always been the answer.

The Declaration of Independence was written by well-read young people. Well-read young people fought and won the right to vote for women and African Americans. Well-read young people founded the NAACP, GLSEN, and many of the organizations that force us to examine what we mean when we say freedom for all people or education for all children.

Though adults consistently fail to act on gun control, climate change, healthcare, or income inequality, well-read young people continue to speak out. On every issue, they are present. In a world that has not learned to listen properly when kids speak, Dana and Sonja teach us how to give kids the tools and supports to keep reading, thinking, and talking anyway. They know that kids who read powerfully, think critically, and listen empathetically to each other will change the world. Just like the generations of well-read kids before them.

1: Creating a Culture of Reading Through Book Clubs

My advice to teachers is to give your students as much freedom as possible in book clubs.

—MIA, FIFTH-GRADE STUDENT

When you think of an adult book club, what images come to mind? Chances are you're picturing a comfortable space such as your home or that of another club member. Perhaps the gatherings are at a quaint café or in a beloved restaurant. You might know the members of your club as your close friends or colleagues. Or possibly the club members are from a Meetup that you've just joined, and you are interested in getting to know some new people. You might also picture food (savory or sweet bites of something prepared just for the occasion) and continuous drinks (coffee, tea, wine). And in this comfortable space, the conversation is fluid. At times some members turn to another close by to share something that may or may not be spoken out loud to the entire group. Discussions fluctuate from the beginning of the book to the end in no particular order; between statements and questions, and characters and setting. There are agreements about ideas as well as disagreements that result in spirited conversations. Finally, a hallmark of an adult book club is that it is a place where the members completely lose track of time.



A Vision for Book Clubs

When we picture book clubs in our classrooms, we envision many of the same wonderful components of adult book clubs. We imagine small groups clustered together in cozy spots around our room. Perhaps they are seated on the carpet, at a table, or at a group of desks. Some may be gathered beneath their club banner or in a makeshift cardboard clubhouse. In our mind's eye, we see our students making reading plans with their club, talking about books, and asking each other questions. In this hum of activ-

ity, we hear joyful laughter and see new friendships created. We feel the positive energy in the classroom as clubs meet. We picture our students engaging in the same adult experience that we admire, and we feel proud of our students' level of preparedness and their eagerness to take part in their club's discussion.

As we imagine book clubs in our classrooms, we envision our students doing the work we've been teaching. They are putting their learning into action.



Some groups of students talk in an animated manner as they set reading goals and cheer each other on. We hear words of encouragement such as, "We can do this! Let's read twenty pages tonight and make five sticky notes." Our students are in charge of their reading lives, and they feel empowered to challenge themselves as readers and work collaboratively as a team.

While we dream of having book clubs in our classrooms that provide the joyful experience of adult book clubs, we've also found that there can be hiccups. Sometimes our clubs are roaring successes, and at other times, the clubs fizzle and fall apart. Over the years we've heard from fellow educators who have faced similar challenges with book clubs. "They're too complicated to manage." "Are the kids really reading?" "Are their discussions really deepening their understanding of the text?" We've also heard from teachers who've never tried book clubs because of their worries about time and rigor. "I don't have time for this!" "What do I teach in book clubs?" "Are my students just doing their own thing?" "How do I assess their understanding of the book?"

We admit it. We've experienced frustration ourselves. We've come close to throwing in the towel when it comes to book clubs. Stepping back to examine all of our concerns, a common theme emerges: a fear

of letting go. Although we want our students to have control over their reading, we have concerns. As teachers, it's our job to make sure that all of our students are learning and growing, and it's easier for us to imagine this happening underneath our watchful eyes where we can anticipate pitfalls and plan pathways for success. Sometimes it's challenging for us to imagine that, independently, our students will make the best decisions about their reading. We worry that they will not hold themselves accountable; have on-task, meaningful conversations about texts with their peers; and take the clubs seriously. The truth is that we can't always re-create our image of the ideal adult book club in our classrooms. For instance, not all club members will keep up with the reading. During conversations, some members will get off topic. Some voices will be louder than others, and others may not speak at all. At times, club meetings may seem like total chaos! Although we may worry about giving up control to our students, there are ways we can avoid and repair these challenges.

Over the past twenty years of teaching students in elementary and middle school, we've tried many approaches to teaching readers—whole-class texts, leveled reading groups, literature circles, and independent reading. We've experienced successes and failures in all aspects of our teaching. However, over the course of our teaching journey, we've kept one piece constant—we've always had book clubs. The reason is simple: to nurture students' love of reading and their desire to share the experience with others. Despite our hectic daily lives, adults join book clubs. We are exhausted at the end of the workday. The gym (or the sofa!) beckons. There are errands to run and children to pick up from soccer practice. Yet, we make time for book clubs. We join book clubs because we long to be part of communities of readers. Books, friends, and thoughtful, rich conversations. And isn't this passion for reading exactly what we want for our students? A space where they share ideas, take risks, and nurture a culture of reading? Book clubs create close-knit communities of readers and thinkers and help students become lifelong readers.

To be honest, our vision for book clubs continues to be a work in progress. It is informed by our own experiences and our ongoing dialogue with fellow educators, as well as our research. Together, this has become the fountain of knowledge that we draw upon. And we'd like to share our vision with you. No matter your reading curricula, we'd like to show you *why* book clubs should become an essential part of your school year and *how* to make that happen. Whether you're looking to breathe new life into book clubs or begin implementing them in your classroom, we invite you to join us on this journey.



Becoming a Nation of Lifelong Readers

While thinking about the value of book clubs, we began by asking ourselves: Are we a nation of lifelong readers? The answer is complex. To address this question, we looked at how students feel about reading, as well as how they are performing in reading in the United States. “To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence” (National Endowment for the Arts 2007) offers statistical data on the nation’s reading trends, and the results are alarming. According to this 2007 report, Americans were reading less. Only 33 percent of thirteen-year-olds read daily, and 19 percent of seventeen-year-olds did not or rarely read for pleasure at all. And yet, for 65 percent of seventeen-year-old students, the amount of reading done for school or homework remained constant from data gathered as early as 1992—about fifteen pages per day or fewer. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses the reading performance of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders in both public and private schools across the country. The results are compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In 2015, eighth-grade reading performance scores decreased from 2013. And by twelfth grade, students reading at or above the basic performance level was slightly lower in 2015 than 2013. The 2017 results published in April 2018 demonstrate little change in the average reading performance assessments for fourth and eighth graders.

The ubiquity of technology and the impact this has on children’s lives adds further complexity to whether or not we are a nation of lifelong readers. In 2017, CNN (Howard 2017) and NPR (Kamenetz 2017) reported that children are spending more time in front of screens. Children eight years old and younger spend more time on screens (about forty-eight minutes each day) than reading or being read to (about thirty minutes per day). These data demonstrate what James Steyer, CEO and founder of Common Sense Media, calls “a seismic shift” that is “fundamentally redefining childhood experiences” (Kamenetz 2017). He asserts that the nation is just beginning to understand the implications of this. As both reading and blended-learning educators, we are concerned about these data. With our students busy after-school lives being packed with sports practice, music lessons, and more, combined with hours each day exploring social media, playing video games, and watching television, how are kids finding time to read? According to the research, it seems, quite possibly, that they aren’t. These results imply that when it comes to our students, additional work is needed to become the nation of readers we hope to be.

Adolescence is a critical time for reading. Although it may be challenging for educators to affect the reading lives and identities of nine- and ten-year-olds, it can be even more difficult to develop the reading identities of middle and high school students. This, however, is not a new challenge. Nancie Atwell addressed this phenomenon in her book *In the Middle*. She writes, “Reading necessarily takes a back seat as teenagers’ worlds become impossibly full. . . . When reading doesn’t happen at school, it’s unlikely to happen away from school, which means it’s unlikely to happen at all” [1987, 156]. To transform the reading lives of our students, educators will need to consider the ways we value and make space for reading in our classrooms.

Research has helped educators gain both general and nuanced understandings about the teaching of reading. Such research has informed reading instruction in terms of the best practices to strengthen students’ skills, document reading gains, and improve reading attitudes. However, there have been tensions and contradictions in the field around reading instruction over the decades. Some of the misunderstandings are perhaps a result of lack of awareness of important reading research findings. For example, researchers have found that when an emphasis is placed on the volume of reading in literacy curricula, through independent reading, students’ reading fluency and comprehension improves. Richard Allington argues, “There is a potent relationship between volume of reading and reading achievement” [2012, 53]. When kids read more, there is an increase in reading achievement. Lucy Calkins urges, “The single most important thing we can do to turn schools around, making them into places where youngsters thrive as readers, is to clear out the time and space so that children can learn to read by reading” [2010, 7]. One way for students to make gains in reading achievement and become the lifelong readers we desire them to be is through book clubs.

We have mapped the research field and, in Figure 1.1, have summarized six major findings that highlight what is important about book clubs and how students benefit from them.



BENEFITS	FINDINGS
Engagement	Book clubs improve students' attitudes toward reading, especially when students have choice and autonomy.
Reading Skills	Book clubs are opportunities for students to practice reading and for the transference of instruction, which strengthens their skills.
Critical Literacy	Book clubs are spaces where students can deconstruct and critique norms and social constructs, as they learn from various perspectives and develop empathy for others.
Discussion	Book clubs help students have more in-depth conversations over time as bonds between peers strengthen.
Self-Discovery	Book clubs allow students to see themselves in a text, examine their own lives, and explore their identities.
Technology	Book clubs honor the ways kids engage with technology and how they choose to read and respond.

Figure 1.1 The Benefits of Book Clubs

As a result of our research, three major points jumped out at us. First, several terms have been used interchangeably with the phrase *book clubs*. These include: literature circles, book groups, reading clubs, learning clubs, and literature study groups. For some educators, there are nuances between each of these terms, and for others there may not be. We like *book clubs* best because, frankly, it's kid friendly. Second, the research emphasizes two defining principles of a book club: choice and ownership. Students in a book club must have autonomy and the power to choose what they read. Therefore, we define a book club as a space where a specific group of individuals meet physically and/or virtually for a fixed period of time for the purpose of reading and discussing a self-selected text. Third, although strengthening students' skills is paramount to teachers, particularly as we educate children in a standards-driven era, the research shows that the benefits of book clubs extend far beyond reading com-



prehension. We value book clubs because of their indelible influence on students as they develop as critical thinkers, lifelong readers, and change makers in the world.

Creating a Culture of Reading

How did Oprah Winfrey get America excited about reading? She formed a book club. Perhaps you too were a member. From 1996 until present, Oprah's Book Club is the biggest and most successful book club the world has ever seen! In essence, she changed the culture of reading in our country by changing *what* and *how* we read. As a result, millions of people discovered, or rekindled, a passion for reading. Libraries are frequented by readers who want to borrow a copy of the latest "O" book they've placed on hold. Books sales have catapulted to the delight of booksellers and authors. It is as if the entire nation has been under a potent, pleasurable spell that compels it to read, read, read! It is also one of our first models of a digital book club as members connect with one another around the nation and beyond. From 1996 to 2002, not only could we view Oprah, our reading guru, on television with the author of the O book of the month, guiding us through the richness the book has to offer, we could also participate in global conversations with members through digital platforms we could access from our kitchen tables or from bed. And we continue to participate in O's Book Club digitally today.

But how did Oprah accomplish this? She did so by creating a culture for reading through book clubs. Culture is how people connect and come to understand each other better. When we help students to nurture a culture

for reading in their book clubs, they will delve into the stories of others and realize that they are their own. Book clubs break the barriers of isolationism. They inspire students to examine their lives as well as think about others different from themselves.

Book clubs are where students fall in love with reading, but we value book clubs because it is in these spaces that we witness humanity at its best. Through the process of reading and responding to texts, students come to understand each other better. They reflect on who they are, where they hope to be, and the ties that bind them together. The attitudes, traditions, values, and goals established in book clubs often become the principles that guide the way students live their lives. As such, we can invite students to record the story of their book club in a journal or on a blog—the laughs, the struggles, the triumphs, and the lessons learned that will stay with them.

Essential Components for Book Clubs

As a result of reading the research and speaking with numerous educators of grades 3–12, we believe the following components are the seeds of success that can be sowed in the book clubs we nurture in our classrooms. These are the components we believe are essential to creating, maintaining, and sustaining book clubs: conversation, reading time, technology, written responses, observing, coaching, and assessment. These components are not linear, but circuitous and interconnected. They may not all be enacted daily but will occur over the life span of a book club. In Figure 1.2 you will see the essential components.

Figure 1.2
Essential
Components
for Book Clubs

These components delineate what the teachers and students are doing during the book club meeting times. Distinct yet overlapping features of book club meetings enable educators to clearly discern what is happening during club meetings. It helps to think about the process of making book clubs function successfully as a Ferris wheel. You can see in your mind a joyful experience filled with friends and laughter. The wheel is a circle of interconnected pieces that go around and around, and at the center of the wheel is the hub. Next, we unpack the features of the components to make clear the importance of each part and how they work together.

DISCUSSION

For book clubs, the hub is the discussion. It is the reason we form clubs, and it is the social spark that ignites students' enthusiasm for reading. Whether it is talking about the text, asking questions, or making reading goals, discussion is at the heart of every book club meeting. All spokes of the wheel feed into the hub, and when they work together, the conversation is superb. We are able to see transference and application of the reading strategies we've been teaching, and we see our students take ownership of their reading lives. Therefore, it is important and necessary to broaden our conception of what discussion looks like. For some it may be a quieter time and for others a more boisterous time. We also appreciate the many ways that technology aids our understanding of a discussion, and we know that digital tools can allow our students to have powerful exchanges.

PLANNING

Planning is critical for the success of book clubs. For some clubs, this may happen at the beginning of the meeting. For some, it occurs at the end. And for others, it may be happening all throughout the entire meeting. But one of the ways we help book clubs run efficiently is by helping students understand the importance of planning. When clubs plan, they ask and address many questions such as: What will we accomplish today? How will we use our time? Are we meeting our reading goals? How can we improve our discussions? Should we use technology to assist our work and how? How much should we read before our next meeting? What can we do to have more fun in our clubs? An essential component to planning is reflection. For clubs to move forward to achieve their goals involves students looking back and determining what's working well and what they must alter. Although planning may look different in each book club and even from day to day, the common components include goal setting, time management, and reflection.

READING

Also integral to a strong club meeting is reading time. We are fierce advocates of independent reading time each day, and we believe it is equally important for students to have the opportunity to read with each other during book club meetings. It's not necessary for students to read together at every meeting. However, it is important to encourage your students to read passages of the text together. This meaningful experience

allows students to share their personal reactions to the text. They will ooh and aah! Reading together is one of the ways that book clubs motivate readers and create a community. When students read together, you will observe their reading skills in action. You will see students summarize portions of the text together, check for each other's understanding, and ask questions. When students read together, they model good reading habits for each other.

DIGITAL TOOLS

Technology gives educators the tools they need to create digital spaces for reading response and discussion. When we think of discussion as the hub, we imagine a spoke of the wheel as the technology that helps all voices be heard in the club. Digital tools such as Padlet, Kidblog, Flipgrid, and Word-Press help teachers create blogs and message boards for students to share their ideas. Just as Nerdy Book Club and O's Book Club play a role in our adult book club lives, creating spaces like these enables our students to connect to each other, other classes, and the world.

WRITTEN RESPONSE

Another key component of book clubs is written response. Students' written responses about the text might look like sticky notes, written journal entries, reflections, or blog posts. Although adult book clubs do not make writing mandatory, some members will jot notes in the margins, on the last page of the novel, or on paper. It's often quite interesting to see all the many ways that adults record their thoughts and musings, and it's equally important to offer our students a variety of ways to respond to a text that feel authentic to them. The ways students respond may change from text to text and even throughout the duration of book clubs. We also appreciate how Lucy Calkins has helped teachers rethink lengthy reading written responses and how this can impede the reading we want our students to do. Book clubs especially are not the time to request essays and reports, but instead the time to expect concise, powerful bursts of expression that demonstrate students' understanding and insights.

OBSERVATION

Equally important as the work that students are doing during book club meetings is that of the teachers. Observation plays a key role in book clubs, as the teacher moves around the room listening to the clubs' discussions. The process of observing is sensory based and goes beyond



what we can see, and it includes what we hear, and the feeling we're getting about interpersonal relationships within clubs. This involves paying keen attention to the verbal and nonverbal cues that help us to determine: What does it feel like to be in this club? Are each of the members thriving? During this time, we are also observing our students' reading strategies in action, and we are making notes about what we are noticing. These notes become the artifacts we collect to springboard the coaching we'll do with a particular club. For instance, we may note that in one club, our students are having difficulty using setting details to inform their thinking about a character's actions. In another group, we may notice that students are reluctant to speak up when they disagree with an idea being discussed. Heightening our awareness of what's really happening in book clubs involves teachers becoming researchers. And we know that the best research begins with observation.

COACHING

Not only is every teacher a teacher of reading and writing, but every teacher is a coach. In many schools, we are grateful for literacy coaches who keep us up-to-date with everything from learning standards to current teaching strategies to new resources. But when we think about the word *coach*, the context that most frequently comes to mind is often sports. Whether it's softball, basketball, or soccer, teachers can apply the techniques of these coaches to the type of coaching students need in book

clubs. There's practice time, when players exercise to increase stamina, coaches review the plays and provide pointers, and players practice the plays applying feedback from the coach. However, once the game is happening, the time designated for practice simply doesn't exist. The coach can address the team throughout the game, but this happens in the course of minutes, because the players have to get back to the game. Think about book clubs as "the game" and it's happening . . . now! Extended, multilayered lessons have no place during book clubs. Reserve such direct teaching for another time in your reading instruction. Instead, aim to provide a quick strategy or suggestion, and it should take teachers five minutes or less to do so. In short, unless a club is in crisis, we should get in and get out and let students do the work of readers of and respondents to texts.

ASSESSMENT

Good teaching begins with an initial idea of what you are going to assess. This backward design allows us to map the skills we hope our students will learn by the end of a unit or lesson. In this way, book clubs are no different from any other unit you teach. Since the clubs are run by your students, and you are acting as an observer and a coach, it can feel as though you do not have concrete assessments to identify your students' learning. We've experienced this feeling in book clubs. However, we have highlighted specific observational and written response strategies that will help you assess the learning that is happening during book clubs, so you know that your students are making progress as readers.

So Why This Book?

As full-time teachers ourselves, we've yearned for a book that pulls together the research and best practices that help us have the "best book clubs ever"! And although we found pieces of the puzzle in various places, we couldn't help but notice an important gap: there simply wasn't a book that exclusively addressed the nuts and bolts of book clubs—how to create, maintain, and sustain them. So we decided to create this resource for ourselves and for other educators. Furthermore, as blended-learning educators, we desire to instruct using educational, sound methods that infuse technology. Therefore, a blended-learning book club approach is one that we are excited to share with educators who also care about their students accessing technology in authentic, meaningful ways in literacy instruction.

The research statistics we've discussed show we are at a cross-roads when it comes to our students and reading. However, we cannot give

up. We cannot allow the dip in unmotivated readers to grow. In the years to come we want to see a rise in the number of readers who are excited to read for pleasure. We want our students to be passionate about reading. How do we fight against the wave of distractions and new technology that flood our students' lives? How do we win what may appear to be a losing battle? We act boldly and bravely, and we adjust. We breathe new life into what we're doing. We change with the times, and we seek to disrupt the status quo. We start a reading revolution. To truly become a nation of lifelong readers, we must create a culture of reading in our classrooms. We believe this can be accomplished through book clubs, where students have autonomy and are empowered to read and respond in ways that are authentic and meaningful to them.

In addition to reflecting on the current reading research, we amplify the voices of teachers and students from various grade levels to provide the honest truth about book clubs. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 include minilessons that address common pitfalls you and your students may experience, along with pathways that can help you to overcome these hurdles. Chapter 6 includes resources to help students commemorate book club experiences. Although there is no one right way to approach book clubs, and no universal panacea to solve the issues that will inevitably arise, we hope our book will inspire you to join us on this journey to breathe new life into book clubs. Here's how the journey will continue to unfold:

Chapter 2—Organizing and Setting Up Book Clubs

There are several logistics involved in planning for book clubs. Where do I get the books? What types of clubs can I offer? How will I group my students?

Chapter 3—Launching and Managing Book Clubs

Ensuring that book clubs run smoothly from start to finish requires several key minilessons. How do I fit book clubs into the curriculum? What do students do during book club meetings? What is my role as the teacher?

Chapter 4—Lighting the Fire of Discussion

Book clubs are energetic, loud, productive spaces. How can I honor the authentic ways kids communicate without fear that discussions will run amok? Which methods help students to flourish as discussants of texts and of their ideas?

Chapter 5—Journeying Through Texts with Peers

Reading comprehension strategies help students journey through texts together. How can I teach students to navigate

fiction and nonfiction texts in their book clubs? What scaffolding do students need to live confidently within the pages of a text? Which methods help students to dive deep into a text to make discoveries about themselves and the world?

Chapter 6—Living with Books All Year Long

Culminating activities are opportunities for students to celebrate their club's achievements. How can I create meaningful and exciting ways to wrap up book club journeys? How can I provide pathways for book club experiences beyond our classroom doors?



3.1

Fueling Discussions with Digital Texts

Pitfall: Club members are experiencing challenges with discussions.

Pathway: Consider using a short, engaging digital text to ignite discussion and fuel students' understanding of what makes a good conversation. Many special education and English language learner teachers find digital texts particularly effective when working with a wide variety of students. You can begin by selecting a photograph, advertisement, or short video clip. If you decide to use a photograph, we recommend images of animals, scenic views, or intriguing objects. You can see examples of these in Figure 3.13.

Begin your lesson as a whole class to closely examine the digital text. Ask students to list any ideas, questions, or responses they have about the digital text. Then, create small, random groups of students, and invite students to engage in a discussion about the digital text in their small groups. There should be a buzz of conversation in your classroom. When you come back together as a whole class, discuss and list all the different responses to the digital text. Remind students that the buzz that just occurred is what we're striving for in our book club discussions.

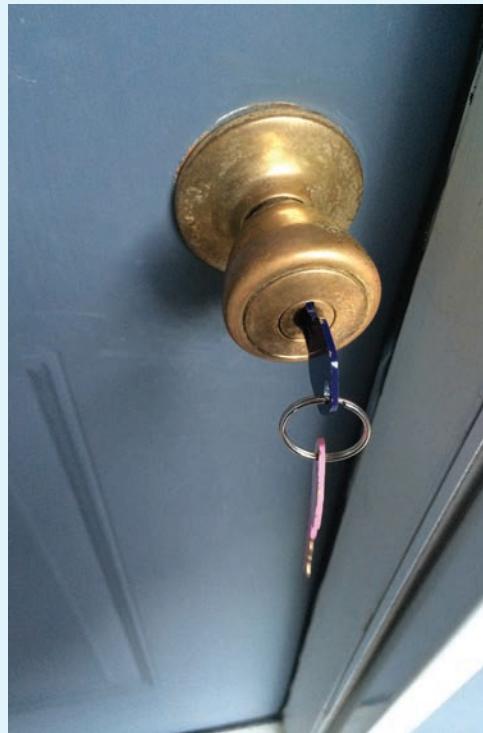


Figure 3.13
Three Digital Text
Examples

Revving Up Talk Through Practice Discussions

Pitfall: Club discussions may feel rigid at first, and students may need to practice having authentic conversations.

Pathway: Begin by selecting a short, highly engaging text. Create small, random groups of students. These are not the actual book clubs, but practice groups.

Provide copies of the text and read it aloud or silently as a whole class. When students are finished, have them write or list any ideas, questions, or responses they have to the text. Invite students to engage in a discussion about the text in their small groups.

Observe your students while they are talking, but do not intervene in their discussions. Reconvene the class, and ask students, “Based on the experience you’ve just had with your peers, what are some features of a good discussion?” (Some ideas may include sharing different ideas, asking questions, listening, feeling heard, wanting to talk more.) Together, create a chart titled What Are Features of a Good Discussion? See Figure 3.14 for an example.

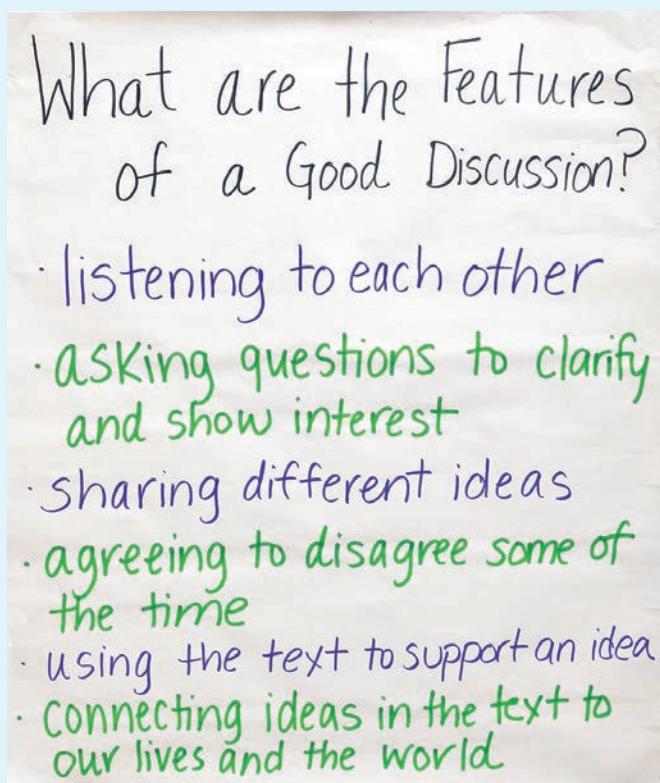


Figure 3.14 What
Are the Features of
a Good Discussion?
Chart

3.2