



Arte et Marte
By skill and valor

Consilio et animis
By wisdom and courage

Fide et Amore
By faith and love

BRITFIELD BOOK CLUB

How to Host

AN AWESOME SCHOOL BOOK CLUB



1. DETERMINE THE BOOK CLUB'S MISSION AND GOALS.

Why do you want to start a book club? To help students enjoy reading? To help them relate to what they read and share about it? To focus on certain genres? To practice a reading strategy or learn literary terms? To prioritize literacy? As an enrichment to the ELA curriculum standards? Decide what your book club priorities are, write them down, and filter every club-related decision and choice through them.

2. CHOOSE GREAT BOOKS.

Books should be of quality but not necessarily ones normally studied in classrooms. Find out what students enjoy reading — genres, series, topics, authors, etc. — and allow them to choose the title. (*Hint: You can really get students excited when you read books they recommend to you.*)

3. MAKE CLUB MEETINGS DIFFERENT THAN SCHOOL.

A great book club isn't just an extension of what is already happening in the classroom. Great book clubs honor who each student is, providing opportunities for authenticity and personal growth as readers, thinkers, and people. Let students lead the discussion; adult participants should act as facilitators and guides, not as teachers or lecturers, so dialogue can remain organic and natural. And invite everyone to participate, not just a chosen few (even students who read at below grade level can contribute when they feel safe enough to do so).

4. CREATE A FEW GROUND RULES AND GUARDRAILS FOR PARTICIPANTS.

Such as:

- No interruptions when others are sharing.
- All comments and opinions are permitted and respected.
- Be an active listener.
- Keep personal stories confidential within the group.
- Everyone is welcome in the group, and new people are encouraged to join.
- Discussion should stay related to the book but can include examples from real life.
- It is safe to be wrong and make mistakes in Book Club.
- When the group is full, we split into two groups — and we celebrate!

5. SCHEDULE SHORT MEETINGS AND SMALL GROUPS.

Choose a regular meeting day, time, and location. Students will pay better attention and may not be as intimidated about sharing in smaller groups. Start out with 30-45 minutes and 4-8 readers.

6. KEEP THE STRUCTURE LOOSE.

Allow students to comment freely, even if they didn't finish the passage. (Any amount of reading has benefits, and they might go back to the book if their friends praise it.) Encourage any connection the student makes with the content. Listen carefully to what comes up for each participant — even comments that seem off-topic can help the student grow and you understand the students' world. Allow students to read a traditional book but also an eBook or audio book; remember, book clubs do not assess decoding skills but instead provide a shared experience and growth opportunities.

7. PICK A GOOD SPOT.

Choose or create space where readers feel safe and relaxed (such as the library, a classroom, under a tree, on the playground, in a treehouse, etc.). Make sure there is plenty of light. Decide whether a table discussion would work well or if students feel more connected without a table between them. Even set up pillows, blankets, cushions, comfy chairs — or allow students to bring their own.

8. START WITH AN ICEBREAKER.

Begin group meetings with a light question related to the chapter's theme. For example, the first chapter in *Britfield & the Lost Crown* is set in a corrupt orphanage full of kids who watch out for each another, so the icebreaker for the first meeting might be, "Tell us about a time when you were doing something hard or boring, but people around you made it better." This helps students know and connect with one another — a necessary part of feeling safe enough to share.

9. JUMP-START DISCUSSION.

Ask a good question to begin, then allow students freedom to share.* Prompt students by asking what they liked best (or least), what thoughts came up as they read, or what character they most identify with and why.

10. DO SOMETHING HANDS-ON TOGETHER.

Some students will only truly embrace what they read when they are able to do something active related to it. Ideas:

- Make simple crafts during the discussion (some students will share more while doing something with their hands).
- Bring book-themed snacks (this can be a huge attraction factor!).
- Create alternate storylines or poetry.
- Draw a picture of a character or setting.
- Act out scenes from the book.
- Hold one meeting in a local place that illustrates the story, conflict(s), theme(s), or characterization(s).
- Invite a real person with related experience to join your discussion for one meeting (say, a detective for a detective story, a historian for a history epic, a zoology or biology professor for an animal story, etc.).
- Watch a clip from a movie or play based on the book.
- Look online for coloring pages, games, and other printables based on the book or subject.

11. LAUNCH THEM WHEN STUDENTS ARE READY.

Some teachers find students need coaching before beginning Book Clubs each year. Consider this prep schedule:

- **September:** Whole-class read-alouds, turn-and-talks, how to find a good spot for independent reading, and how to take quick notes.
- **October:** Allow students to read with a partner, and give opportunities to talk about what feelings or thoughts come up when they read.
- **November:** Grow the reading partnerships to four students, or read the text aloud in class and ask students to discuss it in groups before sharing their thoughts with the class.
- **December:** Begin Book Club meetings.

12. CONSIDER SOME LOW-KEY SOCIAL ENGINEERING.

Especially with students who struggle relationally or have difficulties reading. Gathering students with similar temperaments and skill levels in groups may head off problems later.

13. ALLOW OLDER STUDENTS TO LEAD YOUNGER ONES.

Since the best Book Club discussions evolve organically, your Book Club provides an ideal place for older students to mentor younger ones. You might also ask older students to recommend books for younger groups.

14. INVOLVE A SPECIFIC AGE-RANGE — OR NOT.

Forming a group around a demographic could equalize the reading-level within the group. It might also work well to combine reading levels to include students who have a heart for struggling readers.

15. ADVERTISE!

Send out a flyer to parents, post a flyer in the school library and ELA classrooms, talk about them in school newsletters, tell everyone you can find — faculty, staff, administration, district office, students, parents, everyone!

16. WELCOME NEW STUDENTS OFTEN.

Prevent groups from becoming cliques by welcoming new students into them often. Here's an idea: Leave an empty chair during each group meeting to symbolize that the group is open to new readers. When the group reaches its preferred number, plan to split the group in half to form two groups. Then celebrate the formation of another Book Club group!

17. HOLD AN INTRODUCTORY MEETING FIRST.

Then you can establish the ground rules, introduce the students to one another, decide on a meeting schedule, and decide what book to read first. For best results, involve students in all decision-making (after all, it's their group!).

18. OFFER INCENTIVES.

Reward students who join several reading groups in a year, or hang a chart in the library. Give away small favors to attendees (like bookmarks or pencils), or even provide a reward for all students if the number of participants in Book Clubs passes a certain goal. Be creative, and make sure all goals are achievable.



**The Study Guide for Britfield & the Lost Crown contains several questions in each chapter designed especially for open discussion and Book Club content.*

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