



Book Discussion Starters

Good book discussions are less about how much we like a book and more about what a book makes us think, feel, and understand.

Here are a few discussion starters to use with older children.

Follow-up questions like “Why?” or “Tell me more!” and “And . . .?” may encourage further thinking.

(Many of the questions could also be asked after viewing movies.)

Sports Stories

1. Does the author seem to know a lot about the sport?
2. Is your story more about the sport itself (lots of descriptions of games) or about the people who play it?
3. Do you have a favorite part? Read it aloud and tell me why you picked it.
4. Does one of the characters have a conflict with someone or a problem to solve? How well does s/he handle it? What might s/he have done differently?
5. Did you see examples of good sportsmanship? Bad sportsmanship? What are they?
6. Is your story realistic? Could everything that happened in the book, happen in real life?
7. Did you learn anything about your sport or about playing it?

Fantasy Books

1. Why did you pick this book? What part did you like best? Read it aloud?
2. Is some of the story realistic? What parts are completely made-up and REALLY imaginative?
3. Is the story funny or serious?
4. Does a character in the story have a conflict with someone or a problem to solve? What is it?
5. Are there illustrations? If they weren't there, would you still be able to understand the story?
6. Is your book a science fiction (sci fi) fantasy? Does it take place in the future, and are science and technology important parts of the story?

Series Books

1. What made you pick this series? Are you happy with your choice? Will you stick with it?
2. What genre does it fit? Is your story mostly humorous or serious, or a combination?
3. What is it about the main characters that makes you want to read several books about them?
4. Some series books follow the same character through several years (ex. Anastasia Krupnic) and others follow different girls through time (ex. Dear America). How is yours organized?
5. Who would enjoy your story more – girls or boys?

Mystery Books

1. What was the mystery in your story? Did you figure out the answer to the mystery, or were you surprised? What clues did you use?
2. Could everything that happened in your mystery, happen in real life?
3. How was the mystery solved? With luck, magic, or thinking?
4. Would you make a good detective?
5. Did your story leave you wondering about anything?

Action, Adventure and Survival

1. Read aloud or describe the part of the story that has the most action or adventure.
2. Is the action or adventure in your story realistic? Could it have happened in real life?
3. Imagine yourself as one of the characters. Would you have acted differently? What qualities helped the characters succeed?
4. When and where does your story take place? Could it take place in another setting?
5. Are you the adventurous type? If you wanted to have an adventure or write one, what would it be?

Contemporary Stories

1. What made you pick your book? What were you looking for? Are you happy with your choice?
2. How do you know for sure that your story takes place in the present? Would it make sense if it were set in the past?
3. Have you or someone you know ever been in a situation similar to the one described in your story? Compare what happened.
4. Did any of the characters have a conflict with someone or a problem to solve? What happened?
5. Who tells your story? If another character told the story, how would it be different?
6. Sometimes characters in stories do a lot of changing. Do your characters change or adapt?
7. Have you read any other books like this? How does this book compare?

Animal Stories

1. Would you describe your story as realistic (animals behave as they do in real life) or fantasy (animals talk, think, make plans, etc.)? Do you prefer one more than the other?
2. Who are the main characters in your story? Are they people or animals? Did they have problems to solve? How did they do?
3. Did you learn anything about animals? Does your story include information about the animals' description, habitat, breeds, behavior, diet, etc.? Did you need that information to understand the story?
4. Is your story serious or humorous? Can a story be both?
5. What makes a good animal story? If you were writing an animal story, what should you keep in mind? Read aloud the best parts.

Historical Fiction

1. What's the setting (time and place) of your story? Could you see yourself living in that time?
2. Who are the main characters? What problem or situation do they face? How did they handle it? Did you know what was going on in the hearts and minds of the characters?
3. Was anything in the story confusing or unclear? Is there something you'd like to know more about?
4. Did the story make you understand something better or think of something in a new way?
5. Have you read many historical fiction books? Do you read them the same way you read other books?
6. Does this book remind you of other books, or perhaps movies, that you've seen?

Humor

1. What makes your book funny – physical humor, word play, irony, unusual characters/plot twists?
2. Is there a series side to your book? Is there a BIG idea or lesson about life?