



FACING
HISTORY &
OURSELVES

Centering Student Voice and Choice

A Book Club Guide

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Adolescence is a time when young people are crafting stories about who they are, how they understand their community and society, and how they fit into the world around them. Because literature has the power to inform and transform the way students see themselves and others, the ELA classroom plays an important role in this process. All too often, however, the books students encounter in school don't fully reflect their identities or lived experiences in our increasingly complex and interconnected world. Interspersing whole-class reads and independent reading with book clubs can help expand the range of stories students read and provide them with opportunities to take ownership of their learning and discuss topics that matter most to them with their peers.

Similar to adult book clubs, student book clubs help build community and provide adolescents with opportunities to interact with each other in meaningful and authentic ways. Grounded in student autonomy and choice, book clubs can help students feel a sense of agency in their learning, build reading time into their daily routines, and make meaningful connections to books they are excited to read. In fact, a four-year study of eighth graders where teachers shifted from assigned books to choice reading revealed an “increased reading volume, a reduction in students failing the state test, and changes in peer relationships, self-regulation, and conceptions of self.”¹

With these ideas in mind, Facing History & Ourselves created this planning guide to provide educators with some inspiration and guidance. Inside, you will find practical resources to implement a book club unit that centers students' voices and experiences while also cultivating a classroom literacy community. The questions and activities invite critical thinking and conversation around issues of identity, belonging, choice, and agency. Exploring these ideas through literature invites young readers to build empathy as they consider how these concepts play out in other adolescents' lives, as well as to deepen their own understanding of their lived experiences and the world around them.

1 Gay Ivey and Peter H. Johnston, “Engaged Reading as a Collaborative Transformative Practice,” *Journal of Literacy Research* 47, Issue 3 (September 2015): 297–327, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X15619731>.

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Core Principles of Facing History Book Clubs

Book clubs provide opportunities for student-centered, student-driven learning. They can strengthen classroom community, decrease social isolation, and increase students' motivation to listen to, encourage, and support one another.² Regardless of how you adapt and implement the suggestions and resources in this guide, we encourage you to keep the following core principles in mind:

- 1. Provide Student Choice and Autonomy:** To the best of your ability, given your school's resources, let students choose what they read from the selection of books you can offer and what they talk about during their book club meetings.
- 2. Set Daily Reading Goals:** Encourage students to set a daily reading goal. When students choose a book themselves that feels relevant, and know they will be held accountable by their peers, they are more apt to read than if it is assigned to them.
- 3. Keep Group Size Manageable:** Create groups of 4–5 students. Small groups are inviting and give every student the chance to participate during book club meetings. It is fine to have multiple groups reading the same book.
- 4. Schedule Regular Club Meetings:** Schedule time for book clubs to meet regularly so they can establish momentum. Doing so sends the message that book clubs are an important part of the course. For example, groups might meet 1–2 times a week for 20–30 minutes over the course of 3–4 weeks.
- 5. Prioritize Engagement with Books and Each Other:** When was the last time you kept a reading log or wrote a book report about a book you read? The goal of book clubs is to (re)ignite a love of reading and foster community around literature, and this guide includes a range of authentic and engaging classroom activities and assessment ideas.

Goals of Facing History Book Clubs

- Encourage community and connectedness.
- Practice perspective-taking and develop empathy.
- Encourage autonomy and choice.
- Develop students' reading identities.
- Foster civil discourse.
- Increase reading volume and stamina.
- Cultivate a passion for literature.

² Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle, *180 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2018), 93–94.

Planning for Book Clubs

Questions to Support the Planning Process

Self-reflection is an important part of the planning process for any Facing History unit, and we have designed the following questions to offer educators some structure and guidance. You do not need to engage with all of the questions to have a successful book club unit! Choose the ones that feel right for your context and experience with book clubs as you consider the goals, desired outcomes, and structure of your unit.

1. How did the literature you read during adolescence mirror your experiences and expand your worldview? How did it fall short of providing these growth opportunities?
2. Who are your students? What are their interests and passions? How do they spend their free time? Remember, it is important to know them as individuals and avoid making assumptions about what they might like to read based on your perceptions of their visible identity markers.
3. When thinking about individual students, what do you know about their relationship with books and reading? How can you learn this information and use it to inform their choices about text selection and how you structure your book club unit?
4. What experiences have you had implementing or participating in book clubs as an adult and/or as a student? What positive memories do you have about this experience? What negative memories do you have? What factors contributed to these impressions?
5. What are the goals of your book club unit? You might consider literacy goals, student agency goals, and classroom community goals, to name just a few.
6. What is the organizing principle of your book club unit (topics, theme, genre, author study)? How does this unit fit into your course as a whole?

Recommended Reading

The following resources provide research, framing, and activities to support student-centered book clubs:

- *4 Essential Studies: Beliefs and Practices to Reclaim Student Agency* by Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher
- *Breathing New Life into Book Clubs* by Sonja Cherry-Paul and Dana Johansen
- *Talking Texts: A Teachers' Guide to Book Clubs Across the Curriculum* by Lesley Roessing

7. What opportunities do you see for students to make real-world connections and engage in authentic writing and speaking tasks that they will find relevant and meaningful? How can you build on their prior knowledge and experiences?
8. What reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills will you need to teach that will help your students fully engage with their books and each other independent of you, their teacher?
9. How will you think about differentiation? What accommodations can you offer, such as audiobooks, books in translation, extended time, or enlarged font, so all students can fully participate in the unit?
10. How will you hold students accountable for their reading and student-led discussions in a way that encourages meaningful reflection and autonomy? How can you engage your students in the process of deciding?
11. Who can you connect with to help address these questions (e.g., co-teacher, planning partner, department chair, resource specialist, school or local librarian, community nonprofit)?

Activities to Support the Planning Process

- ☐ Watch Dr. Kimberly Parker discuss the power of **cultivating literacy communities**. Choose from questions 1–4 (above) for a personal reflection.
- ☐ Create a survey to learn about your students' interests and relationship to reading. Ask them about the last text (book, movie, podcast, TV show, album) they loved and why, as well as topics they like to read and/or learn about. Record patterns and themes that emerge as potential book club topics.
- ☐ Schedule a meeting with your school's learning specialist and EL coordinator in order to deepen your understanding of and plan for the accommodations your students may need.

Access Books for Your Students

Two guiding principles of student book clubs are **choice** and **autonomy**. Students should have the opportunity to choose books that they are excited to read and talk about with their peers. One of the biggest hurdles for many educators is obtaining copies of the books. It can be challenging to find books that are appealing and relevant to students, reflect a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, and are readily available. Your department chair, colleagues, school or local librarian, or resource specialist might be able to help you address this challenge.

Identify Titles That Speak to Students' Identities and Interests

The following resources can help you identify titles that will appeal to students with a wide variety of backgrounds and interests:

- **We Need Diverse Books** has a curated list of titles on their **Where to Find Diverse Books** page.
- **Disrupt Texts'** blog post **Disrupting Genre** has resources you can consult for multi-genre literature representing marginalized and underrepresented individuals, as well as support for critically evaluating texts.
- NCTE's **Build Your Stack** organizes titles by theme and grade level.
- **Booklist**, **Kirkus Reviews**, **Publishers Weekly**, **School Library Journal**, and the **Young Adult Library Services Association** compile book lists and include book reviews.
- Teaching for Change's **Social Justice Books** project provides a critically reviewed selection of multicultural and social justice books for children, young adults, and educators.
- Seattle Public Library's **Own Voices YA Favorites** page includes a curated list of popular titles with diverse characters written by authors from those same diverse groups.
- **Well-Read Black Girl**, a book club dedicated to Black women writers, publishes a **reading list** and has an active presence on social media.
- Carol Jago, associate director of the California Reading and Literature Project at UCLA, curated a **list of recommendations** for classroom libraries (Yes, she has read them all!).
- The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's **reading list** includes a range of curated titles, including **100 young adult titles**.
- **@Project LIT Community** and have an active presence on Twitter. You can join their conversation about literacy and see their curated list of current YA recommendations by searching **#ProjectLITBookClub**.

Get Books into the Hands of Students

Once you have a list of books in mind, you will need to make them available to students. It may be challenging to synchronize the titles you want to suggest and the ones your students express interest in reading with what is accessible at your school. You could begin by polling your students to see who might already have access to books that are suitable for a book club. You can also coordinate with colleagues to share book club titles or reach out to your school librarian. If your school or district has a [Sora](#) account, your librarian may be able to help you access titles for your students.

Here are some other ideas for how you can get books in the hands of your students:

Prioritize book clubs as a department. Rather than using department money to buy class sets of the same title, consider using the funds to purchase copies of multiple titles. For example, rather than buying 200 copies of a single text for 9th grade, consider purchasing 20 copies of 10 titles that teachers can share for book club units. If possible, involve students in the text-selection process to pique their interest and develop their agency.

Access ebooks through public libraries. Students who have a public library card can borrow their book club book—either the print version or, if they have a compatible device, the ebook via a free app like [Hoopla](#), [OverDrive](#), or [Libby](#). Look for information about accessing ebooks on your public library's website.

Access trade books online. Educators can apply for a free account with [Epic!](#), a digital lending library with thousands of titles for children ages 12 and under. Educators working in Title I or Title I-eligible schools can also apply to [First Book](#), a nonprofit program that supplies free and low-cost books to schools.

Explore the public domain. In addition to borrowing from the library, students can access public-domain books on the following websites: [Project Gutenberg](#), [Digital Public Library of America](#), and [Open Library](#). Internet Archive, a nonprofit digital library, has a [Universal School Library](#) with a growing collection of digitized books. The collection is designed using principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion as central to the curatorial approach.

Generate Excitement and Organize Groups

Begin by providing students with the list of titles you have curated. It is important for students, especially those who are not regular readers, to have an opportunity to preview the titles so that they can make an informed choice. You might tease a few books by reading the first paragraphs, pages, or even a chapter aloud to the class. You can also conduct short book talks or share book trailers for high-interest books.

The following strategies and resources can help you introduce students to their choices and generate excitement for book clubs:

- **Teacher Book Talks:** We Need Diverse Books has a free **Booktalking Kit** for educators, which includes brief summaries of a curated list of lesser-known children's, middle-grade, and YA books about diverse characters and by diverse authors.
- **Student Book Talks and Reviews:** Students can "book talk" about their favorite books in small groups or with the class. They can also write short reviews that they publish on a bulletin board in the classroom, a book club Padlet, or a shared Google Slides deck. Students can also record book talks and post them in a shared online space.
- **Book Trailers:** Scholastic, YouTube, SchoolTube, and other websites can be good places to find "book trailers" for specific titles that may interest your students.
- **Literary Influencers:** In 2019, School Library Journal released a curated list of **8 YA BookTubers to Watch Right Now**.
- **Book Tastings:** NCTE's blog post **How Do You Approach Book Tastings?** has creative ideas from teachers for how they set up and facilitate this engaging activity to help students explore a wide range of titles in a short amount of time and identify titles they might want to read.

After students have been introduced to a number of titles, they can self-select into groups of 4–5 students. While it is powerful when students can come together around a single book, discussing a topic or theme across different titles also provides a meaningful book club experience.

If it's too challenging to organize groups around single titles, consider . . .

- **Genre book clubs** (fiction, sci-fi, nonfiction, graphic novel, historical fiction)
- **Author book clubs** (Elizabeth Acevedo, Samira Ahmed, Laurie Halse Anderson, John Green, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Jason Reynolds, Jacqueline Woodson, Kelly Yang, Ibi Zoboi . . .)
- **Thematic book clubs** (coming of age, overcoming obstacles, global migration, historical fiction from a specific era, memoir)

. . . where students in each book club read and discuss different but related titles.

Determine How Students Will Communicate Their Learning

The focus of book clubs should be reading for pleasure and connecting over books, so assessment may feel a bit messy or informal. Nevertheless, it is important that students are accountable for reading and participating in their group discussions. They also need to know how they can communicate with you if they are struggling with their books or group dynamics.

Consider the following suggestions for how students can share their book club experiences with you. You can also invite students to make their own suggestions and develop a process together.

- **Journal Reflections and Exit Tickets:** After a book club meeting, have students choose one or more of the following questions for a journal response. They can share an idea from their reflection on an **exit ticket**. Alternatively, students can create a reflection video that you respond to with a short video of your own.
 - What was a book club highlight this week? It might be something you read or something that happened in your meeting.
 - What was challenging about your book club this week? What steps can you take to overcome this challenge next week? How can your teacher support you?
 - What is your favorite place to read your book and why? What, if anything, makes it challenging to read your book outside of class? What steps can you take to overcome this challenge?
 - What do you want to read next? How did you learn about this book? What excites you about it?
- **Blog about Books:** Blogs allow students to share their feelings about the books they read and to be creative by including relevant digital texts like photos, video clips, and articles. They can create and publish their blogs on platforms like **Fanschool** or **Edublogs** for a real-world experience and audience.

Implementing Book Clubs

Plan the First Meeting: Contracts and Schedules

Once students are organized into their book clubs, it's time for them to take over the process! One way for groups to foster community and get organized is to spend their first meeting creating contracts and schedules. We have developed resources to support this process.

1. Establish norms and create a contract.

The first time students meet in their book clubs, they can **create a contract** to establish norms for discussions and participation. They can also choose a **group name** and **motto** and **design a shield** as a way to establish their collective identity. After creating their contracts, book clubs can share them with you along with a reflection about the process.

2. Create a reading schedule.

Let students know how many weeks they will be spending in their book clubs and how often they will meet during class. To help students pace their reading and ensure that they are all in the same place for each book club meeting, have them organize their time and create a book club **reading and meeting schedule**, which they can then share with you.

Share Learning with Book-to-Self-to-World Connections

Student choice and engagement are at the heart of book clubs. When young people have opportunities to make meaning of books together, to grapple with hard truths and complex questions about human behavior, their understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them can change. It is important that after each book club cycle, students have meaningful opportunities to reflect on what they have read and to apply new learning from their books to their lives.

1. Find yourself in the books you read.

Distribute the **Inhabiting the World of the Book** handout and invite students to choose one of the options (or propose another one) to explore on their own or with others in their book club group. Host a celebration where all of the students share their learning.

2. Connect to a social issue.

Book club groups often become interested in a social issue that their book explores (e.g., racial injustice, gender discrimination, disability rights, voting rights, refugee crises, human rights, gun violence, income inequality, housing and

food insecurity, the ethics of science and technology). Groups can research the issue in their own community to better understand its challenges, as well as the individuals and organizations working to enact change. They might want to invite a community leader to speak to the class, write an op-ed for the school or local newspaper, host a fundraising event to raise awareness, or volunteer together after school or on a weekend.

3. Host book talks for the school community.

To generate excitement for the next round of book clubs or independent reading, students can host a “book talk” event and invite other classes that meet at the same time. Have students prepare a 2- to 3-minute book talk where they read a short section and pitch their books. See the “Generate Excitement and Organize Groups” section of this guide for book talk resources to help students organize their presentations.

4. Publish book reviews.

Unlike book reports, which can veer toward plot summaries, book reviews require students to engage critically with the text in order to evaluate it and to incorporate their own perspectives as readers. Get started by sharing mentor texts, which you can find on book review sites like Kirkus Reviews or Publishers Weekly, the websites of newspapers like the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, or blogs like *Book Riot*. Discuss the components of a book review: a brief summary, a critical argument, and a recommendation for the reader. Focus on the critical argument that the author of each book review makes and the evidence they provide to develop it. Then have students write their own book reviews, perhaps submitting them to the school or local paper or “publishing” them on a book-review bulletin board in your school or local library.

Handouts to Support Student-Centered Discussions

Book clubs reflect a student-centered approach to literacy development. While they provide students with choice and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning, sometimes students need additional scaffolding. The following handouts are designed to support students so they can facilitate their own book club discussions. Keep book clubs fun and engaging by using these handouts judiciously. Consider making copies of each one that you keep in folders in your classroom so groups can take them as needed to guide their discussions.

Access [Google Doc](#), [PDF](#), and [Spanish](#) versions of all handouts in [this folder](#).

Community Building and Creating a Schedule

- [Create a Book Club Contract](#)
- [What Are We All About?](#)
- [Get Organized! Make a Book Club Schedule](#)
- [Book Club Meeting and Reading Calendar](#)

Establishing Routines and Facilitating Discussions

- [Taking Charge of the Discussion](#)
- [Routines for Getting Started and Wrapping Up](#)

Suggestions for Book Club Discussions and Activities

- [Bookmark](#)
- [Compelling Questions for Book Club Discussions](#)
- [Keep the Discussion Alive!](#)
- [Map the Internal World of a Character](#)
- [It's All About Perception](#)

Inspiring Students to Pursue an Interest on Their Own

- [Inhabiting the World of the Book](#)

Create a Book Club Contract

Directions: At the beginning of the year, did your class create a contract or did your teacher share expectations for how you should treat and talk to one another? For your book club to develop its own sense of community, it is important to agree on a few norms for how you will interact with one another so that everyone feels valued and can participate and ask questions during your discussions. As a group, discuss the questions below and then create your own contract.

Sample Book Club Contract

1. Listen with respect. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.
2. Make comments using “I” statements (*I believe . . . I feel . . .*).
3. Speak with respect. Insults and harmful language are never okay.
4. Share the talking time. Make an effort to include everyone in the discussion.
5. Come prepared by sticking to our reading schedule.
6. Use technology in a responsible and inclusive way when we are communicating outside of class (video, chat, text, email).

Read the Sample Book Club Contract above and then discuss the following questions:

1. What do you think is the **most valuable** norm on the sample contract?
2. What norms do you need to clarify because they are confusing?
3. What norms do you think need to be modified (changed in some way)?
4. What new norms would you add? Why are they important to you?

Now it's time for your group to create a Book Club Contract!

First, talk about the following question:

Which norms would help our book club create a safe, respectful, and fun space for our discussions?

Then, in the space provided or in your journal, write your Book Club Contract with 3–6 norms that you all agree to try your best to uphold.

Our Book Club Contract

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

What Are We All About?

Directions: Sports teams have mascots and uniforms. Royal families have shields or family crests. Universities have mottos. Businesses have logos and mission statements. There are many ways that groups express their identity, purpose, and message about who they are and what they represent.

What is your book club all about? Talk about it today and record your ideas below!

The Name of Our Book Club Is: _____

Decide on a name for your book club. Your name might be connected to your book, your school, your community, or a shared interest. It's up to you!

Our Motto Is: _____

What's your motto—inspiring words that guide your group? For example: *Keep calm and read on!*

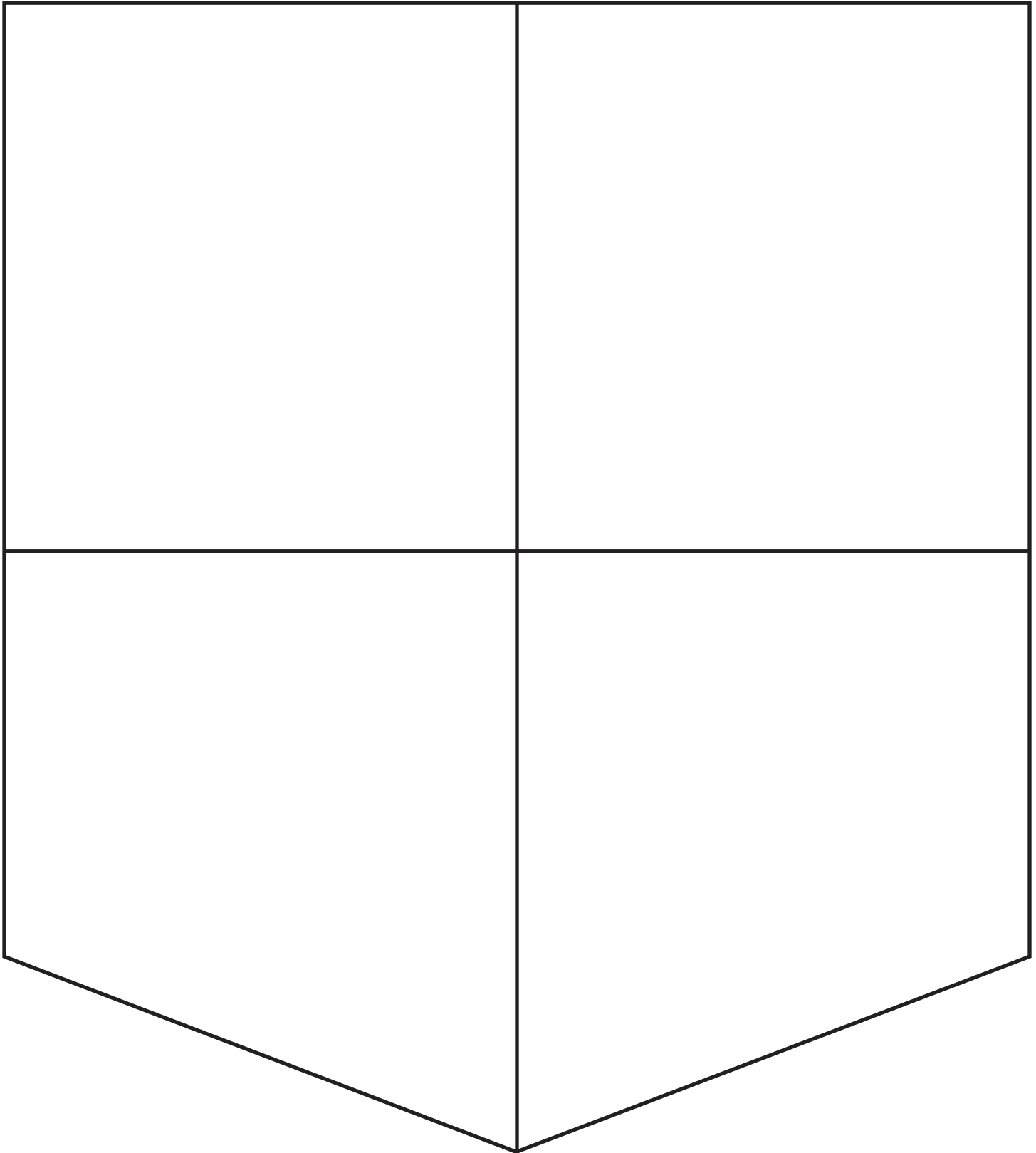
Our Core Values Are:

What are **four core values** of your book club? What are you all about? Discuss with your group.

As you talk about your values, complete the “shield” activity on the next page.

Our Book Group Shield

Create a group “shield” below by inserting images, symbols, or short phrases that represent the four values your group discussed.



Get Organized! Make a Book Club Schedule

Directions: When book clubs make a schedule before they start reading the book, it helps keep everyone organized. Group members know how many pages they need to read each day and which pages they will talk about in the next meeting. Create a reading schedule with your group by filling in the blanks below together.

First, the basics:

Your teacher may determine how many weeks your group will be meeting in book clubs. Use this information to help you complete this section of the handout.

1. The title of our book is _____.
2. Our book has _____ pages.
3. Our book club will read and talk about this book for _____ weeks.
4. We will start reading the week of _____ and we will have our last book club the week of _____.

Let's do some math!

5. How many pages will your book club read each week? Divide the number of pages in your book by the number of weeks your book club will meet: _____
6. How many pages will you read each day? _____

Finally, use the "Book Club Meeting and Reading" handout or a calendar on your computer or phone to record your book club meeting days and times. Then for each day, write the page numbers you will read. (For example, pages 1–15, pages 16–27, pages 28–40.)

Book Club Meeting and Reading Calendar

Directions: Update the calendar below by writing the month in the space provided and the dates in the small boxes. Record your book club meeting days in the calendar, and add the pages you will be discussing during those meetings. You can also add the pages you plan to read each day if it helps you to set daily reading goals.

_____ (Month)

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
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Taking Charge of the Discussion

Directions: Book club discussions should be fun! While they are not as structured as class discussions, having roles can help the group uphold its norms. Successful book clubs find a balance between “book talk” about characters, themes, and conflicts and “friend talk” about everyone’s lives and the world today. Switch roles each meeting so everyone has a chance to try them out!

Facilitator

The Facilitator guides the discussion. They get the meeting started with a group check-in. At the end of the meeting, they lead a reflection. The Facilitator makes sure that everyone’s voice is heard and that one student isn’t dominating the conversation. The Facilitator can help the group review their book club contract if someone feels like a norm has been broken.



Questioner

Everyone should come to book club meetings prepared with questions to discuss about the chapters they read. The Questioner helps the Facilitator by posing the first question about the book. They also have follow-up questions if the conversation slows down. The Questioner can use the “Compelling Questions for Book Club Discussions” handout or prepare their own questions as they read each week. They can write their own questions on sticky notes or a small piece of paper that they use as a bookmark.



Time Keeper

The Time Keeper helps the Facilitator to keep the group on track. They can help the group get refocused if the discussion wanders away from the book for too long. When the meeting is almost over, the Time Keeper lets the Facilitator know that they should start the group reflection.



Big-Idea Grabber

The Big-Idea Grabber summarizes the big ideas that group members raise during each discussion. The Big-Idea Grabber records these ideas and shares them with the group and the teacher. They can “sketchnote,” which means representing what group members say using pictures and images. Or they can jot down key words and phrases during the meeting on a piece of paper. Before the final reflection at the end of the meeting, the Big-Idea Grabber gives a summary of the big ideas the group talked about.



Routines for Getting Started and Wrapping Up

Directions: Books clubs are all about sharing stories and building community around books. It can be fun to start and end each book club session with a routine to bring in everyone's voice. Choose from the following routines to frame your book club meetings.

Routines to Get the Discussion Started

1. What's on Your Mind?

Take a minute to think about the chapters you read for this book club meeting. Then choose **one of these questions** to chat about for a few minutes. Make sure to hear from everyone in the group!

- What's on your mind after reading these chapters?
- What's worth talking about in these chapters?¹
- What is the most valuable idea in this part of the book?

2. Share a Notable Quotable

- Take a minute to review what you read for this book club meeting. Have each group member choose a sentence or short section that you really enjoyed. Maybe you found it funny or particularly moving. Maybe it connected to your own life. Maybe it made you angry or it confused you.
- Read aloud or summarize (if it's more than a sentence) your short section and share why it stood out to you.

3. Consider a Color, Symbol, and Image²

- Think about a color, a symbol, and an image that you think best represents the chapters you read for this book club meeting. You can focus on a character, a theme, or a big idea that interests you.
- Have each member of the group share their color, symbol, and image and explain their ideas.

4. One Question and One Comment³

- Take a minute to think about a question you have about the chapters you read for this meeting. It might be a place where you got confused, a question about why a character made a certain decision, or a question about the world of the book.
- Have each group member share their question and comment and see where a discussion of them takes you! Make sure to hear from everyone in the group.

1 Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle, *180 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2018), 57.

2 Color, Symbol, Image is adapted from a thinking routine developed by educators at Harvard University's Project Zero.

3 Kelly Gallagher, *Deeper Reading: Comprehending Challenging Texts*, (Stenhouse Publishers, 2004), 48.

Closing Routines for the Final Five Minutes

1. Can You Hear Me Now?

Discuss what worked in this session's book club discussion and what didn't work.

- What new insights do we have as a result of a group member's question or comment?
- Who had something to say but struggled to be heard?
- Were there any distractions, like background noise or phones?
- How can we support each other in the future to overcome any challenges?

2. Review Your Book Club Contract

Review the norms you created during your first book club meeting and then discuss the following questions:

- Where did we do a good job upholding our group norms today?
- Where did we struggle or break one of our norms?
- What is one thing we can do better next time as a group to make sure that we all uphold our norms?

3. Set Goals for the Next Meeting

Setting goals and sharing them with each other is a great way to hold everyone accountable for the week's reading. Discuss the following questions, making sure to hear from everyone in your book club.

- What was a highlight of today's discussion for you?
- What is your reading goal for the week? What is one thing you will do to help make sure you meet or exceed your reading goal?
- How can the group help you reach, or surpass, your goal?

Bookmarks

SIDE 1

Title: _____

Ask the Book

- ✦ What factors make the character who they are?
- ✦ What choices does the character face to take or not take action?
- ✦ What might the character gain, risk, or lose if they take or don't take action?

SIDE 1

Title: _____

Ask the Book

- ✦ What factors make the character who they are?
- ✦ What choices does the character face to take or not take action?
- ✦ What might the character gain, risk, or lose if they take or don't take action?

SIDE 2

Title: _____

Ask Yourself

- ✦ What makes me, me?
- ✦ How does this book help me understand my own choices?
- ✦ How does this book help me understand the impact of my choices—on myself and on other people?

SIDE 2

Title: _____

Ask Yourself

- ✦ What makes me, me?
- ✦ How does this book help me understand my own choices?
- ✦ How does this book help me understand the impact of my choices—on myself and on other people?

Compelling Questions for Book Club Discussions

Directions: In addition to discussing the questions that your group members bring to each meeting, you can also choose a few questions from the list to help guide your discussion. The goal is not to rush through lots of questions! Rather, really explore a few questions by focusing on specific scenes in your book, making connections across chapters and to other books you have all read, and considering the ways the book connects to your own identity and experiences.

Understanding the Characters

1. Who are the main characters in your book?
2. How do they see themselves? How do others see them?
3. What kinds of challenges do the main characters face? How do they deal with these challenges? What words of advice do you have for them?
4. Why do the characters believe what they believe? Who or what shapes their beliefs?
5. How do the characters navigate the tension between their desire to fit in and their need to express their own unique identities?
6. What kinds of power do characters in the book have? How does the amount of power each character have, or feels like they have, influence their choices and decision-making?
7. Which character do you most relate to and why? Which character do you least relate to and why?

Considering Characters' Choices

8. What choices do characters make in the chapters you just read? What other choices could they have made?
9. What are all of the factors that impact the choices characters in your book have and how they make decisions? Do you think these factors reflect what it's like in the world today? What makes you say that?
10. What are the spoken and unspoken rules of the place where your book takes place? Who makes the rules? How do the rules impact the main character of your book and the choices they have available to them? How are they similar to or different from the spoken and unspoken rules of your home, school, or community?
11. Where do you see characters making the choice to act as perpetrators of injustice or unfairness? What factors motivate their behavior?

12. Where do you see examples of characters making the choice to act as bystanders? What factors impact their decision not to take action? How might the situation in the book change if they make a different decision?
13. Where do you see characters choosing to be upstanders? How do their choices and actions impact those around them? How do they feel about themselves?
14. Where do you see yourself judging characters for their decisions and actions?

Thinking about Perspective

15. A character's perspective is their attitude and beliefs about the world around them. In your book, whose perspectives does the reader get to see? How does knowing this perspective impact your understanding of what is happening in the story?
16. For the character(s) whose perspective you get to see, what do they think and feel about their situation and the other characters in the book? Why do you think the author chose to develop this character's perspective?
17. Whose perspectives are missing from the story? Are there any characters who don't have a voice or who are only seen through the eyes of other characters? What do you think they are thinking and feeling? Why do you think the author chose not to develop their perspective?
18. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from the perspective they did? What other choices could the author have made? How would it have changed the story?

Connecting the Book, the World, and Me

19. How does this book reflect or not reflect your own identity or lived experiences?
20. How does this book help you understand someone else's life experience?
21. What social issues are explored in the book (i.e., racial injustice, gender discrimination, disability rights, voting rights, refugee crisis, LGBTQ+ rights, gun violence, income inequality, housing and food insecurity, the ethics of science and technology, etc.)? What message does the book send about one or more of these issues?
22. What does this book say about the world today?
23. Why do you think the author wrote this book?
24. How have you been changed or impacted by reading and discussing this book with your book club?
25. What lessons can you take from this book into your own life?

Keep the Discussion Alive!

Directions: Sometimes we run out of things to talk about during a discussion. Silence is okay because it allows group members to collect their thoughts! But if you feel like you need help keeping the discussion alive, try using some of these sentence starters to get going and then build on each other's ideas.

Ask a Question

Why did . . .

Why did they choose to . . .

What happened when . . .

Wait! Who is . . .

How does _____ connect to . . .

Do you think that . . .

I wonder why the author . . .

Clarify Something

This makes sense now because . . .

Are you sure? I think this means . . .

I agree with you that this suggests . . .

I used to think . . . but now I think . . .

I'm not sure that . . .

I would like to talk about . . .

I have a different idea . . .

Make a Prediction

I think the next chapter will be about . . .

I wonder if . . .

Based on what is happening, I bet ____ will happen next because . . .

I think that . . .

Make a Comment

The most valuable idea is . . .

My favorite part/character so far is . . .

This is confusing because . . .

I don't like this part because . . .

This is similar to/different from . . .

I'm surprised that . . .

Make a Connection

This part/character reminds me of . . .

I see what the book is saying, but from my experience, it's more like . . .

This reminds me of . . .

I can relate to this because . . .

This part connects to . . .

Map the Internal World of a Character

Directions: It can be fun to talk about a character in a new interactive way. For this activity, choose one character to focus on. Discuss the questions and use your answers to create a “character map” on a big piece of paper. Your map can use words, phrases, and images to visually represent your character. Then discuss the connection questions at the end of this handout.

Character’s Name: _____

- 1. Draw a head.** Discuss the questions, writing and sketching ideas inside of the head. Save room for the eyes, ears, and mouth!
 - What does your character think about themselves?
 - What does your character think about other characters in the book?
 - What does your character think about their community or world?
- 2. Add the ears.** Discuss the questions, writing ideas around the ears.
 - What does this character hear other characters saying about them?
 - What messages does this character receive about themselves—their identity or groups they belong to—from their family, friends, society, or the media?
- 3. Draw the eyes and the mouth.** Discuss the questions, writing ideas inside and around the eyes and mouth, or add a speech bubble to capture what the character says.
 - What does this character notice about the world around them?
 - What does this character say to their family, friends, and/or people they don’t know well?
- 4. Now draw the body!** You will write ideas in and around the heart, stomach, hands, and feet.
 - **Draw a big heart.** Discuss the questions, writing ideas in and around the heart.
 - Who or what does this character care about?
 - What does this character feel?
 - What does this character want for themselves, others, or the world?

- **Draw the hands.** Discuss the questions, writing ideas around the hands.
 - What does this character do or want to do to help the people or causes they care about?
 - What skills or talents does this character have that they could use or do use to help other people or their community?
- **Draw the feet.** Discuss the questions, writing ideas around the feet.
 - How is/has this character changed over the course of the book?
 - Where is this character going or do they want to go in their life?

Connection Questions

After completing your character map, discuss these connection questions together.

1. Where do you see similarities between what is inside the character's head and heart, and how you think and feel? Where do you see differences?
2. What lessons can this character teach readers about ourselves and the world?
3. Why do you think the author created this character?

It's All About Perception

Directions: In real life, conflicts can arise when we see ourselves differently from how others view us. For this discussion, you will focus on this idea of perception. Choose one character and jot notes on this handout to capture your thinking as you discuss the “character questions” and “connection questions” on the next page.

Character's Name: _____

Character Questions

1. What do you think your character feels, believes, knows, or experiences in their life? Write words, phrases, quotes, and images **inside the head**.
2. How do other characters talk about, interact with, feel about, and treat this character? Record notes **outside of the head**.



Connection Questions

Choose from the following questions to make connections between the text and your own experiences.

1. What similarities and differences do you notice about the ideas inside the character's head versus outside? What factors might account for any differences?
2. What conflicts can arise when our perception of ourselves is different from how others— family, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors, strangers—may perceive us?
3. Have you ever felt like the way you perceive yourself feels different from how others perceive you? How does this make you feel? How can you use this understanding to help others who might feel this way?

Inhabiting the World of the Book

Directions: Books can open our imagination, expand our knowledge, and inspire us to try new things, but we don't always have or make time to fully explore the world of the stories we read. For this final project, explore the ideas in this handout and then choose one that interests and excites you. Be creative and have fun!

Explore the Ideas in This Handout:

The Daily Dish

All Over the Map

The Power of Picture

A Novel Soundtrack

Re-Imagining the Story

Down the Rabbit Hole

Expand Your Horizons: Try Something New

The Daily Dish

Are you reading a book filled with food references? Is food really important to the characters or world of your book? Are there descriptions of meals or recipes passed down through generations? Do characters work in a restaurant or aspire to be a chef someday?

If food is a central theme of your book and you are passionate about upping your cooking game, why not use this opportunity to learn a few recipes or make a cookbook of your own? Here are some ideas to help get you started:

- Review the chapters and make a list of the references to food.
- If your book explores an ethnic group's cuisine, do some research to learn more about the ingredients, when certain dishes are eaten, and which cultural traditions are connected to them.
- Find a recipe for a dish or a food from your book and teach yourself how to prepare it at home (after checking first with your parents or guardians). Document the process with short videos or photographs and share them with classmates.
- Create a cookbook with recipes that connect to your book. Or imagine that you are the protagonist of your own story. What recipes would fill your cookbook? Create it and design a cover!
- Reflect on your learning in a journal, blog, or video: *What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about an aspect of your book—a character, scene, conflict, or theme—after learning more about the food that is so important to the story? What new skills have you added to your own repertoire? What do you want to learn next?*

All Over the Map

Are you reading a book where the author spends a great deal of time setting the setting? Are there vivid descriptions that create a sense of place—the sights, sounds, and feelings associated with where the characters live? Is your book set in a real place or is it imaginary?

If the setting is a key element of your book and you are interested in geography, cartography (map making), or art, why not use this opportunity to imagine the setting of the book in new ways. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Review the chapters and mark key places with a sticky note where the author develops the setting. Perhaps they are describing a street or landscape in great detail. Maybe a character is living between two homes or living in one place and going to school in another and there are different spoken and unspoken rules in each place.
- Conduct some research to learn more about the setting. For example, if your book is historical fiction, look for images or maps on Google Earth, Google Maps, or the Library of Congress website. If your book is fiction, but takes place in a real location, use these same resources to understand the look and feel of the place.
- If your book takes place in an imagined world, create sketches in a notebook or on a computer, using details from the story to inform your choices.
- Create a map of your book. Print or draw your own maps and make a collage to represent the different settings of your book. Or draw a street map and label buildings and key places from the book.
- Imagine you are a tour guide leading a group through the world of your book. What stops would your tour make? Create a brochure or webpage advertising your tour. Or imagine that you are an individual who took your tour and created a photo album. Create this photo album in a Google Doc with images you find online or on paper with your own sketches. Label the images with references and quotations from the book.
- Reflect on your learning in a journal, blog, or video: *What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about an aspect of your book—a character, scene, conflict, or theme—after learning more about and visualizing the setting? What new skills have you added to your own repertoire? What do you want to learn next?*

The Power of a Picture

When you read, do you see the characters and imagine the world of the book in vivid colors? Are you illustrating the story in your mind as the story unfolds? Do you have a passion for art—drawing, painting, modeling with clay, murals, cartooning, sculpting, photography, graphic design? Can you imagine illustrating moments or scenes in your book club book?

If you love art or wish you had more time for creative expression, consider creating a visual representation of one or more scenes in your book.

- Review the book and mark places with sticky notes that you want to capture visually.
- Create a drawing, painting, or doodle (or another visual medium) to insert at the beginning of each chapter.
- If you like comics, take a section of your book and re-imagine it as a graphic novel. First, create a storyboard (you can find templates online) and decide what to include in each panel. Then create your artwork and add text from your book or your own imagination.
- If you are interested in fashion, imagine that you are the costume designer for a Hollywood production of your book. Choose one scene or section of the book and sketch each character's clothing and accessories, paying attention to details in the book that reveal what they might be wearing. If you sew, try creating a pattern for an article of clothing and then make it.
- If you have wanted to try layout and graphic design, create a new cover—both the front and back—for your book. Decide on your target audience and how you want to represent the story using color, fonts, text, images, and graphic design.
- Include a reflection that responds to the following question: *What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about an aspect of your book—a character, scene, conflict, or theme—or your book as a whole after creating a visual representation? What new skills have you added to your own repertoire? What do you want to learn next?*

A Novel Soundtrack

Do the characters in your book turn up the music and tune out the world? Does a character play an instrument or perform in their school's marching band or orchestra? Who are their favorite artists? What's their favorite genre? Like a soft melody or a thumping bass, music can fill the space between the words and transport readers into the world of the book.

If your passion is music—listening to it, playing it, composing it, dancing to it—let your book guide you through an exploration of the sounds that inspire the characters.

- Review the book and mark places with sticky notes where music or sound plays an important role in the story.
- Research any specific albums, songs, musicians, or genres referenced in your book and try to find samples that you can listen to.
- Create the soundtrack for a movie version of your book. Select an opening and closing song and then select a song for five key scenes. Create an online playlist that you share with your book club and other students in your class. If you like to draw or enjoy graphic design, create a cover for your soundtrack “album.”
- Create a playlist for your favorite character. Carefully compile the song list, design the album cover, and title the album. Then create an online playlist and share it with your book club.
- If you are a composer or musician, compose an original piece of music for a specific scene in your book and record it for your class. Or learn how to play one or more songs referenced in your book if you learn by ear or can find the music online.
- Reflect on what you learned by responding to the following questions: *What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about an aspect of your book—a character, scene, conflict, or theme—or your book as a whole after exploring the musical references in the book or creating a soundtrack for your book or a character? What new skills have you added to your own repertoire? What do you want to learn next?*

Reimagining the Story

Are you a passionate writer? A storyteller? Do you keep a journal, write poetry, or contribute to your school newspaper or literary magazine? Do you imagine yourself into the stories that you read and hear? While authors anchor their stories in a particular time and place, it isn't hard to reimagine them occurring elsewhere, with characters who have different identities, or being written in a different form altogether.

If you love storytelling, or have not had an opportunity to write creatively in a while, here are some ideas for you to try:

- **Re-story Time and Place:** Write a new version of your book (shorter, of course) or a specific scene and set it at a different time. For example, you might re-story a work of historical fiction in the present. Or you might write a new version of your book or a scene by placing the characters in a new setting to see how they behave and interact with one another.
- **Reimagine Identity:** If the characters in your book don't represent your identity, the identities of people in your school, or what you see in the world, re-imagine them, perhaps writing your own story into a scene of your book. You might focus on one chapter or take the characters from your book and create a new story where they have different identities, thinking about how you might reimagine their race, ethnicity, sexuality, ableness, or another aspect of identity.
- **Shift the Perspective:** Insert a new chapter from a different character's perspective. For example, if there is a character who does not have a voice or is located at the margins in your book, center them and let them tell part of the story. You might write from your own creative voice or try to emulate aspects of the author's style.
- **Recast in a New Genre or Form:** Retell your story in a new way. Create a found poem for each chapter and assemble them into a small book. Recast one chapter or scene of your book in the form of a graphic novel if you have a passion for cartooning. Write your book in the form of a short story, or create a six-word memoir for each central character. If you enjoy drama, rewrite a chapter or scene in the form of a play. Write notes about the set design, include stage directions, use dialogue from the book and create your own. Make it yours!
- **Write a reflection that responds to the following questions:** *What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about an aspect of your book—a character, scene, conflict, or theme—or your book as a whole after reimaging it or recasting it into a new form? What new skills have you added to your own repertoire? What do you want to learn next?*

Down the Rabbit Hole

What's better than reading a really great book? How about reading a great book that references another great book? Or a book that is a modern re-telling of a much older story? Books can be filled with allusions to history, literature, mythology, and folktales. Sometimes characters quote from them; sometimes they read or make a reference to them; or sometimes the book itself offers a modern take on an old story.

If you have a passion for mythology or have always wanted to understand why your favorite character keeps quoting from a particular book, take this opportunity to explore! Go down the rabbit hole and learn about the other worlds your book references. Here are some ideas to get you started exploring the allusions in your book:

- Review your book, marking references with sticky notes to the literary and historical allusion. Then do some research to learn more about them!
- Read summaries of these books and stories, or, if you can find copies online, try to read the first 10 pages or the first chapter.
- Create an allusion guide to help other students who read your book understand these references—the ways in which knowing the original story deepens your understanding of your book club book. Add illustrations, key quotations, and brief summaries. Be creative!
- Include a reflection that responds to the following question: What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about your book after learning more about the literary and historical allusions? What new skills have you added to your own repertoire? What do you want to learn next?

Expand your Horizons: Try Something New

How do characters in your book spend their free time? Do they play an instrument? Sing? Dance? Beat box? Play a sport? Knit? Crochet? Sew? Cook? Design computer games? Code? Write in a diary? Draw? Write stories? Perform at poetry slams? Write letters? Hike? Skateboard? Watch tv or movies? Build things? Martial arts? Read? Blog? Perform community service?

If you want to expand your hobbies and learn something new, look for inspiration in your book. There is probably a video on YouTube that can help you get started!

- Make a list of the hobbies and interests that characters have in your book. Then pursue one to see where it takes you. What can you learn on YouTube, blogs, social media, from books, or from your friends and family members?
- Learn how to doodle, paint or sketch, or draw anime characters.
- Produce music using GarageBand or another program.
- Write in a journal everyday, even if only for five minutes. In addition to writing, you can also include photos, articles from the news, and inspirational quotes and images. You can sketch, collect quotations that you see and year, or capture your ideas in poems or letters to your future self.
- Learn how to meditate or do yoga by trying out free classes online or in your community.
- Design an outfit or learn how to sew on buttons.
- Learn how to knit or crochet. There are free classes online.
- Write and perform a spoken word poem. Watch some youth slam poets compete on Brave New Voices and use their performances to inspire you. Need help getting started? Why not write down the first line of a poem you love and see where it takes you?
- Learn how to bake bread or cook a meal for your family. Prepare for the future by learning how to cook eggs, make pasta, chili (meat or vegetarian), or your favorite meal.
- Start a book lovers' community service project:
 - Can your book group connect with a local elementary school class to read stories out loud (in person or online)?
 - Can your book group help other students in your school or family members organize their own books groups?

After you have spent time learning something new, reflect on the experience by responding to the following question: *What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about an aspect of your book—a character, scene, conflict, or theme—or your book as a whole after learning something new that is connected to your book? What new skills have you added to your own repertoire? What do you want to learn next?*