

Library/Classroom Literature Integration Projects

Teacher-librarians can't possibly get to know all of a school's students well enough to be able to recommend suitable reading material for each and every child. However, the teacher librarian's familiarity with the school library's collection, with its greater quantity and breadth of material, can be accessed as a valuable asset. Together, classroom teachers and the teacher-librarian can create and provide rich, meaningful reading experiences for students.

The activities described below will give the student opportunities to access to the library's resources while developing their reading, writing and critical thinking skills in the classroom. The format can be individualized to each student's needs and abilities.

Author Study

Students choose an author from a list provided by the teacher-librarian. The authors on this list will be established, award-winning writers with a proven track record in writing for children – some will be current, others will be from a time period that may make them unfamiliar to today's students.

Students will select a minimum of two novels to read, and will prepare an oral presentation which will include the following information:

- A brief biography of the author, including birth date and place of birth; a description of how he/she became interested in writing and/or becoming an author; favourite authors; his/her interests as a writer; best-known works; and any other facts the student feels are relevant to giving the audience a better understanding of the author as a person;
- A brief summary of each of the books the student read;
- A comparison/contrast of the themes and/or main ideas of the two stories – is there a common thread running through them? How is the common theme or idea expressed differently in each novel? Note: students may read more than two novels for this assignment, but two is the minimum requirement.
- A letter written by the student to the author describing his/her own personal reactions to each story read and questions he/she would pose to the author about characters and/or plot developments. If the student so desires, the teacher-librarian can help the student find a snail-mail or e-mail address to send the letter to, and an opportunity to read any responses received will be provided by the teacher in class.

The teacher-librarian can brainstorm with the class a list of possible sources of information on the author, including authors' individual websites; collective websites devoted to authors; public libraries' author visits; journal articles; television and radio interviews; and, if the author is local, him/herself!

A prepared handout is available for students to record their ideas and information, and to guide them through it as a research project.

Award-Winning Children's Literature

The teacher-librarian prepares lists of novels for each of several prominent children's literature awards; gathers the books into an attractive display; and gives a brief booktalk on a few novels from each award.

Students choose a novel from the display to read. They will complete two assignments:

Essay – will have the following requirements:

- A cover page, with the novel's title, author and genre centred in the middle of the page, and his/her name, division and teacher's name in the bottom right-hand corner
- Eight paragraphs, consisting of
 - o An introduction
 - o A minimum of five facts about the author
 - o A description of the story's setting, (when and where it takes place), and an opinion from the student about how the setting affects the mood of the story
 - o A description of the story's main character(s), including appearance, personality, attitude and beliefs. Also, an explanation of how the character(s) change(s) throughout the novel.
 - o A description of the plot, including the beginning, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.
 - o A description of the theme – the theme arises out of the story's conflict; identify the conflict and the theme (the lesson/truth the author wants the reader to understand as a result of reading the story)
 - o A description of the award the novel has won, including its criteria, origin and two other novels which have also won; also, an opinion as to why the student thinks this book did or didn't deserve this award – this requires some specificity related to the main characters, plot, writer's style, etc.
 - o A conclusion

Oral Presentation – will be evaluated by the teacher and his/her peers

- The presenter needs to include the following:
 - o A general overview (without giving away the ending) and critique of the book (liked/not liked, and why)

- A visual to show the class – can be an illustration in the book; the book's cover, which will be described; an object related to the story; a costume related to the story; etc.
- A passage selected from the story to read aloud, explaining its context and why it was chosen

Awards

Carnegie Medal (UK) – Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

Red Cedar Award (CDN) – BC Library Association

Newbery Medal & Honour Books (US) – American Library Association

Young Readers Choice Award (US) Northwest Library Association

Governor General's Literary Awards (CDN) – Canada Council for the Arts

Other ideas to develop

Biographies unit

Heroes unit – there are already several around (used to be a staple of grade 6 LA), or we could create a new one from scratch

Battle of the Books – kids and teacher, together, make a list of books (can include ones a lot of them have already read, plus some new ones); allow time for students to read them; students write questions about the books (basic facts about characters, plot, etc) and then create teams, a la Reach for the Top, to be quizzed. I have more detailed information about this activity, which has actually been around for a long time.

Design a new book dust jacket (critical thinking activity)