

The C. I. A. Approach to Book Clubs

Each C. I. A. unit of study has been written with the foundational belief that all students should be exposed to rich, complex literature through instructional read-aloud. During the read-aloud, teachers set the upper limits for students' reading comprehension. The read-aloud provides students with a model for how to apply known strategies and skills in increasingly more demanding text. In addition, it builds students' background knowledge, thereby increasing their success in texts of the same genre and/or topic.

The Read-Aloud Block

When creating your literacy block schedule, teacher modeling through read-aloud is the first structure you will want to build into your day. During the read-aloud block, you will be conducting a C. I. A. unit of study—in this case, *The War with Grandpa* 3.2. Set aside 45 minutes for the read-aloud block, giving 10 minutes to vocabulary instruction and 35 minutes to the read-aloud lesson.

Read-Aloud Block—45 minutes

10 minutes of vocabulary instruction

35 minutes of read-aloud

Materials: C. I. A. Unit of Study—Realistic Fiction, *The War with Grandpa* 3.2

The Book Club Block

While providing grade-level instruction for all students within the structure of a read-aloud is critical, it will not allow students the opportunity to practice strategies in their own readable texts, at their own instructional levels. Therefore, teachers must also provide differentiated instruction in the reading block.

There are many types of groups teachers might create in their classrooms to support small-group instruction. One such group is a guided reading group. This type of group is appropriate for early-fluent and newly fluent readers who will need guidance as they first decode and then comprehend text. These readers will need the highest level of support that is provided in guided reading and transitional guided reading. While guided reading lessons are not offered in this teacher’s guide, teachers can easily layer in guided reading for students who still need that level of support.

The next level of small-group instruction is appropriate for fluent and proficient readers. I like to use the term “book club” to describe the small-group setting appropriate for these readers. The term simply refers to a group of students reading the same book, who meet together to discuss the book several times throughout the experience. The Common Core State Standards call for students, as early as third grade, to participate in this type of small group, where students “...come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material...[and] explicitly draw on that preparation and other information...to explore ideas under discussion” (Speaking and Listening Standard 3.1.a).

Book club assignments and meetings can easily be centered on the framework of the C. I. A. approach. For that work, set aside at least 45 minutes for the book club block, giving 5 minutes to a whole-class mini-lesson and 35 minutes to work time and 5 minutes for collaboration.

Book Club Block—45 minutes

5-minute whole-class mini-lesson

35 minutes of work time

5 minutes of collaboration

Materials: book club texts

Text Selection and Timing

Book club texts are selected based on what students are being exposed to in the read-aloud block. This allows teachers to use the read-aloud to build background knowledge about a genre and subject. When students have ample background knowledge, teachers are then able to stretch those students to their highest instructional level. This stretch is critical to increasing each student's learning potential—students who are reading challenging text with the scaffolds of read-aloud have been found to make accelerated growth in reading comprehension. Why? When students are placed in challenging text they work hard to understand the text and fix up their comprehension. In challenging text students rely on their use of known strategies and skills. This authentic practice ensures that students transfer what they have learned in the read-aloud into their collaborative work. Doing this increases their confidence as readers and increases the likelihood that those strategies and skills will transfer into independent reading.

As students read these texts they will use charts created in the read-aloud to support book club work. For this reason, I recommend creating a stagger between your read-aloud and the beginning of your book club unit. Wait to start your book clubs until you are at least through the first quadrant of the read-aloud.

Staggering the starting dates of read-aloud and book club units also ensures that students will not be expected to complete the difficult work of the first quadrant in two books at the same time. Instead, students will be in the second or third quadrant of the read-aloud book by the time the book club cycle begins, giving them a much more manageable workload.

Set Up for Success

Gather Book Club Materials

Each student will need his or her own copy of a book club text and a book club notebook, which is a consumable item you can purchase from shop.readsidebyside.com.

The Book Club Notebook

The book club notebook is where students will record notes in preparation for book club meetings. Each student in your class will need a copy of the book club notebook. This notebook has been designed for use at all grade levels and to be used with a variety of literary and nonfiction texts. Some of the pages will have space for students to tape in reference materials. For example, students will tape the genre chart onto page 4 of the book club notebook. In addition, the book club notebook offers space for teachers to record notes and assessment scores.

Establish Groups

To ensure that each student gets time to share in book club meetings, keep groups at 4–8 students. It is important to keep the number in the group even, if possible. Each student in a group will be matched with a partner, whom he or she will go to for help during daily work time and meet with at the end of work time to compare notes and discuss thinking.

Use a reading comprehension assessment to sort students. It is important that your students show evidence of being able to write about their reading, so a written assessment is necessary. This is because the assignments students are asked to complete during book clubs have a high task demand—students have to independently take notes and write in response to reading. As you run your assessment, remember to focus on finding the student’s *highest instructional level*. In small groups, we want to stretch students into tackling challenging text.

When sorting students I take into account not only their reading comprehension, but also their reading stamina. At the beginning of the year, I find it is best to err on the side of caution and place the majority of my students in shorter text. This allows them time to regain stamina that may have been lost over the summer and increases their confidence as readers. Each book club guide includes directions for sorting students into groups and titles.

Establish Book Club Routines

The C. I. A. approach simplifies the differentiated instruction block by allowing students to work in varying texts, but at the same pace. In other words, all groups work through each quadrant together, on the same schedule. This allows the teacher to meet with the whole class in mini-lessons, and also allows small groups to meet as needed. This routine creates sustainability for the teacher and students.

A daily routine will help ease the typical overload associated with running small groups. The majority of the days will be working days, when students are reading and working on book club assignments. Book club meetings will occur at the end of each quadrant—only. Using this approach, the emphasis is placed on students *doing* the work of reading and writing, with little interruption from the teacher. This is where real reading practice, and learning, takes place.

Work Time Routine

Working days will begin with students gathering in the meeting area. They are expected to sit next to their book club partners. Students should bring their reader's notebooks (which hold all their read-aloud notebook entries), their book club notebooks (a consumable product purchased from www.shop.readsidebyside.com), and their book club texts to the meeting area each day; they should each also bring a pencil.

On working days, the teacher will begin the book club block by conducting a whole-class, 5-minute mini-lesson. Following the mini-lesson, students will be released back to their seats to read the assigned pages of their book club books and complete written assignments. During this time, students are expected to utilize the help of their book club partners when needed. If a student's book club partner is unable to help, both students sign up to conference with the teacher. (You will need to create a place for students to sign up on a whiteboard or sign-up sheet.) The teacher confers with partnerships, rather than individuals. This allows for greater efficiency of time.

At the end of the work time, students will gather in the meeting area again. They should always sit next to their book club partners. It may also help to have groups sit together. Give students time to compare notes and receive help from their partners before you begin the share-out time. Each day there will be a discussion question for the share-out time. Conducting the share-out together as a whole class allows students to learn about each other's novels and make connections across texts. This activity also increases collaboration—the highest classroom motivator!

Sample work time schedule:

5-minute whole-class mini-lesson (conducted in the meeting area)

35-minute work time

5-minute partner collaboration

Book Club Meeting Routine

You will need two full days to meet with all of your book club groups. Schedule your groups according to readiness. This will allow groups who are behind on their work extra time

to complete assignments. Some additional assignments for students who have completed their regular work and have “free time” either before or after book club meetings are described below. Each book club meeting will take 15–20 minutes, allowing for two meetings within each book club block.

Additional Assignments

Plan for meaningful activities for students to participate in once they have completed all their work and are either waiting to meet or have finished meeting with their book clubs. I recommend having students either work on a vocabulary assignment, read their own independent selections, or read an outside text that supports further understanding of their novel or a topic introduced within their novel. A vocabulary list and some suggested outside texts can be found in the appendix of each book club guide.

Vocabulary

Rather than teaching a whole new set of words for each book club text, you will have your students broaden their understanding of words learned during the read-aloud. In the appendix you will find a list of all the vocabulary words students learned in the corresponding read-aloud unit. Copy and cut this page so that each student in your class has the word list. Students should tape this word list into their book club notebooks on page 46. Then, on the note pages in their book club notebooks, they will write sentences that show how the key vocabulary words are used in their book club texts.

Outside Texts

To increase students’ understanding of their texts and related topics, direct early finishers to other texts that connect to their book club books. Several outside text recommendations for each of the book club texts can be found in the appendix. Students might be encouraged to write

summaries in response to a text, answer questions in response to a text, or highlight the message of a text and details from that text that support the message.

Enjoy Success

Take a deep breath—you are ready to start your book club series with your students. Relax—knowing it will be much easier than any other small-group cycle you may have implemented in the past. Prepare—by reading all of the books you plan to use before introducing them to your students. Now smile—this work will reap rewards for your students that will last a lifetime.