

Dialogic Book Talk

Dialogic book talk is a small group activity in which adult and children together develop shared understandings of a book through talk. It is a collaborative act of enquiry, in which participants:

- Use language for thinking
- Make connections to things they already know
- Ask questions of the book
- Explore the book at different levels
- Give reasons for what they say

Undertaking all of these activities takes children into the first stages of critical response to texts.

1. Choose your book

Choose a book with illustrations that you enjoy or a book that you enjoy reading. The book should make you think and ask questions. Look through the book and/or read it several times over the course of a few days; you may have new thoughts about it each time.

2. Planning for dialogic book talk

You need to think about possible lines of enquiry and be well prepared for the different views that might be shared by the children. **Think about the:**

- Setting – where and when does the story happen? How do we know?
- Characters – real or fantasy? What are their relationships with each other? Are some more important to the story than others?
- Events – could things have turned out differently? Are we really sure what did happen? (Many children's classics can be interpreted in different ways – and sometimes the illustrations seem to tell a slightly different story.)

3. Leading the session

Begin by reading the story or looking at the pictures with a small group of 4-6 children. Ensure that the children have opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas about the story. Although you are leading the session, the children should lead the discussion.

4. During the session:

- Allow pauses and thinking time (**TRAFFIC LIGHTS***)– don't rush in to fill gaps in the talk.
- Try to use prompts such as 'I wonder why...' rather than direct questions such as 'Why does...' This suggests that you really want to know, rather than that you already have the answer and are checking whether the children know it.
- You need to be ready to move things on if children have nothing to say or are going round in circles.
- Expect children to listen to each other first time round rather than making them repeat what they've said, or repeating it for them, though you may wish to recast it in order to encourage other children to contribute.
- Listen carefully to everything the children say – be ready for the flash of insight from the child who doesn't seem to have been listening at all.
- Be prepared to let the conversation go in directions which you hadn't expected.
- Encourage children to go back to the book to look again at pictures, and re-read for them bits they refer to. The activity is not a test of memory, and going back often gives an opportunity to go deeper or change your mind.
- Stop when the children start to show that they have had enough.

5. Reflecting on the session

What did you observe?	What did the children learn?	What did you learn?
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* Talking Tip – Week 2