How to Talk to Your Kids About Books
(even if you haven’t read them yourself)
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CONVERSATION IS AN INFORMAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

The best stories lend themselves naturally to conversations, and conversations about
books don’t need to be that different from any other discussions we have with our kids.

Good stories cause questions to bubble up within us. They spur more questions than
answers, and can be a great help as we seek to build relationships with our kids.

Consider two main kinds of conversation:

๏ Intentional: planned, an event, less frequent (i.e. book club)
๏ Organic: unplanned, casual, more frequent (i.e. a conversation in the car)

3 KEYS TO GOOD CONVERSATIONS:

1. Maintain a friendly, easy-going approach (smile a lot!)
2. Don’t feel the need to talk about every book
3. Remember that compelling questions matter more than compelling answers

3 OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Use these questions with any child and any book. The conversation you have will vary
based on the your child’s age and the book you’ve chosen. What we’re after is a habit of
asking questions, so that our children become discerning readers who are used to
thinking and talking about ideas.

Samples come from The Three Bears by Paul Galdone, The Lion, the Witch, and the
Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis, and Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

1. Should he/she have done that?

To ask this question, choose any character from the story and any of their actions from
the book. Ask your child if the character in questions could have done the action.
Follow up by asking why or why not.
• Should Goldilocks have entered the bears’ cottage?
• Should Edmund have followed the White Witch?
• Should Elizabeth have insulted Darcy?

2. **How is X like Y? How is X different from Y?**

   To ask this question, choose two characters (or settings, or things) from the story, and ask how they are alike and different. This question helps develop the habit of thinking in metaphor. Metaphor is important for the best written and spoken communication.

   • How is Goldilocks like Baby Bear? How are they different?
   • Should Edmund have followed the White Witch?
   • Should Elizabeth Bennet have insulted Darcy?

3. **Who is the most __________ in this story?**

   Insert any character trait into the blank space. Follow this question with a second one—something like, “What makes you say that?” or, “Can you give me an example?”

   Ideas: courageous, considerate, cowardly, deceptive, faithful, foolish, generous, greedy, happy, hard-working, merciful, noble, proud, selfish, wise,

   • Who is the most foolish in *The Three Bears*?
   • Who is the most courageous in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*?
   • Who is the most proud in *Pride and Prejudice*?

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

**Book:** *The Read-Aloud Family: Making Meaningful and Lasting Connections with Your Kids*

Written by Sarah Mackenzie, this bestselling book offers age-appropriate book lists for toddlers to teens, as well as inspiration and practical help to create a lively, joyous book club culture in your home.

**Website:** readaloudrevival.com

Free book lists & podcast episodes hosted by Sarah Mackenzie to help you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.