

[Search](#)[KIDS](#)[TEENS](#)[BLOG](#)

Books + Music + Movies + Digital

Events + Classes + Activities

Research + Resources

Kids + Teens

We're Here (Longer) for You! New opening hours!

THE FACILITATOR'S HANDY LIST OF GROUND RULES, GUIDELINES AND EVERYTHING ELSE

[Before the meeting](#) | [During the meeting](#) | [Discussion guidelines for participants](#) | [Facilitator guidelines](#)

Before the meeting

- Choose a theme
- Select titles
- Schedule meeting place and dates
- Order the books EARLY if using interlibrary-loan. Give readers at least two weeks with the book.
- Gather author information and reviews of books to share with group
- Put together a list of works by the author and similar titles
- READ THE BOOK
- Always be prepared to lead the discussion



During the meeting

Begin the discussion no more than 5-10 minutes after scheduled time.

Take time to make introductions—you never know when you'll have a new face and usually the only person in the room who knows everybody is you.

Icebreakers: Any one of the following should get the conversation started.

1. Ask each reader to answer the question, "Did you like the book?" during introductions. Once introductions are over, you will have enough comments to get the discussion off to a good start.
2. Ask each reader to choose one word that describes the book.
3. Ask each reader if this is a book similar to what they usually read or not.

Discussion guidelines for participants

Interruptions — There will always be someone who breaks in while another person is speaking. Most interrupting during discussion is due to enthusiasm rather than rudeness. Control the interruptions by saying, "Hold that thought, Sheryl. We'll want to hear it again once Angie has finished."

Monopolizing Conversation — Cut in on a longwinded group member with, "That's an interesting point you just made. Did anyone else get the same impression or a different one?" "You've made some interesting points, Terri. Let's hear from another reader. Kimberlee? What did you think?"

Keeping the group on the topic of the book — Try not to let readers wander and bring them back if they do. Comments such as, "Let's get back to the end of chapter 4. What did you think at this point?" "I have a question about the situation on page 125. What's really happening here?"

Listen carefully to what is said by participants — Rephrase a reader's comments or question to be sure you and others understand what was meant. This is an especially necessary technique when dealing with a verbose participant.

Allow everyone the chance to contribute to the discussion — Engage silent readers by posing open-ended questions directly. But don't badger the participants who really don't want to participate. They may not have finished the book and don't want to admit it. Try asking, "What did you like/dislike about the book, David?"

Remind everyone of the next meeting time and title of next book — Always have extra copies of the book group flyer on hand.

Have copies of the next book available for readers — Make sure the next book in the series is always available at the meeting preceding its discussion.

Have copies of reviews, author information and/or readalike lists for group members — If time allows during the discussion, keep a running list of books readers recommend which are like the one just finished. At the end of the series, compile all the recommendations and hand it out to the participants. These book lists are also great sources for a revival series if a theme has been especially well received.

Facilitator guidelines

As the facilitator, think of yourself as a literary umpire. It's your job to make sure everyone has the opportunity to respectfully share their opinions of the selection with the group. You do not have to agree or disagree with every statement made by a reader. Turn issues back to the group by asking, "Does everyone agree with David's comment?"

10 questions which will help generate discussion:

1. How does the title reflect the book?
2. Which character do you think is the voice of the author?
3. Is the main character likeable? Why or why not?
4. Did the author leave loose ends? What were they?
5. What do you think the author wanted the reader to get out of the book?
6. What makes a minor character memorable? Why is this character important to the story?
7. What do you think happens to the characters next? (after the last page is turned)
8. Would you recommend this book? Why or why not? If yes, what would you say about it?
9. Why was this book selected for discussion?
10. Would this book make a good movie? (cast the film)

Further questions for discussion

1. What makes the book distinctive?
2. Is the period in which the book is set important to the theme? Why? Are the values presented dated? How?
3. Is the setting of the book important to the theme? Why? How realistic is the setting?
4. Does the theme of the book relate to the protagonist's gender? How?
5. What did the author attempt to do in the book? Was it successful?
6. What is the author's worldview?
7. Were the plot and subplots believable? Were they interesting?
8. Did the author leave loose ends? What were they?
9. How understandable were the motivations of the characters? What motivated the behavior of the characters?
10. How is the book structured? Flashbacks? From one point of view? Why do you think the author chose to write the book this way?
11. How does the language of the book help convey the theme?
12. Does the author rely heavily on imagery and symbolism?

Talking about a book no one liked

Don't be alarmed if all your readers come to the discussion announcing how much they hated the book, the characters, the writing, the subject, EVERYTHING. Books no one liked often provide the best discussion. Ask the following questions to get people talking about what they didn't like about the book:

1. At what point did you decide to give up on the book and why?
2. What made you keep reading to the end?
3. Which character did you dislike the most?
4. Are any of the situations in this book realistic?
5. Does the dialogue sound natural?
6. What could the author have changed to make this a book you would have enjoyed?
7. Would this book have been better in another format? (i.e. as an audiocassette or film)

If the idea of acting as group facilitator isn't one you cherish (and you still want a book group in your library), consider asking the group members to take turns. If the members balk at taking on the role, look around your community for "visiting" facilitators. Good people to ask would be teachers, local college faculty, bookstore workers, the people who regularly give programs to study clubs, other librarians, etc.

When you have to wing it as the facilitator

Read at least two reviews. Read some author background. Keep discussion focused on the group's reactions and opinions. Ask the questions from the list printed above.

Compiled by *Kaite Mediatore Stover* (<mailto:kaitestover@kclibrary.org>), Head of Readers' Services, Kansas City Public Library.