

BASAL READERS AND TRADE BOOKS

Our ultimate goal must be to help students see reading as a tool not only for learning, but also for pleasure.

BY BARBRA
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“**A**re your children getting the message that reading is ‘necessary, valuable, and pleasant . . . ?’”¹ Children need help in developing these concepts. As teachers, our ultimate goal must be to help students see reading as a tool not only for learning, but also for pleasure.

Teachers need to foster an environment in which students become eager readers. They can do this by integrating children’s trade books (whole text outside literature) with the basal reader. The trade books bring interest, excitement, and real-life situations to the reading program. Through these books, students read about people like themselves, their families, and friends, and gain a better understanding of the value of reading.² The basals provide a thematic approach and a base on which to build a reading program. Here are some ideas that you can use to integrate basal readers and trade books in the reading program.

Program Overview

First choose one unit from the Life Reading Series and four to six trade books with a similar theme. Allow each student to select the book that interests him or her most. Divide students into groups according to the book they have chosen. During the reading period, schedule discussions and story-related activities to enhance the reading experience.

Preparation

Preparation is the most time-consuming part of this program. After the materials are assembled, the program does not take as much time to implement.

It is not necessary to take the units in the sequence in which they occur. Choose a unit that will work well with several trade books that interest you and your students. Multigrade teachers should consider selecting units at different levels that have a shared theme.

You might start the year using the fifth unit from Level 10, *A Time to Weave*, titled “In Another’s Moccasins.” This

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basal unit has several stories about native Americans that are interesting to discuss and compare with a variety of trade books.

Second, decide which trade books you will use with the unit (select at least four to six books). For example, the following list of trade books could accompany “In Another’s Moccasins”: *The Sign of the Beaver*,³ *Island of the Blue Dolphins*,⁴ *Zia*,⁵ *The Story of Sitting Bull*, *Great Sioux Chief*,⁶ and *Pocahontas and the Strangers*.⁷

For each school and area, the choice of books may be quite different, depending on the parents and community. You should read through each of your possible choices before obtaining multiple copies. Consult with your principal, colleagues, conference superintendent, and parents for input on your book choices. This selection process will take time, but in the long run you will be more satisfied with the results.

Third, locate multiple copies of these trade books. Ask your librarian to contact other branches. Most libraries will work with other branches of the public library to see if

additional copies of the books you need are available. These can usually be sent to the branch library of your choice. Keep your school and city librarians aware of what you are doing and use their help with this part of the process. Be sure and give them ample time to collect the materials. (This often takes two weeks or more.)

Or you might want to purchase sets of books for the classroom. Because these selections have already been approved, they would be good to include in your textbook library. Most paperback books can be purchased inexpensively through various book clubs.

To help your students increase their personal libraries, you might request that each purchase the book he or she has selected. Then after you are done with the unit, each will have a book to inspire good memories or share with a friend.

To ensure that your program runs smoothly, here are a few suggestions:

1. *Create charts and bulletin boards to display in the classroom.* One of these displays should list various literary

terms, such as the following:

- definition of plot and setting;
- types of characters, including the protagonist and antagonist;
- character characteristics, such as flat, round, static, and developing; and
- point of view, with the different options.

The other display should represent story elements such as introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

2. *Before beginning each unit, set deadlines for the reading assignments so that the students know when they must complete certain sections in their trade books.* This will help with lesson planning and preparation of basal reading assignments. Plan for each group to finish its trade book on

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approximately the same day. (This step will be explained in more detail in the implementation section.)

Implementation

This is where the fun begins. This section will list the daily activities of this program and an explanation for each activity. It will also suggest a schedule for pulling this reading program together. In order to fit all of this into your reading program, you should try to have at least one hour a day scheduled for the reading period.

Basal Day. This day can be very flexible and fun to plan. Try to schedule at least two basal days per week.

The students can read their stories in groups, pairs, alone, or as a class. After they've read, discuss the common themes in their trade books. Talk about the different characters. Ask what they liked or disliked about them. Refer to the story elements on your charts or bulletin board as you compare the basal readers with the trade books. Have the students form teams and act out their favorite parts or have them add a new ending to the story and present it to the class. Do one or two interesting activities on each basal reader day.

Trade Book Day. Try to find an interesting way to present the trade

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books to your students. You might consider doing an advertisement-type format for each of them—giving the class a *brief* overview of the plot of each book. Students are to read these books either during USSR time (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading, which will be explained in more detail later), on the trade book day, or during their free time.

On a certain day each child is responsible for having read up to a certain page in his or her book. On this day each group enters information on its plot chart, discusses the pages read, and tries to predict what will take place in the pages to come (more

details on these activities later).

On the same day, make an assignment related to the pages the students have read, and give a new reading assignment in the trade books. I like to schedule all of these activities on Thursday because this allows the students to do the new reading assignment over the weekend.

Here are some ideas for discussing the trade books:

- Talk about the literary terms and element charts.
- Have the students share a part of the story that they think should have been left out or describe a place they wish the author had given more details about.
- Discuss the characters and any development that is or is not taking place. Ask the students what they think about these characters—should they be developing more quickly or are they changing without cause?

Many different games, activities, and assignments can be done on both the trade book and basal days. Readers Theatre and skits are always fun ways for children to read through basal stories while working on their presentation skills. Webbing (see below) is a great way for children to draw out the story and brainstorm different ideas about the book.

You might also ask each group to create a pictorial map of the main setting of the book. This will help them to organize their thoughts. After they have completed the maps, be sure they share and interpret them for the class.

Lastly, you might teach letter-writing skills by having students write to one of the characters in the book or write an actual letter to the author of the book. If they write letters to one of the characters in the book, have them trade papers and respond as if they were the character.

Finally, here are some details relating to the activities recommended above:

USSR. This is an acronym for Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading. During this time when the classroom is quiet, everyone has a book to read (including the teacher). The books can either be trade books or

other books each person chooses. This period should last *no less* than 20 minutes.

Plot Charts. These charts are a great way to motivate students to read more than one trade book selection. Each week the students reading each book get together and decide what has happened in the story so far that contributes to the plot. They then record these *significant events in order* on their plot charts. Display these charts in a prominent place in the room so that all of the students can read the information, and so the charts can be easily referred to during class discussions of the various stories.

Response Journals/Ways to Respond. Through these journals the students share their feelings about the trade books or basal stories. There are a variety of ways in which students can respond to the stories; however, each should decide for himself or herself the way to respond. Students should make at least one entry a week. Entries should include a title, the date for each entry, and at least a half page of writing. Suggest to students the following ways they might tell the story:

1. Retell the story,
2. Tell something you liked or disliked about the story,
3. Tell something you wondered about when you were reading,
4. Ask a question you thought about when you were reading,
5. Tell about something similar that happened to you,
6. Tell how you felt when you were reading,
7. Write a prediction you think might be fulfilled in the story,
8. If you were the protagonist in the story, tell how you think you might act toward the antagonist.⁸

Webbing. This activity helps students brainstorm before beginning a writing assignment and helps to further develop the story in the students' minds. The teacher and/or students choose one main thought, character, or event from the story they want to develop. They write their choice in the center of the paper and circle it. Now the brainstorming begins—ideas directly related to this chosen idea are written down on lines radiating out from the circle like spokes of a wheel.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE⁹

Week 1

Monday

- Introduce four to six trade books and basal unit theme
- Have students select a book to read
- Announce page numbers to be read by Thursday
- Students begin reading selected book

Tues. & Wed.

- USSR*
- Basal Reader Day

Thursday

- Trade book groups begin plot charts
- Predict
- Read orally

Friday

- Share plot charts with whole group
- Announce page numbers to read by Thursday
- Introduce response journals
- Model ways to respond
- Read silently or in pairs

Week 2

Mon. - Wed.

- USSR/Response journals
- Basal Reader Day

Thursday

- Update plot chart
- Predict
- Read orally

Friday

- Share plot charts with whole group
- Announce page numbers to read by Thursday
- Read silently or in pairs

Repeat Week 2 until trade books are completed. Then move on to Post Week 1.

Post Week 1

Mon. - Wed.

- USSR/Response journals
- Basal Reader Day

Thursday

- Each trade book group creates a story map/web on an overhead

Friday

- Share story map/web with the class

Post Week 2

Mon. & Tues.

- Basal Reader Day

Wednesday

- Choose and begin group book activity
 1. Crossword puzzle
 2. Game
 3. Readers Theatre
 4. Bulletin board mural

Thursday

- Continue group activity

Friday

- Share group activity with the whole group

Post Week 3

Mon. - Wed.

- USSR
- Basal Reader Day

Thursday

- As a whole group, compare and contrast basal stories and trade books

Friday

- Write letters to one of the main characters
- Write to one of the trade book authors

* *Uninterrupted Sustained Student Reading*

After the group has written down as many directly related ideas as possible, they then begin to think about ideas that are directly related to the ideas written on the spokes of the circle. This “webbing” can continue for as long as it produces useful ideas. These charts can be helpful when discussing the literature book during full class discussions.

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Prediction. As they read the trade books, ask each group of students to think ahead about what *might* happen in the story. You need not spend much time discussing their views, but each student should feel free to share in the discussion. Have students record their predictions so they can refer to them during future discussions to see the accuracy of their predictions.

Students meet together to record events in their plot charts.

Conclusion

The goal of the reading program is to instill in each student a lifelong interest in reading. This can be a great challenge, but innovative methods of reading instruction can help to create this interest.

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Using trade books students find interesting, in combination with the basal reader, can encourage better attitudes in the students and provide structure for the teacher’s program. Through this integrated approach, teachers help their students establish reading habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. ✍

Third-grade students present a Readers Theatre from their basal reader.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

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3. Elizabeth George Spears, *The Sign of the Beaver* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983).
4. Scott O’Dell, *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1960).
5. Scott O’Dell, *Zia* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1976).
6. Lisa Eisenberg, *The Story of Sitting Bull, Great Sioux Chief* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991).
7. Clyde Robert Bulla, *Pocahontas and the Strangers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
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9. Adapted from *ibid.*, p. 11.

LIFE READING SERIES

On Eagles’ Wings

Level 12

UNIT 5, “Wings for My Flight,” pages 330-417

UNIT THEME: SELF-DETERMINATION/COURAGE

1. *The Sign of the Beaver*, by Elizabeth George Spears. New York: Dell, 1983.
2. *Children of the Fire*, by Harriette Robinet. New York: Macmillan, 1991.
3. *My Side of the Mountain*, by Jean Craighead George. New York: Dutton, 1988.
4. *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, by Scott O’Dell. New York: Dell, 1960.
5. *Amos Fortune, Free Man*, by Elizabeth Yates. New York: Dutton, 1950.
6. *Shades of Gray*, by William Reeder. New York: Macmillan, 1989.

WAYS TO RESPOND

You can:

1. Retell part of the story.
2. Tell something you liked about the book.
3. Tell something you did not like about the book.
4. Tell something you wondered about when you were reading.
5. Ask a question you thought about when you were reading.
6. Tell about something similar that happened to you.
7. Tell how you felt when you were reading.