

Three years ago Education World celebrated Children's Book Week by publishing [Better Book Reports -- 25 Ideas!](#). Since that time, those book report ideas have logged tens of thousands of hits! So, in recognition of Children's Book Week 2002, we are pleased to introduce the sequel to that popular article: "Better Book Reports -- 25 More Ideas."

We understand that sequels are not always as popular as their predecessors -- consider *Caddyshack II* or *Look Who's Talking, Too* -- but we're confident that you'll find many great ideas in *this* new release!



CHARACTER COMPARISON

Students select one character from the book they're reporting on and then answer the following questions:

- What traits does this character have that I do not have?
- What traits do I have that the character does not have?
- What traits do the two of us share?

Encourage students to consider all kinds of traits -- physical appearance, personality, character, outlook on life, and so on. Students will use a Venn diagram to organize their thinking about their personal traits and those of the character they selected.

If you do not have a Venn diagram work sheet, students can use one of these sheets to complete the activity: Venn diagram work sheet [1](#), [2](#), or [3](#).

If your students are unfamiliar with the Venn diagram as a graphic organizer, or if they could benefit from a quick refresher course before using it in this activity, draw a sample Venn diagram on the chalkboard. Write the word "Dog" under Circle A. Write the word "Cat" under Circle B. Then ask students to list on chart paper some characteristics of dogs and/or cats. Discuss which characteristics are specific to each animal and which characteristics the two animals share. Write the characteristics specific to dogs in Circle A. Write the characteristics specific to cats in Circle B. Write those characteristics that both animals share (e.g, they make good pets, they have fur...) in the area where the two circles connect.

For this character sketch comparison, students will write characteristics that apply *only* to the book character in Circle A and characteristics that apply *only* to themselves in Circle B. They will write characteristics that apply to both the character and themselves in the area where the two circles intersect.

MINI BOOK REPORT

Students create a mini book report. Provide each student with a sheet of drawing paper. (Younger students might use 11- x 17-inch paper; older students might prefer 8-1/2- x 11-inch paper.) Have students fold the drawing paper in half, then in half again. When they unfold the paper, they will have four boxes of equal size. Then ask students to cut the paper in half along one of the folds, slip one piece of the paper inside the other, and staple the fold to create an eight-page book. Decide in advance what should appear on each page of the students' mini book reports. For example, you might assign the pages as follows:

- Cover -- a new cover design for the book.
- Inside cover -- blank, no text.
- Page opposite the inside cover -- title, author, and other important information about the book.
- Center spread -- a picture of a favorite part of the book along with an explanation of why that is a favorite part.

- Next page -- five vocabulary words (and their definitions) that are important in the book; the words might offer other students an indication of the reading level/difficulty of the book.
- Inside back cover -- blank, no text.
- Back cover -- a teaser written to entice others to read the book.

SCAVENGER HUNT BOOK REPORT

Students search the book read for words and/or sentences that match the scavenger hunt criteria, which focuses on grammar and phonics skills. The following are examples of the kinds of words students might be looking for; the last few items on the list might require writing two sentences from the book:

- a three-syllable word
- a contraction
- a compound word
- a word with a silent e at the end
- a word with a suffix that required doubling the final consonant before adding the suffix
- a word with a suffix that required dropping a silent e before adding the suffix
- the longest word in the book
- a word that includes the letters *tion*
- a four-syllable word
- a word that includes a silent letter other than e
- an adjective
- a word with a prefix
- a sentence that includes a simile
- rhyming words (students might write two sentences, highlighting the rhyming words)
- synonyms (students might write two sentences, highlighting the synonyms)
- antonyms/opposites (students might write two sentences, highlighting the opposites)

BOOK REPORT BINGO

Students play book report bingo. To encourage students to read books of different genres, create a simple bingo sheet. Have students read five books over two months that match the genres in any row or column on the bingo sheet. Following is a sample sheet:

	BOOK	REPORT	BINGO		
Biography	Poetry	Mystery	Myth	Fiction	
Mystery	Fiction	Poetry	Biography	Humor	
Drama/Play	Mystery	Myth	Historical Fiction	Poetry	

Poetry	Humor	Drama/Play	Mystery	Historical Fiction	
Historical Fiction	Biography	Humor	Fiction	Drama/Play	

21 MORE BOOK REPORT IDEAS READY TO GO!

Ready, Setting, Go!

Students use a Venn diagram (See Character Comparison activity above.) to compare the setting in a book with local settings (in your community). How are the two settings alike? different?

Now You're Cooking!

Students appeal to their classmates' stomachs by making an edible book report! They will locate a recipe for a food dish that plays a role in a book or one that represents the setting of the book. When they share the food with their classmates, students will explain how the dish relates to the book read.

Before-and-After Book Reports

Students write a brief report about what they *think* a book will be about -- based on the book's cover -- before they actually read it. After reading the book, students write a brief explanation of the book as it actually is. For additional details that flesh out this book report idea, see [The Psychic Book Report](#).

Videotape Book Report

Students create a "commercial" for a book they read. Set up a video camera in the back of the classroom, provide brief instruction on how to use it (Post a sheet of simple instructions for reinforcement.), and have each child videotape himself or herself presenting a 30-second "commercial" for the book read. In the first 30 seconds of the commercial, students should tell what is good about the book. The next 2 minutes will feature the student reading a favorite passage from the book -- a passage that might motivate others to want to read the book. You might make a few copies of the video and send it home with a different student each night so parents can view the children's work *and* gather ideas for books to give as gifts!

Reporting "Live" from the Scene

Students write a script presenting one of the major events in a book as a real event. Have them create a simple background or use a local setting as the backdrop for a "Live at 11" news report. Student-reporters present their on-the-scene reports in front of the video camera.

Share a Book Report.

Students share book reports with students in the same grade in a neighboring school or school district. Pair up with another class in the community and encourage students to share book reports throughout the year. Plan to have students read some of the same books and some different ones. It would be nice if one or two of the book reports students shared during the course of the year were video book reports -- so students could get to know one another better. Better yet, arrange for a meeting of the students for the purpose of book sharing either as a culminating event at the end of the year, or both at the start *and* end of the school year.

Book Report Recipe

Students write a "recipe" for a good book. Provide students with a "recipe card" format for their book

reports. Each book report should include 1 cup of plot, 2 teaspoons of characters, 2 tablespoons of excitement, 1/2 cup of opinion... See the complete [Book Report Recipe lesson idea](#) online at The Teacher's Desk.

Birth Sign Book Report

Students explore characters and the signs of the Zodiac. Provide students with a simple explanation of some of the personality characteristics of the [Zodiac/Horoscope Signs](#) or the 12 animal birth signs of the [Chinese Zodiac](#). Then have students select a character from the book read. As they read the character traits of the birth signs, they should consider under which sign the selected character was born. Their book report will explain why they came to that conclusion.

Five-Dollar-Words Book Report

Students learn about tools that can help them improve their writing and, therefore, make a more powerful statement about the book they just read. This activity combines the book report with an exercise using a dictionary or thesaurus. Students start by writing a paragraph to describe why they liked or did not like about the book read. Before they hand in the brief book critique, however, they take one final look to be sure they have used the best words to describe the book. Challenge students to use a dictionary or thesaurus to find in their critique five "50-cent words" (small, unexpressive words) and replace those words with "5-dollar words" (words that convey their thoughts more specifically, descriptively, or dramatically).

Test Time

Students create a quiz to check their peers' comprehension of a particular book. The quiz should include fill-in-the-blank, true or false, or multiple-choice questions. Correct the student-created quizzes and keep a file of the quizzes. Each time a student completes a book, he or she can take a quiz created by a peer!

Folded Book Reports.

Students create an accordion-folded book reports or quadraramas -- [Not Your Same Old Book Report](#).

Mapping a Book

Students create a map highlighting places described in the story. Many of the map's features should be based on information provided by the book's author. The map might show the immediate neighborhood or community in which the book takes place; if the author offers ample description of the home or another place as the central setting for the book, then the students' maps might detail that place. In most cases, the completed maps will involve some conjecture on the part of the mapmaker. The student will explain his or her reasoning in writing or orally.

Adjective-ly Speaking

Students focus their attention on the author's descriptive writing talents and learn more about adjectives. The activity will drive home that good writing -- their own included -- benefits from excellent descriptions. Have students locate five or ten (depending on grade level) sentences in the book that include excellent adjectives/descriptions.

Once Upon a Timeline

Students create a timeline showing a chain of important events from a book read.

Trading Spaces

Students answer the question, *Would you want to trade places with a character in the book?* Explain that their essays must provide solid information supporting their responses to the question. The information they use will help demonstrate how closely they read the book.

Acrostic Poem Book Report

Students write acrostic poems demonstrating their understanding of the sequence of events in a book. See the lesson, [Acrostic Book Report](#).

Teacher Marci McGowan shared the lesson plan above with Education World. McGowan received \$50 for contributing her lesson to our [Teacher-Submitted Lesson Plan archive](#). Go to the archive for more lessons as well as information about how you can earn money by sharing some of your favorite lessons!

Story Maps and Boxes

In another lesson from Education World's Teacher-Submitted Lessons archive, students use a story-mapping template to review parts of a story and information about a book they have read. They share their story boxes as an alternative to book reports. See Patricia Fry's complete [Story Maps and Boxes lesson](#).

Thumbnail Outline

Students explore the value of the outline format book report and practice picking out the important details and characteristics of a book that might belong in an outline. Provide them with a work sheet based on the simple outline form below, or adapt the format by adding the elements you like to emphasize.

Book Title: _____

Author: _____

I. Main Characters

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

II. Setting and Time Period

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

III. The Plot: A Timeline

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

IV. Best Parts of the Book

- A. _____
- B. _____

V. Criticism of the Book

- A. _____
- B. _____

VI. Overall Opinion of the Book (and Details to Support Your Opinion)

- A. _____
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

Books Reports Go Hi-Tech

Introduce technology as a tool for creating book reports. See the following book report lessons that make use of a variety of popular software products:

- [HyperStudio Book Report](#)

- [Creating a Book Review Using a Multimedia Stack](#)
- [PowerPoint Book Report](#)
- Students might use the [Multimedia Book Report Rubric](#)

Big Books for Little Kids

Students in grades 4 and up work as a class or in small groups to retell a story for younger students in simple words and pictures. The students might examine a few of the big books that younger students have been exposed to and use them as models as they create their own big-book versions of stories worth telling. When the big books are completed, schedule a special event so the “authors” can share their work with the young children!

Gary Hopkins
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