

Title:

Not Another Book Club

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722

Summary:

Not everyone has time to read a novel to be able to go to a book club and talk about fiction. So what is the alternative? Why not start your own short story club? Read on to find out how.

Keywords:

short stories, book club, fiction, reading, stress relief, time management, short story, short fiction, story, online stories

Article Body:

Want to talk about fiction but not sure if you can commit to reading a book each month? Especially if it turns out to be a book you don't like. It's one thing finding time for a novel you do like, but one that is a struggle just to turn the pages? No thanks.

So what is the answer. Short stories, of course! They can be read in a fraction of the time and then you can talk about them instantly.

So how does a short story club work? Basically the same as a book club but without the 12 hours of homework that it takes to read the novel so that you can join in the discussion.

First up you need to decide if you want to be in an online or offline club. If you are wanting to set up an online club then the best way to do it would be to use either an instant messaging service (Yahoo or MSN are too popular services) or an internet voice service like Skype so that you can chat aloud for free just like you would if you were all meeting in person (go to <http://www.skype.com/> for more details).

Whether you decide on an online or offline club, you will need to work out a few other details like how many people you'd like in the club. Too few members and it maybe difficult to get a discussion going, too many and it maybe difficult for everyone to get an opportunity to speak. Eight is probably a good number as it allows for a few people to be away each week but it would probably still work well with six. You could always start off with less and then invite more people

in if you feel you need to.

You need to set the guidelines up front so that everyone knows how it will work.

1. How often will you meet? Once a week, once a month, once every two months. You probably wouldn't want to go any further out than two months or you will lose momentum.
2. When will you meet? Lunchtime, after work, in the evenings, Saturday afternoons, over breakfast. It's better to be consistent, say every Friday lunchtime or the first Monday evening of the month, so that you save on scheduling time and avoid confusion.
3. Where will you meet? This will probably be determined by when you meet but some possible options are a library, restaurant, someone's home, a community centre or a café. Wherever you go, make sure that it is not too noisy so that everyone can hear what others are saying.
4. Work out how you will choose what to read. Will you take it in turns to pick? This could work well if people have time to go searching for stories. Will you work from a book of short stories? Bear in mind with this that some people will read ahead. You could subscribe to a short story service like espresso Fiction and receive a new short story every Tuesday which you can discuss. The benefit of this is that the onus to plan ahead doesn't fall on any one person and saves time.

So you've now got the rules organised, how will you get a discussion going? The best way to do this is to structure each meeting along similar lines. A rough outline follows:

- . Meet at a set time and allow a few minutes for everyone to catch up with each other
- . Spend 15 minutes reading the story
- . When everyone is finished, go around in turn and have each person say what they liked or disliked about the story
- . Run through a standard list of questions:
 - Did the opening grab your attention?
 - Was the ending satisfying? Did it derive from the story or did it feel too left field?
 - Was it well written?
 - How was the pace of the story? Were there any dead spots?
 - Was there any padding that didn't contribute to the telling of the story or development of the characters?
- . Finally ask each person to give the story a rating out of ten. One being terrible and ten being outstanding. You can then add the scores together and divide by the number of people attending to give an average score.