



## Booktalk: talking your way to understanding

**Rules of the game:** Booktalk develops Socratic thought: talking your way to understanding through dialogue. Make the pupils do the thinking and the talking.

**The teacher's role is to**

1. **Encourage and guide but not contribute to the discussion**
2. **keep opening up issues while remaining neutral and butting out (if the pupils know what you think – you've done it wrong.)**
3. **act as a facilitator – be a good listener and encourage the pupils to listen to each other**
4. **stop students thinking they have to work out the answer in your head**
5. **welcome all ideas and only praise contributions that build on/challenge ideas; don't praise the ideas**
6. **help students construct their thoughts coherently – ask for evidence**
7. **Model sentence stems that will help**

**Encourage these ground rules for the class and model this behaviour:**

- chip in – not hands up
- build on other people's ideas
- challenge ideas
- listen
- change your mind
- don't dominate the discussion – encourage everyone to contribute

**Praise and encourage tentative language – model useful sentence stems**

- I was wondering if ...
- I am starting to think that ...
- I'm not certain, but ...
- Some people are beginning to think that ...
- I liked the way you said 'possibly'

**Ways of involving the class:**

- ask open questions that encourage real thought
- encourage class to ask significant open questions
- help the class focus on significant issues
- rephrase ideas and hold them up for further inspection
- repeat ideas to help class focus – draw threads together, refocus and recap
- provide thinking time – wait – go slow – ride the silence
- build challenge – get them to explain further.

**Use grids to encourage thinking (the headings will vary depending on the text)**

Comparisons	Questions	Writer's purpose	Key points
Concerns	Patterns	Significance	...