

Booktalk!

Educator

Booktalking Activities

Booktalking Buddies: Positive Influences Across Grade Levels

Want your students to model good booktalking skills? They need the right audience! Students in younger grade levels are eager listeners. It's fun for everyone!

What

Rehearsed booktalks, performed with gusto. These don't have to be perfect, but they should be polished.

Who

Try to group students with children at least two grades younger than they are. We find that younger students look up to and admire older readers, and prove to be an enthusiastic audience. Just keep in mind this age difference as your students make their book selections. If booktalking to a kindergarten class, for example, picture books are the most appropriate choice. Remember that a great booktalk convinces the listener to read the book – select books that your audience can read if their interest is piqued.

When and Where

Booktalking can happen anywhere, at any time! However, you'll want everyone to be comfortable, as your booktalkers may be nervous and your audience may be easily distracted. This might mean booktalking in a communal space familiar to both of them, such as the media center or cafeteria. It's always a great time to booktalk, but keep in mind that students may get riled up – booktalking is fun! You might find that it's the perfect way to end the school day.

Why

Ultimately, you want your students to feel comfortable performing booktalks for as many types of people as possible. But before they're ready for their peers or their parents, students in lower grades might be a great start: they're a fascinated and forgiving audience. Younger students benefit as well, as they see positive role models of reading. They'll begin looking forward to the day when they are the ones performing booktalks!

Booktalking Activities

We know that once you've been bitten by the booktalking bug, you'll be hooked! For that reason, we've provided you with some additional activities to help make booktalks a prominent and lasting part of your school's reading culture. Whether students are recording videos to be played back later or performing for younger students in the cafeteria, they'll love every minute of it!

Using QR Code Booktalks at Your School (in five easy steps!)

- 1 Begin booktalking in your school.** Use the tools we've included in this kit to get students excited about booktalking. Practice, practice, practice!
- 2 Record your students' booktalks.** This can be an easy and painless process. Many of your students may know how to shoot and upload videos and would enjoy the opportunity to do so. You don't even need a camera – a smartphone will do the trick!
- 3 Upload student booktalks.** In order to create a QR code, you first need a site to link to – videos must live online. We suggest Schooltube, a school-safe video site for students. Upload to www.schooltube.com to store your booktalks. It's free, has simple directions, and other students may get inspired!
- 4 Create and print a QR code from a generator.** Search online to find – many are free.
- 5 Put the booktalk QR codes in key spots.** Try placing them by the books they advertise, such as on the shelf, on the back cover, or on a nearby poster. Put them up in the hallways to advertise for your upcoming Book Fair. Get creative! Just be sure students have a way to scan the codes (smartphone, tablet), and wi-fi is available. Stand back and enjoy the excitement!

What Is a Booktalk? What Is a Booktalking Club?

A booktalk is a two-to-three minute presentation which a student (or teacher, or anyone really!) gives to persuade others to pick up a book they've already read and enjoyed. At Scholastic, we believe very strongly in the power of booktalks. We've presented them at schools and conferences all over the country. Some schools loved booktalks so much that they asked us for additional booktalking opportunities. Thus, booktalking clubs were formed! Meeting before or after school (or during lunch or free periods), members of these clubs work together to craft fantastic booktalks and spread the word to their school and community about great books.

Why start a booktalking club?

Using our free resources as a guide, we think you'll find that a booktalking club achieves many of your professional goals with very little effort required on your part. The clubs rely heavily on peer-guidance and offer students a clear delineation between classroom and club time. Our surveys indicate that students who participated in booktalk clubs read more often for pleasure, got more enjoyment out of reading, and were much more likely to suggest a good book to a friend. The data also indicates that they felt more confident in their writing, editing, and performing skills. We accomplished these results in just 45 minutes a week over the course of 10 weeks, and we think you can too!

How do I get started?

Review "**Starting a Booktalk Club: Success in 12 Weeks.**" (To find this document, log into your Chairperson's Toolkit, go to Fair Files, and enter keyword, "Booktalk.") Here, you'll find a week-by-week guide to getting your club off the ground, as well as answers to frequently asked questions. We look forward to hearing about your success!

Booktalking Club: Troubleshooting and FAQs

How do I find students to join the club?

As is the case with many clubs, much of it will depend on the club moderator and others who are joining. You've already gotten the idea to do this, so we have confidence that you'll be a great moderator! Once students hand in permission forms and collect their books, encourage them to ask friends to join. Consider making "**Ask Me About Booktalking Club**" pins or stickers (designed by students!) for especially gregarious members. Know that a club where students have fun is bound to grow. Give it time!

What if a student enjoys the club but cannot keep up with the pace of our reading?

For the sake of their self-confidence, we don't necessarily suggest pairing students with books below grade level, though if they gravitate in that direction, we do not discourage it. Look for books that are fun and easy to read quickly. Perhaps a reference-style work of nonfiction, a companion guide to a new movie, a book that teaches a skill or craft, or a short graphic novel? **Remember: this should never feel like a chore.**

Booktalk!

What if students decide they do not like the books they selected?

We believe that even good readers abandon books for various reasons. If your students don't love their selections, encourage them to make new ones. Just remind them of the deadline to begin creating the booktalk; if booktalks are due in three days, a 400-page epic might not be the best fit. Take this as an opportunity to start a conversation: why did he or she choose the book in the first place? How can he or she select a book that might be a better fit in the future?

I see a lot of discussion of peer-led activities. What if my students get off task?

Although it would be preferable to let them choose their own partners, first consider making pairings that rely on students you know will stay focused. Most importantly, you set the tone for these activities. If you are at your desk working on your lesson plans while they do cooperative work, you may find that they have more trouble staying focused than if you are visiting groups and offering feedback. Getting off topic is okay sometimes. Of course a book about a lost dog can lead to a discussion of family pets, and that's part of the communal reading experience! Just be sure to challenge students to channel that enthusiasm and energy into their writing and performing.

My students keep picking books that are either too hard or too easy for them. Should I intervene?

It's tempting to guide your students to books that are challenging, but remember that this is not a classroom activity. Students joined this club for pleasure, and the activities should feel pleasurable. For the most part, they should be allowed to make their own choices. However, if you have strong relationships with your students, consider talking to them individually. Ask them to self-assess their progress. For some students, this may be the reminder they need to get back on track. If it's not though, stay optimistic; they may find their niches as the club continues.

My students have very ambitious ideas of starting a booktalking culture in our school. Should I encourage them to be more realistic?

Although you don't want them to be disappointed, we encourage you to support your club's booktalking dreams – enthusiasm is contagious! Allow your students to get your administration, staff, and students hyper-charged about booktalks. This is how big changes start!

We've reached the end of 12 weeks. Now what?

Congratulations! Your booktalk club is up and running and you should feel a strong sense of accomplishment. Now you have two options; follow the pattern established in our outline (read, write, peer-edit, practice, perform, repeat), or forge your own trail based on suggestions from your students. In most cases, we think it will be some combination of the two. We believe that the structure we provided is strong, but that personalization will make it even stronger. Listen carefully to the feedback your students give you, and find a plan that works for you!

Student Booktalk Tips

1 Read your book thoroughly.

You might even want to take notes, if inspiration strikes while you are reading! Make sure this is a book you love; if you'd rate it less than an 8 out of 10, find a different book!

2 Open strong!

Think about starting your booktalk by asking a question: "What scares you the most?" Or start by giving your thoughts on a character you loved: "This is the bravest dog I've ever met." Don't start with something predictable – like "This book is called..." or "This book is about..." – surprise and excite the audience!

3 Find a hook.

Consider your audience. Is there some element of this story that you know will especially interest your peers? Perhaps there's intense magic, or an adorable dog, or a talented surfer? Think about the aspects of the story that made it engaging for you.

4 Don't give it all away.

Think of this like a preview, not a whole movie. Leave them begging for more! End with a cliffhanger such as, "Will he get out in time?" Remember, the idea is to get them interested enough to want to read the book.

5 Enhance your presentation with props.

Carry an umbrella for a book about a rainy day, or wear a cap for a book about baseball. Be creative! Just be sure not to wear anything that will muffle your sound, such as a mask. What you are saying is much more important than how you look!

6 Suggest other great reads.

"If you liked [title] then you'll love this!" Think of a similar book which you know was a hit in your school or classroom.

Have fun!

Top 10 Tips for Coaching the Perfect Booktalk

Because you're an educator, we know you want your students to shine. We also know that reading, writing, and public speaking can be difficult for some students. Here are some tips to help students create booktalks they'll deliver with pride:

- 1 Be a booktalk model.** Demonstrate the right attitude toward booktalks by performing them yourself, often and with enthusiasm. Let them see how much you enjoy sharing books with them in this special way!
- 2 Let students booktalk books they really love.** A genuine recommendation comes from genuine enthusiasm for a book. Although you can certainly guide your students in making their selections, be sure that their choices are, ultimately, their own.
- 3 Give them time to work on their writing during class.** For some students, writing the booktalk can be the scariest part of the process. If time permits, let them do some of the writing in class, where you are available to offer guidance and support.
- 4 Encourage small-group rehearsals.** Speaking in front of large audiences can be difficult for even your most outgoing students. Have them practice in front of just a few other students, or one-on-one, until they feel comfortable enough to share with the whole class.
- 5 Promote strong listening skills.** Performing to a disinterested audience is a challenge. Remind students to be courteous – still, silent, and focused – while others booktalk. Don't forget the applause!
- 6 Ask prompting questions.** Sometimes, even well-rehearsed students freeze up. If a student is struggling to recall his or her booktalk, jump in and ask questions like, "What are some similar books to this?" or "What drew you to pick up and read this book?"
- 7 Allow notes when needed.** Although an ideal booktalk is so well rehearsed the speaker does not need written prompts, it's okay to permit students to read from notes if they need them. Quick notes and bullet points on index cards can be helpful for students to recall character names, dates, and other details they don't want to forget.
- 8 Create a positive booktalking environment in the room.** Post on your door a sign that reads, "Booktalks in Progress." Ask the school office to hold any notes or passes. Avoid interruptions.
- 9 Give positive feedback.** Even if a student forgets her cliffhanger, mispronounces the author's name, or never looks up from her notes, let her know you appreciate her effort and emphasize at least one thing she did well.
- 10 When possible, do not grade booktalks.** Booktalks are best when given as a true, joyful reaction to a book. When students know they are being graded, they may perform booktalks which are technically flawless but also passionless. Let their personalities shine; try using booktalks as a tool only to foster a love of reading.

Booktalk!

Know a student who is stuck trying to write a booktalk? Sometimes, one suggestion is all you need to get going. Photocopy these starters, cut them out, and place them in a fishbowl. The next time students just can't seem to get writing, or if you just want to conduct a fun classroom activity, invite them to go "fishing" for the perfect booktalk starter. Students can incorporate these lines anywhere into their presentations.



Booktalk! Starter Card

This book was like nothing else I've ever read because:

Booktalk! Starter Card

This book is perfect for someone who:

Booktalk! Starter Card

This book reminded me of:

Booktalk! Starter Card

This book made me want to:

Booktalk! Starter Card

The one thing I'll never forget about this book is:

Booktalk! Starter Card

I think the author wrote this book because:

Booktalk! Starter Card

This book would (or wouldn't) make a great movie because: _____

Booktalk! Starter Card

The strongest emotion you'll feel when reading this book is: _____

Booktalk!

Know a student who is stuck trying to write a booktalk? Sometimes, one suggestion is all you need to get going. Photocopy these starters, cut them out, and place them in a fishbowl. The next time students just can't seem to get writing, or if you just want to conduct a fun classroom activity, invite them to go "fishing" for the perfect booktalk starter. Students can incorporate these lines anywhere into their presentations.



Booktalk! Starter Card

I knew I loved this book the moment I read:

Booktalk! Starter Card

My favorite character is:

Booktalk! Starter Card

In one word, this book is:

Booktalk! Starter Card

The perfect place to read this book would be:

Booktalk! Starter Card

After reading this book, I'm more interested in:

Booktalk! Starter Card

If I could share this book with one person or character

we've studied in class, it would be _____

because _____

Booktalk! Starter Card

You won't be able to put this book down because:

Booktalk! Starter Card

After reading this book, I think that I am more:

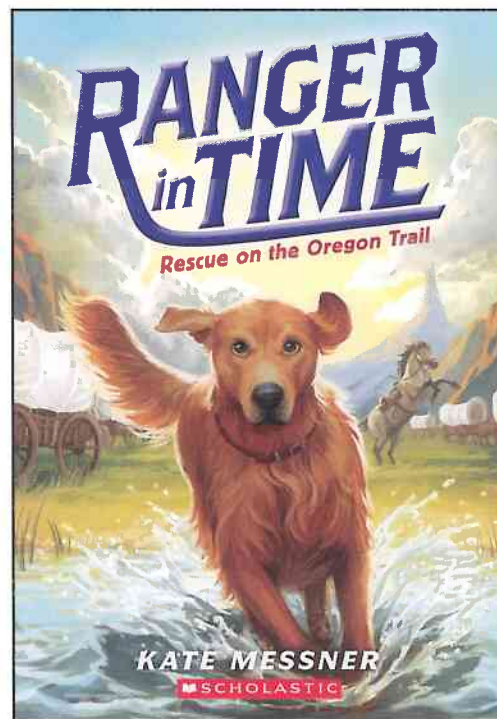
Booktalk!

Ranger in Time: Rescue on the Oregon Trail by Kate Messner

Booktalk!

Ranger is a time-traveling golden retriever with a nose for trouble. After sniffing something mysterious in his backyard, he's transported back to 1850 on the Oregon Trail. He arrives in time to help a boy named Sam save his little sister. But that's not the only help Sam's family is going to need on their journey, and Ranger's search and rescue skills are put to the test.

Walking for hundreds of miles with his new family, Ranger still misses the family he left behind. Will he ever hear their voices again and be reunited in the present day?



Best for Grades 2-4

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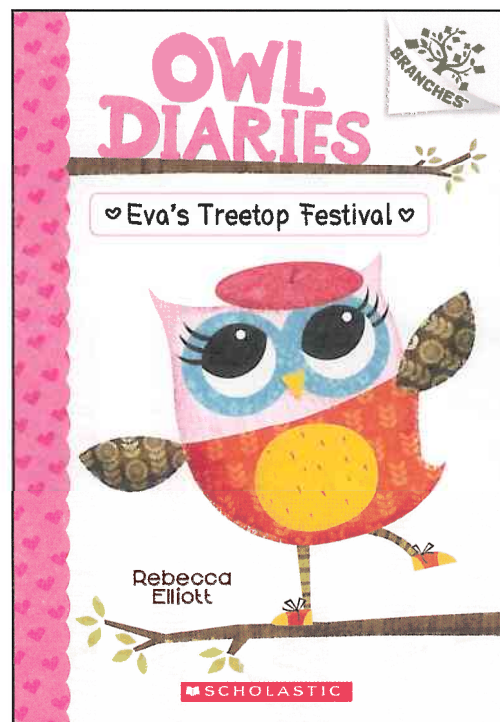
Booktalk!

Owl Diaries: Eva's Treetop Festival by Rebecca Elliott

Booktalk!

Eva the owl just loves to be busy. Whether she's drawing, working on a school project, doing crafts, or hanging with her pet bat, Eva's always got a reason to be excited. Spring is extra exciting, and she's got a brilliant idea to share at school: a spring festival! Her classmates can't wait, but now Eva's got a big problem; she has to plan the festival!

From building a runway to painting the talent show set, her wings are starting to get tired. Miss Featherbottom says she should share the work. Can Eva give up some responsibility without giving up her artistic vision?



Best for Grades 2-3

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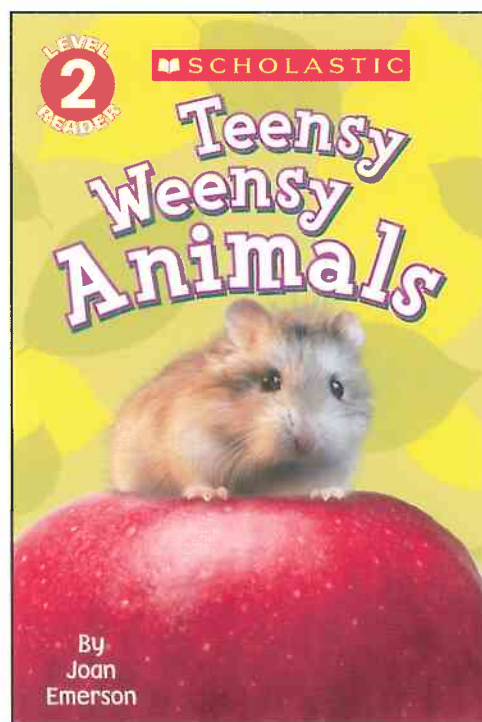
Booktalk!

Teensy Weensy Animals by Joan Emerson

Booktalk!

You probably don't think of elephants as being small, but then again, you've probably never seen a pygmy elephant! There are miniature versions of many animals, from antelopes the size of puppies to frogs smaller than dimes. Some of these animals are even world-record holders!

Whether the animal is wild, like the silky anteater, or a pet, like the munchkin cat, one thing is for sure: these tiny creatures are adorable! Even animal-lovers are sure to find something they've never seen before in this book full of colorful, lovable photos.



Best for Grades K-2

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Booktalk!

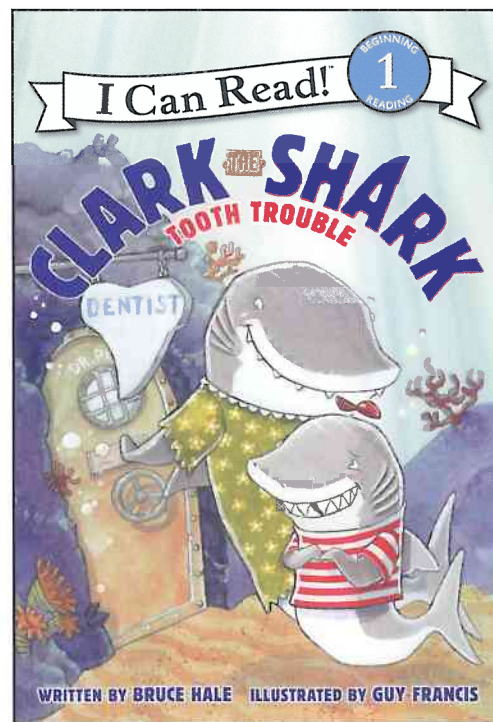
Clark the Shark: Tooth Trouble

by Bruce Hale, illustrated by Guy Francis

Booktalk!

Clark has a tooth that hurts and wobbles. What if it falls out of his mouth? Miss Mahi, the school nurse, tells Clark that he must see a dentist. Clark doesn't even know what a dentist does, but Billy-Ray tells Clark that dentists are scarier than a box of blue whales! This makes Clark very anxious. His mother tries to get him to relax and be his sharky self again.

Scared or not, he's got to face the dentist once and for all, as he has his very first appointment. It might take more than his mother to get him to stay in that chair!



Best for Grades K-2

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Booktalk!

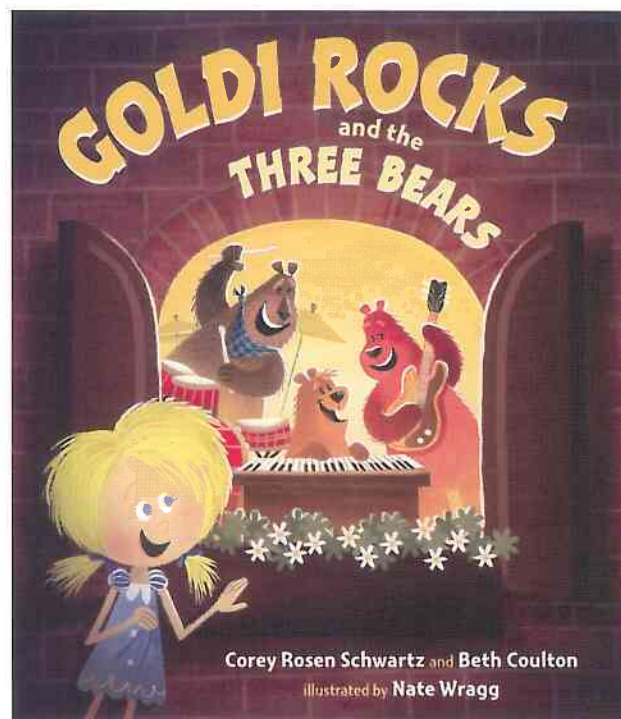
Goldi Rocks and the Three Bears

by Corey Rosen Schwartz and Beth Coulton, illustrated by Nate Wragg

Booktalk!

Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear love to rock-and-roll, but they can't hit the high notes. Soon after they set out to find a soprano with a high voice, a little girl knocks at their door, discovering the Three Bears' studio.

Hungry Goldi forgets all about porridge as she explores the microphones, headphones, and musical instruments. When the Three Bears return, they awaken an exhausted Goldi, but her scream could be the answer to their wishes! Goldi and The Three Bears might just have a harmonious future together after all.



Best for Grades K-2

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Booktalk!

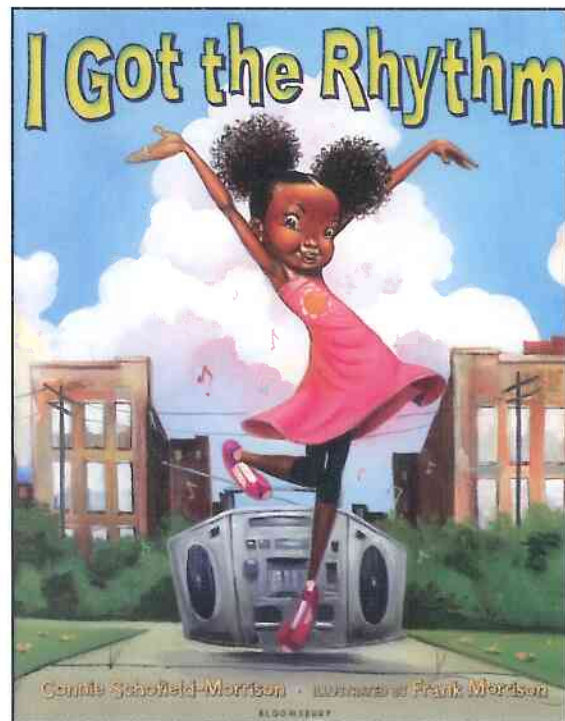
I Got the Rhythm

by Connie Schofield-Morrison, illustrated by Frank Morrison

Booktalk!

How do you feel rhythm? Do you clap it with your hands, or snap it with your fingers, or shake it with your hips? Do you tap your toes to the beat? Children of all colors are enjoying music in the park by doing all of these things as they feel the rhythm.

On such a beautiful day, everyone is outside to soak up the sun and music, which means that eventually, even adults can't help grooving. As the members of this community join proudly together to sing, stomp, and sway, you just might feel tempted to do the same!



Best for Grades K-2

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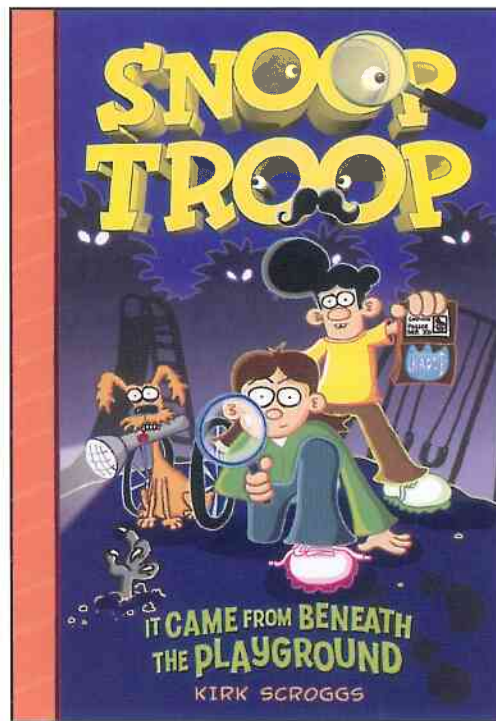
Booktalk!

Snoop Troop: It Came From Beneath the Playground by Kirk Scroggs

Booktalk!

Logan Lang thinks mystery is her middle name. She devours detective books from her library like popcorn, and her lunch box doubles as a police radio. Gustavo Muchomacho, Logan's arch-nuisance, runs the after-school Cop Club for kids and wants to solve crimes like Logan with all the skills he's teaching. Not a chance!

When the police dispatch alerts her to a stolen merry-go-round at the amusement park, Gustavo arrives in a disguise. The police think this nutty pair should work together to help solve the case. Are two heads better than one?



Best for Grades 2-5

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Booktalk!

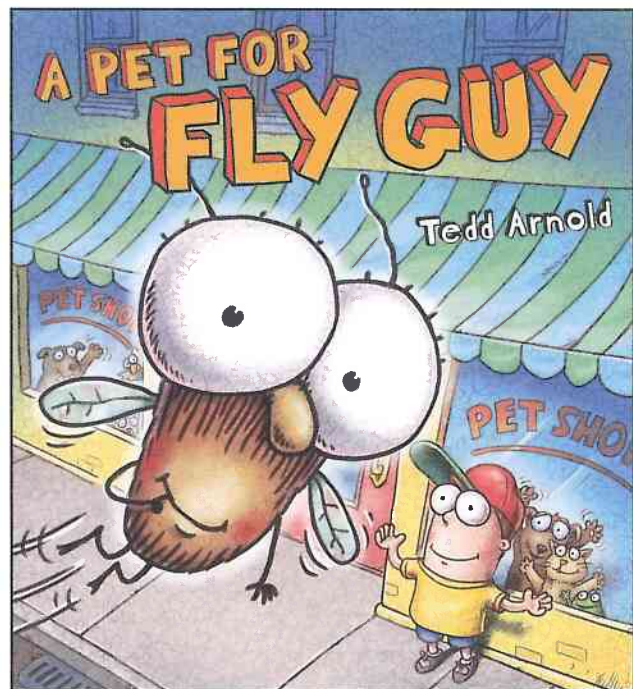
A Pet for Fly Guy

by Tedd Arnold

Booktalk!

Fly Guy and his pal Buzz decide to head for the park and enjoy a picnic lunch. As they watch many people playing with their zany pets, Fly Guy suddenly feels very left out. He doesn't own a pet, so the two friends are determined to find just the right one for him.

Dogs and cats are too large, and frogs and worms are too slimy. Crickets are way too jumpy! Fly Guy might have a very tiny brain, but he comes up with a big, brilliant idea. Maybe Buzz could become his pet! It's a strange solution, but Buzz is willing to give the plan a try!



Best for Grades K-2

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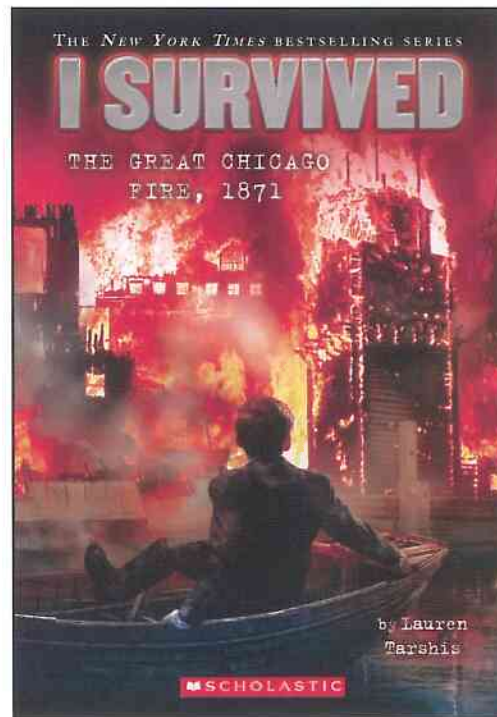
Booktalk!

I Survived: The Great Chicago Fire, 1871 by Lauren Tarshis

Booktalk!

Oscar didn't even want to come to Chicago. If his mother hadn't remarried after his father's death, they'd still be living on their great big farm back home. Chicago, on the other hand, is smelly, loud, and crowded. No sooner is he off the train than he's pickpocketed!

While chasing down the thief, he becomes separated from his mother, but that's not the worst of it. The real trouble starts as an orange glow in the sky, then an intense heat. Soon, Oscar is all alone, lost in a city he doesn't know, with a horrifying realization: Chicago is on fire.



Best for Grades 2-5

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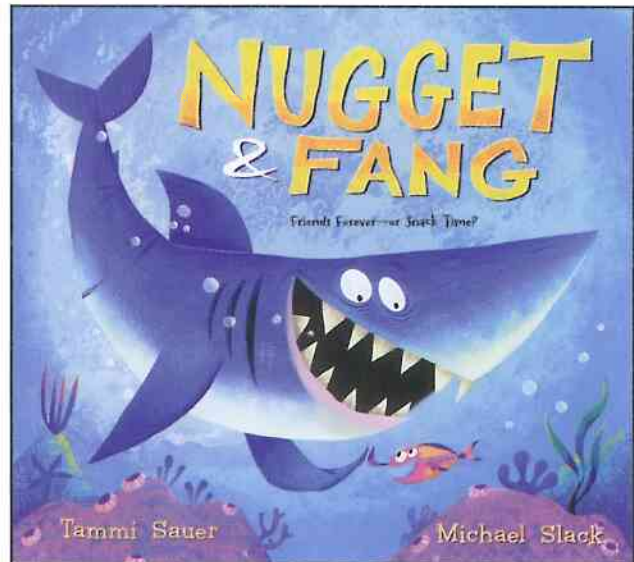
Booktalk!

Nugget & Fang: Friends Forever – or Snack Time? by Tammi Sauer, illustrated by Michael Slack

Booktalk!

In the deep, deep ocean, Nugget and Fang are truly the best of friends. There's just one problem: Nugget is a minnow, and Fang is a shark. Actually, they never thought this was a problem at all. It wasn't until Nugget's classmates told him in no uncertain terms that sharks want to eat minnows!

Fang has never considered taking even a tiny nibble of Nugget and feels heartbroken when his once-best friend begins avoiding him. Are his sharp teeth all Nugget sees? Luckily for both of them, those sharp teeth might save the day after all!



Best for Grades K-2

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Booktalk!

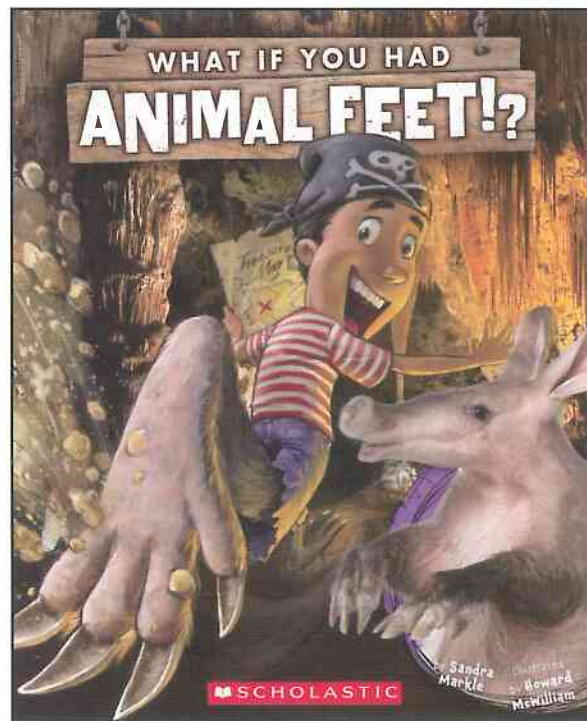
What If You Had Animal Feet!?

by Sandra Markle, illustrated by Howard McWilliam

Booktalk!

Sure, maybe you've always wanted to run like a cheetah. But have you ever wanted to climb like a mountain goat or dig like an aardvark? Animals rely on their feet to accomplish many very specific, very impressive tasks.

From paws to claws and even the webbed feet of the platypus, your life would be quite different if you swapped your bottom half! Take these impressive animal feet, and your imagination, for a test drive in this book full of fascinating facts and funny pictures.



Best for Grades K-3

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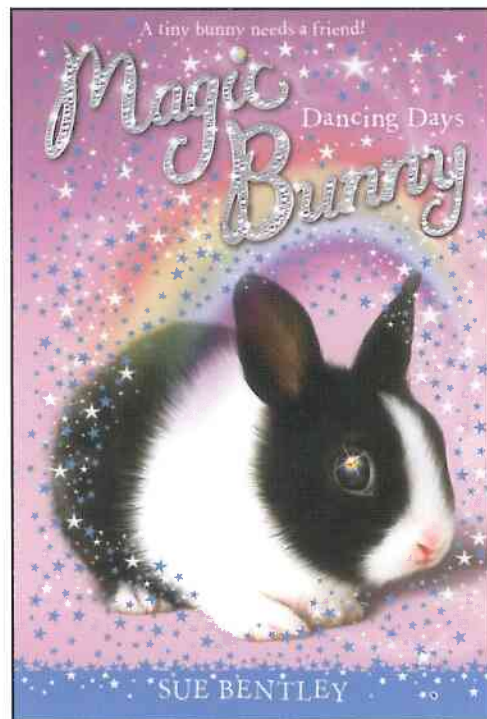
Magic Bunny: Dancing Days

by Sue Bentley

Booktalk!

Nothing is more important than a good friend. Sara is quickly reminded of this when she sprains her ankle in dance class and her best friend Beth is almost as upset as she is. Now their chances to make the dance team audition are over.

Just when Sara needs it most, a magical bunny named Arrow hops into her life. He is a very special friend, and even helps her through a serious disappointment with Beth. With their dance friendship on the line, it takes Arrow's magic to remind Sara what a pal she really can be. Is Arrow's work with Sara done?



Best for Grades 2-4

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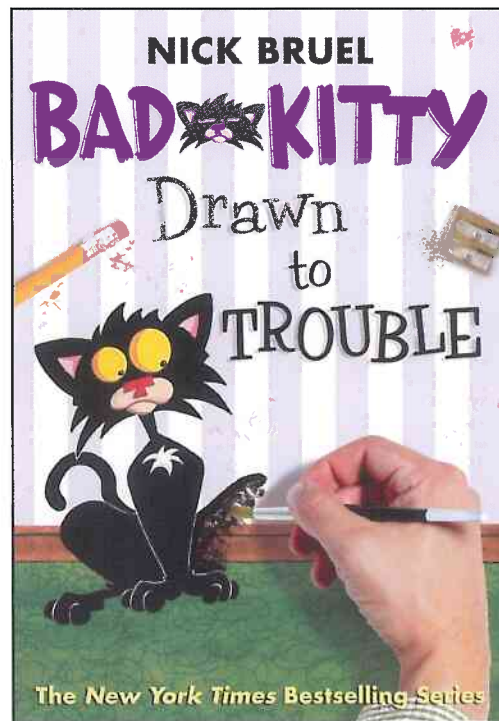
Bad Kitty: Drawn to Trouble

by Nick Bruel

Booktalk!

How is a Bad Kitty story made? It takes a talented author and artist to get the job done. Luckily, Nick Bruel is both! He's ready to take you behind the scenes to see how blank pages become a book.

Unfortunately, not everyone else is ready! Bad Kitty does not like the plot of this new book. Going on a diet and eating turnips? Yuck! She wants out! What is just outside the door, though? Is it a zombie, or a giant octopus, or a hungry polar bear? It seems like Bad Kitty is going to have to stick around and let her author decide what happens next!



Best for Grades 2-5

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