

# An Interactive Approach to Book Reports

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## Brief Rationale

- Incorporates several of Ellis's (2005) 10 general principles for successful instructed learning by contributing to:
  - “focus on meaning”
  - “extensive L2 input”
  - “opportunity for output”
  - “opportunity to interact in the L2”

# Componets

- Summary
- Opinion or reaction statement
- Short quotation with commentary
- Student-made quiz
- *Optional activities:* self-evaluation, slideshow, descriptive statistics of reading performance

## The Summary consists of

- About 200 to 300 words
- Title, author, publisher, place and date of publication
- ***Fiction books:*** Setting and main characters and briefly outline the plot
- ***Nonfiction books:*** Main ideas and conclusion

## Table 1. Questions and Prompts for Summary Writing

### ***Fiction***

- Who are the main people in the story?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen or what places is it concerned with?
- What is the story about?
- How did the story begin?
- What happened after that?
- How did the story end?

### ***Nonfiction***

- This book is about . . .
- There are ( 3 ) main ideas.
- First, ( ) + (detail)
- Second, ( ) + (detail)
- Third, ( ) + (detail).
- The conclusion is . . .

## The Opinion

- Equal in length to the summary or a little shorter
- Written in paragraph form
- Guiding questions helpful for stimulating writing (Table 2)

## Table 2. Questions for Guiding Opinion Writing (1/3)

1. What did you think of the book?
2. What do you think is the theme of this book (e.g., “the importance of friendship”)?
3. What did you find interesting, surprising, shocking, or strange?
4. What other feelings did you have when you read this book?
5. How does it compare to your life? >>>

## Table 2 (slide 2/3)

6. How does it compare to your country?
7. What is something new that you learned?
8. What do you agree or disagree with in the story?
9. Have you changed your ideas about anything because of reading this book?
10. What more would you like to know about this topic? >>>

Table 2 (slide 3/3)

11. What do you predict will happen?
12. If you were a character in the story, what would you have done differently?
13. If you were the author, would you change anything in the book?
14. Would you recommend this book to others? Why?

## Short Quotation

- Interesting or important
- Decide on a criterion for choosing this passage
- Explain the reason for choosing it
- Refer to the guiding questions for opinion writing to help select a quotation

# Presenting the Book Report in Class

- Small groups of about four students per group
- Appendix A outlines a step-by-step procedure
- *Left-hand column*: What the book report writer (the speaker) does
- *Right-hand column*: what the other group members (the listeners) do
- Steps may be added, deleted, or modified
- Appendix B presents a script for the speaker to follow while presenting the report.

## Step One: Summary

- Book report writer reads aloud or speaks from memory
- Listeners take notes using a note-taking worksheet
- Worksheets differentiate between note-taking styles for fiction and nonfiction
- Introduce note-taking by demonstrating the process using the blackboard
- Students progress from using worksheets to blank sheets.

## Steps Two: Replying to Questions

- Listeners complete and confirm the accuracy of their notes
- Listeners ask information questions (*who, what, where, when, why, and how*) to fill in missing details
- Listeners re-tell the information to check the correctness of their notes:

*“You said ( ). Is that right?”*

## Step Three: Quiz on the summary

- Quizzes are done in a lighthearted manner, more like a game than a test.
- A quiz might consist of *true-false, multiple-choice comprehension questions, vocabulary questions, and open-ended comprehension questions.*
- Teacher does not grade the results.

## Step Four: Opinion

- The book report writer presents the opinion by either reading aloud or speaking from memory. As in Step One, the listeners engage in active listening by taking notes using a note-taking worksheet.

## Steps Five and Six

- Book report writer replies to questions about the Opinion.
- Book report writer presents a short quiz about the Opinion.
- The quiz does *not* have to have exactly the same format as the quiz for the summary presented earlier.

## Step Seven: Short Quotation

- As in Steps One and Two, the book report writer presents the short quotation and engages the listeners by asking about their reaction to it.

## Step Eight: Discussion

- Talk about the story and share opinions
- Compare the story to their own lives and the situation in their own country
- Ask each other what they would have done if they were a character in the story, or how they would change the ending if they were the author. It may be helpful to remind students how to use conditionals (e.g., *“If I were the author, I would have . . .”*).

## Step Nine: Exchanging Reports

- Students exchange and read each other's reports, and then write comments and questions to their partner(s).
- Students who were not able to follow the oral presentations now have a chance to read the parts that they couldn't understand aurally.

## Step Ten: Self-Evaluation

- Students complete a self-evaluation questionnaire about their participation in their group discussion.
- Students learn to judge for themselves where their strengths and weakness are (metacognitive skills).

## Step Eleven: Slideshow Presentation (optional)

- Students can engage in a creative project in which they present their book reports to the entire class using images as well as text (PowerPoint).
- Audience members can fill out a feedback sheet to give to each presenter. It can be a very simple form such as “good points of the presentation” and “suggestions for improvement,” or it can be more detailed covering categories such as delivery, organization, and contents.

## Step 12: Descriptive Statistics (optional)

- At the end of the semester, students create charts and graphs displaying their reading performance (Excel).
- *Examples:* number of words or pages they read each week, their reading rate, the results of their self-evaluation questionnaires.
- Keeping track of how much work they are doing and how well they think they are doing can teach students how to be self-directed, aware learners.

## Conclusion (1/2)

- Questionnaire results at the end of the semester have consistently indicated the popularity of using interactive book reports with graded readers and news stories.
- Students appreciate the variety of contents, enjoy discussing their opinions, and enjoy exchanging reports and writing to each other.

## Conclusion (2/2)

- However, as the semester progresses and students begin reading longer or more difficult books, it is necessary to lengthen the deadlines for finishing the book reports.
- Pushing students to do too much, too fast—even with lower-level readers—may create dissatisfaction with the course for some students.

## Selected Reference

Ellis, R. (2005). Instructed Second Language Acquisition: A Literature Review. Auckland, NZ: Auckland UniServices Limited. Retrieved January 21, 2007, from

[http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/6983/instructed-second-language.pdf](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/6983/instructed-second-language.pdf)