

Speed Dating With Books

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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In this era of being alone in a world full of people, speed dating is a matchmaking process in which people meet a large number of possible suitors through a rotation cycle of short “dates”, each lasting eight minutes or less. This culturally popular dating system can be used to introduce students to a large quantity of quality literature in a short period of time. Students discuss books, rather than themselves, to find a literature selection that they would like to get to know more intimately through reading (Berger, 2009; Moen, 2007)

DATING VARIATIONS

Text Appeal Booktalks

Students are arranged in pairs, sitting across from each other. Students share a booktalk with their audience, answer questions, and then listen to their partner’s booktalk, before quickly rotating to the next “date” to repeat the process. Ring a service bell to facilitate the rotation process.

Moen (2007) advocates the provision of questions, such as the following, to assist unfamiliar students to the matchmaking process:

- What was the main character like? Did you like or dislike him/her?
- What was the main conflict or struggle in the book, and how did it develop?
- What was a memorable part of the book?
- What was the theme of the book?
- Did this theme connect with you?
- When and where did the story take place, and how did this setting affect the characters and events?
- Why did you choose this book?
- How did the book maintain your interest?
- Did this book remind you of other books you have read?
- Have you read other books by this author?
- Would you select other books in this genre?
- How would you rank this book if 1 represented the worst and 10 the best? Explain your rating.

As students gain repeated exposure to speed-dating with books, encourage the development of student-created questions.

Getting To Know You

Place an assortment of books on tables, ensuring a variety of readability levels and genres are available. Seated in pairs at tables, students are provided five minutes to “get to know” the book they pick up. After five minutes, everyone rotates to a different table. If the first table has a book that a student wishes to read, they can check it out and find a comfortable place to engage in the book. If the first table did not have a book that they wished to read, students

choose a book from the second table and use the next five minutes to explore the text. Students continue to switch every five minutes until they have made a choice or it is time to make a final decision on which book they were going to take out for a longer "date".

Ranking Your Dates

Students engage in the same process as described previously, but have them also rank the books according to interest and features. Students are provided with two minutes to choose a book and to explore its features and plot.

After two minutes, students are provided one minute to record information about the book, including the title, author, genre, if you think you would like to read the book, and a brief synopsis. Provide a two-column sheet – the first column for the list of the titles and the second column titled "Rank" to the left of the book title column – for students to record their thoughts.

Students then return the book to the table and choose another selection. Repeat the process several times. Culminate the session with a class discussion of the books and the process. Importantly, allocate time for students to sign out a book of interest and to read!

By designing a new place for singles or the bookless to find literary love, *Speed Dating With Books* draws students to books by appealing to their hearts, as well as dispelling the stereotype of the libraries as a passionless solitary place.

Bibliography

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