



Making the Connection: Books and Readers

by JUDY WALLIS

For most of us, there was that defining moment when we discovered “the” book—the one that made the difference in our lives as readers. It was the book that sparked something deep within us. It was the book Jim Trelease called the “home run” book. Perhaps it was a teacher who put the book in our hands. Maybe a peer mentioned it. But the truth is that book gave us our identity as a reader. As teachers, we have the enormous opportunity to be that person who connects a reader with the book that will change them forever. I’ve discovered that there are ways we teachers can connect kids with books. Through the classroom routine of Book Pass, we offer students opportunities to expand their reading and increase the potential that one of those books passed will be a “home run!”



LITERACY CHAMPION: JUDY WALLIS

Judy Wallis’ name is well known. Once described as one of the best language arts directors in the country, she has devoted her professional life to teaching and teachers. After serving as a teacher and literacy coach, she directed the PreK–12 language arts programs in two large school districts for over 20 years, working with literacy coaches, teachers, and principals.

She has authored chapters and articles in a number of books and journals and co-authored *The Blue Pages* in Regie Routman’s *Conversations and Comprehension Intervention* with Steph Harvey and Anne Goudvis. Knowing that success is best achieved through systemic and embedded professional development, Judy has devoted her professional career to ensuring teachers and administrators have access to the very best resources and professional development. She has encouraged and supported thousands of teachers and coaches in their classroom work, often serving as a demonstration teacher and mentor. Those who have worked with Judy over the years say she inspires teachers and administrators to create exemplary programs that produce high student learning and performance. As a speaker at national conferences, literacy consultant, workshop presenter, and university adjunct, Judy has spent the past 13 years working alongside teachers at all levels to develop exemplary literacy instruction.


One to Know: Connecting Readers and Books

Thankfully, schools and districts are beginning to embrace the importance of school and classroom libraries in growing strong and confident readers. Much has been written about the importance of engaging arrangements of books on the shelves and caring adults who support kids in finding their next book. Still, we sometimes see readers select books and return them quickly to the shelves or library unread. Supporting students in “meeting” new books can play an enormous role in ensuring they know what their next read will be. Book Pass is an ideal way to connect kids and books and welcome them into the literacy club!

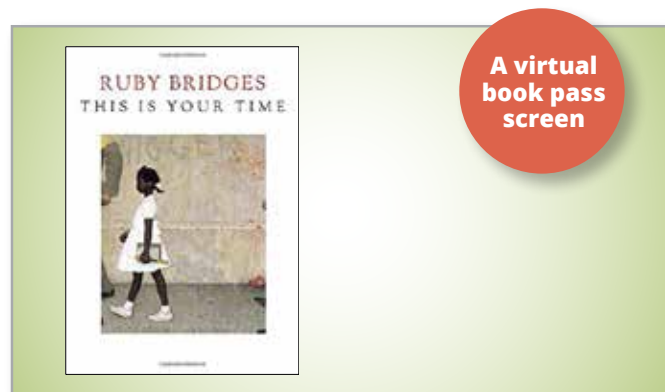
During Book Pass, students have the opportunity to shop for books and create a plan for reading that resembles a “bedside” reading stack. Just spending three minutes before passing a book on allows readers a quick preview to decide their interest.

Like the book talk, Book Pass is an easy way to nurture our students’ reading lives. The Book Pass typically follows this sequence:

- Students sit in groups of five or six or in a large circle.
- A quick demonstration of how to peruse a book is essential and might include reading the flap or back of the book, sampling the first page of the book, or quickly looking through the book at illustrations or photographs.
- Each student gets a Book Pass form to record the title, author, genre, and their desire to read.
- The books are stacked and as the timer starts, students grab a book. When the timer dings, it’s time to pass the book to the next person.
- If time permits, the students may sample a second stack of books. Because reading is social, kids love chatting about their finds and plans. I encourage kids to make a plan and think about what book is up next on their list.
- Virtual book pass is another way when connecting with kids remotely. Just create a dozen or so slides for kids.

Book Pass		
Name _____	Class _____	
Title	Author	Genre
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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What to Do

There are all sorts of ways to incorporate Book Pass into the lives of readers. Librarians can hold Book Pass days once a month, caregivers can check out books and hold Book Pass experiences, teachers can incorporate Book Pass once every four to six weeks to ensure students know their “next read.” For young children, simply paste a photo of the book on the Book Pass form. As students look at the book, they record a smiling face to show they want to read it, a neutral face if they aren’t sure, and a sad face if the book doesn’t make the cut. The procedure is always simple: a stack of books, some kids, a form to jot preferences, and a book lover to lead the way.

More to Know and Do

- Make sure to model how to be a book consumer!
- Share the satisfaction of your own reading life.
- Talk about how you find books.
- Select the finest books.
- Search “Best Book” sites to keep up with books.
- Browse your favorite bookstore’s shelves and do your own personal “Book Pass” to find the best for kids.
- Know what kids like in books and characters.
- Talk to kids!
- Let kids talk to kids. Reading is social and so much of what we read others recommend.
- Keep in mind the many genres—don’t forget poetry, engaging informational books, graphic novels, novels in verse.
- Add book talks in between Book Pass to keep kids engaged in “literary gossip.”
- Consider the joy of knowing you helped a reader find a “home run” book!

How to Reach You

You can reach Judy at judywallis.wallis@gmail.com

Book Pass



Name _____ Date _____

Title

Author

Genre
