

Steps to Successful Student Book Review Blogging

Abstract: In order to promote independent reading and scaffold the language arts curriculum, students write and post book recommendations on their school-based book review blogs. This unit uses digital resources to support the curriculum, teach digital citizenship, emphasize the ethical use of information, and encourage multiple forms of sharing and collaboration.

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Subject Area: Language Arts

Unit of Study: Book Reviews and Blogging

Grade Level: 5th (scalable for grades 2-12)

Standards Connections

- [Common Core ELA-Literacy Standards](#) (Reading and Writing): Standards RL5.1-5.10 focused on key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideals, and range of reading and level of complexity, as well as Standards W.5.1 (writing opinions pieces) and W.5.6 (produce and publish writing pieces using technology, including the Internet).
- [American Association of School Librarians Standards for 21st Century Learner](#): Standard 3 focused on using and sharing knowledge and information ethically and responsibility (3.1.2-3.1.6, 3.2.2, 3.3.2, 3.3.4) and Standard 4 focused on reading for pleasure to pursue aesthetic growth (4.4.1, 4.1.3, 4.1.7, 4.2.3, 4.3.1, 4.3.4, 4.4.6).
- [ISTE National Educational Technology Standards for Students](#): Standard 2 focused on using digital media to communicate and work collaboratively and Standard 5 focused on digital citizenship.
- [Virginia English Standards of Learning](#) (Reading and Writing) focused on the comprehension of texts; writing for a variety of purposes; and distinguishing between fact and opinions.

Materials/Software/Equipment: Independent reading selections (fiction and non-fiction), post-it notes, book review templates and guidelines, rubrics, computers, and blogging platform (for purposes of this project, both schools use [Edublogs](#)).

Instructional Resources:

- Oakridge Reads (<http://oakridgereads.edublogs.org>)
- Jamestown Reads (<http://jamestownreads.edublogs.org>)

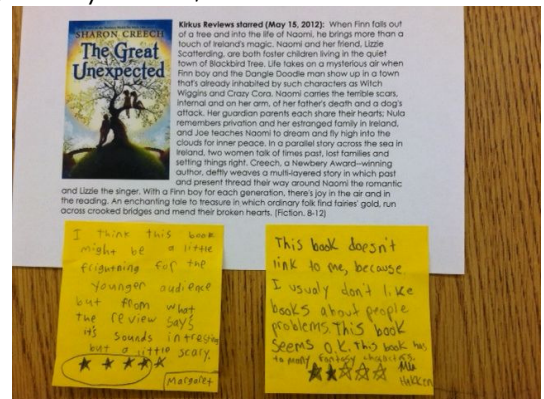
Learning Objectives: As part of this book review and blogging unit, students will:

- Understand that a book review is a critical evaluation (opinion) of a text that includes a short description and recommendation.
- Demonstrate reading comprehension through the communication of new ideas including summarizing texts and identifying relationships between texts.
- Write to inform and to persuade others about literature and informational texts.
- Read, increasingly more, for personal growth and pleasure.
- Improve their ability to select engaging and appropriate resources and texts.
- Participate in the exchange of ideas (collaboration) through the use of digital resources.
- Demonstrate digital citizenship and ethical use of information.

Learning Activities: This collaborative unit is comprised of four introductory library lessons, as well as continuing independent work and classroom lessons throughout the school year. The librarian and classroom teacher meet to plan the unit, including discussing objectives and creating the guidelines, templates, and assessment rubrics.

Lesson 1—Book Review Introduction (30 minutes): The objective of this first lesson is to introduce students to book reviews. During the weekly library lesson, students will work in small groups (4 students per group) and read published book reviews of recently released fiction. Through this exercise they will be introduced to the primary components of a book review:

- Short, descriptive summary that “hooks” the reader;
- Additional contextual information (e.g., author’s purpose, connections with other texts); and
- Recommendation (opinion).



The students will then respond to the reviews using post-it notes to connect their thoughts with the reviews and see how they influence readers.

Lesson 2—Blog Introduction (30 minutes): During this lesson, students will learn that a blog is an online journal that is typically created by an individual or group, who write entries (better known as posts) on a regular basis about a particular topic or subject. In addition to basic text, blogs often include a variety of media, including images, sound, and video. One of the main benefits of a blog is that it is interactive and dynamic. Visitors to a blog can read posts and then comment, allowing participants to discuss the topic. The librarian will introduce and model the book review template and introduce the blog. The students will have a week in the classroom or as homework to

complete the book review template with a book of their choosing. They will use the completed template to post their first book review.

Lesson 3—Blogging (45 minutes): During the weekly library lesson, students will learn about the mechanics of posting a book review. This hands-on, whole-group session includes logging in to the blogging platform, posting reviews, adding pictures or images, tagging reviews, and publishing.

Lesson 4—Commenting (30 minutes): During the weekly library lesson, students discuss digital citizenship, including guidelines on making quality posts and comments. Following this whole group activity, students log into the blog on tablets or laptops and begin to comment on their classmates' book reviews.

Continuing Lessons: After the initial four-week introduction, students will continue to post book reviews and comments during their language arts blocks and at home. Over time, students will be introduced to their sister blogs (Oakridge Reads and Jamestown Reads) and provide comments through the collaboration between Oakridge and Jamestown Elementary Schools. In addition, students will learn to use additional digital resources (e.g., [Animoto](#), [Voki](#), [Xtranormal](#)) to create book trailers and book talks to enhance their blog posts.

Evidence/Assessments(s): Book reviews provide a better assessment of independent reading than static reading logs or standard book reports. Blogging participation is included as part of the students' quarterly language arts grade. Students will be assessed using the following formative tools:

- *Blog posts*—each post and comment will be reviewed by the librarian or classroom teacher before publication to ensure that they meet quality post criteria, including:
 - Written in their own words;
 - Organized appropriately; and
 - Use of correct grammar, capitalization, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- *Student Reflections & Evaluation:* Each quarter, students will be required to submit an end-of-quarter blog grading sheet that includes the number of blog entries and comments posted, along with goals for the next quarter.

Librarian/Teacher Reflection and Notes

The blogs were initially developed to encourage and scaffold independent reading at our respective schools. However, we extended the project beyond the school walls and now are a cross-town collaboration. Students from Oakridge and Jamestown Elementary Schools regularly read each other's book reviews and comment, creating a rich dialogue about literature and providing a venue for real-world and appropriate use of social media tools. In addition to directly scaffolding the grade-level language arts curriculum, there is indirect evidence that the blogging project has increased library circulation as well, especially in middle grade fiction. Blog posts also provide the librarian with ideas on new texts we might consider purchasing for library circulation.

When a student strongly recommends a book not in our school library, we make a concerted effort to add that title to our collection.

One of the benefits of blogging is the interactive nature of the platform. Blogs allow students to connect and interact with their peers, teachers, and authors via posts and comments. This allows for continuing dialogue about books beyond the classroom and school building. In order to maximize interaction on the blogs, librarians and teachers can share blog posts via Twitter or other social media tools, which can also help to identify partner classrooms or schools. Finally, providing guest log-in capabilities on the blog allows authors, teachers, and parents to interact with the students and find book recommendations.

Steps to Successful Student Book Review Blogging: Suggested Templates, Guidelines, and Rubrics

Oakridge Reads Book Review Instructions

Image
of
Book
Cover

Title:

Author:

Genre(s): (e.g., historical fiction, mystery, fantasy)

Short summary (2-3 sentences)

Provide a short summary of the plot in your own words that does not give away (or spoil) the exciting parts of the story. Make sure that you write with expression and that your topic sentence “hooks” the reader. Finally, try not to include opinions in this portion of the review.

Additional Information

In this section you will include some additional information about the book or author so readers can better understand your recommendation. Examples include:

- *Favorite quotation:* Introduce the quotation in your own words so the reader can understand what’s happening in that part of the story. Make sure to use quotation marks and explain to the reader why you liked the quotation.
- *Favorite character:* Describe your favorite character and their traits. Was the character believable?
- *Author’s purpose:* Why do you think the author wrote this book? Was it to persuade, entertain, inform, or teach?
- *Author’s website:* Provide a link to additional information about the author, book, or series, if available.

Recommendation

Tell others if you would recommend the book. Explain why you would or would not recommend this book to others. Be specific so your readers really understand what you liked or disliked about the book. Finally give the book a *rating* from 1 star (terrible) to 5 stars (terrific).

Call No. Where would you find this book in the library?

Tags: What are the key words or topics of your book?

Reviewer: Your initials as the reviewer and your teacher’s name (please do not use your full name)

Oakridge Reads Book Review Template

Image
of
Book
Cover

Title

Author

Genre(s)

Short summary (2-3 sentences)

Additional Information

Recommendation

Call No.

Tags

Reviewer



Oakridge Reads: Creating a Blog Post or Comment

Oakridge Reads! Blog: <http://www.oakridgereads.edublogs.org>

Posting and Commenting on Book Reviews: Oakridge students will be good digital citizens (that is, demonstrate appropriate online behavior) when they post both book reviews and comments to existing reviews. First and foremost, it is important to **“think before you post.”** We've adapted Cold Spring School Library's suggested rules for making a quality blog post:*

1. Take a moment to compose your post or comments in your own words (remember to give credit if you use someone else's work).
2. Spelling and grammar are important.
3. Never use inappropriate or bad language (use your digital manners).
4. Only write what you would say in person (do not try to hide behind an anonymous post).
5. Compliment the writer, ask a question or add information; you do not have to agree with the review but you should be respectful and appropriate.
6. Sign your post or comment with your initials and your teacher's name (do NOT use your full name)
7. Review and edit your post or comments before submitting them.
8. Remember that you always leave a *digital footprint* when working online.

Posting a Book Review

1. Log into the blog (provide user name and password)
2. Click on Dashboard
3. Select “Posts—Add New”
4. Enter your review using the template as a guide
5. Review, edit, and revise your post
6. Click on “Submit for Review”
7. Your teacher or librarian will review and approve your post

Posting Comments to Oakridge Reads! Reviews

1. Log into the blog
2. Identify a book review and click on “Comments” or “No Comments” under the title
3. Write your appropriate and thoughtful comments
4. Review your comments and click on “Submit”
5. Your teacher or librarian will review and approve your comments

* See Janet Reid's Cold Spring School Library Skills Blog. Retrieved October 23, 2012 from <http://csslibraryskills.blogspot.com/2011/03/making-quality-comment-on-blog.html>

JamestownReads!

Read, Write, Recommend at jamestownreads.edublogs.org

This is a guide to help you understand which recommendations and comments get approved (published to the blog) and which ones do not.

I am looking for recommendations and comments that represent fifth grade work. Your comments and recommendations are a reflection of you, the fifth grade, and Jamestown! Remember, anyone can read these posts! Show them what you know and have fun! - Ms. Blaine

	Approved	Not Approved
Reviewer's Name	Uses initials	Uses own first and/or last name or that of another student
Emoticons	One emoticon or less	Uses more than one emoticon
Grammar - Spelling	Two or fewer misspellings	More than two misspellings
Grammar - Capitalization	Correct capitalization	Incorrect capitalization of book titles, beginning of sentences, and/or proper names.
Grammar - Punctuation	Correct punctuation	Incorrect punctuation
Comments	A comment that is two or more sentences and lets the reviewer know why you liked their review.	A one-sentence comment that does not provide much feedback for the reviewer (for example, "Great review!").
Recommendation Post	A post that provides a one to two sentence summary of the book and explains why you are recommending the book.	Most recommendations are not approved because they do not meet the grammar standards listed above.

Oakridge Reads End-of-Quarter BLOG Grading Sheet (Q_)

Name: _____

Date: _____

DIRECTIONS: Look back at your blog entries and for the quarter. List them on the form below. Quarter _ blog entries are the ones published between [date] and [date].

	<u>Date Published</u>	<u>Book Title</u>	<u>Author's Name</u>
(1)			
(2)			
(3)			
(4)			

- If you wrote *more than 4* blog entries, fantastic! But, you only need to list four of them on this paper.

Next, complete the following information.

(1) Circle the Grade that you earned for the blog this quarter:

A = 4+ Blog Entries plus comments

B = 3 Blog Entries plus comments

C = 2 Blog Entries plus comments

D = 1 Blog Entries plus comments

E = Comments ONLY **-or-** I did nothing

(2) Next quarter my goal for the Oakridge Reads Blog is _____

Oakridge Reads Blog Reflection Questions

(For Parent-Teacher Conferences)

Name: _____

Date: _____

DIRECTIONS: I want **you** to tell your parents a little bit about our OakridgeReads Blog and how you've been participating. Look back at your blog entries for this quarter (*Date – TODAY*). List them on the form below. Then, write complete thoughtful answers to the questions on this paper.

Date	Book Title	Author

** If you've already written more than 4 blogs this quarter, great work! But, you only need to write down your 4 favorite entries.*

(1) Explain to your parents what the blog is and what you're supposed to do.
