



# Literacy Connects

*A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional Professional Development Program-Issue XL*

## Creative Alternatives to the Book Report

The traditional book report is as motivating for students as an old, smelly tennis shoe. With all of the possibilities of genres, there is no reason for students or teachers to be bored with book reports. Following are suggestions for changing the traditional book report into an activity that will engage students, promote higher level thinking, and help teachers get through grading the final products with their wits and their hair intact. *Note: Many of these ideas were adapted from Diana Mitchell, NCTE, January 1998.*

1. **Heroes and Superheroes:** Select two or three people your character would think of as a hero or superhero. Describe the characteristics of the hero and why those characteristics would be important to your character. Also describe which characteristics the hero possesses that your character would most want for himself/herself.
2. **Create a Childhood for your Character:** If your main character is an adult, imagine what he or she would have been like as a child. Write the story of his/her childhood in such a way that shows why he/she is that way in the novel.
3. **Book in an Oatmeal Box:** Choose a book report container. The container could be a paper bag, a manila envelope, a soup can, or a cereal box. Decorate the container to convey some of the scenes, details, elements, or themes found in the book. When the container is complete, find or create at least five things that share information about some of the book's literary elements—plot, setting, characters, conflicts, climax, or resolution—and place them inside the container.
4. **Director's Packet:** You're a director and you want to turn this book into a movie. Create a proposal packet that contains a brief screenplay, character descriptions, wardrobe recommendations, locations for shooting, what the soundtrack would be and why, notes about the atmosphere you wish to create, and how you plan to create it using light, camera angles, and dialogue.
5. **Character Resumes:** Use a resume template to create resumes for three characters. The resume should include a statement of the applicant's goals and a detailed account of his or her experience and outside interests; rely on the book to provide this information.
6. **Create a Home Page or a Blog:** Select several characters and design a blog or home page for each of them, picking out appropriate backgrounds and pictures and then creating information that would tell a viewer about your character. Create links to at least five different sites that you think would interest your character. Post on the page an explanation of how you made the decisions you did and what you believe this tells us about the character.
7. **Chat Room Conversations:** Imagine that your character has found other people to talk with while in a chat room he or she found while surfing the Internet. Describe the chat room and why your character would choose that particular group. Construct the conversation your character had with others while in the chat room.
8. **Music:** Divide your book into at least four sections. Select a piece of music that you think captures the feel or tone of each section. Record the pieces and do voice-overs explaining what is happening in the novel during the music and why you felt this musical score fits the section of the novel.
9. **File a Complaint:** Adopt the persona of one of the characters who you feel was portrayed in a sexist or racist manner. Write up a complaint explaining what you feel was unjust in your portrayal and explain the actions you would like the author to take to remedy the biased portrayal.
10. **Found Poems:** Select a chapter from your book that you consider powerful or interesting. Then select works, lines, and phrases that you think project strong images and show the impact the chapter makes. Arrange this material into a poem.

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