

Book Talk Examples *by Mrs. K. Hein*

Crispin: The Cross of Lead *by Avi (about two minutes)*

Imagine a character somewhere between a young, inexperienced Harry Potter and King Arthur and you have Asta's son in Avi's book, Crispin: The Cross of Lead.

On the run without knowing exactly why, all that Asta's son knows is that he needs to hide to survive. Throughout his whole thirteen years in a medieval village in the England the only people who have cared for him are his mom and the local clergy. And when he loses them, he loses any protection from his enemies. This young man is racing to stay alive and he needs to learn as many skills as possible in order live.

I recommend this historical fiction book to readers who enjoy adventure and surprise. It is a medium read for middle school students, with some vocabulary about medieval times that is interesting to learn—only about one every ten pages so it is not overwhelming.

Crispin won a Newberry Award Medal for good reason—good pacing, interesting main characters, and enough “edge of your seat” moments to add this novel to your “this is a good book” list. Even if a book set in medieval times is not usually your idea of a good time, this one will be.

You'll have to read the book to find out how he gains some recognition and freedom.

Rules *by Cynthia Lord*

When I was in middle school, I would have loved to make up some rules for my younger sisters, and have them listen. In Cynthia Lord's Rules, Catherine does get to make up rules for her younger brother David and his parents go along with it and even support it. But this isn't your typical family.

Catherine's brother David has autism and does amusing things like put toys into the fish tank and check behind all the doors when they visit other peoples' houses. Catherine loves her brother, but feels torn between wanting to have a “normal” family and including her brother in her life.

Furthermore, she ends up realizing she has some rules of her own that need to be broken as she considers becoming friends with a boy at David's therapy centre—a very unusual type of friend—and the new girl next door—the type of friend Catherine has always dreamed of having. This is a funny and heartwarming book with moments you won't be able to resist sharing with others. (Ask me about “stinks a big one” later!).

I recommend this contemporary novel to readers who enjoy both a good laugh and a good heartfelt “ahhh.” You will fall in love with the characters in this book and remember some of the rules for years to come.

Book Talk Outline

Paragraph #1

Catchy Lead:

- *“Imagine . . .”*
- *“If you could . . .”*
- *Quote from the book*
- *Paraphrase the most exciting event*

Introduce main character and a bit of the plot

- In (Book Title, underlined) by (author’s name), _____.

Paragraph #2

Tell us the problem in the book (without giving the book away)

Paragraph #3

I recommend this _____ (genre) book to readers who enjoy _____ (Give two examples).

Paragraph #4

Tell us about the theme. What is the big idea of this book? For example/ friendship, family, overcoming obstacles, freedom, or . . .

Conclude with a bold statement

- What will the reader of the book learn?
- Or Ask a question related to the theme or character

Getting Ready to Share with the Class

- Practice saying your review three times in front of the mirror.
- Then, make a bullet point outline of your review. Keep the first sentence and the last sentence. Summarize in bullet points the other parts. Then try saying your review using just the bullet point outline.
- Keep your eyes up and looking around.
- Keep your gestures to those that relate to what you are saying. Otherwise, keep them in a neutral position. Fidgeting is distracting and makes you look nervous.

- Use your voice to show excitement about the book—even the best written review can make a book seem uninteresting if given in a monotone voice.