



WARMER ACTIVITIES for Graded Readers

Engaging Your Class Before Reading

Starting a lesson with a fun and engaging warmer activity helps students get into the right mindset for reading. These activities spark curiosity, activate prior knowledge and encourage discussion, all of which make reading more enjoyable and meaningful.

The activities in this resource are designed for use with any graded reader and can be adapted to suit different levels. The levels specified are only suggestions.

At a basic level, you can show your students the book and put the following questions to them.

- Do you know this author?
- Examine the cover. What can you see?
- Read the blurb (the summary on the back cover) and discuss it with a partner.
- Look at the list of main characters at the front of the book. What do you think is going to happen to these characters? Who are the goodies / baddies?
- What will the story be about, do you think? Will it be funny, romantic, scary ...?
- What will the main themes be?
- What do you already know about life in ... [country] in the
- ... [time period]?

Below are more in-depth warmer activities.

PICTURE PREDICTION

Show an image related to the book's theme (without revealing too much). Students work in pairs to describe what they see and predict what the book might be about.

Example – Jane Eyre: Show an image of a Victorian governess standing in front of a large manor house. Students describe the scene and predict that the story might involve themes of love or social class.

WORD ASSOCIATION

Write one key word from the book on the board. In pairs, students take turns saying related words.

Example – The Jungle Book – Write the word *jungle* on the board. Students might say *trees*, *wild* or *adventure*.

BOOK COVER CLUES

Show the book cover but cover the title. Students guess what the book might be about based on the cover image. They can make guesses about the setting, the mood and the plot.

Example – The Hound of the Baskervilles: Looking at the cover, students might guess that it's a scary story about a dog that attacks people.

FIVE WORDS

Give students five important words from the book. In small groups, they must invent a short story using all five words. Then, discuss how their stories might connect to the real book.

Example – Animal Farm: Choose five words, such as *farm, animals, rebellion, pigs* and *power*. Students craft a short story using those words, touching on themes of leadership and society.

BOOK SPEED DATING

Arrange a selection of graded readers around the room. Students spend two minutes with each book, reading the blurb and skimming the first page. After rotating through several books, they choose one they'd like to read, fostering interest and personal choice.

Example – various books: Put out a selection of graded readers at a suitable level. Students spend time choosing one. You could then get them to explain the reasons for their choice.

TITLE TEASERS

Write the book title on the board but remove one or two words. Students guess what the missing words could be and justify their choices.

Example – Treasure Island: Write “Treasure _____” on the board. Students have to guess the missing word. They might suggest *Hunt, Map, Curse, Adventure*. This can lead to discussions about pirates and dangerous quests, helping students to predict the book’s themes.

SPEED CHAT

Write three simple discussion questions related to the book’s themes. Students rotate in pairs, discussing each question for one minute.

Example – Hushabye: This is a murder mystery novel so pose questions like:

- Have you ever read a detective story before?
- What qualities make a good detective?
- Why do you think some crimes are harder to solve than others?

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QUOTE HUNT

Give students a short, interesting quote from the book. In pairs, they discuss what it could mean, who might have said it and what kind of story it suggests.

Example – 1984: Provide the quote, “Big Brother is watching you.” Students discuss its meaning, who might have said it, and how it reflects themes of surveillance, control and government power.

CHARACTER GUESS WHO

Provide students with brief descriptions of characters from the book without revealing names. In pairs, they discuss who these characters might be and how they might relate to the story, encouraging inferencing and prediction skills.

Example – Pride and Prejudice: Describe a character as “a wealthy, proud man who thinks less of people with less money.” Students might infer this is Mr Darcy, leading to discussions about character development and societal norms.

THE AUTHOR’S LIFE IN NUMBERS

Write five numbers on the board that relate to the author (e.g., their birth year, number of books they wrote, year they died). In pairs, students guess what the numbers mean before you reveal the answers.

Example – Ghost Stories: Write the numbers 1812 (birth year), 15 (number of novels), 1870 (year of death) on the board. Students guess what the numbers mean before revealing the answers, leading to a discussion about Charles Dickens’s life and works.

BACK COVER DETECTIVE

Read a simplified version of the book’s blurb but leave out key details (e.g., names, places). Students fill in the blanks with their own ideas before comparing with the real version.

Example – Jekyll and Hyde: Read the blurb without the underlined words. Students complete the blurb with their own ideas, then compare it to the original:

Doctor Jekyll is kind, lively and has lots of friends. So why is he friends with Mr Hyde, a rude and violent man, who makes everyone feel afraid? It is clear that Jekyll has secrets that might destroy him. Can his friends save him?

FIRST LINE CHALLENGE

Give students the first sentence of the book. They must write the next two sentences, imagining how the story might continue. Then, compare with the real opening.

Example – Wuthering Heights: Provide the first sentence: “I’ve just returned from a visit to my landlord, the only neighbour I will have here.” Students write the next two sentences, imagining how the story might continue. Then, compare with the real opening to see how their ideas match the tone and setting of the novel.

CULTURAL CONTEXT EXPLORATION

Introduce the cultural or historical setting of the book. Students research the time period or location, then share interesting facts with the class. This activity builds background knowledge and deepens understanding of the story's context.

Example – Persuasion: You might suggest students research the following topics related to early-nineteenth-century England:

- how marriage was influenced by social class
- the limited role of women at this time
- the Napoleonic Wars and how they shaped society
- how family reputation and social connections were vital to an individual's standing in society

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