

The Story Conversation

K-2 with adult support | 10-20 minutes | Prep: 2 minutes

What children practice

Children discuss a character or event, connect an idea to a story detail, and respond to another person's idea.

Gather and set up

One picture book you know, two or three chosen prompt cards, and optional paper. The session time includes discussion; allow separate time for a full reading if the book needs it. Read the book first. Choose one prompt for a natural pause and two for after the story. Pick prompts that fit the actual text. Do not stop on every page or require every child to answer publicly.

0-2 min • Give a listening job

Say 'Listen for something the character wants.' Explain an unfamiliar word needed to follow the story.

During reading • Pause once

At a useful turning point, invite a prediction or a character question. Give thinking time and a partner turn. Then return to the story.

After reading • Look back

Return to a page that helps answer a question. Ask 'Which part helped you?' Distinguish remembering a detail from explaining what it might mean.

Next 3-5 min • Compare ideas

Ask 'Who has a different idea that also fits?' Invite children to respond to a partner rather than only to the adult.

Last 2 min • Keep one thought

Children draw, dictate or tell an idea worth remembering. Ask one child to connect a thought to a specific page or moment.

Free 30-minute introductory workshop

Live on Zoom: the whole book + voices + a turn directing C. J.

Adults: cjmcguirebooks.com/visit

Subject to availability. School/library groups; a teacher or librarian hosts.

(C) 2026 C. J. McGuire. Free classroom, library and home copying.



Keep the thinking going

‘We can enjoy different pages. When we explain what happened, let’s find the part that helped us think.’

What a response might sound like

‘Which page made you laugh?’ asks for a personal response; there is no single right page. ‘What did the character try first?’ asks for a detail from the story. ‘Why might they do that?’ calls for an explanation supported by the text or pictures.

Make the first step smaller

Offer two pictured choices or revisit one short moment. Let a child choose a card for an adult to read. Accept pointing, drawing, dictation, signing and familiar communication supports. Give partner thinking time before inviting whole-group responses.

Add a challenge when ready

Ask whether the words and illustration tell the same thing. Invite a child to revise a first prediction after the ending, or explain why two readers might understand a character differently.

A quick check for understanding

Notice whether children can connect a thought to a detail and attend to a partner’s contribution. Quiet participation can be checked privately through a point, drawing or brief conversation.

No printer? No problem.

Keep this page open and choose just two questions. An adult can write one shared response on a board or simply listen.

Print only what you need

Pages 1-2: adult reference. Page 3: one set of cards per group, or read aloud without cutting. Page 4: optional child response. US Letter: actual size. A4: Fit. Student pages use black lines and white backgrounds.

Developed for C. J. McGuire Books with AI assistance. Suggested activities for educator review, not an independently evaluated curriculum. Feedback: hello@cjm McGuire Books.

Pick two. Let the story breathe.



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

LOOK

What small detail did you notice?

REMEMBER

What did the character try first?

WANT

What does the character want? What helps you tell?

FEEL

How might the character feel? Which clue helps?

PREDICT

What might happen next? Why?

COMPARE

Could that clue mean something else?

LISTEN

What did your partner notice that you missed?

CONNECT

Did the words and picture tell you the same thing?

LAUGH

Which moment made you smile? Why?

ENTER

Which page would you step into?

CHANGE

What would change if one character chose differently?

LOOK BACK

Did the ending change one of your ideas?

A thought worth keeping



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw the moment you want to talk about.

I think... The story detail that helps is...

My partner noticed...