

Abstract

Format: Workshop

Time: 60-90 minutes

Title: “Judging a Book by Its Cover: An Unorthodox Reading Lesson”

Target Students: Beginner to advanced, any age group

When teaching reading, teachers need to keep in mind that our goal is to help students develop the skills of an effective reader. But, what are these skills?

Primarily, effective readers are better able to “interact” with their material. In other words, effective readers approach different texts with different assumptions and apply a variety of strategies to what they read depending on the purpose, subject matter and genre.

Included in these skills is the ability to select and evaluate potential reading material. The skilled reader can determine relatively easily by examining a book’s cover whether or not he/she will find that book interesting and relevant. Such skills extend to a variety of materials (newspapers and magazines, for example), but our purpose in this workshop is to look at books.

In a lesson like this, students work together to examine a book’s front and back covers to learn as much as possible about the book without actually reading it. Then, they share their ideas with the rest of the class and explain why they would or would not choose to read such a book themselves.

Practicing such a skill in the classroom is also something that a reader at just about any level can complete, since the amount of reading done in such an activity is relatively small and the necessary vocabulary is predictable.

In this workshop, teachers will explore and practice ways to create just such an activity for their students, an activity that can be safely called a reading lesson without very much actual reading. Despite this, it is also an activity that helps students to become more effective readers by encouraging them to critically examine reading material they choose on their own.