Book club questions that work for any book

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Ten book club questions for kids that work with any book, in the order a meeting uses them, and how Peabody's club kits add six more for each of its stories.

The book club questions that work for any book are open ones: they ask what a reader thought, not what happened on page twelve, so every child who read the book has an answer and nobody can get it wrong. Peabody's ten are below, in the order a meeting uses them, from an opener everyone can answer to a closer that hands the club back to the children. After them is how Peabody's club kits add six questions of their own for each of its free stories, taken from that story's own answers. All of it is free, like the rest of Peabody through the end of 2026.

Peabody's ten, in order

1. What is one thing you liked, and one thing you didn't? The opener. Every reader can answer it, and by the end of the circle you know how the group felt about the book.
2. Who would you most like to meet from the book, and why? Children talk about people before they talk about plots. This one gets them talking about characters without the word "character".
3. What did the main character want, and what got in the way? The question under every story, from a short fable to a long novel. If a club only had time for one, I would ask this one.
4. Was there a moment you were surprised? Then ask for the page. Finding it is part of the answer, and it sends readers back into the book.
5. Did anyone change from the beginning to the end? Best from about eight up. It is the first step towards talking about what a book means, and children can usually see a change before they can name a theme.
6. If you were the author, what would you change? It tells every reader they are allowed to disagree with a book, which is where the best club conversations start.
7. Where does the story happen, and could it happen anywhere else? Setting, without the word. A fairy tale in a city, or a sea story in a desert, makes children notice how much the place was doing.
8. Is the story fair to everyone in it? Older readers enjoy this one most: villains who had a point, endings that were too neat, characters who got less than they deserved.
9. Who would you give this book to? A child who can name the right person, a cousin who loves horses or a friend who hates long books, has understood what kind of book it is.
10. What should we read next? The closer: it hands the club back to the children.

The same ten are on the top 10 book club questions page, ready to read out.

How to ask them

- Pick a few, not all ten. The meeting plans use two questions in a 30-minute meeting for ages 5 to 7, three in the usual 45-minute meeting, and an open discussion in the hour-long one for older readers.
- Ask for the page. "Can you find it?" turns an opinion into a reason, and it is the habit every later book report needs.
- Let them answer each other. When a child answers, ask the circle "does anyone see it differently?" rather than replying yourself.
- Never mark an answer. A club is the one place where reading is not graded, and children stop answering the moment they think there is a right answer.

What to leave out

Recall questions ("what colour was the dog?") check whether a child read the book, and children who haven't read it find that out quickly enough at their first meeting. Yes-or-no questions ("did you like it?") end the conversation they were meant to start. And "what is the moral?" asked as a test turns a fable into homework; "do you agree with the lesson?" is the better version.

How the kit questions are made

Peabody has 69 club kits, one for each free story that has what I call an answer layer: its own short summary, its own facts, and its own questions with their answers. Most are classics, from level 4 to 17. A kit has six questions, made in a fixed order:

1. The story's own answered questions come first, up to four of them. The leader's note under each is the story's own answer, so the leader can check a fact without looking it up.
2. Then Peabody's open questions for that kind of story. Each kind has three, written once for every story of that kind, with a note on what to listen for rather than an answer.
3. When a story has only a question or two of its own, one or two general questions fill the six: who would you give this story to, and what would you ask the person who first told it?

No part of a kit is written by an AI model. The summary, the facts and the answered questions are the story's own; the open questions, the activity and the reading plan are Peabody's, written once for each kind.

Here is how that comes out for Henny Penny, a level 5 fairy tale. Its kit opens with the story's own three answered questions, including whether it is the same story as Chicken Little. Then come the three open fairy-tale questions: who was kind and who was not, which part you would change, and whether there is a rule of three in the story. The kit adds three facts about where the tale comes from, the lesson in one line, an activity (draw the story as a map) and a reading plan: 180 words, about two minutes aloud, one meeting.

A longer story gets a longer plan. Beauty and the Beast is 1,283 words, about eleven minutes aloud at the 120 words a minute the kits plan for, so its kit splits it over two meetings by pages.

The open questions by kind

Each kind of story gets its own three, because each kind does something different:

- Fables ask whether the lesson is true, which animal you would be, and who the animals would be as people.
- Fairy tales ask about kindness, a different ending, and the rule of three.
- Myths ask what the story explains, whether the ending was fair, and what you would ask a character.
- Legends ask what makes a hero, what could really have happened, and how the villain would tell it.
- World tales ask what the story shows about its place, and what other story it reminds you of.
- Literary classics ask who changed, which scene goes on the film poster, and which line you will remember.
- True books ask for the most surprising fact, the question the book left open, and a one-sentence version for a little brother or sister.

Questions parents ask

How many questions should one meeting have?

Two for ages 5 to 7, three for the usual club, more only if the talk is going well. One good question that runs for ten minutes beats ten that get one answer each.

Do these work for a book that isn't on Peabody?

Yes. The ten are written for any book at all. The kits are only for Peabody's own stories in the library, because each is made from that story's own answers.

Does the kit give the ending away?

Yes. Its short version of the story tells the ending, so it is for the leader's eyes, or for after everyone has finished.

What if nobody answers?

Answer it yourself, briefly and honestly, then ask again. Or switch to "one thing you liked", which nobody finds hard.

Free at peabody.kids/guides/book-club-questions-any-book