The Mystery of Meerkat Hill (A Precious Ramotswe Mystery for Young Readers)

by Alexander McCall Smith, illustrated by Iain McIntosh

In this mystery, set in Botswana, budding detective Precious Ramotswe solves the mystery of her friends’ missing cow with the help of their pet meerkat.

Extensions

- “Explore Other Books in the Precious Ramotswe Mysteries for Young Readers Series”
- “Explore a Genre: Mysteries”

Technology Extensions

- “Learn More About Meerkats”
- “Learn More About Botswana”
OVERVIEW

**Academic Focus**
- Students read and discuss a mystery story.
- Students share and support opinions about the story.
- Students make inferences to understand the story.
- Students learn about features of mystery stories.

**Social Development Focus**
- Students discuss opinions respectfully.
- Students build on one another’s thinking.

**DO AHEAD**

✓ Prior to Day 1, teach the lessons that accompany “Jacko’s Special Day” and *Riding Freedom* if you have not already done so. The students will use procedures and strategies introduced in those lessons as they read, write about, and discuss *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill*.

✓ Prior to Day 1, if your students are not familiar with the cooperative structures “Turn to Your Partner” and “Think, Pair, Share,” teach Mini-lesson 1, “Teaching a Procedure for ‘Turn to Your Partner’” and Mini-lesson 2, “Teaching a Procedure for ‘Think, Pair, Share.’” (See the Setting the Foundation Mini-lessons.)

✓ Prior to Day 1, visit the Learning Portal (ccclearningportal.org) to find all of your digital resources for these lessons, including reproducibles (BLM), assessment forms (e.g., GD), and images (IMG).

✓ Prior to Days 3–6, check in with individual students to make sure they have done the reading and writing. If necessary, provide them with additional structured reading and writing time.

✓ Prior to Day 4, prepare a sheet of chart paper with the title “Features of Mystery Stories” and list the features shown on the image of the chart in Day 4, Step 3.

✓ Prior to Day 5, write an opinion in your reading journal about how you feel about the ending of another story the students have read or heard as a model for the students (see Day 5, Step 3 for an example).
ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

- The following academic vocabulary words are used during the lessons:
  - **mystery**: type of fiction story with an unexplained crime or problem and a main character who gathers information to explain and solve it (see Day 1, Step 1)
  - **opinion**: what a person thinks or feels about something (see Day 1, Step 3)
  - **making inferences**: using clues in a text to figure out something that is not stated directly (see Day 2, Step 3)

ELL SUPPORT

- **Build Background Knowledge**: If your students are unfamiliar with meerkats, point to the image of meerkats on the front cover of the book and explain that meerkats are African animals about the size of squirrels that live in large groups. As shown in the image, meerkats sometimes stand on their back legs to watch for danger.

  Also point out that the book is a mystery. Clarify vocabulary that is frequently used in mystery stories:
  - **case**: unexplained problem or crime that needs to be solved (page 60)
  - **detective**: character who gathers information to solve a case (page 16)
  - **clues**: pieces of information that help the detective figure out what happened (page 63)
In this lesson, the students:
- Read and discuss a chapter in a mystery story
- Share and support their opinions about the story
- Listen respectfully and share their thinking

1 **Introduce The Mystery of Meerkat Hill**

Show the cover of *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill* and read the title, the series title, and the names of the author and illustrator aloud. Ask and briefly discuss:

Q **What do you think you know about mysteries? What mystery stories have you read? What mystery movies or TV shows have you seen?**

Explain that a **mystery** is a type of fiction story with an unexplained crime or problem and a main character who gathers information to explain and solve it. Tell the students that the main character of the book is a girl named Precious Ramotswe (RAM–OT–SWEE) who lives in Botswana, a country in Africa. Point out Precious’s name in the series title on the cover of your copy of the book. Then show the maps of Africa and Botswana on the pages preceding chapter 1.

2 **Read and Discuss Chapter 1**

Distribute *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill* and the self-stick notes. Tell the students that they will read and discuss the first chapter of the book today. Have the students open their books to page 12 and mark the page with the self-stick note so they know where to stop reading.

Ask them to turn back to page 1 and read chapter 1 silently to themselves. When all the students have read the chapter at least once, ask and briefly discuss:

Q **What happens in this chapter?**

3 **Introduce Sharing and Supporting Opinions**

Tell the students that when they share what they think or how they feel about something, they are sharing opinions. Explain that readers may have different opinions about something in a story and that this is fine. What is important is that they can support, or explain, their opinions with evidence from the text. Point out that the students support their opinions during book discussions whenever they answer questions such as “Why do you think so?” and “What in the text makes you think that?” Tell them that they will continue to practice sharing and supporting their opinions during their discussions about *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill*. 

**Teacher Note**

You might also wish to point out Botswana on a larger map or globe.

**Materials**
- Teacher and student copies of *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill* (pages 1–11)
- Self-stick note for each student
- (Optional) Globe, or a map of Africa
Share and Support Opinions About Chapter 1

Use “Think, Pair, Share” to discuss the questions that follow. After you ask the questions, have the students look in chapter 1 to help them form their opinions before having them turn to their partners. Ask:

Q What kind of person is Precious’s father, Obed? What makes you think that? [pause] Turn to your partner.

After partners have shared, invite volunteers to share their thinking with the group.

Students might say:
- “I think Obed is brave. It was brave of him not to run away from the ostrich in the story he tells Precious.”
- “I think Obed is smart, too. Instead of running away, he tricks the ostrich.”
- “On page 3 it says that Obed is a ‘good, kind man’ who wears an old hat. He’s also a good storyteller. On page 4 it says that Precious loves his stories.”

Wrap Up

Explain that in the next lesson the students will read more of The Mystery of Meerkat Hill and continue to share and support their opinions about the book. Collect the student copies of The Mystery of Meerkat Hill, keeping the self-stick notes in the books.

The Mystery of Meerkat Hill
Sharing and Supporting Opinions

In this lesson, the students:
- Read and discuss a chapter in a mystery story
- Share and support opinions about the story
- Build awareness of making inferences
- Build on one another’s thinking

Gather and Review Building on One Another’s Thinking

Show your copy of The Mystery of Meerkat Hill and review that in the previous lesson the students read the first chapter of the mystery and shared and supported opinions about Precious’s father, Obed. Tell the students that they will read and discuss chapter 2 today.
Direct the students' attention to the “Ways to Build on One Another’s Thinking” chart and remind them that the chart lists some ways readers can build on one another’s thinking during book discussions. Encourage the students to use these strategies as they talk about *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill*.

2 **Read and Discuss Chapter 2**

Distribute *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill* and the self-stick notes. Have the students open their books to page 22 and mark the page so they remember where to stop reading.

Ask them to turn back to page 13 and read chapter 2 silently to themselves. When all the students have read the chapter at least once, ask and briefly discuss:

**Q** What happens in this chapter?

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**Discussion Support**

If the students have difficulty remembering what they read, ask additional questions such as:

**Q** What does Precious find out about Teb and Pontsho in chapter 2?

3 **Share and Support Opinions About Precious and Introduce Making Inferences**

Point out that while Precious is learning about Teb and Pontsho in chapter 2, readers of the story are learning about Precious. Write the following questions where everyone can see them and read them aloud:

What kind of person is Precious? What makes you think that?

Ask the students to silently review chapter 2 and form opinions about Precious. Have them write their opinions on self-stick notes and place the notes next to evidence in the chapter that supports their opinions. After a few minutes, invite volunteers to share their opinions and evidence with the group. Take note of inferences the students have made to point out at the end of the discussion.

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**Teacher Note**

Save the “Ways to Build on One Another’s Thinking” chart to use on Days 3 and 5.
Students might say:

"On page 16 it says that Precious is very curious about people and that’s why she’ll be a good detective when she grows up."

"In addition to being curious, I think Precious is smart. The reason I think so is that she figures out that Teb and Pontsho are poor without them telling her."

"I think Precious is kind. There’s evidence of that on page 20 when Precious figures out that Teb and Pontsho are poor but doesn’t say anything so they won’t feel bad."

"I agree with [Eva’s] opinion that Precious is kind. It’s kind of her to be nice to Teb and Pontsho when they’re new at school and don’t know anybody."

Explain that the author of the book, Alexander McCall Smith, gives readers information about the kind of person Precious is in a couple of ways. Point out that sometimes he tells readers directly what Precious is like. For example, on page 16 he says that she is very curious about other people. At other times, he shows readers what Precious is like through things Precious thinks, says, and does. Explain that when a reader uses clues—like a character’s thoughts, words, or actions—to figure out things that are not stated directly, the reader is making inferences. Point out the inferences the students made to form their opinions about Precious.

You might say:

“Nowhere in the book does it say that Precious is kind, but [Eva] figured that out by the way Precious acts toward Teb and Pontsho on their first day at school. [Toby] inferred that Precious is smart because of the things she observes, or notices, about Teb and Pontsho, like the fact that they are probably poor and probably don’t want to talk about it. Alexander McCall Smith never tells us directly that Precious is smart, but he shows us she is through the things she is able to figure out.”

4 Assign Independent Reading and Journal Writing

Tell the students that they will read the next chapter in the book independently. Explain that in chapter 3 readers learn more about Precious, Teb, and Pontsho and meet Teb and Pontsho’s family. Tell the students that they will each write an opinion about Precious or something else from chapter 3 in their reading journals to share with the group in the next lesson. Explain that as the students did today, they will use self-stick notes to mark evidence in the chapter that supports their opinions.

5 Wrap Up

Tell the students when the next lesson will be. Remind them that it is important for the group discussion that they do the reading and writing ahead of time and do not read ahead. Have the students open their books to the end of chapter 3 on page 34 and mark the page with a self-stick note so they remember where to stop reading.
The Mystery of Meerkat Hill
Sharing and Supporting Opinions

In this lesson, the students:
- Discuss a chapter in a mystery story
- Share and support opinions about the story
- Build awareness of making inferences
- Discuss features of mystery stories
- Build on one another’s thinking

1 Gather and Discuss Showing Respect for Different Opinions

Review that each student read chapter 3 of *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill* independently and wrote an opinion about something in the chapter to share with the group. Remind the students that it is normal for readers to have different opinions about a story and that this is OK. Briefly discuss:

Q **Why is it important that you speak respectfully when you respond to opinions that are different from your own?**

Students might say:
- “It’s important to be respectful because readers are allowed to have different opinions about the same story.”
- “Just because you disagree with an opinion doesn’t mean the opinion is wrong.”
- “It’s important that people feel safe sharing their opinions. Otherwise no one would want to talk.”

2 Share and Support Opinions About Chapter 3

Give the students a moment to review the opinions they wrote in their reading journals about chapter 3 and the evidence they marked in *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill* to support their opinions. First in pairs and then as a group, have the students share their thinking. As the students share, point out any inferences they made to form their opinions.

Teacher Note

You will ask the students to notice their own inferences on Day 4.
Students might say:

“I think Precious is polite. On page 25 she compliments Teb and Pontsho’s house, but she doesn’t tell them she thinks it’s small.”

“I think Kosi is a good pet because he is small and he likes people. On page 31 it says that Kosi is not afraid when Precious touches him.”

“I disagree with [Dasheil’s] opinion that Kosi is a good pet. On page 32 it says that Kosi was separated from his family. Teb and Pontsho should have tried to find Kosi’s family instead of keeping him as a pet.”

Encourage the students to build on one another’s thinking during the discussion by asking follow-up questions such as:

Q  [Luka] shared the opinion that Precious is [polite because she doesn’t tell Teb and Pontsho that she thinks their house is small]. Do you agree that [Precious is polite]? Why or why not?

Q  What questions do you have for [Avery] about her opinion that [Teb and Pontsho’s family is happy living all together in their small house]?

GROUP DISCUSSION OBSERVATION NOTE

As you observe the students, ask yourself:

1. Do the students understand the story?
2. Are they able to form opinions about the text and identify evidence that supports their opinions?
3. Do they respond respectfully to opinions that are different from their own?

Record your observations on the Group Discussion Observation sheet (GD5).

Support for Question 1. If many students do not understand the story, summarize the major events in the plot so far or invite a student to do so. If only one or two students do not understand the story, meet with those students at another time to identify where they are stuck (background knowledge, vocabulary, etc.).

Support for Question 2. If many students are not able to form opinions or identify evidence to support their opinions, ask more targeted questions such as:

Q  Do you think Kosi is a good pet? What makes you think so?

Q  How do you think Teb and Pontsho feel about living with all their family members in a small house? What makes you think so?

Support for Question 3. If many students are not responding respectfully to opinions that differ from their own, pause the sharing and facilitate a discussion about ways to respond respectfully.
3 Discuss Some Features of Mystery Stories

Remind the students that mysteries are a type of fiction story. Explain that mystery stories have certain features that make them mysteries. For example, all mystery stories have a case, or unexplained problem or crime in the plot that needs to be solved. Point out that another feature of mysteries is a character who is a detective, or person who gathers information to solve a case. Point out that by the end of chapter 3 of *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill*, readers have learned a good deal about the main character, Precious. Use “Think Pair, Share” to have the students first think about and then discuss:

**Q** What do you know about Precious that might help her solve a mystery? [pause] Turn to your partner.

**Students might say:**

“Precious is curious and she asks a lot of questions. Detectives ask people questions when they’re trying to solve a case.”

“She’s good at noticing things. I bet she’ll be good at noticing clues.”

“Precious likes to be helpful. I think when the mystery comes up she’ll want to help figure it out.”

Tell the students that they will talk more about the features of mystery stories in the coming days.

4 Assign Independent Reading and Journal Writing

Tell the students that they will read chapters 4 and 5 independently. Explain that in those chapters readers learn more about Teb and Pontsho’s pet meerkat, Kosi. Tell the students that they will each write an opinion about Kosi or something else from chapter 4 or 5 in their reading journals and use self-stick notes to mark evidence in the book that supports their opinions. The students will share their opinions and evidence with the group in the next lesson.

5 Wrap Up

Tell the students when the next lesson will be. Remind them that it is important for the group discussion that they do the reading and writing ahead of time and do not read ahead. Distribute a self-stick note to each student. Have the students open their books to the end of chapter 5 on page 58 and mark the page with a self-stick note so they remember where to stop reading.
Setting the Foundation
Using Nonfiction
The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda

by Mark Weston

This nonfiction book tells Soichiro Honda’s unexpected journey from growing up as a boy who loved cars to becoming a mechanic, competitive car racer, and successful businessman who revolutionized the car industry. In addition to Honda’s biography, expository text and text features provide information on subjects like Japan during World War II and the invention of factory assembly lines.
OVERVIEW

Academic Focus
- Students read and discuss a nonfiction book that includes narrative and expository text.
- Students generate, write, and discuss their own ideas about the book.

Social Development Focus
- Students listen respectfully and share their thinking.
- Students build on one another’s thinking.
- Students participate responsibly in group discussions.

DO AHEAD

✓ Prior to teaching these lessons, teach the Small-group Reading “Jacko’s Special Day” lessons; see page xx. For more information, see “Small-group Reading Overview” in the Introduction.

✓ Visit the Learning Portal (ccclearningportal.org) to find all of your digital resources for these lessons, including reproducibles (BLM) and assessment forms (GD).

✓ Prior to Day 2, type the notes you took in Day 1, Step 2 into a list and title it “Our Book Club Agreements” (see the example in Day 2, Step 1). Then make a copy for each student in the group and one for yourself. If possible, we recommend you keep the list to a half page, so that it will fit inside the students’ reading journals.

✓ Prior to Day 2, check whether all of the students in the group still have their copies of the “Ways to Think About My Reading” sheet (BLM2) that you distributed on Day 3 of the “Jacko’s Special Day” lessons. If necessary, locate the “Ways to Think About My Reading” sheet (BLM2) and make a copy for any student who needs one.

✓ Prior to Day 3, fill in on the “Book Club Schedule” (BLM6) the dates/days set aside for the students both to complete the assigned reading and to meet to discuss the book. Also fill in any other helpful information, such as school holidays. Leave sufficient space for the students to add the page numbers they will read during each individual reading session. Then make a copy of your annotated version for each student in the group. (See the sample schedule in “Reading Between Sessions” in the Introduction.)

✓ Prior to Day 4, prepare a sheet of chart paper with the title “Ways to Keep the Discussion Going” and include the ideas shown on the image of the chart in Step 1.
DO AHEAD (continued)

✓ Prior to Day 5, write journal entries in your reading journal on the assigned reading the students will be discussing, using suggestions from the “Ways to Think About My Reading” sheet (BLM2). Be prepared to talk about how you can turn your journal entries into conversation starters.

✓ Prior to Day 6, complete your copy of the “Exit Ticket: Following Agreements” sheet (BLM7) to use as an example (see Step 4).

✓ Prior to the day the students finish their book, be prepared to conduct a closing discussion (see the Teacher Note in Day 6, Step 5).

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

• The following academic vocabulary words are used during the lessons:

  book club: a group in which members read a book independently and then gather to discuss it (see Day 1, Step 1)

  text features: special parts or sections, such as a table of contents, that help the reader locate information in the text or understand the topic better (see Day 1, Step 3)

  conversation starter: a thought or question shared with a group to begin a discussion (see Day 5, Step 1)

  open-ended questions: questions that cannot be answered with one word, such as a simple “yes” or “no,” and that often start with words like what, how, or why (see Day 6, Step 1)

  closed-ended questions: questions that can be answered with one word, such as a simple “yes” or “no” (see Day 6, Step 1)

  exit ticket: a note to the teacher consisting of each student’s responses to a few prompts that allows the students to share what they are thinking and learning (see Day 6, Step 4)
In this lesson, the students:

• Preview a nonfiction book and make predictions
• Generate book club agreements
• Listen respectfully and share their thinking

ABOUT BOOK CLUBS

Students who demonstrate the capacity to make sense of texts independently and participate responsibly in small-group discussions about texts are great candidates for book clubs. The lessons in this manual are intended to help students who demonstrate this initial level of readiness to further develop their ability to have lively, meaningful conversations on their own.

The six Setting the Foundation lessons in the program establish a foundation for productive, responsible participation in book clubs. We recommend that you teach these lessons in order, over the course of 2–3 weeks, and that you remain present for the entirety of each lesson, including the book discussions and the reflection steps. Once the students have learned how to complete exit tickets on Day 6, you will choose when to visit and reflect with the group and when to have the students simply complete and turn in their exit tickets for your review.

After teaching the six Setting the Foundation lessons, you can continue to support the students’ growing independence by using the Discussion Support and/or Comprehension mini-lessons (see pages xx–xx). You can determine which mini-lessons to use based on your ongoing formative assessment of the group’s interactions and the participation of individual students. If your students have needs that are not addressed in the provided mini-lessons, see “Book Clubs Overview” in the Introduction.

In selecting or creating mini-lessons, keep in mind both the students’ specific developmental needs and the goal that they will be able to participate in future book clubs with even greater independence and success. The Setting the Foundation lessons refer to the nonfiction book The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda, but you are free to substitute any nonfiction book that fits your students’ needs and interests. For more information, see “Book Clubs Overview” in the Introduction.

Teacher Note

Soichiro Honda’s first name is pronounced “So-ee-chee-ro.”
Gather and Introduce Book Clubs

Explain that for the next few weeks, the students will work with you to learn strategies for leading their own book clubs. Explain that a book club is a group in which members read a book independently and then gather to discuss it. Tell the students that as members of this book club, they will read sections of a nonfiction book independently and write thoughts and questions they have about their reading in their reading journals. Then they will meet to discuss what they have read. Explain that talking about their reading with others can help the students better understand it and think about it in different ways.

You might say:

"Book clubs can be a lot of fun because you get to read interesting books and talk about them as a group. In your book club discussions, you will have a chance to discuss your ideas and questions and learn from other people’s ideas. I know you will have lots of interesting things to say to each other."

Explain that for the first several discussions, you will work closely with the students to help them get used to being in a book club. After that, the students will discuss the nonfiction book on their own, although you will still support and teach them, especially at the beginning of their discussions.

Make Book Club Agreements

Explain that for the group to work well independently, the students need to come up with some agreements for how to work together. Distribute the “Examples of Book Club Agreements” sheet (BLM5), and explain that it shows two other book clubs’ agreements.

Give the students sufficient time to read the agreements. Then ask:

Q How do you think agreements like these might help a book club succeed? Turn to the person sitting next to you.

Have a few students share their ideas with the group. Then ask:

Q Now that we have discussed some agreements from other book clubs, what ideas do you have for your book club agreements?

Q Why might it be helpful to include [“Stay focused on discussing the book”] as one of your agreements?

Discussion Support

Draw the students’ attention to any items in the “Examples of Book Club Agreements” sheet (BLM5) that you think are especially important, but remember to let the students’ thinking drive the conversation as much as possible.
Have volunteers share their thinking, and write their ideas where everyone can see them.

**Students might say:**

“I think the agreement in Example A that says ‘Stay focused on discussing the book’ is important. We should include something about that.”

“Both lists include things about being prepared. We won’t be able to have good conversations if we haven’t done the reading and journal writing before we meet.”

“These examples make me think we need something about showing respect and interest in others’ ideas whether or not we agree.”

“I agree with [Eduardo]. We should look at the person who is talking and really listen and not be messing around.”

Ask and briefly discuss:

**Q** What other ideas do you have for your book club’s list of agreements?

As volunteers share their ideas, add them to the list. If the students generate more than five ideas, ask:

**Q** How can we simplify and combine these ideas, so that you have no more than five important agreements to follow?

Have volunteers share their ideas with the group. As they share, revise the list. Explain that you will provide copies of the list to the students during the next lesson.

### Preview The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda and Make Predictions

Distribute the copies of *The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda*. Explain or review that nonfiction books like this often have text features, which are special parts or sections, such as a table of contents, that help the reader locate information in the text or understand the topic better.

Have the students preview the book individually by reading the front and back covers and the table of contents. Invite the students to page through the book to look for other text features, such as text boxes, photographs, and diagrams. Then ask and discuss:

**Q** Based on what you have read, what predictions do you have about what you will learn in this book? What did you read that helped you make that prediction?
**Teacher Note**
You might explain the following terms if your students are unfamiliar with them:

- Honda Motor Company: a company that makes motorcycles, cars, minivans, and trucks
- horse manure: horse “poop” (see page 11)

Please note that in chapter 3 the text box, “Japan in World War II,” addresses potentially disturbing information about the years 1940–1951, including the internment of Japanese Americans, the death of six million Jews in Nazi concentration camps, and the loss of approximately 300,000 lives as a result of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We recommend that you prepare the students for this or sit in on the discussion of this part of the book.

**Teacher Note**
The students will continue to use the reading journals they started during the Small-group Reading “Jacko’s Special Day” lessons that you taught prior to the start of the book club.

**Teacher Note**
After you complete the Setting the Foundation lessons, you might wish to teach Mini-lesson 11, “Learning from Text Features,” to give the students more practice with nonfiction text features. You might also wish to teach Mini-lesson 12, “Asking Questions Before Reading,” to support the students’ comprehension of historical, scientific, or other information.

**Teacher Note**
You might want to explain that the students will use this information on Day 3 to help them create their book club schedule.

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**Students might say:**

“I predict that this book will be about how the man who invented Honda cars did a lot of different things in his life. First he was a repairman, then he was an engineer, and then he became a businessman. I got that prediction from the back cover.”

“At first I was confused because the cover says ‘car engineer’ but the man on the cover looks kind of like a doctor in his white coat. Then I realized he’s like an inventor. I predict we’ll learn about the inventor of Honda cars.”

“I predict this book will give a lot of information about Mr. Honda and about history and science topics. I think this because there are some big text boxes with gray backgrounds like ‘Japan in World War II’ and ‘How to Cool an Engine,’ and I saw a diagram of the parts of a car engine.”

**Discussion Support**
If the students do not mention the text features during the discussion, you might ask them which ones they noticed. Consider pointing out the glossary at the back of the book, which has the definitions for words that are bold in the text. Invite the students to mark page 51 with a self-stick note so they can refer to the glossary as needed.

**Assign Reading and Writing**

Tell the students that before they meet again, they will read the first chapter of *The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda* and then write responses to two questions in their reading journals. Have the students locate the first blank page after their journal entries about the story “Jacko’s Special Day.” Then have the students write the questions that follow on that first blank page:

- What have I learned about Soichiro Honda and the history of cars so far?
- What questions do I have, based on what I have read so far?

Distribute a self-stick note to each student. Have the students open *The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda* to page 14 and mark the page with a self-stick note so they know where to stop reading. Explain that after they finish reading the first chapter, they will write responses to the two reading journal questions; then they will write on their self-stick notes how many minutes it took to read the chapter and write their responses. Tell the students when they will have time in class to do their reading and writing, and when they will next meet to discuss their thinking about what they have read.

Remind the students to bring their reading journals and books to every book club.
In this lesson, the students:
- Discuss book club agreements
- Discuss part of a nonfiction book
- Explore different ways readers think about texts
- Listen respectfully and share their thinking

1 Gather and Discuss Book Club Agreements

Distribute the student copies of “Our Book Club Agreements.” Briefly review the agreements and point out any edits you made when you copied them.

Our Book Club Agreements

- Do all the reading and journal writing before each meeting.
- Be ready to share your thinking about the book.
- Give your full attention and listen quietly when others are speaking.
- Disagree respectfully.
- Ask people questions about their thinking.

Ask and briefly discuss:

Q Which agreements do you think will be easy to follow?
Q Which agreements might be challenging to follow?
Q What can you do to help yourself follow these agreements?

Students might say:

“I think it will be easy to disagree respectfully because we know how to speak politely. We can have different ideas without being hurtful.”

“I think it might be challenging to get all of the reading done on time. When will we read?”

“We can remind ourselves to stick to the agreements, and we can reread them whenever we need a reminder.”

Materials

- Teacher and student copies of *The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda*
- Teacher and student copies of “Our Book Club Agreements,” prepared ahead
- Two self-stick notes for each student
- Student reading journals
- Tape or staplers
- Teacher and student copies of the “Ways to Think About My Reading” sheet (BLM2), prepared ahead

Teacher Note

Before you begin this lesson, check in with the book club students to make sure they have done the reading and writing. If necessary, provide them with additional reading and writing time.
Explain that the students will try out these agreements for the next few meetings and revisit them later on to see if anything about them needs to be changed.

Distribute a self-stick note to each student. Explain that the students will create a section in their reading journals called “Notes” where they will keep these agreements as well as other information and ideas that will help them have lively, fun book club discussions. Have the students open their reading journals to the last page, count back 20 pages, mark that page with the self-stick note, and write Notes in big letters at the top of that page.

Distribute the tape or staplers and have the students affix the book club agreements to the first blank page of the “Notes” section of their reading journals.

2 Discuss Chapter 1

Ask and briefly discuss:

Q What have you learned so far about [Soichiro Honda and the history of cars]? Show us where in the text you learned [that when Honda was young, he was extremely focused on his goals and worked very hard].

Q Has what you have read so far confirmed (shown to be true) any of the predictions you made about the book in the previous lesson? Please explain.

Students might say:

“I learned that as a kid, Honda was totally into cars. He wanted to learn how they work and to build a car one day.”

“I learned that Soichiro Honda didn’t do well in school because he wasn’t great at learning from books. He liked to work with his hands.”

“I learned how to say ‘thank you very much’ in Japanese, which is really fun to know!”

“I had predicted that this book might be a little boring. But now that I’m reading it, I think it’s kind of interesting. I’m learning a lot about the history of cars, like how cars were invented to solve the problem of horses making such a smelly mess in the streets.”

Teacher Note

You might have each student keep the self-stick note on the page, so that it is easy to turn to this section as needed.

Teacher Note

If the students have difficulty answering the questions, have them briefly review the notes they wrote in their reading journals.

We recommend that the students begin each discussion with their reading journals closed and that they refer to their notes only if they run out of topics to discuss. Invite them to place a self-stick note on the reading journal page where they have written their notes so they can quickly turn to that page if needed during the discussion.
Continue facilitating the discussion. Ask and briefly discuss:

**Q** What questions do you have about the part you read?

As the students respond, ask follow-up questions such as:

**Q** Who else was confused about [why the Model T was called a “workingman’s Ford” and what that means]?

**Q** What ideas do others have that could help [Jackson] understand that?

### 3 Introduce the “Ways to Think About My Reading” Sheet

Have the students take their copies of the “Ways to Think About My Reading” sheet (BLM2) out of their reading journals. Remind the students that they discussed the ways to think about their reading when they read and discussed the story “Jacko’s Special Day.” Review that having a list of different ways readers can think about texts helps readers come up with ideas when they are reading on their own. Read aloud the items on the sheet. Ask and briefly discuss:

**Q** Which of these strategies did you use today when you discussed The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda?

**Q** What strategies, if any, did you use today that aren’t listed here?

If the students identify strategies that are not listed on the “Ways to Think About My Reading,” sheet, have the students add those to their copies. Encourage the students to refer to this sheet when they are independently reading *The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda*. The strategies can help them think about what they want to discuss with the group. Review that whenever they use a strategy that is not listed, they might share it with the group and add it to their sheets. Have the students put the sheets back into their reading journals.

### 4 Reflect on Group Discussion

Have the students open their reading journals to “Our Book Club Agreements”; then ask and briefly discuss:

**Q** When you discussed the book today, how did you do with following your book club agreements?

**Q** What worked well? What was challenging?

**Q** What can you do differently next time? How might that help the group?