

2022 Book Talk Judging Reflections —Windows to A Magical World

2022 全國創意英文說書比賽評審心得 --窺探魔法世界的櫥窗

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On a pleasant Sunday morning, a family of four relax in the living room after breakfast. Sunlight streams through the windows while steam wafts up from freshly steeped oolong tea. They cozy up on the couches, with their heads bending down. Each of them is gazing at something that completely absorbs their attention. Now what do you picture the items they are holding? Smartphones? Tablets? In fact, if you come closer, you'll realize that those are actually BOOKS.

It's a fairly accurate description of my nerdy bookworm family, immersed in the world of fiction. As an incurable book addict and high school English teacher, I've been blessed to have the privilege of teaching a wide variety of YA novels, including *Number the Stars*, *The Alchemist*, and *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I've relished these opportunities to discuss with my teenage students universal human experiences and values through these novels. My most treasured teaching moments happened when my students raised thought-provoking questions about a character or spontaneously started debating about the issues of equality and courage.

In my free time, I sometimes listen to *The Book Review Podcast* hosted by editors at *The New York Times*. The host invites world-famous authors and critics to introduce new fiction that is available in bookstores. From time to time, they revisit award-winning books, shedding new light on them or exploring their personal relationship with them over the years.

That's why I jumped at the chance to be one of the judges at the 2022 Book Talk Contest

last year. I had a lot of fun listening to different book talks, and was especially intrigued by some of the books I haven't read before, such as *Cinderella Is Dead* and *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue*. Books such as *Huckleberry Finn*, *Anne Frank's Diary* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* may be well-known stories, yet the presenters' passion for the novel and creativity were palpable. I was thrilled to learn that there are young like-minded book lovers out there, and got even more excited when they introduced a couple of new books I've never heard of. The contestants were basically a younger version of the podcast hosts/critics, who arouse literary interest by giving others a quick peek into different worlds.

As for how to become even better book talk speakers, the following are two useful tips. First, no spoilers. Your job is to provide enough incentive for the audience to be interested in the novel you're introducing, so don't treat it like a book report where you have to provide all the detailed information. Pique our curiosity without giving away the entire plot. Secondly, consider adjusting the pace at which you speak. A more relaxed pace yet passionate tone is a difficult balance that requires practice. In addition, you may adjust your pace based on the plot. At an important point, you can use a faster pace to generate excitement or slow down a little bit to create suspense.

If books are a “uniquely portable magic” like Stephen King wrote, then book talk speakers are like appealing glass windows that invite people to take a sneak peek of the magical world. All in all, I'd like to congratulate you all on your achievement, and I look forward to hearing more interesting book talks from you in the future. So read on!

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鏡頭帶到美麗的星期天早晨，某家庭享用早餐後在客廳休息，陽光從窗外灑落屋內，熱氣從烏龍茶杯中內裊裊上升。這一家子舒服地坐在沙發上，他們四個人每個都目不轉睛盯著手上的物品。你覺得他們都在看甚麼呢？手機還是平板嗎？如果你把鏡頭拉更近一點，你就會發現他們手上都拿著——書。

以上的描述很精準呈現我的書蟲家庭如何共同沉浸在書本的世界裡，因為我本身就是個無可救藥的小說重度上癮者再加上高中英文老師的身分，我一直都很幸運可以教很多不

同類型的青少年小說，例如《細數繁星》、《牧羊少年奇幻之旅》或《梅崗城故事》等。透過這些英文小說，我很珍惜有機會跟青少年們討論人類的共同生命經驗和價值，而我教書生涯中最引以為豪的是在課堂討論中，學生們閱讀思考這些小說後，提出發人深省的問題，或是主動開始辯論平等和勇氣等議題。

閒暇時我也會聽紐約時報編輯主持的 The Book Review Podcast，他們專訪世界知名的作家和文學評論家來介紹剛上市的新書，有時也會回顧得獎書籍，從新詮釋這些文學作品或探討經典故事的個人省思。

正因為我的個人因素，所以當初欣然接受擔任 2022 全國創意英文說書比賽的評審工作，過程中聽到了許多有趣的說書內容，尤其當我聽到從來沒有看過的書籍，像是《灰姑娘已死》和《隱形生活》時更是興奮莫名。《頑童歷險記》、《安妮日記》和《哈利波特：神秘的魔法石》等雖然是大家耳熟能詳的小說，但是說書人所展現的熱誠和創意卻令人激賞。見證到這麼多年輕的愛書人已經很感動，所以當他們介紹到我個人還沒看過的書籍時更是內心澎湃不已，這群說書人就好像是少年版的書評或播客主，透過說書的方式讓我們能快速窺探不同的世界，同時也激發了聽眾打開書本閱讀的興趣。

至於要如何成為更棒的說書人，以下兩點可供大家參考。第一，不要露梗。說書人的職責應該是要提供足夠的誘因，讓聽眾們對於所介紹的書籍有興趣，所以要吊一下聽眾們的胃口，不要把故事大綱和結局一次全部講清楚說明白，否則大家可能就會失去興趣。第二，說書的語氣也很重要。較輕鬆但有熱忱的風格不太好拿捏，也需要長時間的練習才能捉到訣竅。還有也要依據說書的情節來調整語速，在關鍵點可以講快一點來製造緊張感，也可以放慢速度來營造懸疑的氣氛。

如果書本就像如果書本就像是「隨身攜帶的魔法」(史蒂芬·金)，那麼說書人就好像是美麗的櫥窗，吸引大家去見證魔法的魅力。最後我要恭賀所有參與 2022 全國創意英文說書比賽的同學們，你們表現的可圈可點，我也很期待未來能再有機會聽到你們介紹不同的書籍，同為愛書人的大家可是要繼續堅持閱讀呢！