



STALL STORIES

&

STORY SNACKS

Putting books where students already are

PTA Unit Leader Toolkit

South Carolina PTA | Literacy Initiatives Program

No contest. No assignment. No requirement.

Just the right words in the right place at the right moment.

What Are Stall Stories & Story Snacks?

Stall Stories and Story Snacks are two versions of the same simple, powerful idea: put compelling book quotes, cliffhanger summaries, and reading hooks in the places students already go every day — and let curiosity do the rest.

There is no formal sign-up, no tracking sheet, no required completion. These programs work by ambient exposure. A student glances at the back of a stall door. A quote catches them mid-sentence. They want to know what happens next. That is the entire mechanism — and it works.



Stall Stories

Quotes, hooks, and summaries posted in restroom stalls, office nooks, hallway corners, and other spots students pass through throughout the school day.

The name is the joke. The reading is the point.



Story Snacks

Food-themed or food-adjacent quotes and hooks placed in the cafeteria, snack shop, school store, teacher's lounge, and anywhere food or social time happens.

A play on words that earns its own smile.

What Makes These Different from Other Programs

Every other program in this toolkit asks something of students. Stall Stories and Story Snacks ask nothing. That is their superpower. The student who would never sign up for a reading challenge, never visit the library, never touch a bookmark — that student still uses the restroom. They still eat lunch. These programs reach the readers that every other program misses.

- No participation barrier — there is nothing to join and nothing to complete
- Reaches all students, including the most reluctant readers, through environments they can't opt out of
- Highly adaptable — any school, any grade level, any budget, any season
- Easily updated and refreshed — new content every month keeps it from becoming wallpaper
- Seeds curiosity that other programs can harvest — a student hooked by a Stall Story quote is more likely to pick up a library book
- Works in parallel with any other literacy program running in the school

The Goal: Piquing Interest

The goal of Stall Stories and Story Snacks is not to make students finish a book. It is to make them want to start one. There is a meaningful difference. Wanting to start a book is a feeling — a spark of curiosity, a half-formed question about what happens next. That feeling is what these programs are engineered to create.

What a Great Hook Does

A great hook leaves students mid-sentence in their own head. They're trying to figure out what came before it, or what comes after it. They're uncomfortable with the incompleteness — in the best possible way. The best Stall Stories and Story Snacks content is not inspiring or wholesome. It is unresolved.

Choose quotes that raise questions, not quotes that provide answers.

What Works and What Doesn't

✓ Works Well	✗ Falls Flat
Mid-action quotes that drop you into a moment	Inspirational quotes about the importance of reading
Cliffhanger lines that end at a decision or revelation	Plot summaries that explain what happens
Dialogue that feels overheard rather than presented	Quotes that are wholesome or tidy
Hooks that hint at a secret or a conflict	Content that could belong in a school newsletter
Lines with an unexpected word or image that sticks	Very long passages that require sustained reading
Seasonal or culturally resonant references	Quotes students have all seen before (same Seuss, same Rowling)

On Books and Availability

Because the goal is curiosity-sparked reading, think carefully about what happens when a student is hooked. If a student reads a quote in a stall and genuinely wants the book, can they get it? A few practical guidelines:

- When possible, feature books with multiple copies in the school library so demand can be met
- Featuring 1–2 books per cycle rather than a wide variety concentrates interest and makes library copies go further
- Include the library call number or a QR code linking to the library catalog on each posted card — remove the friction between curiosity and access
- Coordinate with the librarian so featured books are pulled to a visible display during the posting period
- For books with only one copy, post a sign-up strip at the bottom of the card: students tear off a tab with their name to hold the book



STALL STORIES



Stall Stories: The Full Guide

Stall Stories is the restroom-and-beyond placement version of the program. The name is deliberate — the mild humor of the concept (reading in the bathroom) is part of the hook for students, especially in middle and high school. Lean into it. The playfulness of the name makes the program stick in a way that 'hallway literacy display' never would.

Where to Post

Primary Locations

- Inside restroom stall doors — full 8.5×11 sheet, eye level
- Above restroom sinks — students stand still here; shorter quotes work well
- Inside elevator doors (if applicable)
- Hallway nooks, alcoves, and recessed doorways
- Stairwell landings between floors
- Lockers — with student permission or on locker-adjacent walls

Bonus Locations

- Main office waiting area — parents and students both see these
- Counselor's waiting room
- Nurse's office
- Teacher's lounge — staff readers matter too
- Near water fountains or charging stations
- Anywhere students wait: auditorium lobby, gym entrance, bus pickup area

What to Print

Full 8.5×11 sheets work best for stall placement — they're visible from a seated position and don't require students to lean in. Use a large, readable font (24pt minimum for the quote; 14pt for the attribution). A simple, clean design with one or two colors is more effective than a busy layout.

- One quote or hook per sheet — resist the urge to pack multiple quotes onto one page
- Include the book title and author clearly, but below the quote — don't front-load it
- A brief (one-sentence) teaser below the quote can add intrigue: 'Find out what she did next.'
- Print on cardstock or laminate for durability — restroom humidity affects plain paper quickly
- Post with removable adhesive or in a plastic sleeve mounted to the door

Sample Printed Cards

Below are examples of what a Stall Stories card might look like when printed. These are illustrative — customize the design, font, and quote selection to fit your school's voice and season.

 **STALL STORIES | This month: Autumn reads**

"She was not the kind of girl who got herself in trouble. Until the night she did."

What did she do? What couldn't she take back?

Ask the library for this month's featured title →

 **STALL STORIES | Can you guess the book?**

"The last thing he expected to find in his father's drawer was a letter addressed to him — dated three years after his father died."

Scan the QR code to find this book in our library.

Guess the title? Drop your answer in the box outside the library.

Seasonal & Holiday Themes

Tying Stall Stories content to the season or upcoming holiday is one of the easiest ways to keep the program feeling fresh and current. Students notice when the content has been updated — and they notice when it hasn't. A new set of cards each month signals that someone is paying attention.

Season/Month	Theme Direction	Example Book Pairing
August–Sept	New beginnings, secrets, first days	The First Day of the Rest of My Life; An Ember in the Ashes
October	Suspense, mystery, the uncanny	Coraline; The Haunting of Hill House; We Have Always Lived in the Castle
November	Gratitude, belonging, family complexity	The Hate U Give; Everything I Never Told You; Where the Crawdads Sing
December	Darkness, hope, unexpected gifts	A Christmas Carol; The Midnight Library; Long Way Down
January	Reinvention, ambition, second chances	The Alchemist; Educated; Aristotle and Dante

February	Love, obsession, heartbreak, betrayal	Normal People; Eleanor & Park; The Secret History
March–April	Growth, change, identity	The Bell Jar; Felix Ever After; All the Light We Cannot See
May–June	Endings, futures, leaving	The Perks of Being a Wallflower; Goodbye Days; On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous

Making It Interactive: The Guess-the-Book Game

The most engaging version of Stall Stories pairs the quote with a guessing game. Remove the book title from the posted card — show only the quote and a few evocative clue words — and invite students to guess the book. This turns passive reading into active participation without requiring a formal sign-up.

1. Post the quote card without the book title. Include: 'Can you guess the book? Drop your answer in the box outside the library.'
2. Place a small box or envelope outside the library door (or at the main office) for guess slips.
3. At the end of each month, draw one correct-answer slip for a small prize: a bookmark, a piece of candy, a homework pass.
4. Reveal the book title in morning announcements or on the library bulletin board, along with the winning student's name.
5. Refresh with a new quote and new book the following month.

Student Suggestion Box

Add a second slot to the guess box: 'Have a quote or book we should feature? Suggest it here.' Students who see their own suggestions posted become invested advocates for the program. A librarian or PTA volunteer reviews suggestions monthly and selects one to feature. Credit the student by first name when it goes up.



STORY SNACKS



Story Snacks: The Full Guide

Story Snacks brings the same idea into the spaces where food and social time happen: the cafeteria, the snack shop, the school store, the teacher's lounge, and anywhere students gather outside the classroom. The food connection is both literal and figurative — these are bite-sized literary moments designed to be consumed quickly and leave students hungry for more.

Where to Post

Student Spaces

- Cafeteria tables — table tents or placemats work beautifully
- Cafeteria walls, especially above the tray return
- School store or snack shop counter
- Vending machine surrounds
- Food line queue walls — students stand still here
- Outdoor seating or courtyard walls

Staff Spaces

- Teacher's lounge — coffee station and microwave area
- Faculty mailroom
- Staff refrigerator door
- Break room or shared workspace

Staff engagement matters — teachers who encounter a great quote at the coffee station talk about it with students.

Format Options for Cafeteria Placement

- Table tents (folded cardstock, A6 or half-sheet) — one quote per tent, placed at each table; replace monthly
- Tray liners (full 8.5×11 sheet under the tray) — one quote visible for the entire meal; high dwell time
- Wall posters near the tray line — students stand in this spot for 2–5 minutes; use this real estate
- Window clings or vinyl-applied quotes along cafeteria windows — long-lasting and visually striking
- A monthly 'Story Snacks spotlight' framed display near the cafeteria entrance — treat it like gallery art

The Food-Theme Connection

Story Snacks content can lean into the food setting with quotes that are food-themed, food-adjacent, or just use food language as a metaphor. This is not required — any compelling quote works — but the thematic resonance makes the placement feel intentional rather than random, and students notice.

"If you give a mouse a cookie, he's going to ask for a glass of milk."

— If You Give a Mouse a Cookie — Laura Numeroff | A classic for a reason. Works at any age with the right tone.

"Food is everything we are. It's an extension of nationalist feeling, ethnic feeling, your personal history, your province, your region, your tribe, your grandma."

— Anthony Bourdain | Perfect for a cafeteria wall. Opens conversations about culture, identity, and story.

"There is no sincere love than the love of food."

— George Bernard Shaw | Short, punchy, and works as a gateway to food-themed books like Julie & Julia or The Hundred-Foot Journey.

Book-of-the-Month / School-Wide Read Connection

Story Snacks works especially well when the featured quotes tie to a single book the school is reading collectively — a book-of-the-month, a summer read, or a title being studied in English classes. When students see a quote in the cafeteria from the same book their teacher is discussing in class, the two contexts reinforce each other and the book feels inescapable in the best way.

- Coordinate with ELA department chairs or the literacy coordinator to align Story Snacks content with any school-wide reading initiative
- If a book-of-the-month program exists, offer to supply Story Snacks cards featuring quotes from that month's selection
- Feature progressive quotes across a month — Week 1 is an early quote, Week 2 is mid-book, Week 3 is a late hook — for students who are reading along
- The school-wide read connection also gives cafeteria staff, custodians, and non-ELA teachers a natural entry point into the conversation

Sample Story Snacks Cards



STORY SNACKS | Book of the Month

"The secret ingredient is always the one you're afraid to add."

What was she afraid of? And did she add it anyway?

This month's featured book is in the library. Ask for it by name.



STORY SNACKS | Guess the book for a prize!

"He had eaten nothing for three days, and somehow the hunger had become the clearest thing in the world."

What brought him to this point? What was he waiting for?

Know the book? Drop your guess in the library box. The winner will be announced Friday.

Making It Interactive: Guessing, Suggestions & Events

The Guessing Game (same as Stall Stories — works beautifully in the cafeteria)

Post a quote without the book title. Students drop guesses in a box near the cafeteria exit or at the library. Monthly prize drawing from correct guesses. Announce the winner and book title over morning announcements.

Student Suggestion Box

Place a small box in the cafeteria with index cards: 'Have a quote or book we should feature? Write it here.' This takes about 30 seconds for students to engage with while waiting in line or finishing lunch. The best suggestions go up the following month — with the student's first name credited on the card.

The Food-Themed Party

If Story Snacks runs for a defined period (a semester, a marking period, a six-week challenge window) and includes some kind of guessing or participation element, a food-themed party is the natural conclusion celebration. It doesn't need to be elaborate:

- A 'literary lunch' in the library with light refreshments and a slideshow of the quotes that ran during the period
- A 'book tasting' event — small excerpts from several books available at stations, like a food tasting, where students sample and vote for their favorite
- A themed potluck tied to food-in-books: students bring a dish mentioned in a book and share it with a one-sentence description
- A 'character dinner' where students come as a character from a book they read this year

On Rewards

Stall Stories and Story Snacks don't require a reward structure the way competitive challenges do. The program's value is ambient and cumulative. That said, a small monthly prize for the guess-the-book game, or a semester party for consistent participants, will increase visible engagement and give students something to talk about. Keep rewards light and fun rather than transactional — the point is to celebrate reading, not to compensate for it.

Working with the School

These programs are among the easiest in this toolkit to get approved because they ask very little of the school — no class time, no scheduling, no assignments. The main things to coordinate are posting permissions, content review, and library alignment.

Getting Permission to Post

- Ask the principal for blanket permission to post in restrooms and common areas — frame it as a beautification and literacy initiative
- Most schools will want to review content before it goes up; build in a one-week review window for the first cycle
- Once trust is established, a simple monthly email with the new content attached is usually sufficient for ongoing approval
- Identify who is responsible for any existing hallway display policies (often the assistant principal or facilities coordinator) and follow their process
- Ask specifically about restroom posting — some schools have facilities guidelines about what can be posted in restrooms and how

Partnering with the Librarian

- Give the librarian advance notice of which books will be featured so they can pull copies to a visible display
- Ask if they can add a 'Featured in Stall Stories / Story Snacks' label to the spine or cover of featured books during the posting period
- The librarian can own the guess box, collect slips, and announce winners — this deepens their ownership of the program
- Share the content calendar at the start of each semester so the librarian can plan book displays accordingly

Getting Teachers and Staff Involved

- Post in the teacher's lounge from day one — staff who encounter the program become its informal ambassadors
- Ask ELA teachers to mention the featured book when they see students — 'Did you see the Stall Stories quote this month? That's a great book.'
- Invite any teacher who wants to suggest a quote or book to submit it through the student suggestion box — this is their program too
- Acknowledge staff participation: if a teacher reads the featured book and tells their class about it, that is worth a social media mention

Social Media Strategy

Stall Stories and Story Snacks are visual programs by nature — a well-designed card in a well-chosen location is inherently shareable. Social media extends the ambient reach of the program beyond the school building and into family feeds, which creates its own ripple effect.

Hashtag Suggestion

**#StallStories[SchoolName] · #StorySnacks[SchoolName] · or a combined
#[SchoolName]LiteracyMoments**

Use one consistent tag so posts build on each other over time.

Post-by-Post Playbook

Post 1: Launch Announcement

📖 Something new is showing up around [School Name] this week. Keep your eyes open in the hallways, the cafeteria, and... well, everywhere. We've placed book quotes in some unexpected spots. When you find one that grabs you, that's the point.
[Hashtag] #SCReads #SCPTA

Post 2: Monthly Quote Drop (share the quote itself)

💬 This month's Stall Stories quote is up. We're not telling you where. We're not telling you what book it's from.
[Share the quote text in a graphic or as the post itself]
Know the book? Drop your guess in the box outside the library by [DATE].
[Hashtag] #GuessTheBook #SCReads

Post 3: Winner & Reveal Announcement

🎉 This month's Stall Stories book was [TITLE] by [AUTHOR] — and [STUDENT FIRST NAME] guessed it first!
New quote goes up [DATE]. Keep your eyes open. 👁️
[Hashtag] #SCReads #SCPTA

Post 4: Student Suggestion Featured

👉 This month's Story Snacks quote was suggested by [FIRST NAME], a [GRADE] grader at [School Name].

[Share the quote]

Have a quote or book you think we should feature? Drop it in the suggestion box in the cafeteria. You might see it on a table tent next month.

[Hashtag] #StudentVoice #SCReads

Photography Tips

- Photograph the cards in their actual locations — a quote on a stall door is more interesting than the same card on a desk
- Shoot from slightly below eye level to capture the placement context
- A blurred student in the background (reading the card, back turned) adds human scale and interest
- For Story Snacks, a table tent photographed among actual lunch trays and food is infinitely more engaging than a flat-lay
- Post a 'find the quote' photo: show a wider hallway or cafeteria shot with the card visible but not prominently featured — invite followers to spot it

Planning Checklist & Timeline

Stall Stories and Story Snacks are among the lowest-overhead programs in this toolkit. Once the initial setup is done, monthly maintenance is the main commitment. Use this checklist to launch cleanly and sustain momentum.

First Launch — 2–3 Weeks Before Going Up

☐	Get principal approval to post in restrooms, hallways, and common areas <i>Bring a sample card so they can see exactly what you have in mind</i>
☐	Identify all posting locations — walk the building with this list in hand
☐	Coordinate with the librarian: which books will be featured, ensure copies are available
☐	Create or source the first set of cards — print on cardstock and laminate if budget allows
☐	Decide: standard informational cards, guessing game, or both?
☐	If running the guess game: set up the guess box location and system
☐	If running a student suggestion box: create the submission cards and set up the box
☐	Post launch announcement on social media
☐	Brief any teachers or staff whose spaces will have cards posted

Monthly Maintenance (Ongoing)

☐	Select next month's book(s) and quote(s) with the librarian
☐	Design and print new cards — one full refresh per month minimum
☐	Take down old cards; post new ones in all locations <i>A student volunteer can help with this — makes it a 30-minute task</i>
☐	If running the guess game: collect slips, draw winner, notify winner and announce
☐	If running suggestions: review submitted suggestions and select next month's student pick
☐	Post the monthly quote drop and winner reveal on social media
☐	Check in with the librarian: has circulation of featured books increased? Any student comments?

Semester Wrap-Up

☐	Compile all quotes and books featured over the semester — create a 'What We Read' summary post
☐	Recognize student suggestion contributors by name
☐	If running a conclusion event: plan food-themed party or book tasting (see Story Snacks section)
☐	Gather feedback from the librarian, any participating teachers, and any students who engaged
☐	Decide on any format changes for next semester based on what worked
☐	Submit a program recap to SC PTA if desired

Tips for Keeping It Fresh

Content Tips

- Rotate quote length — very short quotes (one sentence) and slightly longer hooks both work; variety keeps it from feeling monotonous
- Mix familiar authors with new names — one well-known title per cycle builds trust; the unfamiliar title is where the discovery happens
- Pull from diverse authors and perspectives — students whose experiences are reflected in the quotes feel seen by the program
- Use YA titles generously — they are often the most narratively compelling for this age group and produce the best hooks
- Find the most surprising line from a book, not the most beautiful one — surprise keeps people reading

Operations Tips

- Recruit a small student volunteer team to help with monthly posting — this takes 20–30 minutes and students enjoy the behind-the-scenes ownership
- Create a simple template in Canva or Google Slides so anyone can produce new cards quickly — don't let the design process be the bottleneck
- Keep a master list of all quotes and books used so you don't repeat within the same year
- Laminated cards last months; plain paper cards need replacing after 1–2 weeks in humid restroom environments
- If engagement with the guess game drops off, refresh the prize or change the format — it may just need a reset

The Bigger Picture

Stall Stories and Story Snacks are not programs that produce measurable outcomes on a spreadsheet. You will not be able to count how many students picked up a book because of a quote they read in the cafeteria. That is fine. The goal is to make your school a place where books are present, where language is valued, and where any student — on any ordinary day — might encounter a sentence that changes something small inside them.

That is worth doing, even when you can't count it.

Need Help?

Reach out to your SC PTA District President or visit the SC PTA website for additional resources, sample card templates, and support. We want every school to have words on its walls worth stopping for.