

Part 3 - Understanding the Situation

Note: 'Teacher says' and 'Student responses' found in this file and other files in the lesson plan are to be considered as possible examples and not to be used or sought verbatim. Consider them as what it might look like in your classroom with your students and use them as a way to prepare for what will actually happen.

Focus: Your students may or may not be familiar with the concept of a little library and more than likely not know what it takes to 'run' one successfully. This is a real-world problem not a textbook question. There are many aspects that need to be considered and among them is what books should go in the little library so that they will be read by others. Seeking information specifically about the messy situation is what the first component is all about.

Understanding the Problem begins by showing a photo of a free little library (but do not say what it is) to your whole class and asking them questions such as:

What do you notice?
What do you wonder?
What are you curious about?
What do you know?
What do you think this is used for?

Note: This file, contains information and photos of little libraries ([Part 1 - Background Information for Free Little Libraries](#))

Some possible student responses are listed below. Student responses can be in the form of statements or questions and can have quantitative or qualitative characteristics. These responses are not to be thought of as a definitive list but rather as examples that might be mentioned. The students are leading the process at this moment and the teacher is scribing the ideas.

It looks like a bird house.
I see books inside.
I wonder if the books get wet when it rains or snows.
I wonder, do the books get stolen?
I wonder, how many books are inside?
It is hard to tell how big it is.
Where is the photo taken?
When was the photo taken?
Why was the photo taken?
I wonder, what kind of books are inside?
Are the books new or used?
Are the books expensive?
Are the books for kids or adults?
Who owns the books?
Why would anyone put books in a little house?

I notice there are different sizes of books inside.
I wonder if they are all adult books?
Is it just a display or can you get inside to grab a book?
Why would anyone leave stuff outside like that?
I see a path up to the thing.
How tall is it?
Why is it sitting on a pole?
Could anyone reach it?
Who built it?
Why did they build it?
If I go there and see a book I like, do I pay for it, like at a garage sale?

Any one of these statements or questions could lead to further classroom discussion depending on your students' interests. Additional questions such as, what information do you need to answer your questions or wonderings and where might you find the information can also drive the conversation. The questions are to stimulate and foster conversations and discussions, and the path each class takes is unique. As their teacher, you can judge when the ideas and comments start to dry up and when to ignite the interest back up again.

At an appropriate time move on to helping your students understand the situation ...
To help your students understand the situation they need to seek information about the situation.

Teacher says: What information might you need to figure out how to operate a successful free little library?

Student responses:

What is a free little library?
How many books can fit?
Who uses this kind of library?
Do you have to sign out books or just take them?
How often do new books get introduced?
How do we tell people about the little library?

Teacher says:

Someone donated their free little library and a box of books to the school because they are moving away. We have been asked to continue to run the little library and I want it to be a success.

I am wondering if you are interested in taking on this challenge? Would you like to have one here for us to use? What books will we need to continue making a free little library a success?

I have the box of books they donated. Maybe we should start by looking them over and deciding if we want to put them in our free little library. How will you decide what is a

good book to have in our little library? Why is it important we have a method of deciding what books should go in our little library?

Student responses:

If we have books in the little library that nobody likes then they will just sit there.

Yes, if I want to read a cookbook I am not going to a comic book store.

But what if I want to read both a cookbook and a graphic novel?

I'm thinking about how I decide whether I want to read a book or not.

Yes, when we go to the school library, sometimes you and I pick the same book and other times, I find a book on the other side of the library I want to read.

Note: at this point in the lesson plan this next task can be completed now or as the start of the next lesson, Analyze the Situation.

Teacher says:

Let's go back to something that was just said. How **do** you pick out a book you want to read? What do you look for in a book to read? What about a book makes you avoid it? What information do you need?

Give me some ideas and I will write them down for us to discuss.

Student responses:

When I look at the cover of the book and the picture is unusual or interesting to me I will pick it up and check it out.

If the title is interesting and - it is almost like daring me to read it.

If I recognize the author and have read something else from them.

If I open it up and start to read it from the beginning I can usually tell within the first two pages if I want to read it.

If it has funny characters.

If it is humorous.

If I read a bit and right away it starts to scare me I will read it.

If I read a bit and right away it starts to scare me I WON'T read it.

If it has lots of photos but not too much information.

If it is over 200 pages, no way will I read it.

If it is a bestseller, I will read it.

If it happens in the future or in an imaginary world. I will read it.

If it is part of a series I want the first one, not a later one, so I know what is going on.

If it really happened or is about real people I won't read it.

If it looks like it's for little kids I won't pick it up.

I like mystery books.

If I saw the movie and liked the movie, I will read the book.

I ask my friends and if they read it and liked it, then I will.

If I see someone I know read it then I will read it next.

If it is a paperback book I will read it.

If it is not too big to fit in my backpack or carry it home.

If it is about something I want to learn to do, like draw or cook.

I like reading books about the war.

If it won a prize, and it has a sticker on the cover, or it says so on the cover, then I will read it.

If the blurbs on the back cover sound interesting then I will read it.

If it is an old book that has been around for a while, then it must be a good book.

Teacher says:

This is quite a list. We have done quite a bit today. We started by finding out what a free little library was and the things you noticed and the questions you asked really showed me this is something you are interested in and that you see the value in us taking up this challenge of having a successful little library.

The list of ideas you think about when deciding to read a book will make a solid foundation for us to build on. If you think of other ways you judge a book to write then down and give them to me.

I want you to start looking over the list and think of the ideas you might use to influence your decisions to read a book or not. Next time, we will start to create a rating model for you to predict what books you would like to have in our little library.