

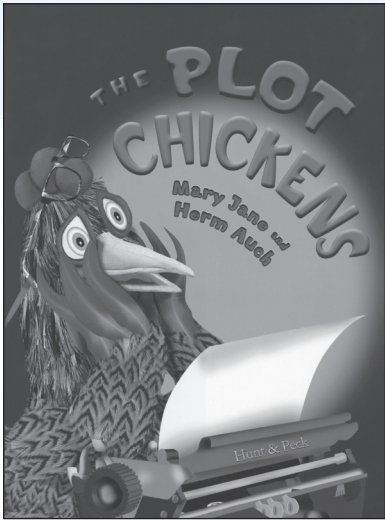
# The Plot Chickens

GENRE FANTASY

**WHY THIS TEXT?** Henrietta the chicken decides to write her own book. She sends her story to a publisher, who rejects it. Undeterred, Henrietta decides to self-publish the book, but it is not well received. Feeling down, Henrietta goes to the library where she learns that the most important critics—children—love her book! Students will enjoy the colorful illustrations and characters as they learn lessons in perseverance and how to write a story.

 **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

**SELF MANAGEMENT**  
**Goal Setting**



by Mary Jane and Herm Auch

**TEXT COMPLEXITY**

**LEXILE MEASURE** AD540L **GUIDED READING LEVEL** O **OVERALL RATING** MODERATELY COMPLEX

| TEXT X-RAY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| KEY IDEAS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | LANGUAGE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | BACKGROUND & CULTURE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Henrietta decides to write a book, so she checks out a book about writing.</li><li>She follows each step and soon has written a story.</li><li>She sends it to a publisher, but it is rejected. She tries to publish it herself, but it gets horrible reviews.</li><li>Embarrassed, Henrietta goes back to the library, where the librarian tells her the children love her book.</li></ul> | <p><b>Key Vocabulary</b></p> <div>librarian (p. 4)    devastated (p. 21)</div> <div>typewriter (p. 8)    brood (p. 21)</div> <div>peck (p. 8)    embarrassed (p. 29)</div> <div>suspense (p. 15)    rejection letter (p. 21)    dramatic expression (p. 31)</div> <p><b>Idiomatic Expression</b></p> <div>lays an egg (p. 27)</div> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Explain that the title of the story is a play on words, one of several in the text. Explain that it is based on the phrase “the plot thickens,” which means that a story or situation is getting more and more complicated and/or confusing.</li><li>Discuss the steps for writing a story, which children may be familiar with from writing their own stories at school.</li></ul> |

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

**Facilitating Book Clubs**  
Group Project Options..... 2  
Meetings 1–2 ..... 3  
Meetings 3–5 ..... 4

**Printables for Group Project Options**  
Reading Remake 7: Make a Mural  
Reading Remake 8: Make a Book Trailer

**Tabletop Minilessons: Reading**  
Anchor Chart 10: Plot  
Anchor Chart 12: Literary Elements

**Printable:** Book Club Discussion Guide 3.10

## GENERATE INTEREST

Book clubs engage students in reading for authentic purposes in a collaborative learning environment.

A few days prior to the first book club meeting, present students with book choices and provide a brief synopsis about each one. Give students time to preview the books, and then ask them the following questions:

- Which book is your top choice? Why?
- Which books are your second and third choices?
- Which of these books is easy, just right, or a challenge?

Place students into book club groups according to their interests and needs.

## SET EXPECTATIONS

Successful student-led groups require clear expectations, ongoing support, and lots of practice. Use the tips below to help facilitate your classroom book clubs:

- Use read alouds and shared reading time to model collaborative discussion of texts in pairs and groups.
- Set up regularly scheduled book club meetings one or more days each week.
- Distribute a Book Club Discussion Guide to each student and encourage students to keep it inside their books.
- During book club meetings, circulate to provide support using the meeting suggestions below.
- During independent reading time, remind students to read and prepare for their next book club meeting.

## GROUP PROJECT OPTIONS

### Make a Mural

- Tell students they will make a mural to show they understand the events of *The Plot Chickens*.
- Have students work in groups, using **Printable: Reading Remake 7** to guide them through the steps in the project.
- For Step 2, have students choose a scene, character, or topic in the story for their mural. Tell them they can also come up with their own idea. Remind them they need to decide what they want the mural to communicate to their audience. For Step 3, have students decide how they will create their mural and what materials they will need.
- Student groups will present their murals to the class.

### Make a Book Trailer

- Tell students that they will make a book trailer to encourage readers to read Henrietta's book. Remind them that a book trailer is like a commercial for a book.
- Have students work in groups, using **Printable: Reading Remake 8** to guide them through the steps in the project.
- For Step 2, remind students that they'll be writing their book trailer for Henrietta's book, *The Perils of Maxine*, not *The Plot Chickens*. Have them reread the full story on page 32 of the book. For Step 3, suggest students also include a positive review of Henrietta's book.
- Student groups will present their book trailer to the class.

### Write a Story

- Tell students that they will follow the steps that Henrietta followed in *The Plot Chickens* to write their own story. Remind them that she learned how to write from a book called *Writing Rules!*
- Have students work in groups, following the steps in *The Plot Chickens* to write their story.
- Have students choose a topic for their story. Tell them they can use a character, setting, event, or a picture as inspiration for their story.
- Student groups will present their stories to the class.

# Facilitating Book Clubs

## GUIDE DISCUSSION

As students meet in small groups, circulate to observe, listen, and support meaningful discussion as needed. Students can prepare for each meeting by using **Printable:** [Book Club Discussion Guide 3.10](#).

### Meeting 1 Get Started

Distribute one book and a copy of the Book Club Discussion Guide to each student. Remind students to use the discussion starters during each meeting and any notes they take to help them prepare for the next meeting. Announce when the next book club meeting will take place, and have students write the date on their Book Club Discussion Guide.

#### Discussion Starters

- *Why did you choose this book instead of other books?*
- *Look at the cover of the book and reread the title. What do you think this book will be about?*
- *Have you ever thought about writing your own book? What steps would you need to take to get a book published?*

#### ENGLISH LEARNER SUPPORT

Use the title, cover illustration, and first few pages to build background and vocabulary. Point out the typewriter and paper on the cover. Use the Key Vocabulary word *typewriter*, as well as words such as *main character*, *librarian*, *read*, *book*, and *plot* to help students discuss the concepts.

### Meeting 2 Pages 3–20

Students will use the Book Club Discussion Guide to discuss the text.

#### Discussion Starters

- *What clues tell you this story is fantasy?*
- *Why does Henrietta decide to write her own book?*
- *Why do you think the author named this book The Plot Chickens? What does the title mean?*
- *Summarize the rules Henrietta learned from the book Writing Rules!*

#### A CLOSER LOOK

Have students turn to pages 7–20. Point out and discuss the comic-book style of the illustrations and text. **Ask:** *Why do you think the author decided to tell some of the story this way?*

**Model Student Response:** I think the author decided to use comic-book style illustrations and text to tell this part of the story because it makes it more fun to read. Also, there are many characters and two plots going on at the same time, so the comic-book style makes it more clear who is speaking and what is happening.

# Facilitating Book Clubs

## Meeting 3 Pages 21–32

Students will use the Book Club Discussion Guide to discuss the text.

### Discussion Starters

- How does Henrietta react to the rejection letter from the publisher? What does this tell you about her?
- Using the illustrations, summarize the steps Henrietta takes to make her own books. What do you notice about the equipment she uses?
- How does Henrietta react to the review of her book? How would you react if you received a review like that?

### VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

Ask students to turn to page 27. Point out that the reviewer uses the idiomatic expression “lays an egg,” which means the book was not good. Next, point out the name of the reviewer, Noah Lyke. Guide children to realize that the name sounds like “no like,” which is how the reviewer felt about Henrietta’s book. Have children discuss other elements of humor they notice in the story and why this makes the book more fun to read.

## Meeting 4 Revisit the Text and Plan Group Project

Students will use the Book Club Discussion Guide to revisit a section of text, and they will choose and plan their group project.

### Discussion Starters

- In what ways does the librarian help Henrietta reach her goal of becoming a writer? What does the librarian do at the end of the book?
- Why do you think the authors wrote *The Plot Chickens*? What lesson do they want readers to learn?
- Choose a group project to complete with your group. Divide the tasks equally. Write down the due date and the tasks you will complete.

### SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

**Goal Setting** Have students think about Henrietta’s goal and how she remains on task even after her book is rejected twice. Ask them to consider if she ever found success after all her hard work. Guide them to understand that Henrietta did eventually find success/acceptance among the children at story time. Finally, have students discuss what they can learn from Henrietta’s experiences in *The Plot Chickens* about knowing how to successfully complete writing assignments—or other goals—of their own, and what ultimately defines a person’s success.

## Meeting 5 Present Group Project

Students will present their group project to the class. Remind presenters to speak loudly and clearly, to make eye contact with their audience, and to make sure each person in the group has a role. Encourage the class to ask questions and to give positive and constructive feedback.

### EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Consider each student’s self-evaluation along with your observational notes and the results of the group project as you assess student progress. You may wish to hold individual or group conferences to provide ongoing support and guidance.