



# Incorporating the Freshman Reading Book into Your Classroom

*Ideas from UVU Faculty*

## How the Book Was Used:

Each week, we had assigned chapters to read outside of class. Each Friday, we went over the assigned chapters with in-class activities. The in-class activities included small-group class presentations of material from the chapter designed around different prompts I handed out to each group. At the end of the book, we did an in-class, open-book, open-internet small-group "test" wherein small groups each divided up 180 questions covering the entire book and shared the work of answering them.

We read a chapter for each class starting around the third week and discuss what happened in the chapter and I tried to relate it to the student's life and things going on in the country presently.

Basically I ask the students to evaluate the text in terms of how much it offers to a freshman college student. They have to take a stance on whether they think this is a worthwhile text for freshman students to read, and then support that stance by providing examples from the text and their own experiences during college of how the book does or does not provide useful information, inspiration, or engagement.

I encouraged students to draw connections between themselves and those depicted in the book and include them in their weekly chapter journals. This was also the foundation of their group project for the semester where they lead a discussion on 3-4 chapters.

Students are assigned chapter readings and asked to complete an assignment by sharing their favorite quote from the chapter and why they chose the quote. This allows me to evaluate if they read the book.

## Outcomes:

→ Using the book helped the students get to know one another better by regularly participating in small-group work and then making class presentations; this created a feeling of class collegiality and camaraderie that was enjoyable for everyone.

→ As the students continued to read they became more invested in the characters and what was happening to them. I believe they felt they knew those characters and didn't like some of the things that went on.

→ This assignment has provided students an opportunity to engage with and practice the evaluative and rhetorical skills my class teaches as well as giving them a sense of agency as a student by getting the opportunity to make a statement about the materials offered and promoted by UVU.

→ In SLSS 100 the book helps students find perspective regarding life's challenges when combined with the textbook.

→ An excellent tool for facilitating class discussion. By starting with a favorite quote, this can make the student feel more comfortable sharing and discussing.

## **How the Book Was Used:**

Students are placed into small Learning Communities (groups of 3-4) and asked to present and facilitate a book discussion in an engaging way each week. Students also wrote a four-page essay on the book that tests their understanding of major concepts from the book and invites them to apply it to their own situations.

FRP books have been used to teach narratives, book reviews, vocabulary, and formatting citations.

I decided to have Boys in the Boat be entirely an outside-of-class assignment. For each part of the book (conveniently divided into 4 parts) we had an online discussion board on Canvas. Students needed to respond to a prompt and then give thoughtful responses to at least 2 other student posts.

## **Outcomes:**

→ We have healthy discussions about themes that emerge, including grit, resilience, paying your own way, staying focused, and so forth, and students become connected to their teams and class in meaningful ways as a result. I've found that this team-based approach facilitates enduring peer to peer interactions outside of class, including friendships.

→ I used it to discuss imagery, diction, details, high-low diction, and dialogue techniques. We discussed the plot and wrote reviews on the book. It was used for lessons on analysis and synthesis.

→ I was pleasantly surprised with the level of participation and enthusiasm the students had for these assignments. There seemed to be a higher percentage of students reading the book than in previous semesters when we did in-class activities, and more students were expressing their thoughts and discoveries about what they were reading than participated previously. The students really came to embrace the book and recognize how they could apply it to themselves as college students. In many cases, their responses were quite profound and they came up with ideas I hadn't considered - which I LOVE!