



## *Episode 2 - Cheat Sheet*

**Engaging Conversations -  
How to Talk to Your Kids About Books  
Guest: Adam Andrews**

<b>Meet Adam Andrews</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>In this Episode</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Cheater's Guide</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Major Takeaways</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Show Notes</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Action Plan</b>	<b>6</b>

## Meet Adam Andrews

Adam Andrews and his wife Missy founded the [Center for Literary Education](#) to make high quality teaching materials accessible to committed parents and teachers. Inveterate bookworms, they have spent the past twelve years making booklists of great literature for students of all ages. [Teaching the Classics](#) is the result of their conviction that the best curriculum is one that involves both teacher and student in a discussion of great ideas.



## In this Episode

In this episode, we learn that we can approach literature from a Socratic perspective by asking questions and getting a conversation going, not through a lecture. Adam says that Socratic discussion is the best way to engage students with the ideas in the books we read. Authors use context, structure, and style to send a message, and the whole point of reading is to have a conversation with the author.

In this episode, Adam gives us a proven formula for starting that conversation with the author, digging out the author's intent, and widening our understanding of the book. It's all about asking the right questions!

**Don't worry about the answers.  
Ask the right questions and read carefully.**

—Adam Andrews

## Cheater's Guide

Use this guide to skip to parts that most interest you, or [listen to the entire podcast](#).

- 5:35** Why are picture books the best way to learn literary analysis, even for adults?
- 7:45** What kinds of questions should we ask our kids about the books we read together?
- 10:48** Why you need to think through the plot to find out what the author is trying to say in the book.
- 12:16** Developing a habit— why you can do this on occasion with your child and then they'll start to naturally do it on their own
- 13:05** Do you have to read EVERY book this way?
- 13:45** How many books a year should you use this method with?
- 14:30** Start with a picture book, no matter the age of your students.
- 15:29** Do you need to use particular books for this method?
- 16:25** Why ask the author and not yourself? It all starts with “I don't know. I want to know.”
- 18:10** What is the socratic method and how can parents apply it in their conversations with their kids?
- 21:53** How do we schedule this into family life?
- 22:00** Adam explains how many books his family attempts to use this method with.
- 24:49** How long does it take to have this kind of discussion?
- 27:00** What age do you start having these conversations?
- 30:57** Who is best suited to have these discussions? (Hint: look in the mirror :)
- 32:00** Adam tells us his all-time favorite read-alouds
- 33:05** The optimal time to read *Tom Sawyer*.
- 34:15** The best read-alouds for high schoolers.

# Major Takeaways

## 1. The point of reading is not to find out what you think about the book.

The point of reading is to have a conversation with the author. When talking with your kids about books, make sure the focus is on what the author wants to tell us, not our reaction to it.

## 2. Chart: Plot the exposition, rising action, climactic moment, denouement/falling action, conclusion...

... if you ask your students, “Which elements of the story belong in each of these parts of plot?” the author’s point starts to become clear. Ask the author, not yourself, by asking: “What’s the author trying to tell me by setting the story up this way? What major question is being answered when the conflict is being resolved?” THAT’S what the book is about. That’s different than retelling what happened. (Our reaction is not the point.)

## 3. When in doubt, ask a question!

## Show Notes

Links to everything Adam and I talked about during today's show

[\*Teaching the Classics\*](#) by Adam & Missy Andrews

Online classes at the [Center for Lit](#)

Adam's [convention talks](#), free at Center for Lit

[\*A Bargain for Francis\*](#) by Russell Hoben

[\*Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb\*](#) by Al Perkins

[\*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer\*](#) by Mark Twain

[\*Great Expectations\*](#), [\*David Copperfield\*](#) or anything by Charles Dickens

Many thanks to all the kids on this episode's **Let the Kids Speak!** The books recommended are:

[\*The Search for Delicious\*](#) by Natalie Babbitt

[\*By the Great Horn Spoon!\*](#) by Sid Fleischman

[\*Half Magic\*](#) by Edward Eager

# Action Plan

## 1. Choose a picture book off your shelf.

Don't overthink it—just pick one! Read the book to yourself. Can you find the five main parts of the plot in the book?

Exposition	_____
Rising Action	_____
Climax	_____
Denouement	_____
Conclusion	_____

## 2. One of the simplest ways to get started with a Socratic discussion is simply to ask these two questions:

“What is the author trying to say by setting the story in this particular time and place?” and  
“What does the main character want or need?”

Start with just those and see if it takes you anywhere.

## 3. Listen to [episode 10](#) with Heidi Scovel.

She uses the methods Adam teaches here with her parent/child book club. It may help you to hear her perspective on it. And don't worry! If you are still struggling, there is more help coming. We'll be adding a “How to have a Socratic Discussion with Your Kids” workshop to the Read-Aloud Revival Membership site in 2015.