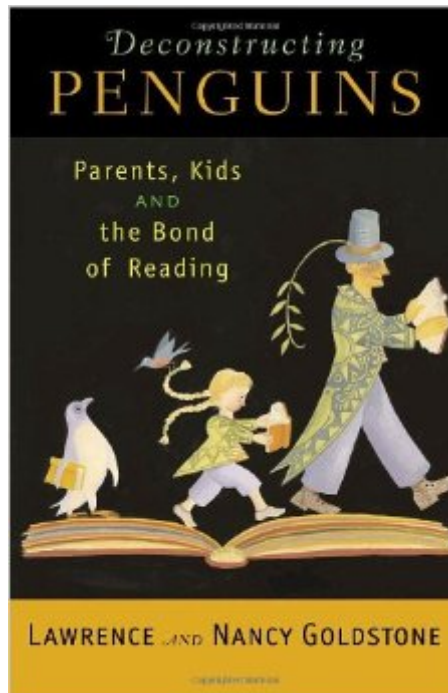


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# Deconstructing Penguins: Parents, Kids, And The Bond Of Reading



## Synopsis

Books are like puzzles, write Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone. The author's ideas are hidden, and it is up to all of us to figure them out. In this indispensable reading companion, the Goldstones' noted parent-child book club experts encourage grownups and young readers alike to adopt an approach that will unlock the magic and power of reading. With the Goldstones' help, parents can inspire kids' lifelong love of reading by teaching them how to unlock a book's hidden meaning. Featuring fun and incisive discussions of numerous children's classics, this dynamic guide highlights key elements—theme, setting, character, point of view, climax, and conflict—and paves the way for meaningful conversations between parents and children. Best of all, the Goldstones note, you don't need an advanced degree in English literature or forty hours a week of free time to effectively discuss a book with your child. This isn't Crime and Punishment, it's Charlotte's Web.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I cannot recommend *Deconstructing Penguins* highly enough. I am a mother of three children and *Penguins* is the first teaching/parenting book I've seen that has offered me such fun and easy tools with which to analyze and share literature as a family. The Goldstones' conviction that even young children are quite capable of and even excited about discussing serious ideas through critical reading is refreshing and right on the money. Children relish meaty moral conundrums. They love to have long discussions on ethics with their peers and parents or teachers (particularly when those discussions pertain to fictional characters rather than to themselves). The Goldstones' book looks at

plot, setting, antagonist and protagonist in a way that will have most parents thinking "I had no idea it was so simple," and most teachers and librarians thanking their lucky stars.

"Deconstructing Penguins" empowers parents to believe they can have real debates about literature with their children right now, even as early as second grade! This is very exciting stuff. I can't wait to revisit some of the classic titles on the authors' reading list, such as *Babe* and *Charlotte's Web*, from a totally different perspective. For anyone who wants to start a parent-child reading group, this book is a god-send. Moreover, "Penguins" presents the most cogent approach to reading groups for adults or kids. In the years I've participated in book groups, including Great Books, I've always felt something was lacking from the discussion despite lots of bright people asking bright questions. After reading "Penguins," I now know what was missing: a unifying theme or framework for analyzing the book's true meaning. "Penguins" gives you that framework and a whole lot more. The authors show they understand great literature, as well as the minds of children. If only more libraries could be as leading edge as the authors' library in Westport, Conn.!!

I have been a fan of the Goldstones since reading their books on book-collecting, e.g. *Used and Rare*, *Slightly Chipped* etc. This book is different, it is about how to approach book discussions for both young and old. I am the parent of a two year old girl, and books are a big part of our lives [I am a book collector myself]...although this book may still be too advanced to put into practice with my little one, it really gives me great ideas on how to go about discussing books in a more interesting manner, and sets me up with great guidelines for beginning a parent/child book discussion group a couple of years down the road. I look forward to more enlightening works by the Goldstones.

As a teacher, this book gave me a fresh perspective. The authors walked their groups through a few main concepts: antagonist, protagonist, climax, and point of view. They were able to take these basic ideas and turn them into excellent and thoughtful discussions. In a test heavy culture, it is refreshing to see that there is another way to teach reading comprehension

As a fourth grade teacher I am dismayed by how many students are already disengaged by reading. A wonderful supplement to readings about literature circles, this book changed the way I ran book clubs. It reminded me of the engaging mystery of quality literature - and the reminding is helping me bring that wonder to my students. A great inspiration and model for parent-child bookclubs, but also a model for all teachers that I have not found anywhere else.

Excellent book for starting a kids' book club. We have a book club of 5-10 year olds that was kind of lackluster in the kid-led discussion category. We applied some of the techniques in this book (eg, talking about protagonist/antagonist and approaching the book like a mystery), and the discussion just exploded. One star deducted because a large proportion of the book is devoted to applying their techniques to specific kids' books, and I would have liked more general information and additional methods for sparking discussion.

I loved this! I read it all in one go, and learned so much. The authors describe several sessions of their library book club, talking about the big ideas behind each story. They start with one big idea (protagonist/antagonist) and then add an idea into each chapter, such as point of view, climax, catalyst and so on. There's also a book list at the end. I'm not from the US, so while I knew many of the books described, I hadn't read all of them, so it was a good introduction to a few new books. Some of them seem very challenging for the age group listed, either emotionally challenging or simply in terms of ideas - I don't have children of that age group as yet but I do know that many of the books listed would be high school (yrs 7-10) over here. Not a criticism, but a point of interest. I did entirely disagree with their take on *The Giver*, however - I feel that the society, rather than a knowingly evil secret society, is a society which acts on tradition, unquestioning tradition. And I do believe the old Giver changes, and that you feel that the way he will deal with Jonas' loss and its effect on the community will be different from the way he dealt with his daughter, because of those changes. But it was good to read something that made me really feel challenged!! I bought this book to enrich my discussion of books with my children as they grow older and I can certainly see that this will help do so. I'd also suggest it to teachers, of all ages, and book club leaders too. An enjoyable read.

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