



Read Your Way: A Book Tasting Experience

A First Literacy Grant Program Model

Introduction

The Osterville Village Library received a First Literacy grant to support the development of our **Book Tasting** program, an interactive literacy experience designed to help children, adults, and families discover new ways to read, learn, and engage with books together.

At its heart, Book Tasting is about removing barriers. It creates a welcoming, playful environment where participants can explore different genres, reading formats, and learning tools without pressure, embarrassment, or judgment. For many families, it becomes more than a library program. It becomes an invitation to read together, learn together, and rediscover the joy of curiosity.

Program Purpose

Book Tasting introduces participants to books and literacy tools in a fun, restaurant-style setting. The program helps children and families explore:

- Different genres of books
- Different reading levels and formats
- Audiobooks and digital books
- Large print materials
- Wonderbooks and read-along books
- Playaway touch screen
- Augmented and virtual reality books
- Interactive learning tools
- Library technology such as Libby and the interactive table

The goal is to help people understand that reading does not have to look the same for everyone. Some people read with their eyes. Some listen. Some learn best through hands-on or interactive experiences. All of these approaches support literacy.

Why Book Tasting Matters

Literacy is a family experience. When a child is supported by a parent, grandparent, caregiver, or trusted adult, reading becomes less intimidating and more joyful. At the same time, adults often discover resources that help them, too.

A parent who may feel self-conscious about reading can listen to an audiobook while following the printed words. An older adult may discover large print books for the first time. A child who thinks they only like sports books may suddenly become interested in fantasy, biography, mystery, or nonfiction. A family that arrives unsure of what the program is may leave with a stack of books, new confidence, and a shared reading plan.

Book Tasting works because it is approachable, social, and enjoyable. It gives people permission to explore.

Setting the Scene

We set up our main meeting room as a restaurant. This helps make the experience feel special and removes the feeling of a traditional classroom or formal literacy lesson.

The room includes:

Tablecloths

Simple centerpieces or fake flowers

Special placemats

Printed menus

Book tasting response sheets

A display of books and materials at the front of the room

A snack table with prepackaged healthy snacks, water, and juice

Depending on the time of day, snacks can be adjusted. For family programs, simple prepackaged healthy snacks work best. The goal is not to create a complicated meal, but to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Two Book Tasting Models

We have offered Book Tasting in two primary ways: genre-based and modality-based. Libraries can also combine both models depending on the audience.

Model One: Genre-Based Book Tasting

The genre-based Book Tasting introduces participants to different kinds of books they may not normally choose.

For example, a child who only reads sports books may be introduced to a sports biography, fantasy, mystery, historical fiction, graphic novels, or nonfiction. An adult who usually reads romance may be encouraged to try mystery, literary fiction, memoir, history, or another genre.

Participants “order” a book from a menu. They spend about 15 to 20 minutes with each selection, reading a few pages, looking through the book, and responding to simple questions on a tasting sheet.

They may be asked:

What is the title?

What genre is it?

What did you notice first?

Would you keep reading?

Who else might enjoy this book?

Would you check this out?

After each round, participants move on to another book. This structure keeps the program moving while giving everyone time to explore.

Model Two: Modality-Based Book Tasting

The modality-based Book Tasting introduces participants to different ways of accessing information and stories.

This has been especially meaningful because many people are not aware of the full range of literacy tools available through the library.

Examples include:

Large print books

Wonderbooks that read aloud

Audiobooks

Libby and downloadable books

Augmented/ Virtual reality books

Interactive tablets

Interactive learning table

Read-along materials

This model helps reduce stigma. A child, parent, caregiver, or older adult may discover that listening while following the words is not “less than” reading. It is another valid and powerful path to literacy.

For older adults, this model has been especially helpful. Some participants did not realize large print books were available. Others did not know they could download books and listen at home.

Family Literacy Impact

The family model may be the most powerful version of the program. Families experience the materials together, and everyone learns at the same time.

This matters because sometimes a parent or caregiver may also need support. Book Tasting allows them to learn about resources in a comfortable setting while participating alongside their child. No one is singled out. No one is embarrassed. Everyone is simply exploring.

When families discover books and tools together, they are more likely to continue reading together at home.

Successes and Lessons Learned

This has been one of the most rewarding programs we have offered.

Families have checked out multiple books after participating. Children have discovered formats and genres they did not know existed. Adults have learned about resources that make reading easier and more accessible. Older patrons have discovered large print and downloadable audiobooks. Families have spent meaningful time together around books.

One of our most memorable experiences was hosting a group of foster children and parents. The children were so engaged with the different book formats, tools, and learning experiences that they did not want to leave. They were discovering resources they had never known they could access.

That moment captured the purpose of the program: when literacy feels joyful and accessible, people lean in.

Challenges

The greatest challenge has been explaining the program clearly in promotion. The phrase “Book Tasting” is fun and memorable, but some people do not immediately understand what it means.

This is an area we continue to refine. A stronger title or subtitle may help, such as:

Book Tasting: A Fun Way to Discover Your Next Read

Book Tasting: Explore New Books and New Ways to Read

Book Tasting: A Family Reading Experience

Taste, Try, Read: A Book Discovery Event

Read Your Way: A Book Tasting Experience

The program itself is highly successful once people attend. The key is helping them understand in advance that this is not a lecture or a traditional book club. It is interactive, relaxed, and designed for discovery.

Materials Included

This guidebook includes sample materials used by the Osterville Village Library, including:

Sample menus

Genre tasting sheets

Modality tasting sheets

Participant response forms

Placemat examples

Video of room setup

Examples of book displays

Promotional language

Each library or organization should adapt the materials to fit its own audience, collection, space, and goals.

Implementation Tips

Start with a clear audience: children, adults, older adults, families, English language learners, caregivers, or a mixed group.

Choose whether the program will focus on genres, reading modalities, or both.

Create a warm room setup that feels different from a traditional program.

Use menus to make the experience playful and easy to follow.

Keep the tasting rounds short, approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Total program 1 hour.

Introduction to event by staff

Have staff or volunteers available to explain materials and answer questions.

Encourage participants to check out books at the end.

Include accessible formats whenever possible.

Have set starting time.

Do not overcomplicate the snacks or decorations. The atmosphere matters, but the focus should remain on discovery.

Final Thoughts

Book Tasting is not an easy program to explain at first, but once people experience it, they understand its value immediately.

It is joyful. It is accessible. It is meaningful. It brings children, parents, caregivers, and older adults together around the shared experience of reading and learning. It helps people discover that literacy can happen in many ways, and that every way into a book matters.

We hope this guidebook helps other First Literacy grantees and community partners create their own version of Book Tasting. The materials can be adapted for any library, school, nonprofit, or family literacy setting.

Most of all, we hope you will try it.

It has been one of the most rewarding programs we have offered, and we would be very happy to answer questions or share additional information with anyone interested in bringing this model to their own community.



Scan the QR code to watch a short video on
how to set up the Book Tasting



Sample Documents



Discover your Reading Style

New Ways to Make Reading Easier & More Successful



"I never realized there were so many ways to help my child enjoy reading."

Reservations Encouraged:
508-428-5757

Reading does not have to feel frustrating.

Join us for a welcoming, hands-on experience where you can explore different ways to enjoy stories and build family literacy skills.

Especially helpful for:

- Struggling or reluctant readers
- Neurodiverse learners
- Busy families
- Adults who prefer listening or interactive learning
- Traditional books with supportive strategies

Try Tools Like:



Books that read aloud while you follow the words



Portable audiobooks for learning anywhere



Interactive story tablets and literacy games



Hands-on touch-based learning experiences



Traditional books with supportive strategies

Saturday March 21
2:00PM

Osterville Village Library

- ✓ Free Adult and Family Program
- ✓ All Ages Welcome
- ✓ Light Refreshments



Village
Library

Inspiring lifelong learning for every reader

FAMILY BOOK TASTING

Discover New Ways to Learn

March 21st at 2pm

Join us for a special Book Tasting that goes beyond traditional reading! Families, kids, and curious learners of all ages are invited to explore exciting new ways to gather information and enjoy stories.

At this hands-on event, you'll get to "sample" different formats, including:



WONDERBOOKS – books that read to you while you follow along, available for all ages



PLAYAWAYS & LIBBY – portable audiobooks you can listen to anywhere, and downloadable books



LAUNCHPADS – interactive tablets with learning games and stories



AR/VR BOOKS – step into the story with augmented and virtual reality, fun and engaging for all ages



INTERACTIVE TABLE – learning through touch, play, and discovery



TRADITIONAL BOOKS AND MORE – the classics we know and love along with large print books

This is your chance to find out what resonates with you and your family—whether you learn best by listening, seeing, touching, or reading. Open the door to new ways of learning, growing, and experiencing the magic of words together. Everyone is welcome! Come explore, experiment, and discover a whole new world of learning. Light refreshments served.



Reservations required, call 508.428.5757



Osterville Village

Main Course - Bios

Some dishes come with a heaping of gossip

Item	Price
Being Jazz.....	JENNINGS
Vincent & Theo.....	VAN GOGH
A Pearl in the Storm.....	MCCLURE
A Monk Swimming.....	MCOURT

Main Course - Non-Fiction

Some dishes are heavier...in calories!

Item	Price
Carly: A Century of Panic & Pleasure.....	394.12
Milk & Honey.....	811.6
Monuments: America's History in Art & Memory.....	973
The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind....	621.45

Sides (Action)

Action-packed sides with a sprinkle of conflict

Item	Price
The Navigator.....	CUSLER
Eragon.....	PAOLINI
Roosevelt's Beast.....	BAYARD
Bloody Jack: Being An Account of the Curious Adventures of Mary "Jacky" Faber, Ship's Boy.....	MEYER

Desserts (Romance)

Tastes of chocolate, passion, & a hint of heat!

Item	Price
The Love Letter.....	SCHNE
Crystal Gardens.....	QUICK
Rainshadow Road.....	KLEYPAS
Island of Sweet Pies & Soldiers....	ACKERMAN



Please inform your "Server" when you would like your "to-go" boxes on any orders placed!

Book Tasting Buffet Menu



Treat yourself to some delicious books.
Many genres to choose from.

Fiction

Narrative stories that are from an author's imagination.



Nonfiction

Books that teach facts about a topic



Fantasy

A story that is not possible in real life



Graphic Novel

A book in comic strip format



Picture Book

A book containing many illustrations.



Mysteries

A suspenseful story about puzzling events.



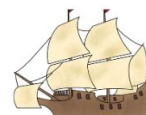
Classics

Novels that have stood the test of time.



Historical Fiction

The setting of these stories is based on real places or events.



Genre/ Book Type:

Book Title:

Why did you choose to *taste* this book?

What do you like about this book?

Let's rate it! How many stars do you give this book?

Rating:



Genre/ Book Type:

Book Title:

Why did you choose to *taste* this book?

What do you like about this book?

Let's rate it! How many stars do you give this book?

Rating:



Book Tasting

Name: _____



Genre/ Book Type:

Book Title:

Why did you choose to *taste* this book?

What do you like about this book?

Let's rate it! How many stars do you give this book?

Rating:



Genre/ Book Type:

Book Title:

Why did you choose to *taste* this book?

What do you like about this book?

Let's rate it! How many stars do you give this book?

Rating:



Genre/ Book Type:

Book Title:

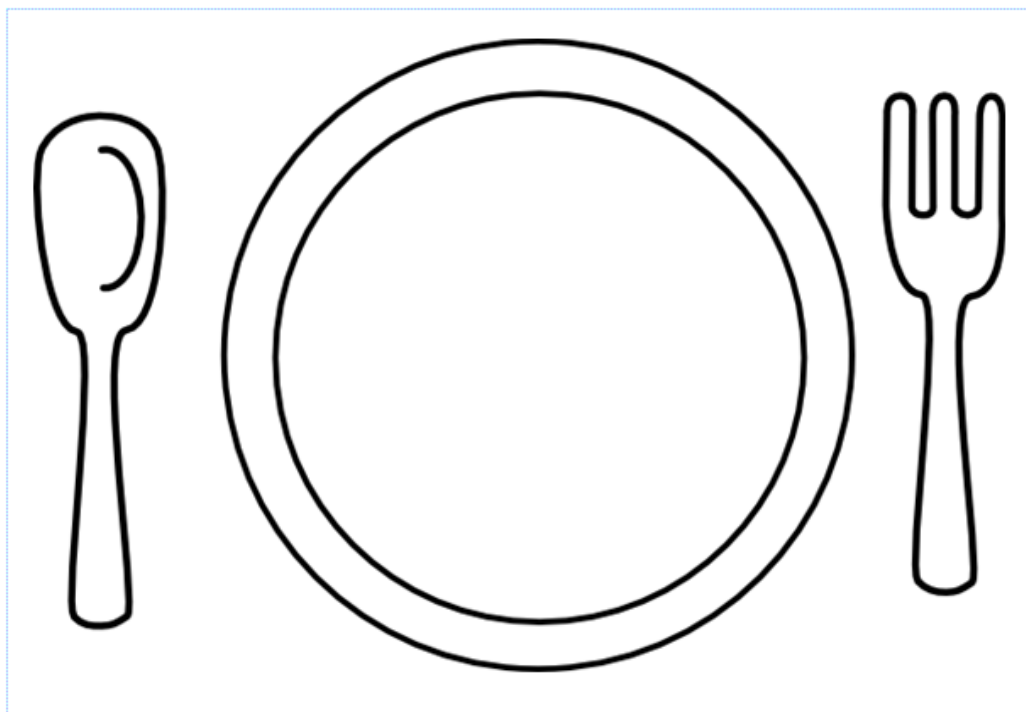
Why did you choose to *taste* this book?

What do you like about this book?

Let's rate it! How many stars do you give this book?

Rating:





Any questions please feel free to reach out.

cyndycotton@clamsnet.org

Osterville Village Library

