

Readers: Better Together

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NYLA 2026 Developing Leaders Capstone

Read Aloud Exercise

Ping-Pong Poem by Douglas Florian

The

words

In-

side

This

Ping-

Pong

poem

Bounce

back

And

Read Aloud Resources

A Picture is Worth 1000 Words

This activity helps participants create new stories using pictures and images. Feel free to get creative as you stretch your imagination!

Materials:

- A collection of 3-5 images (these can be famous pictures downloaded from the internet, pictures from storybooks, personal photographs, or any other images you can find. Try to find a variety of subjects; one photo might be of groups of people or a person, one might be of landscapes, one might be abstract, or of animals, or drawings that the participants themselves have done)
- A notebook or paper for each participant
- Pencils or pens for each participant
- Chart paper (optional)

Directions:

1. On the chart paper provide the following story prompts:

The Pixar Pitch:
Once upon a time...
Every day...
One day...
Because of that...
Because of that...
Until Finally...



2. Select one of the images and put it in a space that all participants can see.
3. Tell participants that they will each write a quick story based on the image. Encourage them to come up with characters, a conflict, a theme, and a plot based on what they see in the picture. They can use the "Pixar Pitch" to lay out the story by completing each sentence using the ideas they imagine after looking at the image.
4. Allow 5-10 minutes for each participant to write down a story.
5. Allow each participant to share the story they created based on the image.

World Read Aloud Day

It Happened To Me

This activity will help you share stories of small but important life moments with others. You can play this game in a group or use this method to think of stories you want to write on your own.

Materials:

- Small slips of paper
- A hat, bucket, or cup
- Notebooks or paper for every participant
- Pencils or pens for every participant

Directions:

1. On each of the small slips of paper, write down one of the prompts below:
 - A time you learned an important lesson*
 - A time you were very scared*
 - A time you discovered something new about yourself or about the world*
 - A time you were incredibly happy*
 - A time you were incredibly excited*Feel free to add any other prompts you would like!
2. Put all the slips of paper into a hat, bucket, or cup.
3. Have all participants sit in a circle.
4. Pull one of the slips of paper from the hat, bucket, or cup and read what it says to the group.
5. Allow each participant 5 minutes to respond independently in their notebook or on paper to the prompt.
6. Complete 3 rounds of this- pulling a prompt and allowing participants to independently respond.



Story in the Round

Telling a Story in the Round is a fun, exciting, and creative way to share stories together. Don't be afraid to get silly!

Materials:

- (Optional) Chart paper

Directions:

1. (Optional) On a chart paper, write down the following reference prompts and hang it in a place where all participants can see:

Beginning [Once Upon a Time...
Middle [Then...
But...
Next...
So...
After that...
Because of that...
End [Finally...



2. Have participants sit in a circle.
3. Explain that you will be creating a "Story in the Round" together. This means that each participant will add a sentence to a story you all create together on the spot!
4. Start the story with "Once Upon a Time." The first prompt should include some characters and a setting (for example: "Once Upon a time there was a young girl who lived in the woods").
5. The person to your right should continue the story. If needed refer them to the chart and encourage them to start their sentence with any one of the "Middle" transition words (for example: "And she had a little dog who loved to wander around").
6. Each participant around the circle should continue adding sentences to the story. At any point, someone can use the ending prompt "Finally" to end the story.

Project Proposal

“

“Reading that isn't solitary and sedentary.”

Identifying ideas of how to facilitate and inspire multi-age communal reading inside and outside of libraries to engage active reading, writing, and discussion – particularly including children who can read independently. Young children are, hopefully, read to by caregivers, teachers and librarians, but once they learn to read, everyone expects them to read quietly on their own. [We're] interested in finding ways to bridge those early communal reading experiences so that readers continue to benefit from communal reading.”

Kate Eicher

Project Proposal

Project Proposal Response

“We Read Together!”

- **All-Ages Book Buddies**
 - Expanding the idea of a traditional library program “Book Buddies” to include a multitude of ages & a range of people from the community
- **Audiobook Club**
 - Creating audiobook walking programs that facilitate and inspire multi-age communal reading that incorporates movement inside and outside of libraries
 - Exercise auditory comprehension skills

We Read Together: All-Ages Book Buddies

The Mission:

Rethinking and expanding the Book Buddies program in two major ways to facilitate and inspire multi-age communal reading inside and outside of libraries as a way for all people to experience the benefits of communal reading.

- Expanding it for a wide range of ages
- Developing it as an outreach program



Book Buddies: What Is It?

- According to a 2016 SLJ article, Book Buddies and/or “Buddy Programs” are defined **programs in which “older and younger children read together.”** The article also notes that there is also the term “Paired Reading,” which refers to **“children of the same age reading at different levels.”**
- This article also refers to a 2011 study that states: **“Students deepen their interpretation of texts when they “read” each other’s responses, and their comprehension is strengthened by another student’s reaction.”**
- Book Buddies is traditionally a program geared towards children/teens reading to children.

Book Buddies: The Research

Scholastic's THREE Reasons to read aloud to a Tween:

1. Building Vocabulary
1. Insights into Their Challenges
1. Rest & Relaxation becomes correlated with reading.

— [3 Important Reasons to Keep Reading Aloud to Your Tween.](#)

Book Buddies: The Research

Quotes:

- **“When older students see their teachers sharing literacy in this way, it allows them to simply enjoy a good book. Too often, older students view reading as an arduous task because during these years, there’s such a focus on meeting standardized testing goals.” –How Read-Alouds Can Benefit Older Students (Edutopia)**
- **“Without exception, children can’t wait for their big buddies to read to them again, librarians interviewed here say. The activity boosts small children’s love of reading, and, Umanskaya reports, the older children also gain a lot.” –The Buddy System: Everyone Gains When Kids Read Together (SLJ)**

Book Buddies: The Research

Quotes Continued:

- **““I like reading new books each week, and I get to see my friend,” said a young participant. The friend? An assisted-living resident who was a stranger when they met at Reading Pals two years ago.” -Book Joy with Elders (SLJ)**



Book Buddies: Reading with Elders

Program Outline:

- **Location(s):** In-house at the library or at a local nursing home or senior/community center.
- *Examples:*
 - [Glen Cove Senior Center](#) – Long Island, NY
 - [Orangetown Senior Citizen Clubs](#) – Rockland County
- **Potential Contacts:** Nursing home, senior/community center staff.
- **Age Groups:** Children/tweens/teens & senior citizens.
- **Program Outline:** Children/tweens read to senior citizens, both age groups share their life or creative stories together – has the potential to become a creative writing exercise.



Book Buddies: Reading with Families

Program Outline:

- **Location(s):** In-house at library or at a local park
- **Age Groups:** All ages/families
- **Program Outline:** Families come together and read together in an organized but informal way in either the library, outside on the library property, or at a park.



Book Buddies: Reading with Friends

Program Outline:

- **Location(s):** In-house at library, a local park, a local coffee shop, or designated study room.
- **Age Groups:** Children/tweens/teens
- **Program Outline:** Friends read together in an organized but informal way in either the library, outside on the library property, at a park, coffee shop, etc. to provide easy crafts and snacks.



Book Buddies: Children, Tweens & Teens

Program Outline:

- **Location:** In-house at library or at the elementary, middle, or high schools.
- **Potential Contacts:** Teachers within community/school district.
- **Age groups:** Children/tweens/teens
- **Program Outline:** A slight variation on the Book Buddies program by doing it as an outreach program and a bridge between the elementary/middle/high schools.



Book Buddies: Reading with People with Special Needs

Program Outline:

- **Location:** In-house at library or local group home.
- **Potential Contacts:** Local group home staff/[ARC](#) (or anything similar)
- **Age Groups:** Children/tweens/teens & people with special needs
- **Program Outline:** All ages can read with people with special needs and do a craft together.

Book Buddies: Reading with Therapy Animals

Program Outline:

- **Location:** In-house at the library.
- **Age Groups:** Children, who are developing literacy skills, or tweens & teens; as well as, therapy dogs and their handlers (middle-aged to senior citizen volunteers).
- **Program Outline:** A slight variation on a program that already exists; all ages can read to these therapy animals and doesn't have to be one-on-one, but more communal.
- **Potential Contacts:** [Therapy Dogs of Rockland](#) (or their affiliate branches) / [Alliance of Therapy Dogs](#)
 - [New York Therapy Dogs](#)
 - [Good Dogs](#)

New York Therapy Animals, Inc.



Comfort Support Smiles

Real World Example: *Come! Sit! Read!* - Pearl River Public Library

Description: Each second Saturday of the month, we hold *Come! Sit! Read!* This program is for school-aged children, who are developing readers.

- [Therapy Dogs of Rockland](#) – the organization.
- Each new sign up requires parental/guardian permission and a signed consent form.
- Each child is given a **fifteen minute** time slot to read to one of the volunteer dogs.
- Call the library or come in to sign up.
- **Two dogs**, with handlers, at each session.
- **12-15 participants** each month.



Marketing an All-Ages Book Buddies

- Staff can create a year-long display of titles for children to read aloud to dogs, seniors, younger/older kids, etc. This display can be kept up to date in KOHA (or other ILS system), based on collection development.
- Flyers in relevant locations – put flyers up in community & senior centers for Reading with Elders, flyers in school-wide emails for school-based Book Buddies, flyers to social work and ARC-based organizations for Reading with People with Special Needs, etc.
- Newsletters, E-newsletters, website homepage, library calendars, etc.

The
Book
With
No
Pictures

B.J. Novak

Book Buddies: A Working Book List



One-Session Books: (For the programs that are a one-off)

- [*The Pigeon HAS to Go to School!*](#) by Mo Willems. A picture book that's easy to read and appropriately funny; even the older crowd can appreciate the sentiment.
- [*The Book With No Pictures*](#) by B.J. Novak – Interactive books help build confidence with reading, encourage interaction and to laugh together

Elementary:

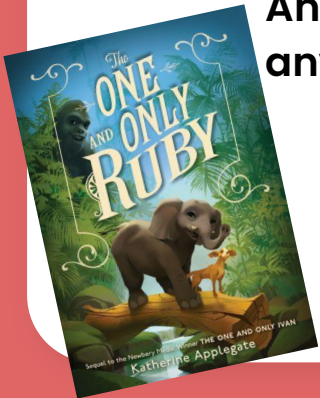
- [*The Pigeon HAS to Go to School!*](#) by Mo Willems
- [*Beatrice Zinker, Upside Down Thinker*](#) by Shelley Johannes – Chapter book – about thinking outside the box and how that can be used to your advantage. A short story about how being different can be embraced.



Book Buddies: A Working Book List

Middle Grade: (For the programs that are several sessions/continuous)

- [Not Nothing by Gayle Forman](#) – Talks about a child who goes into a retirement home and hears the story of an elderly man who hadn't spoken in years. Teaches the importance of listening to stories from, not only kids, but from the older generation.
- [The One and Only Ruby](#) by Katherine Applegate (or anything by this author) – An early middle-grade story about friendship will always bring a smile to anyone's face.



We Read (And Move) Together: Audiobook Walking Club

The Mission:

Creating audiobook walking programs that facilitate and inspire multi-age communal reading that incorporates movement inside and outside of libraries.

- **Increase physical activity by enhancing social connections**
- **Develop it as a peer/patron-led program**
- **Promotion of Libby and audiobook resources**
- **Extend the reach of the library in the community**
- **Inviting to readers and “non-readers”**
- **Exercise auditory comprehension skills**



The Research: Why Libraries?

The Research So Far:

“Library-based group walking programs may be able to increase physical activity by enhancing social connections, social support, and social capital to promote adoption and maintenance of walking for health”

Libraries are geographically accessible to most Americans: about 96% of the US population lives within a public library service area, and about half of all US libraries are located in rural areas. ” (*RURAL WALKING AND LIBRARIES STUDY: Oregon Walking Groups and Civic Projects Rural Libraries*).

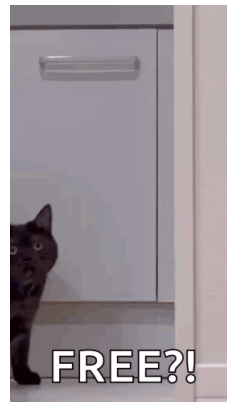
The Research: Why Audiobooks?

The Research So Far:

Audiobooks are good for your mental health!



1. They interrupt the anxiety spiral.
2. Free audiobooks from the library can reduce financial stress.
3. They make everyday tasks feel lighter.
4. They fit into lives that feel too busy to read.

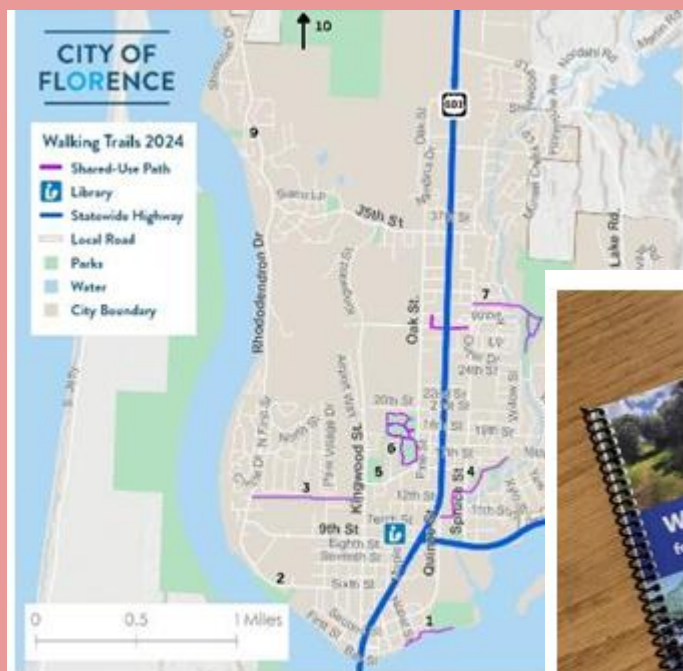


The Research: Why Audiobooks?

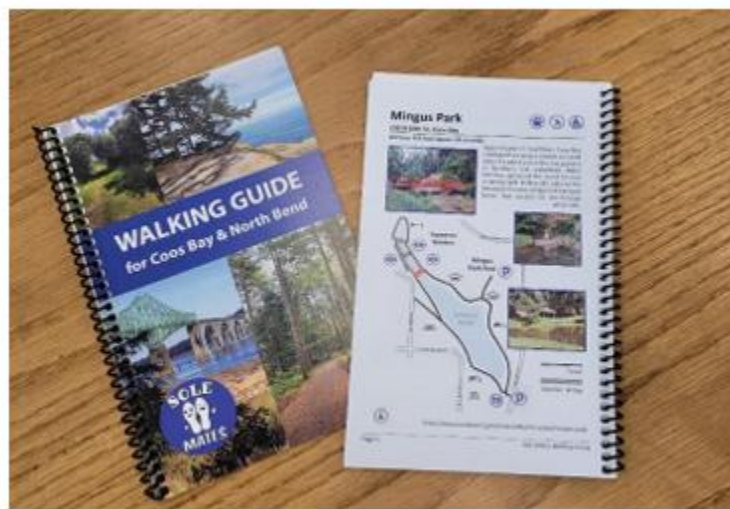
They offer connection during lonely moments.







Walking trail map published by the group



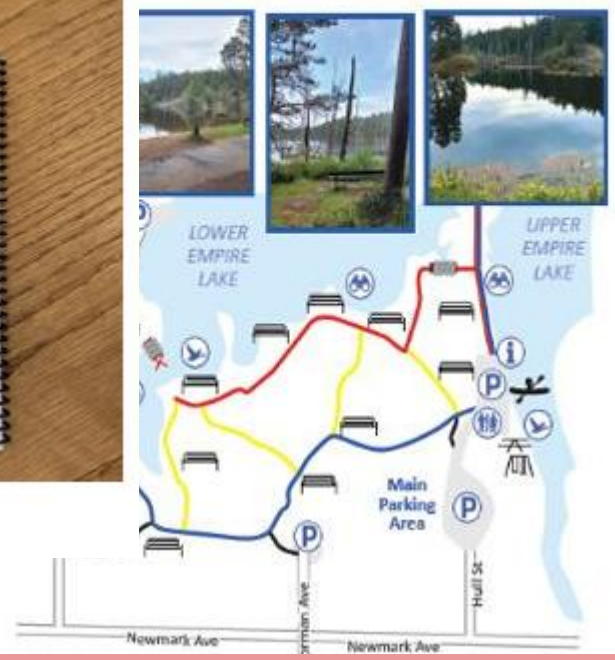
Walking guide created by Sole Mates.

John Topits Lower Loop

355 Hull St, Coos Bay - Gates open from dawn to dusk

Distance: 1 mile walking west and following the loops back east.

John Topits was the generous donor of this 120 acre park to the City of Coos Bay. Year round recreation includes kayaking, fishing, hiking, biking, and nature watching. Trails are paved and there are various routes along the lake and back through the woods. The lower loops lead to Lower Empire Lake and are under the tall forest canopy of fir and spruce trees. Trails are h some short elevations. Expect large puddles during the



We Read Together: Audiobook Walking Club

Program Outline:

- **Location(s):**
 - Outdoor: Library property, parks, hiking trails, sidewalks, school property
 - Indoor: Partnerships with YMCAs, gyms, schools, business campuses, etc.
- **Age Groups: All!** Beyond families, friends, and neighbors, partner with:
 - Scouts, hiking clubs, sports leagues, gyms, animal shelters, environmental clubs, and other active non-profits in the area
- **Program Outline:**
 - Patrons arrive with charged devices with audiobooks and headphones
 - Provided: audiobook suggestions, Libby support, map, and wrap-up activity
 - Single event or recurring

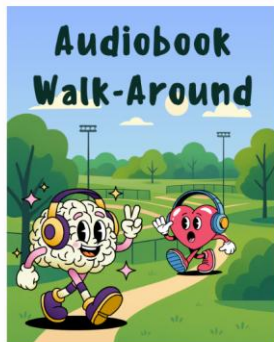
Real World Example: Audiobook Walk Around

Email Blast:



May 15, 2026 | AWPL Children's News & Updates

Take a Walk With Us!



Audiobook Walk-Around

Take a walk and enjoy a story at the same time! Bring your audiobook and headphones, then stroll with us from the Children's Room patio through Memorial Park and back to the Library. Rain or shine, you may walk with the group or stay inside to craft (if the weather is questionable). Afterward, create your own audiobook badge to take home.

Ask a librarian for help downloading Libby, logging into Hoopla, or borrowing a title for your YOTO mini.

Ages 9 – 12 w/caregiver
May 23, 2026
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

[Register](#)

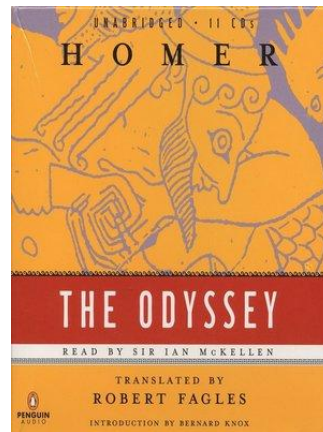
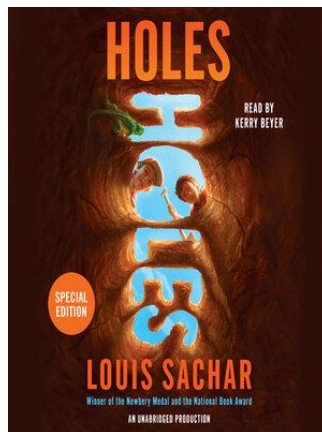
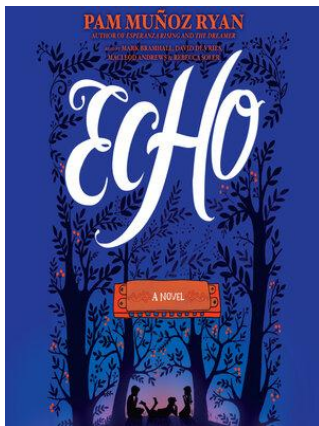
Flyer Update:

The flyer features a stylized illustration of two figures, one orange and one purple, walking along a winding blue path that leads towards a large blue book icon at the bottom. The background is a light yellow gradient. The title 'AUDIOBOOK WALK AROUND' is prominently displayed in large, bold, blue letters with a yellow outline. Below the title, the text 'READ TOGETHER WITHOUT SITTING STILL' is written in a smaller, sans-serif font. The date 'SATURDAY, MAY 23' is in large, bold, blue letters, followed by the time '1:00-2:00 PM' and the location 'START AT CHILDREN'S PATIO'. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner, and the text 'ADULTS & TWEENS: REGISTER TO TAKE A STEP TOWARDS READING TOGETHER!' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. At the very bottom, it says 'AGES 9-12 WITH ADULT'.

Audiobook Walking Club: Reading Different Books

Choice is important – be ready to offer guidance or theme.

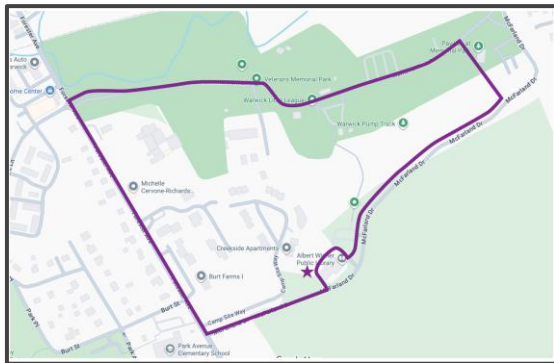
- [Odyssey Awards List](#)
- Suggest prolific authors
- Capitalize on popular trends or series



Real World Example: Audiobook Walk Around

Lessons Learned:

- Stick with regular registration timing for new programs
- Reach out for partnerships before scheduling and market together
- Prepare staff for questions
- Make a list/display of suggested audiobooks that are under 2 hours

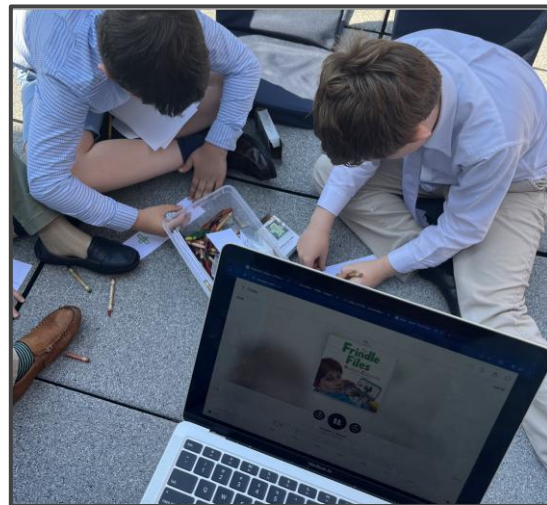


Non-Walking Audiobook Clubs

More ideal when running into roadblocks like LOCATION and WEATHER

Consider other ways to be active while still able to listen:

- **Arts & Crafts: coloring, painting, drawing, crocheting, collaging, clay**
- **LEGO building, Domino track laying**
- **Fidgets or stretch bands**
- **Yoga**
- **Small, easy obstacle course**



Read Aloud Exercise

***Surprise* by Beverly McLoughland**

The biggest

Surprise

On the library shelf

Is when you suddenly

Find yourself

Inside a book—

(The hidden you)

You wonder how

The author knew.

Thank you!



Scan this QR code for:

- Accessibility
checklists
- Resources
- App suggestions
- Book Lists

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Book Buddies FAQs

- **How Many Books Do I Bring?** 5-8 books seems to be enough; depending on how advanced the children are and their reading level.
- **What if I have a book request?** Please let the library staff know and we will display those titles and make them available to our volunteers. These titles will be “highly suggested.”
- **How do I sign up?** We are currently using SignUp.com or SignUpGenius.com. If you have a teen who volunteers with our library, you may be familiar with the website. All you need to do is create an account, put in your child’s name, and your email address into the date and time slot you want and the website will send out email reminders. The librarian in charge will also ensure to send a separate email as a reminder. Just in case there is an issue with the website; as well as, your email sends the automated reminder to your “Junk” or “Spam” folder.

Book Buddies FAQ's

- **Will you be posting addresses and all relevant information for participants?**
Yes!
- **Physical vs. Digital Materials?** If the child prefers a digital resource, please direct them to Libby or Hoopla Kids for them to pick a book from the digital collection.
- **Are audiobooks allowed?** Audiobooks can be encouraged, but we would love to see the child/children read aloud to those our volunteers visit.

Audiobook Walking Club FAQs

Does everyone read the same book?

Probably not! There just aren't enough copies unless folks are willing to share. Most models and clubs do not read the same book, however, they encourage and stimulate discussion of literary works while making and enhancing social connections.

What if you don't have an accessible walking route in your neighborhood?

Right?? Unfortunately, this is going to be a case-by-case issue. Sadly, this may not be possible where you are. The good news? Your walking club can petition for safer and more accessible walking spaces!

What do you do for bad weather/winter?

Good question. I think it has to be weather permitting, but you could alternatively hold an indoors meeting and encourage people to walk and talk, give fidget toys, get to know each other a little better. Everyone can give a brief summary of what they ARE reading.