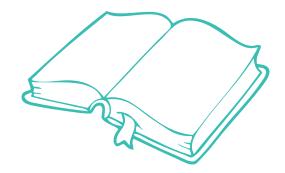


Conversation Book Club in your community. This guide will provide you with some tips, ideas, and creative elements to make your book club a success. We hope you will make your club your own—and build upon the unique qualities of your group. Have fun!

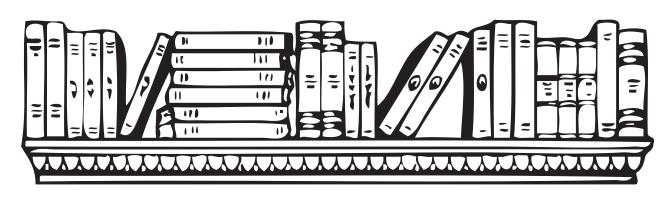


7 Steps for Getting Started

- **1. Pick a Location** Decide if you will host the book club in your home, at your church, library, coffee shop, or at a group of friends' homes on a rotating basis. Ask for input from the group on what would work best for everyone.
- **2. Decide Meeting Dates** Will you meet monthly, weekly? How long will your meetings last? Solicit suggestions from your group to decide what will work the best for everyone's schedule.
- **3. Invite Friends** Spread the word in your local community through an invite by e-mail. Personal invitations are the best for folks who you think would really enjoy the fellowship and conversations. Invite homeschooling friends, neighbors, and non-homeschooling friends to participate. The ideal group size would be five to ten participants, but that can be flexible. If you have a group larger than ten, you may consider breaking off into separate groups during your gathering time to foster discussion. (See *Sample E-mail Invites and Reminders* for resources.)
- **4. Pick a Launch Date** Decide when you will get started, and make it festive! Consider inviting folks to bring special snacks or treats to kick off your book club in high style.
- **5. Order Books or Share Where to Purchase** You may either purchase books on behalf of your members and have them pay you directly or invite them to purchase the book online at www.ClassicalConversationsBooks.com.
- **6. Decide on Your Format** Will you offer childcare? Can folks bring friends? Will you have a fellowship time at the beginning or the end? Will you offer refreshments, snacks, meals, themes? Will participants contribute to the refreshments? Will you have a time for prayer requests and praises? What would make the book club a joy for everyone?
- **7. Confirm Details** The key to a great book club is communication. Make sure you have everyone's correct e-mail addresses to send out meeting reminders and book club updates. Confirm your meetings after you set each one and send out a reminder a few days beforehand to touch base with your members.

S Great Tips for Success

- 1. Start and End on Time Let's face it, we are all busy. Be true to your word to start and end at a reasonable time. Most book club meetings last no more than one and a half or two hours. If folks want to stay longer for fellowship, make that part optional.
- **2. Send Out Questions in Advance** Folks don't like to be caught off guard. Be sure to give the questions out in advance for each meeting, so they can come prepared to share their ideas.
- **3. Encourage Everyone to Participate** Set the tone that everyone is learning together and that no one is an expert on the material. Set a tone for grace that there is no right or wrong answer for anything. The book club is about discovery and learning together.
- **4. Agree to Disagree** Set the expectation up front that not everyone will have the same viewpoint, and that is a good thing! If we all agreed and saw things exactly the same, it would be a very boring discussion. Set the tone that we might disagree and that is okay. But remind folks to do so with respect and kindness.
- **5. Draw Out the Best in Folks** Consider conducting an icebreaker option at the beginning of the first few sessions. This is a way to get everyone comfortable with each other right from the start. Simple questions are a great way to get warmed up—for example, your favorite book, what you ate for dinner last night, where would you like to travel to and why, or how you like to relax. (See *Icebreaker Ideas*.)
- **6. Make it Fun** Consider ideas to make the book club fun and easy. For example, if it is a burden for someone to host every time, meet on a rotating basis to various homes, invite guests to bring snacks to share, have themes for the snacks/beverages such as special teas, coffee & dessert night, chocolate night, salty snack night, or pair with the season of the year. (See *Book Club Theme Ideas* for more ideas.)
- **7. Decide on a Season** It's helpful for people to know a specific period for the book club. Have a definitive start date and end date—this helps people manage expectations for commitment. If your club decides to continue on with another book, great, but be open to the fact that folks may not want to commit to more than one season for a book club.
- **8. Share Your Insight** Consider posting your insights or what your group is learning within your own Classical Conversations community to offer the benefit to the rest of your group. You should also consider posting on the Classical Conversations Facebook page, Google Plus page, or Twitter to share your group's key learnings and celebrate your efforts. Others may enjoy learning about what you are gaining and be inspired by your efforts.



ullet The 10 Best Ideas for a Happy Book Club

- **1. No Gossip** What happens at the book club stays at the book club. Making a club about gossip is the quickest way to turn people off.
- **2. Keep it Positive** As the leader of the book club, it is your job to keep the tone light and positive. This should be fun and a treat for everyone who participates.
- **3. No Hijackers** Do not let any one person dominate the conversation. Review this up front. The best book club experiences are when everyone participates in some way, so try to draw out everyone to contribute.
- **4. Not a Therapy Session** You may want to share that the book club should be about rich, engaging, and inspiring ideas and conversations about the book you are reading. You want people to share part of their lives together. Agree that emotional issues and highly sensitive topics are best kept for therapy or for prayer requests at the end of the discussion.
- **5.** We Don't Have to Have All the Answers Just like in life, there is no answer key for every question. As the book club leader, the expectation should be that no one has all the answers. However, your group will explore the topics together and people will have different answers based on their own personal situations. This is how God made us all unique.
- **6. Grace**, **Grace** Agree to set the tone that the book club will be what people make it. If participants do the reading and review the questions prior to getting together, great! If they don't have time and they just show up to be encouraged, that's great too. Let all conversations and words be grace-filled as we learn together.
- **7. Simple Is Best** Agree that we all have a lot going on, so keeping the gathering simple will be the expectation. If someone wants to go above and beyond with an elaborate spread, decked-out house, or PowerPoint presentation, that is his or her choice. However, the expectation will always be simplicity.
- **8. Make It Fun** The most important ingredient of the gathering is to make it fun. Whatever way you would like to do that—fun icebreakers, rich conversations, meeting at a coffee shop, having chocolate and strawberries, whatever is meaningful—make it a joy.
- **9. Feedback Is Great** Ask for feedback along the way to involve folks in making the book club great. Ask good questions: Is the meeting time/frequency working for everyone? Are we allowing enough time for rich conversations and fellowship? Are there ways we could make the book club better? Are folks enjoying it?
- **10. Encourage** The most important part of the book club is that folks leave the gathering encouraged. Caring and educating our children is a hard and wonderful work. These gathering times should be about lavishing encouragement among friends.



SAMPLE E-MAIL INVITES AND REMINDERS

Sample E-mail Invite #1

Hello Friend!

Are you interested in some lively discussion and great fellowship with friends? Join us for a launch meeting for our *The Conversation* Book Club on (time/date) and (location). At the meeting you will discover what *The Conversation* is about, relax with friends, and learn something new. How great is that?

The Conversation is a book written by Leigh Bortins that discusses challenging your student with a classical education through the high school years.

Here's a quick snapshot of *The Conversation*:

In *The Conversation*, the third book in a trilogy about homeschooling with a classical education, Leigh Bortins offers wisdom for the high school years. Leigh shares a beautiful framework for tackling difficult subjects, while casting a vision for homeschooling in high school with excellence. Through her encouragement, parents are invited to move beyond simply providing an education in order to raise a generation of virtuous men and women.

Please let me know if you think you might like to join us so I can reserve enough copies of the book. I will have copies of the book for purchase for \$16 at the meeting, or you can order your copy of the book at www. ClassicalConversationsBooks.com. I hope you can make it! RSVP to (e-mail) or (phone number) by (date). Thanks again! I hope you will join us!

Your friend,

Suzy Supersweet Phone E-mail

Sample E-mail #2

Hello Friend!

I'm starting a new book club with a book called *The Conversation* and thought you would really enjoy it. We are going to have a launch meeting on (time/date/place) and I hope you can make it.

I'm really interested in discovering how to bring out the best in my student for the high school years, and I'd love to include some friends on the learning journey, too! Here's a quick snapshot about the book:

The Conversation by Leigh Bortins

In *The Conversation*, the third book in a trilogy about homeschooling with a classical education, Leigh Bortins offers wisdom for the high school years. Leigh shares a beautiful framework for tackling difficult subjects, while casting a vision for homeschooling in high school with excellence. Through her encouragement, parents are invited to move beyond simply providing an education in order to raise up a generation of virtuous men and women.

Please let me know if you think you might like to join us so I can reserve enough copies of the book. I will have copies of the book for purchase for \$16 at the meeting, or you may order your copy of the book by visiting www.ClassicalConversationsBooks.com. I hope you can make it! RSVP to (e-mail) or (phone number) by (date).

Thanks again! I hope you will join us, and feel free to invite a friend, too!

Sincerely,

Joyfilled Julie Phone E-mail



Sample E-mail #3

Hello!

I'm starting a new book club and I would love it if you would join me. I will be reading the book *The Conversation* by Leigh Bortins. I want to learn more about bringing out the best in my student for the high school years. If you'd like to find out more, I am having an intro meeting coming up on (date/time/place). I hope you (and maybe a friend) can make it! You probably don't need convincing—but just in case—here are a few reasons why you should consider it:

Top Ten Reasons You Should Join The Conversation Book Club

- 10. You get to spend time with friends and make some new ones.
- 9. You will enjoy great fellowship among other parents on the homeschooling journey.
- 8. You will get out of making dinner/laundry/homework for the night (hopefully).
- 7. You will enjoy Lobster Thermidor and escargot at every meeting (well, maybe not, but we might have some awesome Chex Mix and coffees)!
- 6. You will be encouraged by the group to read, discuss, and dive deeper into a great book.
- 5. You will gain new tools to learn how to bring out the best in your student's high school learning experience.
- 4. You will learn strategies and ideas to tackle difficult subjects with your student.
- 3. You will discuss a bigger vision for high school with the world as the classroom.
- 2. You will practice having big, juicy conversations in order to use them at home.
- 1. You will smile more, have fun, lose weight, and look ten years younger (well the smiling and having fun part is true).

Please let me know if you think you might like to join us so I can reserve enough copies of the book. I will have copies of the book for purchase for \$16 at the meeting, or you can order your book by visiting www.ClassicalConverSationsBooks.com. I hope you can make it! RSVP to (e-mail) or (phone number) by (date).

Thanks! I hope you will join us; feel free to invite a friend, too!

Blessings,

E-mail

Jubilant Janice Phone

Sample Reminder E-mail

Hello Friend!

Don't forget that *The Conversation* Book Club meeting is coming up on (date/time/place.)

A couple reminders:

- ☐ Please be sure to bring your copy of *The Conversation* with you.
- ☐ This week we are focusing on (topic/chapter), so please be sure to look over that chapter prior to the gathering.
- ☐ As always, we are a grace-filled group, so even if you don't get a chance to read the excerpt, please come anyways.
- \square We will be discussing the questions below.
- ☐ You may want to bring a notepad/pen to write with in case you or anyone else says something profound (which will most certainly happen)!
- ☐ We will be serving light refreshments. If you would like to bring something or if you have dietary issues, please let the host know.
- ☐ We would like to begin promptly at (time) so that we can end on time. If you would like to come early, we will have fellowship at (time) to welcome everyone and enjoy snacks together.
- ☐ If you have any questions or need directions, please let me know—you can reach me at (phone number).

(Insert Questions for Discussion Here)

Thanks!

Sarah Superawesome My Address or GPS Map E-mail/Phone



ICEBREAKER IDEAS

Favorite Book or Movie Share

Everyone has a favorite book or movie that they love. As a way for folks to get to know each other, invite them to share their favorite book or movie and why.

Who Am I?

Write names of famous people on paper and then tape one to everyone's back. Participants ask yes-or-no questions to discover who they are. Examples could be political personalities, celebrities, sports heroes, people from the Bible, historical figures, and more.

Strange Question

Invite folks to answer a strange question when they introduce themselves at the start of the gathering. Examples could be what you had for dinner last night, where you would love to travel, what's the best thing that happened to you this week, what you love about the season you are in, or the funniest thing that happened this week.

Introduce Your New Friend

A fun way to get the group connecting is to invite the group to pair up in twos and learn their partner's name and a unique talent or interesting things about them. They will then introduce their neighbor to the group and share some of the things they learned about their newest friend.

The Best Idea About...

As a unique exercise in thinking creatively, pick an issue that everyone can relate to in your group and have a sharing session on best practices. For example, invite participants to share their best dinner idea when you have almost no food in the house, the best way to get your kid to love reading, the best idea about getting organized, the best idea on homemade Christmas gifts, or the best idea about saving money.



BOOK CLUB THEME IDEAS

Listed below are a few sample ideas to add some pizzazz to your book club gatherings. Obviously, these are optional, but here are a few creative twists on the meetings that would pair with specific chapter readings. Make your book club a reflection of your participants and solicit ideas and input on what folks would truly enjoy. As always, simple is best—but if you want to offer additional elements, here are few thought starters below.

Thought Starters on Themes for Book Club Gatherings

"English" Tea Party

Pair your conversations about reading and writing with a truly "English" tea party. Invite guests to share their favorite teas, crumpets, scones, and desserts. Hats and gloves encouraged! Guests can bring ideas for suggested high school reading lists, favorite high school reads, or ideas for books that their students loved.

Mathematical Celebration of "Pi"

Make it a mathematical evening by celebrating all things "pi." Invite guests to bring savory, sweet, or fruit pies, or keep it simple and have everyone chip in for pizza pie with sweet pies as your dessert. Discussions can focus on strategies for high school math, encouragement for a struggling math student, great math resources, and high school math equipping.

International Geography Night

Celebrate geography and countries around the world by inviting all your participants to bring a dish that represents their country of origin or a favorite country. Discussions can focus on ideas for adding culture to the homeschool experience with brainstorming for mission opportunities, study/travel ideas, foreign language resources, and best practices.

The Mystery of History

Host a special icebreaker activity that invites folks to guess what historical figure they are. Tape a historical figure's name to each person's back and have him or her solve the mystery by asking only yes-or-no questions. Invite guests to share their favorite historical figure or book about history. Discussions can focus on essential biographies, books/experiences related to history, and favorite history equipping for high school.

Mad Scientist Night

As a way to enjoy science, consider sharing some beautiful images or YouTube videos about science or nature. Other ideas might be to include a fun hands-on activity for parents to share with their kids at home for the love of science. Ideas include make-and-take flubber, build-a-bridge contest, duct tape challenge, or nature sketchbook activity. Discussion can focus on strategies for STEM enrichment (science/technology/engineering/math), equipping for the sciences, favorite books, and experiences to foster a love of science.

Artistic Fun Night

As part of your conversations about fine arts, offer a simple art-themed activity for your participants. An option might be provide tiny canvasses and paints for your guests to paint during the welcome time of your evening. You could also invite guests to share a picture of their favorite piece of art and tell why they enjoy it. Discussion can focus on opportunities to weave the fine arts and culture into your high school plans, including ideas for camps, classes, experiences, and books—or tips for adding support for the arts as part of your high school day.



These are to be used as a jumping-off point for your book club gatherings. However, feel free to develop questions of your own. The idea is to make your own book club a reflection of your personality, with your own unique group.

Chapter One

Read Introduction, "Why I Cherish the Conversations" Read Chapter One, "Confident Parents"

Chapter One Questions

- 1. What does a confident homeschooling parent look like?
- 2. How do we show our kids that the world is their classroom?
- 3. How do we foster great conversations with our kids?
- 4. What is the best way to prepare our students for life?
- 5. How do we foster a love of learning through the high school years?
- 6. What habits make your home school run well?
- 7. How would you describe "authority" and how does that translate to your daily homeschooling experience?
- 8. What is your perspective on the difficult subjects/content for the high school years? How do you develop a confident approach?
- 9. How do you handle questions about socialization for homeschoolers?

Additional Reading

"Homeschooling High School" by Andrea Newitt https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/homeschooling-high-school

"A Word about Homeschooling through High School" by Denise Moore https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/word-about-homeschooling-through-high-school

"What Do Employers Want Our Kids to Know?" by Jennifer Courtney https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/what-do-employers-want-our-kids-know



Chapter Two

Read Chapter Two, "Rhetoric Defined"

Chapter Two Questions

- 1. How do you explain classical education in a nutshell?
- 2. How do you define the term "rhetoric?"
- 3. In this chapter, Leigh Bortins explains the three stages of classical education as the grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric stages. What is your perspective/experience with this in your own family?
- 4. On page 60, Leigh shares the five canons of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, elocution, memory, and delivery) as a way to organize your homeschool day. How do you see using these ideas working in your home school?
- 5. How can we set up our homeschool plan to point toward the big ideas of "perceiving wisdom, pursuing virtue, and proclaiming truth?"
- 6. What does it look like to use knowledge and understanding to perceive wisdom in a subject?

Additional Reading

"Into Eternity: Homeschooling Through High School" by Kate Deddens https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/eternity-homeschooling-through-high-school

"All Dressed Up for the Prom, But Will You Go?" by Courtney Sanford https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/all-dressed-prom-will-you-go

"Challenge: The Moment You've Waited For" by Jennifer Courtney https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/challenge-moment-youve-waited

Chapter Three

Read Chapter Three, "Reading"

Chapter Three Ouestions

- 1. Do you agree with Leigh's idea that we only need four things to educate someone: pencil, paper, good books, and time for good conversations? Why or why not?
- 2. What are the books that shaped who you are as a person?
- 3. Which books do you think are essential for high school reading?
- 4. In this chapter, Leigh discusses the idea of experiencing characters' emotions and actions in order to "practice judgment and virtue." What are your thoughts on this?
- 5. What qualities make a literary work a resource that helps students learn how to live well?
- 6. How can you read well with your children?
- 7. What sorts of questions foster big, juicy conversations about literature with your kids?
- 8. Try using the five canons of rhetoric with your student as outlined in this chapter and share your experiences.

Additional Reading

"Homeschooling and The College Question" by Jen Greenholt https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/homeschooling-and-college-question

"Skills Versus Subjects" by Lisa Bailey https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/skills-versus-subjects

"Can Books Really Teach Us Anything?" by Jennifer Courtney https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/can-books-really-teach-us-anything-part-two

Chapters Four and Five

Read Chapter Four, "Speech and Debate" Read Chapter Five, "Writing"

Chapters Four and Five Questions

- 1. What best practices have you found for developing effective speaking abilities for homeschoolers?
- 2. What role do you feel technology plays in the home school?
- 3. What are some simple, everyday strategies you have found to help your student put his/her speaking and debating skills into practice?
- 4. Leigh describes three types of speeches: political, forensic, and ceremonial. How can your student practice these types of speeches?
- 5. How would you use the five canons of rhetoric for speaking and writing well?
- 6. What does it take to make an excellent writer?
- 7. How do you create a love of the written and spoken word with your child?
- 8. How do you see the five canons of rhetoric, when practiced and internalized, making you and your student better storytellers?

Additional Reading

"From Driver to Passenger: A Homeschool Parent's Journey" by Lisa Bailey https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/driver-passenger-homeschool-parents-journey

"The Practical Classical Education" by Matt Bianco https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/practical-classical-education

"The Challenge of Challenge: Mentoring Future Leaders" by Courtney Sanford https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/challenge-challenge-mentoring-future-leaders-0

Chapters Six and Seven

Read Chapter Six, "Science" Read Chapter Seven, "Math"

Chapters Six and Seven Questions

- 1. How does imagination play into the study of math and science?
- 2. How can you weave wonder and delight into math and science?
- 3. How would you use the five canons of rhetoric for the investigation of science?
- 4. How would you use the five canons of rhetoric for the investigation of math?
- 5. How can you relate science and math to endeavors that interest your student?
- 6. How do you encourage a student who lacks passion for science and math?
- 7. How can you create a vision for your homeschool science and math as a way to "know Creation better?"
- 8. How does studying science and math rhetorically compare to the methods used in modern class rooms? Are there advantages/disadvantages in both?

Additional Reading

"Homeschoolers and College" by Matt Bianco https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/homeschoolers-and-college

"One-Room Schoolhouse Math: Ideas for the Challenge Math Seminar" by Jennifer Courtney https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/one-room-schoolhouse-math-ideas-challenge-math-seminar

"Success in Challenge for the Student with Disabilities" by Dana Wilson https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/success-challenge-student-disabilities



Chapters Eight and Nine

Read Chapter Eight, "Government and Economics" Read Chapter Nine, "History"

Chapters Eight and Nine Questions

- 1. How do you make "discussing important ideas" a part of your homeschool day?
- 2. How does "immersing your student in good stories" benefit the course of his/her school day?
- 3. How do you guide your student to think about ideas in a broader context as good citizens, rather than just studying a subject?
- 4. How do we develop our kids to be deep thinkers and leaders?
- 5. Leigh describes the study of government and economics as "a harmonious combination of utilitarian and beautiful." What do you think she means by that?
- 6. How can we foster connections across what students learn in art, math, science, government, history, government, and other subjects? What is the benefit of this practice?
- 7. How do you encourage your student to "practice citizenship?"
- 8. What do you think Leigh means when she says, "history helps students understand what it means to be human?"
- 9. How can we see the study of government and history as "receiving the inheritance well?"

Additional Reading

"The Dividends of a Challenge Education" by Lisa Bailey https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/dividends-challenge-education

"How to Ask Better Questions (and Why it Matters)" by Jen Greenholt https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/how-ask-better-questions-and-why-it-matters

"What Our Children Are Learning in Challenge Class" by Matt Bianco https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/what-our-children-are-learning-challenge-class



Chapters Ten and Eleven

Read Chapter Ten, "Latin and Foreign Languages" Read Chapter Eleven, "Fine Arts"

Chapters Ten and Eleven Questions

- 1. What are your assumptions about studying a foreign language as a parent and a student?
- 2. How do you set up your homeschool student for success in foreign language study?
- 3. What do you believe the study of Latin offers the homeschool student?
- 4. How does the study of language and art help us to appreciate and understand our cultural heritage?
- 5. How are you teaching your child to know and pursue what is true, good, and beautiful?
- 6. How could you use the five canons of rhetoric to study art?
- 7. What is the importance of art education (music, fine arts) as part of the homeschool experience?
- 8. What are some ways you can foster the love and appreciation of the arts with your student?
- 9. How can you appreciate the arts if you have no experience with understanding it?
- 10. How can you develop meaningful conversations about the arts with your student?

Additional Reading

"Homeschoolers Wanted: The College Search" by Robert Bortins https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/homeschoolers-wanted-college-search

"Homeschooling and the College Question (Part 2)" by Jen Greenholt https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/homeschooling-and-college-question-part-2

"Things Homeschooling Is Good At" by Tobin Duby https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/things-homeschooling-good



Chapter Twelve and Epilogue

Read Chapter Twelve, "A Graduation Conversation" Read Epilogue, "Looking Back, Looking Ahead"

Chapter Twelve and Epilogue Questions

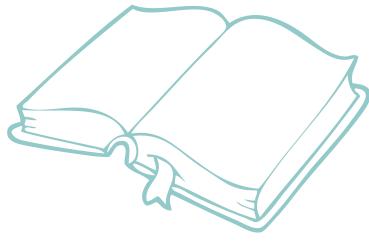
- 1. What do you believe is the end goal of education?
- 2. How would you answer Leigh's question for your family: "How can my children live a life of virtue?"
- How does a classical education lead students and parents to contemplate important questions of "justice, courage, loyalty, truth, goodness, and beauty?"
- 4. What do you think the classical societies of the past did to produce so many gifted thinkers, orators, soldiers, and political leaders?
- 5. Why do you believe homeschooled students are outperforming their publicly educated peers?
- 6. What is your perspective on Leigh's statement that the secret to college preparedness is "perseverance and hard work?"
- 7. How do we make our children "hungry for beauty?"
- 8. What has homeschooling taught you?
- 9. How has this book helped you to realize how to homeschool through the high school years with "authority, habits, and content?"
- 10. What will your legacy be in homeschooling?

Additional Reading

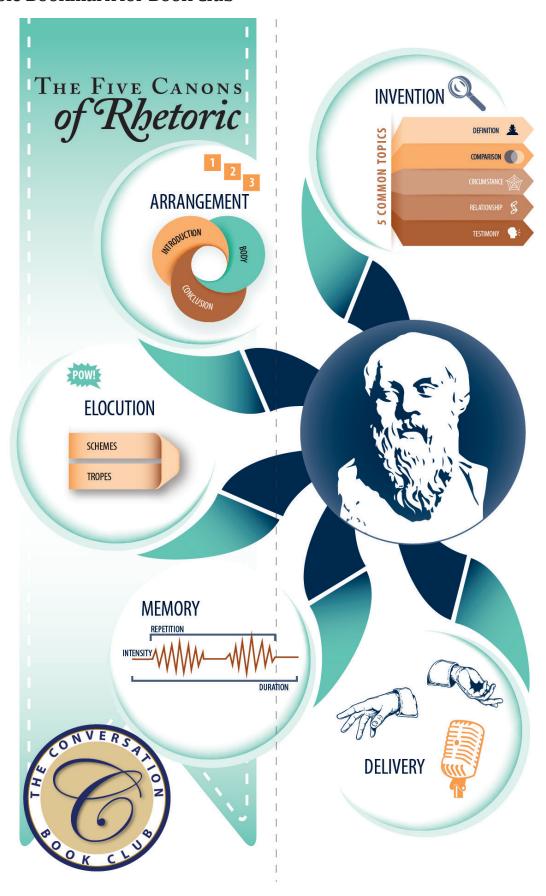
"After High School" by Shawn Stewart https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/after-high-school

"Hindsight and High Hopes" by Robert Bortins https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/hindsight-and-high-hopes

"Graduation and Getting There" by Heather Shirley https://www.classicalconversations.com/article/graduation-and-getting-there-0



Printable Bookmark for Book Club



Printable Bookmark for Book Club

