First, I knew I had to be concise with the time restraints. I had only 60 minute class periods and knew I had to choose genres that my students gravitated to, but I also wanted them to explore genres that they wouldn’t otherwise choose. I decided on science fiction, historical fiction, mystery, realistic fiction, graphic novels, and biography.
To begin, my students made reservations the week before the book tasting. I knew the tables would be set up so that six could sit at each one. With these reservations, I made assigned seating. As they entered the library, they found their name card with a table number. They then found their table.

Each table was set up to look like a fine dining experience. I purchased tablecloths, each student had a placemat to jot down notes, they were given a menu as their guide for the book tasting experience, and they answered questions about each book they “tasted.” In the center of each table, I brought in my personal cake plates from home and stacked the books on each one. Each table was a different genre represented by a decorative sign and a homemade table sign.

With the amount of time, each student was able to get through only three genres. While they tasted three books per genre, they used their menu to guide them. They took notes on their thoughts of the cover, their reaction to reading the first few pages of the book, their take on how the author grabbed their attention, and rated of each book they tasted.
When they finished three rounds, they chose three books they were really interested in reading and documented the titles on a bookmark. Depending on which books were available, they checked out a new book!

The bookmarks were kept and used for further book checkouts.

I also reached out to my very supportive parents for donations of baked goods, napkins, and plates. So many parents donated that we had more than enough for all four of my ELA classes. The kids enjoyed a special treat after they found their new books to read.

The students had nothing but positive feedback on this experience. We visit the library every other week for book exchanges. Many asked if we could do this every time we exchanged books! Even my reluctant readers found this to be an engaging experience. I think the best part was that my students continued to check out the choices on their bookmarks.
The biggest thing that I would change is the amount of time spent doing this. I think I would try to adjust our schedule so we had more than 60 minutes. I think it would be great if the kids could make it to every genre. I felt it was important that they could experience three books from each genre, so extending the experience would make it so much better!