

Literature Circles User Guide



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Literature circles encourage conversations among students who have read the same text and help students develop insights by considering texts from different points of view.

Select four to six *fluent* readers for each literature circle group, basing your decisions on the following criteria:

- the students' choice of books (for this activity you may want to offer a selection of three appropriate books and let each group choose *one* for reading and study)
- students' reading ability
- students' interests

You may join one or two groups during the lesson to observe and demonstrate procedures or critical literacy skills.

With young fluent readers, plan for activities that focus on comprehension and the development of word study skills.

Introducing Literature Circles

When introducing literature circles to students:

- Select an appropriate text.
- Select a *role* (e.g., “Connector”; see other roles in the section below); prepare a role card and make copies for each student.
- Pique students' interest by briefly introducing the book, the setting, and the author.
- Introduce and discuss the literature circle role you have selected. Encourage students to think about the role while reading.
- Read a section of the text, thinking out loud and making connections to the assigned literature circle role. Show students how to make brief notes while reading.
- Following the reading, discuss the literature circle role. For example: “In my role as Connector, I was able to make the following text-to-self connections... and these text-to-text connections...” Discuss these connections and how they help with the understanding and appreciation of text.
- Allow students to try this role on their own. Repeat the process for each of the different roles.

Introduce each of the individual literature circle roles and practise each as a whole group. Before working independently, students should feel comfortable with each of the roles and capable of completing tasks with confidence.

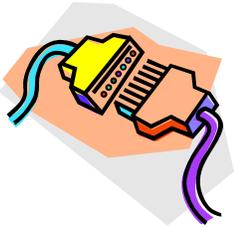
Literature Circles Roles

Five of the basic literature circle roles are:



Questioner

The questioner thinks of relevant questions while reading a fictional or factual text: How does this happen? Why did this character act in this way?



Connector

The connector makes text-to-self connections (How does this relate to my feelings, my experiences?), text-to-text connections (Have I read something like this in another book? Is this book similar to another by the same author?), and text-to-world connections (How is this similar to what has been happening in the news?).



Vocabulary Enricher (Word Wizard)

The vocabulary enricher selects and explains new or interesting words that add interest to the text.



Illustrator (Artful Artist)

The illustrator shares visual interpretations of the story with other members of the group.

Discussion Director



The discussion director selects an interesting main idea or event for the group to discuss. The discussion director reminds the group to keep on track and encourages others to participate.

Other optional roles include the following:

Summarizer: The summarizer prepares a summary of the main points of the day's reading.

Researcher: The researcher locates information related to the book, such as cultural references or the history of the book's setting.

Literary Luminary: The literary luminary finds important sections or quotations in the book that can be shared with others.

Scene-setter: The scene-setter tracks where actions happen and when/if the scene changes.

(Literature circle roles adapted from Daniels, 2002)

Operating a Literature Circle

When students are able to work independently with individual roles, literature circles can be conducted as follows:

- Offer the literature circle group a small selection of books from which they can choose a title. Since each member of the group reads the same book, four or five copies will be required.
- Allow students time to review the books and make their choice.
- The group decides how much of the book they will read during the first session. All members of the group are expected to read the selection and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting.
- Assign literature circle roles or allow students to select an available role card (pre-select specific roles to meet the goals of the activity). Colour-coded role cards allow the teacher to see at a glance that all roles are represented within the group.
- Ask students to think about their role and make notes as they read. They may use sticky notes, a response sheet, or write on the role card.
- At the next meeting, students talk about their reading and lead a discussion related to their role.