Using Literature Circles

Encouraging Meaningful Access to Literary Texts
What Are Literature Circles?

- According to Harvey Daniels, “Literature Circles are small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book” (13).
Why Use Literature Circles?

Literature Circles are based on sound educational theories:

- Reading is a strategic process
- Reading is a transaction among reader, text, and context
- Independent reading is linked to reading gains
- Scaffolding enables learning
- Collaborative (social and interactive) learning is beneficial
- There can be multiple interpretations of a text
Furthermore…

- Discussions are student-centered
- Interactions with texts are meaningful
- Response to the reading is deeper and more personal
Literature Circles

Combine two powerful teaching/learning strategies:
- collaborative learning and
- independent reading
Literature Circles are student-led, heterogeneous, and small group

- Student-selected reading material
- Temporary groups of 4-6 students, formed according to book selections
- Regular meetings that allow groups to discuss their reading
Components

- Student-generated discussion topics
- Discussions that are conversational and exploratory in nature
- Use of notes to guide students’ reading and discussion
- Students assume a variety of roles
Components con’t.

- Discussion environment is nonjudgmental and safe for risk-taking
- Students share completed books with peers and select a new book
- Teachers facilitate rather than dominate
Establishing Literature Circles

- Create time and space
- Establish rules and procedures
- Model the process
Demonstrate the Process

- Read a selection aloud for entire class
- Students take notes (use of sticky notes)
- Students generate authentic questions
- Facilitate discussion; encourage turn-taking, piggybacking
Implementing Literature Circles

- Selecting texts: book talks, votes
- Forming groups
- Determining reading assignments, roles
- Individual preparation: reading and taking notes
- Meeting to discuss
Keys for a Good Discussion

- Everyone participates
- Everyone comes to the discussion group prepared
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Everyone respects one another’s ideas and opinions
POSSIBLE ROLES

- Discussion Directors
- Passage Masters
- Connectors
- Illustrators
- Graphic Designers
Discussion Directors

- Initiate discussion with an authentic, open-ended question
- Encourage participation from all members of group
- Keep group focused
Passage Masters

- Identify significant (i.e. puzzling, meaningful, or controversial) passages in reading and flag them
- Share passages with group and invite responses
- Explain choices to group
Connectors

- Make connections between the reading and their lives—things they have read, experienced, heard about
- Share their connections with the group and invite responses
- Invite group members to share other connections
Illustrators

- Identify feelings the reading generated
- Find or create a visual that suggests something about the reading
- Share visual with the group and invite responses
- Explain choices to group
Graphic Designers

- Identify major concepts in the reading and organize them in a graphic design
- Share their visual with the group and invite their responses: how do they interpret the design?
- Explain their interpretation to the group
Role Variations

- Literary Luminary
- Summarizer
- Vocabulary Enricher
- Investigator
- Theme Connector
Assessment

- Teacher observations
- Self-evaluations
- Rubrics, checklists
- Log entries, tests
Trouble-shooting

- Finding books
- Finding time
- Accommodating diverse learners
- Enlisting support from parents and administration
- Releasing control
- Managing many groups reading different books
Key Resources


The Teacher’s Role in a Literary Community

Barry Hoonan from Bainbridge Island with a mixed class of 5th and 6th graders. As you watch, think about the teacher’s role(s).

http://www.learner.org/resources/series169.html?pop=yes&volid=90493&pid=1826#