

Literature Circles Resource Guide

*Teaching Suggestions, Forms,
Sample Book Lists, and Database*

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Tools for Discussion

Brainstorming Ideas—With your students, brainstorm some ideas about what they can talk about during discussions.

Quote and Question—As students read, ask them to find one quote that stood out for them and raise one question that genuinely puzzled them.

Prompts—(See Journal Prompts, p. 52)

Guided Topic—You may want to suggest a topic for discussion that you introduce through a focus lesson. This is a good way to tie in a focus on theme, genre, or author.

Student-generated Questions—Generate a list of open-ended questions with your students.

“Post-it” Notes—These small “flags” work well to identify passages that students want to share in a discussion. As they read, students can make short notes or write questions on the “Post-it” notes to remind them of what they want to discuss.

Bookmarks—Students can use bookmarks to note interesting or puzzling words they encounter, to write questions, and to record ideas worth discussing.

Golden Lines—“Golden lines”—quotes from the book—are an easy and effective source of interesting discussion material. Many students find it much easier to select something the author said than to come up with their own reactions. *≈ kitchen cabinet/blackboard*

Discussion Log—Discussion logs are a more structured way to prompt students to collect quotes, questions, and interesting words. They provide just enough space for a quick notation and differ from a journal entry, whose purpose is extended and reflective response.

What Makes a Good Discussion?

- **Empathetic Listening:** Give your complete attention to the speakers, showing the people in your group that you value their thoughts.
 - Use positive body language
 - Eye contact
 - Hands resting
- **Responding to Group Members:** Expand on other group members' ideas by sharing your thoughts and feelings about what they contributed to the conversations.
- **Clarifying:** Probe to understand each other's ideas better.
 - Tell me more about . . .
 - What do you mean . . . ?
 - Why do you think . . . ?
- **Sharing Ideas and Justifying Opinions:** Share parts of the book that are important to you and explain why they are important. Justify your opinions.
 - I think . . . because . . .
 - I wonder . . .
 - I was surprised . . .
 - This part reminds me of . . .
 - I don't understand . . .
 - I like this section of writing because . . .
 - I noticed . . .
 - I wish . . .
 - My favorite part is . . . because . . .
- **Self-reflection:** Consider what has been done well, and make decisions about what needs to be improved. Set goals for the future.

Focus Questions for Anecdotal Notes: Literature Discussions

1. Is the student prepared for the literature discussion?
2. Does the student use the text to share passages? To support ideas and opinions? How effectively?
3. Does the student listen actively to others?
4. Does the student ask questions? What kinds?
5. Do the questions get a thoughtful response? Which are most effective?
6. Does the student contribute thoughtful ideas?
7. Does the student make predictions? How effectively?
8. Does the student build on other people's comments?
9. Does the student keep the group on task?
10. Does the student discuss unknown or interesting words?
11. Does the student make personal connections to his/her life? At what levels?
12. Does the student make connections to other books, authors, and experiences?
13. Does the student discuss the author's craft and word choice?
14. Does the student discuss literary elements (plot, setting, characters)?
15. Can the student reflect on literature circle participation and set goals?

Discussion Etiquette

Discussion Elements	Looks Like:	Sounds Like:
Focused on Discussion Body posture Eye contact	Eyes on speaker Hands empty Sit up Mind is focused Face speaker	Speaker's voice only Paying attention Appropriate responses Voices low One voice at a time
Active Participation Respond to ideas Share feelings	Eyes on speaker Hands to yourself Hands empty Talking one at a time Head nodding	Appropriate responses Follow off others' ideas Nice comments Positive attitudes
Asking Questions for Clarification	Listening Hands empty	Positive, nice questions Polite answers
Piggybacking Off Others' Ideas	Listening Paying attention	Positive, nice talking Wait for people to finish
Disagreeing Constructively	Look at the speaker Nice face, nice looks	Polite responses Let people finish talking Quiet voices No put downs
Active Listening	Paying attention Hands empty Looking at the speaker	Quiet Speaker's voice only
Taking Turns to Let Others Speak	One person talking Attention on the speaker	One voice
Supporting Opinions with Evidence	Use the book and form	Piggybacking off others Help others find evidence One voice Let people finish talking
Encouraging Others	Eyes on speaker Head nodding	Positive responses Appropriate responses

Literature Circles Self-Evaluation

Name: _____ Date: _____

5 = Always

4 = Almost all of the time

3 = Sometimes

2 = Occasionally

1 = Never

Title: _____

Author: _____

___ I had my novel and response journal ready at the beginning of each meeting.

___ I was quiet and listened for directions.

___ I wrote thoughtfully in my response journal.

___ I dated my journal entries.

___ I remembered to write down important quotes, new or interesting words, and items to be discussed in the group (using "Post-it" notes, a bookmark, or journal).

___ I stayed on task during reading and discussion sessions.

___ I took an active role during discussions by *asking questions, listening, and talking* about the book.

___ I was cooperative and participated in the extension activity.

What did you like most about this book? _____

What is your goal for the next book? What do you plan on doing differently during your next literature circle to make yourself a better reader/participator?

Literature Extension Activity

(Complete after watching the video of your presentation.)

What went well? _____

What will you work on next time? _____

Discussion: Self-Reflection

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
I was an empathetic listener by giving my complete attention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I responded to other group members' ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I asked questions to clarify my understanding of the book and/or to help me better understand other group members' ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I shared parts of the book that were important to me and explained why they were important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is a new insight or appreciation you gained today during your discussion? *(Did you learn something new about the book? What do you remember most about the discussion?)*

Goal: Next time, I want to work on _____

Bookmark

Name: _____

Title: _____

Author: _____

List favorite or important pages, quotes, scenes, interesting or unknown words.

Bookmark

Name: _____

Title: _____

Author: _____

List favorite or important pages, quotes, scenes, interesting or unknown words.

Oral Response Discussions

Discussion Summary/Group Feedback

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

Summarize what you did well and/or learned today during your literature discussion.

Comments from other group members:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Literature Response Log

Name: _____ Pages: ____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

Response

Oral Response Discussions

Points for Discussion

I'd like to talk to my group about . . . I'd like to ask them . . . I wonder why . . . It was interesting that/when . . .

Are You Ready?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I finished my assigned reading | <input type="checkbox"/> I completed my responses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I dated and labeled my responses | <input type="checkbox"/> I marked the parts I wanted to share |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I put my best effort into my work | |

Journal Response Forms

Diary Entries—Choose an incident or event from your story that might cause one of the characters to respond in a journal. Taking the role of the character, explain what happened and how you felt about it. You might want to create journal entries for more than one day in your character's life.

Cause/Effect Explanation—Find a place in your book where something happened as a result of an action taken by a character or by an event that occurred. On one side of your paper, illustrate what you see as the cause. Write a brief explanation underneath. On the other side, illustrate the result and write your explanation.

Letters—Write a letter to a friend, to your literature circle group, to a character in your book, or to the author. Share your thoughts, questions, and feelings about the book so far.

Character Web—Draw a portrait of your selected character in the middle of your journal page. List three to five traits that describe that character; write these around the character's portrait. (Adaptation: Now find a specific passage from your book to support each trait. Copy that passage next to the trait. Be sure to list the page number.)

Sketching and Drawing—Use shape, design, image, and color to represent what you feel about your book. You might want to recreate a significant scene, depict how a character is feeling, capture the mood or tone of the events in this chapter, illustrate the conflict, or portray your feelings about this book at this point in your reading.

Journal Comments

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

Cover

(title, author, student name, illustration, page numbers, neat appearance)

Journal Entries

(dated, varied format, comments supported with examples/details, neat appearance)

Vocabulary

(at least 10 words and definitions to talk about)

Total Score Based on Journal Response Rubric _____
