



# An Introduction to Literature Circles

We will begin at 3:30pm.  
Please note: This webinar will  
be recorded.

Presented by  
Angela Ehmer





An outline will be provided and followed by time for questions.

Please ask questions via the chat box at any time during the session and ensure your microphone remains muted.



Content:

What is a literature circle?

- Purpose
- Origin
- Points of difference

Implementation:

- Text selection
- Grouping Students
- Role cards
- Roles & responsibilities

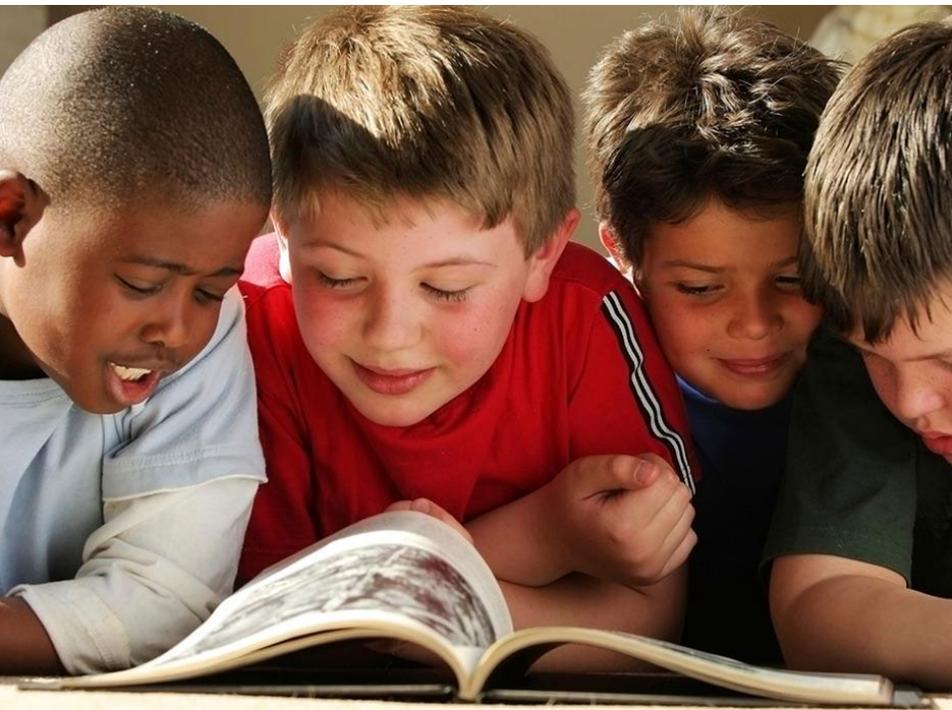
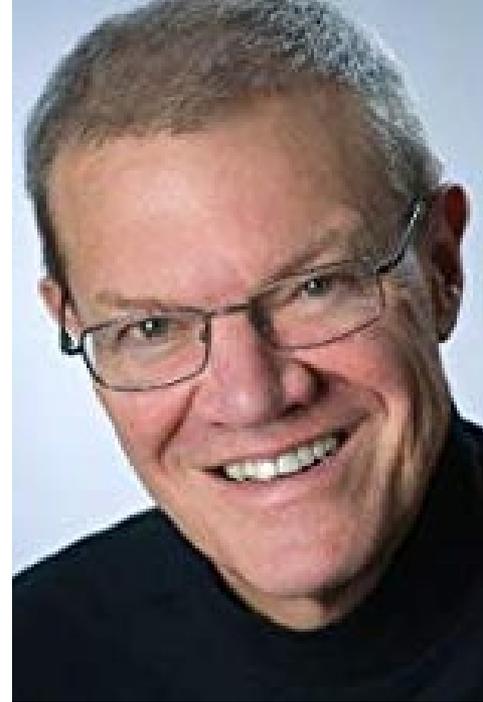


What is a Literature Circle?

**A literature circle is a focused, small group conversation through which students' develop a deeper and richer understandings of the text.**



A literature circle is a collaborative reading approach in which students with varying reading abilities, each with an interest in reading the same text, form a discussion group.



## Early work:

- Harvey Daniels
- Katherine Schlick Noe
- Bonnie Campbell Hill
- Nancy Johnson

*Literature includes a broad range of forms such as novels, poetry, short stories and plays; fiction for young adults and children, multimodal texts such as film, and a variety of non-fiction. Literary texts also include excerpts from longer texts.*

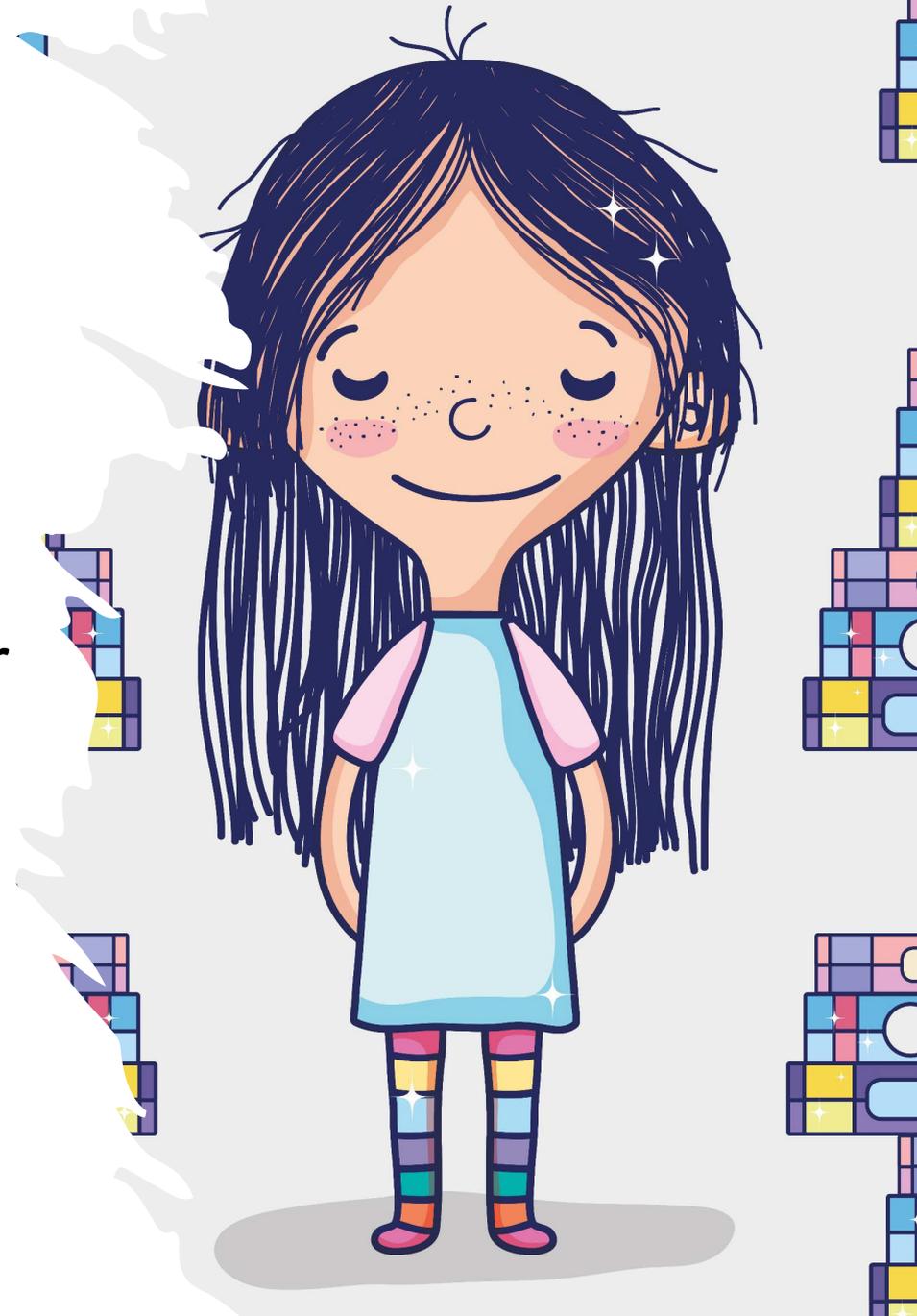
*Australian Curriculum*



*Evidence of engagement with literature is demonstrated with academic achievement in areas including reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary and numeracy.*

*Children who read daily for pleasure can show academic achievement of up to a year and half greater than children who do not.*

OECD, 2011



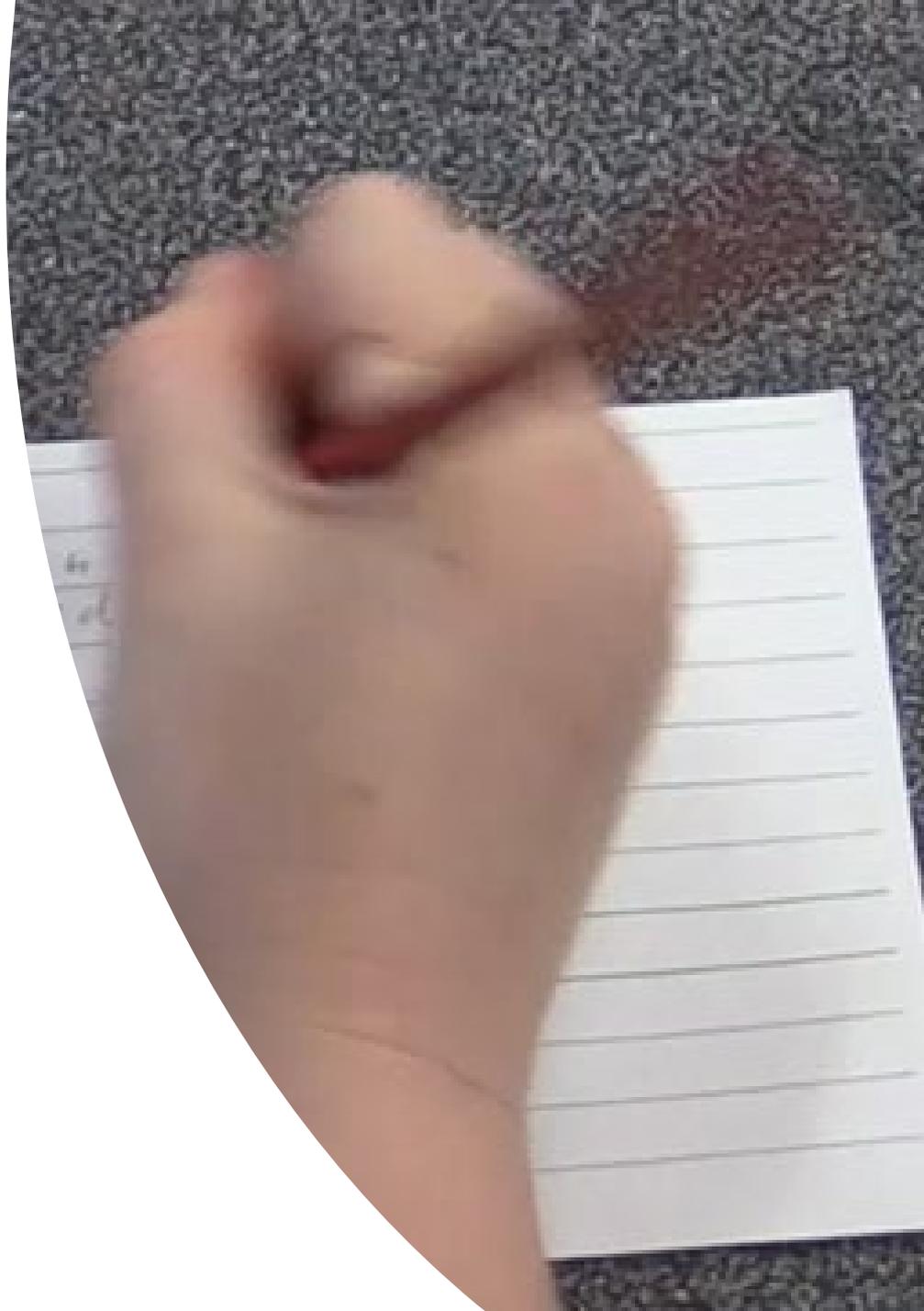


Why?

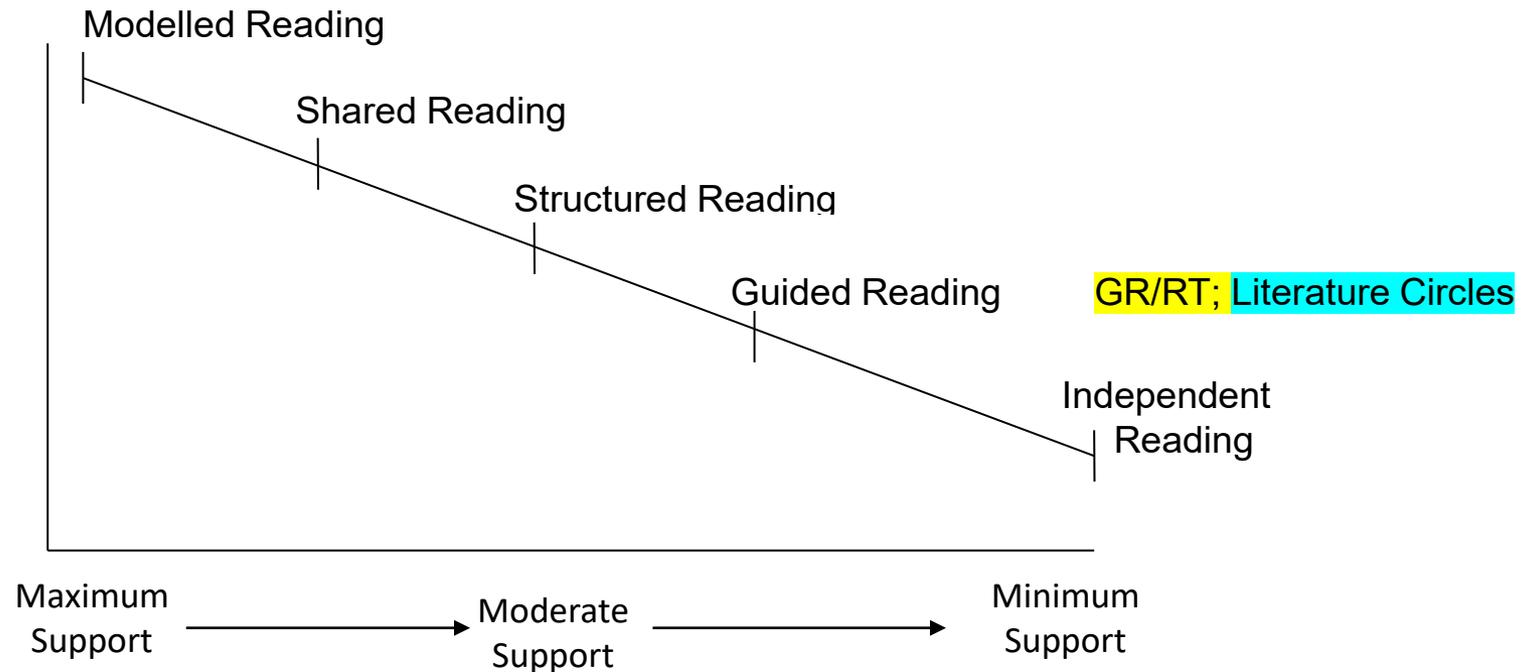
# Selecting Texts

Look for:

- **quality literature with interesting themes, ideas and characters**
- **interesting, engaging texts**
- **picture books, short stories, novels, poetry, songs**
- **a text well-suited to analysis and discussion**



# Scaffolding Readers Through Their Zones Of Proximal Development



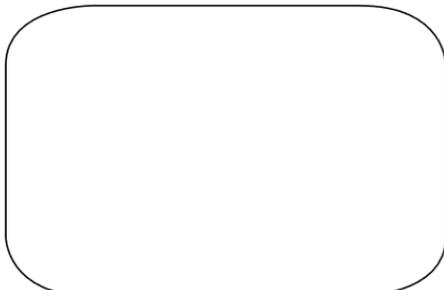
Adapted from *Vygotsky's Gradual Release of Responsibility Model*

# Scaffolds and supports:

- Role Cards
- Teacher as ... participant, independent observer, rotating observer

## Story Teller

Tell the group what the story is about.  
Begin with the words: *This story is about ...*

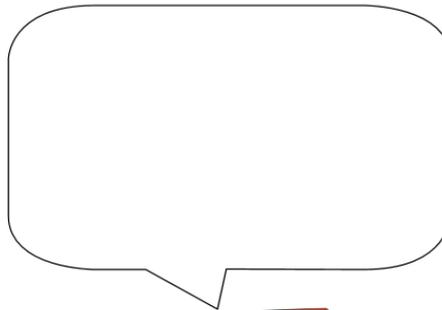


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## Word Whiz

Find tricky or interesting words.  
Say each word and give its meaning. Start with the words:  
*My first word is ...*

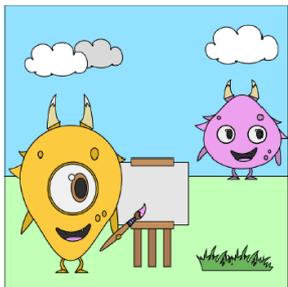


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## Artist

Imagine something from the story.  
Add all the details you can remember.  
Use the book to help you.

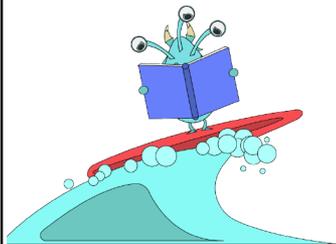


Literacy Solutions Book Chat Cards

## Connector

Think about the story and what it reminds you of. It could be something which has happened to you, or something you have seen, heard or read. Use the words,

*This story reminds me of ...*



Literacy Solutions Book Chat Cards

## Guide Sheet

The aim of this learning experience is to engage students in a rich conversation about a story. The story may be read more than once to students. If reading a second time, prompt students to think about their special job while listening.

When sharing, support students to:

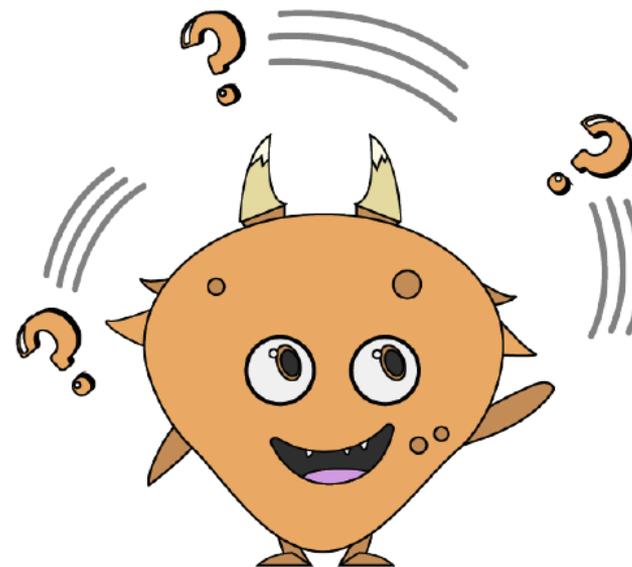
- speak in sentences
- justify their response by referring to events or characters from the story
- support students to recall ideas which link to their response
- actively listen to others
- make eye contact and smile



Literacy Solutions Book Chat Cards

# Question Master

Think of an interesting question about the story. It might be something you are wondering about or something you do not understand.



Literacy Solutions Book Chat Cards

## Leader

Welcome your group to the chat.  
Introduce what you have read. Invite others to share and contribute. Thank them after they have shared.

*Welcome to the group. We read ....  
I would like to invite .... to share.*

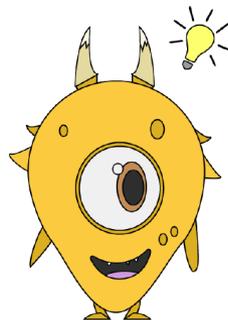


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## Predictor

Think about what might happen next in the story. You could say,

*I think .... might happen, because ....*

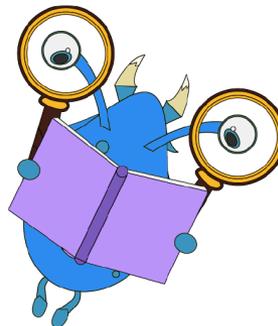


Literacy Solutions Book Chat Cards

## Storyteller

Tell your group what the story was about. Start with the words,

*The story was about ...*



Literacy Solutions Book Chat Cards

## Thinker

Use your prior knowledge and evidence in the text to infer, or show you understand something the author has not said or directly stated. What could you infer from the text? Record your inferences.



## Quiz Master

What can your group remember?  
1. Write 5 questions which are answered in the book.  
2. Conduct your quiz to see what they remember. If stuck, give the page number and let your group do a quick search.

Question 1:	Answer:
Question 2:	Answer:
Question 3:	Answer:
Question 4:	Answer:
Question 5:	Answer:



## Director

Welcome your group and lead the conversation. Say the title and author. Invite group members to speak. Plan your notes below.

Welcome to the discussion.

We have read \_\_\_\_\_ which was written by \_\_\_\_\_  
I'd like to invite \_\_\_\_\_ to speak.  
Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_  
Would anyone else like to share?

List your sequence:

Speaker order	Speaker's name	Speaker's role (e.g. Connector)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		



## Sketch Artist

Imagine, or visualise something from the story. Draw it and add detail in the box below. Add labels and captions if you wish. Explain your sketch and describe the details you've added and why.



## Summariser

Write the main ideas and important details in the order they happen. Use the boxes below to help you.




## Researcher

The more you know about something the better your understanding. Find out more about an idea from the text. You could research a place, person, thing, event, feeling or emotion.

Page:	Topic/Idea:
I've learned ...	

Page:	Topic/Idea:
I've learned ...	



## Literary Observer

It is your job to find literary devices used by the author to build meaning or make the text more interesting to read.

irony

metaphor

alliteration

analogy

onomatopoeia

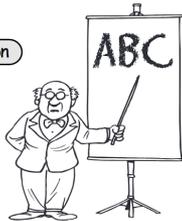
personification

sarcasm

hyperbole

simile

idiom



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## Director

Your job is to lead the discussion and introduce the section of text to be discussed.

For example,

*Welcome to our circle. We are discussing Chapters 3 and 4 of...*

You must:

- Keep the discussion going.
- Introduce each person to take their turn.
- Make sure that everyone participates.



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## Question Master

It is your job to think of 3 interesting discussion questions.

Try to think of questions that get your group to share their own thoughts and opinions about the book.

For example:

- What did you think about...?
- How would you feel if...?
- What would you do if...?



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## Clarifier

It is your job to clarify parts of the text that are hard to understand.

Find 2 or 3 sections of the text that you think others may need clarified.

Be ready to explain what you think the author means.



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## Summariser

It is your job to give a summary of what has occurred.

Write a few sentences which sum up the events in this section of the text.



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## Detective

It is your job to investigate new words.

Find 2 or 3 words that you don't know the meanings of.

Find out what they mean and be ready to share them with the group.



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Roles and responsibilities change over time.  
Role cards will eventually be phased out.



How are groups formed?



How many students  
should be in a group?



Are literature circles suitable  
for beginning readers?



When are meetings scheduled?

A photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, several young students in green school uniforms are seated at their desks, looking towards the front of the room. A teacher, a woman in a green uniform, is standing in the background, interacting with another student. The classroom is decorated with colorful streamers and a banner of rainbows hanging from the ceiling. The scene is framed by a white, torn-paper-like border.

How frequently do students meet?

When do students prepare?



**What happens when students meet in literature circle discussion groups?**

# Observations and Data

- inform teaching decisions

Monitor whether responses are at:

- Mastery level
- Satisfactory level
- Developing level



# Using Expert Groups

As the need arises, students may be asked to share responses in 'expert groups'.

Expert groups are comprised of students all sharing the same role card. For example, all the summarisers meet to share their summaries.

Expert groups provide opportunities for students with the same assigned role to share their response and listen to others (texts may be different, but roles are the same).

The teacher may work with one group or move about monitoring progress.

# Options for getting started

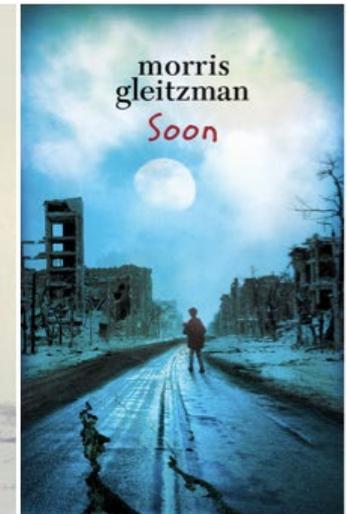
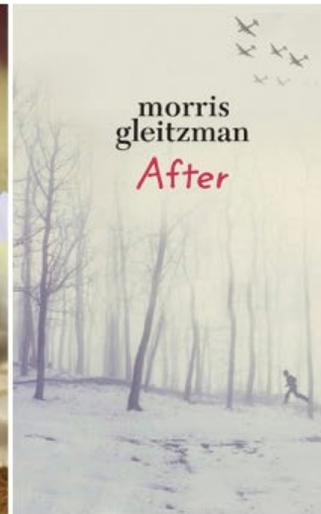
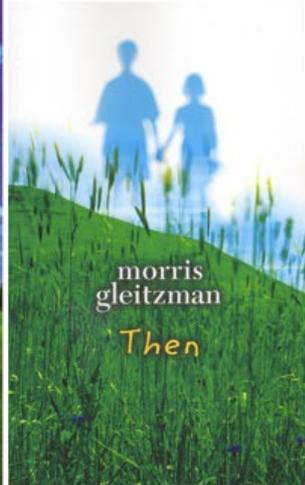
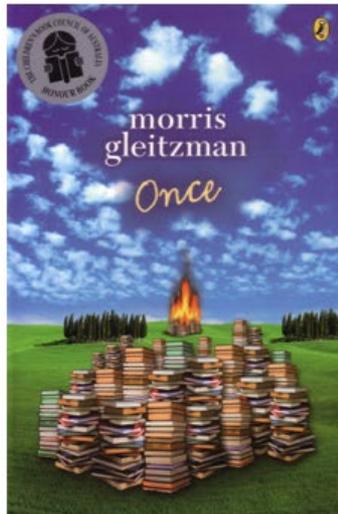
- **Whole class**
- **Small group**

*There are no hard and fast rules!*

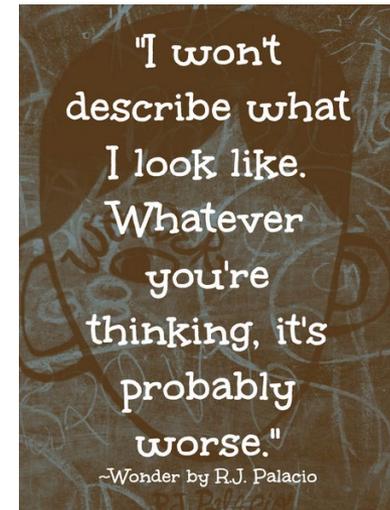
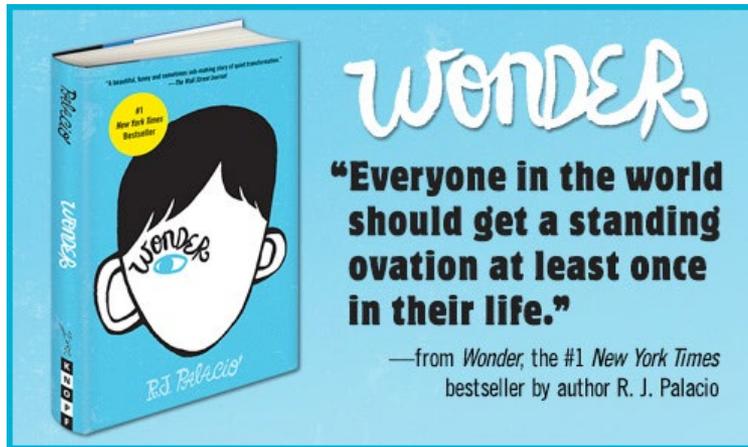
*What will work for you?*

*What will work for your students?*

<b>Before Reading</b>		<b>Statement</b>	<b>After Reading</b>	
Agree	Disagree	It is acceptable to break the law.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	It is always wrong to abandon a child.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	It is acceptable to hurt someone if they pose a danger.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	If you kill someone to save someone else, you should be punished.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	People should always be judged on their actions.	Agree	Disagree



<i>Before Reading</i>		<i>Statement</i>	<i>After Reading</i>	
Agree	Disagree	Words can be used as weapons.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	Everyone feels vulnerable.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	You don't need to be mean to hurt someone.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	When you are unfairly judged, it can change how you think and act.	Agree	Disagree
Agree	Disagree	Empathy is important.	Agree	Disagree





# Features:

- text choice is negotiated
- reading occurs away from the group
- literature circle meeting is a focused discussion
- mixed ability groups
- students read independently
- one leader
- role cards support thinking
- every student shares
- students build on responses of others
- students negotiate how much to read for next meeting
- On completion, students present something interesting about the text.



# The benefits of teaching with literature:

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- **Studies show increased compassion and empathy from readers of fiction**
- **Improved writing skills and authorial awareness**
- **Student-centred, negotiated learning**
- **Exposes all learners to high interest text models**
- **Improves conversational skills**
- **Improved attitudes to reading**
- **Exposes students to complex vocabulary and more sophisticated language and text structures**



The richness of literature circle discussions promotes high quality, substantive talk and ...

- **engages students in more substantive discussions which lifts intellectual dialogue**
- **supports robust learning by boosting memory**
- **promotes deeper reasoning and critical literacies**
- **scaffolds language development**
- **nourishes the development of social skills**
- **creates opportunities for the curriculum to meet the students**

(Adapted from Anderson, *et al*, 2011; Edwards-Groves, 2003)

# Titles you might like ...

- *The One and Only Ivan*, Katherine Applegate
- *The One and Only Bob*, Katherine Applegate
- *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, Kelly Barnhill
- *The Witch's Boy*, Kelly Barnhill
- *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, Judy Blume
- *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, John Boyne
- *The Boy at the Top of the Mountain*, John Boyne
- *Stay Where You Are and Then Leave*, John Boyne
- *The Midnight Fox*, Betsy Byars
- *The Pinballs*, Betsy Byars
- *The Night Swimmers*, Betsy Byars
- *Summer of the Swans*, Betsy Byars
- *Cracker Jackson*, Betsy Byars
- *Bingo Brown* series, Betsy Byars
- The *Blossom* family series, Betsy Byars
- *Herculeah Jones* mysteries, Betsy Byars
- *Dear Mr Henshaw*, Beverly Cleary
- *Walk Two Moons*, Sharon Creech
- *Love That Dog*, Sharon Creech

# Titles you might like ...

- *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, Kate DiCamillo
- *The Tiger Rising*, Kate DiCamillo
- *Raymie Nightingale* trilogy, Kate DiCamillo
- *Flora & Ulysses*, Kate DiCamillo
- *The Magician's Elephant*, Kate DiCamillo
- *Because of Winn-Dixie*, Kate DiCamillo
- *The Tale of Despereaux*, Kate DiCamillo
- *Parvana* books, Deborah Ellis
- *I, Coriander*, Sally Gardner
- The *Once* series, Morris Gleitzman
- *Boy Overboard*, Morris Gleitzman
- *Girl Underground*, Morris Gleitzman
- *Loyal Creatures*, Morris Gleitzman
- *The Last Bear*, Hannah Gold
- *Refugee*, Alan Gratz
- *Ban the Book*, Alan Gratz
- *The Midnight Zoo*, Sonya Hartnett
- *The Silver Donkey*, Sonya Hartnett
- *Thursday's Child*, Sonya Hartnett
- *The Children of the King*, Sonya Hartnett

# Titles you might like ...

- *When the Mountain Meets the Moon*, Grace Lim
- *Starry River of the Sky*, Grace Lim
- *The Giver* quartet, Lois Lowry
- *Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry
- *The Wildwood* trilogy, Colin Meloy
- *We Are Wolves*, Katrina Nannestad
- *A Monster Calls*, Patrick Ness
- *Nevertell*, Katharine Orton
- *Wonder*, R. J. Palacio
- *Bridge to Terabithia*, Katherine Paterson
- *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, Katherine Paterson
- *Come Sing, Jimmy Jo*, Katherine Paterson
- *Jacob Have I loved*, Katherine Paterson
- *Park's Quest*, Katherine Paterson

# Titles you might like ...

- The *Enola Holmes Mysteries*, Books 1-6, by Nancy Springer
- *The Cay*, Theodore Taylor
- *Morrigan Crow* series, Books 1-3, Jessica Townsend
- *The Boy in the Dress*, David Walliams
- *Tanglewreck*, Jeanette Winterson

Also see:

- <https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/literature-circle>
- <http://www.litcircles.org/Books/books.html>
- <https://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca/english/edservices/pedres>
- <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson-docs/30887Novels.pdf>
- <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newbery>

# To read more about Literature Circles:

Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*. Markham: Pembroke Publishers Ltd.

- Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Daniels, H. & Steineke, N. (2004). *Mini-Lessons for Literature Circles*. Portsmouth: Heinemann
- Fountas, I.C. & Pinnell, G. (2001). *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- Hill, Johnson and Schlick Noe, eds. 1995. *Literature Circles and Response*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.
- Schlick Noe and Johnson. 1999. *Getting Started with Literature Circles*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.