

Literature Circles and the Heart of Response (Grades 1-8)



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Why Literature?

Because literature has the power . . .

- to make us more human, to help us see the world from inside the skin of persons very different from ourselves; to live more lives than the one we have; to try on various roles.
- to develop compassion and insight into the behavior of ourselves and others (through characters so real that the reader lives and suffers and rejoices with them).
- to show us the past in a way that helps us understand the present.
- to move us in ways that facts, statistics, and history texts can never do (or rarely do).
- to develop the imagination; to help us entertain ideas we never could have had; to interpret and translate our experiences, to shape our world, and to enlarge our imaginations.
- to take us out of ourselves and return us to ourselves as a changed self; to enlarge our thinking while educating our hearts.

Huck, C. S. (1987). To know the place for the first time. *The Best of the Bulletin*. Children's Literature Assembly/National Council of Teachers of English, 1, 69-71.

Literature Circles Overview

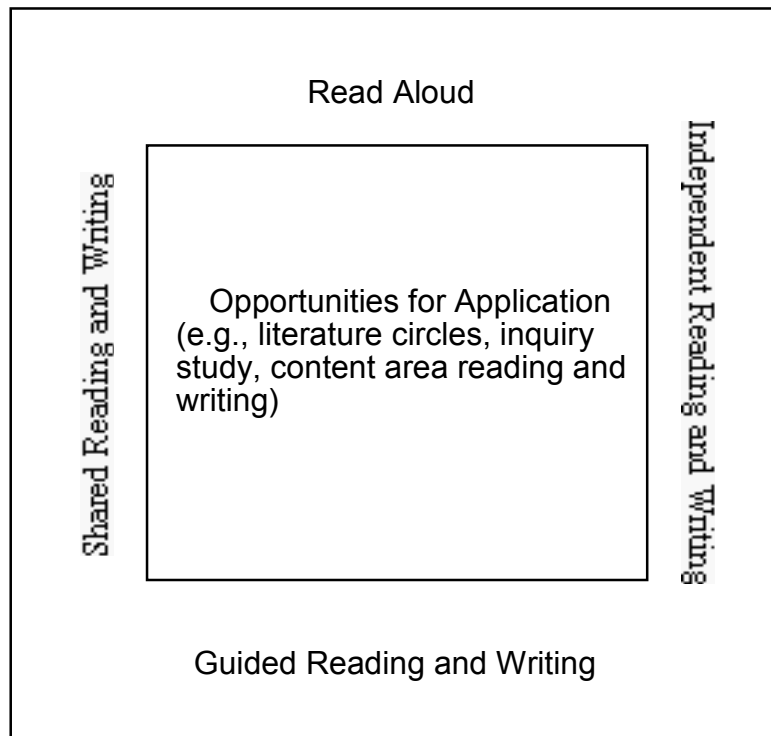
What Are Literature Circles?

In literature circles, small groups of students gather together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. The discussion is guided by students' response to what they have read. You may hear talk about events and characters in the book, the author's craft, or personal experiences related to the story. Literature circles provide a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books. Collaboration is at the heart of this approach. Students reshape and add onto their understanding as they construct meaning with other readers. Finally, literature circles guide students to deeper understanding of what they read through structured discussion and extended written and artistic response.

What Literature Circles Are... and Are Not ...

Literature Circles are . . .	Literature Circles are not . . .
Reader response centered	Teacher and text centered
A component of a comprehensive literacy program	The entire reading curriculum
Groups of readers formed by book choice	Teacher-assigned groups formed solely by ability
Structured for student independence, responsibility, and ownership	Unstructured, uncontrolled "talk time" without accountability
Guided primarily by student insights and questions	Guided primarily by teacher- or curriculum-based questions
Intended as a context in which to <i>apply</i> reading and writing skills	Intended as a place to do skills work
Flexible and fluid; never look the same twice	Tied to a prescriptive "recipe"

Literature Circles in a Comprehensive Literacy Program



Literature Circles: Primary

I use Literature Circles every other week, providing an emphasis on choice reading and predictable books with rhyme, rhythm and repetition during the alternate weeks.

Friday: I read all of the picture books aloud, and give a book talk on any chapter books. There are usually 3 - 4 selections. Papers are posted with the title of each book and numbers below to indicate the number of students who may be in that group. The books are set below the papers to provide a visual reminder. I draw names from a jar, and write each student's name under the selection they choose. If the last few students have no choice available, their names are marked with a star to indicate that they will be able to choose first for the next Literature Circles.

Monday: All students read their book. This occurs in a variety of ways:

- The whole group (from 5 - 7 students) meets in a circle and the book is read aloud (with pauses for discussions, predictions) by me, an assistant, or a strong student reader. Each student follows along in their copy of the book.
- Students listen to a tape of their book at the Listening Center, following along in their copy. I record all books that we use in Literature Circles.
- Students partner read.
- Students read on their own.
- Students read with a 6th grade tutor.

Students then respond to the book in their Literature Log through writing and drawings.

Tuesday: Discussion. I meet with two groups to talk about the story. Each child brings their copy of the book and their Literature Log. Each group also reads their book again (or continues reading in longer books), and responds in their Literature Log.

Wednesday: Read. Projects. Students meet in their groups to talk about project choices, and then begin projects. These may be group, partner, or individual projects. I also meet for discussion with any groups I was unable to meet with on Tuesday.

Thursday: Complete projects. Record project in Literature Log.

Friday: Share projects. Share and read favorite parts of the book with groups.

Literature Circles: Structure

Choosing Books

A model I follow is, "I choose, we choose, you choose." This model will cover the whole year starting in September/October when I choose a book the whole class will read so we can focus on learning how to discuss and respond to literature. Later in the year, I want students to start picking their own books, so we choose together. I also want student groups to start reading different books based on a theme. Finally, when they're ready, they choose by themselves from the several options I provide.

Introducing Books

At the start of each round of literature circles I introduce books based on our theme. Students pick their top three choices and groups naturally form. However, it may be necessary that I place students in groups based on their second or third choice or based on group dynamics.

Student Schedule

I assign an ending date for students to be finished with their books. Each group negotiates its own reading schedule.

Teacher Schedule

I teach in a district that recently adopted a new reading curriculum that includes an integrated reading anthology, language arts workbook, and spelling workbook. Since there is a strong emphasis on this curriculum, I alternate between working in the anthology (to teach reading strategies) and doing literature circles (to apply reading strategies and develop response). We will have literature circles on Tuesdays and Thursdays and work in the anthology on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Literature Circle Schedule

Students use their journal entries as a jumping-off point for discussions. Groups assign themselves two or three journal prompts for each round. After students share their journal entries, they discuss what their next assignment will be. Students self manage their groups, picking an order of sharing and assigning a noise monitor and task master to keep the group on track.

Frequently Asked Questions

When and how do I start? What is the first thing I do?

I'll start literature circles in October. I give the class a month to adjust to each other, and we need time to work on general collaborative group skills. During this time I will be modeling what I feel is the hardest skill for students to learn -- how to discuss reading in a structured but meaningful way. When I feel they are ready, I will have groups of four discuss a short story from our reading anthology.

What do kids need to know before we start?

Students need to know that we will be working through literature circles throughout the year and that they will be working with different classmates in different groups all year.

What do I not need to worry about in the beginning?

I don't need to worry about their immediate success and the overall structure of the groups. It takes time for students to learn their collaboration and discussion skills.

What makes a discussion work?

Good modeling throughout the year in all subjects. Brainstorm rules for a good discussion with the whole group and post in the room. Review good discussion rules before each discussion. Use the fish bowl technique to further model what a good discussion looks and sounds like.

What makes a journal entry work?

I make sure students have ownership of their journals -- small, easy to carry, decorated. They create and use one journal per book or story. I also use the same prompts for both discussion and journals.

How long will each cycle last?

Each literature cycle will last about 4 - 6 weeks. Three or four weeks will be spent reading, discussing, and writing in journals. A week or two will be spent on their reflection projects and sharing.

What is everybody else doing while a group or groups meet?

In my class, other students are working on journal prompts, reading their books, or working on a language arts skill set either related to or unrelated to their literature circle book.

Do students read at home?

Sometimes. Students negotiate and assign their own reading schedule based on a timeline I have set for them. Depending on this timeline and what they have assigned, reading at home may be necessary. However, I also provide time in class for reading.

How do I keep track of what the different groups are doing?

At the beginning of each literature circle session, I ask each group what they are going to be doing during this time. I also sit outside of their discussions from time to time to observe. I ask each group to assign a "reporter" person whose job it is to report to the class or to me what is going on in the group, what is working well and what needs more work. I also have students complete self and group assessments after literature circles; students rate themselves and their group and set one goal for next time.

What if I haven't read all the books?

Fake it. This gives you a perfect opportunity to ask authentic questions of the group.

Literature Circle Structure: 3rd/4th Grade

Beginning Literature Studies

In the first six to eight weeks of the school year, I focus on creating literary experiences that promote collaboration, independence, and responsibility, while fostering a love for reading and writing. During this time period, I also assess students on an ongoing basis using diverse forms of assessment.

Literary Experiences and Routines

- Read aloud
- Reading strategy lessons
- Book talks
- Writing strategy lessons
- Journal writing
- Poetry pockets
- Diverse forms of response
- Reading time (20-30 minutes reading, 10 minutes sharing)

Launching Literature Circles

Beginning Literature Circles

I introduce students to literature circles through the use of picture books before launching into chapter books. After the book has been read, children practice using the discussion strategies outlined below. I introduce these strategies one at a time so that all children may gain experience using each strategy. I usually model two discussion strategies with each picture book. Following the students' discussions in small literature circles of four to six children, a literature extension is introduced and modeled. With each picture book, the children gain experience responding to literature through drama, music, writing, or the visual arts before beginning literature circles with chapter books.

Discussion strategies

- discuss personal reactions to books
- mark passages with "Post-it" notes
- create questions to spark lively discussions
- discuss literary elements
- find difficult or interesting words

Choosing a Theme

Begin a literature circle by selecting a theme based on the students' interests and your curriculum. Using a theme for literature circles is a vehicle for helping learners make connections between all the books that are being used. I recommend that a read aloud be chosen that matches the theme for the literature circle. Often, the read aloud is used in a focus lesson for modeling reading strategies and oral and written responses to literature.

Book Talks

Choosing high quality literature that children will have an emotional and personal response to is critical in actively engaging the readers. I choose somewhere between 7 to 8 books for each literature circle. A 3 to 5 minute book talk is given on each book that is being shared. During the book talks, students have a piece of paper with all the book titles that are being shared; this way they may take notes about the books that are appealing to them. Following the book talks, one copy of each of the books is passed

around the classroom so the children have the option of spending a few minutes with specific books they're interested in reading. When the book pass is complete, each student writes "yes" by all the books he/she would like to read and "maybe" by the books he/she would possibly like to read. The literature circles are formed from the readers' choices that they've indicated on their papers. I may not use all the books that were shared during the book talks. I usually have 5 to 6 literature circles and each literature circle has 4 to 6 members.

Daily Schedule

Following the daily focus lesson, students meet with their literature circle and decide how many pages they are going to read for the day and record this on their literature circle bookmark. All students read for about 25 minutes. Following the reading time, the children meet with their literature circle and work on a reading response or discuss the book with their group.

Weekly Schedule

Discussion: Students meet with their literature circle 1 to 3 times each week to discuss the book. All literature circles are required to meet at least once a week; readers decide how many and which days they will meet. When everyone in the literature circle has agreed on a day to meet, the facilitator records this on a weekly class calendar which is kept on a clipboard. Where the readers are in the book and their interest level usually determines how many times a week and on which days they will decide to meet. This valuable flexibility allows the readers to meet on days when they have been emotionally moved or have real questions about the book.

The student-led literature circle meeting lasts about 25 minutes and the members conclude the meeting by self reflecting on their involvement and what insights they gained from other members of their literature circle. In the beginning of the year, I concentrate on developing group dynamics. Once the literature circles are running smoothly, I begin to focus on eliciting depth in the students' oral responses.

Response: The children respond to their literature circle book twice a week. One response is due on Wednesday; the other on Friday. The focus lessons on Monday and Wednesday usually center on the students' weekly responses. In the beginning of the year I concentrate on introducing diverse forms of response and keep an ongoing list of different ways to respond to literature. This list serves as a menu which children may choose from for their weekly responses. Sometimes I will direct one of the readers' responses and they will choose the other. As the year progresses or when the need arises, I discuss depth and quality of responses. When the students complete their book they begin planning and creating an extension project that will cause them to revisit, reread, and rethink the book.

Possible Focus Lessons for Literature Circles

- Weekly schedule
- Daily schedule and procedures
- Discussion strategies
- Reading strategies
- Author's craft
- Literary elements

Literature Circles Structure: Intermediate

1. Have multiple copies of several books. These can be on a single theme, topic, or genre. The books should cover several reading “levels” and include areas of students’ interest. Try to use books that you enjoy reading. You may also get suggested titles from students.
2. Introduce each book by giving short book talks. Reading a passage from each book can also “hook” the students. Inform students if a book has a tape available and which books might be a “stretch.” Books may be placed on display for students to look through during the day.
3. Students sign up for (or write on a slip of paper) their first, second, and third choice. Using this information, form groups, taking into consideration student choice and group dynamics. Groups of 4 - 5 work best.
4. As a group, students decide how much to read before getting together for discussion. Some groups read and discuss as they go along, others will discuss a larger “chunk” of text at one time. Students can read on their own, with a buddy, as a group, or with a tape. Books can be taken home if more support is needed. It helps to set an approximate date when the book should be completed. Teachers may join a group as an active member to model questioning, responses, and listening skills, or sit quietly near the group to listen and take anecdotal notes.
5. Students respond to their reading in journals. This helps with comprehension and gives them a starting place for discussions. The students have a list of “Suggested Journal Responses” and a list of “Possible Response Questions.” There are times you may want to focus on a specific aspect of literature and direct a question or response. Journals are collected weekly, with feedback given in the form of written comments and questions.
6. When the book is finished, the group decides (usually) how to extend and present the book to the rest of the class. As a group, they write what their extension activity will be, and list which part(s) of the book will be shared. Students have a list of “Ways to Share Books.” Presentations are video taped and students watch their own and take time to self-evaluate their work. They may also meet with the teacher for a conference to discuss their group’s work.

Literature Circles Structure: Middle School

How do you get started?

As we lay the foundation for literature circles, I've found that it works best to have the whole class read the same novel. This sets the stage, providing guided practice with all components of literature circles that students will later apply more independently in their groups formed around book choices. Beginning the year with all students reading the same book gives them a chance to develop the skills, strategies, and behaviors that create the foundation for successful literature circles throughout the year. For this first unit, I choose an engaging book that is accessible to all of my students. This is often a short novel that will lead into a longer book. For example, the sixth graders read *The Song of the Trees* (1975), then follow up with *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), both by Mildred Taylor. This first unit is a training session, so it's important to go slowly, provide clear modeling, and review my expectations often.

How do you help students understand the purpose of discussion?

This first round is really a training session so we go slowly and all procedures are modeled and reviewed. Students need some guidance about what I expect from their literature circle conversations.

- *Brainstorming to launch discussions:* After students have read several chapters of the whole-class novel, we prepare for discussion with a short brainstorming session. I ask the class, "What are some things in these first chapters that you could talk about fruitfully in your groups?" I record their ideas on the board for students to refer to during the discussion.
- *Fishbowl:* Students also need to see and hear examples of discussion in order to begin to understand what to do. I ask the fifth grade teachers for names of students they think are especially good at discussing literature. I then ask five of those students in each reading class to come the following day prepared to discuss *The Song of the Trees*. In "fish bowl" style these five students sit in the front of the classroom and carry on a discussion about the book while everyone else listens and observes. When the discussion is over, students identify what happened that contributed to a good discussion. These items are recorded on a poster, displayed in the classroom and become our model of strategies for a good discussion.

How are the literature circle groups formed?

I find that groups of four or five students work the best. Larger groups tend to break off into side conversations, and groups with only three students don't seem to have enough energy or diversity of ideas. I form these first groups myself, making them as heterogeneous as possible by balancing personalities, gender, and ability levels.

Later, when students choose from an array of books, I form the groups according to students' choices. I "booktalk" each of the novels, describe some enticing aspects of the book, and give students an idea of the number of pages and level of difficulty. After they've heard about each book, students take time to examine copies of all of the choices. I suggest that they read a page or two to get a sense of the characters and the overall flavor of the book. Students vote for a first, second, and third choice on a ballot. In my class, this ballot is a blank piece of recycled paper; other teachers use preprinted forms. I can form groups in just a few minutes, honoring each student's first choice whenever possible. However, I also make some strategic decisions about which students work well together (or not!) and ensure that there are both outgoing and more reticent students balanced among the groups.

How often do students discuss?

To fuel a good discussion, students need to be far enough into a book to care about the characters but not so far that they can't remember details. Each group usually meets for a discussion once a week, resulting in three discussions during the course of reading the book: one near the beginning, one in the middle, and a final discussion after students have completed the whole novel.

What does a typical week look like?

Monday	5-15 min. 10-30 min.	Set reading schedule for the week. Discuss journal topics. Students begin to read and write in journals.
Tuesday	10-20 min. 10-30 min.	Focus lessons (chapters 4, 5, and 6) Two or three groups discuss. Other students read or write in journals.
Wednesday	10-20 min. 10-30 min.	Focus lessons (chapters 4, 5, and 6) Two or three groups discuss. Other students read or write in journals.
Thursday	45 min.	Students read or write in journals.
Friday	45 min.	Independent reading day (self-selected books)

What about teaching reading skills?

Mini-lessons that focus on reading skills or strategies or literature circle procedures are interspersed throughout each unit where they are most relevant. They usually take about 10 - 15 minutes at the beginning or end of the 45-minute reading period.

What do you do when students are finished reading the books?

Completing a literature circle unit usually takes 3 to 4 weeks for reading, discussions, and written response. I find that many students naturally gravitate toward various art forms to respond to a book. Therefore, we generally culminate the unit with an extension project. The purpose of this project is to extend their understanding of the book related to the theme of the unit and to celebrate literature. For each unit I usually give students three or four choices of projects. They begin their project by filling out a planning sheet that explains what they are going to do, how they are going to do it, and how it reflects their understanding of the book they read. I usually allow 1 week for students to complete their extension projects during class time.

What do you do the rest of the year?

Depending on the class and the yearly schedule, we will do four or five literature circle units during the school year. In-between each unit we take a break for two to four weeks and focus on a non-fiction unit, poetry, or some other area of interest and need. Non-fiction and poetry are great topics for literature circle discussions, too, but I find that changing the format for a few weeks between each literature circle cycle keeps students fresh and interested.

**Focus Lessons:
Literature Circle Procedures**

- Choosing a book that interests you and that you can read
- Starting discussion quickly
- Polite disagreement
- Keeping the conversation going
- Listening attentively
- Being an effective group member
- Asking for clarification
- Inviting reluctant group members to say something
- Mediating conflicts
- Spicing up a lagging discussion
- Tying extension projects back to the book

**Focus Lessons:
Story Structure**

- Beginning, middle, end
- Climax
- Endings
- Problems/Attempts to solve problems

**Focus Lessons:
Reading Strategies**

- Predicting
- Reading on to see if predictions make sense
- Self-correcting when reading doesn't make sense
- Thinking about what would make sense
- Using what you already know (background knowledge)
- Finding evidence to support a point
- Comparing/contrasting
- Identifying important information
- Using flexible strategies to identify unknown words:
 - Using letters and sounds to predict
 - Breaking a word into parts
 - Relating to a word you know (how-now)
 - Skipping the word and going on
 - Re-reading
 - Using a dictionary or other source
- Previewing
- Building vocabulary through reading
- Creating pictures in your head
- Asking yourself (or the text) questions
- Reading what you don't know slowly and what you do know quickly
- Skimming
- Analyzing, interpreting, inferring
- Reading faster to build fluency and momentum

**Focus Lessons:
Memorable Language**

- Golden Lines – “just right” words and phrases
- Descriptive details
- Simile/Metaphor/Analogy

**Focus Lessons:
Literary Elements**

- Point of view and perspective
- Tone and mood
- Persuasive devices

**Focus Lessons:
Genre Characteristics**

- Realistic and Historical Fiction
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Poetry
- Informational Books
- Biography/Autobiography
- Traditional literature (myth, legend, folktale)

**Focus Lessons:
Writing and Response Strategies**

- Choosing a topic or focus for your journal entry
- Supporting ideas with information from the book, your own life, or other books
- Elaborating by using details
- Writing with a purpose and for an audience
- Trying out dialogue
- Using figurative, descriptive language
- Using sketches and illustrations to spark or extend ideas
- Developing criteria for effective writing
- Writing a response from a character's point of view
- Incorporating ideas from Post-it Notes into a written response
- Incorporating ideas raised during discussion into written response

Making Discussions Work

Discussion is at the heart of literature circles. Effective discussions increase students' understanding of what they read, as well as make the reading experience more enjoyable. You can help students develop effective discussion skills by providing some tools and teaching discussion strategies.

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** — Open-ended discussions starters: *"I wondered..." "I noticed..." "I felt... because..."*
- ✂ **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.
- ✂ **Discussion Logs** — 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.

Developing Discussion Skills Teach strategies for effective listening and contributing.

- ✂ **Brainstorm:** *"What works and what doesn't work in a discussion?"*
- ✂ **Develop guidelines for discussion:**
 - **Immersion:** Jump in with both feet. Students meet and talk without much guidance. After about 5 minutes, pull them together to reflect on what went well and what was frustrating. Help students design guidelines for effective discussions.
 - **Fish Bowl:** Invite a group of students to model a discussion. Four or five sit in a half circle and talk about a book (read aloud, picture book) while the class observes. Stop them periodically, pointing out things they do naturally that make the discussion flow. Generate guidelines based on the fish bowl experience.
- ✂ **Practice and debrief**

Focus Lessons for Discussion Anything you notice that your students need to work on:

- ❖ Respectful disagreement
- ❖ Keeping a conversation going
- ❖ Difference between discussion and taking turns
- ❖ What active listening really means
- ❖ How to get a conversation back on track

Preparing for Literature Circle Meetings

Before you meet with your literature circle, choose a part of your book that:

- makes you wonder
- makes you laugh
- makes you sad or upset
- you don't understand
- was your favorite part
- has interesting words
- reminds you of another book
- reminds you of something that has happened in your life

Mark the parts you want to discuss or make a note in your journal about them. Be ready to talk about your choices.

Literature Circle Bookmark

Please record the number of pages your literature circle group decides to read each day.

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

You may use the back of your bookmark to write **questions** you want to ask or **vocabulary words** you may want to discuss.

Literature Circle Bookmark

Please record the number of pages your literature circle group decides to read each day.

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Literature Circle Bookmark

Please record the number of pages your literature circle group decides to read each day.

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

You may use the back of your bookmark to write **questions** you want to ask or **vocabulary words** you may want to discuss.

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, character)?
15. Can the student reflect on literature circle participation and set goals?

Literature Circle Evaluation

Name: _____ Date: _____

Literature Circle Group: _____

Book: _____

What things did your group do very well today?

- started in 1 minute
- read and follow along
- cooperated
- discussed well

What things are going really well in your discussions?

- listening to others
- everyone is sharing
- predicting what will happen next
- asking questions
- supporting ideas
- relating to other books or characters
- relating to own lives

Literature Circle Debriefing

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

How much did you participate in the discussion about this book?

- about the right amount too much not at all too little

What was an important contribution you made to the discussion?

What was an important idea or explanation expressed by someone else in the group during the discussions? (Identify the person and tell what he/she said.)

What group strategies did your group use well? (participating, staying on topic, contributing appropriate information, encouraging others to contribute, listening carefully, making good eye contact, being considerate of others' opinions, asking for clarification, summarizing, using appropriate voice levels)

What strategies did you struggle with?

Suggestions/comments/goals for next literature circle discussion?

Literature Discussion Self-Evaluation

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

What did I do well during our literature discussion? (asked good questions, listened actively, responded to others, supported my ideas using the book, took a risk, compared the book to my life or other books)

What could I do better next time?

Discussion Rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____

Check the boxes that apply to this discussion, then mark an "X" in the top bar to indicate approximate placement on a continuum. Use the back for comments: what you noticed as strengths and weaknesses, and what you found interesting and unique.

NOVICE	APPRENTICE	PRACTITIONER	EXPERT
<input type="checkbox"/> not prepared for discussion (forgets journal or book)	<input type="checkbox"/> brings book and journal	<input type="checkbox"/> brings book with passages marked and several journal entries	<input type="checkbox"/> brings book with passages clearly marked and thoughtful journal entries
<input type="checkbox"/> rarely contributes to discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> contributes to discussions occasionally or when prompted	<input type="checkbox"/> contributes appropriately to discussions	<input type="checkbox"/> contributes significantly to discussion
<input type="checkbox"/> conversation off-task or does not contribute	<input type="checkbox"/> difficulty keeping discussion going	<input type="checkbox"/> generally keeps the discussion going	<input type="checkbox"/> effectively keeps the discussion going
<input type="checkbox"/> rarely listens or responds to group members	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes listens and responds appropriately, occasionally asks questions or shares ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> listens and responds adequately (occasionally reads journal entries or unclear passages, discusses unknown words, asks questions, listens actively, builds on others' comments, makes connections to other books and experiences, discusses author's style and literary elements)	<input type="checkbox"/> listens and responds thoughtfully (reads journal entries or unclear passages, discusses unknown words, asks questions, listens actively, builds on others' comments, makes connections to other books and experiences, discusses author's style and literary elements)

Comments:

Response Journal Rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

- 4** In addition to a precise plot summary, the writer makes inferences, predictions, comparisons, or evaluations and supports ideas with evidence from the story. The writer makes connections with his/her life, other books or other events. The writer demonstrates fluency.
- 3** The plot is accurately summarized with specific details. The writer shares one or more personal reflections and gives examples to support his/her interpretations.
- 2** The plot is summarized in a general way but lacks detail or support. The writer may share a general personal response.
- 1** The writer retells minimal details from the story.

Journal Response Rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____

Check the boxes that apply to this journal response, then mark an "X" in the top bar to indicate approximate placement on a continuum. Use the back for comments: what you noticed as strengths and weaknesses, and what you found interesting and unique.

NOVICE	APPRENTICE	PRACTITIONER	EXPERT
<input type="checkbox"/> little writing	<input type="checkbox"/> some writing (includes reactions, summaries, and connections to other books or experiences, evaluates and analyzes)	<input type="checkbox"/> adequate writing (includes occasional reactions, summaries, and connections to other books or experiences, evaluates and analyzes author's craft or elements of literature)	<input type="checkbox"/> thorough writing (includes thoughtful reactions, summaries, and connections to other books or experiences, evaluates and analyzes author's craft or elements of literature)
<input type="checkbox"/> includes no examples to support opinions	<input type="checkbox"/> includes occasional, incomplete or unclear examples to support opinions	<input type="checkbox"/> includes sufficient examples to support opinions	<input type="checkbox"/> includes clear, complete examples to support opinions
<input type="checkbox"/> no variation in forms of written response	<input type="checkbox"/> occasionally varies forms of written response	<input type="checkbox"/> clearly varies forms of written response	<input type="checkbox"/> skillfully and creatively varies forms of written response
<input type="checkbox"/> no attention to details (lacking in organization and neatness with many spelling and punctuation errors)	<input type="checkbox"/> slight attention to details (lacking in organization and neatness with some spelling and punctuation errors)	<input type="checkbox"/> adequate attention to details (somewhat organized and neat, with mostly correct spelling and punctuation)	<input type="checkbox"/> thorough attention to details (well organized and neat, with correct spelling and punctuation)

Comments:

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 completed, correct definition, neat appearance)

Total Score Based on Journal Response Rubric _____

Two Stars and a Wish

Name: _____ Project: _____

Reviewer: _____ Date: _____





Wish: _____

Two Stars and a Wish

Name: _____ Project: _____

Reviewer: _____ Date: _____





Wish: _____

Presentation Rubric

<p>4</p> <p>WOW! TERRIFIC!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spoke loudly all of the time • I faced the audience all of the time • I looked at the audience all of the time • I was serious all of the time • I followed along all of the time • I knew when it was my turn all of the time • I did my part well
<p>3</p> <p>You've Got It!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spoke loudly most of the time • I faced the audience most of the time • I looked at the audience most of the time • I was serious most of the time • I followed along most of the time • I knew when it was my turn most of the time • I did my part well most of the time
<p>2</p> <p>Not Yet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spoke loudly some of the time • I faced the audience some of the time • I looked at the audience some of the time • I was serious some of the time • I followed along some of the time • I knew when it was my turn some of the time • I did some of my part
<p>1</p> <p>Try Again!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did not speak loudly • I rarely faced the audience • I rarely looked at the audience • I was not serious • I did not follow along • I did not know when it was my turn • I did not participate

Literature Circle Issues

GOALS:

What are your goals for literature circles?

How does this fit with your reading curriculum and other areas of the curriculum?

STRUCTURE:

When will you start literature circles?

How long will each set last?

How many literature circle sets will you have this year?

What will be the schedule (days and times)?

How will you inform parents about literature circles?

Will you involve parents in helping? When will you train them?

BOOK CHOICE:

What books do you plan to use?

Will you use a whole class set or give students choices?

How many groups will you have? What will be the size of each group?

How will you connect the books (by theme, author, topic, or genre)?

DISCUSSIONS:

Will groups be student-led or will you meet with each group?

Will you have student or parent facilitators for each group?

How often will students meet for discussions each week?

Will you develop discussion guidelines? Will students come up with questions to discuss?

How will you and the students assess participation and their oral discussions?

How can you continue to foster quality discussions?

WRITTEN RESPONSE:

Will your students write in response journals? How often?

Will you use journal prompts?

Will you respond to their journals in writing? How often?

How will you assess written journal responses?

How can you continue to foster quality written responses?

ARTISTIC RESPONSE:

What options do students have for extension projects? How will you introduce options?

How will students plan their projects (e.g. a planning sheet)?

How much time will students have to complete their projects?

When will they share their projects with the rest of the class?

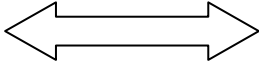
How will you assess artistic responses?

How can you continue to foster quality artistic responses?

EVALUATION:

How will you elicit feedback at the end of each literature circle set?

Change Over Time

	Teacher-directed		Student-centered
Book Choice	Whole class reads same book	Two or three choices	Four or five choices
Responses	Given by the teacher	Choice of a few responses	Students choose from a menu of ideas
Schedule	Teacher sets for the whole class	Groups meet on a rotating basis	Groups set up their own schedule
Requirements	Each chapter has a response	A given number of responses per week; written only	A given number of responses per week using a variety of response forms
Evaluation	Everything is graded; very little emphasis placed on discussions	Students choose a few responses to be graded; begin to evaluate discussions	Students still choose a few responses to be graded but greater emphasis is put on discussions.

Professional Resources: Literature Circles

- Allington, Richard L. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. New York, NY: Addison-Wesley.
- Angelillo, Janet. (2003). *Writing about reading: From book talk to literary essays, grades 3-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Atwell, Nancie. (2007). *The reading zone: How to help kids become skilled, passionate, habitual, critical readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. (with DVD)
- Blasingame, James. (2007). *Books that don't bore 'em: Young adult books that speak to this generation*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Blecher, Sharon & Jaffee, Kathy. (1998). *Weaving in the arts: Widening the learning circle*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Buzzeo, Toni & Kurtz, Jane. (1999). *Terrific connections with authors, illustrators, and storytellers: Real space and virtual links*. Westport, CN: Libraries Unlimited. (www.lu.com; 1-800-225-5800)
- Church, Susan & Swain, Margaret. (2009). *From literature circles to blogs: Activities for engaging professional learning communities*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Cole, Ardith Davis. (2003). *Knee to knee, eye to eye: Circling in on comprehension*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Daniels, Harvey. (2001). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in reading groups and book clubs*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- Daniels, Harvey and Steineke, Nancy. (2004). *Mini-lessons for literature circles*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Day, Jeni Pollack, Spiegel, Dixie Lee, McLellan, Janet, & Brown, Valerie B. (2002). *Moving forward with literature circles: How to plan, manage, and evaluate literature circles that deepen understanding and foster a love of reading*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Dodson, Shirley. (1996). *The mother-daughter book club*. NY: HarperCollins.
- Evans, Karen. (2001). *Literature discussion groups in the intermediate grades: Dilemmas and possibilities*. Newark, DL: International Reading Association.
- Fountas, Irene & Pinnell, Gay Su. (2006). *Teaching for comprehension and fluency: Thinking, talking, and writing about reading, K-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Fountas, Irene and Pinnell, Gay Su. (2006). *The Fountas and Pinnell leveled book list, K-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Also see website: www.FountasandPinnellLeveledBooks.com
- Fountas, Irene and Pinnell, Gay Su. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fox, Mem. (1992). *Dear Mem Fox, I've read all your books, even the pathetic ones.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace.
- Harvey, Stephanie & Daniels, Harvey. (2009). *Comprehension & collaboration: Inquiry circles in action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hill, Bonnie Campbell, Johnson, Nancy J., & Schlick Noe, Katherine L. (Eds.). (1995). *Literature circles and response*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Hill, Bonnie Campbell, Schlick Noe, Katherine L., & Johnson, Nancy J. (2001). *Literature circles resource guide*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Hill, Bonnie Campbell, Schlick Noe, Katherine L., & King, Janine A. (2003). *Literature circles in middle school: One teacher's journey*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Holland, Kathleen, Hungerford, Rachael, & Ernst, Shirley. (1993). *Journeying: Children responding to literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Jenkins, Carol Brennan. (1999). *The allure of the author: Author studies in the elementary classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Jenkins, Carol Brennan & White, Deborah. (2007). *Nonfiction author studies in the elementary classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Johnson, Nancy J. & Giorgis, Cyndi. (2007). *The wonder of It all: When literature and literacy intersect*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Johnson, N.J. (1997). Literary weavings: Extending response through the arts. In *Voices from the middle*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 36-39.
- Lesene, Teri. (2006). *Naked reading: Uncovering what teens need to become lifelong readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Lesene, Teri. (2003). *Making the match: The right book for the right reader at the right time, Grades 4-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse. (E-Book)
- "Literature circles: Growing our reading lives," *Primary voices*, Volume 9 (1), August, 2000 issue, Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Marriott, Donna. (2002). *Comprehension right from the start: How to organize and manage book clubs for young readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Meet the Author series, published by Richard C. Owen Publishers.

Nichols, Maria. (2006). *Comprehension through conversation: The power of purposeful talk in the reading workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

O'Donnell-Allen, Cindy. (2006). *The book club companion: Fostering strategic readers in the secondary classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Peterson, Ralph & Eeds, Maryann. (2007). (Second Edition). *Grand conversations: Literature groups in action*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Roser, Nancy & Martinez, Miriam. (1995). *Book talk and beyond: Children and teachers respond to literature*. Newark, DL: International Reading Association.

Samway, Katharine Davies & Whang, Gail. (1995). *Literature study circles in a multicultural classroom*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Schlick Noe, Katherine L. & Johnson, Nancy J. (1999). *Getting started with literature circles*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Serafini, Frank. (2001). *The reading workshop: Creating space for readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Serafini, Frank & Serafini-Youngs, Suzette. (2006). *Around the reading workshop in 180 Days: A month-by-month guide to effective instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Short, Kathy & Pierce, Kathryn Mitchell. (Eds.) (1990). *Talking about books: Creating literate communities*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Trelease, Jim. (2006) (Sixth Edition). *The read-aloud handbook*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Wilhelm, Jeffery. (2007). *Engaging readers and writers with inquiry: Promoting deep understandings in language arts and the content areas with guiding questions*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Wilhelm, Jeffery. (2001). *Reading is seeing: Learning to visualize scenes, characters, ideas, and text worlds to improve comprehension and reflective reading*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Heinemann: 1-800-793-2154/1-603-431-7894 (www.heinemann.com)

Stenhouse: 1-800-988-9812/1-207-253-1600 (www.stenhouse.com)

Scholastic: 1-800-325-6149/1-573-632-1687 (www.scholastic.com)

Web Sites

Literature Circles Resource Center

www.litcircles.org

Katherine L. Schlick Noe, Seattle University

Themed Literature Units

<http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/TLU/TLU.html>

Developing literature circles around meaningful themes;
site by Katherine L. Schlick Noe, Seattle University

Literature Learning Ladders

<http://eduscapes.com/ladders/>

In-depth site developed by Dr. Annette Lamb and Dr. Larry Johnson of Eduscapes, a professional development organization for teachers.

Laura Candler's Literary Lessons

<http://home.att.net/%7Eteaching/litlessons.htm>

4th/5th grade teacher Laura Candler has developed this extensive and useful site describing how she uses literature circles in her intermediate classroom. She includes many forms and guidelines that you can download, as well as book suggestions for intermediate students.

Discussion Groups/Literature Circles

http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/english/elg_lit_circles.htm

Guidelines from the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools.

LiteratureCircles.com

<http://www.literaturecircles.com/>

Based on Harvey Daniels' *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. (2002). Stenhouse.

Jon Scieszka: www.guysread.com

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Best New Books 2008-2009

Bonnie Campbell Hill

BEST NEW PICTURE BOOKS

Zen Ties by Jon Muth (2008)
Tupelo Rides the Rails by Melissa Sweet (2008)
A Visitor for Bear by Bonny Becker, ill y Kady MacDonald Denton (2008)
Little Hoot by Amy Krouse Rosenthal, ill. Jen Corace (2008)
The Retired Kid by Jon Agee (2008)
A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever by Marla Frazee (2008)
Twenty Heartbeats by Dennis Hasleley, ill. By Ed Young (2008)
Yoko Writes Her Name by Rosemary Wells (2008)
Born to Read by Judy Sierra, ill by Marc Brown (2008)
The Cobbler's Holiday or Why Ants Don't Wear Shoes by Musharraf Ali Farooqi, ill by Eugene Yelchin (2008)
That Book Woman by Heather Henson, ill by David Small (2008)

BEST FANTASY/SCIENCE FICTION

Princess Ben by Catherine Gilbert Murdock (2008)
Test by William Sleator (2008)
Sun and Moon, Ice and Snow by Jessica Day George (2008)
The Sky Inside by Clare Dunkle (2008)
The Diamond of Darkhold by Jeanne DuPrau (2008)
Breaking Dawn (2008) by Stephenie Meyer
Brisinger by Christopher Paolini (2008)
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins (2008)
The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman (2008) Newbery Winner
The Humming of Numbers by Joni Sensel (2008)
Savvy by Ingrid Law (2008)
Bloodhound by Tamora Pierce (2009)

BEST NONFICTION

Looking for Miza: The True Story of the Mountain Gorilla Family Who Rescued One of Their Own by Juliana Hatkoff, Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff and Paula Kahumbu (2008)
Frogs (2008) by Nic Bishop
Artist to Artist: 23 Major Illustrators Talk to Children about Their Art. (2008)
Greater Estimations by Bruce Goldstone (2008)
The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary by Candace Fleming (2008)
The Houdini Box by Brian Selznick (2008)
Knucklehead by Jon Scieszka (2008)
Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson & Susan Roth (2009)

BEST NEW FICTION (NOVELS)

Lost and Found (2008) and *Extra Credit* (2009) by Andrew Clements, ill by Mark Elliot
Six Innings by James Preller (2008)
Beanball by Gene Fehler (2008)

The Mysterious Case of the Allbright Academy by Diane Stanley (2008)
Bird Like Moon by Kevin Henkes (2008)
Swindle by Gordon Korman (2008)
Clementine's Letter by Sara Pennypacker, ill by Marla Frazee (2008)
The Underneath by Kathi Applet, ill by David Smith (2008)
The Penderwicks on Gardam Street by Jeanne Birdsall (2008)
Love That Cat by Sharon Creech (2008)
3 Willows: The Sisterhood Grows by Ann Brashares (2009)
Word Nerd by Susin Nielsen (2008)
Write Before Your Eyes by Lisa Williams Kline (2008)
The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg by Rodman Philbrick (2009)
Peace, Locomotion by Jacqueline Woodson (2009)
Love, Aubrey by Suzanne LaFleur (2009)

BEST HISTORICAL FICTION AND BIOGRAPHIES (PICTURE BOOKS) (including contemporary issues in other countries)

My Heart Glow: Alice Cogswell, Thomas Gallaudet and the Birth of American Sign Language by Emily Arnold McCully (2008)
We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball by Kadir Nelson (2008)
Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai by Claire A. Nivola (2008)
What To Do About Alice? By Barbara Kerley, ill by Edwin Fotheringham (2008)
How I Learned Geography by Uri Shulevitz (2008)
Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad by James Rumford (2008)
Walking to School by Eve Bunting (2008)
Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope by Nikki Grimes, ill by Bryan Collier (2008)
Lincoln and Douglas by Nikki Grimes, ill by Bryan Collier (2008)
Afghan Dreams: Young Voices of Afghanistan by Tony O'Brien & Mike Sullivan (2008)
One Beetle Too Many: The Extraordinary Adventure of Charles Darwin by Kathryn Lasky, ill by Matthew Trueman (2009)
Abe's Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln by Doreen Rappoport, ill by Kadir Nelson (2008)
Manjiro: The Boy Who Risked His Life for Two Countries by Emily Arnold McCully (2008)
Coretta Scott by Ntozake Shange, ill by Kadir Nelson (2009)

BEST UNTOLD TALES (PICTURE BOOKS) OR OTHER VIEWPOINTS

Owney, the Mail-Pouch Pooch by Mona Kerby, ill by Lynne Barasch (2008)
Manjiro by Emily Arnold McCully (2008)
Sparrow Girl by Sara Pennypacker, ill by Yoko Tanaka (2009)
Independent Dames by Laurie Halse Anderson, ill by matt Faulkner (2008)

BEST UNTOLD TALES OR OTHER VIEWPOINTS (NOVELS)

The Smile by Donna Jo Napoli (2008)

BEST HISTORICAL FICTION (NOVELS) (including contemporary issues in other countries)

Roots and Wings by Many Ly (2008)
Snow Falling in Spring by Moying Li (2008)
Ringside 1925: Views from the Scopes Trial by Jen Bryant (2008)
Chandra's Wars by Allan Stratton (2008)

Keeping Score by Linda Sue Park (2008)
Child of Dandelions by Shenaaz Nanji (2008)
Mao's Last Dancer by Li Cunxin (2008)
The Disappeared by Gloria Whelan (2008)
All the Broken Pieces by Ann Burg (2009)
Chains (2008) and *Forge* (2009 forthcoming) by Laurie Halse Anderson

BEST POETRY

Why War is Never a Good Idea by Alice Walker, ill by Stefano Vitale (2008)
On the Farm by David Elliott, ill. Holly Meade (2008)
Oh, Theodore! Guinea Pig Poems by Susan Kitz, illustrated by Stacey Schuett (2008)
Wabi Sabi by Mark Reibstein, art by Ed Young (2008)
Honeybee by Naomi Shihab Nye (2008)
Well Defined: Vocabulary in Rhyme by Michael Salinger, ill by Sam Henderson (2009)
More Than Friends: Poems from Him and Her by Sara Holbrook and Allan Wolf (2008)

BEST YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

The Fortunes of Indigo Skye (2008) by Deb Caletti
The Juvie Three (2008) by Gordon Korman
Wintergirls (2009) by Laurie Halse Anderson
Shift by Jennifer Bradbury (2008)
Sweethearts by Sara Zarr (2008)
Ghost of Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson (2008)
The Opposite of Invisible by Liz Gallagher (2008)
How to Build a House by Dana Reinhardt (2008)
Greetings from Nowhere by Barbara O'Connor (2008)
Sunrise Over Fallujah by Walter Dean Myers (2008)
The Adoration of Jenna Fox by Mary E. Pearson (2008)
House of Dance by Beth Kephart (2008)
House of Djinn by Suzanne Fisher Staples (2008)
Smiles to Go by Jerry Spinelli (2008)
Trouble by Gary Schmidt (2008)
Slam by Nick Hornby (2008)
Paper Towns by John Green (2008)
Jerk, California by Jonathan Friesen (2008)
Itch by Michelle Kwasney (2008)
Artichoke's Heart by Suzanne Supplee (2008)
The Kind of Friends We Used to Be by Frances O'Roark Dowell (2009)
The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks by E. Lockhart (2008)
Willow by Julia Hoban (2009)
Brutal by Michael Harmon (2009)
King of the Screwups by K. L. Going (2009)
Just Another Hero by Sharon Draper (2009)
Sprout by Dale Peck (2009)
Marcelo in the Real World by Francisco X. Stork (2009)
The Secret Life of Prince Charming by Deb Caletti (2009)

Front and Center by Catherine Gilbert Murdock (2009)
Along for the Ride by Sarah Dessen (2009)

BEST ADULT BOOKS

The Middle Place by Kelly Corrigan (2008)
The Other by David Guterson (2008)
The Host by Stephenie Meyer (2008)
Beautiful Boy by David Sheff (2008)
Firefly Lane by Kristin Hannah (2008)
The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows (2008)
The School of Essential Ingredients by Erica Bauermeister (2009)
Three Little Words: A Memoir by Ashley Rhodes-Courter (2009)
Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese (2009)
The Help by Kathryn Stockett (2009)

Compiled by Bonnie Campbell Hill October, 2009

