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Literature Circles: A Case Study of a Student with Reading Difficulties

Gregory E. Morris
St. John Fisher College

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Thesis

Degree Name
MS in Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education

First Supervisor
Lucia Guarino

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Gregory E. Morris
St. John Fisher College

GMST 641: Research II
Dr. Lucia Guarino
5/14/01
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As a first year teacher of Language Arts for a 6th grade class, I have been concerned about providing opportunities for student-centered learning aligned with the school district’s curriculum and the State Standards. The use of literature circles is one approach to language arts instruction mentioned in the school district’s curriculum guide. This research will address how a student benefits from literature circle discussions.

Background Information

My curiosity about literature circles started two years ago. My daughter was entering the second grade as I started my coursework toward my Elementary Education Certification and a Masters of Science Degree in Mathematics-Science-Technology Education.

My daughter was, and still is, an extremely shy child. Despite her shyness, she has always done well in school. Her teacher did not have a lot of experience; she was beginning her second year of teaching. After school one day, her teacher told me that my daughter was participating in a literature circle. Her reading was above grade level and she added interesting contributions to the discussion. We never really talked about her interesting contributions – the conversations seemed to focus on her shyness.

Around the time of this conversation I was learning about cooperative and collaborative work groups and constructivist methods of learning. As I participated in group learning activities myself, I began questioning the benefits of working in groups. Although I almost always learned something, I wondered if I was learning what I was supposed to be learning. I was often frustrated while working in the groups and felt that my group members did not have the same level of motivation as I did. Because of my
self-motivation and inquisitive mind, I found that I was often looking for explanations from other sources to validate some of the learning that evolved from group work. I wondered if elementary students felt the same way about group work.

With these experiences as a group participant in mind, I started questioning my daughter about her literature circle. She told me about the people in her group and a little about the books. It appeared as though the students who were well behaved and were reading at about the same level were the only students in literature circles. I liked the idea that she was working with students that seemed to have the same level of motivation but I wondered if she was getting enough attention from her teacher and being challenged academically. I also liked the idea that she was getting practice with social skills. I failed to ask what she was learning.

As I progressed with my coursework, I volunteered in a 3rd grade classroom. It was amazing to see the wide spectrum of student abilities. I couldn’t help but think of my daughter and make comparisons with the higher achieving, self-motivated students. I began questioning how a teacher could provide growth opportunities for the higher achieving students while managing the non-motivated students, the behavioral issues, and providing the desperately needed instruction for the students performing below grade level. It seemed like the lower level readers needed so much of the teacher’s time. Observing this in a 3rd grade classroom I turned into the skeptical parent. My thoughts turned back to my daughter’s literature circle – was it designed to give the teacher time to work with the “needy” students and those with behavioral issues?

I did not get a chance to explore this question during my student teaching placements. As a student teacher in a kindergarten class, my questions about group work
did not seem relevant. All of the lessons were teacher directed. I had a similar
experience as a student teacher in a 5th grade classroom. The students were grouped by
ability for language arts—all the high performing students were with one teacher, the
middle performing students were split between two teachers, and the low performing
students were with another. A basal reading program was used and delivered as whole
class instruction with a balance between guided reading, shared reading, and independent
reading.

I have now begun my first year of teaching language arts and social studies in a
sixth grade classroom with the hope of teaching all subjects in a self-contained classroom
in the future. I am concerned about giving the lower achieving students the attention they
need but also challenging the higher achieving students. The school district’s language
arts curriculum guides are loaded with information but give little direction for a first year
teacher. I have been lucky to have guidance from a Reading Specialist who works in my
room during reading (literature study) two days a week. She helped me decipher the
curriculum guide and emphasized the importance of reading comprehension and
understanding the literary elements in 6th grade.

With the Reading Specialist’s lead, we started our first literature study using a
trade book—my first experience with trade books. She immediately sensed my
discomfort with her suggested approach of letting the literature lead us. I was unsure
how to plan, write lesson plans aligned with the state standards, and provide appropriate
evidence of the students meeting the objectives of the lessons and the school’s
curriculum. I trusted the Reading Specialist’s experience and let her know that I would
be relying on her to get me through the first study. She got me through it—we studied
We were amazed at how the opportunities to teach the curriculum unfolded from the literature.

We started the novel as a whole class and subsequently divided into two groups. The instruction and discussion times were teacher directed. The students kept literature study folders to organize their assignments. The assignments focused on activities that would lead to further discussion, develop skills, and/or allow them to struggle with and demonstrate their comprehension. All of these activities supported the school’s curriculum but our future studies can not follow this same format. First, I don’t have enough novels of the same title for all students to be studying the same piece of literature. Secondly, I found it impossible to involve all the students in the discussions when I had 23 students in whole-group sessions. It was difficult, but not impossible, to involve the students in discussions when they were divided into groups of 11 or 12. Finally, monitoring their performance was difficult due to the size of the groups – I was focused on leading the discussion and unable to remember and/or document all that occurred in the discussions.

With these thoughts in mind, I was looking to offer the students some choices in the novels they read, involve more students in the discussions, and remove myself as a discussion leader with the hope of identifying strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension for each student. The ultimate goal is to improve the reading comprehension of each student. Can Literature Circles help me accomplish these things? Can students lead their own discussions and arrive at an appropriate level of comprehension? Do literature circles help a low ability student achieve the goals of the New York State English Language Arts Learning Standards?
Literature Review

This section will include a review of literature describing literature circles, the purpose of having literature circles, and the role of teachers in literature circles. In addition, a summary of research about the recent trends in literacy instruction and the New York State English Language Arts Learning Standards are addressed. Finally, the benefits of literature circles, methods for implementing literature circles, and methods of gathering data to assess students are described.

Daniels (1994) describes one model for literature circles. He indicates that his model is easy and safe for more children and teachers. The model he suggests uses assigned roles and a variety of structures for managing the literature circle over the long run. He also presented the fact that there are some critics who do not approve of the use of role sheets which he refers to as transitional devices. The opponents of the role sheets feel that the role sheets “turn the activity into a convergent, teacher-controlled task” (Daniels, 1994).

Literature circles are defined by Daniels (1994) as follows:

- Literature circles are small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. While reading each group determined portion of the text (either inside or outside of class), each member prepares to take specific responsibilities in the upcoming discussion, and everyone comes to the group with the notes intended to help perform that job. The circles have regular meetings, with discussion roles rotating each session. When they finish a book, the circle members
plan a way to share highlights of their reading with the wider community; then they trade members with other finishing groups, select more reading, and move into a new cycle. Once readers can successfully conduct their own wide-ranging, self-sustaining discussions, formal discussion roles may be dropped. (p. 13)

The purpose of the discussion meetings is to share ideas (Daniels, 1994). They can do this by writing book reviews, writing the "missing chapter", creating book posters, writing a readers theater script, or through other writing activities or drawing. The teachers require the students to select their topics for their discussion. According to Daniels, literature circles do not aim to cover material to teach specific subskills.

Evans (1999) describes her collaborative research project involving literature circles. As their collaborative effort improved, Evans (1999) indicated that her partner’s suggestion to use information from observation charts would help decide what strategies to teach. They reviewed the charts looking for "items that students were not including in their discussion (e.g. taking the perspective of the character, theme) and selected those topics for strategy lessons”.

Even though the role sheets guide the student, the teacher still has a significant role. According to the Daniels model:

Most of the teacher’s work is organizational, managerial, and logistical. Teachers collect sets of good books, help groups to form, visit and observe group meetings, confer with kids or groups who struggle, orchestrate sharing lessons, keep records, make assessment notes, and collect still more books. (p. 26)
Tiballi & Drake (as cited by Tunkle, Anderson, & Evans) indicate that a child-centered classroom is absolutely necessary for literature groups to be successful. Tunkle, Anderson, & Evans suggest that “successful discussions depend on the consistency of discussion times, the amount of time provided for discussion, the students’ understanding of discussion expectations, and each group member’s active participation in the discussion.” The authors also mention that the teacher’s role in literature circles is highly debated. Some researchers feel that the teacher should be a director or leader, others suggest an observer, a participant, or a combination of the roles. Hanseen (as cited by Tunkle, Anderson, & Evans) suggest that the role changes depending on the student needs and the level of challenge the literature presents. “The important factor is helping students express their unique thoughts and ideas during literature discussions.”

Shanahan & Neuman (1997) discuss the literacy research they feel has made a difference. Their findings supported by literature research include: the trend of more self-selected reading in elementary classrooms, worksheets declining in use, an increase in the minilesson and literacy club as an instructional activities, the change of books used to teach elementary literacy, increased attention given to elementary writing instruction, more instruction devoted to reading comprehension than before, and teachers are more likely to use informal assessments.

According to the New York State Department of Education students should be active learners, responsible for and knowledgeable about their own learning. The New York State Department of Education has developed four learning standards for English Language Arts (ELA). Each standard includes the skills of reading, writing, listening,
and speaking. The purpose for the reading, writing, listening, and speaking are designated in the standards as follows:

- **ELA 1** For Information and Understanding
- **ELA 2** For Literary Response and Expression
- **ELA 3** For Critical Analysis and Evaluation
- **ELA 4** For Social Interaction

The competencies that the students should achieve are divided into two groups - those specific to the standard and those that cross all standards. “Because the study of English Language Arts is integrated, separation into categories is, at times, artificial.” The standards and the competencies are described by grade level (see Appendix A). The grade 5-6 competencies for listening and speaking are as follows:

**Listening**

**What Students Do To Listen Across All Four ELA Standards**

- Listen respectfully and responsively
- Identify own purpose for listening
- Recognize content-specific vocabulary or terminology
- Listen for unfamiliar words and learn their meaning

**What Students Do To Listen for Information and Understanding**

- Follow instructions which provide information about a task or an assignment
- Identify essential details for note taking
- Distinguish between fact and opinion
- Identify information that is implicit rather than stated
- Connect new information to prior knowledge or experience

**What Students Do To Listen for Literary Response and Expression**

- Distinguish different genres, such as story, biography, poem, or play
- Identify characters’ motivation
- Recognize the use of literary devices, such as simile, personification, rhythm, and rhyme in presentation of imaginative texts and determine their impact on meaning
- Use personal experience and prior knowledge to interpret and respond to imaginative texts and performances
Literature Circles

- Identify cultural and historical influences in texts and performances

**What Students Do To Listen For Critical Analysis and Evaluation**

- Form an opinion on a subject based on information, ideas, and themes expressed in presentations
- Recognize that the criteria used to analyze and evaluate presentations may be influenced by one's point of view and purpose for listening
- Recognize and use the perspectives of others, including teachers and peers, in order to analyze and evaluate presentations
- Use prior knowledge and experiences in order to more fully evaluate and analyze content of presentations
- Recognize persuasive presentations and identify the techniques used to accomplish that purpose, such as choice of language and use of sound effects
- Evaluate the quality of the speaker's presentation style by using criteria such as volume, tone of voice, and rate.

**What Students Do To Listen For Social Interaction**

- Respect the age, gender, position, and cultural traditions of the speaker
- Recognize friendly communication based on volume, tone, and rate of the speaker's voice
- Recognize that social communication may include informal language such as jargon and colloquialisms
- Recognize the meaning of speakers' nonverbal cues.

**Speaking**

**What Students Do When Speaking Across All Four ELA Standards**

- Respond respectfully
- Initiate communication with peers, teachers, and others in the school community
- Use language and grammar appropriate to purpose for speaking
- Use facial expressions and gestures which enhance communication
- Establish eye contact during presentations and group discussions
- Use audible voice and pacing appropriate to content and audience
- Use visual aids to support the presentation

**What Students Do When Speaking for Information and Understanding:**

- Ask probing questions
- Interview peers
- Share information from personal experiences
- Share information from a variety of texts
- Synthesize and paraphrase information
- State a main idea and support it with facts, details, and examples
- Compare and contrast information
• Make connections between sources of information
• Present reports of five to seven minutes for teachers and peers on topics related to all school subjects
• Summarize main points as part of the conclusion
• Use notes or outlines appropriate to the presentation.

What Students Do When Speaking for Literary Response and Expression
• Present original works such as stories, poems, and plays to adults and to peers
• Share book reviews
• Summarize the plot, describe motivation of characters, and explain the importance of setting
• Connect a personal response to literature to prior experience of knowledge
• Recognize the importance of cultural, ethnic, and historical characteristics in texts and performances
• Ask questions and respond to questions for clarification
• Use notes or outlines appropriately in presentations.

What Students Do When Speaking for Critical Analysis and Evaluation
• Ask questions and respond to questions for clarification
• Express an opinion or a judgement about information, ideas, opinions, themes, and experiences in books, essays, articles, and advertisements
• Use role play as a strategy to analyze or evaluate an event or issue
• Use information and ideas from other subject areas and from personal experiences to form and express opinions and judgements
• Articulate a thesis statement and support it with details, examples, and reasons
• Persuade, using appropriate language, tone, volume, and gestures
• Use notes or outlines appropriately in presentations.

What Students Do When Speaking for Social Interaction
• Discuss the content of friendly notes, cards, and letters with a teacher or classmate in order to get to know the writer and each other
• Use informal language of social communication
• Respect the age, gender, culture, and interests of the listener.

Daniels (1994) states:

Every time a literature circle meets, multiple skills are being practiced, reinforced, or strengthened. However, skills are being learned implicitly, through practice and use, not explicitly through teacher presentation. And
the particular skills addressed will be different for every child every day.
and the sequence will be completely unpredictable. (p 187)

Burda (2000) felt that her students were “not only becoming better readers, they were also becoming citizens of the world.” The reading and the discussions about the literature provided the means. To prepare the students for testing, Burda (2000) requires her students to organize and prepare their written responses to the literature in a paragraph format. It gives the students experience in writing the basic five-paragraph genre that they are tested on.

Defending the use of his role sheets, Daniels (1994) states that they help students activate prior knowledge, make predictions, and set up purposes before reading each selection. In addition, “the various discussion roles encourage different cognitive approaches to meaning making: visualization (the illustrator), associative thinking (the connector), analysis (the discussion director and vocabulary enricher), and drama/performance (the literary luminary). During reading Daniels indicates that the group meetings support kids in constructing and comparing interpretations of the book, sharing visualizations, correcting misunderstandings, making connections and predictions, sustaining energy, and keeping the work going. After reading, the students have “varied opportunities to reread, rethink, and synthesize what they have learned” (Daniels, 1994)

Pittman (1997) concluded:

In literature circles, students are able to enhance reading skills, learn from each other, gain self-confidence, improve oral and written communication, discover important themes that run through literature, and have fun in a socially interactive environment. Students are observably more
enthusiastic, attentive, and responsible for their own learning in this setting. (p. 19)

To start literature circles, Daniels (1994) stated “the way in, and the base for everything is “just reading” and “just responding” to lots and lots of good books. The role sheets were designed to “guide the students reading just as the teacher does when the whole class is reading the same book”

According to Daniels (1994) students choose the literature. He recommends a group size of 2-6 students but 4-5 is optimal. The students should not be ability grouped. For older students, the students should meet for a minimum of 45 minutes but the meetings don’t necessarily need to take place daily. They can be daily, every other day, or every three days.

Like Daniels, Burda (2000) also addresses the importance of students choosing their books and then getting together to talk about them. She describes how literature circles evolved in her classroom and the areas in which she is focusing. Davies Samway, Whang, Cade, Gamil, Lubandina, Phommachanh (1991) describe how the teacher “gives a booktalk in which she enthusiastically describes each book and then students individually select which book they will read; if too many students want the same title, a lottery system is employed to decide who gets the book.” In this model of literature circles the students are given large blocks of time to read in class. Each group meets with the teacher for a 20-30 minute discussion after a couple of days of independent reading. The teacher then gives the students an assignment.
Evans (1999) describes their collaborative approach to forming the discussion groups:

Students ranked their top three choices and we used their rankings as the primary criteria in determining the groups. We also used information from our previous observations of the students, such as who had (and had not) worked well together in past groups.

Exploring the characters is one strategy used in literature discussions to create understanding. Emery (1996) states that understanding characters helps students “develop desirable human qualities and a love of literature” and “is also essential for comprehending the story as a whole”. With this said, Emery (1996) indicates that 9 to 11 year-olds have limitations when it comes to understanding characters and illustrates how teachers can overcome these limitations by using Story Maps with Character Perspectives (SMCP).

According to Short, Kauffman, & Kahn (2000):

In literature circles, students usually begin with conversations that meander from topic to topic before moving to focused dialogue. These conversations can be facilitated by encouraging students to explore their initial responses through other sign systems. We’ve sat in literature circles with students, especially young children, who obviously had connections and feelings that they couldn’t yet put into words. Responding in other sign systems gives them a way to think about and share their feelings and images.” (p.161)
The findings of Short & Harste, with Burke (as cited by Short, Kaufman, & Kahn, 1996) refer to sign systems as the multiple ways of knowing – the ways in which humans share and make meaning, specifically through music, art, mathematics, drama, and language. The authors illustrate that the sign systems are “tools for thinking and exploring new ideas and for communicating and going public with ideas” and “these systems need to be available throughout the entire literary experience.” They discuss the process of transmediation; “students talk about what they consider the most significant ideas from their discussions and then take those understandings into other sign systems.” “By engaging in transmediation across sign systems, they were encouraged to think and reflect creatively and to position themselves as meaning makers and inquirers. They were supported in gaining new perspectives and creating new visions about literature and life” (Short, Kaufman, & Kahn, 1996).

Burda describes her growth in assessing student comprehension during literature study and teaching out of the assessment:

I can tell immediately if someone is confused. For example, when talking about The Witch of Blackbird Pond, we realized pretty quickly that, as a group, we were having some trouble following both the events of the story and the many characters. In response to this, I helped the students make a story timeline and a character map so everyone could understand how the plot was working. The next time we met as a literature circle, I could tell the students were comprehending more and were making inferences rather than trying to figure out surface level information.
According to Emery (1996):

"preadolescents tend to be limited in ability to make inferences about story characters in the following four ways: focusing on what is happening but not why, thinking that story characters are like them, focusing on only a small part of the story, and focusing on the main character's perspective only." (p. 536)

Using story maps helps the students understand the characters and the plot. The sequence of activities suggested by Emery (1996):

First, the students read the whole story through. Second, they list the important story events, and the resolution. The third and most important step is that students engage in a discussion of the character perspectives during the main story events listed on their map. During this discussion, the teacher asks questions that focus on character motives and reactions to events. (p.537)

Following this sequence allows the students to understand the important story events before making the difficult inferences. Students need help considering why things happen, considering motives and reactions of characters being different from their own, considering the story as a whole, and considering the perspectives of all important characters (Emery, 1996).

In literature circles, students are evaluated based on teacher observation and student self-evaluation (Daniels, 1994). When they asked students to reflect on their literature circle experiences, Davies Samway et al. (1991) found that students understood themselves and others better and students viewed themselves as readers. Because of the
climate created by literature circles. Davies Samway et al. (1991) concluded:

a feeling of trust develops so that students feel free to take risks and share their ideas. Class members are encouraged to express their feelings, share their cultural traditions and values, and learn to be attentive and respectful listeners. This process appears to have supported the students' growing literacy by providing a safe environment in which honest book discussions can take place. (p. 201)

Boucher Bauer (1999) discuss students' authentic responses to literature and how they provide "insights into the connections made within and across texts and how students used what they know to monitor and learn new information." Journal entries, as discussed by Bisesi (as cited by Boucher Bauer, 1999), provided information on specific connections that students make as they read and respond to text.

Tierney (1998) suggests that "conversations and notes" are a better means to assess than "checklists, rubrics, and more formal evaluations, which seem to distance the student from what she/he is doing, has done, or might do."

Tunkle, Anderson, & Evans indicate that there are multiple ways to assess students in literature groups. Individual interviews, observations, audio or video tape discussions, student's responses to literature, student self-evaluations, literature charts, reflections on learning, connections, and projects were listed as possibilities.

Alvermann, Peyton Young, Weaver, Hinchmann, Moore, Phelps, Thrash, & Zalewski (1996) researched the perceptions of students in middle and high school of how they experienced classroom talk about texts in their content area classes. In their research, they had the student's reflect and report on their own and other student's
experiences as discussants. The researchers conducted case studies and collected data by videotaping three discussions, one at the beginning, middle, and end of their case. They interviewed each group after the videotape. The students viewed the videotape and answered the researcher's questions. The researchers also used field notes, audiotapes, theoretical memoranda, site descriptions, and student work.

Baumann, Hooten, & White (1999) researched the “nature of fifth grader's reading comprehension development” and “the nature of fifth grader's attitudes toward reading and literature as a result of” their literature strategies program. To collect data they used videotapes of lessons and research team meetings, a teacher-research journal, lesson plans, student's reading journals that included literary responses and strategy-related activities, student interviews, an informal survey regarding in and out of school reading habits, attitudes, and interests, and various artifacts such as student's projects and teaching charts and handouts.

Pittman (1997) researched the change in attitude, comprehension, and self-confidence of students in literature circles in a study of non-fiction. She administered a Reading Interest Inventory and selected students who did not have positive attitudes or self-confidence in their reading ability. She then monitored those students “through observation and student/teacher journals, and assessed through the post-survey and teacher/group evaluations.”
Method

This research is a case study exploring the performance of a sixth grade student performing below grade level in literature circle discussions. This section first describes the participant, the method for selecting the student involved in the case study, and the method for forming the literature circle groups. Next, the materials used by the students to prepare for the literature circle discussions and the materials used to collect data during the literature circle discussions are described. Finally, the procedure for implementing literature circles and collecting and analyzing the data is explained. The focus of the research is to determine if student-led literature circles can help a low-performing student meet the goals established by the New York State English Language Arts Learning Standards.

Participant

Before selecting the participant, I decided that our literature would be selected from the fantasy genre. Based on the number of books on my shelf, I chose *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt and *The Cricket in Time Square* by George Selden as possible options.

I gave the class a brief overview of each book and asked each student to state their preferences for reading either of these books on a 3x5 card. Each student wrote their name on the card and then listed one title on the front and the other title on the back. For each title, they expressed their interests in reading it and explained their reasons with comments such as: ‘I already read it, book A sounds a lot better than book B but I will read either, I don’t want to read either one, etc.’ All of the students made a choice, some students were neutral.
With nine of the twenty students receiving Reading Center services, I met with the Reading Specialist to form the groups. Five students chose *The Cricket in Time Square*: collectively, they had a range of abilities and no social issues to worry about as a group. The reading specialist decided to take the lead role for all five of the students who chose this book.

The remaining fifteen students chose *Tuck Everlasting* as their first choice. I arranged the cards in order of reading level. With the goal of having four to six students in a group, I chose the top three high level students and started to form the three groups. Kate was the best reader in the class. I then looked at the three lowest level students and placed them with the high level students; Jane was the lowest level student so, I placed her with Kate. With the remaining students, I considered the dynamics of the students and the Reading Specialist's preference for working with particular students. Each group had students at various levels of ability and the Reading Specialist agreed that I could take the lead role for the Reading Center students in the group with Kate and Jane. There were six students in the group with Kate and Jane, one group of 5 students and one group of 4 students.

Jane, a pseudonym, is a 12 year-old female Caucasian in 6th grade with no apparent health problems. Jane has been receiving Reading Center services due to her below grade level performance in reading and writing. She has difficulty with decoding, has a 504 plan – a Student Accommodation Plan which specifies required test modifications and assignment modifications, and receives speech services. Jane is a hard worker but she has passive resistive tendencies. She does not like to appear different from the other students and does not like to take advantage of the test modifications.
specified in her 504 Plan. She can be moody and often becomes withdrawn and shuts down completely. Jane did not enjoy the last literature study, *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell. She said it was boring and voiced her dissatisfaction for having to work with the Reading Specialist again. Jane is quiet and shy. She socializes with only a few students in the class.

**Materials**

To collect data, I used audio tapes, student self-evaluations (see Appendix B), anecdotal notes of observations (see Appendix C), and students discussion plans and literature response journals. The student's literature response journals consist of a pocket folder with brads and loose-leaf paper. They use the literature response folders to organize their responses to literature, character maps, notes, illustrations and their preparation work for the discussions. The students have been provided with guidelines for writing responses to literature (see Appendix D). They will use these guidelines when responses are assigned. To assist the students in creating discussion plans, each student was given role sheets (see Appendix E) suggested by Daniels (1994).

**Procedure**

My Literature Study is scheduled four times a week for 40 minutes. The Reading Specialist attends Literature Study on Mondays and Tuesdays. On Thursdays, a Teacher Assistant fills in for her. On Fridays, I have no assistance. To reduce the number of students in the room and the noise level in a room with no doors, I scheduled all Literature Circle discussions for Tuesdays. In doing so, the Reading Specialist could take a group of students to another location.
Every student in the class is capable of participating in a literature circle without the use of specific roles. In the beginning of the school year, we began our first literature study reading one novel using a whole-class format. Subsequently, we divided the class into three groups reading two novels. With three discussion groups, the students began having self-sustaining discussions about the novels and also self-evaluated their performance. I introduced the use of a tape recorder during these discussions to get the students acclimated to the idea of having it as part of literature circles.

To prepare for the discussions, students were given teacher selected reading and writing assignments. They started the assignment in class and finished it for homework. The reading assignments ranged from six to sixteen pages per day and were a combination of independent reading, partner reading, or guided reading.

The writing assignments included a variety of tasks to be completed in their Literature Response Journals. The tasks included responses to literature, character maps, notes, sketch notes, sketch to stretch illustrations, illustrations, preparation work for the discussions, and a title page. The students had some choice in the assignments. My approach is a blend of Daniels (1994) where the students choose the assignments and Davies Samway et al. (1991) where the teacher chooses the assignment.

With every assignment given, the students were reminded that they might want to include some of their previously completed work in their Literature Circle Discussion Plan. The students wrote these plans the day before the scheduled Literature Circle discussion.

On discussion days, I observed. I did not participate in the discussion. At times, I was seated with the group. Other times I observed from a distance. I was looking for
listening and speaking skills in addition to comprehension. I recorded my observations on a checklist (see Appendix C).

The discussions lasted approximately 30 minutes and began when the groups were in their assigned discussion locations. I always had the tape recorder set up first thing in the morning. The students started the tape recorder and began their Literature Discussions. I gave them a one or two minute warning to finish their discussions.

When the time was up, I asked them to briefly discuss the quality of the discussions with each other as I distributed the self-evaluation forms. As soon as the self-evaluation forms arrived at their tables, they were asked to silently complete them. I collected them after 5 minutes.

When I collected the student’s self-evaluations, I quickly reviewed them to see if there were any immediate discrepancies with my observations. After the final discussion, I collected the student’s Literature Response Journals. I reviewed the journals to see if I could find evidence of a change in understanding. When transcribing the tapes, I was interested in Jane’s contributions to the discussion. I was interested in the number of times she contributed and whether it was voluntary or in response to a question addressed specifically to her. I also categorized her responses; I was interested in whether they were answers to the questions of others, supporting statements or personal opinions, piggybacking, directing the discussion or executing their discussion plan, or if they were inaudible.

To determine if the group had a worthwhile discussion, I evaluated the discussion to determine if the topics discussed were related to literary elements, specific details or
events in the story, or applications of reading strategies. I compared these topics to my anecdotal notes, the self-evaluation forms, and the Literature Response Journals.
Results

This section describes the results of each of the six literature circle discussions followed by an analysis of each one. The results include, in sequence, a summary of the assigned tasks before the literature circle discussions, Jane's preparation work, the events of the day, Jane's contributions during the literature circle discussion, a summary of the topics discussed by the group, and finally, Jane's self-evaluation. The analysis for each discussion addresses each of the categories listed in the results. The results have been interpreted to determine the degree of understanding and the applicability of the specific ELA Standards. Each discussion analysis concludes with a summary of the discussion. A summary of the research findings follows the 6th discussion analysis.

Results of Discussion #1

We started our study on 2-6-01 by distributing the books and conducting a shared reading for the prologue and chapter 1. For homework, the students responded in their Literature Response Journals with their first thoughts and chose two words or phrases, defined or explained them, and explained why they selected them. I will refer to this process of selecting two words or phrases as simply 'two words or phrases.'

With my son ill, I missed the next day of Literature Study. I instructed the substitute teacher to have the students independently read chapters 1-4, take notes, and find two words or phrases. When I returned on Friday, I discovered that many of the students did not complete their work; we used class time to catch up.

On Monday, we prepared for the first Literature Circle discussion. I gave a mini-lesson about asking good questions. I gave the students role sheets developed by Harvey Daniels and illustrated how they could be used to prepare a discussion plan— they then
completed their discussion plans. We also started the title page and character information page of their journals.

In her Literature Response Journal, Jane’s first response indicates that the book is boring. She was predicting that it would get better based on the enthusiasm I showed for the book during the initial book talk and because she read the summary on the back. To prepare for the discussion, Jane wrote two questions, a brief response, and drew an illustration of Mae. Her questions were: “who do you think that guy in the yellow clothes?” and “do you like the book so far, why?” In her response, she indicated that she was surprised that the Tuck family looked the same after 15 years. She wanted to ask the man who he was and why he was there. She thought the book was confusing and had to ask a friend for clarification. She acknowledged that the book was getting better (see Appendix F).

On the day of our first discussion, one of the students in the research group was absent. I sat in the middle of the room where I could hear all three groups at the same time.

Two of the students in the study group immediately focused on the tape recorder and started all of their questions with “well Mr. Tape Recorder”. They found this to be quite funny.

Jane did not contribute much but appeared to be attentively listening, was laughing, blushed several times, and appeared to be enjoying the conversation. Early in the conversation Jane raised her hand when someone asked a question - the group members did not notice her attempts to participate; eventually, she stopped raising her hand. Jane, Kate, and one other member of the group were whispering to each other and
looking at the tape recorder; Jane did not look happy. Jane whispered to the other group member at other times during the discussion too. Jane did support many of the student’s responses with gestures and comments like “yeah” and “I do, I do”—these comments could not be heard on tape. About half way into the discussion, one of Jane’s rubber bands from her braces snapped; she left the group to get a replacement. When she returned to the group, she fixed the rubber band and tried to hide from the group. The group tried to get her involved by calling her name and saying in unison: “what do you think Jane?” She withdrew completely. Toward the end of the conversation, she was back to giggling and again followed the conversation. For the duration of the discussion, she was prompted to speak four times, she did not respond. Beside the supporting comments previously mentioned, she only spoke once when she supported the discussion by saying “if you read the back” — many group members were talking at the same time. She was anxious to turn the tape player off at the end of the discussion.

In the course of the discussion, the group talked about the character’s names, the ideal age for drinking the water that would make them everlasting, Winnie’s feelings, the purpose of the book, and the relationship of the characters and why there were so many characters. They also made personal connections, shared visualizations, and helped each other with decoding words. When they reread a passage of the book, there was a moment of excitement. Several members in the group came to the realization that the Tucks “didn’t get to choose to be everlasting—they just drank it (the spring water).” Another student piggybacked on the topic and said, “that’s why he says it is always the same.”

On Jane’s self-evaluation form (see Appendix G), she indicated that she did a great job giving others a chance to speak, discussing the questions and comments from
others in the group, preparing for the discussion, giving her full attention to the speaker, listening with an open mind, and showing courtesy to each speaker. She felt her best contributions were telling the group they were off topic, referring to the book for ideas, and keeping the noise level down. She indicated that she learned that reading the back of the book was bad because it gave the book away and she also learned the predictions of her group. To have a better discussion, she stated: "I will have to work on talking to the speaker (speaker), well my group said that, but I think I was fine because I keep (kept) talking to everyone (everyone) and I was on task."

Analysis of Discussion #1

Jane's preparation work shows that she only has a shallow understanding of the details in the story. She refers to the man in the yellow suit as the man in the yellow clothes. She also incorrectly stated the number of years the Tuck family has looked the same as 15 in lieu of 87. Although she was attempting to apply NYS ELA Standard #1, reading and writing for information and understanding, her written work shows an incomplete understanding of the novel. Jane is partially aware of her lack of understanding as evidenced by her comment about the book being confusing and her action of applying the self-correcting strategy of asking for help. This self-correcting strategy is a goal of reading across all four ELA Standards (see Appendix A).

During the discussion Jane was observably listening respectfully and responsibly, a goal of listening across all four ELA standards. She attempted to use gestures, raising her hand in an effort to initiate communication. This shows an attempt to apply speaking goals across all four ELA standards.
Jane was observably unhappy with the tape recorder – I wonder if this is due to her shyness, her stubbornness, or her insecurity. Although the group missed her earlier attempts to participate and seemed to miss her supporting comments and gestures, they attempted to solicit her participation. She tried to hide from them and she refused to speak. She seemed uncomfortable but she also seemed to realize that the discussion would go on without her.

At the end of the discussion, Jane’s evaluation indicates that she was a better listener than a speaker. This is consistent with my observations and the audiotapes. Of particular interest was her comment about the perception of the group. She thought she was “fine” but indicated that the group did not think so. Although this comment is inconsistent with her speaking self-evaluation, I wonder if she was aware that the group did not notice her supporting comments or gestures. In her mind, she seems to think she was participating.

Jane’s comment about the back of the book giving the story away is again, evidence of shallow understanding. She does not seem to be aware of the themes or potential themes within the literature, a weakness in achieving ELA 2. Of course, she had only read the beginning of the book at this point and it is often difficult to see the themes developing at such an early stage.

The discussion itself was worthwhile. In discussing the character’s names, the students were applying ELA 1. As they shared opinions of the ideal age to drink the water, they applied ELA 3. Winnie’s feelings and the purpose of the book involve the application of ELA 2 and ELA 3. The character’s relationships and their interactions illustrate the application of ELA 1, ELA 2, and ELA 3. Their personal connections and
visualizations indicate application of ELA 1, ELA 2, and ELA 3. In discussing words and their meanings, the students practiced ELA 1. When rereading the passage from the book, the students applied ELA 1 and ELA 3. Throughout the discussion, the students constantly practiced ELA 4, speaking and listening for social interaction. The self-evaluation of the discussion gave the students an opportunity to write for evaluation. ELA 3. The topics they discussed are topics we may have discussed in a teacher led discussion. Just like a teacher led discussion, it is difficult to determine the degree of listening or understanding of the discussion she was exposed to.

In summary, even though Jane did not contribute much, she benefited from the discussion. Her preparation work shows that she has a shallow understanding of what she read, she applied listening and speaking skills across the four ELA Standards, and she was exposed to a worthwhile discussion.

Results of Discussion #2

The Literature Study time was cut short due to a two day Document Based Question (DBQ) exam followed by a week's vacation for winter recess. To prepare for the second discussion, the students read chapter 5 with partners and prepared their discussion plans. The preparation and the discussion both took place after vacation.

Jane’s discussion plan for the second discussion included two questions: “what did it mean when it said, “the worst is happening at last?,” exclaim!?” and “what is in the water and why does it make your age stay the same? what is in the water?” (see Appendix H).

For this discussion, I sat at the table with the research group but I did not participate in the discussion. Jane and Kate sat near the tape recorder.
Jane was upset when she got to school in the morning because she was supposed to be receiving Academic Intervention Services after school but her mother didn’t know what the transportation arrangements were going to be so she wouldn’t let Jane attend the first day. She looked tired and was withdrawn. Kate prompted Jane to show one of her pictures early in the conversation but one of the other students stole the group’s attention by showing one of his pictures. There were times where she was giggling. One student asked, “What do you think is going to happen Jane or are you just going to read from the back?” She responded with, “I don’t know.” Later, another student, her friend, addressed her and asked, “Jane, do you have any questions – did you do your homework?” Jane responded but it was unclear. The first student followed-up, “Come on Jane, you have to say something more than I don’t know or whatever you said before.” Jane pushed herself away from the table where I couldn’t see her and she couldn’t see me. Jane’s friend took Jane’s Literature Response Folder and asked the group one of Jane’s questions. Later, this same student asked, “Jane, do you like this book?” Jane responded, “yes.” Toward the end of the discussion, she muttered something to her friend and started responding to the group by giggling. After the discussion, Jane shut down completely. She wouldn’t even make eye contact with me for the rest of the day.

The group discussed predictions, shared illustrations, compared the book to other books we read in Literature Study, and talked extensively about the character’s names and who the main characters were. They also attempted to make sense out of the elf music and the music box. Students from a fourth grade classroom distracted the group when they came in to use our computers mid-way through the discussion. It was a temporary distraction.
For this discussion, Jane evaluated herself at the extremes (see Appendix I). She indicated she did a great job giving others a chance to speak, making eye contact, preparing for the discussion, and listening with an open mind. For the remaining categories, she felt that she did not do well. Jane indicated the best thing she did was listening and making eye contact. She learned that her group members had good questions and comments. To have a better discussion, she felt that she should sit away from the tape recorder.

The self-evaluation forms of the other students focus on themselves with the exception of Sally’s. Sally indicated that the best thing she could do to have a better discussion was “helping more people to talk” (see Appendix J).

Analysis of Discussion #2

In chapter 5 of the novel, Winnie meets Jesse Tuck and sees him drinking from the spring. Jesse suggests that it would not be a good idea for Winnie to drink the water. Jesse’s mother, Mae, approaches Jesse and Winnie and commented to her other son, Miles, “the worst is happening at last.” The chapter ends with this remark. Jane’s discussion question, although spelling is poor, deals with this statement. The fact that she asked the question leads me to believe that she did not have an understanding of the ramifications of being everlasting. Despite reading the back of the book and thinking she knew what was going to happen, she appeared to be deficient in her analysis and evaluation of the events, ELA 3. The second question included in her plan deals with the water. The question reveals the fact that she understood there was a relationship between aging and the water. She seems to be trying to understand what makes the water so special. She understood that there was something special about the water and she was
seeking to understand how or why the water could be special – she was wrestling with analysis and evaluation, ELA 3.

The group was clearly trying to get her involved – she clearly did not want to participate – she did not voluntarily participate. Her mood seemed to be a major factor. Although she giggled on occasion, her responses were not effective – she seemed to be avoiding participation. The giggling showed that she was listening.

Jane’s self-evaluation form, an application of ELA 3, also hints that her mood was a factor – she gave herself the lowest rating for most of the categories. On the comment section, she suggested that sitting away from the tape recorder would lead to a better discussion. Whether her mood was triggered by the events of the morning or being seated near the tape recorder is unknown. Sally’s self-evaluation seems to be referring to Jane’s lack of participation too.

Again, Jane was exposed to a worthwhile discussion. The discussion of their predictions applied ELA 3. Their illustrations applied ELA 2 and ELA 3. Comparing the literature applied ELA 2 and ELA 3. ELA 1, ELA 2, and ELA 3 were practiced as they discussed the main characters in depth and tried to understand the connection of the elf music to the music box. ELA 4, speaking and listening for social interaction, was applied throughout the discussion.

In summary, Jane’s preparation work continues to show that she has weak reading comprehension skills. Her mood seems to play a major role in her performance, or lack of performance, during the discussion. Again, she was exposed to a worthwhile discussion that covered a variety of topics and applied all four of the ELA Standards.
Results of Discussion #3

To prepare for the third discussion the students read chapter 6 with a partner, read chapters 7-9 independently, completed two responses, and found four words or phrases. School was closed for the next two days due to the winter storm warnings. The students were given one day to prepare discussion plans and the discussion day was moved from Tuesday to Thursday.

In her response for chapter 6, Jane expresses her opinion of the chapter. She liked the “connections” but did not like to be left “hanging”. She mentions that she still has an outstanding question: “what did it mean when it said, ‘the last (should be worst) is happening at last?’” Jane admits that she was confused when Winnie, the main character, was thinking aloud – Jane thought she was talking to another character (see Appendix K).

In her response for chapters 7-9, she stated that she was going to ask her outstanding question about “THE WORST IS HAPPENING AT LAST”. She thought that there were important things that happened in these chapters but was “confused about them talking on the trail instead of at home.” She indicated that she had a “fun feeling (funny feeling) about Winnie” (see Appendix L). Jane did not prepare a discussion plan for this discussion.

Kate was absent from school and Jane’s friend was scheduled to leave the Literature Circle ten minutes into the discussion due to a dental appointment. I viewed the discussion from the center of the room.

Jane directed the discussion once, another student recognized her attempt to direct and said, “ok Jane, go.” Although she asked her question very quietly and the noise in the room was at an all time high, I could tell that she finally asked her question about
what was meant by the "worst is finally happening." A student replied with, "The spring and Mae and Miles... I guess they think the worst is finally happening because somebody found out about the spring." From this point on, Jane looked more relaxed and giggled a lot. The majority of the time, she was making eye contact with the speaker.

During the discussion, the students shared their visualizations of the man in the yellow suit and their visualizations of the spring. They discussed some of their words and phrases, "what is scorn?" They discussed how the man in the yellow suit could have known about the Tuck family being everlasting. They shared their opinions about drinking the spring water and the implications. They shared some of their responses in their Literature Response Journals before revisiting the names and relationships of the characters as well as the elf music and music box. Some of them came to the realization that drinking the water made them everlasting, which meant that they couldn't get hurt and that is why they didn't change.

While the students were completing their self-evaluation forms, Jane's math and science teacher interrupted her for a few minutes. She felt she did a great job for almost all of the categories (see Appendix M). She elaborated on her response by saying that the group did not give her a chance to speak and that Tom's giggling distracted her. She indicated that her best contribution was telling her group members to get on topic. For learning, she commented about Tom's "great imagination" and expressed an appreciation of her group being nice because they explain things so she could understand them. To have a better discussion, she thought she should work on talking and trying to get questions in her mind to keep the discussion going.
Analysis of Discussion #3

Jane’s preparation works shows that she is aware of her reading deficiencies when she admits that she was confused, ELA 1. It is not clear how or if she was able to overcome the confusion. The fact that she held on to her question about the “worst is happening at last” shows that she was either aware that this was an important statement or that she was disappointed that nobody else brought it up. Either way, she was listening to the discussion and applying listening across the ELA Standards. I’m not sure what she meant by “liking the connections” – she did not describe the connections. Although she indicated that she did not like to be left hanging at the end of chapter 6, it shows that she is interested in the book and has a desire to continue reading. This shows an awareness of author’s craft, an application of ELA 2. Jane attempts to share her feelings about Winnie when she wrote that she had a “fun felling (funny feeling) about Winnie.” She may have had difficulty articulating her feelings but she seems to understand that having opinions and sharing feelings is an important part of reading, an application of ELA 2 and ELA 3. Not preparing for the discussion is unusual for Jane. Because her responses focused on her previous question, I wonder if the responses were doubling as her discussion plan too.

During the discussion, Jane directed the discussion for the first time and one member of the group noticed. This was a big step for her – she was accepted and treated as an equal, an example of speaking across the ELA Standards.

Jane didn’t have the uninterrupted time she usually has to complete her self-evaluation – she seemed to rush it. By mentioning that her group did not give her a chance to speak implies that she had more to say, was experiencing social frustration, or
was gaining confidence as a result of her successful participation. I did not observe her trying to keep the group on task – she may have tried. Her earlier success seems to have opened her mind – even though she was unhappy with Tom, she could see his great imagination – this may have been envy or simply an observation. Her statement relative to her group being nice and explaining things so she could understand them implies that her understanding has changed, an application of ELA 1. It seems to be more than a coincidence that her positive statement toward the group followed her success in the discussion and acceptance by the group when the group did not specifically put her on the spot. She also seems to have analyzed the successes of the group when she indicated that talking more and trying to get questions in her mind to keep the discussion going would lead to a better discussion, an application of ELA 4. This confirms that she is aware of the abilities of others to actively listen and piggyback on the ideas of other group members and the fact that she has not done so yet, an application of ELA 3.

Like the two preceding discussions, the students discussed topics worthy of discussion – topics that would have been discussed in a teacher led discussion. They shared their visualizations, an application of ELA 2 and ELA 3. They shared words and phrases, an application of ELA 1 and ELA 2. They analyzed how the man in the yellow suit knew the Tucks were everlasting, an application of ELA 3. Their opinions about the implications of the water as well as the sharing of their responses show application of ELA 3. Like the other discussions, ELA 4 was practiced throughout the discussion as students spoke and listened to each other.

In summary, Jane’s preparation work shows that she is aware of some of her deficiencies, she is interested in the story and she is putting forth effort. Although she
only contributed once during the discussion, she directed the discussion and was successful. She also seemed to be learning from the group. The discussion she was exposed to was also worthwhile. As a result of this discussion, all four ELA Standards were addressed.

Discussion #4

To prepare for the fourth discussion, the students read chapters 10-11 with partners, took notes, completed a response, and found two words or phrases. In addition, they independently read chapters 12-15, completed a sketch to stretch (a form of response using meaningful illustrations to show understanding of a student selected passage), found two words or phrases, and competed discussion plans. The discussion day was moved to Wednesday in an effort to get back on track.

I was unable to find Jane’s response for chapters 10-11. She did prepare a sketch to stretch. For the discussion, Jane planned to ask how her group members liked the book, show her drawing, and ask “what do you think Winnie’s grandmother is going to say when she gets home?” (see Appendix N).

By having the literature circle discussions on Wednesday, all four groups were in the room for the first time. The discussions took place thirty minutes earlier than usual and I did not have the assistance of the Teacher Assistant or Reading Specialist. I had asked to see everybody’s discussion plans. I circulated among all the groups during the entire discussion.

During the discussion, Jane voluntarily contributed to the group five times—three times she attempted to direct the discussion and, twice she offered supporting comments. Throughout this discussion, Jane made good eye contact with the speaker and
followed the conversation with her eyes, she seemed happy and was giggling a lot. When I approached the group, she focused on me. When I walked away, it took about 30 seconds for her to return her eye contact to the speaker. About seven minutes into the discussion, Jane supported the discussion with a loud, confident “uh, huh!” The group had been talking about the Tuck’s not being able to change their looks after they drank the water that made them everlasting. Someone suggested that it would be a good idea if “you get perfect, then you drink the water”. This was piggybacked by another student “like you do your hair” – immediately, two students said, “you can change your hair”.

The negotiation began. Everybody was talking at the same time. “No you can’t.” “Yes you can” followed by Jane’s “uh, huh!” She leaned forward, made direct eye contact and supported the “yes you can group.” About six minutes later, she was playing with her pen; Tom was singing. Jane’s friend was annoyed by Jane’s pen, looked directly at her with a smile, and took it from Jane’s hand. Jane smiled and blushed. Six minutes later, Jane asked a new question that was not in her plan: “how come they never clean their house?” She spoke with confidence, she was clearly heard on the tape, and the group acknowledged her question and responded simultaneously. A few minutes later, the group lost focus. Jane took control of the group by asking, “can I see everybody’s drawings?” – again with confidence. Everybody shared their drawings with each other and then started to put them away. Jane took command again, “let me see yours.” This was followed by Jane and her friend exchanging whispers – one of the group members insisted, “no whispering, you have to share with the group.” Toward the end of the discussion, the group was talking about Mr. Tuck’s name. One member asked, “I wonder why they don’t call Tuck by his first name?” – Jane quickly chirped in, “my mom calls
my dad by his last name.” The student with the question responded with, “what?” Jane repeated herself, loud and clear. The other student then playfully addressed Jane using her last name, “hay ######,” followed by group laughter.

The group discussed their change in feelings about drinking the spring water, being able to die and going to heaven, earning income, how the water worked and its characteristics, implications of always looking the same, Winnie’s dilemma, the Tuck’s lifestyle, and the names of characters. They shared sketches and illustrations, reread passages, and compared the book to other books.

Jane rated herself as doing a great job in holding the attention of her group, stating ideas clearly, giving others a chance to speak, preparing for the discussion, listening with an open mind, and asking good questions or making connections based on what she heard (see Appendix O). She felt her best contribution was “try to give ?’s so my group was on topic. We did not have a good discussion so I was trying to get the mines (minds) thinking. Her learning included the realization that everyone should have questions to keep the group on topic.” To have a better discussion, she indicated that she should prepare better.

On her self-evaluation, Sally added a comment about letting other people have a chance to talk. She indicated that this is one way she could help the group have a better discussion (see Appendix P).

Analysis of Discussion #4

Jane’s preparation work shows that she is interested in the opinions and feelings her group members have about the book, an application of ELA 3 and ELA 4. This may be because she is enjoying the book herself or looking for an easy way to direct the
discussion without having to say a lot herself. By preparing a drawing, it also seems to be a safe way to participate without a lot of speaking. By asking about the feelings of Winnie’s grandmother, she has moved beyond basic comprehension and is connecting the story with her life experiences, an application of ELA 2 and ELA 3.

Having all four groups in the classroom without any assistance made it difficult to give my attention to Jane for the duration of the discussion. Even with the noise level and the additional distractions, Jane had a great discussion – her participation was up, her confidence was up, and she seemed to be imitating the other students. She was definitely more comfortable when I was away – I wonder if this is due to her low appetite for risk and feelings of insecurity by being judged. She seemed to have been frustrated with Tom’s attention getting behavior. When she was made aware of her own distracting behavior she seemed to appreciate the quiet, non-attention getting gesture on the part of her friend, an application of ELA 4. Her speaking was clear – she overcame her displeasure for the tape recorder, seemed to feel comfortable with her group, and was accepted by her group, an application of speaking across the ELA Standards. When she demanded to see everybody’s drawings, she was showing that she would not let them go on to another topic until she had her turn – again, evidence of increased comfort, an application of ELA 4. Being told not to whisper did not upset her; this was also a milestone, another application of ELA 4. When she added that her mother calls her dad by her last name, she was showing that she was actively listening. She connected the discussion to her life and demonstrated a solid understanding, an application of ELA 2 and ELA 3. She realized that the group was not making fun of her when they used her last name – they were acknowledging her contribution, an application of ELA 4.
In her evaluation, she acknowledged her success and seemed to realize the importance of asking questions. She seemed to be voicing her frustration with Tom’s behavior when she said that they did not have a good discussion – she seemed to realize that good questions keep the discussion going and that Tom tended to speak freely without thinking. Sally’s self-evaluation seems to suggest the same. Jane is taking the discussions seriously and indicated that she could have prepared better – it seems like she was referring to preparing more discussion questions as a way to better prepare.

The group analyzed and evaluated their change in feelings about drinking the water and the implications of looking the same way forever, an application of ELA 3. As a group, they demonstrated that they understood the themes of the book, an application of ELA 2. In discussing Winnie’s dilemma, they addressed the elements of characterization and plot, an application of ELA 2 and ELA 3. While sharing their sketches and illustrations, they practiced ELA 4. Comparing literature, they applied ELA 2 and ELA 3. Throughout the discussion, they again practiced ELA 4, social interaction.

Her preparation work shows continued interest and effort in addition to deeper understanding. Her participation in the discussion was up and so was her confidence. She was aware of her success and continued to take the discussion seriously. The discussion itself addressed worthwhile topics and applied all of the ELA Standards.

Discussion #5

To prepare for the fifth discussion, the students read chapters 16-17 with partners, responded in their Literature Response Journals, and found two words or phrases. Independently, they read chapters 18-19, were given a choice between notes or sketch notes (a note taking strategy using a combination of sketches and text with bullet points),
completed a response, found 2 words or phrases, and completed discussion plans. The discussion day moved back to Tuesday, the original Literature Circle day.

Jane’s sketch notes show that she now refers to “the man in the yellow clothes” as “the man in the yellow suit” (see Appendix Q). In her comment/response she questions whether or not the man in the yellow suit died. She also expresses her opinion that the man in the yellow suit is evil (see Appendix R). Her discussion plans include sharing her sketch notes and four questions: “How did the man in the yellow suit get hurt?”, “Which ch. do you like this fare (far)? Why?”, “Why do you think Mae has the music box and the tune (tune) is the one the man’s (man’s) grandmother (grandmother) taught (taught) him?”, and “What do you think is going to happen next?” (see Appendix S).

One of the students was absent the day before the discussion and had not completed the reading or prepared for the discussion. We did not have a smooth transition into Literature Circles. My Language Arts mentor had just completed a lesson - she arrived late, she finished late, and the students did not seem to appreciate her. In addition, the Reading Specialist was not available so, I had all four groups in the room again. In the beginning of the discussion, I sat with the research group. The noise level was extremely high in the room – it was difficult to decipher the tapes.

When I was seated with the group, Jane did not contribute. She tried to answer a question addressed to the group but the student asking the question cut her off; she was not heard. She wrote a note in her notebook. Later, Jane tried to get involved again – she spoke to a group member that she previously had no interaction with, Sally. When I left the group to stop an argument occurring in another group, she tried to get involved again. Unfortunately, I could not capture her contributions on tape. Three of the group
members, including Kate, did not acknowledge Jane. Jane made eye contact with Sally, smiled, shrugged her shoulders, and said something quietly to her. She immediately started fidgeting in her chair, laughed, smiled, and followed the exchange of the three talking group members. Two of the group members continued to monopolize the discussion. At the one-minute warning, Jane insisted to show her sketch to stretch and was cheered on by Kate—"go Janey, ... go Janey, ... go Janey."

The group analyzed the characters and their actions, connected the novel to other literature, discussed the elements of the plot, discussed the theme, and discussed the setting. There was a lot of activity in the room.

Jane indicated that she did a great job in almost all categories being evaluated (see Appendix T). She was not sure if she spoke loud enough. She felt the best thing she did was asking questions and preparing for the discussion. She learned that Mae hit the man in the yellow suit with the gun and that some (a) people (person) in the group can be a snot. To have a better discussion, she thought she should try to ask more questions and sit in a different spot.

Analysis of Discussion #5

Jane's discussion plan shows that she followed through on her own goals - she wrote more questions. Although the question about the man in the yellow suit is a lower level question, the remaining three questions show that she is still enjoying the book, is interested in the opinions and analysis of others, and wants to check the understanding of her group or possibly her own understanding. Her sketch notes show that she self corrected the "man in the yellow clothes" to the "man in the yellow suit". This may have been the result of reading repeated references to the character in the book or from hearing
it in the discussions. Regardless, she has corrected her error, a goal of reading across the ELA Standards. In her response, she had a valid question about whether or not the man in the yellow suit was dead - the author chose to end the chapter with a cliffhanger. This shows an awareness of literary response and expression, ELA 2.

The noise in the room did not seem to be a factor in the discussion – only in my data collection. However, when I tried to sit with the group to facilitate data collection, Jane seemed to be afraid of being judged. She was clearly uncomfortable when I sat with the group. The student led discussion, with my observations from across the room, seemed to be a safer environment in which to discuss literature for her.

When Jane tried to respond to a question and was cut-off by the other group member, it seems as though she was frustrated at the lack of social courtesy, an understanding of ELA 4. Jane and Sally seemed to share this frustration – neither one of them were being acknowledged. Their eye contact with each other and Jane’s shoulder shrug later in the discussion shows this common frustration again, another application and understanding of ELA 4. Jane’s fidgeting, laughing, and smiling indicates that she was struggling with the frustration but not ready to abandon the discussion – she was trying to do the right thing by listening respectfully and responsibly, an example of listening across the ELA Standards. At the end, she refused to settle with listening – she insisted on showing her sketch to stretch. Her demands were acknowledged and supported by the group. This shows significant growth for Jane. Instead of withdrawing from the discussion, she stuck with it and had her success at the end, an application of ELA 4.
Jane’s comment on the self-evaluation form about not being sure if she could be heard illustrates that she was aware that the noise level in the room was a factor. It is also possible that the tape recorder is no longer an issue for her. This may be due to becoming more comfortable with her discussion group or the fact that she has been a more successful participant, an application of speaking across the ELA Standards. She acknowledged her preparation work and again is showing that she understands the importance questions have in discussions. By acknowledging that she now understands what Mae did, she confirms that she did not fully understand what she read, a weakness in ELA 1 and ELA 3. She is receiving and seeing the benefits to discussing novels in literature circles. Jane’s comment about someone being a snot appears to be directed at her frustration of getting cut-off and ignored by one of the group members. It also shows that she is aware that she did the right thing but the other student did not. Again, evidence of Jane listening and speaking respectfully and responsibly and aware of the deficiencies of her group in these areas, an application of speaking across all four ELA Standards. Jane’s request to sit in a different spot again supports the idea that the tape recorder is no longer the issue. She wanted to sit in the middle of the group as opposed to the end seat away from the tape recorder. This indicates that she wanted to become more involved in the group and hopefully, in a better position to get acknowledged by her group when she had something to say, an application of ELA 4.

The group discussion was again worthwhile. Analyzing the characters and their actions in addition to the comparisons to other literature, the group applied ELA 2 and ELA 3. In discussing the elements of plot and setting, ELA 2 was applied. Throughout the discussion, the students practiced ELA 4.
In summary, Jane's discussion plan shows continued interest and effort. The discussion was frustrating to her because of the performance of another group member. Instead of withdrawing from conversation, Jane persevered. Jane continued to see that good questions facilitate the discussion and she wanted to become more involved. The topics and standards addressed by the group again exposed Jane to a worthwhile discussion. All four ELA standards were addressed during the discussion.

Results of Discussion #6

Before the final discussion, students independently read chapters 20-22, prepared notes or sketch notes, a comment, and found two words or phrases. With partners, they read chapters 23-24 and took notes. Independently, they composed a response and found 2 words or phrases. They also independently read chapter 25 and the Epilogue, found two words or phrases, and wrote a 'great' final response. Then, they reread the Prologue and chapter 1 independently and prepared for the final discussion that was held on Tuesday, March 27th.

For the final discussion, Jane prepared five questions (see Appendix U) and an illustration (see Appendix V). She addresses the questions she prepared for the discussion in her final response (see Appendix W). She states that her opinion of the book changed – she liked it. She was also wondering how Winnie got out of jail. She shared an incorrect prediction and analyzed the outcome and made personal connections. She also wrote questions she wished to ask the author.

One of the students, Tom, was absent. Jane asked if she could sit in the middle of the table as opposed to the end – I honored her request. We started the discussions late. I observed from a distance.
Jane contributed to the discussion twice – once, voluntarily and a second time, in response to a question addressed to her: “the only thing that brought me into the story is the back but then if you read it, you already know what is going to happen.” When asked if she wanted to share one of her responses, she replied “no, not really.” Jane’s friend became the director.

The group discussed the character’s motives, they evaluated the book (they gave it a report card grade), shared visualizations, and discussed topics such as Greek mythology, life, death, and the end of the world. There were many distractions in the room - three different teachers walked through my room, several times, with parades of students, to gain access to the computers in the room next to mine. It was not a silent parade. Two rotating groups of students from other classes were using the computers in my room – they were having difficulty. The computers are located next to the research group’s table. The Literature Circle discussions came to a complete halt many times.

Jane thought she did a great job giving others a chance to speak, preparing for the discussion, listening with an open mind, and showing courtesy to the speaker (see Appendix X). She questioned if the group could hear her. She gave herself a low rating for making eye contact. She felt her best contribution was sticking to the questions asked. She learned and understood what really happened in the jail.

Analysis of Discussion #6

In her preparation work, Jane seems to be drawing upon her past success. She prepared more questions than any other discussion – again this is evidence that she sees the benefit of having questions. She also prepared an illustration – she may have been thinking ‘it worked before, it should work again.’ Her comment about her changed
opinion was vague. It seems as though she is not aware of why she likes the book. This could be due to the fact that she actually understands the story better because of the literature circle discussions, an application of ELA 1. It also could be that she is aware of and contemplating the themes and conflicts which she has been made more aware of as a result of the literature circle discussions, ELA 2 and ELA 3. Her written responses again confirmed that she did not fully understand the events – she missed how Winnie got out of jail, a deficiency in ELA 1. Jane’s written responses reveal that she is not only honest by stating her incorrect prediction, but she shows that she is using reading strategies to analyze and correct her predictions, an application of reading across the ELA Standards. Her questions to the author validate her interest in the novel and an appreciation for author’s craft, an application of ELA 2.

Considering the amount of preparation on Jane’s part, Jane did not have a good discussion. She only participated twice. This is odd considering the fact that Tom, the student she seemed to be the most frustrated with in the past, was not present. She may have been disappointed that he was not there and therefore, did not get a chance to experiment with her discussion plan. It is also possible that her mood played a role – something could have happened in the morning that I missed. A third possibility is the chaos. It seemed like we were in the middle of a parade route with all the people in and out of our room. With Jane not being a risk-taker, I wonder if she was uncomfortable with others around. Her comment about the back of the book is in conflict with the findings from the last two discussions – she returned to her earlier position of the back of the book ruining it for her. This is inconsistent with recent interest she has shown. It appears as though her mood or insecurity is again playing a significant role.
Her self-evaluation form reveals that she continues to accept the tape recorder—she questions if the group could hear her. She gave herself a low rating for making eye contact; she understands that she was not listening respectfully and responsibly: an application of listening across the ELA Standards. Of particular interest is her comment about sticking to the questions asked as her best contribution to the group. She was not responding to the questions, which means she may have been aware that the group was not focused on the questions either. Again, the lack of focus most likely had to do with the environmental chaos. Even though she did not pursue clarification of the events in the jail, she learned that other group members also had confusion about these events and the group was able to clear it up for all, an application of ELA 1. Despite her own actions in the group, she benefited from the discussion by gaining understanding, ELA 1.

Even with the distractions and overall lack of focus by the class, the group addressed all four ELA Standards. In discussing the character's motives, they applied ELA 2. Their evaluation of the book included the application of ELA 3. Sharing their visualizations included ELA 2 and ELA 4. In discussing Greek mythology, they applied ELA 1 and ELA 3. When discussing the topics of life, death, and the end of the world, ELA 3 was addressed. Throughout the discussion ELA 4 was practiced, social interaction.

In summary, Jane's discussion plan continues to show that she has difficulty with reading comprehension when reading new material. However, her attitude seems to have improved. She is putting forth more effort and states that she likes the book. The discussion itself was not as good due to the distractions or possibly her mood. Her performance was disappointing but the group did discuss worthwhile topics.
Summary

In Jane’s case, her performance was inconsistent. Her Literature Response Journal shows that she missed details of the major events within the chapters. For example, in one of her responses, she was obviously aware that something unusual was happening because, according to Jane, the Tuck family looked the same after 15 years. Actually, they looked the same for 87 years. She also had difficulty when Winnie was thinking aloud, not talking with another character. The act of using the gun to hit the man in the yellow suit and the jail scene were also confusing to her. Regardless of her understanding going into the discussions, she listened, understood, and benefited from the discussions. Even though her written responses and her behavior during the discussion indicate that she is enjoying the book, her comment in the final discussion seems to contradict. She declared, “the only thing that brought me into the story is the back but then if you read it, you already know what is going to happen.” I wonder if this type of response is a defense mechanism?

Jane was quite aware of her performance during the discussions. In the beginning, she seemed frustrated with not getting a chance to speak. She raised her hand, the group ignored her. She was concerned about being a responsible learner but also for keeping the volume down in the classroom. Not everyone in the group had the same level of concern. Jane worked through it. Despite being put on the spot by her group, she eventually participated, executed portions of her plan, assumed the role of the director, and used illustrations to participate in a safe way. She seemed to realize that everyone in the group had weaknesses. Her moods and insecurities were factors in her
performance; she also seemed more comfortable taking risks when I was not sitting with the group.

During one novel study, I observed the student with the lowest reading level working toward the goals established by the New York State ELA Learning Standards. The discussions were student led and offered exposure to a variety of worthwhile topics that facilitated application of all four ELA Standards.

With the exception of the last discussion, Jane was showing improvement in her contributions. It was not the intent for Jane to master the ELA Standards during one novel study. However, she did get practice and made progress toward all four ELA Standards when she felt comfortable and safe. She seemed to feel more comfortable and safe when I was not too close or other visitors were not around. It took her a while to discover how to get involved. The literature circle discussions gave her the chance to see that other students share the same questions and misunderstandings. They also gave her a chance to compare their performance with her own and establish goals for herself.

When she let them, the group treated her as an equal. When she didn’t participate, the group applied peer pressure.

Literature circles helped Jane work toward the goals established by the NYS ELA Standards. During this study, she was reading, writing, listening, and speaking for information and understanding, for literary response and expression, for critical analysis and evaluation, and for social interaction.
Conclusion

My journey into literature circles started with my mission to provide a student-centered classroom while simultaneously addressing the common learning standards for all. The use of Literature Circles accomplishes both of these things.

Although there are several approaches to literature circles, the models have the common elements of reading, preparing for a discussion(s), implementing the literature circle discussion(s), and evaluating the discussion(s). There are many ways to modify each of these elements to ensure sound literacy instruction that meet the needs of the students as well as the teacher.

The structures I have provided function in a way consistent with the role sheets suggested by Daniels (1994). Students get practice with important skills to help them demonstrate their understanding in a literature circle discussion. With time, the students have been given more choice in the type of tasks they completed while reading or preparing for the discussion. As an observer of the discussion as opposed to the leader of the discussion, I was able to collect data on all the students in lieu of the few that participated in a whole-class discussion. This information is useful in teaching strategy lessons or in setting individual student goals.

I feel that sixth grade students are capable of conducting self-sustaining literature circle discussions at an adequate level of comprehension. The creative thoughts that are shared during the discussion reveal a lot about the individuals. The discussions are fun and can be a source of inquiry for the students as well as myself. Not only have I learned more about the research subject, I now have a different view of the group members and the classroom dynamics.
Literature circles are a great way to meet the New York State English Language Arts Learning Standards while assessing and addressing the needs of each student, even the student with the lowest reading ability.
Bibliography


Tunkle, R.E., Anderson, K. & Evans, C. Literature groups: Their definition, supporting research, components, and benefits. *Reading Improvement, 40-48*

### Standard 1

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

#### READING

Students will read a minimum of 25 books or the equivalent per year across all content areas and standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS READ, Grades 5-6, for Information and Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Read from informational texts such as:  
  - textbooks related to all school subjects  
  - reference materials  
  - primary sources  
  - biographies and autobiographies  
  - essays  
  - newspapers and magazines  
  - age-appropriate online and electronic databases and web sites. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to read include to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Identify purpose of reading  
- Adjust reading rate according to purpose for reading  
- Use word recognition and context clues to read fluently  
- Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues, a dictionary, or a glossary  
- Identify signal words (finally or in addition) that provide clues to organizational formats such as time order  
- Use knowledge of punctuation to assist in comprehension  
- Apply corrective strategies to assist in comprehension (such as rereading, discussion with teacher, peers, or parents/caregivers)  
- Read aloud, using inflection and intonation appropriate to text read and audience  
- Maintain a personal reading list to reflect reading goals and accomplishments. |
Standard 1
Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

WRITING
Students will write an average of 1000 words per month across all content areas and standards.

WHAT STUDENTS WRITE, Grades 5-6, for Information and Understanding
- Write the following in order to transmit information:
  - business letters
  - directions
  - news articles
  - summaries
  - reports of approximately one to five pages.

WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include:
- Use at least three sources of information with appropriate citations to develop reports
- Take notes to record and organize relevant data, facts, and ideas
- State a main idea and support it with details and examples
- Compare and contrast ideas and information among two or three sources
- Write labels or captions for graphics such as charts, maps, graphs, and diagrams used to convey information
- Adopt an organizational format such as chronological order that is appropriate for informational writing
- Use paragraphing to organize ideas and information
- Maintain a portfolio that includes informational writing.

WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include:
- Understand the purpose for writing; for example, explain, describe, narrate, persuade, and express feelings
- Determine the intended audience before writing
- Use tone and language appropriate for audience and purpose
- Use prewriting activities; for example, brainstorming, freewriting, note taking, and outlining
- Use the "writing process" (prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and editing)
- Use teacher conferences and peer review to revise written work
- Observe rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling:
  - punctuation of simple and compound sentences, of dialogue, of titles of articles
  - spelling of commonly misspelled words, of homonyms, of content-area vocabulary
- Use correct grammatical construction:
  - parts of speech: nouns, adjectives and adverbs (comparative and superlative), pronouns (nominative and objective), conjunctions (coordinating and subordinating), prepositions and prepositional phrases, and interjections
  - complete simple, compound, and complex sentences, using: correct subject/verb agreement, verb tense, and pronouns with clear antecedents
- Use signal words to provide clues to the organizational format; for example, in addition, finally, as a result, similarly, on the other hand
- Use dictionaries, thesauruses, and style manuals
- Use word processing skills.
Standard 1
Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

LISTENING
Students will listen on a daily basis.

- Listen to interpret data, facts, and ideas in, for example:
  - short lectures
  - class discussions
  - interviews
  - presentations
  - multimedia presentations
  - newscasts.

- Listen in order to:
  - follow instructions which provide information about a task or an assignment
  - identify essential details for note taking
  - distinguish between fact and opinion
  - identify information that is implicit rather than stated
  - connect new information to prior knowledge or experience.

- Listen respectfully and responsively
- Identify own purpose for listening
- Recognize content-specific vocabulary or terminology
- Listen for unfamiliar words and learn their meaning.

WHEN STUDENTS SPEAK, Grades 5-6, for Information and Understanding

- Speak to share data, facts, and ideas in, for example:
  - small and large group class discussions
  - presentations to classmates and other students
  - school assemblies.

WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- Speak in order to:
  - ask probing questions
  - interview peers
  - share information from personal experience
  - share information from a variety of texts
  - synthesize and paraphrase information
  - state a main idea and support it with facts, details, and examples
  - compare and contrast information
  - make connections between sources of information
- Present reports of five to seven minutes for teachers and peers on topics related to all school subjects
- Summarize main points as part of the conclusion
- Use notes or outlines appropriate to the presentation.

WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- Respond respectfully
- Initiate communication with peers, teachers, and others in the school community
- Use language and grammar appropriate to purpose for speaking
- Use facial expressions and gestures which enhance communication
- Establish eye contact during presentations and group discussions
- Use audible voice and pacing appropriate to content and audience
- Use visual aids to support the presentation.

SPEAKING
Students will speak on a daily basis.
Standard 2
Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

READING
Students will read a minimum of 25 books or the equivalent per year across all content areas and standards.

WHAT STUDENTS READ, Grades 5-6, for Literary Response and Expression
- Read, view, and interpret imaginative texts and performances, such as:
  - short stories
  - short novels
  - plays
  - myths and legends
  - folktales
  - poems
  - films and video productions
  - electronic books.

WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR LITERARY RESPONSE AND EXPRESSION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to read include to:
- Read, view, and interpret imaginative texts from a variety of genres
- Define the characteristics of different genres
- Select imaginative text based on personal needs and interests and read silently for enjoyment for extended periods
- Read aloud from a variety of genres, for example, read the lines of a play or recite a poem
- Recognize that the same story can be told in different genres; for example, novel, poem, or play
- Identify literary elements (setting, plot, character, rhythm, and rhyme) of different genres
- Recognize how the author uses devices such as simile, metaphor, and personification to create meaning
- Recognize how authors treat similar themes
- Identify the ways in which characters change and develop throughout a story
- Compare characters in literature to people in own lives.

WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to read include to:
- Identify purpose of reading
- Adjust reading rate according to purpose for reading
- Use word recognition and context clues to read fluently
- Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues, a dictionary, or a glossary
- Identify signal words (finally or in addition) that provide clues to organizational formats such as time order
- Use knowledge of punctuation to assist in comprehension
- Apply corrective strategies to assist in comprehension (such as rereading, discussion with teacher, peers, or parents/caregivers)
- Read aloud using inflection and intonation appropriate to text read and audience
- Maintain a personal reading list to reflect reading goals and accomplishments.
## Grades: 5-6

### Standard 2

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

### WRITING

Students will write an average of 1000 words per month across all content areas and standards.

### WHAT STUDENTS WRITE, Grades 5-6, for Literary Response and Expression

- Write original imaginative texts, such as:
  - stories
  - poems and songs
  - plays
- Write interpretive and responsive essays.

### WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR LITERARY RESPONSE AND EXPRESSION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include:

- Write original imaginative texts:
  - use organizing structures such as stanzas, chapters, scenes, and verses
  - create a lead that attracts the reader's interest
  - provide a title that interests the reader
  - develop characters, create a setting, and establish a plot
  - use examples of literary devices such as rhythm, rhyme, simile, and personification
  - establish consistent point of view; for example, first or third person
  - use vocabulary to create a desired effect
- Write interpretive essays, in order to:
  - summarize the plot
  - describe the characters and how they change
  - describe the setting and recognize its importance to the story
  - draw a conclusion about the work
  - interpret the impact of literary devices such as simile and personification
  - recognize the impact of rhythm and rhyme
- Respond to literature, connecting the response to personal experience
- Use resources such as personal experience and themes from other texts and performances to plan and create imaginative text
- Maintain a writing portfolio that includes imaginative, interpretive, and responsive writing.

### WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include:

- Understand the purpose for writing; for example, explain, describe, narrate, persuade, and express feelings
- Determine the intended audience before writing
- Use tone and language appropriate for audience and purpose
- Use prewriting activities; for example, brainstorming, freewriting, note taking, and outlining
- Use the “writing process” (prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and editing)
- Use teacher conferences and peer review to revise written work
- Observe rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling
  - punctuation of simple and compound sentences, of dialogue, of titles of articles
  - spelling of commonly misspelled words, of homonyms, of content-area vocabulary
- Use correct grammatical construction:
  - parts of speech: nouns, adjectives and adverbs (comparative and superlative), pronouns (nominative and objective), conjunctions (coordinating and subordinating), prepositions and prepositional phrases, and interjections
  - complete simple, compound, and complex sentence using: correct subject/verb agreement, verb tense, a pronoun with clear antecedents
- Use signal words to provide clues to the organizational format; for example, in addition, finally, as a result, similar on the other hand
- Use dictionaries, thesauruses, and style manuals
- Use word processing skills.
# Standard 2

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

## LISTENING

Students will listen on a daily basis.

**WHAT STUDENTS LISTEN TO, Grades 5-6, for Literary Response and Expression**

- Listen to comprehend, interpret, and respond to imaginative texts and performances such as:
  - stories
  - plays
  - poems and songs
  - films and video productions.

**WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR LITERARY RESPONSE AND EXPRESSION:** The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to listen include:

- **In order to:**
  - distinguish different genres, such as story, biography, poem, or play
  - identify characters’ motivation
  - recognize the use of literary devices, such as simile, personification, rhythm, and rhyme in presentation of imaginative texts and determine their impact on meaning
  - use personal experience and prior knowledge to interpret and respond to imaginative texts and performances
  - identify cultural and historical influences in texts and performances.

**WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS:** The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to listen include:

- Listen respectfully and responsively
- Identify own purpose for listening
- Recognize content-specific vocabulary or terminology
- Listen for unfamiliar words and learn their meaning.

## SPEAKING

Students will speak on a daily basis.

**WHEN STUDENTS SPEAK, Grades 5-6, for Literary Response and Expression**

- Speak to present interpretations and responses to imaginative texts in, for example:
  - class and small group discussions
  - formal presentations to classmates
  - group and individual conferences with teachers
  - school assemblies.

**WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR LITERARY RESPONSE AND EXPRESSION:** The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- **In order to:**
  - present original works such as stories, poems, and plays to adults and peers
  - share book reviews
  - summarize the plot, describe motivation of characters, and explain the importance of setting
  - connect a personal response to literature to prior experience or knowledge
  - recognize the importance of cultural, ethnic, and historical characteristics in texts and performances
  - ask questions and respond to questions for clarification
  - Use notes or outlines appropriately in presentations.

**WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS:** The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- Respond respectfully
- Initiate communication with peers, teachers, and others in the school community
- Use language and grammar appropriate to the purpose for speaking
- Use facial expressions and gestures which enhance communication
- Establish eye contact during presentations and group discussions
- Use audible voice and pacing appropriate to content and audience
- Use visual aids to support the presentation.
Appendix A

Standard 3
Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

READING
Students will read a minimum of 25 books or the equivalent per year across all content areas and standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS READ, Grades 5-6, for Critical Analysis and Evaluation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read to analyze and evaluate information, ideas, opinions, themes, and experiences from the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- books, fiction and nonfiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- essays including scientific and historical essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- newspapers and magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- advertisements</td>
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<tr>
<td>- electronic resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to read include to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate information, ideas, opinions, and themes in texts by identifying:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the central idea and supporting details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- details that are primary and those that are less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- precise and vague language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- statements of fact, opinion, and exaggeration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- missing or unclear information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use established and personal criteria to analyze and evaluate the quality of ideas and information in text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify different perspectives (such as social, cultural, ethnic, historical) on an issue presented in more than one text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize how one's own point of view contributes to forming an opinion about information and ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to read include to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify purpose of reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjust reading rate according to purpose for reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use word recognition and context clues to read fluently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues, a dictionary, or a glossary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify signal words (finally or in addition) that provide clues to organizational formats such as time order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use knowledge of punctuation to assist in comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply corrective strategies to assist in comprehension (such as rereading, discussion with teacher, peers, or parents/caregivers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read aloud, using inflection and intonation appropriate to text read and audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain a personal reading list to reflect reading goals and accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard 3
Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

WRITING
Students will write an average of 1000 words per month across all content areas and standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS WRITE, Grades 5-6, for Critical Analysis and Evaluation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Write the following to analyze and evaluate ideas, information, themes and experiences:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- expository essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- persuasive texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- movie and book reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- advertisements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use strategies such as note taking, semantic webbing or mapping, and outlining to plan and organize writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use supporting evidence from text to evaluate ideas, information, themes, or experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Analyze the impact of an event or issue from personal, peer group, and school community perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Analyze literary elements in order to evaluate the quality of ideas and information in text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use information and ideas from other subject areas and personal experiences to form and express opinions and judgments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adopt an organizational format appropriate for critical analysis and evaluation such as compare/contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use precise vocabulary in writing analysis and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maintain a writing portfolio that includes writing for critical analysis and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Understand the purpose for writing; for example, explain, describe, narrate, persuade, and express feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Determine the intended audience before writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use tone and language appropriate for audience and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use pre-writing activities; for example, brainstorming, freewriting, note taking, and outlining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use the “writing process” (prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and editing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use teacher conferences and peer review to revise written work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Observe rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- punctuation of simple and compound sentences, of dialogue, of titles of articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- spelling of commonly misspelled words, of homonyms, of content-area vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use correct grammatical construction:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- parts of speech: nouns, adjectives and adverbs (comparative and superlative), pronouns (nominative and objective), conjunctions (coordinating and subordinating), prepositions and prepositional phrases, and interjections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- complete simple, compound, and complex sentences, using: correct subject/verb agreement, verb tense, and pronouns with clear antecedents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use signal words to provide clues to the organizational format; for example, in addition, finally, as a result, similarly, on the other hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use dictionaries, thesauruses, and style manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use word processing skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

**LISTENING**
Students will listen on a daily basis.

**SPEAKING**
Students will speak on a daily basis.

WHAT STUDENTS LISTEN TO, Grades 5-6, for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

- Listen to analyze and evaluate information, ideas, opinions, themes, and experiences in, for example:
  - discussions in small and large group settings
  - speeches in class and group settings, such as assemblies
  - reviews of books, films, and stage plays
  - panel presentations
  - multimedia presentations.

WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to listen include:

- Listen in order to:
  - form an opinion on a subject based on information, ideas, and themes expressed in presentations
  - recognize that the criteria used to analyze and evaluate presentations may be influenced by one's point of view and purpose for listening
  - recognize and use the perspectives of others, including teachers and peers, in order to analyze and evaluate presentations
  - use prior knowledge and experiences in order to more fully evaluate and analyze content of presentations
  - recognize persuasive presentations and identify the techniques used to accomplish that purpose, such as choice of language and use of sound effects
  - evaluate the quality of the speaker's presentation style by using criteria such as volume, tone of voice, and rate.

WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to listen include:

- Listen respectfully and responsively
- Identify own purpose for listening
- Recognize content-specific vocabulary or terminology
- Listen for unfamiliar words and learn their meaning.

WHAT STUDENTS SPEAK, Grades 5-6, for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

- Speak to present opinions and judgments in, for example:
  - class and group discussions
  - formal presentations to classmates
  - individual/group conferences with teachers
  - presentations at school assemblies.

WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- Speak in order to:
  - ask questions and respond to questions for clarification
  - express an opinion or a judgment about information, ideas, opinions, themes, and experiences in books, essays, articles, and advertisements
  - use role play as a strategy to analyze or evaluate events or issues
  - use information and ideas from other subject areas and from personal experiences to form and express opinions and judgments
  - articulate a thesis statement and support it with details, examples, and reasons
  - persuade, using appropriate language, tone, volume, and gestures
- Use notes or outlines appropriately in presentations.

WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- Respond respectfully
- Initiate communication with peers, teachers, and others in the school community
- Use language and grammar appropriate to the purpose for speaking
- Use facial expressions and gestures which enhance communication
- Establish eye contact during presentations and group discussions
- Use audible voice and pacing appropriate to content and audience
- Use visual aids to support the presentation.
## Standard 4
Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

### READING
Students will read a minimum of 25 books or the equivalent per year across all content areas and standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS READ, Grades 5-6, for Social Interaction:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Read the following to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- friendly letters, notes, cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- published diaries and journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electronic mail (e-mail).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to read include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Share reading experiences to build a relationship with peers or adults; for example, read together silently or aloud with a partner or in small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respect the age, gender, position, and cultural traditions of the writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recognize conversational tone in friendly communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recognize the types of language appropriate to social communication; for example, jargon/colloquialisms, informal, and conventions of e-mail.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to read include:</th>
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<td>- Read aloud, using inflection and intonation appropriate to text read and audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Maintain a personal reading list to reflect reading goals and accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A

Standard 4

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

WRITING

Students will write an average of 1000 words per month across all content areas and standards.

WHAT STUDENTS WRITE, Grades 5-6, for Social Interaction:

- Write the following to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships:
  - friendly letters, notes, and cards
  - personal journals
  - friendly electronic messages (e-mail).

WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include to:

- Share the process of writing for social communication with peers and adults; for example, write a condolence note, get well card, or thank you letter with a writing partner or in small groups
- Respect age, gender, position, and cultural traditions of the recipient
- Develop a personal voice that enables the reader to get to know the writer
- Write personal reactions to experiences, events, and observations, using a form of social communication
- Maintain a portfolio that includes writing for social communication.

WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to write include to:

- Understand the purpose for writing; for example, explain, describe, narrate, persuade, and express feelings
- Determine the intended audience before writing
- Use tone and language appropriate for audience and purpose
- Use prewriting activities; for example, brainstorming, freewriting, note taking, and outlining
- Use the “writing process” (prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and editing)
- Use teacher conferences and peer review to revise writing
- Observe rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling:
  - punctuation of simple and compound sentences, of dialogue, of titles of articles
  - spelling of commonly misspelled words, of homonyms, of content-area vocabulary
- Use correct grammatical construction:
  - parts of speech: nouns, adjectives and adverbs (comparative and superlative), pronouns (nominative and objective), conjunctions (coordinating and subordinating), prepositions and prepositional phrases, and interjections
  - complete simple, compound, and complex sentences using: correct subject/verb agreement, verb tense, pronouns with clear antecedents
- Use signal words to provide clues to the organization format; for example, in addition, finally, as a result, similarly on the other hand
- Use dictionaries, thesauruses, and style manuals
- Use word processing skills.
**Standard 4**

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

### LISTENING

Students will listen on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT STUDENTS LISTEN TO: Grades 5-6, for Social Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen in the classroom and school environment to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships in, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- small and large group discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conferences with teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SPEAKING

Students will speak on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN STUDENTS SPEAK; Grades 5-6, for Social Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Speak in the classroom and school environment to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships in, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- small and large group activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conferences with teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to listen include:

- Respect the age, gender, position, and cultural traditions of the speaker
- Recognize friendly communication based on volume, tone, and rate of the speaker's voice
- Recognize that social communication may include informal language such as jargon and colloquialisms
- Recognize the meaning of speakers' nonverbal cues

### WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to listen include:

- Listen respectfully and responsively
- Identify own purpose for listening
- Recognize content-specific vocabulary or terminology
- Listen for unfamiliar words and learn their meaning

### WHAT STUDENTS DO FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- Discuss the content of friendly notes, cards, and letters with a teacher or classmate in order to get to know the writer and each other
- Use the informal language of social communication
- Respect the age, gender, culture, and interests of the listener

### WHAT STUDENTS DO ACROSS ALL FOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: The competencies that 5-6 students demonstrate as they learn to speak include:

- Respond respectfully
- Initiate communication with peers, teachers, and others in the school community
- Use language and grammar appropriate to the purpose for speaking
- Use facial expressions and gestures that enhance communication
- Establish eye contact during presentations and group discussions
- Use audible voice and pacing appropriate to content and audience
- Use visual aids to support the presentation
# Self-Evaluation Checklist for Literature Circle Discussions

Name: ________________________________ Date: __________________

Discussion Topic: ________________________________

(4 = great job! 1 = did not do well)

## When I was the speaker did I:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>try to hold the attention of my group?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state ideas clearly?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus on the topic?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give others a chance to speak?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss the questions and comments from others in my group?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state my feelings as well as my ideas?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak loud enough to be heard in my group (but not so loud as to disrupt others)?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make eye contact with my group members?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepare for the discussion?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## When I was a listener did I:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>give my full attention to each speaker?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listen with an open mind?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask good questions or make connections based on what I heard?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show courtesy to each speaker?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The best thing I did to help my group was:

What I learned from the discussion includes:

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Prepared for Class</th>
<th>On task</th>
<th>Contributed to discussion</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. *Tuck Everlasting*
A GOOD RESPONSE SHOULD INCLUDE:

Your feelings, ideas and opinions (reactions) about what you have read. Include a short summary or retell enough of the story to help the reader understand the main idea. Use: "Who "What "Where "Why and "How

Choices - you might include:
- personal thoughts, feelings, opinions
  (you tell what you thought or felt while you read the story and why)
- ask questions or tell about parts that make you wonder
  ("I wonder why the boy didn't call his grandma." "Why do you think he ran away?")
- tell about events that surprised you and why
- discuss big ideas - theme(s) or messages
  (why do you think the author wrote this?)
- connections - to other books, to your life, or to the world
  (explain how the connection is related to an event or idea in the book)
- comments on author's craft
  (explain vocabulary, tell what you liked about how the author told the story:
  vivid descriptions, interesting plot, characters, use of poetic language)
- make predictions based on information that you've read or confirm or change past predictions
- say how you would feel or behave if you were in the character's shoes
  (Try to blend the facts from the book with your opinions and your thoughts)
SUMMARIZER

Name __________________________

Group __________________________

Book ____________________________________________

Assignment for tomorrow p __________________

Assignment: Your job is to prepare a brief summary of today's reading. Below we have listed several main ideas or events to remember. You can use the numbered slots to write down the key points. These will help you remember what you read. The other members of your group will be counting on you to give a quick summary of today's reading. Assignments p __________________

Summary:

Topic to be carried over to tomorrow:

1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________
5. __________________________
6. __________________________

Key points:

1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________

Topi to be carried over to tomorrow: __________________________

Discussion Roles

Literature Circle
**DISCUSSION DIRECTOR**

Name __________________________

Group __________________________

Book ___________________________

Assignment p _p_

You are the Discussion Director. Your job is to write down some good questions that you think your group would want to talk about.

1. __________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________

3. Why...
4. How...
5. If...

**PASSAGE PICKER**

Name __________________________

Group __________________________

Book ___________________________

Assignment p _p_

You are the Passage Picker. Your job is to pick parts of the story that you want to read aloud to your group. These can be:

- a good part
- an interesting part
- a funny part
- some good writing
- a scary part
- a good description

Be sure to mark the parts you want to share with a Post-it note or bookmark. Or you can write on this sheet the parts you want to share.

Parts to read out loud:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Why I liked it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From Literacy Circles: Voice and choice in the student-centred classroom by Harvey Daniels.
Senehouse Publishers, York, ME.
ARTFUL ARTIST

Name ____________________
Group ____________________
Book _____________________
Assignment p —— p ——

You are the Artful Artist. Your job is to draw anything about the story that you liked:
- a character
- the setting
- a problem
- an exciting part
- a surprise
- a prediction of what will happen next
- anything else

Draw on the back of this page or on a bigger piece of paper if you need it. Do any kind of drawing or picture you like.

When your group meets, don't tell what your drawing is. Let them guess and talk about it first. Then you can tell about it.

WORD FINDER

Name ____________________
Group ____________________
Book _____________________
Assignment p —— p ——

You are the Word Finder. Your job is to look for special words in the story. Words that are:
- new — interesting
- different — important
- strange — hard
- funny

When you find a word that you want to talk about, mark it with a Post-it note or write it down here.

Word | Page | Why I picked it

When your group meets, help your friends talk about the words you have chosen. Things you can discuss:

How does this word fit in the story?
Does anyone know what this word means?
Shall we look it up in the dictionary?
What does this word make you feel like?
Can you draw the word?

From Literature Circles: More and choice in the student-centered classroom by Harvey Daniels.
Stenhouse Publishers, York, ME.
**CONNECTOR**

Name ________________________________
Group _______________________________
Book __________________________________
Assignment p _______________________

You are the Connector. Your job is to find connections between the book and the world outside. This means connecting the reading to:
- your own life
- happenings at school or in the neighborhood
- similar events at other times and places
- other people or problems
- other books or stories
- other writings on the same topics
- other writings by the same author

Some things today's reading reminded me of were . . .

---

**INVESTIGATOR**

Name ________________________________
Group _______________________________
Book __________________________________
Assignment p _______________________

Investigator: Your job is to dig up some background information on any topic related to your book. This might include:
- The geography, weather, culture, or history of the book's setting.
- Information about the author, her/his life, and other works.
- Information about the time period portrayed in the book.
- Pictures, objects, or materials that illustrate elements of the book.
- The history and derivation of words or names used in the book.
- Music that reflects the book or the time.

This is not a formal research report. The idea is to find one bit of information or material that helps your group understand the book better. Investigate something that really interests you—something that struck you as puzzling or curious while you were reading.

**Ways of gathering information:**
- The introduction, preface, or "about the author" section of the book.
- Library books and magazines.
- Online computer search or encyclopedia.
- Interviews with people who know the topic.
- Other novels, nonfiction, or textbooks you've read.

Topic to be carried over to tomorrow __________________________________

---

From *Literature Circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom* by Harvey Daniels
Steck-Vaughn Publishers, York, ME.
?#1) Who do you think that guy in the yellow clothes?

?#2) Do you like the book so far? Why?

2/16/01 Responses ch.1-4

It surprised me when they lived for 15 years and they look the same the whole time. If I was in Winines shoes I would have asked the guy how are you and what are you doing here. This book was confusing because I did not get the story so I had to ask my friend and then I got it. Now I think this story is very good, but at the beginning I thought it was boring but it is very good I would give it a ten then up.
Appendix

Self-Evaluation Checklist for Literature Circle Discussions

Name: __________________ Date: __/__/__

Discussion Topic: Tuck Everlasting

(4 = great job!, 1 = did not do well)

When I was the speaker did I:

- try to hold the attention of my group? 4 3 2 1
- state ideas clearly? 4 3 2 1
- focus on the topic? 4 3 2 1
- give others a chance to speak? 4 3 2 1
- discuss the questions and comments from others in my group? 4 3 2 1
- state my feelings as well as my ideas? 4 3 2 1
- speak loud enough to be heard in my group (but not so loud as to disrupt others)? 4 3 3 1
- make eye contact with my group members? 4 3 2 1
- prepare for the discussion? 4 3 2 1

When I was a listener did I:

- give my full attention to each speaker? 4 3 2 1
- listen with an open mind? 4 3 2 1
- ask good questions or make connections based on what I heard? 4 3 2 1
- show courtesy to each speaker? 4 3 2 1

The best thing I did to help my group was:

paper

What I learned from the discussion includes:

paper

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on:

paper
I keep saying that we are getting off the topic. We keep looking in the book for ideas and we had to try to be quiet.

I learned that the back is very bad because it gives the story away. I learned that one group thinks that the guy in the yellow clothes is going to followWinie and find out there secret.

I will have to work on talking to the speaker well my group said that, but I think I was fine because I keep talking to everyone and I was on task.
Q's
2/26/01

1.) What did it mean when it said, "the worst is happening at last?" Explain.

2.)

Discussion Q's
3/7/01

1.) What is in the water and why does it make your agar stay the same? What is in the water?

2.)
Appendix

Self-Evaluation Checklist for Literature Circle Discussions

Name: __________________________ Date: __________

Discussion Topic: _________________

(4 = great job!, 1 = did not do well)

When I was the speaker did I:

- try to hold the attention of my group? 4 3 2 1
- state ideas clearly? 4 3 2 1
- focus on the topic? 4 3 2 1
- give others a chance to speak? 5 3 2 1
- discuss the questions and comments from others in my group? 4 3 2 1
- state my feelings as well as my ideas? 4 3 2 1
- speak loud enough to be heard in my group (but not so loud as to disrupt others)? 4 3 2 1
- make eye contact with my group members? 4 3 2 1
- prepare for the discussion? 4 3 2 1

When I was a listener did I:

- give my full attention to each speaker? 4 3 2 1
- listen with an open mind? 4 3 2 1
- ask good questions or make connections based on what I heard? 4 3 2 1
- show courtesy to each speaker? 4 3 2 1

The best thing I did to help my group was:

The best thing I did was listen to everyone and make good eye contact with members of my group.

What I learned from the discussion includes:

I learned that people in my group have very good questions and comments.

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on:

[Handwritten notes:]

What I have to do next time is sit away from the tape recorder, so I will talk. I do not want to sit next to the recorder.
Appendix

Self-Evaluation Checklist - Literature Circle Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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The best thing I did to help my group was:

What I learned from the discussion includes:

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on:

**
Response for Ch. 6

I think that this chapter’s was very good because it was full of connections, but I did not like it because it left me **hanging** on at the end. I still have one ? but, it is from the other chapter, what did it mean when it said, “the last is happening at last?” I was confused when Winnie had thought going throw her mind, because I thought she was talking to Mea or someone. When I found out that Winnie was talking to her self, it remained me of when I talk to my self and my sister ask “what?” I predict that the Tucks are going to bring Winnie home and tell her about the water and the secret!!!!!! If I was in Winnies shoes I would have ran away because I do not know how this person is and I would very afraid.

)
L.A.
3/2/01

Response for Ch 7,8,9

I thought that this chapter’s were great, because it was full of the important ideas. Next time I am going to ask my group, what did it mean when it said, "THE WORST IS HAPPENING AT LAST" It was confusing when the Tucks were talking because I think they were talking on the trail or were they talking about the passed? I do not know???? I have a question, “Why did the author put that part in when the Tucks were talking, on the trail and not at home?” If I were in Mea shoes I would not have told Winnie the secret, because she could have told grandmother and her grandmother would have found out about the secret and she would have not told an body. I do not trusted Winnie because I have a fun felling about her.
Self-Evaluation Checklist for Literature Circle Discussions

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The best thing I did to help my group was:  
Tell my group members to speak louder.

What I learned from the discussion includes:  
That I have a lot of imagination and it finally paid off!

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on:  
Talking and trying to get everyone involved in the discussion.
my group didn't give me a chance to speak (I think)

If someone was getting
figure it was meant to give
my attention to group member
(forell)
# Self-Evaluation Checklist for Literature Circle Discussions

**Name:**

**Discussion Topic:**

**When I was the speaker did I:**

- try to hold the attention of my group?  
  4 3 2 1
- state ideas clearly?  
  4 3 2 1
- focus on the topic?  
  4 3 2 1
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  4 3 2 1
- listen with an open mind?  
  4 3 2 1
- ask good questions or make connections based on what I heard?  
  4 3 2 1
- show courtesy to each speaker?  
  4 3 2 1

The best thing I did to help my group was:

- **Try my best to listen to everyone in my group.**

What I learned from the discussion includes:

- I don't think I earned a very high grade for this discussion.

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on:

- Prepare better for the discussion. Try and not let others take the lead.
3/10/01 Ch 18-19 Sketch notes

- tucks are having been fast
- they are having flapjacks

- they heard a voice like an alien voice
- man dropped his fork
- everyone looked upstretched
- win a new head

- as the men in the yellow suit wanted to talk
- alfred name
- talking to the tucks
Sketch Notes Ch 18-19

- The man in the yellow coat came in a stereo to talk about his grave. He told him a story about the family that liked forever.
- They go was feeling going in about I think one of the kids family.
- The man in the yellow coat of the town. They said to each other more next time.
- Then he said to winnie to go out and the trucker not was gone. He to go back out to the man in the yellow coat feel about ground. Who did it?
Comment ch. 18-19

Chapter 18 was great. Like now you had to think about how the man in the yellow suit was telling about. I was surprised that he fell out when he did.

Response ch. 16-17

Chapters 16-17 were oh chapters. I was surprised that Winnie's grandmother was talking to the man in the yellow suit. I think he is evil for some reason. The man in the yellow said that he wanted to go academic? Why does he want to go academic? I have a funny feeling about the man. Miles is going to tell Winnie fishing. How come Miles is so sunny one circles? Do you like in this book?
Chapter 4: Dissection Planes

1. See your sketch notes.

2. How can the men in the yellow suit get more? How can they not?

3. Which do you like this face? why?

4. Why do you think Moe had the muffler box and the man is the one the man's gramophone taught him?

5. What do you think is going to happen next?
Self-Evaluation Checklist for Literature Circle Discussions

Name: ___________________________ Date: 3/20/01

Discussion Topic: Tuck Everlasting

(4 = great job!, 1 = did not do well)

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The best thing I did to help my group was:

Try to keep talking so my group was on topic. To prepare for the discussion.

What I learned from the discussion includes:

That some people can be rude like ___________.

I learned that __________

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on:

To have a better discussion, I need to try to ask more questions and be in a different spot.
Dissection

The hole book Plan

- Did you like this book?

- Did it help you when you had to research I & phlegm?

- Would you like to meet the author? Do you have questions for her?

- What did you think Winnie was going to do with the water?

- What would you give this book?
Final Response

Did you like this book? I thought this book was very good. First in the begging of the book I thought the book was going to be boring but the more I read the more the story was better. If I had to give this book a thumps up or thumps down I would give it 2 thumps up. I wonder how Winnie got out of jail? It surprised me when Winnie pored the water over the toad and did not drink it!!! What did you think she was going to do with the water? I thought Winnie was going to drink it and fined Jesse!!! What do you think is going to happen when the world ends and the Tucks are still alive? Would you what to live forever? Yes and no, yes because I would like to see what the new things people would develop and I would like to live forever. But no because if the world ends and everything is gone that what can you do, you cant kill your self because you cant die and I would like to see the people who did die in my family and see haven. So I would not went to live forever!!! I liked how the author wrote the book but I have
some questions, Where did you get all your ideas for the book? How did you get the idea of having water that you drink let people live forever? Are you going to write another book? But for this all I love this book!!

: (~)
Self-Evaluation Checklist for Literature Circle Discussions

Name: __________________________ Date: 3/29/01

Discussion Topic: Final Discussion

When I was the speaker did I:

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The best thing I did to help my group was: **Try to stay on topic.**

What I learned from the discussion includes: *I now understand.*

To have a better discussion next time, I need to work on: *No next time?*