

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

1998

The reluctant adolescent: Implementing literature circles to enhance intrinsic motivation

Judith Ann Hernandez

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hernandez, Judith Ann, "The reluctant adolescent: Implementing literature circles to enhance intrinsic motivation" (1998). *Theses Digitization Project*. 1829.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/1829>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

THE RELUCTANT ADOLESCENT:
IMPLEMENTING LITERATURE CIRCLES
TO ENHANCE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Reading Option

by
Judith Ann Hernandez

June 1998

THE RELUCTANT ADOLESCENT:
IMPLEMENTING LITERATURE CIRCLES
TO ENHANCE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

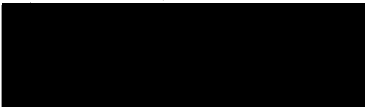
A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by

Judith Ann Hernandez


June 1998

Approved by:



Joe Gray, First Reader

6/2/98
Date


Katharine Busch, Second Reader

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is an emotional period for students. There are a number of changes that occur during this time period that have an impact on their academic growth and their motivation. These include the educational context, emotional and physiological changes. Motivational research contends there is a positive relationship between academic intrinsic motivation and a student's ability and efficacy beliefs.

There is a negative relationship between academic intrinsic motivation and anxiety. Decreases in intrinsic motivation are associated with increases of extrinsic motivation. Social interaction and inquiry are two common elements in promoting intrinsic motivation. They are also the basis for literature circles. This text suggests literature circles be implemented for fostering intrinsic motivation.

Literature circles are sophisticated literature discussion encounters designed to promote the construction of meaning and the promotion of inquiry of life issues. They are founded on the theoretical foundations of constructionalist and transactionalist approaches to literacy.

The benefits derived from such book talks are varied. They include an increase in literacy motivation, social interaction that supports learning, and genuine discussions

emerge between the participants. In addition, a students' self perception as readers is strengthened, improved reading comprehension is noted, and higher order thinking skills are utilized. Above all, the students' take ownership of their learning by exercising choice and exploring issues that are personally significant.

This project has been designed to assist the teacher who seeks to broaden their approach to teaching literacy. The handbook discusses the author's personal interest and experience implementing literature circles. It also provides theroretical background information. In addition, it suggests implementation approaches. Furthermore, assessment and evaluation are discussed as well as strategies which help to strengthen the students' cognitive abilities.

To further assist the teacher, the handbook includes an appendix that provides step by step curricular engagements, assessment tools, and a bibliography.

Dedicated to BRIANA
for all her patience
and love,
and to my
MOTHER and FATHER
for their love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	
Introduction.....	1
Models of Reading.....	4
Personal Theoretical Background.....	8
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
Introduction.....	11
Decline in Motivation.....	14
Classroom Implications.....	17
Literature Circles.....	20
Summary.....	26
GOALS AND LIMITATIONS	
Goals.....	29
Limitations.....	31
APPENDIX A LITERATURE CIRCLES HANDBOOK.....	33
APPENDIX B CURRICULAR SUPPORT.....	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	96
REFERENCES.....	98

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

At the present time I am teaching reading at the middle school level and I service students who are in either sixth, seventh and eighth grade. My class is not to be confused with the regular reading/language arts class. It is a supplementary reading class on the elective wheel, however, the students I have did not elect to take the class. They were assigned to the course based on their standardized reading test scores. Over the last academic year, I have discovered the overriding problem that many of the students have in common is a lack of motivation to read. They are students who can read, however, they choose not to. Furthermore, when they do engage in the reading process it is obvious that any strategies they learned when they were younger have not been practiced, so their performance is deemed as slow or low compared to a strategic reader. At this moment in time in the academic life of a middle school student, I don't believe there are any easy solutions. However, I do believe they would like to be successful readers, but they lack the motivation to put forth effort. As a result, they shut down and put much time in coming up with excuses not to read. Hence, the purpose of this project is to examine motivation factors and to explore the

viability of literature circles as a pedagogy to enhance intrinsic motivation toward literacy.

Students such as mine have often been referred to as remedial readers. My initial reaction to the term remediation is instantly negative. If I have to describe them in any way, it would be as reluctant readers rather than remedial readers. True, some of these students use weak reading strategies, some demonstrate a lack of focus, and others will not read independently for any length of time. However, they like to be read to, they like reading to younger kids, and they like reading to me. They enjoy the one on one attention and the dialogue that accompanies such close interaction.

With other students within this cluster there is what appears to be reading failure, poor performance on standardized tests. However, oral reading assessments, anecdotal observational records, and story retelling, show a different perspective of the same students. In interviewing these students, I have learned that they simply don't care about reading. They see it as boring. When they do read, it is for purely extrinsic reasons.

Furthermore, I have another group of students, albeit a small population, of Hispanic background who speak two languages. I am sensitive to the fact that for some of these

students it is not motivation which they lack nor is it a matter of remediation. In fact, I believe they need more enriching experiences with the English language.

Most importantly, the students who are assigned to this special elective must understand that they are no different than anyone else in the school. At the beginning of the school year these students showed obvious signs of resentment for being assigned to the class. There was a tremendous amount of outward resignation. They seek peer approval and recognition, therefore, they fear others will look down upon them. They also see no reason in putting forth effort when they know they will not be released from this class to re-enter the cycle of the elective wheel. Furthermore, it is an elective and they know they don't have to pass the class in order to go on to the next grade. Nevertheless, I believe that once they do become engaged and allow themselves to relax not only will they realize what they have to gain, they will have a lot to offer to everyone else in the class. It is important they feel competent and it is important that they achieve success.

This is a generalized description of the population I serve. I believe that these students need stimulation from a reading program. They would benefit from a variety of literacy activities that enable them to express themselves,

enable them to interact socially, enable them to inquire, and enable them to think deeply about issues that are important to them.

I know all of the students I now service have the potential to be successful literate individuals. Some of them will be more challenging than others to convince of that, nevertheless, I know that it is vital to bring literature into the classroom that respects people of their gender, their race, their class, and their abilities.

Models of Reading

The implementation and success of literature circles in the classroom will be dependent upon the philosophical perspective of the instructor. In review of the models of reading that have been part of reading instruction over the years, Weaver (1994) has divided the methods into two main schools of thought. One being a part-centered approach and another being a socio-psycholinguistic approach. A part-centered approach refers to the teaching of reading from part-to-whole, often called a bottom-up approach. A socio-psycholinguistic approach refers to an emphasis on the construction of meaning involving the text and the individual's background, often referred to as a top-down approach.

Within the concept of the part-centered approaches the

instructional methods include phonics, linguistics, sight word and basal reader approaches. A phonics program focuses on letter/sound relationships for the purpose of sounding out or decoding words. In conjunction with letter/sound correspondences, phonetic rules are also taught to assist in the sounding out of words. Many packaged phonics programs consist of workbooks, flash cards, words lists, and controlled sentences with vocabulary aligned with the word lists. Proponents of this approach value the fluent and rapid pronunciation of words. They believe comprehension will develop once decoding is mastered.

Proponents of the linguistic approach are concerned with regular patterns of spelling/sound correspondence, for example, *Nan fan can ran*. They believe that if children internalize the patterns they will be able to read unfamiliar words without sound out. The linguistic approach is similar to the decoding approach in that letter/sound correspondence is emphasized rather than comprehension. Unlike phonics, the linguistic approach does not directly teach letter/sound correspondence or phonetic rules. The linguistic approach focuses on regular exposure to regularly spelled words. Therefore, children will infer the common spelling/sound patterns.

A sight word approach, often referred to as the *look say* approach, focuses on the recognition of words on sight. From the outset, proponents of this method initially claim to be concerned with meaning. They made the assumption that if a child developed a bank of words they could immediately recognize, then comprehension would magically follow suit. However in practice, emphasis was placed on word identification and not on meaning. The only difference between this approach and the decoding approach is that this approach focuses on whole words rather than word parts.

The basal reader approach is characterized as eclectic in that many packaged programs include a variety of approaches. Typically, these programs include the direct teaching of phonics, phonetic rules, spelling patterns, and sight word vocabulary in isolation. Proponents of this approach are concerned with word perfect reading. There is strict control of the skills to be taught and when they are to be taught. New vocabulary is pretaught and practiced prior to a selection being read. In reference to comprehension, most basal reading programs provide questions for discussion during the reading and following the reading of a selection. Students are supplied with workbooks that generally contain comprehension and skill questions. Teachers are supplied with manuals that contain all the

right answers to the comprehension workbooks and follow up tests.

In sum, basal reading programs reflect an emphasis on skills which is a bottom-up approach. The transmission of skills and knowledge is passively learned by the student in all the part-to-whole approaches. The teacher controls and is responsible for all learning that is to take place.

According to Weaver (1994), socio-psycholinguistic approaches are those that emphasize the construction of meaning. The constructivist approach not only takes into consideration the meaning inherent in the text, but the prior experiences, prior knowledge, cultural background, and social contexts of the student. An example of this approach would be a language experience approach. Proponents of this approach emphasize the knowledge and oral language of the student to develop written texts. Thus, the student draws a connection between their own words and the written words. Within this context children assume ownership and responsibility of their learning.

According to Au (1993), constructivist models deal with more than just reading. The assumption is made that students will become literate through the engagement of both the reading and writing processes. Under the facilitative guidance of a teacher or knowledgeable other, students who

engage in reading will learn to read. Students who engage in writing will learn to write. The constructivist model does not rely on a prescribed and ordered list of skills to be taught in any sequence. Teaching within the constructivist mode is from whole-to-part. Reading and writing are kept whole. Skills are taught within the context of an authentic act of literacy.

Literature circles fall within this spectrum of the reading continuum. According to Short (1995), the literature circle is one component of a broader curricular framework as has been described in the constructivist model. The literature circle allows students to think and inquire. It gives them the opportunity to attend to the functions of literacy and to respond to a text through the course of discussion. In addition, students are encouraged to use a reading response journal to reflect upon their reactions to a given text (Au, 1993).

Personal Theoretical Background

My theoretical beliefs are grounded in the construct philosophy of teaching reading and writing that has its roots in socio-psycholinguistics. My reading program is based on my belief that the primary purpose of reading is to bring meaning to and take meaning from a text through transaction (Rosenblatt, 1976). I believe that readers must

make connections to a text through implementing prior knowledge, personal life experiences, predicting, and their "theory of the world" (Smith, 1985) and how it works. A good read is to be thoroughly savored, digested and shared. Reading is a social activity. Students need to interact with one another throughout their reading and writing experiences by laughing and talking and debating. My ultimate goal is to guide students to become members of what Smith (1985) calls the "literacy club" (p. 28). I want my students to read extensively in and outside of the classroom to satisfy their sense of inquiry. I want them to read for both "efferent" and "aesthetic" purposes (Rosenblatt, 1985). Since many of the students in my classes do not see themselves as readers and are reluctant to do so, I see my primary job as helping them to find relevance in reading. According to Smith (1985), students are to be shown "that reading is not a painful and pointless academic exercise" (p.148).

Learning situations such as shared reading experiences, collaborative learning lessons and learning centers allow freedom and interaction between the students and the materials and tasks at hand, but at the core of all these lessons there must be motivation. The students must take an interest. They need to know that they are going to get

something out of it otherwise it is just nonsense, a waste of time or busy work. My ideas are confirmed by Smith (1985) on the brain's internal comprehension system:

What we have in our heads is a theory, a theory of what the world is like, and this theory is the basis of all our perception and understanding of the world; it is the root of all learning, the source of all hopes and fears, motives and expectations, reasoning and creativity. This theory is all we have; there is nothing else. If we can make sense of the world at all, it is by interpreting events in the world with respect to our theory. If we can learn at all, it is by modifying and elaborating our theory. The theory fills our minds; we have no other resource. (p.73)

I believe literature circles capitalize on the social desires of the middle school student. They are events that provide opportunities for students to become involved in meaningful and deep acts of thinking and reading. They provide students with the opportunity to explore, question, confirm, and develop their theories while engaging in social discourse. It is a place for students to take ownership and to actively take control and responsibility for their learning (Short, 1995). There are no easy solutions to the perceived problem especially since many of these students have such deep seated negative perceptions and patterns. Regardless, I believe that empowering students in a supportive environment will help to build the intrinsic motivation to read. I propose the implementation of literature circles as a step in this direction.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

There are multidimensional facets that affect motivation of the adolescent student in general and more specifically to reading. There are emotional and physiological changes, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, and the relations between students and teachers and the educational context in which they merge that have an impact on motivation. According to Sweet and Guthrie (1996) "children are not merely motivated or unmotivated, but they possess a profile of different types of motivational goals" (p.660).

There is a series of motivational constructs in regard to success. Wigfield (1997) presents one construct as "subjective task values" which refers to the students' incentives for engaging in different activities. The three components are interest value, attainment value, and utility value (p. 17). A second construct includes both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Intrinsic indicators come from within the adolescent and include curiosity, total involvement, engagement outside of the originating context and continuing impulse. Sweet and Guthrie (1996) make clear distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to an internal need to satisfy curiosity, a need for involvement, a need for social

interaction and a need for challenge. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation originates from a source other than the self such as teachers and parents. Extrinsic reasons to achieve are characterized as compliance, recognition, grades, competition, and work avoidance. In fact, Guthrie, Alao, Soloman and Rinehart (1997) note that students who are intrinsically motivated to read utilize a variety of strategies to construct meaning. On the other hand, those students who are not intrinsically motivated or who depend more on extrinsic motivators are more likely to use weak strategies. The implications of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are crucial in the promotion of literacy. Intrinsic motivators are considered to have long-term effects on strategy development. Extrinsic motivators, on the other hand, have positive short-term effects on behavior and attention to mundane tasks but have a negative effect on long-term acts of literacy (Sweet & Guthrie, 1996). As Gottfried (1985) points out, there is a positive relationship between academic intrinsic motivation and a students' self perception of reading competence, and a negative relationship between academic intrinsic motivation and anxiety. In addition, decreases in intrinsic motivation are associated with increases of extrinsic motivation.

A third motivational construct addresses whether or not a student can succeed. The components are ability beliefs, expectancies, and efficacy beliefs. Ability beliefs are those that the student holds about his or her own competence. Expectancies are those ideas the students hold about how well they will do on a task. Efficacy beliefs refers to what the students believe they can accomplish. Efficacy beliefs are determinants of choice, willingness and persistence (Wigfield, 1997). According to Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) self efficacy is an important element in achievement. There are various influences that assist a student in developing self efficacy, such as observing social models, goal setting, self evaluation, and learning and articulating effective learning strategies.

A fourth motivational construct addresses what students need in order to succeed. Its components are strategy use, self-regulation, volition and asking for help (Wigfield, 1997). Volition as discussed by Corno and Randi (1997) is a voluntary sustained effort. In order to promote long term success the components of motivation, volition, cognition, and emotion must be present.

In sum, there is a positive relationship between competency beliefs, achievement values and intrinsic motivation. Personal interest relates to higher order

thinking strategies and a deeper level of processing. Positive efficacy beliefs relate to setting more challenging goals and it relates to better strategy use and more cognitive engagement. Learning goals relate to strategy use, metacognition and self regulation, and finally, motivation relates to strategy use (Wigfield,1997).

Decline in Motivation

Research has attributed a decline in motivation to a number of causes. From a psychological and physiological point of view, a drop in motivation stems from timing of the transition of students to middle school. The change occurs at the same time as puberty. The change would not be as dramatic if it were later in the adolescents' development at a time when the students have had a chance to adjust to their physiological changes. Other changes that have an impact on motivation are early dating, geographical mobility and family disruptions. According to stress theory, multiple changes create situations which result in negative outcomes (Simmons & Blythe, 1987).

In contrast, an argument can be made that a drop in motivation can not only be attributed to timing but to the nature of the transition as well. Midgley (1993) argues a transition from a facilitative environment to a less facilitative environment will create an impact on the

beliefs and attitudes of students. A more facilitative environment will have a positive effect while a less facilitative one will have a negative effect. In classrooms where the instruction is ability focused and competition is valued, students will give up when they are faced with failure. In contrast, a task focused classroom will stimulate interest and learning will be valued. Midgley's concepts are grounded in goal theory.

In respect to the contextual conditions, teacher expectations of students' ability and socioeconomic status and the treatment henceforth of those students will affect student performance (Wigfield, 1984). Peer influences also account for a lack of motivation. Low performance may be deliberate for acceptance by a peer group. Ruddell and Unrau (1997) suggest:

The protection of self worth may be achieved at the expense of earning low grades if students believe that not studying will preserve esteem more effectively than studying. If students do not engage in reading tasks for school, they may be avoiding them not because they lack motivation but because they are motivated by a paramount concern: the preservation of esteem. (p.109)

Furthermore, more popular students tend to be intelligent and slow learners tend to be less popular. A student of low socioeconomic background also tends to be less popular. A student who is both a slow learner and of a low socioeconomic background is less likely to be accepted in

class (Wigfield & Asher, 1984).

A study of difficult situations in the school environment and stress resistance was conducted of middle school students. The top 5 situations which students found most difficult were: 1) responding to questions in front of peers, 2) criticism and mockery by the teacher, 3) groundless suspicions and or imputations, 4) failures in school learning with public evidence, 5) conflicts with classmates. The study indicated that students with low self esteem used less efficient forms of coping such as resignation and withdrawal. Difficult situations that were construed as interpersonal in nature by low self esteem students lead to submission, inner conflicts and unresolved problems (Tyszkowa, 1990). Moreover, Wigfield (1997) cites research that contends that a lack of motivation in adolescents is due to the fact that middle schools are larger, less personal, more formal, teacher/student relations are less personal and less positive, teachers are more controlling and discipline oriented, there are fewer opportunities for student choice and grading and evaluation are more salient. Therefore, he asserts that these changes can negatively impact ability and efficacy beliefs, reduce intrinsic motivation, and create a dependence on extrinsic elements such as rewards or grades as opposed to learning

for the sake of personal satisfaction and curiosity.

Classroom Implications

Brain based theorists believe it is impossible to separate the cognitive from the affective domain. According to Caine and Caine (1991), in the cognitive domain the brain is constantly searching for patterns from which to construct or create meaning, and it resists ideas or concepts which are meaningless. In terms of the affective domain, the emotions are central to the search for patterns. In other words, the emotions of a student are ongoing; their self concept, their attitudes, their biases and prejudices, and their need for social interaction can influence learning. In addition, ethnographic studies suggest trusting relational environments alleviate battles and more time is spent on learning (McDermott, 1977). Therefore, teachers need to provide supportive environments that accommodate this natural learning process (Caine & Caine, 1991).

In respect to the natural learning process, Cambourne (1991) posits seven conditions to the engagement of learning also dependent upon the learners' affective state of being. He regards three of these conditions as immersion, demonstration, and expectations. However, the conditions of responsibility, use, approximations and response increase the likelihood of engagement. He believes in order for

learners to become deeply engaged in any learning demonstration they must believe that the task is do-able, that the task is personally worthwhile, that the task will not lead to any unpleasant consequences and that the demonstration provider is someone with whom they have built a positive bond.

The classroom environment is crucial in optimizing success. Sweet (1997) suggests teachers construct learning environments which support students' needs for relatedness, competency, autonomy, environments that challenge and produce successful experiences within what Vygotsky has termed the *zone of proximal development*. Teachers' perceptions of student ability and expectations have the potential to promote or inhibit development. Therefore, teachers' assessments of students' needs and instructional practices must be coordinated to promote development. The affective, cognitive and social aspects of learning must be considered when developing a program that will enhance intrinsic engagement.

Involvement with a text is defined as being totally absorbed, focused, engaging in a "flow experience" that is effortless (Shallert & Reed, 1997). This is a psychological and socio-constructivist view on the nature of student/text relationship. Schallert and Reed's view is based on

the assumption that the reader becomes one with the text and their imaginations and emotions are overtaken. Experiences such as these are described as *autotelic*, affective pleasure that is sought after again and again. This type of involvement reflects intrinsic motivation. Students read because it is rewarding in and of itself. This is important because the more deep reading a student engages in the more they learn, the more they understand, the more they remember, and the more creative they become. "Involvement acts as a change agent" as it allows the reader to "transcend into an alternate motivational pattern" (p. 80). Regarding the social-constructivist perspective, Shallert and Reed believe that while total involvement may be individually motivating, peer or student talk is recognized as a key to intellectual development. Students who have opportunities to interact with their peers will anticipate the social engagement. They will have opportunities to express themselves and to confirm or reconstruct their individual interpretations.

One such program that capitalized on students' desires to socially interact is cooperative learning. Johnson and Johnson (1988) suggest that cooperative learning environments foster a positive perspective on students'

learning and increase motivation. The structured cooperative learning lesson can be a powerful tool in producing achievement. Students learn more effectively together, their attitudes toward school, subjects, teachers, themselves and other students is more positive because they are not threatened. They are working toward a common goal together. Furthermore, the experience leads to the ability to function more effectively on an interpersonal level. Therefore, the fears of failure in learning can be minimalized and successes can be celebrated (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996).

Literature Circles

In light of the motivation literature, social interaction and inquiry are key elements in promoting intrinsic motivation (Sweet & Guthrie, 1996; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997; Midgley, 1993; Wigfield, 1997; Caine & Caine, 1991; Sweet, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1988; Schallart & Reed, 1997). The literature circle, as described by Daniels (1994), is a "new/old idea" that creates a rich supportive social interactive environment that empowers the student (p.31). He describes literature circles as a "highly evolved" form of collaborative learning (p.38). Short (1995) emphasizes the fact that literature circles are powerful if they are part of a inquiry based classroom. She asserts:

Literature circles are not a variation on reading groups. They are not a better way to teach reading.

They are a place to think and inquire. This is not to say that students do not learn about language and explore reading strategies during these groups. They do, but the primary focus of a literature circle is not on the reading process but on life and inquiry. (p.xi)

Teachers and teacher researchers confirm the growth of literacy motivation through the implementation of what has come to be known as literature circles, book talk, or peer talk.

The advantages of book talks are both academic and personal. The students have an opportunity to get to know one another and learn what others have to offer. In addition, they also have an opportunity to make connections between their lives within and outside of the school setting. Furthermore, there is a unique paradox within collaborative learning whereby the students do not lose their individuality within the group. Rather, each individual and their diverse traits help to build a community of varied resources. Thus, the collaborative group becomes a unique entity rather than one that is completely homogenized. This is an inherent characteristic of a true literature circle (Short, 1990).

There are a variety of benefits that are derived from literature circles. Kasten (1997) suggests that "genuine reflections" and "genuine dialogue" about books emerge within this context (p.95). In addition, Lapp, Flood,

Buhr-Ranck, Van Dyke, and Spacek (1997) contend that reading and discussing of literature leads to an understanding of key life issues, conflicts of ideas lead to insight, perceptions can be influenced and opinions respected. Most importantly, students' perceptions of themselves as readers is strengthened. Furthermore, the environment itself is stress free, it encourages participation, and helps to reduce anxiety which is particularly important for second language learners. Almasi and Gambrell (1997) report improved reading comprehension, higher level thinking skills, increased motivation, verbalization of thoughts, self monitoring and the assumption of responsibility.

One of the most important things a teacher can do is "not impose a set of preconceived notions about the proper way to react to any work. The student must feel free to grapple with his own reaction" (Rosenblatt, 1976 p.66). McCormack (1997) found that literature circles provided an environment to do just that. The student's raised their own questions, discussed themes on their own, drew connections, and adopted a entirely different demeanor. However, it is noted that none of this occurred immediately. It takes time for students to practice independently in order to improve. They need to learn how to interact and focus on interpretation and understanding (Almasi & Gambrell, 1997).

As Rosenblatt (1985) contends, "the teacher's function is less to impart information than to help students reflect on their experience, clarify its significance for themselves, become aware of alternative emphases, discover their own blind spots, or reinforce their own insights" (p.49).

In a study of both peer led and teacher led discussion groups, Almasi and Gambrell (1997) found a clear distinction between the two groups in regard to the students' ability to recognize and resolve sociocognitive conflicts. Three types of conflicts were identified, conflicts with self, conflicts with others, and conflicts with text. Conflicts with self were more frequent in peer led groups and resolved in peer discussion. Conflicts with text were infrequent in peer led groups, however, they were more frequent in teacher led groups. When a student did not respond correctly, the teacher called on another student. Hence, these conflicts were resolved by another student rather than the student who initiated the conflict. The results of this study indicate that students who were in peer led groups were able to recognize and resolve conflicts. Therefore, teachers can promote students' social and cognitive growth when they assume a more a facilitative role, a role that models and scaffolds the social and cognitive processes.

Equally important in the implementation of literature circles is the issue of diversity. Raphael, Brock and Wallace (1997) believe mainstream students do well in small group environments. Small group environments are important for diverse students to publicly express their ideas and their confusions. They found that the learning disabled were indeed able to contribute and in some cases sway the perceptions of other students in the group. These students asked questions and tested their leadership abilities.

There are various forms of cultural diversity within the context of peer talk. Kaser and Short (1997) explored this issue and found students of diverse cultural backgrounds were not only interested in the issue of ethnicity and race, but they were also concerned with gender, religion, family, community, and social class within their own culture. In addition, they address an issue which they believe is often excluded in curriculum designed to address cultural diversity and that is "kid culture" (p.57). Kid culture is defined as an "underground peer culture of how children of a certain age think about themselves" (p.59). Kid culture has its own discourse and has an impact on their values which are oftentimes in conflict with those values presented by their culture and those values found in the classroom. Kaser and Short explain:

Our experiences convinced us that children feel that the discourse common in their kid culture has no place in the classroom. When they do not talk in adult discourse, they are judged by teachers, not as different but as deficient. (p.60-61)

The implications for the teacher is to acknowledge kid culture in the classroom and to listen without judgment.

Findings of a distinct type of discourse have been noted about gender and its influence in peer led discussions. Evans (1997) identified three types of talk: personal connection with the text, textbound, and unelaborated short talk. The study involved an all girls group and a combination group of boys and girls. The discourse within the all girl group tended to use a gendered talk deemed as "feeling talk," and the combination group tended to use "action talk." Feeling talk refers to discussions involving emotion, sympathy, reflection, and expressive reactions. On the other hand, action talk refers to a textbound discussion.

The dynamics within each group was very distinctive as well. The all girl group worked more cohesively and cooperatively. However, the mixed group battled with leadership issues. The girls in the mixed group were much more leadership oriented and were eventually silenced by the boys and their harassing behavior. Consequently, the discourse within this group was action centered. These findings suggest that teachers model different types of

discourse that are not in opposition of each other. It suggests that texts provide nonstereotypic roles. It also suggests that the contexts of the peer led discussions be in a facilitative environment. Group dynamics are sensitive issues. The wrong context can "negate the intended objectives" (p.168).

According to Caine and Caine (1991) "search for meaning is the heart of intrinsic motivation" (p.92). They believe intrinsic motivation can be fostered by creativity and challenge, ownership and sense of control, and positive social bonding. In addition, hope and positive expectancy, playfulness, joy, respect of other students and teachers, self discipline, the capacity to delay gratification, and a sense of cohesion and connectedness contribute to this development (p.76). If indeed this is true then literature circles are a viable teaching pedagogy. As Kasten (1997) says, "peer talk in the process of reading aids and broadens comprehension. Talk contributes to meaningful and lasting engagement with books that not only enhance the act of reading and the experience of literature, but also are in themselves highly rewarding and satisfying" (p.99).

Summary

Within this research the focus has been on motivation and the engagement of student discourse in literature

circles. Research in motivation provides insight on the constructs of motivation. The constructs include incentives, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, competency and efficacy beliefs, and the cognitive aspects involved with success. Profiles of motivation will be based on the interests of the students, the students' emotional and psychological well being, as well as contextual conditions of the learning environment.

Research has found many factors that are attributed to the decline in motivation. Stressful personal conditions and learning contextual situations are likely to cause a negative impact on the involvement and effort of a student. Furthermore, restrictive educational environments that limit the opportunities for choice and are teacher centered has been found to contribute to this decline. As intrinsic motivation diminishes, a situation that is dependent upon extrinsic motivators is likely to occur. Literacy motivation is related to strategy use. Strong strategies are implemented by those students who are intrinsically motivated and weak strategies are utilized by those who are not.

Literature circles have been described as collaborative groups where students come together to engage in discourse that explores and inquires about the key issues of life. The

advantages and benefits associated with peer led groups are varied. The opportunity for one to maintain one's individuality and unique perspectives is one characteristic inherent within the group setting. It affords one an occasion to engage in authentic reflection and talk. A place where perspectives can be formulated and reformulated and opinions respected. Researchers report improvement in basic reading and comprehension skills, critical thinking skills, motivation, language usage as well as the assumption of responsibility.

The teacher's role becomes one that is more facilitative in nature. The teacher acts as a guide, a more knowledgeable other, who can support students' efforts through demonstrating strategies and scaffolding events for success. The students are free to direct the course of their discussion by developing their own questions, identifying themes, drawing conclusions and making generalizations.

Literature circles are occasions that foster peer talk regarding literacy and its impact on one's life. Literature circles enhance intrinsic motivation by providing the social interaction for one to think and grow.

GOALS AND LIMITATIONS

Goals

The main goal of this project is to assist the teacher in implementing literature circles for young adolescents. It is designed to give guidance for those who are seeking to broaden their concept of teaching literacy. It also encourages teachers to take risks in allowing students to express themselves and their interpretations without fear of being wrong. In this way students can alter their view of literacy. They will come to find reading as more than just an assignment with follow up questions to be answered and graded. They will become motivated to read for a multitude of reasons. Most importantly, they will read to satisfy their own curiosities.

Specific objectives of the project for students:

1. The students will use the literature circle as a vehicle to probe into key life issues.
2. The students will work as a collaborative unit to discuss their interpretations of a text.
3. The students will formulate questions to strengthen their comprehension and to confirm their understanding of a text.
4. The students will make connections between the text and the real world.

5. The students will identify segments of text they find thought provoking, amusing or interesting.
6. The students will summarize the reading.
7. The students will engage in think aloud activities.
8. The students will be encouraged to use alternative sign systems as methods of interpreting a text and conveying their ideas to others.
9. The students will use objective and nonobjective illustrative symbols to respond to a text.
10. The students will select a text of their choice.
11. The students will be encouraged to record their reactions in a journal response book.
12. The students will be encouraged to reflect on their reading strategies.
13. The students will be encouraged to evaluate their reading strategies.
14. The students will be encouraged to use context clues to determine meaning of unknown words.

Specific objectives of the project for teachers:

1. The teachers will be provided with the theoretical basis of literature circles.
2. The teachers will be provided with specific objectives of literature circles.
3. To provide teachers with a clear understanding of

the purpose of literature circles.

4. The teachers will be provided with strategies that will facilitate the training of students to become engaged in active talk during literature circle time.

5. The teachers will be provided with various models of implementation.

6. The teachers will be provided with assessment tools.

Limitations

This project has been designed with middle school students in mind. However, the models and the strategies provided can be used in upper grades in the elementary school, the high school and adult literacy courses. As for primary students, I believe they can be trained as well in the art of discussing literature. However, I caution one to be understanding and patient with their levels of performance. Patience must be had even with older students who have no or little experience with collaborative groups, or whose previous learning experiences have been in skills based classes.

Another point to remember is that literature circles require deep thinking that can be very tiring. So it is important to alternate the circles with other forms of reading and writing engagements. It is **not** meant to be a

curriculum within itself, but to be one aspect of a much broader format.

Finally, because literature circles focus on expanding upon meaning and making connections beyond the text, it is not appropriate to be used in classrooms that are based on the transmission models of teaching reading. It is not just another reading group and to treat it as such will result in failure. Furthermore, workbooks and tests have no place in the literature circle.

The key to success is perseverance, patience, willingness to make changes in one's teaching approaches, and to evaluate oneself by reflecting on one's successes and failures. Finally, one must respect and honestly listen to the ideas of students.

APPENDIX A LITERATURE CIRCLES HANDBOOK

IMPLEMENTING LITERATURE CIRCLES

Introduction

My interest in literature circles began about four years ago. I started implementing what I considered literature circles. I hadn't researched them nor had I observed them implemented in another class. My interest was based on my cooperative learning background. I wanted to design another form of a reading group that not only focused on reading fluency and comprehension, but the social skills of collaboration as well.

That first year I was teaching a sixth grade class at an elementary school. The group was a heterogeneous mix of GATE, regular and RSP students who just took off in these groups. I found my initial efforts successful in a number of ways. Firstly, students were excited about reading because they had an opportunity to choose the book they wanted to read. Secondly, the social aspect of students meeting in their chosen spot in the room to read together motivated them. They were not confined to the desks. Thirdly, the opportunity to stop and talk when they felt the need to allowed more freedom. Hence, the students felt more in control of their reading time. Lastly, the students were meeting the prescribed objectives of the reading assignments and the social skills involved in cooperative learning

sessions. What surprised me was the depth of their dialogue throughout the reading of the text. They made connections and had personal interactions that developed through compassion for the main characters. Their responses were far beyond literal and inferential comprehension.

The following year, I didn't see the same outcomes as the year before. The groups couldn't seem to handle the responsibilities. Their dialogue was weaker and more superficial and literal. After intense analysis, I concluded everything I had done was just wrong, even though I hadn't done anything different in the training process from the year before. Within the training process, which was through the course of a read aloud text, I modeled thinking aloud and writing my thoughts on an overhead in response to the text. In this way the students learned to use a dialectical journal. They practiced the roles of cooperative learning, and the social skills were identified and practiced. Now I believe that I hadn't clearly defined my goals for this particular group. The dynamics of the class had changed and I didn't allow for that. This group of students met the basic objectives. But the aesthetic responses the other class engaged in on their own was something this class did not do. So now I was determined to work on strategies to

help students learn how to interact with a text more profoundly.

After that first year when I had accidentally discovered the power of the circle, my initial desire and goals to develop another type of reading group was starting to change. I now wanted much more than just another cooperative reading group. To get that would necessitate a change in my teaching approach. I was still the one in control and I realized I would have to step back and really listen to and get to know my students. It would mean refraining from asking all the questions or using the teacher's manual of questions and allow a more natural interaction.

Last year, with a new group of sixth graders, I tried using literature circles again. Once again the preparation concentrated on reflective thinking during read aloud sessions. We were reading A Wrinkle in Time. When issues arose through the literature that challenged ideas that were held by the students, I encouraged them to debate. These were not planned events. They were spontaneous events. Events that were indeed intrinsically motivating. I stepped back from the picture and let them argue with a text and with each other.

Once we finished the book, the students then went into the reading group mode with the fantasy genre. The students formed their own groups based on their choice of book. This time I did not reinforce the cooperative group roles. I was beginning to feel that this would restrict their thinking. I still had a list of basic comprehension assignments that they were responsible for, so in this respect I still hadn't relinquished all control. Control is a tough issue to deal with and I'm still working on being more of a facilitator. Nevertheless, the students were on their own to work and read together. I would join the groups as an observer. I listened to them read and talk. One group was reading The Black Cauldron, there was only one girl in this group. It was interesting to listen to her perspective. She assumed the role of Eilonwy, the female protagonist in the story, and had very strong opinions concerning gender issues during group talk. Another group was reading My Teacher is an Alien. The group decided they wanted to read it aloud as opposed to reading it silently because one student was slower at reading and they wanted her to be able to stay with the group. I was thrilled to see such support between these kids. During one of their discussion sessions, there seemed to be a bit of a dispute over a character's actions, what impressed me was that the slower reading student was

arguing her point and rereading and using the text to support her claims. Throughout the course of this endeavor I observed students motivated to read. I observed them using reading strategies we had practiced as a whole group. I observed a sense of camaraderie. I observed talk that went beyond the literal into more inferential and critical levels of thinking.

I have been in a constant flux over the implementation of literature circles. My progress with them has been evolutionary. I am constantly changing and adjusting my approach as I break away from literature based basal reading programs.

Now I am teaching an elective supplementary reading class in a middle school setting. I have six different periods of reluctant readers. So I must deal with the dynamics of each group which is especially challenging. It is my hope to develop an alternative program via literature study for these students to develop as thoughtful readers. In the past classrooms such as mine have often been referred to as "remedial reading" classes. I hope to break away from the negative connotations associated with the term by supporting students in meaningful interactions with texts. Interactions that will strengthen reading strategies, skills and encourage deep discussions centered on the construction

of meaning. The literature circle is one component of a broader program.

Literature circles are unique experiences in literacy. They invite students to think and engage in talk that helps them to construct meaning with other people. It removes the threat of being wrong that so often occurs in a teacher led discussion. So with this in mind, it is my hope that those who considering using literature circles will find this project useful.

Overview

This handbook has been designed for teachers who are interested in broadening their approach to literacy. It is specifically for someone who wants to know how to get started. It describes the characteristics of a literature circle, theoretical foundations as well as the benefits of the approach.

Three different models of implementation are described. One model offers a quick training process; a second offers a linear approach with careful training steps that breaks down the cognitive processes to be practiced; and a third is a short explanation of a model that starts training within the read aloud process and maintains the cognitive process as a whole.

In addition, I have described my own experiences of implementing the approaches. There are examples of student engagement as well as descriptions of strategies that I have found to help the students stretch their thinking.

There is also a section that addresses the issue of assessment and evaluation. This section provides ideas that can be easily implemented while one is observing the students during their literature circle engagement.

Furthermore, there is an appendix that includes detailed steps of curricular strategies and assessment and

evaluation tools, a bibliography of students books that I have used with sixth, seventh and eighth grade reluctant readers, and professional resources.

LITERATURE CIRCLES: WHAT ARE THEY?

Description

Literature circles have been described as collaborative groups where students come together to engage in discourse that explores and inquires about the key issues of life. The advantages and benefits associated with peer led groups are varied. The opportunity for one to maintain one's individuality and unique perspectives is one characteristic inherent within the group setting. It affords one an occasion to engage in authentic reflection and talk. A place where perspectives can be formulated and reformulated and opinions respected. Researchers report improvement in basic reading and comprehension skills, critical thinking skills, motivation, language usage as well as the assumption of responsibility.

Literature circles, as described by Daniels (1994), is a "new/old idea" that creates a rich supportive social interactive environment that empowers the student (p.31). He describes literature circles as a "highly evolved" form of collaborative learning (p.38). Short (1995) emphasizes the fact that literature circles are powerful if they are part of a inquiry based classroom. She asserts:

Literature circles are not a variation on reading groups. They are not a better way to teach reading. They are a place to think and inquire. This is not to say that students do not learn about language and

explore reading strategies during these groups. They do, but the primary focus of a literature circle is not on the reading process but on life and inquiry. (p.xi)

Teachers and teacher researchers confirm the growth of literacy motivation through the implementation of what has come to be known as literature circles , book talk, or peer talk.

The advantages of book talks are both academic and personal. The students have an opportunity to get to know one another and learn what others have to offer. In addition, they also have an opportunity to make connections between their lives within and outside of the school setting. Furthermore, there is a unique paradox within collaborative learning whereby the students do not lose their individuality within the group. Rather, each individual and their diverse traits help to build a community of varied resources. Thus, the collaborative group becomes a unique entity rather than one that is completely homogenized. This is an inherent characteristic of a true literature circle (Short, 1990).

There are a variety of benefits that are derived from literature circles. Kasten (1997) suggests that "genuine reflections" and "genuine dialogue" about books emerges within this context (p.95). In addition, Lapp, Flood, Buhr-Ranck, Van Dyke, and Spacek (1997) contend that reading

and discussing of literature leads to an understanding of key life issues, conflicts of ideas lead to insight, perceptions can be influenced and opinions respected. Most importantly, students' perceptions of themselves as readers is strengthened. Furthermore, the environment itself is stress free, it encourages participation, and helps to reduce anxiety which is particularly important for second language learners. Almasi and Gambrell (1997) report improved reading comprehension, higher level thinking skills, increased motivation, verbalization of thoughts, self monitoring and the assumption of responsibility.

One of the most important things a teacher can do is "not impose a set of preconceived notions about the proper way to react to any work. The student must feel free to grapple with his own reaction" (Rosenblatt, 1976, p.66). McCormack (1997) found that literature circles provided an environment to do just that. The student's raised their own questions, discussed themes on their own, drew connections, and adopted a entirelyly different demeanor. However, it is noted that none of this occurred immediately. It takes time for students to practice independently in order to improve. They need to learn how to interact and focus on interpretation and understanding (Almasi & Gambrell, 1997). As Rosenblatt (1985) contends, "the teacher's function is

less to impart information than to help students reflect on their experience, clarify its significance for themselves, become aware of alternative emphases, discover their own blind spots, or reinforce their own insights" (p.49).

According to Owens (1995) "literature circles are discussion groups in which children meet regularly to talk about books" (p. 2). There are a number of ways to organize and implement the concept, so it is important to note "there is no one right way" (p. 10). Regardless of the structure, literature circles have common elements: 1) groups are heterogeneous 2) groups are organized by book choice 3) groups have a broad range of interests as well as abilities 4) groups make the daily assignment. The most distinguishing factors between literature circles and traditional reading programs are that the students raise the issues to be discussed not the teacher. The role of the teacher is that of a facilitator not inquisitor. The role of the student is to read and come to the literature circle prepared to engage in a lively discussion (Owens, 1995; Daniels, 1994).

Understanding the Foundation

The theoretical foundations from which literature circles have evolved stem from the socio-psycholinguistic approaches of the reading continuum. Weaver (1994) contends that these approaches emphasize the construction of meaning. The constructivist approach not only takes into consideration the meaning inherent in the text, but the prior experiences, prior knowledge, cultural background, and social contexts of the student. This model deals with more than just reading. The assumption is made that students will become literate through the engagement of both the reading and writing processes. Under the facilitative guidance of a teacher or knowledgeable other, students who engage in reading will learn to read. Students who engage in writing will learn to write. The constructivist model does not rely on a prescribed and ordered list of skills to be taught in any sequence. Teaching within the constructivist mode is from whole to part. Reading and writing are kept whole. Skills are taught within the context of an authentic act of literacy (Au, 1993).

Literacy circles fall within socio-psycholinguistic spectrum of the reading continuum. According to Short (1995) the literature circle is one component of a broader curricular framework as has been described in the

constructivist model. The literature circle allows students to think and inquire. It gives them the opportunity to attend to the functions of literacy and to respond to a text through the course of discussion. In addition, students are encouraged to use a reading response journal to reflect upon their reaction to a given text (Au, 1993).

GETTING STARTED

Book Selection

The initial groundwork for the implementation of literature circles requires the selection of books. It is essential to build a library with an assortment of quality reading materials such as, real books, articles, newspapers and magazines of varying difficulty. Four to six copies of each title allow for groups to be formed. When selecting reading materials it is necessary to keep the reading level and interests of students in mind. If indeed the students are not interested it will be difficult for them to engage in any deep discussion (Daniels, 1995; McMahon, 1997; Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Furthermore, books that reflect society's diversity such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity are to be considered. Finally, the districts curricular needs are another consideration (McMahon, 1997).

The beauty of the literature circle is that students will generally pick books with which they are comfortable. The actual selection process begins with students having an opportunity to peruse the available materials. The teacher can also provide a brief overview, or students who are familiar with the texts can give book talks to help in the selection process. Clausen (1995) suggests to her students ways to choose a book:

1. Check to see if the book seems interesting to you.

Look at the pictures and events.

2. Select a page or two and try to read it. If you have difficulty reading several words on one page, it may be too challenging for you.

3. Choose a book that YOU like, not just because a friend chooses it. (p.16)

Once students have had a chance to review the selections they write down their first and second choice on a slip of paper. The teacher then forms the groups based on their selections.

Literature circles can also be formed around a single text. The whole class can read the same book and the students can branch off into their selected groups for discussion. In other words, groups do not have to be reading different titles. In addition, The whole class does not have to be engaged at one time. The circle could be formed on an invitation basis either in a group with or without the teacher, whereby students who have mutual interests in a particular book come together to reflect and respond. When a group is formed with a teacher, the teacher's role is that of a reader as well and not as a leader. Text sets can also be used. These are sets of books that have a theme or topic in common. For example, you might have a collection of 5 different titles all having to do with friendship or courage. (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). The most important thing to remember is to provide choice and to provide

selections that have the potential to initiate discussion (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996; Daniels, 1995; Pardo, 1997).

Student Preparation

Daniels (1995) and his associates have designed a structure to train students to learn how to have literature discussions. Their technique is based on collaborative learning roles, and role sheets are designed as a beginning structure to help the students in the early stages of the establishment of literature circles. Role sheets are simply handouts describing specific literature roles. Roles that the students will perform during the initial training periods. Once the students have a handle on the roles then they are transitioned to reading response logs. Daniels has his critics who take issue with the notion of role sheets, however, it must be made clear that the role sheets are temporary in nature "...the goal of role sheet is to make role sheets obsolete. We use them to help students internalize and practice taking multiple cognitive perspectives on texts" (p.75).

Description of Roles

1. Discussion Director: The job to the discussion director is to create a list of questions for discussion following the reading of the book. The goal is to initiate discussions that address the big ideas presented in the

book. The best questions are those that have entered the mind naturally from personal reactions, confusions, thoughts, feelings, and concerns.

2. Literary Luminary: The job of the literary luminary is to select passages from the text to read aloud to the other group members. These passages should be special in some way. For example, they may be important, surprising, funny, confusing or thought provoking in any way.

3. Illustrator: The job of the illustrator is to draw either realistically or symbolically one's interpretation of the text. It is important to remember that this job is not about being an artist. It is about visually depicting one's ideas.

4. Connector: The job of the connector is to relate the reading to something in the real world. It may be a connection to a personal experience, to something that has happened in the real world or to another book.

5. Summarizer: The job of the summarizer is to write a brief summary of the reading. It is important to note key events or main highlights and the overall gist of the story.

6. Vocabulary Enricher: The job of the vocabulary enricher is to keep track of words that are unfamiliar, puzzling, repetitive, unusual or key to the meaning of the text.

7. Travel Tracer: The job of the travel tracer is to keep track of where the action takes place in the daily reading. The setting should be described or graphically depicted by a map or diagram.

8. Investigator: The job of the investigator is to research background information on the topic related to the book. This is not a formal project in any way. It is simply to find any bits of information that might help the group to understand the book better.

Two Versions of Student Training

Daniels (1995) offers two versions of the student training process, the quick version and the careful version. The quick version takes about an hour to train students if they are already accustomed to a literature based program and have some collaboration experience. The careful version takes about 45 minutes a day for two weeks.

Model A: Quick Version Steps

1. Establish groups by providing reading material such as poems, articles, short stories, or picture books. The whole group may even read the same story, however, the element of choice is then eliminated.

2. Issue role sheets and let students choose their own role.

3. Review the roles as a whole class. This is the time to answer any questions and to clarify the roles.

4. Set time limits. Allow enough time for students to read and to address their role response.

5. Following the reading, students get together for approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to engage in a discussion about the reading. Encourage students to allow the natural flow of conversation to take place. There is not a leader for the group, however the discussion director is to keep track of time, issue invitations to members who have not spoken.

6. During the discussions, the teacher can join each group for a few minutes strictly in the capacity of observer. As this is a time to note specific behaviors to discuss during the debriefing period.

7. When the discussion time is up, call the whole class back together again for a debriefing. This is the time for the teacher and students to discuss successes, problems and ideas for solving problem issues.

Now the students can select another story and exchange literary roles (pp. 52-53).

Model B: Careful Training Steps

This version takes about two weeks. During the first week of the training process a new role is introduced each

day. Each child then practices that role. During the second week the students put their new knowledge to work in a real literature circle.

Day one: The students are introduced to the idea of literature circles. This plan calls for a number of short stories to be used over the initial training period. Select a story and read it aloud. At the conclusion of the reading invite students to make comments and responses. The idea is to model discourse.

Day two: The students are introduced to the role of the discussion director. At this time discuss open-ended questions. Refer back to the story read on day one and ask the students to think of some questions about the story. Once the students start to share their questions, the teacher should make distinctions between explicit and implicit questions. Some teachers use the terms "skinny" and "fat" question.

Hand out the discussion director role sheets and another short story. Have the students read the story and think up two or three really "fat" questions. Allow the students to decide how they would like to read the story such as, aloud, silently, or buddy read.

Once the students have read the story and written their questions, they meet in their group for about 10 minutes to

share and discuss their questions. At this time the teacher circulates and records observations for the final debriefing.

Day three: The students are introduced to the role of literary luminary. Use a new story for today and follow the same procedure as the day before. Explain the idea of the role then give and ask for examples. For this role and the upcoming role of vocabulary enricher, the students are to be able to locate specific points in the text. So it is imperative that the students be shown how to record page and paragraphs on their role sheet.

After the reading, the students meet in their groups to read and discuss the passages they selected. The teacher notes observations for the debriefing element of the lesson.

Day four: The students are introduced to the role of vocabulary enricher. Follow the same pattern as the previous day. Explain the role. Give and ask for examples for a quick practice using the story from the day before. Using a new story and their role sheets in hand, the students read and practice the role. Upon finishing this aspect of the lesson the students meet in their groups to discuss their words. During the debriefing, the teacher can ask for volunteers to share the words they focused on.

Day five: The students are introduced to the role of the illustrator. Initiate a discussion involving the illustrations found in books. Stress the fact that their interpretations do not have to depict scenes from the story, but that their drawings can be symbolic of their personal thoughts, feelings, or connections. The drawings may also be abstractions and designs. Then the students start with a new story and proceed with their drawing response following the reading. Once students have finished their illustrative response they meet in their groups. During the debriefing, volunteers are asked to share their illustrations with the whole group. They are asked to tell about the discussions that evolved from the pictures. The idea is to get them to understand that the drawings are to support and enrich the discourse.

Days six through ten: At this point in the training process the students have been taught five of the most important roles. They are now ready to put together all the roles in conjunction with the reading of a novel. The students proceed daily with a 20 minute reading segment and a 20 minute group meeting. The teacher is to circulate about the room to observe and assist when needed (pp. 54-57).

Variations

Both of these training variations are very structured. Critics of this approach maintain that "you must plunge into the whole complexity of open-ended discussion the first time you try it with students, or you're breaking learning down in a behavioristic and mechanistic fashion" (Daniels, 1994, p.39). However, what is important to remember that there is no one right way to approach literature circles. This role procedure is simply a way to create a scaffold for the students to think in ways to stimulate conversation. The main goal is to eventually move away from roles and have rich meaningful conversations.

Karen Smith (1990) begins training her students for literature study groups early in the school year through her read aloud sessions. She selects literature which deals with the complexity of life. She establishes an environment that creates an aesthetic mood for this event, and she treats the event with seriousness and ritual. During read aloud time, she demonstrates reflective responding. She elicits and listens to the responses of her students. She demonstrates critique by sharing her own thoughts rather than asking questions. She demonstrates rereading of text that supports her responses. She demonstrates the importance of getting to

know characters. Ultimately, through demonstration, her goal is to share perspectives rather than ask questions.

By October she implements the literature study group. The small group includes a few students and her. She describes this experience as intimate, a special event. They have come together to share a book that is of interest to them. During the initial meeting they discuss their personal responses, people, events, and other books that are brought to memory. They share their puzzlements and point out powerfully written passages. At the conclusion of the first meeting they decide what their focus will be for the next meeting. The length of time spent on a book depends upon the group. It may be anywhere from three to five days. In sum, literature study group is a place to "refine and fine-tune" responding to a text (p.22).

Daniels (1995) describes Smith's management as "teacher-and-kid-run groups". The students work in kid-run groups for three weeks per month. For one week per month they meet in a group with her. This is what is considered "a balanced curriculum" (p.67).

Follow-Up Presentations

Once the students have done the reading and have met with each other for their discussion they prepare a celebration of their learning. Short, Harste, and Burke

(1996) suggest presentation activities be based on student interpretations of the story. They are to reflect the important ideas and issues the students discussed in their circles. To prevent students from coming up with trivial ideas, have the students think about what message they want to convey to other people. Then have them brainstorm a list of ways they can get their message across. Once they have generated a slew of ideas then they should choose one that is best suited to demonstrate their understandings. Some possible presentations are:

1. an informal telling of the book and their discussion ideas
2. Readers Theater
3. murals or dioramas
4. write new endings or versions
5. comparison charts
6. a learning center with an interactive experience
7. a gameboard
8. music
9. poetry

The idea behind a presentation is to synthesize what has been gleaned from the reading into a new personally reflective response. The cognitive experience of

synthesizing moves the students into some deeper levels of thinking (pp.218-220).

One final note, it is important to remember that the aforementioned procedures are just variations of getting started. Once the students are familiar with the cognitive processes involved they should be encouraged to use them on their own without role sheets. Unless of course you choose to go another route and allow the students to flow through the process in a less structured manor. If so, then remember that it is wise to be a member of a group to support them in this endeavor. It is also a good idea to have the students use response journals to record responses that come to them naturally. This approach facilitates discussion of the text. It affords students the opportunity to capture their thoughts at the moment rather than to rely on memory.

Personal Findings

I have tried both of these models with varying results. My first attempt at using Daniels' very linear and structured approach was fairly successful in consideration of the circumstances involving the class. I implemented this approach with a class of sixth graders, a class I would only have for one quarter. As I look back, I believe this was a very bold endeavor. Nevertheless, I started out by selecting a read aloud title, The Hundred Dresses. I selected this story because it deals with friendship and peer relationships. I went through some initial activities based on creating interest and tapping prior knowledge to set the stage. I followed up by describing the cognitive roles involved and I told the students we would practice the roles as we read the chapters. I followed Daniels' two week careful training suggestions. However, it took closer to three weeks to actually complete the training process. This was due in part to the length of the chapters, daily time restrictions (48 minute time block), stopping to allow students to record their responses in their journals and of course our discussion. At the conclusion of the training period we had a final discussion and debriefing on the description of the roles.

At the beginning of the quarter, I took a survey of the

students to find out what kind of books they like to read. The results indicated an interest in mysteries. That was a bit of a problem because I didn't have any mysteries, nor were there any in the stock of books at the school site. So, I presented the books I had and the students made their choices from them. Fortunately, the students were delighted with their options; however, I experienced anxiety about the quality of the books and whether or not the students would be able to have discussions about them. The selections included, Escape from Ghost Hotel, Animorphs: The Android, Clue: The Screaming Skeleton, and Shocker on Shock Street. I doubt that any of these books would even be considered for literature circles by the gurus of book talk, but I have to work with materials I've got and the interests of the kids.

Once the students made their selections and I saw how excited they were about reading, I decided not to worry about deep discussions at this point. My main goal for this group was for them to 1) enjoy the reading, 2) engage in the cognitive processes of the roles, 3) construct meaning collaboratively, and 4) use a journal for their reflections.

The students wrote their choices on a slip of paper and turned it in to me. I then organized the groups. Once the groups were formed we discussed how they would engage in the reading. They made a unanimous decision to read aloud to

each other. They also decided when it was time to rotate the roles. Most of them decided that the roles would change after every chapter and mini-discussion. The Animorphs book had a lot more chapters. So the group reading it changed their schedule towards the end of the book when they noticed all the other groups had completed their books. At this point they decided to read more chapters and schedule fewer mini-discussions.

In my observations of these groups there was intense reading going on. Some of them paired off to read and others took turns within the group. The only time I observed silent reading was when a member of a group had been absent and needed to catch up. However, absences were a problem with the Escape from Ghost Hotel group. Two students were chronically absent and contributed very little to group discussions.

As a whole group, four circles running at the same time, there was a flow that was evident, a sense of smoothness and organization. Although I had read all the books, I tried to be an observer only. I was asked periodically to join the Escape from Ghost Hotel as a participant especially at times when they were having a hard time understanding the main character's transition between time periods. Since I was also working on my role as

facilitator, I had to refrain from giving them what they wanted, an answer. I would have them read to me the parts of the text that created the tension, and then I would guide them to other parts of the text that could possibly help them make the clarification.

Out of the four selections, the group that really had to work hard on constructing meaning was the Escape from Ghost Hotel. The main character had the ability to travel through time between the Civil War era and modern day. She dealt with issues of bigotry in her travels, and she had knowledge of her other life in an earlier time period. These were some issues with which the students grappled.

The discussions the other groups had dealt more with the literal aspects of the stories. Clue: The Screaming Skeleton did not offer much in the way of personal connections for the students. However, they liked the way they had to use the clues to determine who the killers were. So, at least they were using some deductive reasoning in their discussions. The Shocker on Shock Street group had conversations that were based on events. However, one student, Richard, made statements that reflected his reading strategy of putting himself in the shoes of the main character. At one point he said, "If that was me I'd take off running," and "I wouldn't do that." So even though this

was a fairly shallow book, I was able to get some insights as to how they deal with the reading process. The Animorphs: The Android group dealt a lot with the characters and character motivation. The characters in the book had the ability to become animal creatures. They were fighting aliens who were trying to take over the world. So the issue of power and the struggles associated with it came to light. However, real world issues of power never surfaced in the discussions.

In the review of the journals they maintained, I observed the fact that they restricted their comments to the assigned roles, the job they did for that particular day or chapter. So in other words if they were the discussion director, then they had questions written, and so on. They did their job. However, they did not go beyond that. They did not use their journal for any and all thoughts they may have been having during the course of the reading. This would be one factor that I would emphasize in the future should I use this approach again.

I have also used a form of Karen Smith's approach as well and I find I am more comfortable with it. I have students in five other classes that I have all year long. With these students, I began the year with a read aloud in conjunction with the use of a response journal. I have

demonstrated thinking aloud, stopping to write in my journal, sharing my journal entry, reflecting on the connections I make, expressing my emotional reactions and questions, stepping into the shoes of the character, rereading passages aloud and openly explain why I selected them. In short, I demonstrate as many ways as I can to respond to a text. I invite the students to do the same. Short, Harste and Burke (1996) have a great collection of curricular engagements that help to support students when they are learning how to transact with a text.

To support the think aloud invitation, I recently started using the curricular engagement "Say Something" (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, pp. 512-513; see appendix B). This requires the students to stop and to say what they are thinking while they read. We practice this during a read aloud and the students also practice it during buddy reading.

Another engagement I have found particularly helpful is "Anomalies" (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, pp. 380-381; see appendix B). Anomalies are unexpected occurrences or surprises that attract our attention as we read. The students focus on passages from the reading to share with the group. I've used this engagement with several different periods and I've gotten different results with each group.

My after school group followed the instructions and wrote their anomalies and then ranked them from most to least anomalous. I opened the discussion with my most anomalous passage and explained my reasons for selecting it. I asked for comments and I got a lot of blank stares. I asked for a volunteer to go next. Varick said he would. He read his anomaly and said he didn't know why he picked it. He said he didn't understand what he was supposed to do. So it was back to the drawing board for me. I then gave several demonstrations. Only one student, Daniel, could support his anomaly. His response was that it had saddened him.

I also have Daniel in another class where we had used this engagement after reading the last six chapters of Where the Red Fern Grows. So he was already familiar with it. With this group I had better results. Angel's number one anomaly was, "Rubin's mouth opened as if to say something, words never came. Instead a large red bubble slowly worked its way out of his mouth and burst." Angel selected this text because he said he could see it happening. Jerad had selected the same text because of the same reason. The discussion centered on the idea of witnessing something die. The kids made personal connections and talked about their experiences.

What is important to remember about using the engagements is that the students need time to get used to them. They will need to participate in them several times before you can see them get into discussing what they are thinking. It is important that the learning context supports risk taking, encourages students to make connections and talk about their ideas (Short, Harste, & Burke 1996).

In addition to these engagements, I build in instruction on story elements that will enable them to understand literature as well as reading strategies that focus on comprehension.

Recently, a group of my eighth grade girls read the book Journey to Jo'burg. This book is relatively easy to read. It is an account of life under Apartheid rule in South Africa. It is a very short book so it only took the girls a few days to read it. I had the girls use a curricular engagement called "Graffiti Board" (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, p. 382-383; see appendix B). The girls used a piece of chart paper to respond to the text. They wrote words, drew pictures and wrote phrases. In short, they can write or draw anything that comes to mind in regard to the text in the form of graffiti. They used the graffiti board as a tool to start and work through their discussion. I was working with another group at the time so I didn't get to hear the

original talk. So they gave me a brief recap of their discussion at the end of the period. Their talk was what I suspected, it was based on the literal elements of the story. I then had them use another curricular engagement "Webbing What's on Your Mind" (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, p. 383- 384; see appendix B). I had them web the responses from their graffiti board into categories. They were to establish the big ideas that these responses reflected as a springboard to a more in depth discussion. The group met and I joined them as a member and we discussed these major ideas. The biggest idea was that of racism. We discussed what we observed in the story. We then took it to another level by talking about what we observe in our own town that is considered racism. The discussion then reverted back to the text and a riot that broke out in Soweto in 1976. We discussed the reasons for the riot. I made a comment about the riot that occurred in Los Angeles in 1991. They were too young in 1991 to remember that event, however, it sparked a lot of questions and eventually the discussion evolved into one about the Klu Klux Klan.

I was absolutely overwhelmed by the depth of the discussion. These girls went beyond what I expected. I think the curricular engagements helped them to focus on thinking about what they read. Yes, I did join the group, but I

didn't join it to be the leader. I was a member, a facilitator, the knowledgeable other who helps scaffold their needs. This is a training process for them, as with all training procedures there must be support.

"Sketch to Stretch" is another engagement that helps facilitate the thinking process (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996; see appendix B). Within this engagement the students sketch their interpretation of a text. I initiate this activity by telling the kids that they will read a story or poem and then "draw what it means to you." Generally I have to give more explanations. I tell them they can draw real things that they are reminded of. They can draw symbols that represent something in the story or feelings they experience during the reading. I tell them they should not focus on a scene of the story, but they should focus on the message the story or poem sends to them. This is a very tough activity for them. Don't be surprised if their first attempts are literal interpretations.

The first time I used this activity, I explained to the students what they would be doing. I used the short story, "The Day the Sun Came Out." I told the students I wanted them to listen to the story first. After the reading, they were not to talk but to capture their first impressions on paper. I then proceeded to give them each a copy of the

story and told them to read it to themselves and then add to their sketches. I gave them the opportunity to take their piece home and change or add things to it. When we met again we had our discussion. Brian drew elements from the story such as a house, clouds with lightening bolts, and stick figures to represent the characters. He later added more clouds, a black box, and a sun. All of these representations reflected his literal interpretation.

On the other hand, Jerad had two very different interpretations. His first drawings included a gun, a robot and something that resembled a flame. Beneath these sketches he wrote "got killed when raining," "came alive when sun came out," and "died when rained again." His revised sketch reflected a square with raindrops and a large circle with smaller circles in it labeled "before." An "after" image was essentially the same scene except there was a sunburst and the raindrops were eliminated. He also had a series of sad and happy faces that reflected the feelings of the characters. He wrote, "The difference between yesterday and today is that yesterday I was thinking different when someone else read the story today it is different cause I read the story."

I found his first and second impressions very interesting. It seemed his first impressions were based more

on his personal visual image, but his second was much more literal.

On another occasion, my seventh grade period four students chose a poem to use with the sketch to stretch strategy:

Mama is a Sunrise

When she comes slip-footing through the door,
 she kindles us
 like lump coal lighted,
She puts a spark even in Papa's eyes
and turns out all our darkness.

When she comes sweet-talking in the room,
 she warms us
 like grits and gravy,
 and we rise up shining
Even at nighttime Mama is a sunrise
that promises tomorrow and tomorrow. (Hunt, 1997)

Two different groups read the same poem and drew their interpretations as homework. They met the following day to discuss their sketches. I set up two tape recorders to record their talk. Up to this point I had been the facilitator in four different sessions using short stories. I told them they would be on their own for this session. However, I wanted to hear what they would say so I told them they would be recorded. They were in agreement with this, in fact, they thought it would be fun because they would be able to hear themselves. But, as they proceeded, it was discovered that one recorder did not work. So I told this group I would sit in only to record notes. However, I soon

discovered my presence was intimidating. I took the following notes while the students discussed Kenny's drawing:

Nicole: I think she is in the kitchen.
Luis: She's got done with the dishes.
Luis: He focused on the kitchen.
Nicole: He focused on the sun going down.
Ricky: Somebody is trying to see the sun come up.
or cooking breakfast.
Luis: She put the dishes away.
Kenny: I drew it because moms are usually in the kitchen, cooking and doing things for you.
Luis: He compared his mom to the mom in the poem.

The students continued to speculate about each others' drawing for some time.

Luis: He focused on the sun.
Ricky: I didn't understand it. So I just drew it because I had nothing else to draw.
Nicole: He compared the outside to how she warms up the room.

The students were clearly uncomfortable watching me take notes so I stopped. Once I stopped they acted as if I was going to join them. I had to say "keep going." There were a lot of long pauses.

The following segment is from the other group:

Eddie: I just drew the mom cause I didn't know what to draw.
Steven: Is the mom inside or outside?
Eddie: Outside.
Eddie: Why did you draw that?
Melissa: I drew it because it is like the mom, the mom is like gives them an extra day. She goes, then she comes, she goes and comes and takes care of problems and hopes.
Steven: What are those wavy lines?
Melissa: Birds.
Steven: Birds don't fly that high.
Eddie: Why did you draw that?

Brandon: Because of the sun and how the lady comes through the door.
Melissa: What is that grey part?
Brandon: The rug.
Eddie: Why is she on the floor?
Steven: Because in the poem it said she is nice?
Brandon: Where is the sun Steven?
Steven: Outside.
Steven: Why did you draw that?
Melissa: Because it is what I visualized in my mind.
Steven: Why did you see the clouds?

At this point the students start asking each other many trivial questions not even related to the poem. Brandon started raising his voice because he was getting irritated with Steven's petty questions. And then Brandon started asking petty questions. Melissa is the only one who seemed to stay in tune with her interpretation of the poem. Eddie didn't feel he understood it at all.

Once these students were done, we all met in a circle for a debriefing. The recorded group pointed a finger at Steven and said all he did was ask questions. They felt they had to be defensive. I reviewed the purpose of the literature circle as a time to come together to share interpretations and perspectives. I told them questions were good to have, but that no one should be made to feel as if they were being interrogated. Literature circles involve some heavy thoughts and it takes time to think in this way. We all come to reading with different ideas and experiences. These circles are not about being right or wrong. At that

time Kenny says, "It's not SRA." I had to laugh at that and said, "You are absolutely right. This is far beyond SRA kits."

I had them put all their sketches on the floor. I asked them to take a good look at their own piece and to think of the message they wanted their piece to convey. There responses were as follows:

Brandon: Mother as warmth.
Steven: Security.
Melissa: It looks like she cares more than others, and she rose like God.
Eddie: Mom is the sun.
Ricky: The sun.
Luis: The same.
Nicole: Taking care of the house.
Kenny: Moms do everything.

All in all, I wasn't disappointed with the session. The debriefing was vitally important. The students have to figure out how it all works. They also have to understand that it is not a matter of answering questions, it's about expressing their thoughts. Students like Luis, Eddie, and Ricky need a lot of experiences like this to get them to reach out into areas they have not explored.

They all said they enjoyed being involved in the session. The group I sat in on were in agreement on that fact that they would have been more comfortable if I had not had to sit in on their group. I agree with this. It makes a big difference when you observe for a minute or two, you come and you go. But this is not to say that teachers should

not be participants in groups. I think they need both. They need opportunities to be involved with and without the teacher.

Assessing and Evaluating Literature Circles

There are a number of ways to document the growth and development of a student's reading during literature circles. Daniels (1995) suggests anecdotal records, checklists, interviews and conferences and portfolios. Most teachers prefer to use a combination of these strategies to get an overall view of the activity. Students can also participate in the assessment process by reflecting and writing a self evaluation.

Anecdotal records or checklists can be maintained during the literature circle time period. Observational notes can be written on labels or post it notes. Checklists with students' names and a list of specific behaviors can be marked while the teacher circulates between groups. It is less threatening if mental notes are made while a teacher is actually interacting with a group. Once the teacher has left, notes and checklists can be addressed (see appendix B).

Scaled rubrics are another form of assessment as is individual and group conferences. During conferences, teachers are able to converse with students about their thinking, their strategies and their goals. Notes can be made at this time, or even better, the conference can be audio taped for future reference. Audio tapes can also be

used during literature circle discussion time periods as well (see appendix B).

Concrete artifacts such as role sheets, response journals and response projects are informative documents. These help the teacher to study the student's thinking. These documents can be collected on a regular basis and stored in a portfolio. The portfolio can present the big picture of a student's reading, thinking and participation.

Many of us must assign letter grades. To address this issue some Chicago teachers developed a system which measures a student against himself/herself for 80% of the grade based on productivity and growth. The other 20% is a norm referenced measure, that which compares the student to other students in the class (Daniels, 1995, p. 167; see appendix B).

FINAL REFLECTION

I believe as an instructor of literacy I have worked toward ensuring that my students walk away from my class feeling like they are readers and writers. While it is true there are many basic reading skills and strategies that must be addressed in instruction, I don't believe it should be at the expense of the meaning the students construct.

Education is under the gun at this point. California public schools that do not measure up the the state's numerical criteria of achievement are threatened with the prospect of becoming an "improvement" school. The students need to be performing well on standardized achievement tests as well as in the classroom. I don't think we can afford not to be teaching towards the highest level possible. I believe that is what literature circles do. It pushes them to go beyond the minimum of acceptable performance. By providing rich contextual literacy experiences, students will become proficient readers.

Through these experiences the students will learn more about their own strengths and weakness. It allows me insight that can't be learned from worksheets or other mundane tasks. These insights allow me to plan ways that will be supportive of their needs. It also allows the students to be supportive of each other.

I hope you find this handbook helpful as you explore literature circles in your classroom. As you progress with this approach, I am sure you will find it as fascinating as I have.

APPENDIX B CURRICULAR SUPPORT

SAY SOMETHING

Materials:

* multiple copies of reading selection for groups or whole class

Procedure:

1. Students buddy-up to read a selection. I have found that practicing the engagement as a whole group during a read aloud is helpful before having them do it as partners.

2. Students should decide how they will read the selection, aloud or silently. My students prefer reading aloud.

3. As a whole class, I read aloud a few paragraphs and then I say "Say Something." If I get no response I demonstrate. Then I go back to reading a few more paragraphs and continue as before. What I have found is the first time kids are reluctant. But as time progresses and it becomes a common thing to do during a read aloud, I have seen anticipation in their faces.

4. As buddy readers, the students read to each other and periodically stop to say something to each other about the text. They need to understand that they can make predictions, share connections, ask questions and clarify understandings.

Adapted from:

Short, K. G., Harste, J.C., Burke, C. (1996). Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

GRAFFITI BOARD

Materials:

- * chart paper
- * markers

Procedure:

1. A group of students engage in a shared reading experience.
2. The students use the chart paper and markers to randomly record their reactions to the reading on their section of the chart paper. Their reactions can be in the form of words, phrases, or sketches. They are to record these reactions in the form of graffiti. There need not be any order or organization.
3. The students then share their section of the graffiti board with each other. Their entries are meant to stimulate a discussion of the text. They can also use their entries to create a more organized web or chart that categorizes their ideas which further the discussion.

Adapted from:

Short, K. G., Harste, J.C., Burke, C. (1996). Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

WEBBING WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND

Materials:

- * chart paper
- * markers

Procedure:

1. Students engage in a shared reading experience. Once they have completed the reading, they share their responses in a discussion. This engagement can follow other engagements such as the Graffiti Board, Anomalies or Sketch to Stretch.

2. Once the students have had an initial discussion, they can use this activity to find an issue to focus on for a more in depth discussion. They can use the responses from the Graffiti Board or other engagement to create a organized visual web of their ideas. At this time they do not have to discuss the ideas presented, they merely categorize the responses under bigger ideas or issues.

3. Once the web is completed they are to decide what part of it will be the focus for their next meeting.

4. At the next meeting, the web should be placed somewhere visible. It can be placed in front of them on a table or on a wall or bulletin board. Then the group continues with their discussion. If any new ideas arise during the talk, they are to be added in a new color on the web. They do not have to discuss everything on the web. They

should focus on what appears to be the most significant for them.

5. When they are done they can add new thoughts or changes in their thinking to the web in a different color. The web can be used to have an informal presentation to the whole class or use it as a basis for developing their presentation project.

Adapted from:

Short, K. G., Harste, J.C., Burke, C. (1996). Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

ANAMOLIES

Materials:

- * reading selection
- * four 3"x 5" note cards for each student participating or slips of paper

Procedure:

1. Students engage in a shared reading experience.
2. Students write a quotation from the selection on each of their cards. The quote should be one that caused them to react in some special way. It could be a quote they did not understand and it caused them to reread. It could be one that was surprising, or caused unusual feelings. They can even write questions that they arose during the reading. I also had the students record the page number as well.
3. Once the students have recorded their anomalies, they are to rank them from one to four, one being the most anomalous, four being the least anomalous.
4. Once the students come back together as a group, they share their most anomalous quote. This opens up the discussion. They should be able to explain why the quote was anomalous for them.
5. After the students have shared the anomalies, they should reflect upon the similarities and differences of their reactions.

Adapted from:

Short, K. G., Harste, J.C., Burke, C. (1996). Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

SKETCH TO STRETCH

Materials:

- * reading selection for groups or whole class
- * pencils, paper, colored pencils, markers, or crayons

Procedure:

1. Students work in small groups to read a selection, orally or silently.

2. After reading, the students draw or sketch their interpretation of the story. A good way to get them started is to say "draw or sketch what this story means to you." Encourage them not to draw a scene from the story, but to think about the meaning of the story and to visually display it. They can also draw their own connections to the story. This is very challenging for them. Most of my students have never had to think in these terms. They are used to illustrating a scene. It is helpful to share examples if they are available before asking them to do this on their own.

3. Encourage the students to experiment with their attempts. Be sure to tell them that this activity is not about being a fantastic artist because you will get students who will say "I can't draw." Be sure to give them plenty of time to read and draw.

4. After the students have drawn their interpretations they are to share them with the group. They should not say

anything about their piece at this time. The other students should examine the works and discuss what they think the artist is trying to say.

5. Once everyone in the group has had an opportunity to express their thoughts about a piece, then the artist can have the last word about his/her piece.

6. Sharing continues in this way until everyone's sketch has been discussed. One piece can then be selected from the group to be shared with the rest of the class.

Adapted from:

Short, K. G., Harste, J.C., Burke, C. (1996). Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

**RECORD OF PREPARATION FOR AND PARTICIPATION
IN LITERATURE CIRCLES**

Name _____ Date _____
 Author _____ Title _____

Preparation for Literature Circles

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| * Brought book to group. | Yes | No |
| * Contributed to developing
a group reading plan. | Yes | No |
| * Worked according to group plan. | Yes | No |
| * Read the book. | Yes | No |
| * Took note of places to share. | Yes | No |

Participation in Literature Circles

- | | | | |
|---|------|------|-----------|
| * Overall participation in the dialogue. | Weak | Good | Excellent |
| * Overall quality of responses. | Weak | Good | Excellent |
| * Referred to text to support ideas
and to clarify. | Weak | Good | Excellent |
| * Listened to others and modified
responses where appropriate. | Weak | Good | Excellent |
| * Other | | | |

_____	Weak	Good	Excellent
_____	Weak	Good	Excellent
_____	Weak	Good	Excellent

Adapted from:

Peterson, R., & Eeds, M. (1990). Grand conversations.
 New York: Scholastic.

LITERATURE DISCUSSION NOTES

Book Title _____ Date _____

Record student responses that indicated any of the following:

1. shows enjoyment
2. shares reaction
3. seeks meaning from illustrations
4. draws conclusions
5. elaborates
6. justifies
7. explains
8. expresses feelings
9. relates to personal experiences
10. goes beyond "I like"
11. makes predictions
12. asks questions
13. discussing literary elements

Name _____
Codes _____

Adopted from:

Hill, B. C., Johnson, N. J., & Schlick Noe, K. L. (1995).
Literature circles and response. Maine: Christopher Gordon
Publishers.

LITERATURE CIRCLE EVALUATION FORM

<u>Trait</u>	<u>Source of Data</u>
40% Productivity	
* Quantity of reading	
* Preparation for discussions	Daily role sheets
* Contributions to group	Teacher observation
40% Growth	
* Variety of books, authors, genres	Daily role sheets
* Explanations and interpretations	Conferences
* Use of input from peers/teachers	Teacher observation
* Application of new skills and insights to new book	Artifacts Projects
* Response expressed in projects	
20% Quality of Reading	
* Difficulty of texts read	Teacher Observation
* Level of thinking shown	Conferences
* Leadership in group sessions	Artifacts
* Sophistication of projects	Portfolios

Adopted from:

Daniels, H. (1994). Literature circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom. Maine: Stenhouse Publisher.

LITERATURE CIRCLE DISCUSSION RUBRIC

SCORE	CRITERIA
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Focuses on major themes, issues, questions, or characters* Effectively uses evidence from text, content area, and/or personal experience to support ideas* Appropriately introduces new ideas on a regular basis* Builds/expands on others' ideas* Respects others' ideas* Talks for a clear purpose* Appropriately supports less active members of the group
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Focuses on secondary themes, issues, questions or characters* Uses some evidence from the text, and /or personal experience to support ideas* Demonstrates some sense of purpose for speaking* Occasionally builds on others' ideas* Demonstrates some respect for others' ideas* Occasionally introduces new ideas
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Superficial response with minimal reference to the text or personal experiences* Talks about trivial textual details or irrelevant personal experiences* Rarely builds on the ideas of others* Rarely introduces new ideas* Demonstrates no clear purpose for speaking* Speaks very infrequently* Raises hand before speaking and/or resorts to round-robin turn-taking
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Superficial response with no reference to the text or personal experiences* Talks about trivial textual details does not connect with text in any way* Does not build on the ideas of others* Does not introduce new ideas* Demonstrates no purpose for speaking* Speaks very infrequently* Waits for someone to ask them to speak

1

- * Talks about anything but the text
- * Does not build on the ideas of others
- * Does not introduce new ideas
- * Will not respond when asked to speak

Adapted from:

Bisesi, T. L. & Raphael, T. E. (1997). Assessment Research in the Book Club Program. In S. I. Mc Mahon , T. E. Raphael (Eds.), The Book Club Connection (p.197). New York: Teachers College Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, L. (1965). The black cauldron. New York: Dell Publishers.

Atwell, N. (1987). In the middle. NH: Heinemann.

Applegate, K. A. (1997). Animorphs: The android. New York: Scholastic.

Babbit, N. (1975). Tuck everlasting. Canada: Harper Collins.

Coville, B. (1989). My teacher is an alein. New York: Scholastic.

Estes, E. (1973). Hundred dresses. New York: Scholastic.

Fox, P. (1973). Slaver dancer. New York: Dell Publishers.

Gardiner, J. R. (1980). Stone fox. New York: Harper Collins.

Harp, B. (1994). Assessment & evaluation. MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Krogness, M. M. (1995). Just teach me Mrs. K. NH: Heinemann.

L'Engle, M. (1962). A wrinkle in time. New York: Dell Publishers.

Lowry, L. (1989). Number the stars. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

Naido, B. (1997). Journey to Jo'burg. New York: Harper Collins.

O'Dell, S. (1970). Sing down the moon. New York: Dell Publishers.

Paterson, K. (1977). Bridge to Teribethia. New York: Harper Collins.

Paterson, K. (1978). The great Gilly Hopkins. New York: Harper Collins.

Parker, A.E. (1995). Clue: The screaming skeleton #10. New York: Scholastic.

Rowls, W. (1961). Where the red fern grows. New York: Bantam Doubleday.

Rief, L. (1992). Seeking diversity. NH: Heinemann.

Russell, D. L. (1994). Literature for children. New York: Longman.

Sperry, A. (1940). Call it courage. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Steinbeck, J. (1937). The red pony. New York: Bantam Doubleday.

Stine, R. L. (1995). A shocker on shock street. New York: Scholastic.

Taylor, M. C. (1987). The friendship/the gold Cadillac. New York: Bantam Doubleday.

Taylor, T. (1969). The cay. New York: Hearst Corporation.

Taylor, T. (1993). Timothy of the cay. New York: Hearst Corporation.

Weinberg, L. (1997). Escape from ghost hotel. New York: Troll.

Whitin, P. (1996). Sketching stories, stretching minds. NH: Heinemann.

REFERENCES

- Almasi, J., & Gambrell, L. (1997). Conflict during classroom discussions can be a good thing. In J. R. Paratore & R. L. McCormak (Eds.), Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research (pp.130-155). Delaware: International Reading Association.
- Au, K. (1993). Literacy instruction in multicultural settings. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Caine, R. & Caine, G. (1991). Making connections: Teaching and the human brain. Virginia: Association for Supervisions and Curriculum Development.
- Cambourne, B. (1991). Breaking the lore: An alternate view of learning. In J. Turbill, A. Butler, B. Cambourne, & G. Langton (Eds.), The core course k-8: Theory of others (revised edition 1994., pp.19-33). New: York: Wayne Finger Lakes Board of Cooperative Educational Services.
- Clausen, C. (1995). A delightful journey: Literature circles in first grade. In B. C. Hill, N. J. Johnson & K. L. S. Noe (Eds.), Literature circles and response(pp.13-24). MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.
- Corno, L., & Randi, J. (1997). Motivation, volition, and collaborative innovation in classroom literacy. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction (pp. 51-67). Delaware: International Reading Association.
- Daniels, H. (1994). Literature circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom. Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Evans, K. (1997). Exploring the complexities of peer-led literature discussions: The Influence of gender. In J. R. Paratore & R. L. McCormak (Eds.), Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research (pp.130-155). Delaware: International Reading Association.
- Gottfried, A. (1985). Academic intrinsic motivation in elementary and junior high school students. Journal of educational psychology 77 (6) pp. 631-645.

Guthrie, J., Alao, S., & Rinehart, J. (1997). Engagement in reading for young adolescents. Journal of adolescent & adult literacy 40 (6) 438-446.

Johnson, R. & Johnson, D. (1988). Cooperative learning. In Context 18.

Hill, B. (1995). Literature circles and response. MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Hunt, E. T. (1997). Mama is a sunrise. In Elements of literature (p.400). New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston.

Kaser, S. & Short, K. (1997). Exploring cultural diversity through peer talk. In J. R. Paratore & R. L. McCormack (Eds.), Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research (pp.45-65). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Kasten, W. (1997). Learning is noisy: The myth of silence in the reading-writing classroom. In J. R. Paratore & R. L. McCormack (Eds.), Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research (pp.88-101). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Lapp, D., Flood, J., Buhr-Ranck, W., Van Dyke, J., & Spacek, S. (1997). Do you really just want us to talk about this book? In J. R. Paratore & R. L. McCormack (Eds.), Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research (pp.6-23). Delaware: International Reading Association.

McCormack, R. (1997). Eavesdropping on second graders' peer talk about African trickster tales. In J. R. Paratore & R. L. McCormack (Eds.), Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research (pp.26-43). Delaware: International Reading Association.

McDermott, R.P. (1977). Social relations as contexts for learning in school. Thought and language/ language and reading (pp. 498-511). Massettchusetts: Harvard Educational Review Reprint series No. 14.

McMahon, S.I. (1997). Reading in the book club program. In S. I. McMahon., T. E. Raphael., V. J. Goatley., & L. S. Pardo (Eds.), The book club connection (pp. 47-68). New York: Teachers College Press.

Midgley, C. (1993). Motivation and middle level schools. In M. L. Maehr & P. R. Pintrich (Eds.), Advances in motivation and achievement 8 (pp.217-274). Conn: Greenwich.

Owens, S. (1995). Treasures in the attic: Building the foundation for literature circles. In B. C. Hill, N. J. Johnson & K. K. S. Noe (Eds.), Literature circles and response (pp.1-10). MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Pardo, L. S. (1997). Reflective teaching for continuing development of book club. In S. I. McMahon., T. E. Raphael., V. J. Goatley, & L. S. Pardo (Eds.), The book club connection (pp. 227-247). New York: Teachers College Press.

Peterson, R. & Eeds, M. (1990). Grand conversations. New York: Scholastic.

Raphael, T., Brock, C., & Wallace, S. (1997). Encouraging quality peer talk with diverse students in mainstream classrooms: learning from and with teachers. In J. R. Paratore & R. L. McCormak (Eds.), Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research (pp.176-206). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Rosenblatt, L. (1976). Literature as exploration. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

Rosenblatt, L. (1985). The transactional theory of the literary work: Implications for Research. In C. R. Cooper (Ed.), Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature:Points of departure (pp.33-53). New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Ruddell, R., & Unrau, N. (1997). The role of responsive teaching in focusing reader intention and developing reader motivation. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction (pp. 102-127). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Schunk, D., & Zimmerman, B. (1997) Developing self-efficacious readers and writers: The role of social and self-regulatory processes. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction (pp. 34-50). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Shallert, D., & Reed, J. (1997). The pull of the text and the process of involvement in reading. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction (pp. 68-85). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Short, K. (1990). Creating a Community of Learners. In K. G. Short & K. M. Pierce (Eds.), Talking about books: Creating literate communities (pp. 33-52). New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Short, K. (1995). Forward. In B. C. Hill, N. J. Johnson & K. K. S. Noe (Eds.), Literature circles and response (pp. ix-xiii). MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Short, K. G., Harste, J. C. & Burke, C. (1996). Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Simmons, R. & Blythe, D. (1987). Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context. New York: Aldine DeGruyter.

Smith, F. (1985). Reading without nonsense (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Smith, K. (1990). Entertaining a text: A reciprocal process. In K. G. Short & K. M. Pierce (Eds.), Talking about books: Creating literate communities (pp. 17-31). New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Sweet, A. (1997). Teacher perceptions of student motivational and their relation to literacy learning. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction (pp. 86-101). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Sweet, A., & Guthrie, J. (1996). How children's motivations relate to literacy development and instruction. Reading Teacher 49 (8) 660-662.

Tyszkowa, M. (1990). Coping with difficult school situations and stress resistance. In H. Bosma and S. Jackson (Eds.), Coping and self concept in adolescence (pp. 187-201). New York: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg.

Weaver, C. (1994). Reading process and practice. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wigfield, A. (1997). Children's motivations for reading and reading engagement. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction (pp. 14-33). Delaware: International Reading Association.

Wigfield, A., & Asher, S. (1984). Social and motivational influences on reading. In D. Pearson, R. Barr, M. L. Kamil & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), Handbook of reading research (pp.423-443). New York: Longman.