

## A Literature Circle Approach to Shared Read Alouds

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Note: To get more background on Literature Circles try <http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/promising/tips/tipcircles.html> or just Google "Literature Circles."

Using the Literature Circle approach, children work in groups called Literature Circles and are tasked with creating the questions about the sections of a book or story. Then they meet regularly to explore and answer the questions in discussion. "Right" answers are not the goal. The goals are to understand stories more deeply, and to learn how to ask questions that generate genuine discussion. The bonuses are that the students will correct each other's comprehension and learn that there can be many points of view that are valid.

Of course a teacher would need to model a good discussion, explain how to respond to others' ideas, and show how to encourage group members to risk sharing feelings. Also a teacher could display types of questions that require more than a short answer. One method used to help kids discover ways to generate discussion is to rotate Literature Circle roles among the members of a group for the different chapters in an accessible, short book. Then ask them to evaluate whether they were able to spark conversation and share questions that worked. Any story passage will do for the general tasks I've listed below (the titles and jobs can be whatever you like and any number you like):

### Examples of Literature Circle Roles

**Character Detective:** Asks about POV and changes in characters' thinking

**Word Wizard:** Asks about word meanings and multiple meanings

**Passage Poet:** Asks about passages that are vivid, clever, or meaningful

**Summarizer:** Asks about twists and turns of plot

**Predictor:** Asks questions about cause and effect and what may happen next

**Art Director:** Asks about illustration aspects or brings a drawing as a response

**Connector:** Asks questions about how the ideas in the story relate to real life

Each Literature Circle meeting covers one section or chapter of the book. It may take eight meetings for a longer book or just two for a picture book. Group members should rotate roles or choose different roles for each meeting.

So, what might I do to use these ideas in a shared read aloud with another classroom?

- Beforehand, I would probably want my students to work through a storybook chosen by their group using this method so they would have a feeling for how discussions might go.

- I'd want to collaborate with the other teacher on just how we want our project to proceed.
- Before the shared read aloud, I'd decide on groups and have everyone choose a job for the first section or chapter.
- Then read aloud the first section or chapter (or listen to the other teacher read aloud) and give the children time to develop a question or two for their role.
- At this point, depending on the plan developed with the other teacher, groups from each classroom could switch questions via email, or have their own discussion before connecting again with the other classroom.
- In the wrap-up, either shared live, on video or audio, a few volunteers from each class could share questions that sparked discussion and relate the ideas that came up. Or just ask the other class to respond to their questions.

When the children see or hear what the other class chooses to ask and the ideas they discuss, there might be an interesting exchange about how people from other places see their world.