



SAMPLE MATERIAL

## Literature Circles Lesson Plan and Materials

Gateway High School, California

**Topic: Adolescent Literacy**

**Practice: Engaging Text Discussion**

Gateway High School teacher Rebecca Wieder uses literature circles in her ninth-grade Humanities classroom to engage students in meaningful discussions about literature. Her lesson plan shows the logistics for using literature circles during classroom teaching. Also included here are student handouts. One describes the students' roles in literature circles, clarifying the job of each participant; the sentence starters provide discussion prompts for students who are unsure how to start talking about a text; and the reflection sheet helps students prepare for the literature circle beforehand and to evaluate their experience in the group after the discussion.

Rebecca Wieder  
Humanities 9: 12/11 Lesson

*Objective 1: Continue to develop discussant skills; deepen understanding of characters, themes, symbols.*

10 min.- Students write down homework, fill out Process of Learning tracker, and write “Before Literature Circles” reflection.

10 min.- Getting ready for Literature Circles:

- Go over goals from previous Literature Circles and what class said they needed to do to get a “10” for the final Literature Circle (focus on interruptions, participation, using the text)
- Have students get out materials (book, prep, paper for notes, post-its)
- Go over order of roles

45 min.- Literature Circles

10 min. Students complete “After Literature Circles” reflection and put together Literature Circles packet to turn in.

10 min.- Debrief:

- What did our circles do well? In what ways did we reach our goals?
- What ideas or issues were most compelling?
- What’s the value of doing Literature Circles? What are the challenges?

*Objective 2: Understand the purpose of writing an essay after reading a book; remember what an essay is and does; begin to formulate ideas for essay, building on prior knowledge/discussion.*

15 min.- Roll out *Like Water for Chocolate* essay:

- Now that we’ve read the book, summarized, analyzed, predicted and discussed, we’re ready to take a stand on a theme.
- Review three themes on your bookmark. Which one is most compelling to you?
- Hand out essay prompt and rubric.
- Model brainstorm on theme.

Homework: Brainstorm ideas and gather quotes on your theme.

## Humanities 9- Literature Circles



*What are Literature Circles?*

- Literature Circles are small student-led group discussions in which each group member has a specific role and has prepared for the discussion according to that role. **For *Like Water for Chocolate*, we will have multiple Literature Circles; for each one, you will have a different role.**
- **Before the Literature Circle, students complete a reflection on their preparation** for the Literature Circle and what they hope to discuss and accomplish during the activity.
- **After the Literature Circle, students complete a reflection** on their group members' preparation, what their group did/didn't do well, and suggestions for improving the discussion during the next Literature Circle.

*What do I have to do to prepare for Literature Circles?*

- Read the assigned chapters, track themes, and complete homework and class work.
- Complete the preparation for your assigned role (see below)

### Literature Circles Roles

**Summarizer.** Your job is to write a summary of at least one page covering all the important events from the assigned reading and explaining why these events were significant. How did they change the characters? How did they develop themes?

**Discussion Director.** Your job is to write down at least five questions for discussion. These questions should be open-ended (not "yes/no" questions) and designed to spark interesting discussion. Questions that are **controversial** or require students to think about **what they would do** in a situation that relates to the story are good conversation starters. You also must write a 3-5 sentence response to each of your questions to share with your circle after they have had a chance to answer.

During the discussion, your job is to encourage all group members to participate by involving them in the discussion, to ask follow-up questions when conversation lags, and to be sure that every participant has a chance to present his or her preparation.

**Connector.** Your job is to find at least four connections between the story and the world/present. These connections might relate to current events, personal experiences, movies or other books, or anything else that relates to the story in some way. Write a paragraph explanation of each connection (4-8 paragraphs total).

During the literature circle, present each connection to your group, and ask them if they can provide additional connections for this section of the text.

**Illustrator.** Your job is to create or find an image that relates to the assigned reading. Consider drawing a picture, downloading images from the internet, creating a collage, etc. On the back of the image, write an explanation of how the image relates to the reading (one full paragraph) and devise a question for discussion relating to the image.

During the Literature Circle, show your group the image **without reading the explanation**. Ask your group to discuss how they think the image relates to the reading. Then, read your explanation and ask your discussion question.

**Literary Luminary.** Your job is to compile at least four quotations from the reading that you think are significant or include interesting/poetic language. Be sure to use MLA format for your citations. For each quote, write a paragraph discussing what the quote means and what role it plays in the story. (4 paragraphs total)

During the Literature Circle, you will read each quotation to your group, then ask your group what they notice about the quotation, what they think it means, and what role the quotation plays in the story.

**Literary Terms Expert.** Your job is to write down at least four examples of magical realism and figurative language (metaphors, similes, symbolism, etc.). Be sure to use MLA format for your citations. For each example, write a paragraph discussing the **example's** meaning and what role it plays in the story. (4 paragraphs total)

During the Literature Circles, share these examples with your group and ask them to discuss their meaning before you offer your answers.

### Before the Literature Circle Reflection

1. Self-assess your preparation for this Literature Circle. Did you read and prepare your role? Explain.
2. What ideas, events, characters, etc., do you hope to discuss in this Literature Circle?

### After the Literature Circle Reflection

1. In what ways have you improved as a discussant over the course of these Literature Circles? What do you still need to work on?

Consider:

- Active listening
  - Not interrupting; using “wait time” to give others a chance to speak
  - Contributing ideas
  - Referring to the text
  - Asking questions and follow-up questions
  - Disagreeing respectfully
2. What do you like best or find most useful about Literature Circles?
  3. What do you find most challenging about Literature Circles? How might you deal with this challenge in the future?



## When you don't know what to say...

### Sentence Starters for Discussions

#### Relate to Personal Experience:

1. If I were \_\_\_\_\_, I would \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I am a lot like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. This scene in the novel reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I would like to be like \_\_\_\_\_ because he/she \_\_\_\_\_.
5. My experience is similar/different because \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I understand how you feel because \_\_\_\_\_.
7. If I could introduce one character to my family or friends, it would be \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Go to the Text

1. What evidence do you have from the book that leads you to believe that \_\_\_\_\_?
2. How do you know that \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Can you show me where it says \_\_\_\_\_?
4. Remember the part when \_\_\_\_\_?
5. The author creates conflict when \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Ask a Question:

1. What do you mean when you say \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Why do you think that \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Can you give an example?
4. Why does \_\_\_\_\_ do \_\_\_\_\_?
5. I think \_\_\_\_\_ is confusing because \_\_\_\_\_.
6. If I could ask \_\_\_\_\_ one question, this would be my question:
7. Why does the author \_\_\_\_\_?

#### Express an Opinion:

1. I agree that \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I think that \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_'s actions because \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I like the way the author uses \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
5. If \_\_\_\_\_ had not done \_\_\_\_\_, I think \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I like \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_.
7. I would be embarrassed to introduce \_\_\_\_\_ to my family because \_\_\_\_\_.
8. I want to tell the author of the story that \_\_\_\_\_.
9. I just hate that \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Speculate:

1. If I could change anything in the story I would change \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I wonder if \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I wish that \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I would like to give the following advice to \_\_\_\_\_:
5. If only \_\_\_\_\_ had \_\_\_\_\_ I think he/she would have \_\_\_\_\_.