

Classroom Lesson Plan 6

Literature Circles

Teacher: Latosha Rowley, IPS Center for Inquiry, Indianapolis, Indiana

Grade Level: Fourth and Fifth

Topic: Let Freedom Ring

Materials Needed:

- Student sign-up sheets for students to make book selections based on interests (see the Teacher Tool “Literature Group Sign-Up Sheet”)
- Tape recorder to tape books for special needs students
- Large recording paper and markers for group recording of discussion ideas and thoughts
- Text sets of four to six copies of selected books
- Student literature logs for recording responses and storing literature circle records
- The Teacher Tool “Group Discussion Role Guidelines”
- “Literature Discussion Guides” for each novel (see Teacher Tools)
- “Reading Assessment Sheet” (see Student Activity Sheets)
- “Rubric: Culminating Project” (see Teacher Tools)

Background Information:

Ms. Rowley believes that having choices of what to read helps students really engage with the literature and enjoy what they are reading. Within the curricular focus of American history with the theme, “Let Freedom Ring,” she offers her students a range of titles designed to help them experience various historical events and expand their thinking on what freedom is and what it looks like while acquainting them with historical examples of struggles for individual and collective freedom.

During this lesson, students make comparisons between life in the 1800s, during the Civil Rights movement, and today in order to explore how things change and how they remain the same. Ms. Rowley encourages her students to make personal connections while they are developing their understandings of both geography and American history. In addition to the core texts that the students read with their literature circles, Ms. Rowley often reads topically relevant picture books such as Patricia Polacco’s *Pink and Say*, Marcia Vaughan’s *The Secret to Freedom*, or Eve Bunting’s *Smoky Night*, to expand their background of the issues and events foregrounded by a particular area of study.

If you are interested in learning more about ways in which Latosha Rowley integrates history and literature study, you may wish to read her co-authored article “Plan for Making Meaning” which can be found under Support Materials at the *Engaging With Literature* library Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature.

Classroom Lesson Plan 6: Literature Circles, page 2

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- read, enjoy, and discuss the literature.
- understand the concept of freedom as it relates to American history and to their own lives.
- use language effectively to make meanings, challenge thinking, and expand their literary envisionments as they discuss concepts, issues, opinions, and ideas related to the literature.
- use language effectively to develop as a classroom community of thinkers and learners, respectful of views other than their own.
- increase their literary understandings and appreciation during collaborative discussions.
- use questions as a way to expand their understandings of the literature and of the issues it raises.
- use informal writing to respond to their reading as a way to prepare for literature discussions.
- complete each of the four literature discussion roles (Discussion Director, Word Wizard, Artful Artist, and Passage Master) and record the appropriate information for each. See “Group Discussion Role Guidelines” for specific information.

Expected Products From Lesson:

- Informal personal written responses
- Written records of facts and information
- Exploratory discussions about the literature
- Map connecting to the text
- Reflective evaluations of both individual understandings and group processes
- Culminating activity

Instructional Strategies Implemented:

- Read-alouds and guided discussion of content
- Mini-lessons modeling discussion strategies
- Literature circle discussions of readings
- Reflective evaluations
- Culminating activity

Classroom Lesson Plan 6: Literature Circles, page 3

Collaborative Structure of Class:

Ms. Rowley's class reflects the ethnic and academic mix of the school as a whole. The Resource Special Education teacher works with a few students outside the classroom for one to two hours a week and visits the classroom daily for an hour to help with classroom assignments.

Although the physical space of the classroom is limited, the learning environment is free; students can move about to read and write in places comfortable for them. Typically they sit at circular tables in groups of four and share a crate on each table to store class work. Students have a strong sense of community developed in part by regular Town Meetings where they share developing issues and concerns. Respect and consideration for others is the fundamental expectation for student behavior.

Lesson Procedures/Activities:

- Students choose books using a Reading Sign-Up Sheet.
- The class day begins with DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) for 15 minutes to give everybody a chance to read.
- Ms. Rowley presents a mini-lesson designed to highlight a particular kind of discussion about literature or discussion strategies.
- Students meet in literature circles to discuss the novel they are reading. They refer to their texts and their written response to guide their discussion.

Follow-Up or Culminating Activities:

- As a group, students complete a map showing locations of the story, journeys of the characters, etc.
- When a group has completed reading and discussing their book, they plan a culminating activity and share it with the class. This might be visual such as a poster, mural, illustrations for the story, a collage, cartoon, or a storyboard; it might be a piece of written work such as a newspaper or a new ending for the story; it might be a dramatic presentation such as a play or skit, a mock trial, a puppet show, or a newscast report; it might even be musical such as an original song or a dance routine presented to the class.

Assessment:

Students may be assessed on a daily basis through:

- their written responses in their literature logs,
- completion of a "Reading Assessment Sheet" either in the middle of their reading or just before they prepare and present their culminating activity, and
- participation in literature circle discussions.

The following activities might receive holistic or scaled evaluation (see the Teacher Tool Assessment and Evaluation: Some Useful Principles for a detailed explanation of holistic and scaled evaluation). The Teacher Tool "Rubric: Culminating Project" included with this program provides useful scoring assistance for the final project.

- Group map of text
- Culminating activity and its presentation to the class