



Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs Reading Groups

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What do we know about literature circles now that we didn't understand eight or ten years ago? What new resources and procedures can help teachers organize their classroom book clubs better? What are the most common pitfalls in implementing student-led discussion groups? And getting beyond the basics, what do mature or "advanced" literature circles look like?

In this thoroughly revised and expanded guide, you will find new strategies, structures, tools, and stories that show you how to launch and manage literature circles effectively. Advanced variations are explored and include alternatives to role sheets and flexible new guidelines for their use.

The second edition includes:

four different models for preparing students for literature circles using response logs, sticky notes, and newly designed role sheets; dozens of variations on the basic version of student-led bookclubs; new models and procedures for primary, intermediate, and high school grades; new materials for assessing and grading literature circles; an inventory of common management problems and solutions; new scheduling patterns for group meetings and reading time; ideas for using literature circles with nonfiction texts across the curriculum; research on literature circles, including correlation with increased achievement on standardized tests; an explanation of how literature circles match with the national standards for literacy education. With detailed examples provided by twenty practicing teachers, Harvey Daniels offers practical and concrete suggestions for each aspect of book club management and proven solutions for problems that arise.

Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs Reading Groups Details

Date : Published January 1st 2002 by Stenhouse Publishers (first published 1994)

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Mark Isero says

This book was OK. The concept of literature circles is important and a good one, but I always thought the implementation felt a bit forced. This is not how real people talk about books, so why should students have to?

Andy says

I had to read this book to figure out how I wanted to run lit. circles in my classroom. There was not enough time to read the entire book, and I didn't think it was necessary to read the elementary sections. A very handy book that I would like to revisit during the summer when I will have more time to read with more depth.

Andrea Dubitsky says

I have tried literature circles in the past. This year my fellow teachers and I focused on literature circles as a vehicle for delivering key curriculum and content. I felt they were just OK for my students, meaning they weren't amazing, or as amazing as I had hoped they would be. Reading this book showed me all the tiny things I should do differently to make the literature Circle experience more fulfilling for my students and I. I'm reading this in April and am still looking forward to summer break, but now I really just can't wait to start over fresh next school year. A very good read for anybody interested in facilitating book clubs or literature circles.

Candace Hudson says

Great ideas, techniques, and strategies for teachers who want to use literature circles. The book is for teachers of all levels.

Chris Keswick says

Interesting and helpful ideas for my homeschool co-op lit class!

Catherine says

One of my very favorite "teacher books." This book is so user friendly that I was able to start Literature Circles in my classroom after implementing the techniques in this book. There are other literature circle

books out there but this is the definitive one!!!

Katie Oglesby says

This was an absolutely amazing book to read. Dr. Daniels presents this reading strategy in such an easy and casual manner that I know it has to be easy to implement. I am a literacy coach for an urban school that is in need of assistance. Many teachers have begun to implement this strategy with their students because of this book. Literature circles are the foundation to comprehension and understanding, evaluating and analyzing texts as a person and a student. I think this book is an easy, natural, understandable professional book that many teachers should have to read. When reading it, it feels as if you are talking to a colleague about something that they are trying out and its working.

I am going to continue using this strategy because it not only sets behavior standards, but also helps teach to the common core state standards without worksheets or complicated projects that students generally don't learn from unless they are self- directed. Literature circles helps students learn about others' opinions, share opinions and how to work through disagreements in a civilized manner while at the same time learning how to express themselves in an understandable verbal manner, analyzing a text among others and having accomplished the goal of reading a text independently and developing ideas based on that reading. So many good things in this book. Totally worth a re read!

Jason Gacek says

This book by Harvey "Smokey" Daniels is the place to go to learn about literature circles. A literature circle is basically a small book club for kids. Each circle consists of about 4-5 students and several circles run concurrently in the classroom. Kids pick the books they want to read and then discuss them. They are encouraged to talk about the books, to explore how the books relate to their experiences, and to pose questions related to the books. The idea here is that reading books you want to read and talking about them is fun. Reading and discussing are worthwhile activities. And participating in these activities can't but help the development of academic skills for students.

I very much enjoyed reading this book and picked up a lot of good ideas from it to incorporate into my own classroom. The examples of circles from real world classrooms were especially helpful. There was one minor frustration for me with the book, though. Smokey explains in this, the second edition, that in the first edition of the book, one of the most popular aspects of the book was the inclusion of role sheets, and as such he has included them in the second edition. A role sheet is a sheet which assigns each student in the literature circle to a role and gives them room to jot down their ideas on the paper to prepare them for the circle. Anyway, Smokey contends in the second edition that the role sheets have been way overused by teachers and that, actually, you don't need them at all, and if you do use them you should only use them for the first 3 weeks and then retire them. What he recommends instead is that students prepare for literature circles by writing and drawing in reading journals. However, Smokey doesn't really offer his own advice about how to structure setting up the reading journals. Instead, he explains that the idea of reading journals has been written about extensively in other books by other authors, and he refers the reader to these authors. It just seemed odd to me that something so important to the running of effective literature circles wouldn't warrant more attention in a book about creating literature circles.

All in all, though, this is a very good book, and an important one. And really, offering up my critique of the

book, as I did in the paragraph above, fits in very well with the objective of the book, which is to get conversations started about books. Who wants to join a lit circle about this book?

Marcy says

When I taught fourth grade, I taught a form of literature circles. I did let children have a choice of three or four books, but once the group was formed, I led the discussions. At the end of each book, each group was responsible for an activity to share with the rest of the class - Reader's Theatre, a diorama, etc. I wish I could teach an older grade once again to experiment how modern literature groups work with kids. I like the idea of mini-lessons to train students about possible roles they can have during discussion, and then let kids choose their own responses to literature like adults do. For students, however, the idea of having a notebook filled with their thinking, post-it notes, etc. is a must. Once a book is read, why have an activity? Go on to the next book..... It's all about reading, thinking, responding, and growing as a reader.

I read this in a day and got a lot out of it!

Sirpa Grierson says

My favorite book by far on using literature circles.

Jill says

Read for a class.

I wish the book had been updated to reflect the changes technology has brought to the classroom.

Jeff says

Literature Circles is a good introduction to a strong literacy practice that builds student motivation and comprehension skills. Daniels has enlisted a number classroom teachers to tell their stories in the book which gives "real world" context to the structures that he outlines in his book.

My one criticism of the book is that Daniels' educational philosophy falls a bit too far away from my own when it comes to assessment and educational outcomes. At least with the structure of literature circles, he seems to be fine with providing a rich environment for students to learn and then allowing for them to make progress through structured exposure great books and student led discussion. He does suggest that literature circles is only one regular component of a full literacy program, and talks about how to collect data on how students are performing in their literature circles in his section on assessment. However, I don't feel like it is enough. I believe that as with all components of your classroom instruction formative assessment (i.e.

assessment for learning) has to be central to any structure you use in the classroom and summative assessment (i.e. assessment of learning, grades) needs to be a bit more clear even with a structure like literature circles that has equal measures of social and academic outcomes .

Regardless, I feel like Literature Circles is a good introduction to a practice that has the potential to make broad impacts in student learning and ultimately children's lives.

Terry Crawford Palardy says

Excellent book - I co-led a staff development course with this book as the main focus. Full of practical applications and resources.

Sarah says

This book was so useful for teachers experimenting with reading - specifically book clubs and the like - in their classrooms. My only comment is that it's a bit dated, so there's a bit of a gap in terms of technology integration.

Debbie says

I tried to do lit circles with guidance from co-workers a few years ago, and I had a terrible experience. I did do some training, but not enough, and I didn't have a close eye on the students to find out if they were comfortable enough to move on.

So, as I read Daniels's book, I kept checking off in my head all the things I'd do next time. He breaks down the routine from primary to community college level, with ideas throughout for management, assessment, encouragement, and problem-solving. It honestly made me rethink my place as a teacher in lit circles and fired me up to plan another experience with it soon. I highly recommend it to those who are considering using lit circles (or non-fiction reading circles) or are looking to fine-tune their experience with new ideas.
