

LITERATURE CIRCLES: BENEFITS AND ROLES

In student-centered instruction, learners are conceived as “active participants in their own discovery process.” Dispensing with the view that students should sit back and act as repositories for transferred knowledge, student-centered lessons and activities empower the learner with choices, opportunities for substantive conversation, and real-world connections. Literature circles are an effective way to achieve many of the goals of student-centered learning while also improving social and interpersonal skills amongst learners.

With this technique, students choose their own reading material from a list of choices and are grouped with students who made the same choice. Students meet with their groups regularly and engage in discussions about topics they generate themselves. To aid in this process and apply helpful constraints, each student is given a specific role which orients them to a specific set of tasks they’ll accomplish for their group.

Traditionally, the roles in literature circles have centered around generating different aspects of discussion about a chosen text; however, many educators have revamped the roles to better suit the technology-centric atmosphere of learning environments today. See the table on the following page for more information.

Traditional Roles	Roles in Literature Circles 2.0
The Discussion Director oversees the discussion and holds group members accountable.	The Project Manager helps group members coordinate responsibilities, mediate conflicts, and meet deadlines.
The Connector identifies elements in the text that relate to students' lives, other texts, and world events.	The Trend-Spotter uses internet and media resources to connect to background knowledge, other texts, and other content areas to explain and make prediction about the book.
The Questioner raises questions to clarify, analyze, and critique the text.	The Bias Detective critically questions the text to raise issues of influence of the author's or character's perspectives and biases.
The Illustrator develops graphics or nonverbal interpretations in response to the text.	The Graphic Designer uses technology to develop graphics or nonlinguistic interpretations in response to the text.
The Summarizer prepares a summary of the assigned reading.	The Tweeter prepares a 140-character overview of the assigned reading, perhaps using hashtags or links to make wider connections.
The Researcher finds and shares background information about a topic related to the book.	The Investigative Journalist checks facts in the book and finds information that will help the group understand more completely.

Adapted from Herrera, L. J., & Kidwell, T. (2018). Literature Circles 2.0: Updating a classic strategy for the 21st century. *21st Century Learning & Multicultural Education*, 17-21.

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