Aesthetic response to literature: literature circles and response activities

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Aesthetic Response to Literature

_Literature Circles and Response Activities_

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Department of

Literacy Education

By

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Capstone Approval Page

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Aesthetic Response to Literature

_Literature Circles and Response Activities_

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Aesthetic response to literature is a crucial goal of reading at any grade level. Through literature circles and response activities, students can begin to develop the necessary skills needed to create aesthetic reading experiences. This capstone includes a literature review highlighting the relevancy and benefits of literature circles and response activities have on intermediate students and their overall reading and aesthetic reading skills. Based on these findings, I implemented literature circles and aesthetic response activities into a fifth grade classroom in Rockford, Illinois. Six novels were used in small groups of five to six students. Through literature circles, aesthetic reading skills were enhanced as well as cooperative learning, reading, writing, and communication skills. The research, observations, and student work samples clearly support the benefits that literature circles and response activities have on students' ability to make aesthetic connections to literature.
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Clarke, L. & Holwadel, J. (2007). "Help! What is wrong with these literature circles and how can we fix them?". *The reading teacher*, 61(1), 20-29.


King, C. (2001). "I like group reading because we can share ideas": The role of talk within the literature circle. *Reading*. 4. 32-36.


Aesthetic response to literature is a crucial goal of reading at any grade level. Through literature circles and response activities, students can begin to develop the necessary skills needed to create aesthetic reading experiences. This capstone includes a literature review highlighting the relevancy and benefits of literature circles and response activities have on intermediate students and their overall reading and aesthetic reading skills. Based on these findings, I implemented literature circles and aesthetic response activities into a fifth grade classroom in Rockford, Illinois. Six novels were used in small groups of five to six students. Through literature circles, aesthetic reading skills were enhanced as well as cooperative learning.
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Aesthetic Response to Literature

"Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours" (John Locke). This quote symbolizes the true goal of every teacher around the world. We want our students to not only read everything they possibly can, but we want them to fully understand and be affected by the text as well. Yet how can a teacher teach students to be affected by simply looking at lines of ink on paper? (Hsu 6). How can a teacher help the students see the letters "A-M-E-R-I-C-A" and not only read the word, but immediately connect America with everything they know about our country? Students need to make connections to literature and be able to draw out the true meanings that the author is trying to convey in order to fully understand the text. This kind of reading where the students make connections and become emotionally affected by the text is known as aesthetic reading (Farris 2004, 19). When students are aesthetically involved with the text, they are able to connect with the content past a simple comprehension level. They are able to bring themselves into the story and completely experience the text.

The most common way readers experience text aesthetically is to engage in characterization, and identify with one or more characters (Bluestein 432). For younger children, this is often in the form of noticing a character's physical traits and comparing them to their own looks. For more advanced readers, they are able to identify with the character's personality, situation, or life circumstances. They are able to see characters as three-dimensional as individuals that have feelings, thoughts, dialogue, and actions similar to themselves (Bluestein 431). Once a reader can relate to a character or the plot of the story, they are able to go beyond initial comprehension and advance to stages of Boom's higher level thinking. But how can a
Teacher help the student take this leap from comprehension? Teaching students to engage in the process of characterization can begin with something as simple as creating a character map. Character maps allow the students to create a visual representation of the character and their three dimensions of actions or feelings, and arrange them in a web form. By clustering the actions of a character, a reader is able to make inferences about who the character really is and not just their initial outward prospective. All it takes is one similarity between the character and the reader to create a relationship with the reader and the text.

This brings up the most vital part of creating aesthetic readers; the text. Without well-written literature, the characters will never come alive to the reader. Teachers need to know how to guide children to the age-appropriate text they will enjoy. When students are forced to read the "classics" such as The Scarlet Letter, although this is a brilliantly written book, the students have trouble making connections to a story that was written in the 1800's. We need to be exposing them to more books that they can relate to and learn from. The world is quite a different place now than it was fifty, ten, or even five years ago. Students need to be reading contemporary literature, written and set in the present (Farris 2004 439). These young readers have grown up with cars, computers, and cellular phones. They have been immersed in technology. It is unreasonable to think that they will be able to form a relationship to a Puritan woman who travels by horse. Overall, novels that have characters and situations a reader can connect to are the best books to cause aesthetic reading.

Although we hope that students are aesthetically reading, there are many other ways in which a teacher can give students opportunities to create relationships with the text. Literature circles give students the chance to aesthetically connect with the text by participating in a small group. Daniels, a well-known advocate of literature circles and aesthetic reading,
defines literature circles as "small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same book" (Hsu 2). Short continues this definition by stating that "Literature circles are open-ended discussions exploring the various interpretations of a piece of literature" (1). Together, these definitions paint a clear picture of what literature circles are in the classroom, small groups of students reading a book and discussing their interpretations, aesthetic responses, and other explanations about the book. By using literature circles, students are able to "explore half-formed ideas with others, to revise and expand their understanding of a piece of literature through hearing other children's interpretations, and to become readers who think critically and deeply about what they read" (Short 1). This detailed definition clearly proves that literature circles are one solution to the connecting to literature problem. Now that teachers know what literature circles are, the question now becomes: how do we implement literature circles into our classrooms?

Daniels' research has led him to identify ten widely accepted guidelines that literature circles must follow in order to be successful. One) Students need to be given a choice of which book to read. If students feel that they chose the book themselves, they are more apt to read and enjoy the book. Two) Groups are then formed around the books that the students chose. These groups are only to be used for this particular book. Variety of group members keeps literature circles new for the students. Three) Within the class, each group reads a different book. There should be some similarity or connection between books, thought to allow for a sense of unity to still be in the classroom. This also gives the teacher the option of teaching a whole unit, theme, or genre. Four) Groups meet on a regular basis. By setting and maintaining a schedule, the students know exactly what is required of them at each meeting. Therefore, they can then come prepared and use the meeting time wisely. Five) Students take written or illustrative notes during
reading and bring them to the literature meetings. By having notes to refer to, the discussion maintains focused and on track. Six) The teacher is responsible for generating discussions. The literature circles are student lead and therefore the discussions should be the same. Seven) Students are encouraged to share personal comments about the text with their group members. All group members are respectful and tolerant of one another's views and opinions. Eight) Jobs are rotated throughout the reading. Giving each student a chance to show their strengths and participate in the discussions is very important. Nine) The teacher is the facilitator and simply observes. Occasional participation in the groups is acceptable, but teachers are not to become part of the group. This is meant to be a student lead activity. Ten) Because the teacher is the facilitator, they are also to be the evaluator. Observations and possible literature response activities are appropriate to assess the students (Literaturecircles.com). Understanding of these ten guidelines is a crucial part in having successful literature circles. Now a teacher can move to the next step in creating literature circles; choosing the text.

Teachers have the important job of choosing the text to use in literature circles. "Teachers should select texts that elicit conversation, are at various levels, and explore different genre" (Farris 2004 96). Although this is a broad proposition, it contains the important elements to consider when finding texts appropriate for the classroom. The idea of genre has already been touched upon, but needs some clarity. Contemporary literature has seen to be the easiest for students to make connections to. It is also suggested that contemporary realistic fiction will stir up more discussions because in addition to being set in the present, these stories are about things that really could happen (Lynch-Brown 131).

Whether or not a book will prompt students to discuss with one another is the second issue to look at. First, teachers need to realize that there are two kinds of reading that take place
in the classroom. Students are reading to either gain information about a particular subject, or they are reading to experience the story. Aesthetic reading or making real life connections to the text and efferent reading, when students take knowledge from the text directly, are both necessary components of reading (Lynch-Brown 10). Although students need to take knowledge precisely from the text and make associations to the text, literature circles are designed to use more of the aesthetic reading techniques than efferent reading. Therefore, we want to choose books that students are more likely to aesthetically read. Carpinelli has additional suggestions of things to consider when choosing a book for literature circles. Fiction tends to be the better choice for literature groups because it encourages students to talk more because often there is a greater potential of objectionable elements in those stories. Humor also attracts students to a book. When there is something that is out of the ordinary or funny, students tend to want to talk about it more (Carpinelli 32).

Besides the content of the book, teachers need to consider the lengths of the books. Students are always concerned about the amount of work they have to do in and out of class. No matter how amazing the book may be, students are not going to choose a book that is five hundred pages when they have the choice of reading a two hundred page book (Carpinelli 33). The same concept can be applied to the print being too small. Students will think that they are reading more than the others (Farris 2004 107). The books offered to the students need to appear to be equal in every possible way. Teachers need to keep these ideas in mind when determining what books to use in literature.

Once the teacher has chosen multiple books on a variety of topics and different levels, the choices need to be given to the students on what book they would like to read. Johannessen tackles this situation by stating that, teachers need to "introduce literary works in ways that will
prepare students for the themes, issues, concepts, and characters they will encounter and that will motivate them to read" (12). Ibis is such an obvious idea, yet it often goes overlooked. If a teacher can get their students excited to read a book they are required to read, students will forget it is for school. They will want to pick up the book and read just to find out what happens to the character. "Interest in reading assists pupils to feel challenge in literary endeavors" (Ediger 1). Ibis is exactly what we want our students to do, engage in reading, and then ultimately want to read. Teachers need to choose books they think the students will be interested in and then present them or book talk them in a way that absorbs the students' minds and makes them want to read the book.

Once the students decide which book they would like to read, the teacher forms groups of four to six students around the book they chose (Farris 2001 155). Short states that we should "not attempt to sort the children according to ability in these groups" (2). Although this is somewhat true, there needs to be a sort of judgment call on the teacher's part. Without taking into account the students' ability levels, they might have such a difficult book they are not able to participate as much as they hope to. Teachers need to use their best judgments when forming literature circles. Although student interest in the text is important, the teacher also needs to determine whether or not the text falls in the appropriate reading level for the students. The best way to accomplish this task is to have the students write down their top two choices of books. By doing this, the teacher can then choose which of the two books would be the best for the student to read. Without the ability to comprehend a text thoroughly, the student will have difficulty discussing the text with their peers. Groups can then be formed with as little as two students, but should not consist of more than six. Ibis provides for an equal opportunity for everyone to participate.
The text is chosen, the groups are formed, and the students are ready to read their books. The trick here is to assign the students roles before they begin reading. They are still reading for enjoyment, but they now have contributions to make during the next literature circle meeting. These "jobs" are agreed by many teachers to also be a good way to evaluate students progress.

The students can create bookmarks for each assigned reading to show that they completed their assigned jobs, while using the bookmarks at the same time as a place to document reflections and connections the text has caused. The content of the bookmark might include "summarizing the story, sharing a feeling or response, connecting their personal experiences with the texts, asking a question, making an interpretation, creating a new ending, or drawing a picture or diagram related to the texts." These are all valid uses of bookmarks while reading. Each of them can then be brought to the group to share during the next meeting. While reading the text, students take notes on the content of the text, the connections they made to the text, and requirements of their specific job. This can be accomplished on a bookmark the students can bring to the next meeting to share with their group members. Although the students each have a certain job to do, these jobs are rotated after each meeting. Rotating jobs exposes the students to a variety of purposes for reading. It also gives them a chance to show off their talents in a specific area. All this is done while actively participating in the group and aesthetic reading of the novel.

There are a variety of roles for the students to take on when reading their book. Although the idea of using roles in literature circles is widely accepted, the roles themselves are not. Teachers can pick and choose which roles are right for their students. The jobs should be displayed in the classroom in the order the rotation will occur. The following are descriptions created by Farris and Daniels of the roles that are most commonly used in literature circles. One
of the jobs is the discussion leader. A discussion leader is the person who is in charge of keeping everyone on task and keeping the discussion going. On his or her bookmark, they would be responsible for coming up with good questions to draw out aesthetic responses from their group members. Another job is the character captain. He or she is responsible for creating overviews or character maps for each of the characters. When meeting with their group, the character captain provides the others with summaries of any new characters introduced or new personality traits for exiting characters. A student who excels at summarizing can be the literary luminary or passage masters. They are responsible for recalling memorable or important passages from the text. Main events and storylines are brought up and discussed during meetings by these group members. A creative job is the illustrator. The illustrator creates a representation of a scene or a character from the text. This can be done using any medium appropriate. Their main job is to bring the story to life in some artistic form. A word reporter gains experience with vocabulary. On the word reporter's bookmark, they write unfamiliar words from the text. The word reporter then writes the page number and sentence where each new word appears. During the group meeting, the group members then discuss their interpretations of the word to come up with an original definition. The final job is the travel tracer or scene setter. This group member is responsible for keeping track of the settings, and change of settings, that occur in the select reading and reporting them back to the group.

Each group member is assigned one of these jobs and takes on the responsibilities for the assigned reading. The jobs must be completed before the students meet with their groups the next time. Because each job is vastly different from the next, the jobs are to be rotated at each group meeting. As Hsu states, "these roles offer students four different reactions to the text: analytical, oral, associative, and symbolic" (3). By rotating the jobs each meeting, the students
are each given the chance to perform each task and share their findings with their group members. Assigning jobs to each student is a great way to create individual accountability, and keep the group discussions as productive as possible. Now that the students have their jobs, the teacher needs to determine his or her job in the literature circles.

Prior to beginning the literature groups, classroom teachers have some preparation to do with their students before the literature circles begin. The teacher needs to discuss how to be successful at literature circles. Topics to bring up with the students include: "how to handle unknown words while reading, how to respond and provide feedback to circle participants, how to select topics for discussion, and how to get along as a group" (Lin 3). It is important here that the teacher answers any questions the students may have before they begin. By reviewing the key issues with the students before hand, the literature circles are more likely to run smoothly later on. Another pre-literature circle activity that can occur is mini-lessons on bookmarks, discussions, and classroom expectations. Once again, the teacher is taking a proactive stance by teaching the students the strategies before the problems arise. The students have been taught how to discuss, write bookmarks, and be a good group member. What is the teacher supposed to do now? "The teacher facilitates the discussion process without taking it over" (Short 3). This one statement sums up the teacher's entire job during literature circles, the facilitator. They can walk around, add to already existing conversations, and observe the students. It is very important that the teacher realizes that the "students can run their own circles" (Short 3). They are in a cooperative learning group where they are all learning from one another. The teacher's job is to observe and maintain an atmosphere where all students can learn and be productive members in their groups.
As a teacher circulates around a classroom full of students participating in literature circles, they are able to see and hear good conversations from their peers. These good conversations are evidence that good reading must be happening. Teachers must take this moment to take a deep breath. Their students are aesthetically responding to literature. What a teacher may not necessarily hear is equally as beneficial to the students. As King states, by participating in literature circles students learn to “relate story settings to their own experiences, evaluate the behavior of characters, develop active attitudes towards reading, and contribute constructively to shared discussions” (34). Although this is more of an assessment for older students, the fact that this could all be happening from literature circles is the reality. Students are learning more about reading than any lesson from a Basal Reading Series can teach. They are engaged in aesthetically reading and discussing real literature.

In addition to a classroom full of students reading high quality literature and a teacher having the time to observe the students working in cooperative groups, there are many more positive results of using literature in the classroom at the social and emotional level. With a variety of reading levels in the classroom, teachers often have difficulty knowing what each student individually needs to be motivated to read or become a better reader. The students can take on this role themselves. "Many children will need peer group support if they are to continue as readers" (King 33). Students can work with one another in their literature circles to motivate and help one another with literature. This is a teacher's dream to have twenty-five mini teachers or helpers moving around the classroom helping out their peers. The relationship students are forming around literature is helping not only their reading grades, but their social skills as well. "Literature circles promote interpersonal relationships through discussion, self-perception, problem solving, and decision making" (Blum 100). Students are working together to reach the
common goal of tackling a piece of literature. There are an infinite number of possibilities for what positive social outcomes will appear while having literature circles in the classroom.

Giving students an opportunity to participate and generate in discussions about literature or anything else is a wonderful gift. Students need to learn how to vocalize their thoughts and opinions at an early age. Parents want their children to talk as a toddler. Teachers want their students to talk to their friends or about literature. The discussions both parents and teachers dream of are crucial to any child. Lloyd states these startling facts regarding the importance of peer discussion in the classroom. Ninety-five percent of educators agree that it's valuable for students to participate in peer discussion, and seventy-seven percent of educators are interested in bringing it into their classrooms. Yet only 33% of educators have actually use peer discussion in their classrooms (Lloyd 115). Everyone can agree that dialogue between peers is important both in and out of the classroom. Literature circles give students the opportunity to learn to successfully communicate with one another. Teachers need to give their students a chance to talk to one another and express themselves. If they do not know how to express themselves orally when they grow up, they will end up expressing themselves in less safe ways due to a lack of options. What could be better to have the students discuss than a good book?

On a more individual level, the students' confidence levels are soaring through the roof. They are not relying on the "all-knowing" teacher to hold their hand. They are making decisions and putting their education into their own hands. "Literature circles provide an opportunity for students to engage in activities that promote self-determination" (Blum 107). The increase of this feeling of self-determination is another important result of literature circles. Students are demonstrating their self-determination by using "metacognition, self-perception, social problem solving, and autonomous decision making" (Blum 100). Literature circles are allowing the
student to think for themselves and increase their knowledge in a way that really benefits them. They are reading and participating to grow as individuals.

Now after stating the great results of using literature circles in the classroom, one must also be aware of the problems that may occur and how to fix them. Class tension will have an obvious effect on cooperative learning in the classroom. It is unrealistic to expect students to work in groups with one another and have meaningful discussions if they cannot even "coexist in their own neighborhoods" (Clarke 22). Teachers need to first eliminate any tensions among the students before cooperative learning can take place. Students need to see one another as equals and valuable resources. Different community building activities need to be done to show students that it is possible to work together to achieve a common goal. The other main problem that occurs is when literature circles are not set up correctly. In a classroom with this problem, an observer might hear off topic conversations, disrespectful comments, silence, or even students yelling over one another. Students who are engaging in one of these behaviors have not been taught the how to participate in a literature circle correctly. Teachers can take a stand against this problem though by simply discussing and displaying a set of policies for the students to follow during literature circles. Examples are found in Johnson's table of "Guidelines for Literature Groups". These guidelines include the following, "have good log entries to share, take turns talking, stick to the topic, and listen carefully" (Johnson 462). Simply reminding the students to read through the guidelines at the beginning of each meeting or having them sign a contract stating they will follow these guidelines are two possible solutions. Teachers can also let students help create this list of rules or policies for literature circles before the first group meetings. Although problems may arise, the results literature circles have made it worth the risk.
Literature circles evoke aesthetic reading in a variety of ways, but do take some time into implement. When time is not in abundance in the classroom, there is another worthwhile strategy that teachers can use to cause students to read aesthetically. Creating different forms of literature response activities can engage the students in many ways and allow the teacher to see what the student is thinking. "Response is often an evanescent thing- a matter of a few seconds. But we would not be interested in response if we did not feel that this work can offer some real benefits for children" (Sipe 12). The trick then becomes to determine what type of responses will offer these benefits for the students in the classroom. Classic book reports, five paragraph essays, and paper and pencil tests are not the way to draw out the students' knowledge and feelings about a piece of literature.

Teachers need to think outside the box and develop creative, fun, meaningful projects for the students to complete during and while they read. Magazines, journals, and books are being written about authentic activities and how powerful the effect on students is. "Murals, journals, reader's theatre, trivia games, timelines, and book jackets" have the potential to really let students be creative and get excited (Instructor 54). Students will do their best and excel past their teachers' expectations when they are given the chance. "Teachers should integrate activities that make learning meaningful, stimulating, and focused" (Kovarik 182). The students are still showing the teacher what they do and do not know. The students are still reading and making connections to the text. But instead of stopping there, the students are soaring above the grade and becoming aesthetically involved with the text itself. If students are not allowed to follow their imagination, and if they are not encouraged to, they will one day simply ignore it all together. Instead of handing a student a piece of paper and ask for an essay, a teacher needs to give the student every resource possible and simply say, "Show me what you can do".
Aesthetically reading is one area where many students are not given the opportunity to shine. When teachers ask students to identify the plot, setting, and characters they are leaving out the important parts of the story. How do you think that character felt? Why did she not feel loved? What would you have done if you were in their shoes? These are the questions that need to be posed to students. If they are not given the chance to answer critical thinking questions like these, they will not think to ask questions like these in their own lives. Reading allows students to escape into a new world every time they turn the page. Through literature circles and authentic responses to literature, students are given the opportunity to share their new world with their peers and their teachers. Even if it is a magical experience with Harry Potter, the students are making a connection to literature that will be remembered forever. Teachers need to take the time to expose children to high quality literature that promotes aesthetic reading in and out of the classroom.
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Clarke, L., & Holwadel, J. (2007). "Help! What is wrong with these literature circles and how can we fix them?". *The reading teacher*, 61(1), 20-29.


King, C. (2001). "I like group reading because we can share ideas": The role of talk within the literature circle. *Reading*. 4, 32-36.


NOVELS CHOSEN FOR 5th GRADE CLASS


### Table of Specifications - *Joey Pigza Loses Control*

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### Table of Specifications - *Frindle*

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Joey Pigza Loses Control: Discussion Questions

Pre-Reading:

What do you know about ADHD?

How would you feel if you had to spend a summer with someone you barely knew?

How would you feel if everything you did turned out wrong?

Chapter 1: Based on what Joey's mom said, "He can be, you know, wired like you, only bigger," make a prediction on what Joey's dad is like.
Chapter 2: What kind of kid is Joey? What makes you think this?

Chapter 3: Why does Joey not like Storybook Land? How would you feel if you went to Storybook Land with Joey’s dad?

Chapter 4: What do Grandma and Joey do? What would you have wanted to do if this was you?

Chapter 5: What is Joey’s dad’s problem? How would this make you feel if this was your dad?

What was Pablo's gift?

Who is the red haired lady?

Chapter 6: No Questions
Chapter 7: How does Joey feel when Carter says, "I was thinkin' ... "? Why do you think he feels this way?

What is the "Greatest Gift"?

Chapter 8: No Questions.

Chapter 9: Read Pg 105 What do you notice about his thoughts? (What they are about, the pace thoughts...)

Chapter 10: Why was it so hard for Joey to keep the secret from his mom?
Have you ever had to keep a secret that you know you should tell someone? How did you feel?

Chapter 11: Predict what you think it means when Joey says that he "will wake up wired?" Page 152

Chapter 12: How are Joey and his dad similar? How are they different?

Chapter 13: How do you think the pressure to win affected Joey?
Chapter 14: Why does Leezy say that Carter will "Hate himself in the morning?"

Describe Joey's escape from the mound.

Post-reading: Do you think that Joey and his dad will be able to have a relationship again? What do you think this relationship would be like?

How would you feel after this crazy summer?
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Discussion Questions

Pre-Reading: By just looking at the front cover of the novel, what do you think the main character is like?

What do you think it means to be a "Wimpy Kid"? Describe a time when you felt like a wimp.

If you could be remembered as something in school, what would you want that to be and why?

Pages 1-20: What are Gregory's 2 reasons for writing in his journal?
How do you think you will feel on your first day of middle school?

What is the "Cheese Touch"?

Pages 21-46: Describe Gregory's family relationships.

If you were writing about your family in a journal, how would you describe them?

What is the "Loded Diaper"?

Why does Gregory want to be treasurer?
Pages: 47-75: List the problems that happened on Halloween. What would you have done to avoid these?

Pages 72-102: Why was Gregory not prepared for wrestling in gym class? What was the solution?

How would you have felt if your parents made you sign up for a school play?

What is Gregory's part in the play? Lines? Costumes?
Predict how you think the play will turn out and why.

Pages 103-119: What are the problems with the play?

What happens when the trees have to sing?

Explain the Barbie Dollhouse.

Have you ever wanted something like the dollhouse that everyone else thought was different?
What would you have done if you received these gifts?

Why couldn't Gregory watch the NYE special on TV? What was the solution to this problem?

What did Gregory do with the gift Rowley got him? Do you think this was a good idea?

What are the 2 consequences of Rowley's accident? How would you have felt if you were him?
What is Gregory's idea for his independent project? What are the problems?

What are the benefits of being on Safety Patrol? Would this make you want the job?

Why did Rowley get mad?

Pages 164-185: Why does Greg want to be in the school paper?

What happened after some "minor editing"?

Explain the Safety Patrol problem and solution.

How would you have felt if you were wrongly blamed for something?
Pages 186-217: What happens to Gregory and Rowley's friendship? Who was wrong and why?

Describe Fregley and Gregory's relationship.

How would you feel if you were Fregley?

How did Gregory feel about Rowley's comic strip?

What did the teens make Rowley do?

What happened to Rowley and Gregory's relationship? How did this happen?
Post-reading: What are some examples of ways you have solved problems with friends?

When have you felt like you didn't belong somewhere? How did you change it?
Frindle: Discussion Questions

Pre-reading: Who gets to make up what things are called?

When you were a baby or little kid, what were some funny baby words you used to say?

(Miss Mazurek used to call fish, shhhhh's"

Describe a time when you started something and it just seemed to get out of hand.

Ch 1: Describe the "Island" in 3rd grade.
Tell the story of the Red-winged Birds in the 4th grade.

Ch 2: Describe Mrs. Granger’s reputation.

How would you feel if you walked into Mrs. Granger’s classroom on the first day?

What is her battle cry?

Ch 3: What was "the question"?

How did Mrs. Granger reply?

How would getting more homework than your classmates make you feel?
Ch 4: What was Nick's idea to make the report the best possible? How did it work?

Predict what the "big idea" is.

Ch 5: List the three things that lead to the bid idea.

What is Frindle?

Do you think you could do this today? How could you? What word would you like to change?

Ch 6: What is the "Word War"? Who does it involve?
Have you ever been as determined as Nick but someone was against it? What did you do?

Ch 7: How does Nick introduce Frindle to the class?

Ch 8: What was wrong with the class picture?

What was Mrs. Granger's response to Frindle?

Predict what the letter says. When will Nick get it?

If your teacher wrote you a note, what do you think it would say?
Ch 9: Describe the conversation between Mrs. Chatham and Nick’s parents.

Have you ever thought what you were doing was ok, but everyone else didn’t? What did you do?

Ch 10: Who was the "reddish-brown haired boy"?

What did everyone try to do with their punishments?

Why do you think Nick didn’t tell the reporter he was the one who started the Frindle problem? Would you have told her it was you?
Ch 11: Recreate the article on Frindle. Make sure to use as many accurate phrases as possible.

Predict how the town will react to the article.

Ch 12: How is Bud Laurence part of the Frindle excitement?

What was Nick’s Dad’s answer to Bud’s question?

Would you have given the same answer if you were Nick’s dad? Why or why not?
Ch 13: Why did students always get 1 word wrong on their spelling tests?

When did you stand up for something you believed in like the students did? How did it make you feel?

Ch 14: How and why was Nick different after Frindle?

If you were Nick, do you think you would feel different? Why?

What did Mrs. Granger say to Nick?

Did he get his letter?
Ch 15: How does the setting change?

What did Nick do with his money? (5 things)

If you were given that much money, what would you do with it?

What 3 things were in the package Nick received? Describe in detail.

Who won the war and why do you think this?

What did Nick give back to Mrs. Granger?
Post-reading: Like Nick’s Frindle, what would you want to be remembered for in fifth grade?

Do you think Nick regrets the Frindle experiment? Looking back years later, how would you feel if you were in his shoes?
Pre-reading: Have you ever felt like you didn't belong? How did it make you feel?

What do you think it would be like to be a foster child?

Describe a time when you made a first impression of someone that turned out to be wrong.

Pages 1-18: What do Gilly’s remarks about her new foster mom show you about Gilly?

What does Gilly’s reaction to Mr. Randolph’s skin color show you?

Why is Gilly so mean spirited and unhappy already at Trotter’s?
Pages 19-30: Why is Gilly so upset Trotter didn't say anything about her hair?

How does it make you feel when people don't notice you or something new about you?

Pages 31-49: Why do you think Gilly lies so much?

Think of a time when you lied, why did you do it? How did it make you feel?

Why is Gilly so mean to Trotter?

What did Gilly find when she pulled out "Sarsaparilla to Sorcery"?

Pages 50-71: How do you think William Ernest feels about Gilly?

Why do you think Gilly said that Trotter had a "smile she always wanted to see, just not from her"? Page 62
What clue did Gilly discover to get rid of Miss Harris? Did it work? Why or why not?

What do you think about what Gilly did to Miss Harris? How would you feel if you were Miss Harris?

Pages 72-93: What is Gilly's new plan?

Why do you think Gilly is referring to herself as "just something to play musical chairs with"?

Page 86

How do you think you would feel if you were "just something to play musical chairs with"?

What did Gilly's letter say?
Pages 94-112: How does Gilly get the last $100.00?

Why does Gilly leave the train station?

Have you ever stolen something? How do you think Gilly felt after she took the money?

Pages 113-137: How does Gilly repay her debt?

What is wrong with William Ernest?

Who is the visitor? How did this make Gilly feel to see her?

Put yourself in Gilly's place: Why wouldn't you have told Trotter the truth? How would you feel seeing your grandmother and not mother?
What is Gilly's reaction to Miss Hopkins' proposal? Why do you think she reacted like that?

Knowing that Courtney didn't come to get you, would you want to go with Miss Hopkins? How do you think you would feel?

Why does Gilly regret writing the letter?

Why do you think she is having these dreams about Courtney?

What are Gilly's first impressions of Courtney?

What does Gilly finally say to Trotter?
Why will Trotter be proud of Gilly?

Is this the life that Gilly dreamed of? Why or why not?

Post-Reading: How would you handle being in Gilly's shoes? What do you think it is like to be a foster child?

What would you do if you were forced to live with someone you barely knew? How would you handle moving in with someone at your age who you just met?
Star Girl - Discussion Questions

Pre-Reading: Think of new students you have met. How did you look at them? How did you treat them?

How do you feel when you do not think you fit in?

Do you think peer pressure is a good or bad thing? Why?

Intro, Ch. 1-3: What is the HotSeat?

What did Star Girl do at lunch that caused everyone to stare?
Why does Leo not want to ask Star Girl to be on the HotSeat?

Ch.4-7: Who is Wayne Parr to the other students?

Think of someone who is popular in school. What makes them considered popular?

What happened at the football game? Why was it such a big deal?

Why do you think Hillary didn't want Star Girl to sing?

What is the Loyal Order of the Stone Bone?

What do you think Charlie means when he says, "Keep looking at her long enough. One day you might see someone you know"?
Ch.8-11: Do you think Star Girl changed? Or did the other students? Why?

What problems appeared on the road runner board?

What effects did winning have on the school?

Ch.12-14: Explain the events of Star Girl appearing on the HotSeat?

If you were Star Girl, how would you feel hearing your peers say those things?
Why do you think Leo ran up and screamed when Star Girl was hit at the game?

Ch.15-17: Who gave Leo a card?

Describe how Leo and Star Girl interacted over these chapters.

Think of a relationship you have had with either a friend or a significant other. How does it compare to Star Girl and Leo’s relationship?

Ch.18-20: Why do you think it so hard for Leo to be with Star Girl?

What did Leo discover at the end of chapter 20?
Have you ever let your friend's opinions be more important than your own? Do you think this was a good idea?

Ch.21-24: What is the "happy wagon"?

If you had a happy wagon, how many marbles would you have in your wagon? Why?

What was on the road runner bulletin board?

What was Leo's crime?

Ch.25-28: Explain how and why Star Girl vanished.
What did the happy wagon reveal about Susan?

What does the phrase "gloriously ordinary" mean to you?

Ch. 29-31: How was the final speech different?

Explain what happened when Susan returned home?

How would you feel if you were let down like Susan?

How did Star Girl enjoy the Ocotillo Ball? What happened when the Bunny Hop was played?
What were the reactions of parents? of the other students?

Ch. 32-33, ending: Describe Star Girl's office and folders.

How has Star Girl changed Mica?

How has Leo changed?

Post-reading: If you could change your town in one way like Star Girl did, what would you do?

Think of a time when you have treated someone badly. What would you have done differently?
Dear Mr. Henshaw: Discussion Questions.

Pre-reading: How do you think you would feel if you were the "new kid" in middle school?

If one of your parents traveled most of the year, how would you handle it? How would you feel?

If you found out someone was stealing from you, how would that make you feel?

Pages 1-19: What kind of personality does Mr. Henshaw have? How do you know?
What is Leigh's family life like?

How would you feel if you were Leigh? What would you do to try and make it better?

Pages 20-37: How do you think Leigh feels when he describes himself as "a boy nobody paid much attention to"? Page 25.

Think of a time when you have felt ignored. How did you feel? Why were you ignored?

Why does Leigh get excited about the flag?
Pages 39-60: Why does Leigh's mom refer to her and Leigh as "lonely hearts"? page 44

What does the picture reveal? Page 50

Why has the t.V. not been fixed?

Pages 61-72: How does his dad make him feel? Why do you think that?

What happened to Bandit?
What did Leigh discover about his dad? How do you think this made him feel?

How would you have dealt with hearing this information about one of your parents?

Pages 73-87: What was Mr. Frindley’s advice?

How does Leigh feel about his dad?

What do you want to happen in Leigh relationship with his dad? Do you think this is possible?

Pages 88-95: What is Leigh's story about?
What is his new lunch plan?

Why do you think he can't finish the letter to his dad?

Have you ever wanted to say something so bad but you just couldn't? How did you feel?

Pages 95-112: How did Leigh stop the burglar and get noticed?

Why do you think Leigh felt differently when his dad called?
Would you be able to forgive a parent who lied to you about what they were doing? Why?

Pages 113-123: Why was it so important what Mrs. Badger said to Leigh?

If you were Leigh, what would you do with this advice?

Pages 125-134: How and why did Leigh "feel sad and better" at the same time?

Post-reading: Why do you think that Leigh liked writing to Mr. Henshaw so much? Can you relate?

How do you escape from the real world? Why does this work for you?
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Dear Parents and Guardians,

My name is Jamie Mazurek and I am a senior at Northern Illinois University. I have the pleasure of working in your student's classroom this fall. As part of my senior capstone thesis, I will be implementing literature circles during language arts class. On Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the months of October and November, I will be introducing your student to a variety of high quality literature and encouraging them to participate in small group discussions regarding the novels they will be reading. In addition to small group discussions, the students will be using comprehension and vocabulary skills while reading the contemporary realistic fiction I have chosen and provided them with. My goal is to get students excited about reading while teaching them the necessary skills to really understand the literature. If you have any questions about my thesis or your student's role in this project, please feel free to contact me at jmazurek@niu.edu. I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to work in your student's classroom. I know this project will be successful for everyone involved.

Thank you,

Jamie Mazurek
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<td>Read pages 113-137 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Character journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 138-155 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce final projects</td>
<td>Finish character charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Tum in character charts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>Final projects are due!!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work on final projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>Complete Post-reading questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finish character charts.
# Joey Pigza Loses Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Literature Circles</th>
<th>Homework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>Complete Pre-reading questions. Introduce Character Charts</td>
<td>Read chapters 1 &amp; 2 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read chapters 3 &amp; 4 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Discuss readings Character comparison</td>
<td>Read chapter 5 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read chapter 6 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>Discuss readings Bookmarks</td>
<td>Read chapters 7 &amp; 8 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read chapters 9 &amp; 10 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>Discuss readings Character journal</td>
<td>Read chapter 11 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Discuss readings Introduce final projects</td>
<td>Read chapter 12 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finish character charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/11</td>
<td>No school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>Discuss readings Turn in character charts</td>
<td>Read chapters 13 &amp; 14 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>Discuss readings Complete Post-reading questions. Work on final projects</td>
<td>Final projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>Final projects are due!!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Literature Circles</td>
<td>Homework</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>Complete Pre-reading questions.</td>
<td>Read pages 0-12 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce Character Charts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 13-29 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 30-53 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Character comparison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 54-72 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 73-94 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bookmarks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 95-111 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 112-132 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Character journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 133-156 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce final projects</td>
<td>Finish character charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/11</td>
<td>No school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Read pages 157-180 and complete discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turn in character charts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
<td>Final projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete Post-reading questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work on final projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>Final projects are due!!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You and Me

Complete the picture of the person below. One half is you, the other half is a character you can relate to. Write and draw the similarities you both share.
Pretend you are a character from your novel. Write a journal from that character's point of view. How are you feeling? What are you thinking? Explain why you do the things you do. Be creative and show that you really know the character inside and out.

Dear Journal,
Write a summary of your story using exactly 55 words. Here are some suggestions: 1) Use pencil so you can erase; 2) Use characters' D8m~to avoid confusion; 3) Write in complete sentences; 4) Use a variety of types; 5) Write several rough drafts and choose the best sentences and phrases to use in your final summary.
Dear Mr. Henshaw,

Draw a small picture of what you think the character looks like. Write any descriptions you can find about the characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leigh Botts</th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Mr. Henshaw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Banditt</th>
<th>Barry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diary of a Wimpy Kid

Draw a small picture of what you think the character looks like. Write any descriptions you can find about the characters.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gregory</td>
<td>Rowley</td>
<td>Fredley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory's Mom</td>
<td>Gregory's Dad</td>
<td>Rodrick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Name**

---

**Frindle**

Draw a small picture of what you think the character looks like. Write any descriptions you can find about the characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nick</th>
<th>Nick's Parents</th>
<th>Mrs. Granger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Chatham</td>
<td>Judy Morgan</td>
<td>Bud Laurence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
Great Gilly Hopkins

Draw a small picture of what you think the character looks like. Write any descriptions you can find about the characters.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Galadriel Hopkins</td>
<td>Maime Trotter</td>
<td>William Ernest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me. Randolph</td>
<td>Agnes Stokes</td>
<td>Courtney Hopkins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Joey Pigza Loses Control

Draw a small picture of what you think the character looks like. Write any descriptions you can find about the characters.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joey</td>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>Mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>Leezy</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Star Girl

Draw a small picture of what you think the character looks like. Write any descriptions you can find about the characters.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Star Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Cinnamon</td>
<td>Senor Saguaro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Number</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Assessment Idea</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Way of assessing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Frindle</em></td>
<td>Nick's <em>Journal</em></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>T.V. Report</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Book Jacket</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Star Girl</td>
<td>True Hollywood <em>Story</em></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Star Girl's Diary</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Book Jacket</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>Great Gilly Hopkins</em></td>
<td>Gilly's <em>Foster File</em></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Biography Video</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>Gilly's Diary</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Book Jacket</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</em></td>
<td>Cartoon Diary of the story from another character's perspective</td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Book Jacket</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><em>Joey Pigza Loses Control</em></td>
<td>Book Jacket</td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Joey's Diary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><em>Dear Mr. Henshaw</em></td>
<td>Book Jacket</td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Leigh's Diary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Literature Circles Final Project Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>3 Points</th>
<th>2 Points</th>
<th>1 Point</th>
<th>0 Points</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong> (x3)</td>
<td>The characters are accurately discussed or described in relation to their role in the novel.</td>
<td>The characters are accurately described. It is obvious that the student understood the characters' importance and role in the novel.</td>
<td>Most of the characters are accurately described. Some of the characters' descriptions and roles needed to be clearer.</td>
<td>Some of the characters are not accurately described. It is somewhat unclear whether or not the student understood the characters' role to the story line.</td>
<td>The characters are not accurately described. It is unclear whether or not the student understood the characters' role to the story line.</td>
<td><strong>Points Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plot</strong> (x2)</td>
<td>The plot of the novel is clearly discussed.</td>
<td>The plot of the novel is clearly and thoughtfully discussed.</td>
<td>The plot of the novel is missing some important parts of the story.</td>
<td>The plot of the novel is missing most of the important parts of the story.</td>
<td>The plot of the novel is not clear through the final project.</td>
<td><strong>Points Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inferences</strong> (x2)</td>
<td>The student was able to draw inferences about the story. This is either in written or illustrated form in the final project.</td>
<td>The student draws logical inferences about the story.</td>
<td>The student has some difficulty drawing logical inferences.</td>
<td>The student has a great deal of difficulty drawing logical inferences.</td>
<td>The final project does not display the student's ability to make inferences.</td>
<td><strong>Points Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Project Appearance</strong></td>
<td>The final project is neat and well put together.</td>
<td>The final project is neat and well put together. Overall, it is very presentable.</td>
<td>The final project is somewhat neat and well put together, but there is some lack in detail.</td>
<td>The final project lacks attention to detail and improvements were needed in the overall construction.</td>
<td>The final project could have been much neater and better put together.</td>
<td><strong>Points Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Following Directions</strong></td>
<td>The final product followed the guidelines on explained on the assignment sheet.</td>
<td>The student followed all of the directions on the assignment sheet.</td>
<td>The student followed most of the directions on the assignment sheet.</td>
<td>The student followed some of the directions on the assignment sheet.</td>
<td>The student followed none of the directions on the assignment sheet.</td>
<td><strong>Points Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling and Grammar</strong></td>
<td>Any written work is free of spelling or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>The final product has five or less spelling or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>The final product has six to ten spelling or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>The final product has ten to fifteen spelling or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>The final product had more than fifteen spelling errors.</td>
<td><strong>Points Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Creating Leigh's School File

Since Leigh is new to this middle school, you are going to create Leigh's school file that his new teachers would have received on his first day there. Anything you think is important about Leigh, his family, or his past needs to be included. Include anything and everything Leigh's new teacher might want to know about him.

Materials:
- 1 File Folder (from Miss Mazurek)
- 1 Sheet of Loose Leaf Paper
- Coloring Utensils
- Your *Mr. Henshaw* novel to refer back to

Directions:
- Write Leigh's full name on the folder tab
- In the box on the left inside cover, illustrate a picture of Leigh. This does not have to be the same picture used on the cover. Draw him how you think he looks.
- Below the picture on the left inside cover, write about who Leigh is. Things to include:
  - Biographical information: (name, age, birthday, etc.)
  - Family: One paragraph with everything you know about his family
- On the right inside cover, write 3 paragraphs about Leigh. Things to include:
  - His hobbies, likes/dislikes
  - Personality issues
  - School behavior (friends, behaviors, etc.)
- On the separate sheet of paper, retell the entire novel. Start at the beginning of the story, retell everything you can remember, both big and small events are important when retelling a story. Things to include:
  - Characters (Mr. Henshaw, Leigh's mom, Leigh's dad, Banditt, Leigh's friends or teachers and principals at school)
    - Who were they?
    - How are they important to Leigh and the story
  - Problems
    - What problems does Leigh face at school and at home?
  - Solutions to these problems
- Always use complete sentences and check your spelling!

This project is worth 30 points!
Writing a Journal Diary from a Character's Point of View

You are going to write a diary from a character's point of view in the novel that you read. Often, the story is only told from one character's point of view. What about the rest of the characters involved? What happened in their eyes?

Materials:
• A minimum of 5 sheets of loose leaf paper
• A piece of construction paper to use as a cover to the journal
• The novel you read to refer back to
• Writing and coloring utensils

Directions:
• Begin by choosing one character you want to write a diary for. The more the character is involved in the original story, the easier this project will be.
• Retell the story from the character's point of view.
• ~ of each sheet of notebook paper needs to be the written diary entry.
• The other ~ of each sheet of paper needs to be an illustration of what you wrote about.
• You need at least 5 journal entries.
• Using the construction paper, create a cover for the diary. Include the title and author of the original book AND a creative title and your name for the journal.
• Always use complete sentences and check your spelling!

Items to include in your journal:
• Setting
• Characters
• Problems/Solutions
• Personal thoughts, opinions, and feelings from the character's point of view

*This should be as factual as possible! Don't make the story up! Retell the story!

This project is worth 30 points!
Creating Gilly's Foster File

You are going to create Gilly's Foster File. Anything you think is important about Gilly Hopkins, her family, her past, or her behavior needs to be included. Now that she is no longer in the foster system, you need to complete her foster file. Include anything and everything you know about Gilly.

Materials:
• 1 File Folder (from Miss Mazurek)
• 1 Sheet of Loose Leaf Paper
• Coloring Utensils
• Your *The Great Gilly Hopkins* novel to refer back to

Directions:
• Always use complete sentences and check your spelling!
• Write Gilly's full name on the folder tab
• In the box on the left inside cover, illustrate a picture of Gilly. This does not have to be the same picture used on the cover. Draw her how you think she looks.
• Below the picture on the left inside cover, write about who Gilly is. Things to include:
  o Biographical information: (name, age, birthday, etc.)
  o Birth parents: One paragraph with everything you know about her birth parents
• On the right inside cover, write 3 paragraphs about Gilly. Things to include:
  o Behavior issues
  o Personality issues
  o School attitude/behavior/grades/teachers
  o Foster home behavior/history
• On the separate sheet of paper, retell how Gilly's last foster placement at Mamie's house was. Start at the beginning of the story, retell everything you can remember, both big and small events are important when retelling a story. Things to include:
  o Characters (Mamie, Walter Ernest, Mr. Randolph, Courtney, Mrs. Hopkins)
    - Who were they?
    - How are they important to Gilly and the story
  o Problems
    - What problems does Gilly face?
    - What problems does Gilly cause?
  o Solutions to these problems.

This project is worth 30 points!
Creating a Book Jacket

A book jacket is a slip that wraps around the cover to protect the book. Your job is to create a book jacket for the novel you read.

Directions: Always use complete sentences and check your spelling!

Materials:
- 1 large sheet of construction paper (from Miss Mazurek)
- Writing and coloring utensils
- The novel you read to refer back to

Format:
- Fold the paper in half (hamburger style)
- Open it up and fold the ends in 2 inches

Front Cover:
- Title
- Author
- Illustrator (If there is one)
- An illustration different than the one on the original novel

Front Inside:
- Summary of the story
  - Characters
  - Setting
  - Plot
  - Problems
- Illustration of one thing you talked about in the summary

Back Cover:
- 5 reviews of the book: These need to be from three of your literature circle group members. Be as specific as possible. What did they like/dislike and why?
  - Example: "I couldn't put it down when Star Girl was singing!" - Miss Mazurek
- Illustration of your favorite scene with a 1 sentence explanation

Back Inside:
- 3 of your favorite quotes in the novel. Make sure to include who says it and the page number
  - Example: "Reading is my favorite thing to do!" - Miss Mazurek page 2
- Illustration of your favorite character with three sentences explaining who the character is

*Make this as colorful and creative as possible!

This project is worth 30 points!
News Report

You are going to create a video biography about the life of Nick Allen, the inventor of Frindle. This video is your chance to be creative and retell the story of Frindle in any way you want!

Directions:
• Use complete sentences to write a script of the news report about Frindle and Nick Allen.
• Check your spelling!

Materials:
• Video camera and tape to record performance
• A written script of what you are going to say in your video
• Your copy of Frindle to refer back to

Things to include in your script and performance:
• A biography of Nick
  o Who is Nick? (age, personality, hometown, etc.)
  o What does Nick like to do?
  o What kind of student is Nick?
• Characters that are important to the story of Frindle
  o Mrs. Granger, Nick's parents, Nick's classmates, the principal, the reporter, Bud Lawrence, etc.
  o Explain who they are and what part they had in the Frindle story
• Frindle
  o How did Frindle come to be?
  o Explain the story of how it got out of control

*Because this project requires a lot of hard work, you can choose to work in partners! But if you do work with someone else, both names need to be on the script and both partners need to make an appearance on camera. (One person can't do the entire performance)

This project is worth 30 points!
True Hollywood Story

You are going to create a video biography about the life of Star Girl. This video is your chance to be creative and retell the story of Star Girl in any way you want!

Directions:
- Use complete sentences and check your spelling when creating your script.

Materials:
- Video camera and tape to record performance
- A written script of what you are going to say in your video
- Your copy of Star Girl to refer back to

Things to include in your script and performance:
- A biography of Star Girl
  - Who is she? (real name, age, personality, hometown, etc.)
  - What does she like to do?
  - What kind of student is Star Girl?
  - Who is Cinnamon?
- Characters that are important to the story
  - Leo, Kevin, Hillari, her parents, Archie, and anyone else you want to include
  - Explain who they are and why they are important to the story
- Mica High
  - What was Mica High's reaction to Star Girl?
  - Speech competition, lunchroom, etc.
- Interviews with Leo, Star Girl, and Archie

*Because this project requires a lot of hard work, you can choose to work in partners! But if you do work with someone else, both names need to be on the script and both partners need to make an appearance on camera. (One person can't do the entire performance)

This project is worth 30 points!
You are going to create a video biography about the life of Gilly Hopkins. This video is your chance to be creative and retell the story of *The Great Gilly Hopkins* in any way you want!

**Directions:**
- Use complete sentences and check your spelling when writing your script.

**Materials:**
- Video camera and tape to record performance
- A written script of what you are going to say in your video
- Your copy of *The Great Gilly Hopkins* to refer back to

**Things to include in your script and performance:**
- **A biography of Gilly Hopkins**
  - Who is she? (real name, age, personality, hometown, etc.)
  - What does she like to do?
  - What kind of student is Gilly?
  - What is her family like?
- **Characters that are important to the story**
  - Mamie, William Ernest, Agnes, Miss Ellis, Courtney Hopkins, Mr. Randolph, Mrs. Hopkins, etc.
  - Explain who they are and why they are important to the story
- **Foster Childhood**
  - What trouble did Gilly get into?
- **Interviews with Mamie, William Ernest, and Courtney Hopkins**

*Because this project requires a lot of hard work, you can choose to work in partners! But if you do work with someone else, both names need to be on the script and both partners need to make an appearance on camera. (One person can't do the entire performance)*

This project is worth 30 points!
Literature Circle Observations

Over the fifteen class meetings I had with the students, I learned much more about literature circles than any book could have taught me. To begin with, I realized how important the choice of book is. I looked at a variety of books with appropriate content for fifth graders. With all of the books out there, it was hard to decide on just six books to use. The first book I chose was The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katherine Paterson. Although this book was written decades before the students were even born, the content is very relevant for children nowaday. In this book, the main character is a foster child who dreams of being reunited with her mother. I found this to be very relevant to fifth graders because they could relate to the family dynamics and relationships in the novel. The second book I chose was Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary. This novel is unique because it is in the form of letters back and forth from a boy in middle school to the author of his favorite book. Again, relationships and the main character's feelings can be easily related to by the readers. Joey Pigza Loses Control by Jack Gantos was the third book I chose for my fifth graders to read. The main character suffers from ADHD and has to spend the summer with his estranged father. The humor and story line makes this a great book for both boys and girls. The fourth book is a newer book that has become very popular with students recently. Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney is a cartoon journal written by a funny yet confused
middle school student. This novel is very different than the others because it is not an on-going story, but instead is a series of journal entries over the course of a year in middle school. I was somewhat apprehensive about using this novel, but because of the popularity of the book with other students, I decided to give it a try. The fifth book, *Frindle* by Andrew Clements is about a main character who tries to change the word for pen to Frindle because of his dictionary loving teacher. Overall, it has a funny, creative storyline that I thought the students would enjoy.

The final book I chose to use for literature circles was Jerry Spinelli's *Star Girl*. Although the main characters are in high school, the issues they face are very relevant to fifth grade students.

Once I chose the six books, I had to come up with the best way to make the thirty students want to read the books. The first period when I met with the students, I conducted book talks over the six books I had chosen. I tried to highlight the characters' emotions and relationships to try and prepare the students to participate in aesthetic reading of the novels. Then, I passed out a small slip of paper to each student with lines for their name and their top three choices of books they would like to read. After collecting the books, I could tell which stories I did great book talks on and which ones could have used more. *Dear Mr. Henshaw* was chosen by the least amount of students, which made sense to me. That particular story lacks a great deal of humor and is filled with sad moments, and
disappointments. I found this novel much harder to book talk than the rest. The two novels that were very popular among the students were *Joey Pigza Loses Control* and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. I believe that the reason why these two novels were so popular is that the passages that I read from those were very funny. In the future, I will try to read passages that are humorous to the students during the book talks. A book that makes the reader laugh is always desirable to read as the students' choices depicted. Looking over their choices, I placed the students in groups according to their interest level for certain novels as well as their reading ability level. With help from my cooperating teacher, I was able to review the students' reading levels and assign them to the appropriate novel. By considering both their interest for the novels as well as their reading ability levels, I was able to differentiate the entire unit to meet the individual student's needs.

In addition to having the book talks during the first class period, I also chose to introduce the five literature circle jobs that the students would be completing while reading the novel. For the five different roles, I created bookmarks to help the students keep track of their jobs. Each job was on a different color of paper and stated the job name as well as a brief reminder of what the students were to do for the job. The students seemed to be eager to start their jobs and asked questions about the rotation of the jobs and other responsibilities the job entailed. I
anticipated the issue of job rotation so I created a little chart that explained to the students what order the jobs were to be alternated in.

To help make this process of jobs and discussion questions easier and more organized, I came up with the idea to have a folder for each group labeled with the title of the novel the group was reading. Inside each folder, the students could find new bookmarks, the rotation schedule, a copy of their group rules, and other materials they may need. The first class period gave me time to introduce the jobs as well as the idea of completing discussion questions while reading. I left that day feeling as if the students were just as excited as I was to be starting literature circles.

The second class period solidified that the students were excited about the novels. I assigned each student a novel and gave them their own copy of the book. When the students were compiled into novel groups, I then passed out the novel folders and gave them time to come up with ten guidelines they as a group wanted to follow to make their experience the best it could possibly be. I wanted this to be a student centered activity because I feel that when students create their own rules, they are more likely to follow them. After the groups came up with their ten rules, each student signed the rules saying that they agree to follow them. Throughout the entire time I was there, it was very encouraging to hear students reminding their peers that they signed the rule sheet so they have to follow the rules.
Then, I instructed the students to take out the character charts, assignment sheets, and the discussion questions that were already in their folders. I reviewed all the material with them and answered many questions regarding how things would be graded and what their responsibilities were. Each group independently read through their assignment sheets for their particular novel and passed out their first bookmarks. The rest of the class period I left for the students to begin reading and ask any questions they may come up with before they left for the day.

Ultimately, I left that day feeling a little apprehensive about how the students would do the next class period when they got in their literature circles to discuss the books.

Over the next few class periods, the students’ main job during their literature circle group meeting time was to review their discussion questions and their jobs, as well as simply discussing the section they were assigned to read. To my enjoyment, the students stayed on task and came to their group meetings each day prepared. Each day, I walked around the room and looked at the students’ packets to make sure they were keeping up with their reading. I also walked around the room and joined in on some discussions the students were having.

The first response activity was "You and Me", and activity that I designed to help guide the students in the process of making connections with the characters in the novels. The students did quite well on this project. It helped me see how the
students were relating to the characters in the novels, as well as how the students see themselves as different from the characters. A wide range of responses were provided by the students. Some had responses such as "the same hair color", while others had more deep responses such as "both worried about school". This activity did a wonderful job of helping the students make connections with the story, a main component of aesthetic reading.

The second response activity the students completed was what I called a "Character Bookmark". For this activity, I gave each student half a sheet of construction paper and asked them to write a character's name from their novel vertically on one side of the bookmark and a second character's name on the other. Then, the students were instructed to come up with words, beginning with each letter of the characters' names that describe that specific character. Again, the students went above and beyond. They were able to come up with meaningful words and phrases that showed me they really understood the character. I chose to meet with a few students after reviewing their bookmarks to clarify some aspects of the characters they may have missed or interpreted incorrectly. The students appeared to really understand the characters.

The third activity was similar to the previous two because it again had the students look at one character in the novel and try to put themselves in the characters' shoes. The students were given the assignment to write a dairy entry as
if they were a character in the novel. It was interesting to see which character the students chose for this activity. Some students chose a main character, while others chose to do a minor character. Similar to the "You and Me" activity, the students were very successful at making connection to the characters and what he or she may be feeling in the novel.

Throughout the novel, the students had the ongoing task of completing a character chart. Each group had a specific chart for their novel that listed the six main characters in the story. The students had the job of drawing an illustration of what they think the character looks like as well as writing a sentence or two explaining who the character is to the story. Some students did exceptionally well with this, while others had difficulty keeping track of a sheet of paper for a lengthy amount of time. In the future when I do literature circles, I will make sure that each student has a designated folder for the novel to keep their papers in. I think that this would help the students who were unable to keep the character chart going.

The final response activity that the students completed was not until they were almost done with the novels. Because summarizing is such an important skill for students to learn in fifth grade, I had the students write "Double Nickel Stories". For this activity, the students had to use fifty-five words no more, no less, and summarize the novel they were reading. I found this to be somewhat of a
challenge for the students to pull out the important concepts in the story when they were summarizing. When the stories were finished, I used the jigsaw method to place one student from each of the novels into a new group where they read their "double Nickel Stories" to the other group members who were not reading the same book. This was an enjoyable activity for all of the students as well as an opportunity to encourage students to read other books.

Throughout the entire process of reading the novels and participating in literature circles, the students did a wonderful job. They stayed on task and really got into reading their novels. I was very pleased with how independent they were throughout the groups. I was able to walk around the room and participate in some discussions myself. I think that a real benefit of having the students responsible for certain roles or jobs within the group. They knew what they were supposed to be doing at all times and were able to act appropriately and independently while doing it. It was hard to stop having literature circle groups because the students really did enjoy them.

The final two class meetings I gave the students time to work on their final projects. Unlike the discussion questions that were mainly at the application level of Bloom's Taxonomy with the students making personal connections, I chose to make the final projects at the comprehension level to see what the students were able to comprehend while reading their novels. In the same format we had done
everything else in this unit, I wanted the projects to completely student centered. I wrote up three options of final projects for each novel. Then, the students were given a chance to choose which project they wanted to complete. By giving the students this choice, I was again able to differentiate this experience by preferred learning style. By this point in fifth grade, the students had already taken a learning style inventory to give them some kind of idea, if they didn't have one already, which learning style they preferred or learned best in. Therefore, I wanted to give the students a chance to show me what they learned from the novel that they read in a way that they felt comfortable with.

Yet again, the students all exceeded my expectations. They took the final project guidelines to the next level. Not only were many of them showing me that they comprehended the novels, but they added their own personal touches that showed me that they really connected with the characters. This was after all, the main goal of literature circles, to have the students participate in aesthetic responses to literature. Literature circles and aesthetic responses activities proved to be worth every second in this fifth grade classroom.
Frindle - Discussion Questions

Pre-reading: Who gets to make up what things are called?

I think maybe elders get to make up what things are called. I think they get to because they know more about stuff because there old.

When you were a baby or little kid, what were some funny baby words you used to say?

(Miss Mazurek used to call fish, shhhhh's)

SO\{\'It, \r\}t\O1 w or~s are swash and w:le c.e., 'I = Cl\o S;1& \r ielle.

Describe a time when you started something and it just seemed to get out of hand.

"I ~~~r~. \C. draw a picture and 
\m~ \-wo year old cousin wanted to draw.
\}6) S\~ started to draw scribbles all 
\l\Jer my paper.

Ch 1: Describe the "Island" in 3rd grade.

\"\"\" s\O\n~ 1\~\(V\h\u\_\) \b\n\~;\- \W\o.~ e\e\Jt CWO~I All \l 0\f (~
\b\O\1 S o. ft~ g\(\S\) wore~ 'bQ.~ch clothes \t-too.
Great Gilly Hopkins - Discussion Questions

Pre-reading: Have you ever felt like you didn't belong? How did it make you feel?

What do you think it would be like to be a foster child?

Describe a time when you made a first impression of someone that turned out to be wrong.

What do Gilly's remarks about her new foster mom show you about Gilly?

What does Gilly's reaction to Mr. Randolph's skin color show you?

Why is Gilly so mean spirited and unhappy already at Trotter's?
Complete the picture of the person below. One half is you, the other half is a character you can relate to. Write down similarities you both share.

I'm not a girl. She is mean and I'm not.

Shes's hair is

mess up when we

woke up we like to be noticed
You and Me

Complete the picture of the person below. One half is you, the other half is a character you can relate to. Write and draw the similarities you both share.

The things that are alike between me and Nick is that we are both kinda trouble makers. We both have blue eyes and wear glasses. Other thing is that we're both in 5th grade. Some different things is that he is caliby. He's more of a club maker than me. He is red curly hair. The forth thing is he calls a pen a frindly. Oo(-r:-) don't do that.