

Fiction/Nonfiction Literacy Circles for  
Research and Writing:  
Literacy for a New Millennium



**Greater Houston Area Writing Project:**  
[http://soe.cl.uh.edu/Writing\\_Project/](http://soe.cl.uh.edu/Writing_Project/)

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## **Multicultural Book Clubs: A Model**

With a few parameters such as do not take the same role two days in a row, and you must go through all the roles within two weeks (or more), students should be able to choose their own roles by taking on a different task every day (or week). Role sheets are good to train students to do the job of each role; however, role sheets are not necessary after training. Each group has a folder to keep their weekly work and group assessment sheet organized.

### *Monday:*

Read with group (silently or aloud)  
Each student does their assigned role work  
Discussion of role work within each group

### *Tuesday:*

Finish role work discussion  
Continue reading  
Each student does their assigned work according to their role  
Discussion of role work within each group

### *Wednesday:*

Finish role work discussion  
Continue reading  
Group plans whole group presentation (chart, skit, reader's theater, character monologues, best of the role work)

### *Thursday:*

Continue reading  
Each student does their role work  
Each group presents information about their book to the class

### *Friday: Research Day*

Group members read in the nonfiction selections for each topic  
This is a good time to introduce nonfiction reading strategies such as KWL  
Students collect data then connect it to the book they are reading.  
The group prepares a group writing response stating what they learned.

Groups are allowed to publish or present their findings on a bulletin board, class newsletter, group presentation, "news report," skit, chart/graph or visual aide. Assessments should include student group assessments and individual assessments, teacher observation and feedback, and teacher response to group written work.



## How to Create Working Book Clubs

### Things to consider before planning:

Can you connect the clubs to some larger unit of study—possibly a content subject?

What are your students' interests?

What reading levels/abilities are present in the class?

Which students have special needs and may need modifications?

What reading/learning styles do your students have?

Which students read slower? faster?

Do your students understand the basics of cooperative learning?

From student surveys and class discussions, select some possible topics for books clubs.

### Resources for book research include:

[www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org) American Library Association

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) Amazon books

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) Barnes and Noble books

[www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov) Library of Congress

[www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/) The Children's Literature Web Guide

[www.library.ualberta.ca/subject/curriculum/childrenslit/index.cft](http://www.library.ualberta.ca/subject/curriculum/childrenslit/index.cft) Library Learning Services

### Student roles taken from:

Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature Circles. Voice & Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

**Connector**

**Questioner**

**Literary Luminary**

**Illustrator**

**Summarizer**

**Researcher**

**Word Wizard**

**Scene Setter**

### Teacher Hints:

1. Students need to understand how to take turns and in the work—plan some fun activities to practice cooperative learning skills before moving on to book clubs.
2. Be aware of your students' reading abilities as they choose their book clubs. It is important to build on individual and group strengths.
3. Folders are easy material managers that help keep the groups' work handy and available. "Artists" can decorate the folders so it is discernible from others.
4. Divide the work into Reading/Thinking days and Discussing/Writing days. On the R/T days, students will read, think about the reading and write down their initial

responses to the role work. DW days bring the group together to discuss, take notes and write final reflections.

5. Each week, plan a day for group share. On this day, all groups will present the most important discoveries about their novels to the class. They can design charts, illustrations, diagrams on a large sheet of butcher paper. The group “sharing” can be posted in class. An alternative is to let groups perform short skits from their novel.

6. Teach the roles one at a time as a whole group using short stories, stories from the basal or a class novel that everyone is reading at the same time. Model, model, model.

7. It is critical to model the kind of discussion that is necessary for each role—not just the written work. Use groups to create “skits” of discussions.

8. When monitoring the group work, discussions and writing, make notes on post-its about what they are doing well to leave with them when you move on to another group.

9. Ideas for mini lessons will come from listening to group questions and discussions. What they do not understand will be observable.

10. Introduce new concepts like “tone” or “mood” during mini lessons and ask the “literary luminary” to look for a passage that shows how it works.

11. Integrate self assessments and group assessments in the overall evaluation of the work being produced. Brief, focused rubrics can help students begin to discover their own progress as well as fairly judge the work of the group.

**Possible questions for self assessment:**

Did you finish your reading?

Did you finish your role work?

Are you ready for discussion?

Did you participate in the discussion?

Did your group members understand what you contributed to the group?

Did others respond to what you did and/or said?

**Possible questions for group assessment:**

Did everyone get to share?

Did everyone have equal time to share?

Did everyone’s contribution help the group to understand the novel better?

Did the group stay on topic?

Did everyone’s questions get an answer?

12. Tape discussions whenever possible. Tell them that the discussions will be part of their grade. If there is time, you may want to transcribe some exemplary discussions and show them on the overhead. Reinforce critical thinking and creativity.

## Paired Fiction and Nonfiction Book Clubs:

### Native American culture:

Night of the Full Moon	Whelan	fiction
Potawatomi	Porter, Clifton	nonfiction
Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee	Brown	fiction
Wounded Knee	Waldman	nonfiction

### Civil Rights/ African American

To Kill a Mockingbird	Lee	fiction
The Watsons Go to Birmingham	Curtis	fiction
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry!	Taylor	fiction
Junebug	Meade	fiction
Souder	Armstrong	fiction
Free at Last!	Bullard	nonfiction
Through My Eyes	Bridges	nonfiction
Children of the Civil Rights Era	Welch	nonfiction

### England:

Oliver Twist	Dickens	fiction
Victorian England	Swisher	nonfiction

### Holocaust:

Number the Stars	Lowry	fiction
Devil's Arithmetic	Yolen	fiction
Stones in Water	Napoli	fiction
Erika's Story	Zee	picture book
The Yellow Star	Deedy	picture book
Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl	Frank	nonfiction
Holocaust: Understanding and Remembering	Strachinich	nonfiction
Fireflies in the Dark	Rubin	nonfiction
Smoke and Ashes	Rogasky	nonfiction

### Dust Bowl:

Out of the Dust	Hesse	fiction
Children of the Dust Bowl	Stanley	nonfiction

### Yugoslavia:

Girl of Kosovo	Meade	fiction
Zlata's Diary	Filipovic	nonfiction

### Afghanistan:

The Breadwinner	Ellis	fiction
Parvana's Journey	Ellis	fiction
Afghanistan	Italia	nonfiction
Unveiled: Voices of Women in Afghanistan	Logan	nonfiction
Blind Chickens and Social Animals	Pont	nonfiction
Life Under the Taliban	Stewart	nonfiction

### Latino/Hispanic:

Esperanza Rising	Ryan	fiction
House on Mango Street	Cisneros	fiction

Trino's Choice	Bertrand	fiction
Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories	Atkin	nonfiction
Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez	Krull	picture book
The Mexican American Family Album	Hoobler et al	nonfiction
<b>Vietnam:</b>		
Goodbye Vietnam	Whelan	fiction
The Lotus Seed	Garland	picture book
Vietnam (True Book)	Gray	nonfiction
<b>India:</b>		
Homeless Bird	Whelan	fiction
Shiva's Fire	Staples	fiction
India (True Books)	Landau	nonfiction
<b>Russia:</b>		
Angel on the Square	Whelan	fiction
The Impossible Journey	Whelan	fiction
Eyewitness Russia	Murrell	nonfiction
<b>China:</b>		
Red Scarf Girl	Jiang	fiction
Chu Ju's house	Whelan	fiction
China (True Books)	Heinrichs	nonfiction
<b>Japan:</b>		
The Bracelet	Uchida	fiction
Hiroshima	Yep	fiction
Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes	Coerr	nonfiction
One Thousand Paper Cranes:	Ishii	nonfiction
The Story of Sadako and the Children's Peace Stature		
<b>Korea</b>		
A Single Shard	Park	fiction
The Firekeeper's Son	Park	picture book
Year of Impossible Goodbyes	Choi	fiction
Korea (True Books)	Landau	nonfiction

Our most successful book clubs have been the pairing of fiction novels with nonfiction informational books. The student response has been phenomenal. Not only are they excited about their own book club, we have noticed that they want to read the other book club books also. There has been much trading of books as the groups learn about what everyone is reading about. Having the nonfiction books available and using them for research has intensified their participation.

## Genre Possibilities (©2004, Paula Griffith)

1. **A dialogue piece**—capture a meaningful conversation that explains the topic, characters, setting, point of view—can be fiction or nonfiction.
2. **Narrative**—write a fiction story about your topic including details from the research. Make sure it has a beginning, middle and end.
3. **A point of view piece**—pretend you are part of the story as a character (fiction) or an involved person (nonfiction). Write a piece from that person’s point of view. This kind of writing could be a part of a diary or journal and could be fiction or nonfiction.
4. **A recipe**—Consider the most important “ingredients” of your topic. It could include “love” or a “battle-torn playground.” Write a piece that reveals your interpretation of your topic using metaphorical thinking.
5. **An article**—pretend you are a reporter. Write an article about your topic—could be fiction or nonfiction. Great way to do historical fiction!
6. **A play**—write a play about your topic. It can be fiction or nonfiction, and it will have speaking parts.
7. **Scripts** can be fun to write. Pretend you are an anchor newscaster and write a news script. Talk show scripts and radio shows are also fun scripts. These can be fiction or nonfiction.
8. **Diaries and journals**—reproduce multiple entries for a diary or journal using point of view to dramatize and create the reality of your topic. Fiction or nonfiction.
9. **An essay**—essays do not have to be boring; however, this type of piece does require particular attention to organization. Essays are a great way to combine information and opinion in a main idea/detail format. Essays can be humorous, persuasive, informative, descriptive and/or compare/contrast. Newspaper editorials are an interesting way to write essays.
10. **Biographies** are traditionally nonfiction pieces about real people. You might want to consider a change of audience and write a biography for younger people so that they can understand who you have researched. You may want to do a picture book.
11. **Picture books** can be fun—fiction or nonfiction. Audience, pictures and format are very important. Write your information or story, but do not forget to plan for illustrations and pictures. Look at some of your favorite picture books so you can have ideas about how you want to arrange your book.
12. **Poems**—for this, you may need to find examples of your favorite kinds of poetry. There are many different types to choose from: cinquain, haiku, sonnet, ode, free

verse, limericks, and many others that may have imagery, onomatopoeia, alliteration and lots of great language. Word choice is critical for poems.

13. **CD covers** that include titles that “tell about” and/or describe the important information. The publishing, copyright dates and names of the performers will also have significance to the topic.
14. **Games** that incorporate major characters and concepts including the directions for playing the game and a copy of what the game board would look like.
15. **Bumper stickers, advertisements and/or billboards** that relay information about propaganda in its authentic form. The student has to do background research to learn about controversies and debatable topics.
16. **“Pictorials”** that have both text and pictures are wonderful! This could be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, a Microsoft Word document with inserted graphics or something that is done by hand.
17. **Comics and/or graphic books** like the Captain Underpants series. Students must understand that art and text are closely linked and both communicated meaning to the reader.
18. **Speeches**—have some of the best speeches for students to use as models like the “I Have a Dream” speech or Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address.” They will have to determine who is the speaker thereby determining point of view.
19. **Personal communications** like greeting cards. If Lincoln was to send General Lee a greeting card after Appomattox, what would it look like? What would it say?
20. **Lists** are also fun and informative. Think about *The Reading Teachers’ Book of Lists* by Edward Bernard Fry. Not just one list, but a collection of lists can tell all kinds of information the reader has to make inferences about. Think—Letterman’s “Top Ten” Lists!



## Getting Started With Multigenre Writing (©2004, Paula Griffith)

Now that you have selected your topic, begun to gather information and have some ideas about what you might want to write, you need to understand how this project, a multigenre collection, will become whole. You will have an introduction, two “anchor” pieces, 3-4 (or more) “snapshot” pieces and bibliography.

### 1. Introduction piece: **Preface**

This piece is written by the author (you) like a personal narrative. You may want to answer some of the following questions:

How did you become interested in this topic?

Why should we be interested in your topic?

How does your topic relate to your family or community?

How does your topic relate to science, history or discovery?

How does your topic relate to the world?

How has researching and writing about this topic changed you?

Do you have any other questions about your topic that you still wonder about?

What other related topics are you now interested in?

### 2. Anchor pieces: Nonfiction and fiction—one of each.

Anchor pieces are longer writings that contain more information than snapshots. These longer pieces are complete and “whole.” They contain descriptions, details, imagery, and can stand alone without anything else necessary to explain them. For fiction, you may want to consider a story, picture book, play, diary or journal. For nonfiction, you may want to consider an essay, article, biography, picture book, diary or journal. Whatever you choose, make sure these pieces contain enough information/details so that your readers will easily connect them to the snapshots.

### 3. Snapshots: Nonfiction and fiction—whatever you choose.

A snapshot is not the whole movie—it is only one picture. These creative pieces are meant to be shorter companion pieces that add to the collection by providing additional points of view, imagery, opinion, or whatever else you may want to add. Good snapshot pieces can be dialogues, scripts, point of view pieces, diary or journal (only 1 entry), articles, recipes, poems, and many others.

### 4. Bibliography: a list of references and resources you used to gather your information in MLA format.

Optional: Illustrations, photographs, pictures

\*\*All collections will have a front cover (title, author, illustration), title page, table of contents and back cover.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Multigenre Preplanning** (©2004, Paula Griffith)

My topic is: \_\_\_\_\_.

My research questions are:

1.

2.

3.

4.

I want to study this topic because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

My nonfiction anchor piece may be \_\_\_\_\_.

Optional other: \_\_\_\_\_.

My fiction anchor piece may be \_\_\_\_\_.

Optional other: \_\_\_\_\_.

I am considering writing these snapshot pieces:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Optional others:

## Preplanning With TTAPP (©2004, Paula Griffith)



**Topic:** What are you writing about? Write a complete sentence explaining your topic:

**Task:** What are you wanting to write? Story? Article? Script? Describe what this will look like.

**Audience:** Who will be reading and/or listening to your paper? (list everyone you can think of):

**Purpose:** Are you writing to inform? Persuade? Entertain? Describe?

**Point of view:** Who is doing the “telling?” Describe this person’s qualifications.