



# Vermont Afterschool

Partnerships, Advocacy, Training, and Resources for excellence in afterschool

## Building Literacy Out of Book Boxes: How to Run an Afterschool Book Club Program

Looking for a way to build literacy and a love of reading in afterschool programs? Consider creating a book club using a **Literature Circle** format, a successful student-centered reading strategy. The **Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence's Book Give-Away Program** offers free book bundles for afterschool programs who are interested in forming book clubs and partnerships as a way to promote literacy.

A Literature Circle is an activity for a group of students who are all reading the same book. They meet together as a book club, discuss parts of the book they have read, and work together to help understand the book.

Literature Circles can include different assignments or "roles" for each student. Roles can be done individually, in pairs, or as a whole group.

Book clubs and Literature Circles are a fun way to encourage collaborative reading strategies. Students can rotate through different roles and hopefully will work together to engage with the texts.



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# Common Questions About Literature Circles

## WHAT IS IT?

Book Discussion Groups and Literature Circles use stories to engage students in discussions about what they're reading. Lively discussions give students a chance to ask questions and voice their opinions while building reading and analytical skills.

## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Any reader of any age! Activities, questions, and roles can vary according to age level. Upper level elementary and middle school age students are particularly well-suited for Literature Circles because they are ready for the independence and sensitivity that comes with group discussions. However, 2nd and 3rd graders may be ready for a Literature Circle program with a higher level of teacher involvement.

## WHAT IS MY ROLE?

Help students to choose a book or story that they will find interesting. If you have many students with different reading levels, you may want to form small groups and, in some cases, read the book aloud to students. Develop questions and model a discussion so that students understand how to analyze what they're reading. Be sure to talk about listening and respecting each other's opinions. After you have modeled a discussion, students can take turns leading and facilitating future discussions depending on their age and maturity. You can give roles to other members of the group, as well as encourage students to write down their own questions, reflections, or favorite quotes as they read. For students who are less comfortable speaking in a group, writing will help them prepare for discussions and develop their ideas more fully.

## WHY DOES IT WORK?

Letting students choose their own books based on topics that interest them increases their incentive to read. Discussions engage students, and asking students for their opinions encourages participation, a sense of ownership, and an acceptance of different perspectives.

## ELL DEVELOPMENT?

One way that English language learners become more proficient in English is through frequent, meaningful interaction with native English speakers. All students benefit from exposure to different learning strategies, including collaborative learning in book clubs. Ask students to choose roles within the group (see page 3) and then rotate roles so that all students have a chance to practice reading, writing, and listening.



*Student Success - Winooski & Beyond*

# How to Lead a Literature Circle

## INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF A LITERATURE CIRCLE

1. Explain that they are groups of people reading the same book and meeting together to discuss what they have read.
2. Emphasize that students will make decisions for themselves and will do some independent work as well as some group work together.
3. Explain the different Literature Circle roles.
4. Preview the way that the roles work—on a white board, modeling, or pass out copies of the role descriptions.
5. Allow students to browse through the VCAE Book Bundle selection and choose the book group they want to join.
6. Groups tend to work best with three to five students each. Help to arrange the Literature Circle groups based upon their book choices and reading levels.
7. Decide how much to read and which role students will take for the next meeting. Assign roles at random or let students choose.
8. Make sure you write down the names of the students with their selected roles.
9. Hand out role guides for students to fill out as they read.
10. Read the book and prepare for the meeting!

## FACILITATING A LITERATURE CIRCLE

1. Starting with the discussion leader, give the different roles a chance to prepare and share their discoveries. Be open and make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate if they wish.
2. To take a turn speaking, have each student identify himself in his role, i.e. “I am the word wizard and my role was to...” before sharing his discoveries.
3. Remember that personal stories that connect to the reading and open-ended questions about the text are welcome.
4. Decide how much of the book to read and rotate the roles for the next meeting until the book is finished.

## FINISHING UP A LITERATURE CIRCLE

1. At the end of the discussion, students can do a more creative project to wrap things up. This is especially effective for nonverbal or quieter students. They can create maps, illustrations, bookmarks, collages, and timelines.
2. Another option is to create reflection journals of words, quotes, and images. These journals can be ongoing throughout the meetings or can be a reflection of the book and Literature Circle experience at its conclusion.

# Literature Circle Roles

These are some of the roles students can choose from. Depending on the reading and comprehension levels, as well as group maturity, you might want to limit their choices to the number of students in the group (i.e. five roles for five students). Eventually, the idea is that they will rotate through each role but having more options can add more play to the process.

## **SUMMARIZER:**

Prepares a brief summary of the story or selection

## **DISCUSSION DIRECTOR:**

Develops questions for the group to discuss together

## **WORD WIZARD:**

Finds words that are difficult or used in an unfamiliar way and provides definitions

## **TRAVEL GUIDE:**

Tracks the movement of the characters, locations, and plot of the story

## **STORY MAPPER:**

Maps out the story using a graphic organizer, timeline, or character/story map

## **BIG PICTURE CONNECTOR:**

Finds connections between the story and another book, events in his/her personal life, or the outside world

## **INVESTIGATOR:**

Looks up any background information related to the book and/or author

## **QUOTE MASTER:**

Finds quotes that the group rereads and then discusses because they are interesting, informative, well written, funny, etc.

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# Basic Book Club Guidelines

Here are some instructions for a more informal book club gathering. If you don't have the time for a structured Literature Circle with the specific roles outlined on p. 3, this is a great option to get students together to analyze literature!

1. Allow students to browse through the **VCAE Book Bundle** selection and choose the book group they want to join. Groups tend to work best with three to five students each.
2. Decide on a written response method (anything from bookmarks or sticky notes to response journals).
3. Give time for students to read alone or with a partner. As students read, they mark discussion points/key quotes/interesting sections in their books with sticky notes or write in response journals.
4. On the Book Club meeting day students meet with their book club groups. At that time they discuss their book and share their written responses with each other.
5. Pass out prompts or write them on the board so students can choose something that they would like to talk about if they need further inspiration. See **Book Talk Questions** or **Reading Responses** listed below.

## BOOK TALK QUESTIONS

What is your favorite part so far?	What questions do you have?
How would you feel if you were...?	What things are different or unusual about...?
What words would you use to describe...?	What surprised you as you read?
Which character is most like you? How so?	Which character is most interesting?
Did you expect the book to end differently?	What did you learn about...?

## READING RESPONSES

I wonder.....I liked it when.....I didn't like it when.....

I feel.....My favorite character is.....My least favorite character is.....

I predict.....If I were the character\_\_\_\_\_, I would.....This reminds me of.....

# Resources and Links

## GENERAL RESOURCES FOR BUILDING LITERACY

**The International Reading Association** | [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)  
The world's leading organization of literacy professionals.

**The Vermont Council on Reading** | [www.vermontcouncilonreading.com](http://www.vermontcouncilonreading.com)  
An organization that promotes effective reading and literacy programs at all levels. The Vermont Council on Reading also holds conferences and awards small grants to members who are looking to enhance literacy instruction within schools.

**Planet Book Club** | [www.planetbookclub.com](http://www.planetbookclub.com)  
This website explains the methodology of book clubs, as well as offering descriptions and samples of book club materials. Planet Book Club also has interactive components for both students and teachers in addition to curriculum resources.

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## RESOURCES FOR LITERATURE CIRCLES

**Literature Circles Resource Center** | [www.litcircles.org](http://www.litcircles.org)  
The Literature Circles Resource Center is designed to support teachers as they plan and use literature circles in their elementary and middle school classrooms.

**Children's Literature Resources** | <http://classes.seattleu.edu/education/litc521/schlicknoe/resources.html>  
Links to a large number of sites for book lists, book reviews, and instruction with children's literature. Developed by Katherine L. Schlick Noe, Ph.D. of Seattle University.

**Laura Candler's Teaching Resources** | [www.lauracandler.com/strategies/litcircles.php](http://www.lauracandler.com/strategies/litcircles.php)  
Laura Candler, a 4th/5th grade teacher in North Carolina, developed this extensive and useful site describing how she uses Literature Circles in her classroom. She includes many forms and guidelines that you can download, as well as book suggestions for intermediate students.

**Literature Circles Extension Projects** | [www.kids-learn.org/litcircles](http://www.kids-learn.org/litcircles)  
Susan Silverman's collaborative Internet project showcases Literature Circle Extension Projects created by students of all ages. It's an opportunity for students to create for an audience and for educators to view best practices.

**Read-Write-Think** | [www.readwritethink.org/lessons](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons)  
Developed in partnership between the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, this is a rich resource for lesson plans and materials on a broad range of literacy topics. To find resources specific to Literature Circles, type "literature circle" and then specify "exact phrase" in the search box.

## Resources Continued...

Daniels, Harvey. *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* (2001). York, ME: Stenhouse.

Peralta-Nash, Claudia, and Julie A. Dutch. "Literature Circles: Creating an Environment for Choice." *Primary Voices K-6* 8.4 (April 2000): 29-37.

Raphael, Taffy E., Laura Pardo, and Kathy Highfield. *Book Club: A Literature-Based Curriculum* (2002). Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications.

Raphael, Taffy E., Susan Florio-Ruane, MariAnne George, Nina Levorn Hasty, Kathy Highfield. *Book Club Plus: A Literacy Framework for the Primary Grades* (2004). Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications.

## Tips to Create Enthusiasm for Reading

Here are some basic tips for creating successful book clubs.

1. Give kids choices about the book they are going to read for a book club. Offer them two to three book choices and let them see the books so they can check out the covers, illustrations, etc.
2. Set up the book club like you would an adult book club—make it special by meeting in a comfortable area, use lamp light instead of overhead harsh lighting, give kids small writing journals with colorful pens, let them spread out and read, and perhaps include a special snack. Be sure to give kids plenty of time to read and discuss the book. Let kids keep their books when book club is finished.
3. Have book bins throughout the school or program center for an ongoing book swap so kids can trade in their books anytime, any day of the year.
4. Start reading kids books yourself so that you can suggest books to kids. Kids need to see adults reading and getting excited when talking about their books!



Wings Community Programs



## Contact Information

The **Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence** is a statewide public-private partnership dedicated to supporting and sustaining innovative learning opportunities beyond the school day for all Vermont's children and youth. The Center's activities are directed toward building the capacity and commitment of Vermont communities to increase the quality and availability of programs during non-school hours.

The **Book Give-Away Program** is generously supported through the Southeast Vermont Learning Collaborative, with additional support and a special thank you to Patrick Daley of Scholastic Books and Carolyn Olivier, formerly with the Hello Friend/Ennis William Cosby Foundation. Thank you as well to Barb Russ, VCAE board member and literacy specialist, for her guidance and support throughout this project.

For more information about the **Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence**, please visit our website: [www.vermontafterschool.org](http://www.vermontafterschool.org).

### INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE BOOK GIVE-AWAY PROJECT? CONTACT US!

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Vermont Afterschool

**Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence**



# Permission to Use Photograph/Video

The **Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence** is interested in **obtaining photos** of youth across the state enjoying the books provided through the Book Give-Away Program. If you host a book club or other literacy event, please consider taking photographs and sharing them with us for future use highlighting literacy-building activities in Vermont afterschool programs. Photos can be sent electronically to either **Cassie Willner** ([cassiwillner@vermontafterschool.org](mailto:cassiwillner@vermontafterschool.org)) or **Lynne Feal-Staub** ([lfealstaub@gmail.com](mailto:lfealstaub@gmail.com)). All photos must be accompanied by a release form signed by a parent or guardian for any children included in the photos.

## PERMISSION TO USE PHOTOGRAPH/VIDEO

Name of Afterschool Program:

Name of Child:

I grant to the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence, its representatives, employees, affiliates, and those acting under their permission, the irrevocable right to use and publish photographs and/or videos of the children in connection with the above-mentioned program.

I authorize the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence to publish, distribute, exhibit, copyright, and license photographs and/or videos of the children in connection with the above-mentioned program in print and/or electronically for the purpose of promoting the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence and its activities.

I hereby transfer and assign to the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence any and all rights, title, and interests that I may have related to photos and/or videos of the children in connection with the above-mentioned program. I agree that the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence will have the perpetual right to copy, reproduce, display, publish, edit, modify, assign, license, and register for copyrights and trademarks, distribute, sell, and otherwise use photographs and/or videos of the children in connection with the above-mentioned program.

I further affirm that I am the parent or guardian of the child listed above. I have read and fully understand the above agreement.

Signature:

Printed Name/Date:

**Permission to Use Photograph/Video release forms should be mailed by afterschool coordinators to:**

Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence  
c/o CVEDC-ESA  
123 Ethan Allen Avenue  
Dupont Hall #309  
Colchester, Vermont 05446



# DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

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

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**DISCUSSION DIRECTOR:** Your job is to create a list of questions your group can use to discuss the book you are reading together. Don't worry about the details. Try to create questions that will make your group really think. The best discussion questions usually come from your own thoughts, feelings, and concerns as you read.

## Possible Discussion Questions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# WORD WIZARD

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

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORD WIZARD:** Your job is to find unknown words in the book. Once you have written down the words and page numbers where you found them, use the context clues to try and guess what they mean. Then use a dictionary to look up their actual definitions. Be prepared to teach the words to your team!

Word	Page	What I Think It Means:	What It Actually Means:

# STORY MAPPER

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

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**STORY MAPPER:** Your job is to choose a type of story map or graphic organizer, such as a character map, story elements map, Venn Diagram, or timeline, and map out the story in the space below. Be prepared to explain the parts of your map to your team and tell them why you chose to use that type of story map.

# TRAVEL GUIDE

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

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**TRAVEL GUIDE:** Your job is to track where the action takes place. You can chart where things are happening and how the setting(s) change through the course of the book. Describe the settings in details, either in words or with a map that you can show and discuss with your group.

**Where does the action begin?**

**Where are some of the places where key events happened?**

**Where do the events end?**

# BIG PICTURE CONNECTOR

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

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**BIG PICTURE CONNECTOR:** Your job is to find some connections between the book you are reading and the outside world. Can you think of some ways that what you read connects with your own life, school, or your local community? Ask your group members if they found any of their own connections to the book.

**How does this book connect to your own life?**

**Have you been able to relate to any characters and if so, why?**

**Can you think of how this book might connect to other people?**



# QUOTE MASTER

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

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**QUOTE MASTER:** Your job is to find quotes from the book that are interesting, funny, well written, powerful, puzzling, informative, etc. Then the group will go around and reread the quotes aloud and discuss their meaning together.

## Quotes and Page Numbers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# INVESTIGATOR

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INVESTIGATOR:** Your job is to look up any background information on the book, author, or historical information related to the book. Try to figure out some context of the story and why the author might have chosen to set the story in that specific time period. What was going on that was interesting? Your goal is to dig up anything interesting on any topic related to your book.