



# Introducing Literature Circles



# What is a Literature Circle?

- Small groups of learners gather to discuss a piece of literature (text) in depth.
- The discussion is guided by the learners response to what they have read.
- It provides a way for learners to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books.
- Collaboration is at the heart of this approach.
- Learners reshape and add onto their understanding as they construct meaning with other readers.
- Literature circles guide learners to deeper understanding of what they read though structured discussion and extended written and artistic responses.



# Introducing Literature Circles

## Term One:

- First ½ of the term spent experiencing a whole class literature circle using a shared book and introduction to the roles. This allows the teacher to guide students through an initial experience and set boundaries and expectations for completed work and behaviour during sessions.
- 5 Weeks duration
- One role focus per week. This allows students to experience each role and develop an understanding of what is expected during each role.
- Coupled with an explicit focus on the underlying comprehension strategy to help students develop their skills and understand the 'why' behind the role.
- Allow time for students to read through the allocated pages. This could be achieved through assigned independent reading time (read to self) or silent reading.



# The roles of a Literature Circle

## Focusing on the roles:

### ☐ Week 1: Questioner

Comprehension focus: [Questioning](#)

### ☐ Week 2: Observer

Comprehension focus: [Visualising](#)

### ☐ Week 3: Connector

Comprehension focus: [Making Connections](#)

### ☐ Week 4: Explainer

Comprehension focus: [Summarising](#)

### ☐ Week 5: Perspective Taker

Comprehension focus: [Inferring](#)

### Week 6: The Heart of the Matter

Focus: [Theme](#)

Visit my Thinking Pathways website for the role cards!

<http://thinkingpathwaysweebly.com/readingresources.html>



**NB:** all blue text on this slide is hyperlinked.



# Week 1: Questioner



## Role:

- To lead the group through the agreed set of pages the group has just read by engaging them in a discussion about the BIG IDEAS.

## Task:

- Compose a range of questions about the set pages to help you and your group explore the text at a deeper level.
- Use question starts, such as Why...? How...? What...? Suppose that...? to help you and record your questions below.

## Reflection: (Assessment As Learning)

- Reflect on your role as **Questioner**. How did asking questions help you to understand the text? What ideas did you gain from others? What still challenges or puzzles you?



## Questioner



Alice Vigers  
2020

**My Role:** To lead the group through the agreed set of pages the group has just read by engaging them in a discussion about the BIG IDEAS.

**Task:** Compose a range of questions about the set pages to help you and your group explore the text at a deeper level. Use question starts, such as Why...? How...? What...? Suppose that...? to help you and record your questions below.

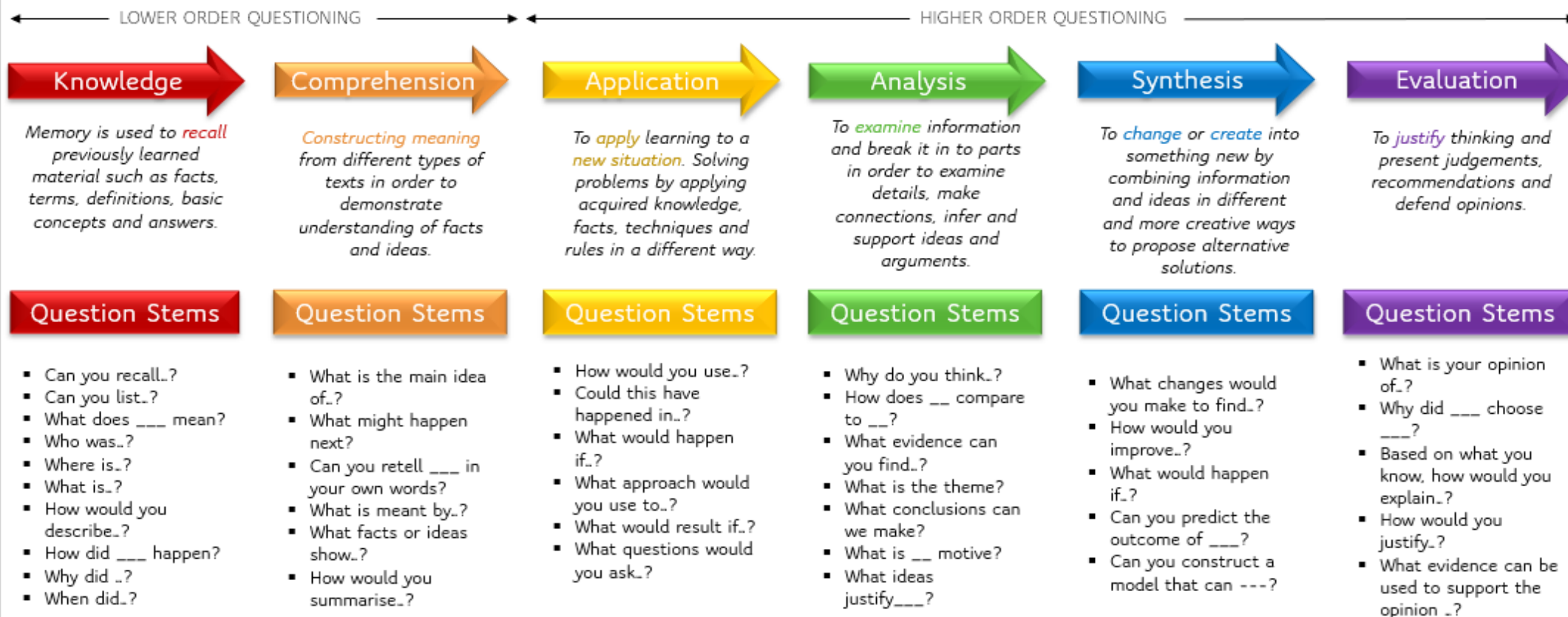


**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Questioner**. How did asking questions help you to understand the text? What ideas did you gain from others? What still challenges or puzzles you?

# Comprehension Focus: Questioning



## BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS







# Teacher Information: Questioner




- The **purpose** of this role is two fold. Firstly, they need to lead the group through a discussion about the text using their pre-generated questions. Secondly, they need to facilitate the sharing of other group members to ensure each person is heard and the conversation remains on topic.
- Asking students to record their questions ensures they are ready for the group meeting and have had an opportunity to develop thoughtful questions that help the group probe deeper into the text.
- Initially students will require support in learning to develop thoughtful questions that deliver a rich response. Allocating time to set this up early in the year will be hugely beneficial as the year progresses.
- Asking students to reflect on their learning is an important part of the learning journey and additionally as an assessment tool. It also provides a rich opportunity for students to set learning goals.

 **Questioner**  Alice Vigers  
2020

**My Role:** To lead the group through the agreed set of pages the group has just read by engaging them in a discussion about the BIG IDEAS.

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**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Questioner**. How did asking questions help you to understand the text? What ideas did you gain from others? What still challenges or puzzles you?

# Week 2: Observer



## Role:

- ☐ To examine how the author helps us create visual images based on the words, pictures and inferences made in the text.

## Task:

- ☐ Create a snapshot of a visual image from the agreed set of pages.
- ☐ Write an explanation to explain why you depicted this visual image in this way.

## Reflection: (Assessment As Learning)

- ☐ Reflect on your role as **Observer**. How did creating a visual image help you to 'see' the location of the story clearer? How does the author's clues impact the way things are seen by the reader?



Alice Vigors  
2020

**My Role:** To examine how the author helps us create visual images based on the words, pictures and inferences made in the text.

**Task:** Create a snapshot of a visual image from the agreed set of pages. Write an explanation to explain why you depicted this visual image in this way.



**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Observer**. How did creating a visual image help you to 'see' the location of the story clearer? How does the author's clues impact the way things are seen by the reader?



**NB:** the comprehension focus tag in the right-hand corner is hyperlinked





# Comprehension Focus: Visualising



- When authors write, they use words to describe different things, such as characters, settings and events.
- The words the author uses helps us to make a picture in our minds.
- Creating a picture in your mind or drawing the picture on paper can help you understand what you are reading.
- This strategy is called visualising.



# Teacher Information: Observer



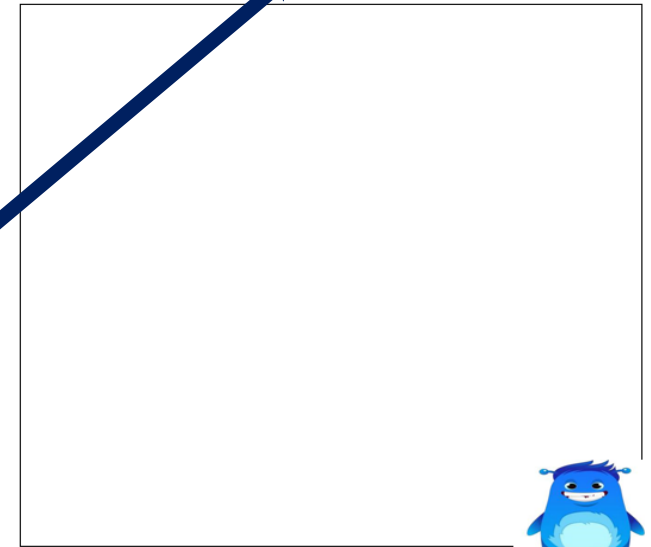
- The **purpose** of this role is unpack the visual images represented in the text by using the clues left by the author, including words, images and inferences.
- Asking students to visualise sections of the text helps them build a deeper picture of what is occurring in the text. It also helps them to form connections to self, text or world.
- Students are generally pretty good with this role, as most love to draw, however; students are also asked to think beyond illustration to being able to explain their chosen for representing something in a particular way.
- Asking students to reflect on their learning is an important part of the learning journey and additionally as an assessment tool. It also provides a rich opportunity for students to set learning goals.



Alice Vigors  
2020

**My Role:** To examine how the author helps us create visual images based on the words, pictures and inferences made in the text.

**Task:** Create a snapshot of a visual image from the agreed set of pages. Write an explanation to explain why you depicted this visual image in this way.



**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Observer**. How did creating a visual image help you to 'see' the location of the story clearer? How does the author's clues impact the way things are seen by the reader?



# Week 3:Connector



Making  
connections

## Role:

- ☐ To make connections with the book through your own life, another text or events occurring in the world.

## Task:

- ☐ Identify a part in the agreed section you connect to and explain the connection you have made using the sentence stem, *This part reminds me of...*

## Reflection: (Assessment As Learning)

- ☐ Reflect on your role as **Connector**. How does making a connection to the book help you to understand an event, location, character choice or reaction? What still challenges you about the text?



Connector



Alice Vigers  
2020

**My Role:** To make connections with the book through your own life, another text or events occurring in the world.

**Task:** Identify a part in the agreed section you connect to and explain the connection you have made using the sentence stem, *This part reminds me of...*



**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Connector**. How does making a connection to the book help you to understand an event, location, character choice or reaction? What still challenges you about the text?



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# Comprehension Focus: Making Connections



Making connections is when we make links between what we already know (our prior knowledge) and the text. There are three kinds of connections we can make. The first is called:

## Text to Self:

- This is when we connect the text to our own experiences.,

## Text to Text:

- Text to text connections are when we compare the text we are reading to other similar texts. These texts could be books or visual texts such as a movie or a TV programme.

## Text to World:

- This is when we connect what we are reading to things that really happen in the outside world.



# Teacher Information: Connector



- The **purpose** of this role is to highlight any connections students have to the text. This is a valuable component of the comprehension process as it helps students relate to the book and support them as they engage with others and share their experiences.
- Asking students to identify the type of connection they are experiencing, reinforces the multifaceted nature of connecting to something or someone.
- Providing students with sentence stems can support students as they learn to identify connections. For some students, this skill may be challenging.
- Asking students to reflect on their learning is an important part of the learning journey and additionally as an assessment tool. It also provides a rich opportunity for students to set learning goals.



Connector



Alice Vigers  
2020

**My Role:** To make connections with the book through your own life, another text or events occurring in the world.

**Task:** Identify a part in the agreed section you connect to and explain the connection you have made using the sentence stem, *This part reminds me of...*



**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Connector**. How does making a connection to the book help you to understand an event, location, character choice or reaction? What still challenges you about the text?

# Week 4: Explainer



Summarising

## Role:

- ☐ To identify the BIG IDEAS in this section of the text and explain why they are important to the main narrative.

## Task:

- ☐ Create a brainstorm of the BIG IDEAS in the agreed section. Identify any connections between the ideas and explain why these are important to the overall storyline so far.

## Reflection: (Assessment As Learning)

- ☐ Reflect on your role as **Explainer**. How did identifying the big ideas help you to see the main idea? How does explaining the importance of something help to synthesise your ideas?



Alice Vigers  
2020

**My Role:** To identify the BIG IDEAS in this section of the text and explain why they are important to the main narrative.

**Task:** Create a brainstorm of the BIG IDEAS in the agreed section. Identify any connections between the ideas and explain why these are important to the overall storyline so far.



**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Explainer**. How did identifying the big ideas help you to see the main idea? How does explaining the importance of something help to synthesise your ideas?





# Comprehension Focus: Summarising



- A summary is a shortened version of a text that contains all the main points.
- Summarising is an important skill that helps us when we are researching, gathering and presenting information.
- Finding key words and phrases helps us to summarise the text.
  - A key is something that unlocks things.
  - A key word is a word that unlocks the meaning of a sentence. It helps you to understand the sentence.
  - Here is an example.
    - The whale is a mammal. The key words are whale and mammal.
  - **Good readers notice key words**
  - Here are some clues to help you find key words:
    - Key words are directly connected to the topic
    - Key words are often repeated in the title and the text
    - A key word helps you to remember an important idea



# Teacher Information: Explainer



- The **purpose** of this role is to summarise the key ideas into a shortened text, usually one or more paragraphs in length.
- Asking students to explain the key ideas in a section of text requires them to synthesise and summarise information.
- By asking students to explain the importance of the key idea to the storyline, students are learning to examine how author's develop ideas
- Asking students to reflect on their learning is an important part of the learning journey and additionally as an assessment tool. It also provides a rich opportunity for students to set learning goals.



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2020

**My Role:** To identify the BIG IDEAS in this section of the text and explain why they are important to the main narrative.

**Task:** Create a brainstorm of the BIG IDEAS in the agreed section. Identify any connections between the ideas and explain why these are important to the overall storyline so far.



**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Explainer**. How did identifying the big ideas help you to see the main idea? How does explaining the importance of something help to synthesise your ideas?

# Week 5: Perspective Taker

## Role:


- ☐ To examine the agreed section of the text from the perspective of another character.

## Task:

- ☐ Choose a side character from the story that doesn't have a leading role. Explain how you think they see, feel about, react to one event in the agreed section of the text.

## Reflection: (Assessment As Learning)

- ☐ Reflect on your role as **Perspective Taker**. How does seeing an event through the eyes of someone else help you gain a different understanding of the situation or person? How might this apply to your own life?




**Perspective Taker**

My Role: To examine the agreed section of text from the perspective of another character.

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Task: Choose a side character from the story that doesn't have a leading role. Explain how you think they see, feel about, react to one event in the agreed section of the text.



Reflection: Reflect on your role as **Perspective Taker**. How does seeing an event through the eyes of someone else help you to gain a different understanding of the situation or person? How might this apply to your own life?



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# Comprehension Focus: **Inferring**



- Inferring is being able to ‘read between the lines’, when the author implies something but doesn’t exactly state it.
- You need to use clues in the text and your own prior knowledge to help you understand.
  - *In the text it says.....*
  - *From what I already know I think it means...*
  - *I think.....because.....*



# Teacher Information: Perspective Taker



- The **purpose** of this role is to step into the shoes of another character and see the events through the eyes of this person.
- Asking students to explain how a character views a situation requires them to make inferences about thoughts, feelings and reactions, using contextual clues to support their understanding.
- Asking students to reflect on their learning is an important part of the learning journey and additionally as an assessment tool. It also provides a rich opportunity for students to set learning goals.



## Perspective Taker



**My Role:** To examine the agreed section of text from the perspective of another character.  
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**Task:** Choose a side character from the story that doesn't have a leading role. Explain how you think they see, feel about, react to one event in the agreed section of the text.



**Reflection:** Reflect on your role as **Perspective Taker**. How does seeing an event through the eyes of someone else help you to gain a different understanding of the situation or person? How might this apply to your own life?

# Week 6: The Heart of the Matter

## Themes

### Role:

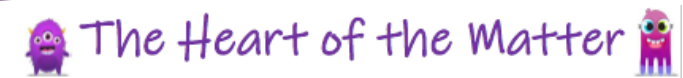
- ☐ To determine the theme or key message the author wants reader's to know.

### Task:

- ☐ Identify the key themes and messages found within the book through a brainstorm. Provide examples from the text that highlight these themes and messages.

### Reflection: (**Assessment As Learning**)

- ☐ Reflect on the shared role of **The Heart of the Matter**. How does digging deeper into themes and key messages help us understand author's purpose? How does collaborating with others enhance your understanding?



My Role: To determine the theme or key message the author wants reader's to know.

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Task: Identify the key themes and key message found within the book through a brainstorm. Provide examples from the text that highlight these themes and messages.



Reflection: Reflect on the shared role of **The Heart of the Matter**. How does digging deeper into themes and key messages help us to understand author's purpose? How does collaborating with other enhance your understanding?





# Comprehension Focus: Theme

- The message or lesson that the author wants you to learn from the story.
- Some examples of themes are:

**Courage**

**Friendship**

**Jealousy**

**Hard work**

- Ask yourself:
  - *What did the character learn?*
  - *How did the characters grow or change?*
  - *Why did the characters act this way?*
- Support it with evidence:
  - *What passage or sentence supports your thinking?*
  - *Can you find evidence in the orientation, complication and resolution of the text?*
- I know the theme is....because the text says....



# Teacher Information: The Heart of the Matter



- The **purpose** of this collaborative group role is to uncover central themes and messages hidden within the text.
- Asking students to identify these key themes and messages requires them to dig a little deeper into a text drawing upon evidence and inferences to support their claims.
- Asking students to reflect on their learning is an important part of the learning journey and additionally as an assessment tool. It also provides a rich opportunity for students to set learning goals.

## The Heart of the Matter

**My Role:** To determine the theme or key message the author wants reader's to know.

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**Task:** Identify the key themes and key message found within the book through a brainstorm. Provide examples from the text that highlight these themes and messages.



**Reflection:** Reflect on the shared role of *The Heart of the Matter*. How does digging deeper into themes and key messages help us to understand author's purpose? How does collaborating with other enhance your understanding?



Thank you for downloading and using the resource 'Introducing Literature Circles'. I created this document to support the implementation of the Literature Circle Role Cards that are highlighted throughout this document. I'd love to hear how this resource supports you and is utilised in your classroom.

Thanks again,

Alice Vigors

[thinkingpathways@gmail.com](mailto:thinkingpathways@gmail.com)

