

Creating a Reading Community/Meeting the 25 Book Standard/Exploring Literature by Genre, Author, and Subject Matter

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Overview:

Finding a creative way for my middle school communications students to legitimately fulfill the Pittsburgh Public Schools 25 Book Standard is a challenge. At the beginning of the year, most teachers give their students the 25 Book Packet which discusses genres, ways to complete a book report, and pages to record books they have read and then leave the student to complete this daunting task on his/her own. This ultimately becomes a problem because (1) most middle school students are not self-motivated, and (2) unfortunately a lot of middle school students will be dishonest about the books they claim they have read. This unit, *Creating a Reading Community/Meeting the 25 Book Standard/Exploring Literature by Genre, Author, and Subject Matter* is designed to alleviate some of the pressure of meeting the 25 book standard for both student and teacher. This unit is geared toward middle school students but is easily adapted to elementary and high school students. By creating “A Community of Readers” working collaboratively and cooperatively in literature circles, reading multiple books in the same genre, by the same author, and on the same subject matter, and reporting on them through a variety of activities, this unit seeks to instill a love of, or at least an appreciation of reading poetry and prose. This unit is designed to be implemented over the entire school year. However, depending on how much time

you have to focus on the unit and how in-depth of an endeavor you want to take on, time could be shortened or lengthened accordingly.

Rationale:

Teaching Middle School Communications in The Pittsburgh Public Schools presents many challenges. Among them is getting my students to meet the 25 Book Standard. During the school year, my students are required to read and report on 25 books that presumably they have read independently. Unless you are a literary genius, have read every piece of children's literature ever published, and have way too much time on your hands, it is almost impossible to genuinely know whether or not your students have completed this task. Some students love to read and attack this task with real enthusiasm but realistically most of my students will admit that they find reading tedious and not on their top ten things to do while not in school. Some even go so far as copying the blurb from a novel and "saying" they have read it. Hopefully, *Creating a Reading Community/Meeting the 25 Book Standard/Exploring Literature by Genre, Author, and Subject Matter* will alleviate some of the pressure of meeting this standard for both students and teacher.

This past summer, I had the distinct pleasure of participating in an awesome professional development course, the summer institute of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project. It was a month long, intense writing workshop for teachers. The main focus was learning how to create a community of writers in your classroom. We learned the old-fashioned way - by modeling. We were, ourselves guided to become our own community of writers so when it came time to implement this in our classrooms, it was just second-nature! The keys to becoming a community of writers are:

- 1.) We always address ourselves as "writers" or "authors."
- 2.) We are free to write about anything we want.
- 3.) All writing is important.
- 4.) We are free to write in any place we want.
- 5.) When we write, we don't stop.
- 6.) We are encouraged to share our writing.
- 7.) We must be good listeners.
- 8.) Feedback is limited to "thank you for your writing."
- 9.) We may ask for a critique or suggestions for our writing.
- 10.) We just Write! Write! Write!

This simple model worked wonders for me and my students. Over the past school year, we have become avid writers! So! I thought; wouldn't it be

great to also create a community of readers in my classroom? If it worked for writing, couldn't it work for reading too? As a community of readers:

- 1.) We would address ourselves as avid readers or "critics."
- 2.) We would be free to read anything we wanted.
- 3.) All literary work would be valued as important.
- 4.) We would be free to read in any place we wanted.
- 5.) When we read, we wouldn't stop.
- 6.) We would be encouraged to share what we have read.
- 7.) We would listen to others' critiques of literature.
- 8.) We would welcome a discussion about what we have read.
- 9.) We would ask questions about what we have read.
- 10.) We would just Read! Read! Read!

The point is to create an environment where reading is enjoyed and valued, an environment where it is safe to discuss literature and report on literature in creative ways.

Now that we have some idea of how to create "A Community of Readers" how do we encourage the actual reading? I have found that whenever I assign my students to read a piece of poetry or prose, the first question they ask is, "Can we work with a partner or in groups?" It never fails! So, I say, why not make the best of my students' innate urge to socialize? Utilizing collaborative and cooperative Literature Circles will enable students to read more books over a shorter period of time, allow social interaction while reading, and facilitate the sharing of what has been read to encourage more reading!

Now, how do we strategically assess all of this? After teaching for nine years, I have learned that not all students learn the same way. Offering one type of assessment does not ensure the success of many. I think the key is to give students choices and opportunities to create their own creative meaningful activities and avenues for assessment.

Finally, how do we extend the learning, or as I like to say, "How do we get the gift to keep on giving?" Students love to perform and create. By giving students a forum such as a stage to perform on or a website to post on, we can encourage a multitude of sharing about the books that they have read and enjoyed!

Research and History:

The essence of this unit is for students to achieve the Pittsburgh Public School's 25 Book Standard through exploration of literature by creating "A community of Readers" through collaborative/cooperative learning models and use of Literature Circles.

As described in the rationale for this unit, creating a community of readers is a teacher modeled "way of thinking" which has, in my own personal experience proven to be a productive way to approach Language Arts.

What is Collaborative/Cooperative learning? "Collaborative Learning is a method of teaching and learning to explore a significant question or create a meaningful project" (Weber 1). "Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups that allow students to work together to maximize their own and each other's learning." According to Johnson, Johnson, and Johnson Holubec in their book, *The New Circles of Learning Cooperation in the Classroom and School*. Further, an ideal classroom would consist of competition, individualism, and cooperation, where "...all students would learn how to work collaboratively with others, compete for fun and enjoyment, and work autonomously on their own" (3).

Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec tell us that for cooperation to work well, teachers must explicitly structure five essential components within each lesson. These include: (1) Positive Interdependence: The "We instead of Me" theory where students understand that they are linked together and that one cannot succeed unless everyone succeeds, (2) Promotive Interaction where "face to face" interaction among students promotes and facilitates each others' success, (3) Individual Accountability where students are encouraged to become stronger individuals when the performance of each individual is assessed and the results are given back to the group and the individual, (4) Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills where students learn to master tasks as a team, and (5) Group Processing where students learn to process and reflect upon how well the group is functioning (12).

Collaborative/Cooperative Learning can be modified to work in small or whole groups. In her article, "Tools for Teaching: Collaborative Learning: Group Work and Study Teams, Barbara Gross Davis delineates three types of collaborative groups. These are: (1) Informal Learning Groups which is a temporary grouping of students for a single class session, but because the major strategy of this unit is Literature Circles, our focus is on (2) Formal Learning Groups where teams are established to complete a specific task, such as perform a lab experiment, write a report, carry out a project, or prepare a position paper, and (3) Study Teams which are long term groups, usually existing over a semester,

whose responsibility is to provide support, encouragement, and assistance in completing requirements or assignments (1).

Why use Collaborative Learning in the classroom?

Collaborative/Cooperative Learning has a rich history of theory, research, and actual use, which makes it one of the most distinguished of all instructional practices” (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec Johnson 13).

Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec Johnson’s “...Social Interdependence Theory perspective assumes that the way social interdependence is structured determines how individuals interact, which, in turn, develops outcomes. Positive interdependence (cooperation) results in promotive interaction as individuals encourage and facilitate each other’s efforts. Negative interdependence (competition) typically results in oppositional interaction as individuals discourage and obstruct each other’s efforts to achieve. In the absence of interdependence (individualistic efforts) there is no interaction as individuals work” (14).

Their research stems primarily from the cognitive theorist, Vygotsky, who based his perspective on the premise that knowledge is social, and is constructed from cooperative efforts to learn, understand, and solve problems. Group members exchange information and insights, discover weak points in each other’s reasoning strategies, correct one another, and adjust their understandings on the basis of one another’s understandings (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec Johnson 14). Vygotsky argued that “Every function of the child’s cultural development appears twice: on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapyschological)... all the higher functions originate as actual relations between human beings” (Vygotsky 23). Together with Vygotsky’s theories and the behavioral theorist Slavin, who emphasized the need for extrinsic group rewards to motivate people to learn in cooperative learning groups, we recognize the need for collaborative/cooperative group learning.

Since 1898, over 550 experimental and 100 correlational research studies have been conducted on cooperative, competitive, and individualistic efforts. Since 1974, the research review articles have been too numerous to mention, but they have clearly proven several things about the importance of cooperation during learning efforts. These are: (1)The effectiveness of cooperative learning has been confirmed by both theoretical and demonstration research, and the literature includes both “scientific” literature and “professional” literature, (2)Cooperative learning can be used with some confidence at every grade level, in every subject area, and with any task, and (3)Cooperation is a generic human endeavor that affects many different instructional outcomes simultaneously

(Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec Johnson 16). Johnson, Johnson, Hulubec Johnson list the positive outcomes of collaborative/cooperative learning as: an increased effort to achieve, more positive interpersonal relationships, and healthier psychological well being, adjustment, and social competence (17).

According to Anuradha A. Gokhale's article titled "Collaborative Learning Enhances Critical Thinking," proponents of collaborative learning claim that the exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking. "According to Johnston and Johnston, there is persuasive evidence that cooperative teams achieve at higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work quietly as individuals. The shared learning gives students an opportunity to engage in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning, and thus become critical thinkers" (Gokhale 1). Gokhale examined the effectiveness of individual learning versus collaborative learning in enhancing critical thinking skills. After recording scores on an achievement test comprised of "critical thinking" items of 24 students learning individually and also the same 24 as 6 groups of 4 learning collaboratively. He found that students who participated in collaborative learning had performed significantly higher on the critical thinking test than students who studied individually (Gokhale 6).

Besides collaborative/cooperative group learning promoting critical thinking, there are even greater benefits. According to Ted Panitz's "44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning," these fall into four sub-categories: academic, social, psychological, and creating alternate assessment techniques. See appendices.

What are Literature Circles? Harvey Daniels describes literature circles as small, temporary discussion groups consisting of students who elect to read the same text (1). Literature circles generally involve 4 to 5 students who are actively engaged in cooperative learning. Learners choose a book to read based on interest. Alternative suggestions for literature circles include choosing a book on a similar topic but written on different levels of complexity or choosing a different selection by the same author. Journals can be used to record ideas during reading. Alternate assessments can be developed by students such as: theater presentation, creative dramatics, artistic endeavors, or making models or objects to clarify meanings of selected, relevant concepts read.

Why use Literature Circles in today's classrooms? Utilizing Literature Circles can promote collaborative/cooperative group learning and empower students to achieve higher standards. In Catherine Day's article titled, "Reading and Responding in Literature Circles," the 26-year veteran teacher speaks about her and her colleagues' implementation of literature circles, what they learned, and how literature circles have benefited their students. Jan Verney, one of Day's

colleagues says, “I firmly believe that the benefits of literature circles far outweigh the challenges. I have also found that literature circles, the associated roles and responsibilities, are always evolving to suit the interests and abilities of the group (10).

Donna Ross, another of Day’s colleagues, eloquently states the benefits of peer support while implementing literature circles: as “a great challenge of literacy circles is to relinquish control and to trust the students enough to allow them to choose and read *any* novel.” It is through giving students this opportunity that students’ ownership and enjoyment is maximized. One student in my class, Adam, had very limited sight-word vocabulary and minimal reading strategies. He had always longed to read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Dahl. No other novel was of interest to him,I discovered that the students in Adam’s group wanted to take turns reading chapters aloud to him. It was a process that resulted in mutual enjoyment and the development of close friendships. Here was a totally unexpected benefit. With access to students with a deeper understanding, Adam gained more than he would have done from reading a ‘matched’ text, and he experienced an absolute enjoyment of the reading experience. This has confirmed my belief in the need for all students to have access to a variety of novels of their choice” (12).

Ross also states, “Through literature circles, students’ abilities to clarify, crystallize and justify their thoughts and ideas has improved dramatically. Their ability to celebrate the text with culminating activities is also an area that has developed – one that connects the group’s experiences with the remainder of the class and helps to achieve closure” (11). Melissa Van Bael, another of Day’s colleagues recognizes literature circles as a strategy that promotes the enjoyment of reading – something that was noticeably lacking amongst many of her students – and that increased the level of critical thought, while broadening her students’ horizons (12).

Objectives:

- 1.) The students will work in flexible groups.
- 2.) The students will manage time effectively.
- 3.) The students will brainstorm and list different genres, authors, and subject matter ideas regarding teen literature.
- 4.) The students will utilize the latest technology and the internet to search for lists of teen literature by genre, author, and subject matter.
- 5.) The students will read at least four books from the same genre.
- 6.) The students will read at least four books by the same author.

- 7.) The students will read at least four books on the same subject matter.
- 8.) The students will discuss the various titles they have read with their literature circle group.
- 9.) The students will discuss the various titles they have read with the larger peer group outside of their own literature circle.
- 10.) The students will problem solve by making decisions regarding: the literature read, the time and work designation, and the ultimate presentation.
- 11.) The students will use various mediums to report on the books read.
- 12.) The students will design a web-page dedicated to teen book reviews.

Strategies:

Initially, through use of modeling, the teacher would motivate the students by sharing with them her own love of literature, perhaps by relating stories about her favorite books and times and places to read.

Through brainstorming, the students would be encouraged to share their own experiences with literature.

The teacher would establish the class as “a community of readers” as described in the rationale of this unit by working in collaborative groups.

The teacher would initiate a student-centered environment by initially encouraging students establish their own groups, encouraging students to manage group activities, and later by encouraging students to design their own assessment activities.

While reading, the teacher will model comprehension techniques such as, “Questioning the Author” where after reading to a certain point, students are encouraged to ask questions about what they have just read to facilitate group discussions.

The teacher would model reading response journal entries on an overhead projector to help students record pertinent information and track individual progress.

The teacher would design interactive bulletin boards to monitor individual and group progress and create to incentives and rewards.

The teacher would use computer technology and the World Wide Web to encourage research and learning.

The teacher would make available different multi-media resources for student design of assessment.

The teacher and students would encourage sharing of assessment by using a forum type atmosphere to present to peers.

The teacher would model interactive teaching by participating in the readings and assessment activities herself.

Classroom Activities:

Pre-Unit Activities (one or two class periods)

Activity #1

Students will be asked to complete a questionnaire/survey asking them to: list their favorite books, authors, and genres, share what issues cause them the most distress, and discuss what subjects and/or subject matter they like reading about most. The surveys will be tallied and shared. See Appendices.

Activity #2

The teacher will unveil a bulletin board such as: “Speed To Read” or “Strive For 25”, etc to motivate students to get started on the 25 Book Standard. The teacher can offer prizes after so many books are read and keep track of individual progress with student-made name tags.

Activity #3

The students will brainstorm and record different ways to report on books; trying to steer away from the traditional book summary. See Appendices.

Activity #4

The students will be given a copy of the 25 Book Standard Booklet issued by the Pittsburgh Public Schools which lists different genres, suggestions for book proofs/reports, and pages to record their reading progress. See Appendices.

September through November (genre study)

Activity #1

The students will brainstorm a list of different genres. Some examples of these would be: Non-Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Historical Fiction, Adventure, Fantasy/Science Fiction, Folklore, Horror, Mystery, Poetry, Plays, Romance, etc.... Next, the students would be broken up into manageable groups depending on how many are on the roster. Since an average class is 24, 4 groups of 6 is ideal. The students and the particular genre each student chooses would determine groups.

Activity #2

In the computer lab, each group will be responsible for searching the World Wide Web for 3 to 4 age-appropriate books (they would be encouraged to find as many books as possible so that students and teacher can pick books which are readily available) in their particular genre that each member of the group will read. For example, if they picked Mystery, they might come up with: *Martyn Pig* by Kevin Brooks, *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg, and *A Wrinkle In Time* by Madeleine L' Engle.

Activity #3

Now, the students will brainstorm different ways and timeframes to get their reading done. For example, they could read one book a month all together; or two students could read a book at the same time so that all three books are being read simultaneously and then the subgroups of two could switch after a month. Next, the groups would brainstorm different ways to assess and report on their books. For example, for one book, they could act out their favorite scene, for another book, they could paint illustrations, for another, they could rewrite the ending or write a sequel or continuation. They could divide up the work or they could all work on each project.

Activity #4

The students will read their chosen books. Allow appropriate classroom and out of classroom reading time. Make sure the students are aware of time expectations. Encourage reading strategies such as: Questioning the Author, Making Predictions, etc....

Activity #5

The students will work within their group to complete the books reports/proofs/assessments of their choosing.

Activity #6

The individual student groups will present their assessments to the whole class on stage at the “Book Café”

December through February (author study)

Activity #1

The students will brainstorm a list of different authors. Next, the students would be broken up into manageable groups depending on how many are on the roster. Since an average class is 24, 4 groups of 6 is ideal. The students and the particular author each student chooses would determine groups.

Activity #2

In the computer lab, each group will be responsible for searching the World Wide Web for 3 to 4 age-appropriate books (they would be encouraged to find as many books as possible so that students and teacher can pick books which are readily available) by their particular author that each member of the group will read. For example, one group might choose the author; Lois Duncan and read: *Summer of Fear*, *Killing Mr. Griffin*, and *I Know What You Did Last Summer*. Another group might choose Lois Lowry and read *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue*, and *The Messenger*. Another might choose Gary Paulson and read: *Hatchet*, *Brian’s Winter*, and *The River*.

Activity #3

Now, the students will brainstorm different ways and timeframes to get their reading done. For example, they could read one book a month all together; or two students could read a book at the same time so that all three books are being read simultaneously and then the subgroups of two could switch after a month. Next, the groups would brainstorm different ways to assess and report on their books. The students might choose to produce a mock interview with an author, create a painting and biography of an author, and or write a letter to another author. Again, the students would decide what they would be producing and how they would be designating their time and the work. They could divide up the work or they could all work on each project.

Activity #4

The students will read their chosen books. Allow appropriate classroom and out of classroom reading time. Make sure the students are aware of time expectations. Encourage reading strategies such as: Questioning the Author, Making Predictions, etc....

Activity #5

The students will work within their group to complete the books reports/proofs/assessments of their choosing.

Activity #6

The individual student groups will present their assessments to the whole class on stage at the “Book Café”

March through May

Activity #1

The students will focus on brainstorming a list of subjects that are pertinent to their lives as teens/kids. Some examples of these could be: Divorce, Death, Grief, Love, Relationships, Bullying, Disabilities, Illnesses, etc.... Again, the students would decide what they would be producing and how they would designate their time and the work. Next, the students would be broken up into manageable groups depending on how many are on the roster. Since an average class is 24, 4 groups of 6 is ideal. The students and the particular subject each student chooses would determine groups.

Activity #2

In the computer lab, each group will be responsible for searching the World Wide Web for 3 to 4 age-appropriate books (they would be encouraged to find as many books as possible so that students and teacher can pick books which are readily available) on their particular subject matter that each member of the group will read. One group of students might choose Disabilities/Illnesses and read; *Kissing Doorknobs* (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) by: Terry Hesser, *My Sister's Keeper* (Bone-Marrow disease) by: Jodi Picoult, and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Autism) by Mark Haddon.

Activity #3

Now, the students will brainstorm different ways and timeframes to get their reading done. For example, they could read one book a month all together; or two students could read a book at the same time so that all three books are being read simultaneously and then the subgroups of two could switch after a month. Next, the groups would brainstorm different ways to assess and report on their books. The students might choose to write a song which captures the essence of the book/subject matter, they could make a statistical chart representing how people are affected by the subject, or they could write a persuasive speech about the particular subject. Again, the students would decide what they would be producing and how they would be designating their time and the work. They could divide up the work or they could all work on each project.

Activity #4

The students will read their chosen books. Allow appropriate classroom and out of classroom reading time. Make sure the students are aware of time expectations. Encourage reading strategies such as: Questioning the Author, Making Predictions, etc....

Activity #5

The students will work within their group to complete the books reports/proofs/assessments of their choosing.

Activity #6

The individual student groups will present their assessments to the whole class on stage at the "Book Café."

Annotated Bibliography/Resources:

Articles:

Davis, Barbara Gross, "Tools for Teaching: Collaborative Learning: Group Work and Study Teams." Accessed seventeen July 2005. From the hard copy book, *Tools for Teaching*, by Barbara Gross Davis. San Fransisco, 1993. <http://teaching.berkly.edu/bgd/collaberative.html>.

Day, Catherine, "Reading and Responding in Literature Circles", Primary English Teaching Association, Marrickville, Australia, 2003

Gokhale., Anuradha A., "Collaborative Learning Enhances Critical Thinking", *Journal of Technology Education* Volume 7, Number 1 Fall 1995.

Panitz, Ted, "44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning." Accessed 14 July 2005. <http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/44.html>.

Weber, Ellen, "Cooperative and Coaborative Learning (Concept to Classroom)." Accessed 14 July 2005. <http://thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/coopcollab/>.

Books:

Daniels, H., *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-centered Classroom*, Stenhouse Publishers, Portland, MN, 1994.

A very comprehensive book on how to effectively implement literature circles in today's classrooms.

Gangi, Jane M., *Encountering Children's Literature*, Boston, Pearson Education Inc., 2004.

A comprehensive guide/lists and reviews of children's literature.

Johnson, David W., Roger T. Johnson, and Edythe Johnson Holubec, *THE NEW CIRCLES OF LEARNING COOPERATION IN THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL*, Alexandria, The Association for the Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994.

A book with great arguments and tips for creating a child-centered classroom.

Vygotsky, L.S., *Mind in Society*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1978.

The father of social learning. A must read!

Children's Books (Just a few listed in order as I mentioned in this unit):

Brooks, Kevin, *Martyn Pig*, The Chicken House, PUSH, an imprint of Scholastic, UK, 2002.

Konigsburg, E.L., *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., NY, NY, 1967.

L'Engle, Madeline, *A Wrinkle In Time*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., NY, NY, 1962.

Duncan, Lois, *Summer of Fear*, Random House Children's Books, NY, NY, 1976.

Duncan, Lois, *Killing Mr. Griffin*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., NY, NY, 1978.

Duncan, Lois, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, Random House Children's Books, NY, NY, 1976.

Lowry, Lois, *The Giver*, Houghton Mifflin Company, NY, NY, 1993.

Lowry, Lois, *Gathering Blue*, Houghton Mifflin Company, NY, NY, 2000.

Lowry, Lois, *The Messenger*, Houghton Mifflin Company, NY, NY, 2004.

Paulson, Gary, *Hatchet*, Simon and Schuster, NY, NY, 1987.

Paulson, Gary, *Brian's Winter*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., NY, NY, 1996.

Paulson, Gary, *The River*, Random House Children's Books, NY, NY, 1991.

Hesser, Terry, *Kissing Doorknobs*, Delacorte Press, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., NY, NY, 1998.

Picoult, Jodi, *My Sister's Keeper*, Atria Books, NY, NY, 2004.

Haddan, Mark, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Doubleday, NY, NY, 2005.

World Wide Web:

Web sites to explore teen literature:

ALA American Library Association

<http://www.ala.org/yalsatemplate.cfm?Section=yalsa>

Teenreads.com

<http://www.teenreads.com>

Authors4teens.com

http://www.authors4teens.com/index.asp?ws=WS_A4T&as=index.asp&token=65BBC961DAA5F5ECD81542DCBB817260

Jubileebooks.com.uk

http://www.jubileebooks.co.uk/jubilee/magazine/authors/mark_haddon/haddon_profile.asp

Houghton Mifflin Reading

<http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hmr/mtai/konigsburg.html>

Random House, Inc.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780440413141&view=excerpt>

Web sites to explore teen authors:

Official Lois Duncan Website

<http://loisduncan.arquettes.com/>

Official Madeleine L'Engle Website

<http://www.madeleinelengle.com/>

Official Lois Lowry Website

<http://www.loislowry.com/>

Official Gary Paulson Website

<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/>

Official Jodi Picoult Website

<http://www.jodipicoult.com/>

Web sites to explore creating web sites/pages:

<http://www.webgenies.co.uk/>

<http://www.webmonkey.com/kids/>

Two very kid and teacher friendly web sites to teach kids how to create their own web page/site.

<http://www.quickonthenet.com/>

A website with information to create a free web page. Geared more towards adults.

<http://www.ipl.org/div/kidspace/kidsweb/>

<http://www.surfnetkids.com/webpage.htm>

Two websites which explain HTML (the language of the web). Very teacher and kid friendly. You can download classroom handouts.

Standards:

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes, and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and given spoken directions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure, and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that is designed to persuade, inform, or describe.

9. All students converse, at a minimum level of “intermediate low,” as defined in the oral proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in at least one language other than English, including the native language if other than English, under sec. 5.215 (c) (relating to languages).
10. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

Citizenship

8. All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.
11. All students demonstrate the ability to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways including but not limited to peer mediation, anger management, interpersonal skills, and problem solving.

Appendices:

Group roles:

- Facilitator: responsible for recording and following instructions or designating in the group, for assuring that the group is on task, and for communicating with the instructor.
- Recorder: responsible for writing answers to questions, taking notes, etc.
- Timekeeper: responsible for keeping track of the time allocated for activities.
- Materials Manager: responsible for obtaining and keeping track of books and materials used by the group.
- Harmonizer: responsible for the group process, making sure, for example, that no one dominates the discussion and that everyone is participating.
- Reporter: responsible for organizing group presentations and presenting results of activities to the class.

Reading Survey (sample)

Name_____ Grade_____ HR_____ Date_____

List reasons you find reading enjoyable:

List reasons you find reading difficult:

List the books you read last year:

List the books you have read that are most memorable:

Of these, which were your favorites and why:

List your favorite authors:

List the reasons why you think you like these authors:

List your favorite reading genres:

List the subjects you enjoy reading about:

List of Suggested Genres:

Recommended Literature: K-12 Literary Genres

books

authors

The following list defines each of the genres included in *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*.

All Fiction

Drama

Stories composed in verse or prose, usually for theatrical performance, where conflicts and emotion are expressed through dialogue and action.

Fable

Narration demonstrating a useful truth, especially in which animals speak as humans; legendary, supernatural tale.

Fairy Tale

Story about fairies or other magical creatures, usually for children.

Fantasy

Fiction with strange or other worldly settings or characters; fiction which invites suspension of

reality.

Fiction

Narrative literary works whose content is produced by the imagination and is not necessarily based on fact.

Fiction in Verse

Full-length novels with plot, subplot(s), theme(s), major and minor characters, in which the narrative is presented in (usually blank) verse form.

Folklore

The songs, stories, myths, and proverbs of a people or "folk" as handed down by word of mouth.

Historical Fiction

Story with fictional characters and events in a historical setting.

Horror

Fiction in which events evoke a feeling of dread in both the characters and the reader.

Humor

Fiction full of fun, fancy, and excitement, meant to entertain; but

can be
contained in all
genres.

Legend

Story,
sometimes of a
national or folk
hero, which has
a basis in fact
but also
includes
imaginative
material.

Mystery

Fiction dealing
with the solution
of a crime or the
unraveling of
secrets.

Mythology

Legend or
traditional
narrative, often
based in part on
historical
events, that
reveals human
behavior and
natural
phenomena by
its symbolism;
often pertaining
to the actions of
the gods.

Poetry

Verse and
rhythmic writing
with imagery
that creates
emotional
responses.

Realistic Fiction

Story that can
actually happen
and is true to
life.

Science Fiction

Story based on
impact of
actual,

imagined, or potential science, usually set in the future or on other planets.

Short Story

Fiction of such brevity that it supports no subplots.

Tall Tale

Humorous story with blatant exaggerations, swaggering heroes who do the impossible with nonchalance.

All Nonfiction

Biography/Autobiography

Narrative of a person's life, a true story about a real person.

Essay

A short literary composition that reflects the author's outlook or point.

Narrative Nonfiction

Factual information presented in a format which tells a story.

Nonfiction

Informational text dealing with an actual, real-life subject.

Speech

Public address or discourse.

List of Suggested Subject Matter: (These are just a few my students came up with):

Disabilities
Bullying
Apartheid
Crime
Gun Safety
Death/Grief
War
Foster Care/Adoption
Divorce
Civil rights
Cultures
Prejudice
Abortion
Love

List of Suggested Teen Authors:

A

[Adler, Stephen J.](#)
[Aidinoff, Elsie V.](#)
[Almond, David](#)
[Alphin, Elaine Marie](#)
[Anderson, Laurie Halse](#)
[Andrews, Mary Kay](#)
[Aronson, Marc](#)
[Ashley, Bernard](#)
[Atwater-Rhodes, Amelia](#)
[Auel, Jean M.](#)

B

[Bauer, Cat](#)
[Bauer, Joan](#)
[Bauer, Marion Dane](#)
[Bechard, Margaret](#)
[Bennett, Cherie](#)

[Bird, Isobel](#)
[Black, Holly](#)
[Block, Francesca Lia](#)
[Blume, Judy](#)
[Bradbury, Ray](#)
[Brandt, Jennifur](#)
[Brashares, Ann](#)
[Bray, Libba](#)
[Brooks, Bruce](#)
[Brooks, Kevin](#)
[Bronte, Emily](#)
[Buck, Pearl S.](#)

C

[Cabot, Meg](#)
[Capote, Truman](#)
[Carbone, Elisa](#)
[Card, Orson Scott](#)
[Carlson, Ron](#)
[Cart, Michael](#)
[Cather, Willa](#)
[Chabon, Michael](#)
[Chopin, Kate](#)
[Clarke, Kathryn Ann](#)
[Clark, Mary Higgins](#)
[Cohn, Rachel](#)
[Coman, Carolyn](#)
[Cooney, Caroline B.](#)
[Cormier, Robert](#)
[Crew, Linda](#)
[Crutcher, Chris](#)

D

[Danziger, Paula](#)
[de la Cruz, Melissa](#)
[Deaver, Jeffery](#)
[Dessen, Sarah](#)
[DiCamillo, Kate](#)
[Donnelly, Jennifer](#)
[Dornstein, Ken](#)
[Douglas, Lola](#)
[Downing, Wick](#)

[Duncan, Lois](#)

E

[Efaw, Amy](#)

[Eliot, Eve](#)

[Elliot, Stephen](#)

[Ellison, Brooke and Jean](#)

F

[Fairstein, Linda](#)

[Farmer, Nancy](#)

[Faulkner, William](#)

[Fleischman, Paul](#)

[Flinn, Alex](#)

[Flock, Elizabeth](#)

[Franco, Betsy](#)

[Fraustino, Lisa Rowe](#)

[Fredericks, Mariah](#)

[Friend, Natasha](#)

G

[Gaiman, Neil](#)

[Garden, Nancy](#)

[George, Jean Craighead](#)

[Gilbert, Barbara Snow](#)

[Gilbert, Elizabeth](#)

[Gladstone, Jim](#)

[Goodman, Allegra](#)

[Gottesfeld, Jeff](#)

[Graham, Rosemary](#)

[Grisham, John](#)

[Gruber, Michael](#)

[Grunwald, Lisa](#)

H

[Haddix, Margaret Peterson](#)

[Hannah, Kristin](#)

[Harris, Joanne](#)

[Harrison, Lisi](#)

[Hartinger, Brent](#)

[Hawk, Tony](#)
[Hearn, Julie](#)
[Hemingway, Ernest](#)
[Hiaasen, Carl](#)
[Holm, Jennifer L.](#)
[Hopkins, Cathy](#)
[Horowitz, Anthony](#)
[Howe, James](#)
[Howe, Norma](#)
[Hull, Jonathan](#)
[Hurston, Zora Neale](#)

I

[Irving, John](#)

J

[Jinks, Catherine](#)
[Johnson, Maureen](#)
[Jordan, Sherryl](#)
[Jukes, Mavis](#)

K

[Kadohata, Cynthia](#)
[Kelby, N. M.](#)
[Kerouac, Jack](#)
[Kerr, M.E.](#)
[Khoury, Raymond](#)
[King, Stephen](#)
[Kingsolver, Barbara](#)
[Kinsella, Sophie](#)
[Kogler, Jennifer Anne](#)
[Kohler, Sheila](#)
[Koontz, Dean](#)
[Kurson, Robert](#)

L

[Lamb, Wally](#)
[Lawrence, Iain](#)
[Lee, Harper](#)
[Le Guin, Ursula](#)
[L'Engle, Madeleine](#)
[Les Becquets, Diane](#)
[Levithan, David](#)
[Lion, Melissa](#)
[Lisle, Janet Taylor](#)
[Lowry, Lois](#)
[Lubar, David](#)
[Luna, Louisa](#)
[Lupica, Mike](#)
[Lynch, Chris](#)
[Lynch, Jim](#)

M

[Mace, Nancy](#)
[Mackler, Carolyn](#)
[Mahy, Margaret](#)
[Manning, Sarra](#)
[Many, Paul](#)
[Marchetta, Melina](#)
[Martel, Yann](#)
[Martin, Charles](#)
[Mass, Wendy](#)
[Maynard, Joyce](#)
[Mazer, Norma Fox](#)
[McCaughrean, Geraldine](#)
[McCourt, Frank](#)
[McCullough, David](#)
[McDaniel, Lurlene](#)
[McDonald, Joyce](#)
[McNamee, Graham](#)
[Mechling, Lauren](#)
[Metzger, Lois](#)
[Mickle, Shelley Fraser](#)
[Miller, Kirsten](#)
[Mitchard, Jacquelyn](#)
[Mitchell, Margaret](#)
[Mlynowski, Sarah](#)
[Montgomery, Sy](#)
[Morgan, Nicola](#)
[Moriarty, Jaclyn](#)
[Morton-Shaw, Christine](#)

[Moser, Laura](#)
[Mosley, Walter](#)
[Moynahan, Molly](#)
[Murdock, Catherine Gilbert](#)
[Murphy, Rita](#)
[Myers, Walter Dean](#)

N

[Nam, Vickie](#)
[Napoli, Donna Jo](#)
[Nelson, Blake](#)
[Nelson, R. A.](#)
[Nix, Garth](#)
[Nixon, Joan Lowery](#)

O

[Oates, Joyce Carol](#)
[Osa, Nancy](#)

P-Q

[Paolini, Christopher](#)
[Patchett, Ann](#)
[Patterson, James](#)
[Paulsen, Gary](#)
[Pearson, Mary E.](#)
[Pearson, Ridley](#)
[Pedersen, Laura](#)
[Peters, Julie Anne](#)
[Picoult, Jodi](#)
[Pierce, Tamora](#)
[Pratchett, Terry](#)
[Provoost, Anne](#)
[Pullman, Philip](#)

R

[Rabb, M. E.](#)
[Reeve, Philip](#)
[Reilly, Matthew](#)
[Rennison, Louise](#)
[Rinaldi, Ann](#)

[Ryan, Sara](#)

S

[Sachar, Louis](#)

[Sanchez, Alex](#)

[Scieszka, Jon](#)

[Scott, Kieran](#)

[Scottoline, Lisa](#)

[Sebold, Alice](#)

[Sittenfeld, Curtis](#)

[Smiley, Jane](#)

[Sones, Sonya](#)

[Sparks, Nicholas](#)

[Steinbeck, John](#)

[Stine, Catherine](#)

[Stine, R.L.](#)

[Strause, Brian](#)

[Stroud, Jonathan](#)

[Super Clea and Keva Marie](#)

[Sussman, Ellen](#)

T

[Taylor, G. P.](#)

[Trope, Zoe](#)

[Trueman, Terry](#)

[Tucker, Lisa](#)

[Turner, Ann](#)

U-V-W-X-Y-Z

[Umrigar, Thrity](#)

[Walker, Rebecca](#)

[Watt, Alan](#)

[Weeks, Sarah](#)

[Westerfeld, Scott](#)

[White, Kate](#)

[Whitney, Kim Ablon](#)

[Williams, Lori Aurelia](#)

[Wittlinger, Ellen](#)

[Woodson, Jacqueline](#)

[Vail, Rachel](#)

[VanLiere, Donna](#)
[Vizzini, Ned](#)
[von Ziegesar, Cecily](#)

[Yancey, Rick](#)

[Zevin, Gabrielle](#)
[Zusak, Markus](#)

List of Suggested Book Reports/Proofs and Activities:

Descriptive writing. (Use this activity to supplement a class lesson in descriptive prose writing.) Have each student read aloud the best example of descriptive prose found in the book he or she is currently reading. The student should write a paragraph explaining why the excerpt is a particularly good example of descriptive prose. The paragraph might include some of the adjectives the author used to set the scene.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down! Each student writes a review of the book he or she just finished reading -- in the style of a movie review. The student concludes by awarding a thumbs up or thumbs down on the book. This activity could be even more fun if two students read the same book. They could plan a lively interaction, a la Ebert and Roeper, about the book, which could be videotaped for all to see!

Character Trait Diagram. Each student creates a Venn diagram to illustrate similarities and differences in the traits of two of the main characters in a book just completed. (A student might elect to create a Venn diagram showing similarities and differences between the book's main character and the student!)

Surfing the Net. Where did the story take place? When did it take place? Each student surfs the Net to find five Internet sites that others might check out before they read the book so they will know more about the book's setting or time period.

Write a Letter to the Author. After reading a book, each student shares reactions to the book in a letter written to its author. If a student writes to an author who is still alive, you might actually mail the letter.

Sell It! Each student pretends to be a publicist for the book that's just been read. The student writes and then delivers a 60-second speech that will persuade other students that they should read the book. Writing and speaking persuasively will be especially difficult if the student didn't like the book. If that's the case, the student can share that fact *after* completing the speech.

Create a Card Catalog. After reading a book, a student completes an index card with information about the book. The front of the card includes details such as title, author, and date published along with a two- to three-sentence synopsis of the book. On the back of the card, the student writes a paragraph critiquing the book. Students might even rate the book using a teacher-created five-star rating system. Example: A five-star book is "highly recommended; a book you can't put down." Completed cards are kept in a card file near the classroom bookshelf or in the school library.

Interview a Character. Each student composes six to eight questions to ask a main character in a book just completed. The student also writes the character's response to each question. The questions and answers should provide information that shows the student read the book without giving away the most significant details.

Ten Facts. Each student creates a "Ten Facts About [book title]" sheet that lists ten facts he or she learned from reading the book. The facts, written in complete sentences, must include details the student didn't know before reading the book.

Script It! Each student writes a movie script for a favorite scene in a book just read. At the top of the script, the student can assign real-life TV or movie stars to play each role. The student might also work with classmates to perform the favorite scene.

Concentration. Each student will need 30 index cards to create a Concentration-style game related to a book just finished. The student chooses 14 things, characters, or events that played a part in the book and creates two cards that have identical pictures of each of those things. The two remaining cards are marked Wild Card! Then the student turns all 30 cards facedown and mixes them up. Each student can choose a partner with whom to play according to the rules of Concentration.

What Did You Learn? Each student writes a summary of what he or she learned from a book just completed. The summary might include factual information, something learned about people in general, or something the student learned about himself or herself.

Glossary and Word Search. Each student creates a glossary of ten or more words that are specific to a book's tone, setting, or characters. The student defines each word and writes a sentence from the book that includes that word. Then the student creates a word search puzzle that includes the glossary words. Students can exchange their glossaries and word searches with others in the class.

In the News! Each student creates the front page of a newspaper that tells about events and characters in a book just read. The newspaper page might include weather reports, an editorial or editorial cartoon, ads, etc. The title of the newspaper should be something appropriate to the book.

Create a Comic Book. Each student can turn a book, or part of it, into a comic book, complete with comic-style illustrations and dialogue bubbles.

Characters Come to Life! Each student creates life-size "portraits" of one of the characters from a book just read. The portrait should include a written piece that tells about the character. The piece might also include information about events, traits, or conflicts in the book that involve that character. Hang the students' portraits in a class gallery.

Prove It in Five Minutes! Each student gives a 150-second (2½-minute) oral presentation in which he or she shares information about a book's plot and characters. The student closes the presentation by offering an opinion and recommendation about the book. Then students in the audience have 150 seconds to question the presenter about the book. If the presenter is able to prove in five minutes that he or she read the book, the student is excused from filing a written report about it.

Picture Books. After reading a book, each student creates a picture book version of the story that would appeal to younger students. The students can then share the picture books with a group of young students.

Resume Writing. As a tie-in to your career education program, challenge each student to create a resume for a book character. The student should include in the resume a statement of the applicant's goals and a detailed account of his or her experience and outside interests.

Character Trait Chart. Each student creates a chart with three columns. Each column is headed with the name of one of the book's characters. As the student reads the book, he or she can keep a record of the traits each character possesses and include an incident that supports each trait.

Theme Report. Challenge each student to select a concept or a thing from the book just finished and to use library or Internet resources to explore it further. The student then writes a two-page report that shares information about the topic.

Setting. To learn more about the setting of a book, each student writes a one-page report explaining how that setting was important to the story.

"Dear Diary." Invite each student to create a diary or journal and write at least five entries that might have been written by a character in a book just read. The entries should share details about the story that will prove the student read the book.