

Literacy Circles



Aim: to help students to develop their reading and communication skills

*Students need time to **develop their reading skills** and this is the **responsibility of all staff**, not just the English department. This activity requires **students to read some text** and then to complete **activities** based on it. The aim is to get students to read and engage with the text, so that they develop their ability to **'read for understanding'**. We have chosen to base this task around a student newspaper so that the form tutor has a ready prepared resource to use and the students improve their knowledge of current affairs.*

The first time you do this activity, it will take a long time and the students need to be introduced to it carefully so that it becomes routine. As such, you will be asked to complete it for the first time in a tutorial lesson. From then on, you should use a morning registration of your choice to complete the activity. Please do this a minimum of three times each half term.

Method:

1. **Divide students into literacy circles** (ideally five in a group) based on their ability (if you are unsure of your students' ability levels, you could base your groups on the reading ages from primary school which can be found on the tutor group lists in the SEN folder).
2. **Give each group copies of 'First News'** and ask them to focus on a particular article. You can either choose the article for the class or you can let them pick an article of their own choice.
3. **Give each student a role card and ask them to complete the task** (low ability cards are available- these are green whereas the others are blue). If you need more of a particular set, please ask the office to photocopy you an extra one.
4. **Groups then discuss the article** as each person gives feedback to the group on the task they have completed.
5. **Collect in the resources** and keep them in the box until next time.
6. **Every two weeks, please send your box up to the library** where the librarian will replace your newspapers with more recent copies and then send the box back to you.

Helpful advice

Based on the trial of this activity with three year 7 forms and discussion with the focus group, here are some suggestions that you may find useful.

- Establish a routine for this activity, for example by keeping the literacy box in the same place, encouraging one member of the group to be responsible for collecting the cards and newspapers for their group as well as asking someone else to be responsible for putting it all away again at the end. Having an ordered routine which the pupils are used to will help you to maximise the time available to you in registration and should help you get the most out of the activity.
- It may be necessary to just remind students about how to work well in groups before you begin, for example by listening to each and co-operating with other group members etc.
- You may find it helpful to use two students from years 10-13 to help you monitor this activity. They could even be involved with paired reading with the students if you felt that were useful. We will ask students to volunteer to help with this and then you will be told who is available to help support the students in your form.
- Some very able students may wish to bring in their own text rather than read the newspaper and so set up a group a little like a book club, but where they still complete the tasks on a particular passage of their choice. This is fine (so long as you check the text is suitable) but they should be told that it is their responsibility to bring the text and organise which section they are using.
- At first, it may be wise to appoint the two strongest pupils in each group as the summariser and the discussion director. As the class get used to the activity, feel free to allow the pupils to take on different roles within their groups each time they do the activity. In doing so, the students will be practising the different skills.
- In the trial, some students felt they wanted time for some whole class discussion. This could be incorporated into the activity if you felt it would work with your group. There could be a whole class summary discussion (if they have all read the same article) or one person from each group could feed back to the whole class if each group has covered a different article.
- If you find that you don't have enough pupils to always have groups of five the easiest roles to leave out are probably the connector and / or the wordsmith.
- Reward excellent effort with merits.