

Lives & Landscapes



*Exploring Agriculture in Young Adult
Novels through Literature Circles*

Illinois
AGRICULTURE
in the ClassroomSM



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What are Lit Circles?

Literature circles are engaging, student-centered, effective groups that allows students to explore texts of their choice, and to reinforce comprehension, analysis, and evaluation of the text with peers.

<u>Engaging</u>	<u>Student-Centered</u>	<u>Effective</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Books are chosen by the students from a text set• Groups are designed around book interest• A variety of assessment options are offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students set their own pace and deadlines• Groups hold their own members accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students challenge one another to think critically about the text• An outlet to apply reading and writing practices



What to Read?

For literature circles to be properly engaging, the technique demands that students are given a choice in the book that they read. However, as the instructor, there is a significant amount of sway over what the students read.

1. Know the books, and offer books that you feel will meet the needs of your students.
2. Offer variety in the texts available to the students (appeals to boys or girls, challenging, easy, different genres...)
3. Spend time giving a book talk and providing a short synopsis of each book. Allow the students to physically look through the books as this is done.
4. Explore the context of the novels before having the students select. For example, provide the students with Ag Mags that relate to each novel.
5. Have every student write down his or her top three selections, then design groups based on the novels. Take into account the needs of your students when finalizing groups. Think about students who do and do not work well together. Often, struggling readers will work well with accelerated readers.



Lives and Landscapes—A Theme

One important aspect of literature circles is the idea that the book selections all fall within a theme. This allows for a unity in the classroom. The theme creates connections between the texts and allows for discussion with the entire class, regardless of the fact that groups are reading different novels.

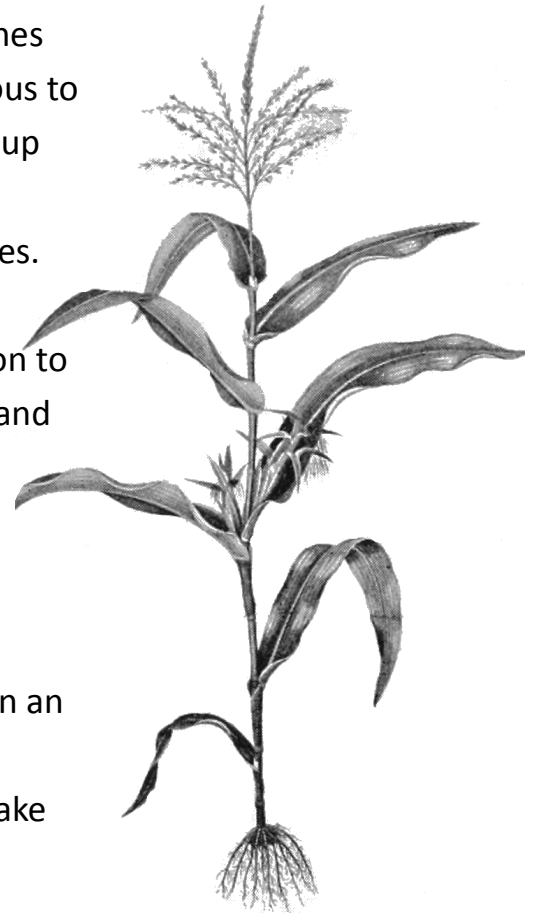
The idea of the “Lives and Landscapes” theme is to explore books which offer diverse perspectives on how the land in which the characters live, whether urban or rural, can effect a character’s lifestyle, values and identity. There are many young adult novels that exemplify this theme. Find some recommendations on the next pages as well as on our website under “Digging Deeper in Young Adult Literature,” at agintheclassroom.org



Agriculture

Agriculture is all around us, from the food we eat, to the clothes we wear. Agriculture’s impact on daily life may be more obvious to some students than others. Similarly, some readers who pick up young adult novels can make a connection to characters by relating to many of the emotional obstacles the character faces. When reading YA novels that relate to agriculture, there are opportunities for readers to make an even stronger connection to the text. By delving into the agricultural aspects of the novel and providing extra background, a novel can become even more engaging.

Take some time to explore how agriculture may impact the characters of a novel before, during, and after the Literature Circles project. Whether it be through trading commodities on an imaginary futures market, growing a classroom garden, or researching where lunch came from, the extra context will make for a more immersive reading experience with an agriculture related novel. Find activity ideas at agintheclassroom.org.



Lives and Landscapes Books

The following is a list of Young Adult novels. Each of these novels fit well into the Lives and Landscapes collection. They represent a broad variety of reading levels, interests, and locales. This list includes just a few of the many great YA novels available. Find more novels at agintheclassroom.org.

My Louisiana Sky

Author: Kimberly Willis Holt

ISBN-13: 9780312660956

Approximate Reading Level: Grades 4-7



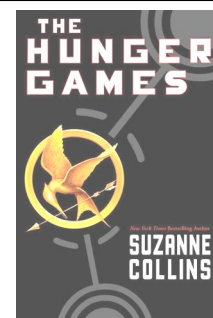
Set in 1950's rural Louisiana, this story follows the trials and tribulations of 12 year old Tiger as she is forced to make decisions beyond her years regarding her "slow" parents after the death of her Grandmother.

The Hunger Games

Author: Suzanne Collins

ISBN-13: 9780439023528

Approximate Reading Level: Grades 5-9



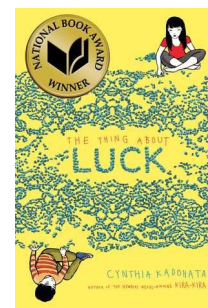
This dystopian novel for young adults features a strong heroine in a fight for survival, in a world where food, and the control of food, is power.

The Thing About Luck

Author: Cynthia Kadohata

ISBN-13: 978-1442474659

Approximate Reading Level: Grades 5-9



Nothing is going right for Summer. Despite a growing crush, a weird younger brother, demanding grandparents, and being dragged across the Midwest for harvesting season, Summer knows its up to her to fix things.

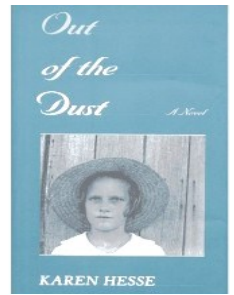
Lives and Landscapes Books

Out of the Dust

Author: Karen Hesse

ISBN-13: 9780590371254

Approximate Reading Level: Grades 5-9



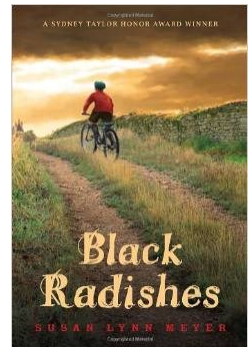
14 year old Billy Jo tells the story of her family struggling to get by in the dust bowl of the 1930s. A unique read as Billy Jo narrates through a collection of free-verse poems.

Black Radishes

Author: Susan Lynn Meyer

ISBN-13: 978-0375858222

Approximate Reading Level: Grades 4-8



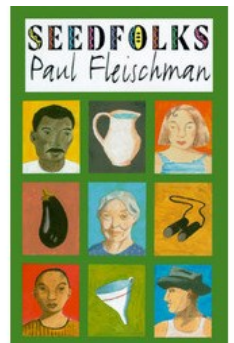
Gustave loves his home and living near his friends in the city, Paris, France. So he isn't too happy when he has to move to the country, even if the city is no longer safe for Jews. When he meets a member of the French resistance, he finds his chance to save his friends back in Paris from the Nazi regime.

Seedfolks

Author: Paul Fleischman

ISBN-13: 978-0590511902

Approximate Reading Level: Grades 5-7




It's hard to be friendly when you live in a hot, crowded, urban neighborhood. But when a young girl starts a garden in an empty lot it sets a chain of events into motion that brings the community together, one person at time.

Calendar

When the groups are put in place, the first task each group should complete together is to create a calendar. Provide a master calendar for students to work from. The master calendar should include:

- Set dates:
 - Beginning and ending dates of projects
 - No school days
 - Lit circle days (days dedicated to lit circles)
 - Non-Lit circle days (groups will not be able to meet)
 - Final deadlines
- Recommendation dates
 - Reading progress (“Books should be about half-way done”)
 - Project Suggestions (Final project should be decided)




Recommend using
different colored
highlighters to mark
each date!

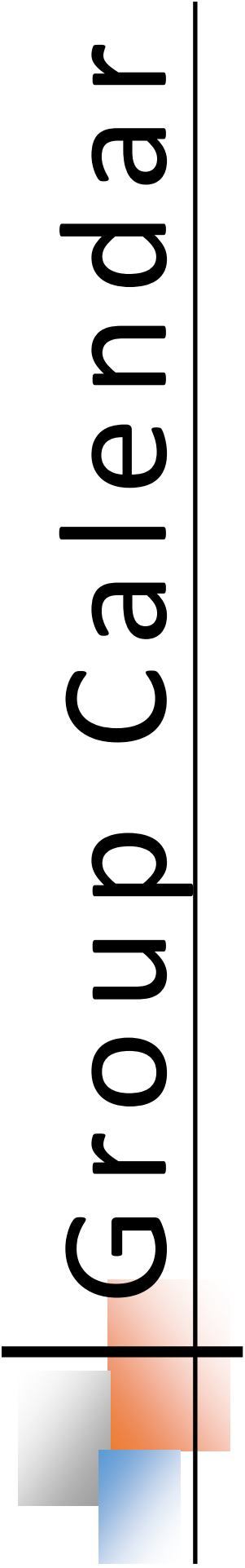
Group Calendars

Give the students the ability to set their own goals and deadlines. In one class period they should be able to fill in a calendar with everything provided in the master calendar, as well as reasonable, agreed-upon deadlines for completing the requirements of the Lit Circles project.

- Reading benchmarks (read to pg#_)
- Group discussions
- In-class reading days
- Complete discussion questions
- Complete vocabulary
- Final project worktime



Don't forget to
have them fill out
an extra calendar
for you!



Group Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat



Reading with Purpose

A great way to help your students to recognize important parts of a text is to practice reading with a trail of breadcrumbs. Have your students leave a color-coded, post-it note breadcrumb whenever they read a specific type of detail.

Common Core Standards: ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1; RL.8.2; RL.8.3; RL.8.4; RL.8.6

Place the corresponding color of sticky note in your book whenever you see...

Green—Setting

- Explicit detail about the location or time
- Implicit detail
- Detail about what is going on in the world beyond the characters' lives
- Detail about the setting's effect on the characters' lives

Blue—Character

- A new character is introduced
- A character's physical feature is described for the first time
- A detail about the character's background that might affect the way he or she thinks, acts, or feels
- Insight into the character's thoughts about the place he or she lives

Red—Reader Reaction

- Surprise: you were just not expecting that to happen!
- Prediction: You think you know what is coming next.
- Connection: You have been there, done that, thought that, or felt that. You have seen, smelled, heard, or tasted that.
- Agree/Disagree: You believe the thoughts or actions of the characters are right or wrong.

Yellow—Commentary

- You have something to say about this and want to bring it up in group discussion.
- You want to know what other readers in your group think about this.

Reader Response

Reader responses are completed by and assessed for individual students, though they supplement group discussions as well.

Reader responses show that a student comprehends the text and asks the student to then analyze and evaluate the text. Listed below are a few reader response options. To cover a broad range of reading skills, it would be helpful to place maximum or minimum limits on the number of times each student can complete each activity. *It may also be helpful to have students complete these tasks in a journal that can be checked, or collected for assessment later.*

Common Core Standards: ELA-Literacy.W.8.1; W.8.2; W.8.4; W.8.9; W.8.10

Diary Entry:

The student will write a diary entry from the perspective of a minor character about the events that just took place in the novel.

Letter of Advice:

The student will write a letter advising one of the characters on a course of action to take, and why. This letter can be from the student (with advice drawn from real world experiences) or from another character in the novel (based on the experiences that character faced).

Illustration:

The student will draw and color a character, event or setting of the story, in detail. In a short paragraph, the student should also identify some of the specific details of the drawing.

Reaction:

The student will explain his or her reaction to this section of the story. Were they surprised? Did he or she have any connection to the character or the world around the character? What does he or she think will happen next? How did this section make him or her feel, and why?





Group Discussions

The group discussion is key to a productive and effective literature circles project. Small group book discussions enrich reading because each student will take away different meanings, connections or reactions from a novel, even when reading the same passages. As each student has different values, personal experiences and backgrounds, so too will they find differences in the books they read. Group discussions should utilize these differences to help every student in a group gain a more complete understanding of a novel, its theme, and its context.

Facilitating Group Discussions

Common Core Standards: ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1; SL.8.3; SL.8.4.; SL.8.6; L.8.3

Though the goal is for the group discussions to be student-led, speaking clearly about opinions and analysis is a skill that needs to be developed over time. To help students with this skill, try some of these techniques:

Discussion goal: Set a goal for your groups to meet within each discussion; e.g. get to know the main character, share your opinion about the book so far, decide on the most important choice made by a character...etc.

Roles: Provide roles for each member of the group. Make sure they know their roles ahead of each discussion so they can be prepared.

Summarizer—Describe the events of the most recent reading section.

Travel Agent—Track the action's movement within the story. No location change is too small.

Literary Luminary—Select and share an important quote or passage from the recent reading and explain its importance and impact on the story.

Researcher—Bring in information to share regarding the background or context of the novel.

Discussion Director—Keep the discussion going with thoughtful questions that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.”

Discussion Summary: At the end of each group discussion, have the students turn in a summary of what questions were asked, what big ideas were brought up, agreements or disagreements within the group regarding the story, and what conclusions were made.



Final Projects

The capstone assignment of the Literature Circles Project is to be completed by the entire group. Going beyond the reader response, the capstone projects allow students to create something new from their interpretation of the story, or from an idea, agricultural topic, or theme within the story.

As with all other parts of a literature circles unit, the final project begins with a choice. The options for final assessments listed below each reach to meet unique common core standards. However, they also can be assessed for these shared standards:

Common Core Standards: ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1; RL.8.2; RI.8.7; W.8.4; W.8.6; W.8.8; W.8.10

ABC Book:

Have the students create an illustrated ABC book. The book can either cover the literature circles novel in general, or a specific, approved agricultural topic relating to that novel.

—CCSS:Literacy-ELA.W.8.2

Board Game:

The students will work together to produce an original board game that reflects plot or theme of the book. The board game should be playable, with all pieces and rules created.

—CCSS:Literacy-ELA.W.8.1; W.8.2

Collage:

The students work together to create a collage representative of the story or theme using cut out pictures from magazines or other materials. There should also be some writing requirement (i.e. “explain ten of your pictures in 2-3 sentences each”).

—CCSS:Literacy-ELA.W.8.1; W.8.2



Final Project

Map:

Have the students create a large map of the area in which the story took place. They should plot the path the story or characters followed. Then have the students research the real locations and identify the demographic, economic, and agricultural features of the area to compare and contrast with the version in the story. They should also highlight, and illustrate at least three key locations on the map with descriptions of what happened at each location.

—CCSS:Literacy-ELA.W.8.2

Scrapbook:

The students will put together a scrapbook as if they were one of the characters. The scrapbook should include pictures or materials that would be meaningful to the character (i.e. real or fictionalized newspaper articles). Each addition to the scrapbook should include a brief description of what was added, as told by the character.

—CCSS:Literacy-ELA.W.8.1

Sequel:

The students work together to write a sequel for the novel. The sequel should continue directly after the original novel or should explain what has happened since the original novel ended. It should be a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end. Though the story does not necessarily need to include the same characters, it should clearly connect to the original. —CCSS:Literacy-ELA.W.8.3

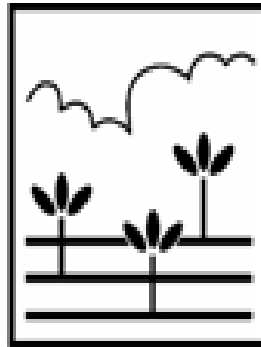
Alternate Ending:

Together, the students will change the ending of the novel. The new ending can begin at any point in the original, but it should create a meaningful change to the conclusion. The alternate ending should also be written from the same perspective as the original novel and in a similar style. Then, in a brief paragraph, the students should justify their ending. “What makes this new ending better than the original?”

—CCSS:Literacy-ELA.W.8.3

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