

The Pros and Cons of Literature Circles

“The purpose of literature circles is to foster scholarly discussion about a novel, to get students talking about class content the way they would in their social circles outside of class...” (Kristina Skiba- 7th grade Humanities). Over the past few years in the 7th grade Humanities department (at Medea Creek Middle School) literature circles have been utilized to assist teaching the Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind unit. They operate largely on students coming into class, completing a certain “job” that will help increase understanding of the novel. From there, students will have scholarly discussions (supervised by parents).

Over the past few years, students and teachers have seemed to really enjoy them. Medha Vallurupalli (student at Medea Creek) says, “ They’re fun and it improves comprehension.” By allowing kids to interact with each other, it improves social skills. Teachers enjoy being able to witness students’ talk about the content with genuine interest.

The system seems to be working, but with a few minor setbacks. Using lit circle method, students aren’t able to ask the teacher questions to clarify as much as they would have with a whole class discussion. As Miss. Steinman (7th grade Humanities) stated, “I like to be able to talk to my students and see what they have to say.” Also lit. circles depend on every student to commit 100% to their work. If one doesn’t, the whole system is effectively squashed.

In conclusion, lit circles are great tools that have been utilized at Medea Creek Middle School to assist literature learning. They really benefit students, but there are minor setbacks.

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