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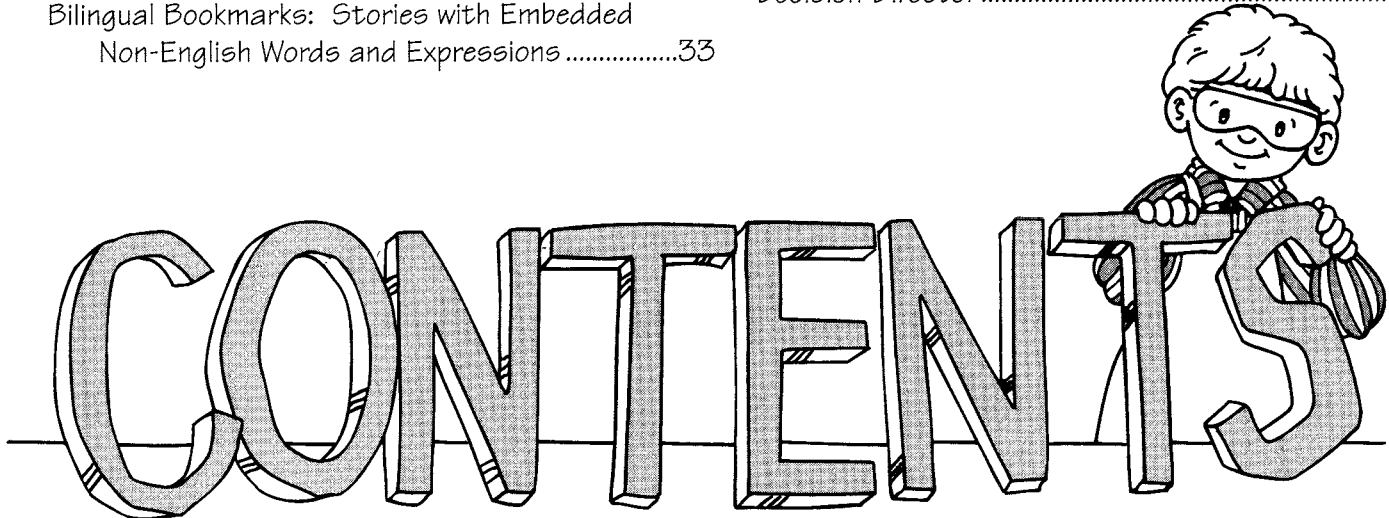
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WHY USE LITERATURE CIRCLES?

At the primary grade level, literature circles should be one component of an overall reading program. Literature circles add another dimension to students' literacy experiences and help boost their enthusiasm for reading while nurturing a sense of community. More specific reasons for providing students with literature circle opportunities include the following:

Literature Circles . . .

- **allow all students to succeed regardless of reading level or ability.**

Student choice is an important component of literature circles. Although at times the entire class may be reading the same text, usually literature circles are based on text sets which include a variety of books of varying degrees of difficulty but ones which are related to one another in some way.

- **utilize cooperative learning strategies and social cooperative learning skills.**

Literature circles capitalize on the positive interdependence and individual accountability aspects that are hallmarks of cooperative learning. With literature circles, students work within a group setting with the common goal of sharing ideas about the same book or same type of book. In order to achieve this common goal, each student must fulfill the responsibilities of his or her individual Response-Discussion sheet. At the same time, literature circles encourage the reinforcement of social cooperative learning skills such as using quiet voices, looking at one another while speaking and listening, and not interrupting while others are speaking.



Literature Circles . . .

- **encourage students to be positive members of a literate classroom community.**

Surrounded by books and book discussions, students can't help but be drawn into a spirited community that respects readers and writers. Moreover, since students choose their own books and direct their own discussions, they become active learners who tend to assume responsible ownership of their learning.

- **capitalize on how students personally respond to literature.**

Each literature circle Response-Discussion sheet allows students to respond to the literature in a way only they can. Each response portion of the sheet allows students to respond to the literature using their own unique point of reference and prior knowledge. At the same time, the discussion portion of the sheet encourages students to explore the text more deeply by raising questions and making observations.

- **encourage multiple readings of the text.**

Because students use the text of their books to ask and answer questions about everything from interesting words to character traits, students read and reread the text to clarify their questions and support their answers.



WHAT ARE TEXT SETS?



A text set is a group of different books related to one another in some way. They may be related by theme, author, genre or any other connecting element you consider to be significant. For example, the different books in a text set may be related to one another because each deals with the issue of extended families. At the same time, books in another text set may be related to one another simply because they have bears as main characters.

The text sets provided in this book represent a very broad range of titles and topics.

Students in grades 1-3 should

be able to read independently some of the titles on the lists. However, since the goal of literature circles is to get students to make connections to the literature and discuss it in-depth, many books on the list may have to be read aloud to students since many books with very limited text may not be suitable for in-depth student discussion.

Since literature circles represent only one component of the reading-literature program, the listed text sets do not attempt to coordinate popular primary grade themes such as family, nature, friends and community. Instead, the text sets in this book are classified using broad cross-curricular categories such as multicultural fairy tales, historical fiction, stories based on math concepts and books representing different artistic styles. By creating text sets based on broad cross-curricular categories, the lists represent books that vary in length and degree of difficulty and include “tried-and-true” titles as well as newer titles you may wish to add to your school or classroom library.