

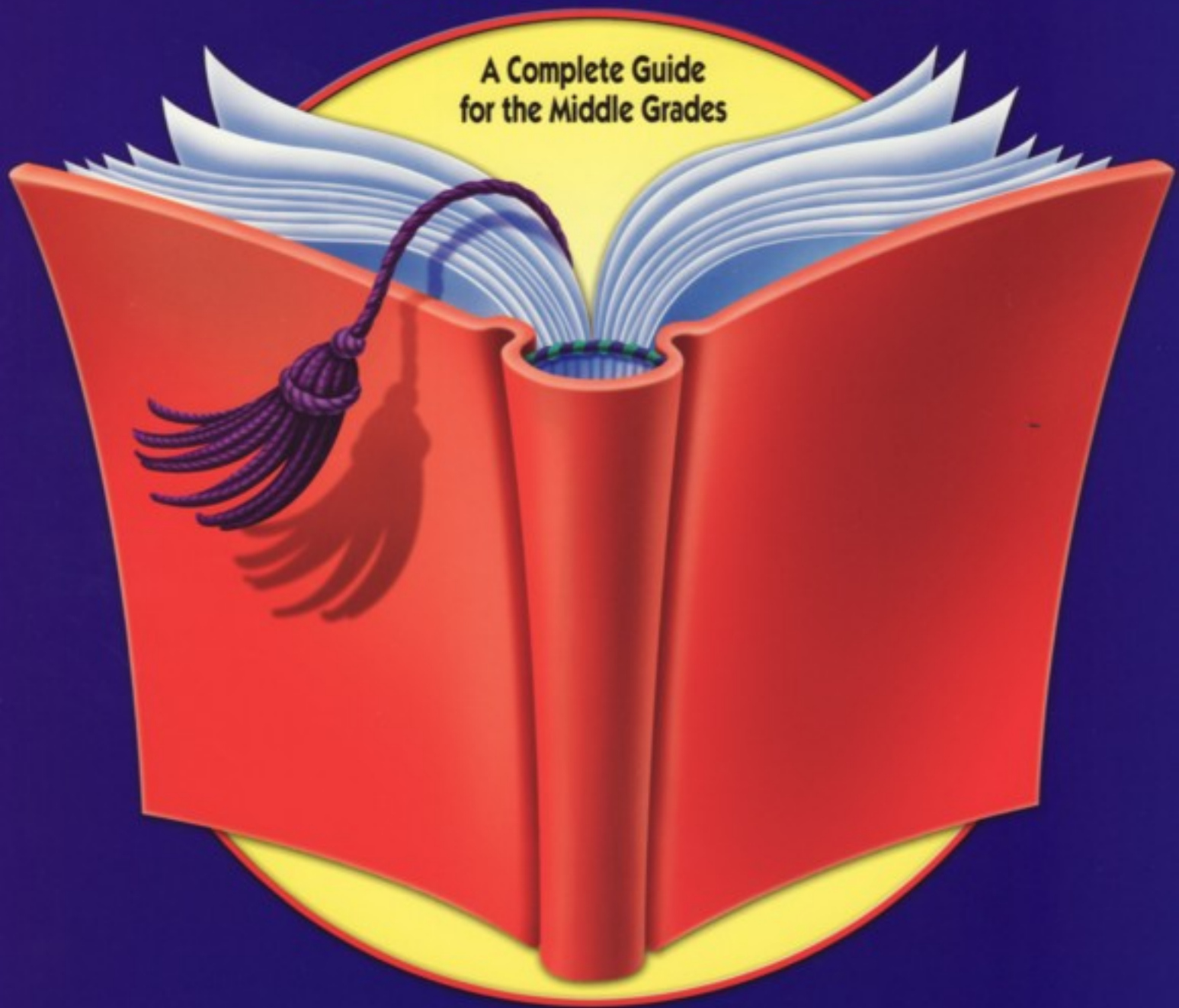
LW-440
Grades
6-8



- Poetry
- Short Stories
- Novels

LITERATURE CIRCLES

A Complete Guide
for the Middle Grades




Written by Valerie Posey and Debora Bodenheimer • Illustrated by Bev Armstrong

The Learning Works

Suggested Timeline and Schedule

This is the recommended order of events for the literature circles program. Other lessons may be interspersed between segments if desired.

1. Teacher Preparation
2. Introduction of Literature Circles to Students (1–2 days)
3. Poetry—Round 1 (1 week)
4. Poetry—Round 2 (1 week)
5. Teach the high-level comprehension rubric (1–2 days)
6. Short Stories—Round 1 (1 week)
7. Short Stories—Round 2 (2–3 days)
8. Novels—Round 1 (2–4 weeks)
9. Novels—Round 2 (2–4 weeks, optional)

NOVEMBER 				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
		1	2 INTRODUCTION OF LITERATURE CIRCLES	3
6 POETRY - ROUND 1	7	8	9	10
13 POETRY - ROUND 2	14	15	16	17
20 TEACH RUBRIC	21	22	23 THANKSGIVING VACATION	24
27 SHORT STORIES - ROUND 1	28	29	30	31

Selecting and Locating Materials

The first step in creating a literature circles program is to choose appropriate, challenging, high interest literature for students to read. These materials can be poems, short stories, or novels. When gathering selections, teachers should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Students need to be able to write on their material in order to interact with it more effectively. Whenever possible, students should be given copies of the poems and short stories on which they can write.
- For novels, students should either buy their own copy in order to highlight important elements, or sticky notes can be used as markers. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
- Lists of recommended materials are provided on pages 16 through 24. In addition to these lists, classroom literature books can be used for age-appropriate selections. Literature and/or poetry anthologies are also excellent resources, as often they will group the literature by theme. One recommended example is *The Book of Virtues* by William Bennett.
- Children's magazines (with selections written by students) are also a great place to locate materials. *Stone Soup* or *Cricket* magazines are highly recommended. Students like to read material written by their peers.
- Fiction materials work better than nonfiction with students. However, depending upon the makeup of the class and the curriculum, teachers may want to experiment with some nonfiction materials. This would work well with interdisciplinary planning, or in a history/social sciences context.



Poetry

In choosing poetry, it is best to select between two and six poems (depending upon length and difficulty) that all relate to a common theme.

Themes

nature	mystery	humor
love	friendship	school
fears	war	seasons
history	courage	animals
discrimination	dreams/goals	death/loss
family	adventure	sports

The following are examples of poetry sets for teachers to use during literature circles:

Nature

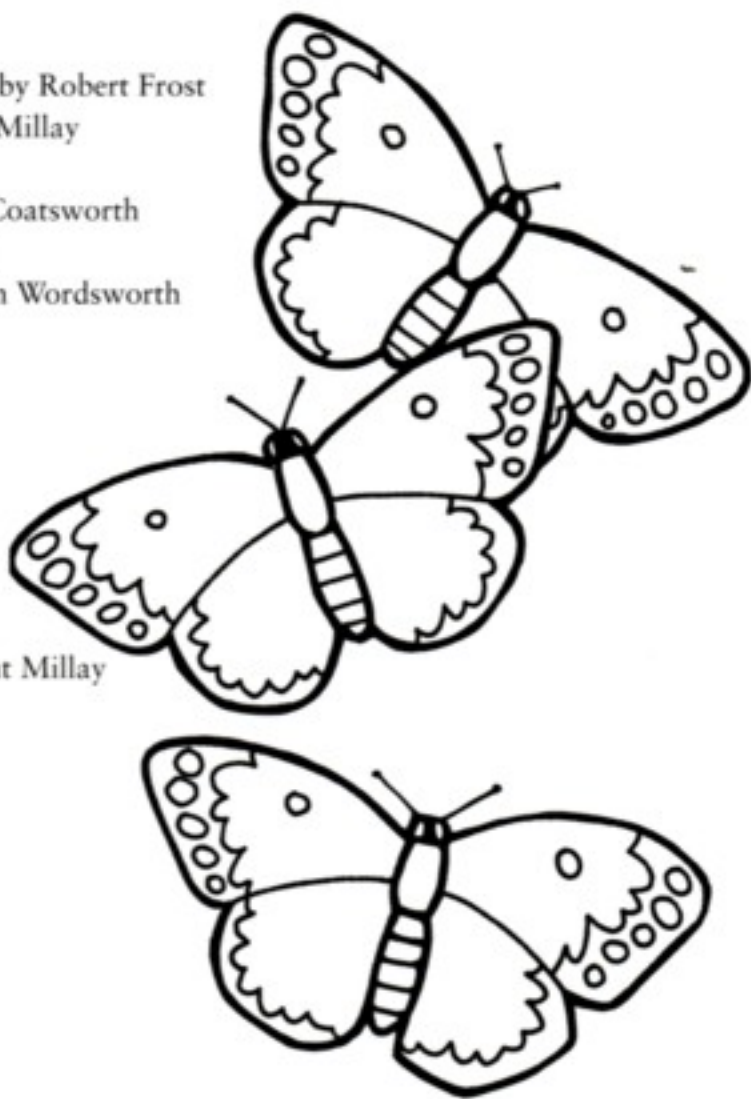
- “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost
- “Afternoon on a Hill” by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- “The Pasture” by Robert Frost
- “Swift Things Are Beautiful” by Elizabeth Coatsworth
- “Nothing Gold Can Stay” by Robert Frost
- “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” by William Wordsworth

Choices/Courage

- “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost
- “If” by Rudyard Kipling
- “Travel” by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- “The Choice” by Dorothy Parker

Animals

- “The Buck in the Snow” by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- “All But Blind” by Walter de la Mare
- “The Bat” by Theodore Roethke
- “Seal” by William Jay Smith
- “Catalog” by Rosalie Moore
- “Blue-Butterfly Day” by Robert Frost



Mystery

- “Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allan Poe
- “The House on the Hill” by Edward Arlington Robinson
- “House. For Sale” by Leonard Clark
- “Enter This Deserted House” by Shel Silverstein

Friendship

- “Poem” by Langston Hughes (from *The Dream Keeper*)
- “A Time to Talk” by Robert Frost
- “Since Hanna Moved Away” by Judith Viorst
- “I’m Nobody” by Emily Dickinson
- “Count That Day Lost” by George Eliot

Love

- “Mending” by Judith Viorst
- “My Love Is Like a Red Red Rose” by Robert Burns
- “no. 919” by Emily Dickinson
- “Two People” by Eve Merriam
- “Oh, When I Was in Love with You” by A.E. Housman

Dreams

- “Dreams” by Langston Hughes
- “Dream Deferred” by Langston Hughes
- “As I Grew Older” by Langston Hughes
- “Fifteen” by William Stafford
- “To Dark Eyes Dreaming” by Zilpha Keatley Snyder

Family

- “Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes
- “The Courage That My Mother Had” by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- “Only a Dad” by Edgar Guest
- “Reading to Me” by Jeff Moss
- “Lament” by Edna St. Vincent Millay

