Lit Circle Notes: Introduction

Name	Date

Group Members

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Deadline
You must finish this book and all related assignments by: Wednesday, June 6th.

Assessment
You will be assessed according to:
`• the quality of your contributions to your lit circle discussion
`• the extent to which you keep up with your responsibilities to your group
`• the quality of your ideas on your Lit Circle Notes
`• the quality of your group's discussion

Assignments
Your group must:
`• assign itself the reading for each night, pacing yourselves so you get it done by June 6th.
`• hold each member accountable for work, contributions to discussion, and respectful participation
`• rotate the assigned roles so that each night someone has a different responsibility; when you complete one cycle through the group, begin again as you think appropriate, rotating jobs daily.

Schedule
Here is the schedule for each week:

`• Monday
` • LC (Lit Circles)
` • Groups meet

`• Tuesday
` • LC (Lit Circles)
` • Read and roles

`• Wednesday
` • LC (Lit Circles)
` • Groups meet

`• Thursday
` • LC (Lit Circles)
` • Read and Roles

`• Friday
` • LC (Lit Circles)
` • Groups meet

Source: I must credit Harvey Daniels with the idea of Lit Circles. Though I have taken small liberties with the ideas and roles, and created my own Lit Circle Notes pages, the core ideas and technique are his, not mine. To learn more, read Harvey Daniels's book *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom* (Stenhouse1994)

Lit Circle Notes: Overview of the Roles

Discussion Director: Your role demands that you identify the important aspects of your assigned text, and develop questions your group will want to discuss. Focus on the major themes or "big ideas" in the text and your reaction to those ideas. What interests you will most likely interest those in your group. You are also responsible for facilitating your group's discussion.

Sample Questions

What were you thinking about as you read?
What did the text make you think about?
What do you think this text/passage was about?
How might other people (of different backgrounds) think about this text/passage?
What *one* question would you ask the writer if you got the chance? Why?
What are the most important ideas/moments in this text/section?
What do you think will happen next---and why?
What was the most important change in this section? How and why did it happen?

Illuminator: You find passages your group would like to/should hear read aloud. These passages should be memorable, interesting, puzzling, funny, or *important*. Your notes should include the quotations but also why you chose them, and what you want to say about them. You can either read the passage aloud yourself or ask members of your group to read roles.

Sample Questions

What were you thinking about as you read?
What did the text make you think about?
What do you think this text/passage was about?
How might other people (of different backgrounds) think about this text/passage?
What *one* question would you ask the writer if you got the chance? Why?
What are the most important ideas/moments in this text/section?
What do you think will happen next---and why?
What was the most important change in this section? How and why did it happen?

Illustrator: Your role is to draw what you read. This might mean drawing a scene as a cartoon-like sequence, or an important scene so readers can better understand the action. You can draw maps or organizational trees to show how one person, place, or event relates to the others. Use the notes area to explain how your drawing relates to the text. Label your drawings so we know who the characters are. **Make your drawing on the back of this page or on a separate sheet of paper.**

Sample Questions

Ask members of your group, "What do you think this picture means?"
Why did you choose this scene to illustrate?
How does this drawing relate to the story?
Why did you choose to draw it the way you did?
What do we see---i.e., who and/or what is in this picture?
What, if anything, did drawing it help you see that you had not noticed before?
What did this quotation/passage make you think about when you read it?
What are you trying to accomplish through this drawing?

Connector: Your job is to connect what you are reading with what you are studying or with the world outside of school. You can connect the story to events in you own life, news events, political events, or popular trends. Another important source of connections is books you've already read. The connections should be meaningful to you and those in your group.

Sample Questions

What connections can you make to your own life?
What other places or people could you compare this story to?
What other books or stories might you compare to this one?
What other characters or authors might you compare to this one?
What is the most interesting or important connection that comes to mind?
How does this section relate to those that came before it?

Word Watcher: While reading the assigned section, you watch out for words worth knowing. These words might be interesting, new, important, or used in unusual ways. It is important to indicate the specific location of the words so the group can discuss these words in context.

Sample Questions

Which words are used frequently?
Which words are used in unusual ways?
What words seem to have special meaning to the characters or author?
What new words do you find in this section?
What part of speech is this word?
What is the connotative meaning of this word?
What is the denotative meaning of this word?

Summarizer: Prepare a brief summary of the day's reading. Use the questions to the right to help you decide what to include. In some cases, you might ask yourself what details, characters, or events are so important that they would be included on an exam. If it helps you to organize the information, consider making a numbered list or a timeline.

Sample Questions

What are the most important events in the section you read?
What makes them so important?
What effect to these events have on the plot or the other characters?
What changes---in plot, character, or tone---did you notice when you read?
What questions might appear on an exam about this section you read?
What might be a good essay topic for this section of the story?

Lit Circle Notes: Examplars and Reminders

Overview: Few people are developing their ideas; few are following the Cornell format; few are doing what I would call complete work. Nearly all are running great discussions. Use these exemplars to help you improve your notes this week. It's the end of the year: I expect daily evidence of all you've learned to do.

Illuminator *"I was told by my father that I had no free will, no control whatsoever over my destiny, that each minute detail about my life, my existence---before now and to come---were all contained in a big scroll made of my life, over which my ancestors pondered day and night as they alternately tossed random situations into my life..." (p. 126, ¶4, from Kaffir Boy)*	*Response* *This quote is important because it makes you think about your future. When I was reading this, I stopped for a second and thought about my destiny. There is no way you can avoid the future. Every second counts. In a few seconds you can make a wrong decision. Sooner or later those seconds turn into minutes, which turn into hours that turn into days... Your destiny is something you come up with by making those decisions. What if someone just scrambled a few obstacles together and then put them in our destiny book? We must learn to make correct choices. They might just change some obstacles in the destiny book. We might be able to overcome those challanges that were put in the future. (Jessica Perez about* Kaffir Boy*)*
Connector *What other places can you compare this to?*	*Response* *This passage reminds me of Germany during the Holocaust. The police in South Africa are just like the Nazis banging on the Jewish doors and looking for the Jewish star or other required identification papers; this is how they use the blacks' passbooks in South Africa. (Jen Lescher about* Kaffir Boy)
Summarizer *What are the most important events?* *Why is this important?*	*Response* *He was being rude to the "shit men" and they made him get in a bucket of night soil. Also they had to move out of their shack and into another one and Alexandra will soon be torn down. He almost died from the braziere being inside.* *It taught him not to make fun of people, especially for their jobs because they don't want to do what they are doing. Moving into another shack is important because it shows how poor they are and how they do whatever the whites say, including picking up their lives and leaving. They do what they say because they fear being arrested. (Jen Lescher about* Kaffir Boy)
Discussion Director *Did they depend on witchcraft and vodoo so they don't have to take ownership of bad things that happened?*	*Response* *Yes, they depended very much on vodoo and witchcraft. They seemed to blame everything bad on the witches and evil ancestral spirits. They blamed no money, not being able to find a job, the police. They were all some sort of evil spirit. It was never the fault of the living person, but always the doing of a nonliving spirit.* [They believed this because... I also noticed that when x would happen, they believed...] (Jennifer Edl, about *Kaffir Boy*)

Down here you should review, retell, or reflect on what you read so far. (Use the back if necessary).

Johannes goes to the tribal land at this point in the book. He goes with his father and finds his witchdoctor. His family leaves to another part of the city because Alexandra got bulldozed. They move to another place where they are in poverty. Johannes turns to begging. Mother gets upset and talks with Johannes. He is now paranoid about police raids and witches. (Jessica Perez, about Kaffir Boy)

Lit Circle Notes: Word Watcher

Name	Date

Word Watcher: While reading the assigned section, you watch out for words worth knowing. These words might be interesting, new, important, or used in unusual ways. It is important to indicate the specific location of the words so the group can discuss these words in context.

Sample Questions

- Which words are used frequently?
- Which words are used in unusual ways?
- What words seem to have special meaning to the characters or author?
- What new words do you find in this section?
- What part of speech is this word?
- What is the connotative meaning of this word?
- What is the denotative meaning of this word?

In this column, write the word, and the page and paragraph numbers. Write the definition and any explanation about why you chose the words in the notes section to the right. >>>)

Assignment for Today: **page _____ – page_____**

Topic to be carried over to tomorrow:

Assignment for Tomorrow: **page _____ – page_____**

Down here you should review, retell, or reflect on what you read so far. (Use the back if necessary).

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Lit Circle Notes: Illustrator

Name	Date

Illustrator: Your role is to draw what you read. This might mean drawing a scene as a cartoon-like sequence, or an important scene so readers can better understand the action. You can draw maps or organizational trees to show how one person, place, or event relates to the others. Use the notes area to explain how your drawing relates to the text. Label your drawings so we know who the characters are. **Make your drawing on the back of this page or on a separate sheet of paper.**

Your drawing should be on the back or on a separate sheet of paper; your notes and explanation should be over here >>.)

Sample Questions

Ask members of your group, "What do you think this picture means?"
Why did you choose this scene to illustrate?
How does this drawing relate to the story?
Why did you choose to draw it the way you did?
What do we see---i.e., who and/or what is in this picture?
What, if anything, did drawing it help you see that you had not noticed before?
What did this quotation/passage make you think about when you read it?
What are you trying to accomplish through this drawing?

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Lit Circle Notes: Illuminator

Name	Date

Illuminator: You find passages your group would like to/should hear read aloud. These passages should be memorable, interesting, puzzling, funny, or *important*. Your notes should include the quotations but also why you chose them, and what you want to say about them. You can either read the passage aloud yourself or ask members of your group to read roles.

Sample Questions

- What is happening in this passage?
- Why did you choose this passage?
- What does this passage mean, or what is it discussing?
- How should you present this passage?
- Who is speaking or what is happening in this passage?
- What is the most unique aspect of this passage---and why is it unique?
- What did this quotation/passage make you think about when you read it?
- What makes this passage so confusing, important, or interesting?

Write the page and paragraph number in this column. Unless the quote is really long, you should also write the quote in this column; write your response to it in the main note taking area to the right.)

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Lit Circle Notes: Summarizer

Name	Date

Summarizer: Prepare a brief summary of the day's reading. Use the questions to the right to help you decide what to include. In some cases, you might ask yourself what details, characters, or events are so important that they would be included on an exam. If it helps you to organize the information, consider making a numbered list or a timeline.

Sample Questions

- What are the most important events in the section you read?
- What makes them so important?
- What effect to these events have on the plot or the other characters?
- What changes---in plot, character, or tone---did you notice when you read?
- What questions might appear on an exam about this section you read?
- What might be a good essay topic for this section of the story?

Write your discussion questions in here; write your response to them in the main note taking area to the right >>>>)

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Lit Circle Notes: Connector

Name	Date

Connector: Your job is to connect what you read with what you study in this or other classes. You can also connect the story with events in your own life or the world outside school as depicted in the news or other media. Another valuable source of connections is books you've already read this year. Connections should be meaningful to you and those in your group.

Sample Questions

What connections can you make between the text and your life?
What other places or people could you compare this story to?
What other books or stories might you compare to this one?
What other characters or authors might you compare to this one?
What current trends or events are related to this section of the book?
What is the most interesting or important connection that comes to mind?
What is the connection that no one else but you can discover?
How does this section relate to those that came before it?

Write your discussion questions in here; write your response to them in the main note taking area to the right >>>>)

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Discussion Director: Your role demands that you identify the important aspects of your assigned text, and develop questions your group will want to discuss. Focus on the major themes or "big ideas" in the text and your reaction to those ideas. What interests you will most likely interest those in your group. You are also responsible for facilitating your group's discussion.

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