How Circles Work: Roles, norms and a reading plan

NBE3U, Unit 5: Stories Now, Lesson 2. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

A literature circle works when everyone arrives having read and with something to offer. Rotating roles give each reader a job, from asking questions to tracking how communities are represented, and shared norms keep the talk respectful.

What students do: Students meet their circles, learn six rotating roles, co-create discussion norms (including how to talk about Nations and communities respectfully), build a reading calendar to finish the novel by Lesson 12, and try a role with the novel's first pages.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
C1.2	select and use the most appropriate reading comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading to understand texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts
C1.3	identify the most important ideas and supporting details in texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, in relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts
C4.1	explain which of a variety of strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after reading texts from and/or related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, then evaluate their areas of greater and lesser strength as readers and identify the steps they can take to improve their skills

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning how literature circles work. • We are learning to plan our reading and choose comprehension strategies.	• I can explain the six circle roles. • I can help create and follow our circle norms. • I can build a realistic reading calendar. • I can identify the most important ideas in an opening.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** How Circles Work deck.
- **Handouts:** Roles and Norms (page 1), Reading Calendar (page 2).
- **Books:** Circle novels.

© 2026 K9solutions

- **Guide:** Unit 5 Circle Guide (role sheets).

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Groups**	Announce circles.	Meet.	
8–25	**Roles**	Six jobs.	Learn.	
25–40	**Norms**	Co-create.	Agree.	Norms recorded.
40–55	**Calendar**	Plan.	Plan.	Realistic plan.
55–75	**Try it**	First pages.	Read and practise.	Important ideas named.

Differentiation

- **Support:** Pre-filled calendar with page numbers.
- **ELL:** Role sheets with sentence frames.
- **Challenge:** Take the Context Researcher role first.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Calendar and first role	Comprehension strategies (C1.2), important ideas (C1.3)
Assessment as learning	Strategy check	Reflecting on strategies (C4.1)

Circles: key points

- **Roles:** Discussion Director, Passage Picker, Connector, Word Finder, Context Researcher, Representation Tracker.
- **Norms:** Come prepared; listen to understand; quote the page; speak for yourself; use the names authors use for their own Nations.
- **Calendar:** Divide the pages evenly across about ten days, with a buffer before each circle meeting.
- **Important ideas:** In an opening, look for who, where, what is wrong or missing, and what the narrator wants.
- **Strategies:** Preview, predict, annotate, summarize each chapter in one sentence, and reread puzzling passages.

Teacher notes

- These are literature circles: small reading groups with rotating roles. They are a classroom structure, not a cultural or ceremonial circle, and we don't call them sharing circles or talking circles.

© 2026 K9solutions

- Rotate roles each meeting so every student does each job at least once. The Representation Tracker role feeds A3.4 in Lesson 9.
- Do not ask Indigenous students to speak for their communities, to share personal or family histories, or to act as experts. Every student's participation in sharing is optional.
- We strongly recommend reviewing this unit with your board's Indigenous education lead and, where possible, inviting a First Nations, Métis or Inuit Elder, Knowledge Keeper or guest speaker following your board's protocols (including offerings and honoraria). Local Nations' own sources come first.

Coming up

Lesson 3, Opening Pages.

© 2026 K9solutions