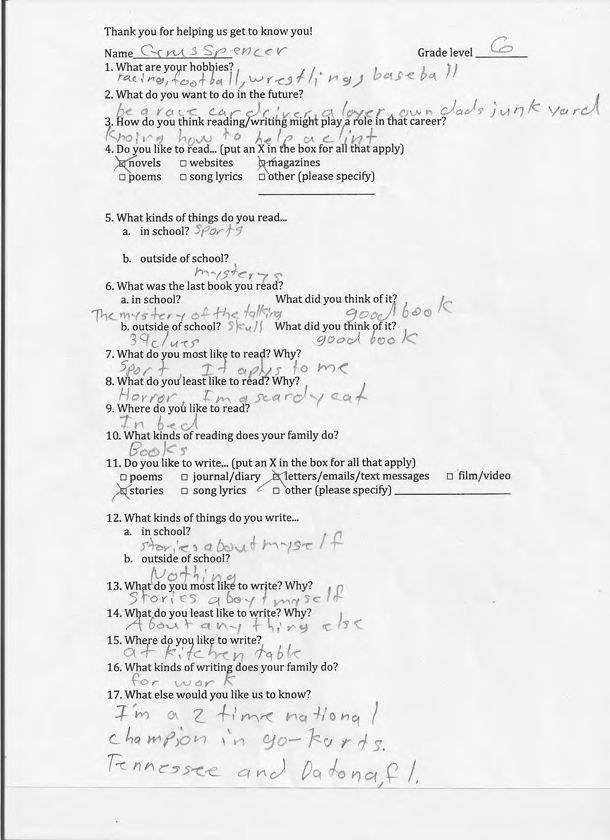
Bloomsburg Middle School Literature Circles

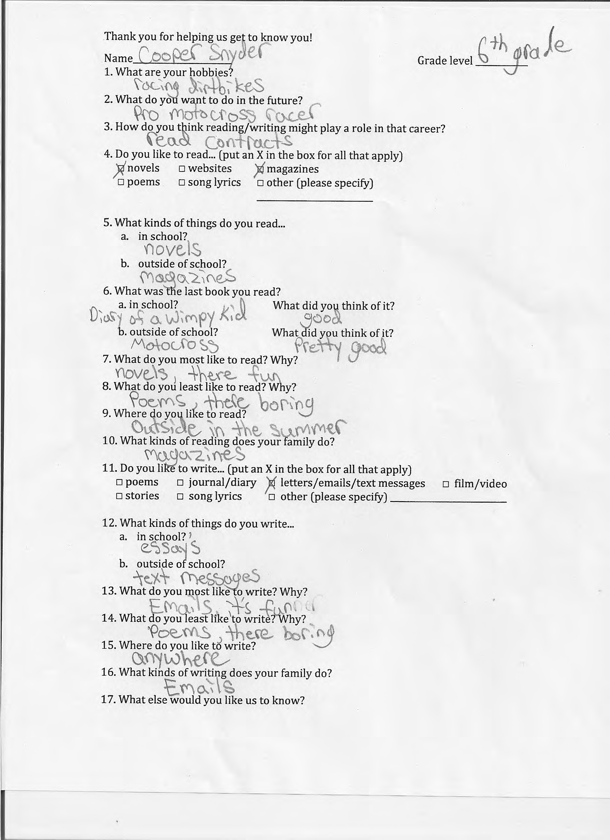
Caitlyn Connolly

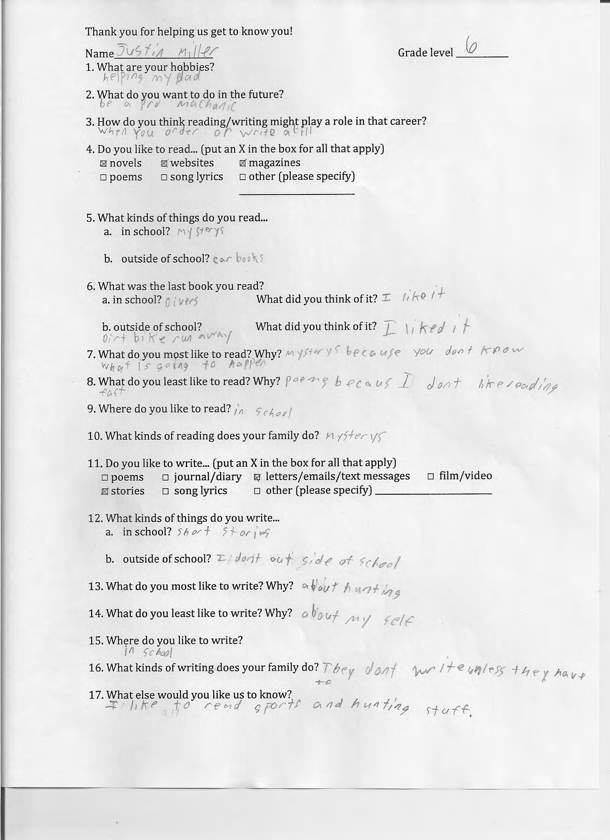
Dr. Sherry

Literature for Young Adults

INSIDER

Book Choices



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**Book Choices**

**The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin**

The mysterious death of an eccentric millionaire brings together an unlikely assortment of heirs who must uncover the circumstances of his death before they can claim their inheritance.

**The City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau**

The city of Ember was built as a last refuge for the human race. Two hundred years later, the great lamps that light the city are beginning to flicker. When Lina finds part of an ancient message, she’s sure it holds a secret that will save the city. She and her friend Doon must decipher the message before the lights go out on Ember forever! This stunning debut novel offers refreshingly clear writing and fascinating, original characters.

**Saturday Night Dirt by Will Weaver**

It’s a sizzling summer Saturday, and Headwaters Speedway has suddenly become the place to be. Thanks to rainouts across the state, this small-town dirt track is drawing both big-time stock cars and local drivers. The impending rain might be exactly what they need to keep her father’s speedway afloat—or sink it for good.

**The Name of This Book Is A Secret by Pseudonymous Bosch**

This is the story of a secret, and also a secret story. Cass and Max Ernest are two friendless 11-year olds who come together to solve the mystery surrounding a dead magician and the clues he left behind. Along the way they must solve puzzles and word games and face incredible danger to answer their questions.

**Rationale for Book Selections**

After analyzing the survey results of my literature circle students, I could see that they had similar interests. They each mentioned liking mystery novels, participating in sports (specifically racing go-karts and motocross). Initially in my search for books, I sought novels that would link to their interests in racing and provide an element of mystery. Some of the challenges that I came across were taking into consideration the students’ lexile levels, books that the students have already read, and the length of the books. We were not provided with the students’ lexile levels while we selected the books, so I had to make sure that I chose a book that would not be considered too easy or too hard for each student. To give me some guidance, I looked at the lexile levels of the books that the students indicated in the surveys as having read in the past. This also helped lead me to similar books that might interest the students as well. I was concerned about the length of the books because, we have a limited amount of time to complete them and students have to read them outside of school. If the book was too short, then students might finish them too quickly and if the book was fairly long, then students might struggle to finish it in time. The four books that I selected represented a variety of subjects and genres that the students might be interested in.

**Literature Meeting Reflections**

**Day 1 – Meeting the Students**

Today we met our students for the literature circles. We opened up our meeting with a “two truths and a lie” ice breaker. A couple of the boys openly admitted how they do not like to read (almost like its un-cool to like it). We picked *The City of Ember*. I’m excited to read it. It was their 2nd pick (Saturday Night Dirt was their 1st) but one studentdid not really seem very interested in reading it. I let them discuss why they would rather read one book over the other and they finally decided on *The City of Ember* because everyone had an interest in reading it. *Brandon* just recently finished reading *The Hunger Games* so I think that this may be a good match for him, because the books are along the same lines/premise. With our free time, I asked about their reading habits, what they’ve recently read, what other things they do outside of school and what they like to watch on TV.

**Day 2 – Learning about Literature Circles**

Today, we started the class by tracing our hand and writing 3-5 words we would use to describe ourselves on the inside and on the outside, 3-5 words that others might use to describe us. Some of their answers were pretty funny.This was a helpful activity to help me get to know them better. Because not all of the books have come in yet, I copied the first 3 pages for them and we ‘popcorn’ read it aloud together. There were a couple words that they stumbled over and didn’t understand. We agreed to read around 65 pages a week. For next meeting, we will read to the end of Chapter 3. After we read the 1st 3 pages, they seemed very excited to start reading it. We went over the different roles in a literature circle. We practiced discussing by thinking about what might be in the secret box mentioned in the passage. I’m not sure if *Marcus* was paying close attention because when asked about what he thought was in the box, he replied, “what box”. He is very energetic and does not seem to have a long attention span. The learning support teacher had to redirect him a couple times. I hope that I will be able to keep him on task during our future lit circle meetings. For next meeting *Brandon* will be discussion director, Justin will be the questioner, *Sean* will be the summarizer and *Marcus* will be the citation manager.

**Day 3 – Literature Circle 1**

The first thing I asked the students was if they liked the book…they said “no, not really.” The first thing I thought was, “OY!” and felt discouraged. But, after talking to them about why they did not like it, I discovered that their reasons had to do with their confusion of the plot. They were confused why there was no light, why there was no one else outside of the city and they didn’t understand that the city was underground. I agree that those things were a little confusing. The book never outright explains that the city is underground, but to justify that, I don’t think that the people in the city know that they are underground either. I tried to draw connections to other things that they might be familiar in our discussion to help them (connect it to the Hunger Games for *Brandon* who has read that). They seemed more excited when we left and they thought that the discussion was good today. We were able to fill up the whole time too, which was good. *Sean* was the summarizer and he wrote down some of the questions that we discussed. Funny enough, he wrote in texting language. Like ‘y’ instead of ‘why’. *Brandon* was the discussion director and *James* was the questioner. *James* did a pretty good job keeping with his role, but *Brandon* struggled to know how to keep the discussion going. They forgot what their roles were so that might have been a factor. I advised them to write down questions and topics as they read next time. We are reading until Chapter 12 for next time. Hopefully the book gets a little bit more exciting. For next time, I want to make sure that I don’t dominate the discussion. It seemed that I was bringing up a lot of things and then just going…what do you think? And getting short responses. Some times that created a longer discussion, but things could definitely be improved.

**Day 4 – Literature Circles 2**

Today went fairly successfully. One difficulty was having everyone at different points in the book. *James* and *Brandon* didn’t read far enough. *Sean*was almost to the right place and *Marcus* is already on to the second book in the series (almost done it too!). There were some interesting things to talk about in the section but the discussion wasn’t as fruitful because we had to spoil it for some of them and made it more difficult to participate. I’m not sure that they fully understand the roles but as long as the discussion continues, I think that it fine. One thing that seemed to be throwing them off was the movie pictures that are attached in the book because they don’t exactly match the book descriptions and some were saying that they were picturing it differently (especially some of the characters). I have not seen the movie yet, so I am not sure if it is a good representation of the book or not. But I do agree with them in that they are different than how the book would lead you to imagine. They seem to like it though, which is good! For next time they are reading up to Chapter 17.

**Rationale**

For this unit I will be using the text *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau. The story takes place in the future when civilization is forced to live underground in a manmade city named Ember. The citizens have been in the city for so long that they do not know about life outside of Ember. Their isolation from resources, however, is making life difficult and the city is running out of supplies and the lights that illuminate the city have been flickering a little too much for comfort. Students will find an interest in the main characters that are twelve years old and determined to find a solution to the problem that it seems the adults are completely overlooking. Although this planning cluster is geared for a language arts classroom, this novel is a great selection for cross-curricular collaboration in math, science, social studies and economics as well. This planning cluster will have the students thinking about the idea of progress and analyzing how society as whole and individuals shift and change over time. They will be looking at the past, present and future to find patterns in society by analyzing artifacts from various times.

**Big Question**

Does time always lead to progress? Is progress necessarily a good thing? What factors play into how something progresses?

**Lesson 1 – The Past**

**Objectives:**

1. After reading *The City of Ember*, students will be able to describe societal characteristics of the citizens in Ember.
2. Given a historical artifact, students will be able to analyze its significance to society and what it says about the time period.
3. After a class discussion of the historical artifacts and *The City of Ember,* students will be able to draw connections between the pieces and describe the progress society has made from the artifact to the future in Ember.

**Materials:** Great Depression and Industrial Revolution Pictures  
**Introduction:** In *The City of Ember,* the citizens do not live luxurious or technologically rich lives. The city is running out of supplies, children start working at the age of 12 and the government is striving to settle citizens’ fear that the lights will go out forever and their world will end.Students will study artifacts from different periods in history and draw connections to the lives of Emberites. What do these artifacts say about the progress of society? How might we see this kind of situation again?

**Activities:**

1. **The City of Ember (10 minutes)**
   1. As a class, students will discuss society in *The City of Ember.* How is it similar or different from our society today? What kinds of things do the government control? What is important to Emberites? What are their concerns?
   2. The teacher will write down and draw out students’ ideas on the board to reference later in the lesson.
2. **Small Group (15 minutes)**
   1. Students will be split up into 3 different groups. Each group will be given an artifact (picture and article) that depicts a different aspect of society from U.S. History.
   2. Students will read the article and analyze the picture for how people in society lived during this time period. How is it similar or different to how the citizens of Ember live? How much has society progressed from then to now?
   3. Teacher will help facilitate discussion in the different groups as needed.
3. **Large Group (15 minutes)**
   1. A representative from each group will present the artifacts that the group analyzed and describe how it connects to Ember.
   2. Class will discuss as a whole their ideas of how society has progress from then to now and also from then to the future in Ember.

**Assessment:** Students will select an artifact that they use often or is representative of something important to them. Students will learn about the history of that artifact and how it has progressed up to now. Students are to bring this item into the following class, as it will be incorporated into the next lesson.

# Artifact # 1

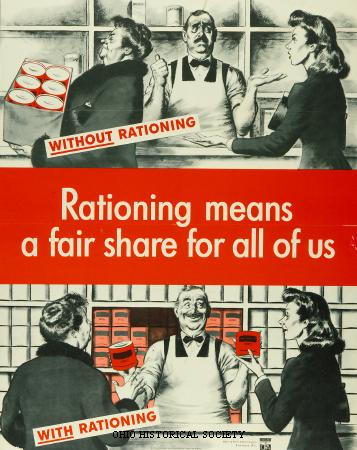
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# Children as young as six years old during the industrial revolution worked hard hours for little or no pay. Children sometimes worked up to 19 hours a day, with a one-hour total break. This was a little bit on the extreme, but it was not common for children who worked in factories to work 12-14 hours with the same minimal breaks. Not only were these children subject to long hours, but also, they were in horrible conditions. Large, heavy, and dangerous equipment was very common for children to be using or working near. Many accidents occurred injuring or killing children on the job. Not until the Factory Act of 1833 did things improve. Children were paid only a fraction of what an adult would get, and sometimes factory owners would get away with paying them nothing. Orphans were the ones subject to this slave-like labor. The factory owners justified their absence of payroll by saying that they gave the orphans food, shelter, and clothing, all of which were far below par. The children who did get paid were paid very little.

Sources: <http://www2.needham.k12.ma.us/nhs/cur/Baker_00/2002_p7/ak_p7/childlabor.html>

<http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/causes.html>

**ARTIFACT # 2**

Every man, woman, and child, on every street in every town across America was affected in some way by the war. Even during the Great Depression there was enough food and products available, if *only* you could afford them.

As the US entered World War II during the winter of 1941, shortages began almost immediately. By necessity our economy shifted to war production almost overnight, and consumer goods were no longer top priority.

In the United States, nationwide food rationing was instituted in the spring of 1942, where each and every member of the family (including babies) were issued ration books by the Office of Price Administration (OPA). These books contained stamps and gave precise details of the amounts of certain types of food that you were allowed. Rationing insured that each person could get their fair share of the items that were in short supply due to the war effort and import reductions. By the end of the war, over a hundred million of each ration book were printed.

Types of rationing included: *Uniform coupon rationing* (sugar is an example) provided equal shares of a single commodity to all consumers;  *Point rationing* provided equivalent shares of commodities by coupons issued for points which could be spent for any combination of items in the group (processed foods, meats, fats, cheese); *Differential coupon rationing* provided shares of a single product according to varying needs (gasoline, fuel oil); and *Certificate rationing* allowed individuals products only after an application demonstrated need (tires, cars, stoves, typewriters).

Citizens were asked to turn in old tires, raincoats, gloves, garden hoses, and rubber shoes for recycling. To save rubber, the government asked Americans to cut back on their driving, to save gas by driving more slowly, and to share rides. Gasoline was rationed nationwide in December 1942. Anything using metal was rationed. Americans were urged to turn in scrap metal for recycling, and schools and community groups across the country held scrap metal drives.

Source: <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=1588>

<http://1940s.org/history/on-the-homefront/war-rationing/>**Artifact # 3**

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Nuclear air raid drills were part of everyday life for schoolchildren in the late 1940s and early '50s. Children were taught to "duck and cover" under their desks and were herded into school basements for periodic air raid drills.

American school children were being taught to "duck and cover" in case of nuclear attack and were being herded into school basements for terrifying bomb drills. Patti Zeck, a first grade student at Carleton elementary school on Detroit's eastside, remembered the frequent drills that sent students and teachers scurrying to the steam tunnels in the bowels of the school building. We marched quietly down into the basement and lined up against the cement walls hoping that the sirens meant just another safety test, and not the real thing.

      As the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union escalated, fear of the bomb and anxiety over the possibility of a nuclear war drove many Americans to dug deep into the earth in an effort to survive what seemed at the time the inevitable nuclear attack from our enemies. Ordinary Americans built bomb shelters in their backyards, often hiding them from their neighbors.

      A nationwide Alert America campaign sought to reassure people that simple civil defense procedures would protect them. Booklets and films offered suggestions on how to survive an atomic attack. Trailers and portable exhibits were used by the Federal Civil Defense Administration to familiarize people with images of the catastrophic effects of the atomic bomb in the naive hope that this would forestall panic. Millions of comic books were distributed to schoolchildren featuring a cartoon turtle called Bert that urged them to "duck and cover" in the event of an atomic strike. Metal identification tags similar to military dog tags were even issued in some schools. Spotters were assigned to watch the skies for anything that looked suspicious or out of the ordinary.

From The Detroit News: <http://apps.detnews.com/apps/history/index.php?id=48#ixzz1sM1o2V71>

**Lesson 2: The Future**

**Objectives:**

1. After viewing the movie WALL-E, students will be able to identify the characteristics of the future society and analyze how this has contributed to their current situation.
2. After class discussion, students will be able to draw connections between the citizens on the Axiom and the citizens in Ember.
3. After class discussion, students will be able to analyze how the progress of humanity is portrayed in both pieces.

**Materials:** Copy of WALL-E movie to be viewed in class, video activity sheet

**Introduction:** The City of Ember is a set in the future. The people unknowingly live in an underground city, unaware of what lies beyond their city. While we watch WALL-E, students will see what connections can be made between these two versions of what the future could be like. What kind of progress has society made in both pieces? What does this say about our society today?

**Activities:**

1. **Wall-E**
   1. Students will watch the first hour of WALL-E in class. The movie will be broken up into 3 segments (Wall-E on Earth, The Axiom, and Wall-E on the Axiom).
   2. The teacher will pause the movie between each segment to hold a discussion
2. **Small Group Discussions (5 minutes each)**
   1. Students will compare and contrast the way that the future is portrayed in Wall-E as compared to what they read in *The City of Ember.*
   2. Students will discuss in small groups and create a Venn Diagram. Each segment will focus on a different aspect of progress and the future
      1. Segment 1: How does each piece interpret has happened to Earth? How is past society represented or seen in each piece?
      2. Segment 2: How does life on The Axiom compare to living in the city of Ember? How are the citizens of each place similar and different? What are the attitudes of the general public?
      3. Segment 3: What kind of progress has The Axiom and the city of Ember shown over the time of their existence? What kinds of things or factors have contributed to this?
   3. The small group Venn Diagrams will be used at the completion of the lesson to create a whole class Venn Diagram
3. **Large Group Discussion**
   1. Teacher will display three Venn Diagrams on the board, one for each segment
   2. Each group will have a representative come to the board and fill in their groups’ contributions. *Repeats can be combined or noted with a check mark.*
   3. Students will have a large group discussion involving their contributions to the Venn Diagrams and also their discoveries during the movie as they relate to the future and progress.

**Assessment:** Students will select an aspect or specific character from Wall-E to compare to a similar aspect or character in *The City of Ember.* Students will create a product (drawing, Venn Diagram, written paragraph etc.) to depict the differences and similarities. **Lesson 3 – The Present**

**Objectives:**

1. Given a modern artifact, students will be able to identify its purpose and how it affects society.
2. Given a modern artifact, students will be able to project how the artifact might change in the future including its function, purpose, and importance.
3. After reading *The City of Ember,* students will be able to find passages in the book that reflect or comment on current society’s habits.

**Materials:** box for time capsule, scissors, markers/ crayons

**Introduction:** We have looked at the past and the future and drawn connections to how we have progressed and will continue to progress into the future. Now it is time to analyze our lives in the present. What kinds of things are important to you? What could you not live without? How has the world changed within your lifetime? Based on how society is right now, what do you think the world will like in 10 years? 40 years? How do you see our modern day items and tendencies are reflected in *The City of Ember?* In Wall-E?

**Activities:**

1. **City of Ember (10 minutes)**
   1. With the people sitting next to them, students will find 2-3 passages in *The City of Ember* where they reference the past (aka our modern time). How do the citizens of Ember view our society
2. **Personal Artifacts (15 minutes)**
   1. Teacher will arrange students in groups according to the category of artifact that they brought in (technology, entertainment, travel, household items, communication etc.)
   2. In small groups, students will share the artifact that they brought in to class and the research they found about the history of the artifact.
   3. Some questions to be considered: Is this progress beneficial or detrimental to society? What are some advantages and drawbacks? Are any of these artifacts touched on in *The City of Ember?*
   4. Students should also find the connections between the artifacts in their group. How are they related? How do these artifacts influence society?
3. **Class Time Capsule (10 minutes)**
   1. Using the artifacts that students brought in, the class will create a time capsule.
   2. Students will compose a letter to the citizens of the future who will be opening the time capsule describing the important features of their group’s category. Be sure to describe the different items’ purposes, importance, function etc. Include any advice or wisdom you have for the citizens of the future or a cautionary tale.
4. **Whole Class Discussion (5 minutes)**
   1. Each group will have a representative share their letter with the class and what they discussed in their groups.

**Assessment:** Students will create a time capsule describing their lives in the present and how they think life will be in the future. Students are to include pictures of their chosen artifacts and written explanations of why they were chosen, how it is significant to society as whole. Students will include an artifact from the past and select an artifact from our discussion of the “future”. Use examples from Wall-E and *The City of Ember.* Students will also include a letter to themselves to be opened in 10 years describing what they think life will be like on a personal level and global level and what kind of progress they hope to see.