

# Genre Journeys 1

---

An independent reading program  
exploring fantasy, realistic fiction,  
biography, and sports fiction

Grades 6–8

Also available: *Genre Journeys 2*, featuring science fiction,  
historical fiction, mystery, and drama.



**About the Author:**

Diane Findlay has worked with children's and young adult literature for more than fifteen years and was the Director of the Waukee (Iowa) Public Library for six years. She is the author of the Exploring Children's Literature series from UpstartBooks and a regular contributor to *LibrarySparks* Magazine.

**Special Thanks to:**

Annette Thomas, Emily Rash, and their eighth grade students at Dallas Center–Grimes Middle School in Dallas Center, IA, for putting these materials to the test.

© 2006 Interact

10200 Jefferson Blvd • P.O. Box 802 Culver City, CA 90232

Phone: (800) 359-0961 • [www.teachinteract.com](http://www.teachinteract.com)

ISBN 1-57336-409-6; ISBN-13 978-1-57336-409-6

All rights reserved. Highsmith Inc. grants permission to reproduce activity sheets and student handouts for classroom use. No other part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without prior written permission from the publisher.

## Welcome to ***Genre Journeys 1!***

Get ready for an exciting journey through literature! With you as their Travel Advisor, your students will earn stickers in their passports as they travel through four magnificent genres: fantasy, biography, realistic fiction, and sports fiction.

Geared for students in grades six through eight, *Genre Journeys* is an independent contract approach to developing language arts skills through reading and literature. These materials allow you and your students to develop customized “itineraries” that accommodate the needs and interests of each individual student. This contract approach is perfect for students who need extra help in language arts, or those looking for additional challenges. Use this unit with specific students or your entire class!

Each genre offers a wide range of recommended titles for three different reading levels and more than fifty activities focusing on vocabulary, comprehension, and writing, as well as extra challenges. After completing your first Genre Journey, you will be able to manage the entire program with little additional investment of time and energy. Expand students’ reading interests and skills by exploring all four genres during the school year.



# ● Table of Contents ●

<b>Purpose and Overview</b>	
What is <i>Genre Journeys</i> ? .....	5
What do students learn? .....	6
How are students organized?.....	8
How much time is required?.....	8
How is learning assessed?.....	9
Why use <i>Genre Journeys</i> ? .....	10
<b>Components</b> .....	12
<b>Getting Started</b>	
Decisions to Make .....	16
Additional Materials Required .....	17
Preparation and Set Up .....	17
<b>Lesson Plan</b>	
Day One .....	20
Week One .....	21
Ongoing Review and Final Evaluation.....	22
<b>Bookmarks</b> .....	24
<b>Rubrics</b> .....	25
<b>Book Circles Overview</b> .....	29
<b>Book Circle Roles</b> .....	30
<b>Activity Card Form</b> .....	32
<b>Travel Miles Chart</b> .....	33
<b>Fantasy</b>	
Introductory Essay .....	37
Travel Itinerary.....	39
Recommended Reading List.....	40
Vocabulary List .....	49
Vocabulary Activity Cards .....	50
Comprehension Activity Cards .....	53
Writing Activity Cards .....	57
Challenge Activity Cards .....	62
Master Worksheets.....	67

**Realistic Fiction**

Introductory Essay .....	73
Travel Itinerary .....	75
Recommended Reading List .....	76
Vocabulary List .....	84
Vocabulary Activity Cards .....	85
Comprehension Activity Cards .....	88
Writing Activity Cards .....	92
Challenge Activity Cards .....	97
Master Worksheets .....	101

**Biography**

Introductory Essay .....	113
Travel Itinerary .....	115
Recommended Reading List .....	116
Vocabulary List .....	125
Vocabulary Activity Cards .....	126
Comprehension Activity Cards .....	129
Writing Activity Cards .....	133
Challenge Activity Cards .....	137
Master Worksheets .....	141

**Sports Fiction**

Introductory Essay .....	151
Travel Itinerary .....	153
Recommended Reading List .....	154
Vocabulary List .....	163
Vocabulary Activity Cards .....	164
Comprehension Activity Cards .....	167
Writing Activity Cards .....	171
Challenge Activity Cards .....	175
Master Worksheets .....	179

<b>Standards .....</b>	<b>188</b>
------------------------	------------

<b>Teacher Feedback Form .....</b>	<b>194</b>
------------------------------------	------------

## Purpose and Overview

### What is *Genre Journeys*?

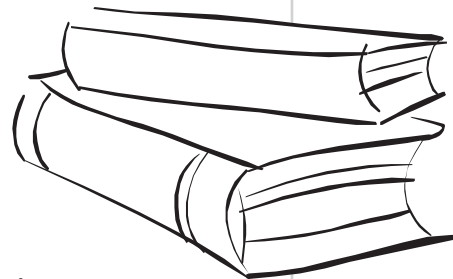
*Genre Journeys* is an independent reading program for middle school students that develops language arts and other curricular skills and an understanding of literary genres. Designed as a contract approach, this unit reaches all kinds of learners with its broad range of activities and variety of reading options. It provides a structure that can be used to create a customized literature unit for one or more students. Reading level, activity selection, and effort required can be adapted to best fit the needs of each student. Use the unit with one student or your entire class. Incorporate as part of your whole-class curriculum or use it as an independent study alternative during scheduled or free class time.

Acting as “Travel Advisor,” you assist student travelers as they select a journey into fantasy, realistic fiction, biography, or sports fiction. Use the Commuter, Frequent Flyer, or Jet-Setter Recommended Reading List to find a book at the reading level that fits best. Then select a variety of Vocabulary, Comprehension, Writing, and Challenge activities from more than 50 choices provided in each genre.

Each student pursues his or her individual journey by reading the chosen book and completing the selected activities. Travel miles are earned each time a student successfully completes an activity. These miles move the student toward the goal: completing the Travel Itinerary (contract) and earning the appropriate Passport Sticker.

To reinforce verbal communication skills, have each student select at least one activity that can be shared with the class. Or you might ask participants to present summaries of their journeys to the class and then conduct a mini awards ceremony. This is a way to recognize individual achievements and creativity while students practice presentation and listening skills. Verbal sharing allows students to learn from and motivate each other. Hearing about a fun project might get other students excited about pursuing their own *Genre Journeys*. The Book Circle options outlined on page 29 also serve these goals.

The journey ends when the student earns enough travel miles, including completion of the presentation, to complete the Travel Itinerary and earn a Passport Sticker to commemorate his or her experience. The student is then ready to create a new personal reading adventure. The combinations of books and activities are endless!



### What do students learn?

We use national standards to identify and communicate the learning objectives for each Interact unit. These standards detail what students are expected to learn as well as how they will demonstrate their new knowledge. In the back of this Teacher Guide you will find the national standards as determined by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education Learning), the NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts, and California Applied Learning Standards that apply to this unit.

Although your students may choose different books and different activities, they will all gain and experience the following:

#### **Knowledge**

- Recognize characteristics of subgenres of fantasy literature found in high fantasy stories, graphic novels, myths, tall tales, fables, fairy tales, folk tales, legends, and animal tales.
- Understand vocabulary associated with fantasy literature, such as “mage” and “benevolent.”
- Recognize characteristics of subgenres of realistic fiction found in family life, friendship, school life, romance, adventure, coming-of-age, and social issue stories.
- Understand vocabulary associated with realistic fiction literature, such as “satire” and “empathy.”
- Recognize characteristics of subgenres of biography found in individual and collective biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and biographical profiles, sketches, and anecdotes.
- Understand vocabulary associated with biography, such as “conspiratorial” and “itinerant.”
- Recognize characteristics of subgenres of sports fiction found in sports action stories, sports mysteries, and building character through sports, sports humor, and sports fantasy stories.
- Understand vocabulary associated with sports fiction, such as “equestrian” and “scrimmage.”
- Learn key differences between genres (when more than one journey is completed).

#### **Skills**

- Work independently to complete tasks by specified deadlines.
- Read fantasy, realistic fiction, biography, and sports fiction literature with understanding.

- Complete writing activities based on the characteristics of one or more of the genres they read.
- Complete writing activities using correct spelling and punctuation.
- Prepare and share a presentation, display, or oral report about one or more of the activities completed.
- Listen politely as a member of an audience and ask relevant questions of the speaker.
- Work cooperatively to share resources and gain support to complete activities.

**Attitudes**

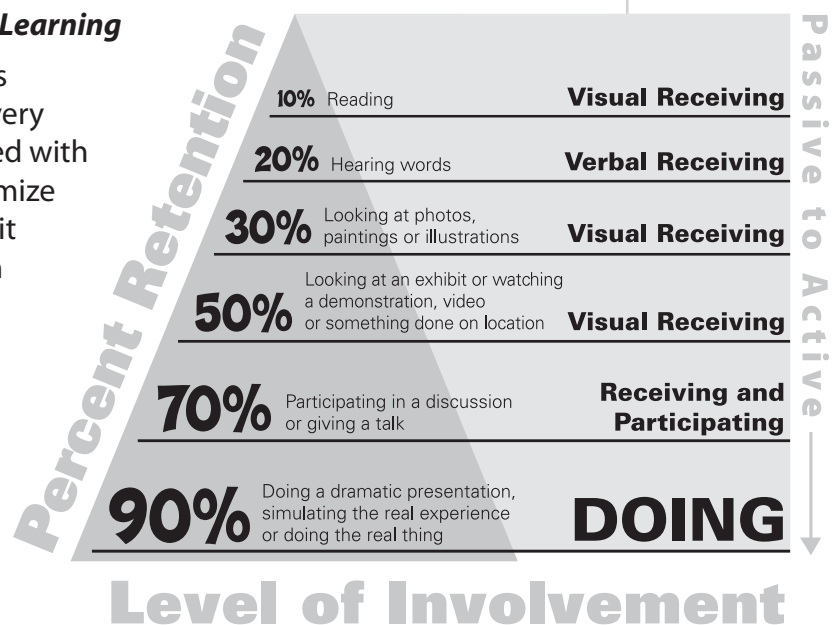
- Appreciate the importance of personal responsibility and time management when completing independent contracts.
- Recognize the value of being an independent reader.
- Appreciate the richness of different genres of literature.

**Experiential Learning**

Students learn best through experience. Research shows that student retention and understanding increase as students become more involved and engaged in the learning process, regardless of whether they are high achievers, reluctant learners, or second language learners. That’s why this unit requires students to choose their own activities and monitor their own progress. They will complete some tasks alone and will work cooperatively on others. They will control their learning and will sometimes teach others.

**Multiple Styles of Teaching and Learning**

Because you have the sometimes overwhelming task of helping every student learn, this unit is designed with great flexibility so you can customize not only how you will use the unit with each student but what each student will do. He or she will read a book and might spell words or complete traditional worksheets. But the student may also invent a time-travel device, design costumes for a stage play, or become a sports commentator.



Adapted from Edgar Dale’s “Cone of Experience”



### How are students organized?

*Genre Journeys* uses an independent contract approach. You might use this unit with one student, a small group of students, or your entire class. Students will work alone to complete the reading and many of the activities. Some activities will require cooperation with a partner or a small group. Other activities require a demonstration or some other method of sharing what was created or learned.

While this unit is designed for individual student use, students can contract in pairs or small groups. You can arrange for two students to work as a team to read the same book and complete the activities they select as part of a single contract. Or you can encourage two or more students with separate contracts to partner for the completion of a particular activity built into each contract.

Book Circle options allow students reading the same book or students reading different books within the same genre to explore literature through group discussion, analysis, and journal writing. Students using this option will also benefit by taking on the roles of Discussion Leader, Literary Analyst, and Connections Commentator. Book Circles can be used in conjunction with any Genre Journey, or independent of a Genre Journey contract.

### How much time is required?

How much class time you take will depend on how you use the program. You can create a structured or unstructured program that takes anywhere from four hours of class time (reading a short book and completing one or two activities) to 70 hours of class time spread throughout the year (two hours of class time per week). Here are some timing options:

#### ***With individual students or small groups:***

- Complete one genre in approximately one month of class time by allowing students two weeks to read their books as homework and completing an average of two activities per week. Students can work on activities during class time or at home as needed.
- Use during designated class times throughout the school year, allowing students to move from genre to genre.
- Use odd moments and spare time during class periods for students to work independently at their own pace. Students can then complete as many journeys as time allows.

**With your entire class:**

- Schedule twice a week for four to six weeks as a regular reading workshop.
- Schedule specific times each day for students working on the same genre.
- Schedule specific times each day for students working on individual genres, including Book Circles for each genre.

**How is learning assessed?**

The process for assessing student work is flexible, as the broad range of activities lends itself to a variety of evaluation methods. These activities allow students varied opportunities to demonstrate learning and competency through different modes and intelligences. We have included four standard rubrics so your assessment can include not only written work but also evaluation of demonstrated skills, oral exchanges, class presentations, individual and cooperative group behavior, application of strategy and process, and evaluation of other student work, such as projects or displays and Book Circles. Use of these rubrics encourages authentic assessment by uncovering evidence that students have learned the targeted content or skills and can apply what they know. Answer keys are not provided for activities, as many are designed to reflect responses to specific books and answers vary.

**What do Rubric Scores Mean?**

- 4 Exceeds Expectations**—This rating describes work that exceeds the standard for the activity. The descriptors include words such as “careful,” “complete,” “excellent,” “effective,” “involvement,” and “enthusiasm.” Students who earn a “4” demonstrate leadership and knowledge during participation in contract activities. Their performance and/or product are significantly better than what was required or expected.
- 3 Meets Expectations**—This rating describes work that meets the standard with quality. The descriptors lack some of the positive adjectives of a “4,” but these students have mastered the content or skills and can demonstrate their understanding in application settings.
- 2 Nearly There**—This rating describes work that almost meets the standard. Inconsistent effort, evidence of little involvement, or a misconception of content will result in a “2” rating. These students need to try harder or revise their work in order to meet the standards.
- 1 Incomplete**—This rating describes work that has not met the standard in content and/or skill. It is incomplete and ineffective. These students will need more instruction and another opportunity to demonstrate knowledge or skill, or will require alternative instruction and assessment.

Use these tools to create an assessment approach that works for you. Use the rubrics along with more traditional forms of assessment for vocabulary definitions and completion of worksheets. Review project work with students in individual or group consultations. Assign letter grades or award travel miles as appropriate for each category of activities and/or each completed contract. Be sure to make student project files available to parents during conferences or open house programs.

### **Why Use *Genre Journeys*?**

*Genre Journeys* is written to be extremely flexible and user-friendly for both you and your students. Here are some advantages to using this program:

#### ***Differentiation***

Like all Interact units, *Genre Journeys* provides differentiated instruction through a broad range of activities and assessment options. Students learn and use knowledge, skills, and attitudes through all domains of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Activities offer students opportunities to gain and demonstrate knowledge through several of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, including Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Visual, Logical/Mathematical, Kinesthetic, and Verbal. Adjust the level of challenge through book and activity selection or by assigning different travel mile requirements to different students. Assist special needs students in selecting books and activities that leverage their interests and strengths and allow them to succeed. Work with your Librarian, Resource Specialist, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, and other specialists to coordinate instruction.

#### ***Here are some ways to differentiate using this unit:***

- Using the same material, create individual contracts that are as simple or as challenging as you require and that fit the needs of different kinds of learners.
- Choose activities that reinforce basic skills like spelling, encourage creativity and independent thinking, exercise research skills, flex critical thinking muscles, or a mix of all of the above.
- Invite motivated students to propose original activities in the four categories for your review and assignment of travel miles.
- Adjust total travel miles required or assign different Activity Card mileage to adjust expectations for different learners or different goals.
- Encourage students to move from one leveled reading list to the next as they gain experience and confidence in a genre.

**Motivation**

- Involving students in choosing their genre, book, vocabulary words, and activities allows students to personally invest in the experience and enhances their enthusiasm and motivation.
- Students practice initiative and responsibility as they manage their time and self-direct their way through their contracts.

**Flexibility**

- *Genre Journeys* can be used intensively over a short period of time, spread out over an entire term, used throughout the year or anything in between.
- Activities do not have to be completed in order. While most Comprehension Activities and some other activities require responses to the chosen book, and therefore must be completed after reading, other activities do not. Students can start on Vocabulary Activities as soon as they have selected their vocabulary words, and may work on other activities that don't relate specifically to their book at any time in the process.
- Adjust the amount of independent work to group interaction by providing more or less time for students to collaborate on activities and present or share their work in various formats. Requiring students to present something from their work to the class and/or using the Book Circles option will increase opportunities for practicing skills of group cooperation and interaction.

**Ease of Use**

- Once you and your students work through one genre contract you will be familiar with the format. Students can easily move on to other genres with little guidance beyond the initial consultation.
- Motivated students may complete extra activities or read additional titles within a genre without extra guidance from you.

## Components

### The *Genre Journeys* Package

The *Genre Journeys* package consists of this Teacher Guide, a set of Passports, and a set of Passport Stickers. This package includes everything you need to run the program, including reproducible genre activity cards, reproducible worksheets, assessment rubrics, and Book Circle materials. The Passports and Passport Stickers are tools to help you turn this learning experience into an exciting adventure for individual students or the whole class.

*Genre Journeys 1* is organized as four separate chapters. Each chapter is a complete journey that explores one of the following genres—fantasy, realistic fiction, biography, and sports fiction.

#### **Each genre includes:**

- An **Essay** introducing the genre
- A reading contract called a **Travel Itinerary**
- A **Recommended Reading List**
- A **Vocabulary List** of words related to the genre
- A set of reproducible **Activity Cards** for each of these four categories: **Vocabulary, Comprehension, Writing, and Challenge**
- Reproducible **Masters**

**Essay** — Each expedition begins with an **Essay** that introduces the genre by identifying basic terms, typical elements, and subgenres. The essay will help students get the most from their reading and prepare for the activities to follow. When new or challenging literary terms are introduced, they appear in boldface type and are accompanied by a definition in italics. This treatment of key words carries through all activities.

**Travel Itinerary** — The **Travel Itinerary** is the actual reading contract that you and each student will fill out together to begin any Genre Journey. Here you will document the student’s chosen book, vocabulary words, activities, and target dates. You and your student will sign this agreement.

**Recommended Reading List** — Each **Recommended Reading List** is divided into three reading levels. “Commuter” titles are a grade level or two below the program’s target grades (six through eight), and are chosen to engage reluctant or less-skilled readers. “Frequent Flyer” titles fall within the target grade range. Titles on the “Jet-Setter” lists are selected to challenge more advanced readers. Grade levels for each book are noted in the margin so you may omit them if you copy the lists for student use. You might direct students to appropriate lists or suggest other titles from among your own favorites.

Encourage students to move to the next reading level as they gain skill and confidence within a particular genre.

Each of the three reading level lists includes a variety of styles and subgenres; each combines perennial favorites with fresh new titles. When we include titles that are part of a series, we usually list the first book of the series. We hope students who enjoy these books will go on to read the entire series in sequence.

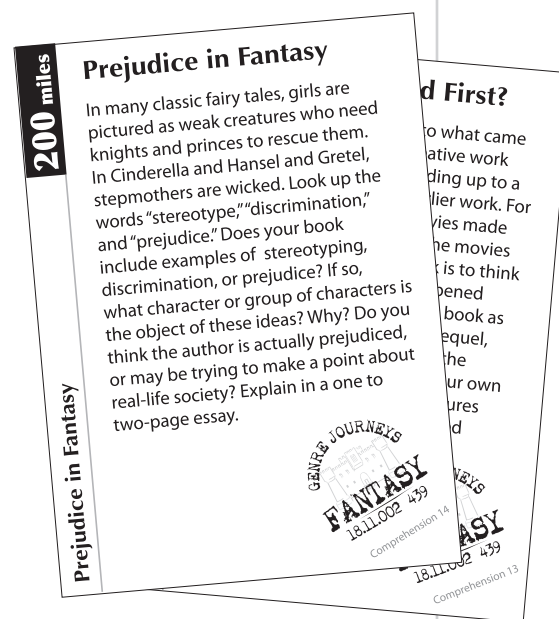
Some students will focus their reading within one genre. Help these students use their subjects of interest to make bridges into other genres. For example, a student who only reads nonfiction sports books might be convinced to try a biography of an athlete or a realistic novel about a character who is active in sports. We've made an effort to cross-pollinate the Recommended Reading Lists with titles that relate to other genres for just this reason. Look for links between genre lists as you guide students in their genre and title choices.

Each **Vocabulary List** contains 50 words that relate to the genre. We have included words that represent various parts of speech, which will help students when completing vocabulary-related activities. Some genres are very broad and offer endless vocabulary options. Feel free to add to or remove words from any vocabulary list. New words might relate to the genre or the particular books your students are reading.

Each genre features a set of reproducible **Activity Cards** in each of the four categories—Vocabulary, Comprehension, Writing, and Challenge. These activities accommodate a variety of learning styles and call on several of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. Vocabulary Activities help students learn to define, spell, understand, and use new words associated with the genre. Comprehension Activities allow them to demonstrate understanding of their book's plot, setting, characters, and themes, structure and style. Writing Activities use ideas from students' reading to practice different kinds of writing. And Challenge Activities provide opportunities to extend ideas from the reading into creative expression, research, and cross-curricular applications. Starting points or sample responses are provided as needed. You may remove cards or use the blank cards provided to add your own activities to any category.

## Vocabulary List

## Activity Cards



### Teaching tip



Adjust the number of travel miles based on rubric performance. Increase miles earned if the student exceeds expectations, and decrease miles earned if improvements are needed. Reassign or average miles for work that is redone or resubmitted. Consider awarding miles for good behavior or highlighting specific activities by assigning double miles.

Activity Cards are valued at 50, 100, 150, or 200 travel miles and are arranged in ascending order of difficulty, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, the particular combination and complexity of skills involved and the time required. You decide how many travel miles a student must earn to complete the expedition based on your educational goals and the time you want to spend. Adjust the total and amounts in each section as appropriate. You might allow students to choose any activities within any category as long as they reach the required total. Or you may require a particular number of travel miles per category. Use the same approach with all students or change your expectations based on student need or ability. For example, you could require a gifted student to complete more Challenge Activities while instructing a reluctant reader to focus more on vocabulary building or writing skills. Or you might require students to complete a certain number of activities per category to earn a Passport Sticker and ignore travel mile values altogether.

### Masters

All documents that may be reproduced from this Teacher Guide are labeled as **Masters**, including the Essays, Travel Itineraries, Recommended Reading Lists, and Activity Cards. Most activities can be completed on regular notebook paper or require common classroom or craft materials. Some activities require students to use additional information, worksheets, or graphic organizers that are also provided as reproducible Masters. Master worksheets are located at the end of each genre chapter and are organized by activity card number (found in the lower right corner of each card.)

### Answer Keys

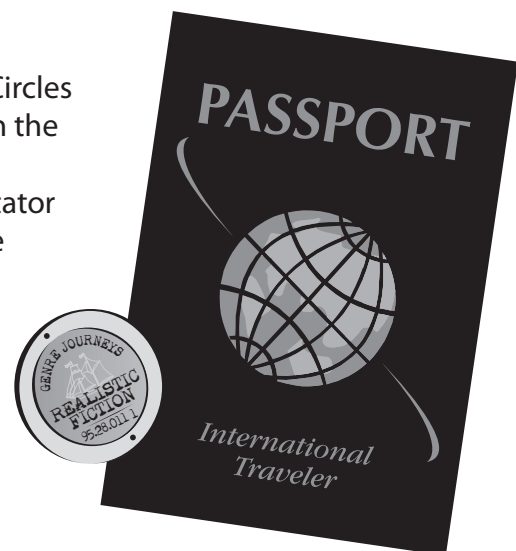
You will not find answer keys for the activities, as many call for responses to specific books and answers vary. Starting points, examples, or sample responses are provided as needed.

### Book Circle Role Sheets

Students participating in the Book Circles option of *Genre Journeys* will take on the roles of Discussion Leader, Literary Analyst, and Connections Commentator for their groups. These sheets define those roles, aid preparation, and clarify expectations.

### Passports and Passport Stickers

Students earn travel miles by completing activities. As they earn miles, they can add them up





on a page of their Passports. Once a Genre Journey is complete, you can give the student the appropriate Sticker for the Passport page. Earning and tracking miles will help motivate students to continue working toward their goals.

### ***Travel Miles Chart***

This chart allows you to add interest and motivation by tracking total travel miles earned collectively by all program participants toward whatever goal you choose to set. Enlarge the Master chart to create a wall-size display for your classroom.

### ***Bookmarks***

Each student will receive a bookmark that corresponds to the genre he or she is reading. Students may want to personalize their bookmarks with color or other decoration.



# Book Circles Overview

Book Circles allow students reading the same book, or students reading different books within the same genre, to explore literature through group discussion, analysis, and journal writing. Students will take on the roles of Discussion Leader, Literary Analyst, and Connections Commentator for their group, changing roles at each meeting.

Three to six students will make up each Book Circle. Students are grouped by the Travel Advisor according to the book or genre they are reading. The groups will meet for 30 minutes at least four times. At each meeting, student members will lead discussion based on the agenda provided on the Role Sheets, point out literary elements or devices used in their books, explore connections between their reading and the real world, and plan for their next meeting. The Travel Advisor will be on hand to check in on the meetings from time to time but will not take part in the discussion.

**Between meetings, students will keep journals that include these entries:**

- A short summary of the assigned reading
- Questions or thoughts about the assigned reading
- Predictions about what might happen next in the story
- Preparation for assigned roles at the next meeting
- Evaluation of the last meeting (Did discussion add to my understanding of the book? Why or why not? How did I contribute to group discussion?)

The Role Sheets detail the tasks of the Discussion Leader, Literary Analyst, and Connections Commentator.