



# Teacher Handbook



# Table of Contents

<b>Why Do a Novel Study?.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Overview.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Using this Handbook.....	4
Novel Study Structure.....	4
How Novel Studies Fit in Your Curriculum.....	4
Scheduling a Novel Study.....	5
Skills Addressed in Novel Studies.....	5
<b>Phase One: Novel Launch.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Purpose.....	6
Generating Engagement and Momentum.....	6
Setting Expectations.....	6
Engaging Parents and Guardians.....	7
Addressing Complex Content.....	7
<b>Phase Two: Reading.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Purpose.....	8
Reading Time in Class.....	8
Homework.....	8
Annotation.....	9
Formative Assessment and Accountability.....	9
Differentiated Supports for Reading.....	10
<b>Phase Three: Small Group Discussion.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Purpose.....	11
Student-Facing Questions.....	11
Three-Round Discussion Structure.....	11
Differentiated Support.....	12
<b>Phase Four: Seminar.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Purpose.....	13
Using the Seminar Plan.....	13
Generating Engagement.....	14
<b>Phase Five: Post-Write.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Purpose.....	17
Support and Expectations.....	17
Assessing Student Work.....	17
<b>Appendix A: Annotation Framework.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix B: Three Ways of Reading Lesson Plan.....</b>	<b>19</b>

# Why Do a Novel Study?

Humans are wired to love stories, and stories are essential to how we learn. As popular cognitive scientist Dan Willingham explains, “the human mind seems exquisitely tuned to understand and remember stories—so much so that psychologists sometimes refer to them as ‘psychologically privileged,’ meaning that they are treated differently in the memory than other types of material.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet, when students encounter novels in school, it’s not always love at first sight. So how can we help our students connect with novels? Our Novel Study Library supports a positive, meaningful reading experience in two key ways:

- 1. Text selection** Students need to feel that the novels they read are relevant—to their cultures, identities, developmental attributes, and interests. While canonical novels explore universal themes that students can learn to connect with, all students benefit from entry points that are closer to their own lived experiences. The Novel Study Library includes a diverse selection of high-interest, contemporary novels across a wide range of genres and themes.
- 2. Student-centered instruction** Secondary students thrive when they are empowered to explore the full range of their natural responses to literature, with the teacher acting as a facilitator of discovery and inquiry rather than a tour guide through predetermined points of interest in a text. The Novel Study structure puts students at the center, empowering teachers to step back and facilitate rather than control students’ reading experiences in order to grow their love of literature and their agency as learners. This increased agency gives students an opportunity to read critically, engage with the text more deeply, and grow their love of literature.



<sup>1</sup> in *Why Don't Students Like School? A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions about How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom* (2010) pp. 66–67

# Overview

## Using this Handbook

This handbook will walk you through each phase of the Novel Study structure, providing resources and ideas for scaffolding and differentiation to meet every student where they are with reading, discussing, and writing about whole novels. Specific resources included in the Novel Studies themselves will be called out in **purple**.

## Novel Study Structure

Novel Studies include five phases:

- **Phase 1: Novel Launch** Kickoff the Novel Study by generating excitement and clarifying expectations.
- **Phase 2: Reading** During this two-to-three-week period, students read and annotate daily with individual support as needed.
- **Phase 3: Small Group Discussion** Students engage in three rounds of student-led discussion of the novel. These conversations are structured to guide students through increasingly analytical exploration of their personal reactions to the novel.
- **Phase 4: Seminar** The instructional arc of each study culminates in a formal seminar discussion of the text, with follow-up writing activities. Students deepen their literary analysis skills and strengthen their speaking and listening skills during this whole-class, text-based discussion.
- **Phase 5: Post-Write** Students extend their analysis of an aspect of the novel in writing.

Novel Studies also include **Optional Extension Activities** with creative writing, research, literary analysis, and informed action prompts.

During a Novel Study students **read the whole novel**—with support as needed—before engaging in analytical discussion and writing about the text. This means that you won't find chapter-by-chapter comprehension questions within each Novel Study Lesson Plan. Instead, students' own daily annotations give them personal accountability and offer a window into students' comprehension, allowing you to see **what they understand and how they are approaching comprehension**, rather than *if* they know the answer to specific questions.

This structure imitates the way adults engage with novels, whether for pleasure in a book club or for academic study in a college seminar. And it works for readers of all levels. This handbook provides resources for scaffolding and differentiating the approach so that every student in your classroom experiences success with whole novels.

## How Novel Studies Fit in Your Curriculum

Each Novel Study is designed to last two to three weeks as a **supplement to enrich your core curriculum**. As shown in the sample calendar that follows, each Novel Study requires only a few days of devoted class time for active discussion and writing. This allows you to incorporate a Novel Study flexibly to connect to themes and topics in your core curriculum.

### Scheduling a Novel Study

Your Novel Study calendar will vary depending on many factors, including bell schedule, core curriculum pacing, and the length of the novel. Because Novel Studies run concurrently with your core curriculum, your calendar requires only a few full class periods devoted to the culminating discussions and writing activities of the Novel Study. The sample calendar below shows one possible model for organizing class time during a Novel Study.

Sample Novel Study Calendar

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>40 min class time:</b> Novel Launch  HW: Read & annotate	HW: Read & annotate	<b>20 min class time:</b> Reading, Individual check-ins  HW: Read & annotate	HW: Read & annotate	<b>20 min class time:</b> Reading, Whole-class check-in  HW: Read & annotate
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>10 min class time:</b> Reading, Individual check-ins  HW: Read & annotate	HW: Read & annotate	<b>20 min class time:</b> Reading, Whole-class check-in  HW: Read and annotate	HW: Read & annotate	<b>10 min class time:</b> Reading, Individual check-ins  HW: Read & annotate
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Full class period:</b> Small Group Discussions		<b>Full class period:</b> Seminar	<b>30 min class time:</b> Post-Write	<b>30 min class time:</b> Post-Write

Other ways to integrate Novel Studies into your core scope and sequence include:

- Selecting short texts to read during class time that relate to the novel by theme, content, or structure
- Using class time to do creative writing assignments that connect to the content of the novel or invite students to emulate some element of the author’s craft
- Incorporating a Novel Study to engage students in meaningful work during transitional or disrupted times of year, such as standardized testing windows
- Using a Novel Study to keep students engaged with literature while focused on informational texts

### Skills Addressed in Novel Studies

Novel Studies are an opportunity for students to independently apply the standards-driven skills they are developing through the daily work of the core curriculum. This includes essential reading skills such as:

- asking questions and making predictions
- making inferences
- analyzing character development
- considering the impact of structure
- interpreting figurative language
- analyzing points of view
- determining themes
- making connections
- using evidence to support interpretation of the text

## Phase One: Novel Launch

### Phase One Objectives:

- Build excitement and engagement
- Clarify expectations for pacing, independent reading, due dates, and in-class activities

### Purpose

Many students can go their entire academic careers without ever reading a novel in class. As such, Novel Studies can be exciting to some students and overwhelming to others. In order to engage students with this wide range of experiences and feelings, consider developing a ritual launch for the beginning of each new Novel Study. This can build excitement about the book as well as familiarity and confidence in the routine of reading novels by helping students know what to expect. The **Novel Launch** embedded in each Novel Study includes three basic components: a **Hook Activity**, a **Launch Letter** for parents and guardians (available in English and Spanish), and **suggested pacing**. Tailor these basic components to develop a Novel Launch routine that meets your classroom needs.

During the Novel Launch, focus on:

- Generating engagement and momentum
- Setting expectations
- Engaging parents and guardians
- Addressing complex content

### Generating Engagement and Momentum

The most important outcome of a Novel Launch is that students feel excited to start reading. Each Novel Study includes one or more optional Hook Activities that are designed to generate excitement and curiosity about the book. Where relevant, these activities also provide basic contextual information about the book to support comprehension.

To generate momentum on the first day of each Novel Study, distribute materials students will need, such as copies of the novel, bookmarks, and colorful sticky notes for annotations, and begin reading in class that day. Consider reading aloud the first few pages with the class. Think aloud as you model how to annotate the text. Then have students read aloud and guide them to pause and reflect on what they are reading, make annotations, and discuss predictions.

### Setting Expectations

The Novel Launch can also be used to establish expectations and accountability for daily reading and annotation. Develop a reading calendar that sets minimum expectations, but allow students to read ahead if they want to. Since whole-class check-ins are about process rather than content (see Phase Two: Reading), it is okay for students to be in different places in the book. Each Novel Study includes suggested daily reading expectations that will move all students through the book in three weeks or less.

Determine and communicate in advance how you will support student accountability, including if and when you will assign grades for annotations and other work completed as part of the Novel Study.

## Engaging Parents and Guardians

Each Novel Study Lesson Plan includes a **Launch Letter** in English and Spanish that explains why the novel is worthy of study and what students and their families can expect during the Novel Study. You can use the provided letter exactly as written or as inspiration for your own. Each letter includes novel-specific **Conversation Starters** to support at home discussion of the novel.

The **About the Book** page at the beginning of each Novel Study is another great source of information for communicating with families who want to know more about what their child is reading. It includes a summary and identifies salient features of the book, including awards won, outstanding elements of author's craft, relevance to adolescent developmental attributes, content tags (including topics, themes, and mature content), and Lexile™ measure.

To set clear expectations and empower parents and guardians to support their students during Novel Study, send the Launch Letter home along with your reading schedule, guidelines for annotation, and details about homework expectations, grading, and other policies and norms. Be sure to include a way for parents and guardians to reach you with questions and concerns.

## Addressing Complex Content

Many of the titles in the Novel Study Library address real events and issues in the lives of adolescents around the world. Depending on your students' backgrounds and lived experiences, what may be acceptable in one classroom could be considered overly mature or controversial in another. To that end, Novel Studies offer **Content Tags** on the **About the Book** page to help you determine whether a title is appropriate for your students.

Middle- and high-school students are developmentally primed to explore topics that may be deemed "mature" or controversial. When set up for success, they are remarkably capable of reading and talking about a wide range of human experiences. Teachers can take a few simple steps to create a supportive environment for discussion of mature content in the context of fiction.

- **Forecast potentially difficult or complex content.** Let students know the content is coming so they are not caught off guard.
- **Set expectations and ground rules.** Contextualize content within the fictional world of the book or the real historical context (in the case of memoirs and historical fiction). Clarify that the author may have included certain language, behaviors, or events because they are part of the characters' world, but these may not be appropriate in the contemporary world or in the context of school. Work with the class to establish guidelines for how you will discuss the book's content with maturity and respect.
- **Facilitate discussion of the content intentionally.** Ask students to reflect on the role the content plays in the book. Why is this specific content included? What ideas or themes does it contribute to? What do you think is the author's point of view on the topic?

## Phase Two: Reading

### Phase Two Objectives:

- Support students in developing an independent reading practice, including metacognition and reading stamina
- Practice literal, inferential, and critical reading and responses
- Help students experience the entire novel so they can discuss and write about the book more effectively and authentically

### Purpose

In Novel Studies, students are asked to read the whole novel before engaging in formal discussion and writing. However, that does not mean students read without support! Many students will be inexperienced reading an entire novel in this way. This phase offers a supportive structure for students to read, think, and annotate so that they can come to discussions primed to dig deep into the text and develop their interpretations with textual support.

During the Reading phase, focus on:

- Reading time in class
- Homework
- Annotation
- Formative assessment and accountability
- Differentiated supports for reading

### Reading Time in Class

While Novel Studies are designed to use minimal classroom time, setting aside regular chunks of class time for reading accomplishes two important goals:

1. It helps students stay on track and maintain their reading momentum.
2. It gives you an opportunity to spot check student annotations and provide one-on-one support.

In-class reading time can be as light as ten minutes at the beginning of class, three times per week. You can also offer some sustained reading sessions to help students stay on track with the reading calendar and develop their reading stamina.

### Homework

If possible, make reading and annotating the only homework you assign during Novel Studies. This sets students up for success and helps you maintain accountability with frequent spot checks of student annotations during class time. If your calendar allows, schedule one or two Novel Study “homework pauses” so you can collect students’ books/notes and do a more thorough review.



## Annotation

Teaching and using a consistent annotation framework for reading novels strikes a balance between encouraging thoughtful reading and allowing students to experience the novel fully without too much disruption. The **Annotation Framework** embedded in each Novel Study, also found in this handbook as [Appendix A](#), guides students to record **noticings, questions, reactions**, and **moments we need to discuss** (a way for students to mark particularly salient moments they are burning to talk about).

If you can, provide sticky notes so students can annotate directly in their books without marking the pages. If that is not an option, consider setting up reading response journals where students can write their comments and questions and cite the relevant page in the book.

Once students understand the basics of annotating text, you can use the **Three Ways of Reading Lesson Plan** ([See Appendix B](#)) to help students develop their metacognition by learning how to categorize responses as literal, inferential, or critical. Students can then form a routine of revisiting their annotations every few days, marking them with an L, I, or C to identify the type of thinking they represent, and aiming for a balance of all three.

## Formative Assessment and Accountability

### *Individual Check-Ins*

Use reading time for accountability check-ins with individual students. This will enable you to spot check their annotations, assign homework grades if desired, and offer in-the-moment differentiation.

### *Whole Class Check-Ins*

Take about five minutes each week to check in with the class. Ask: “How’s the reading going?”

That’s it. This simple prompt can open up reflections on the reading process, frustrations, successes, and opportunities for students to share what works for them. Make it clear that all reactions are okay, including negative or difficult ones! Sometimes those are the best sparks for teaching ideas that will help students continue to develop their independent reading skills and stamina.

If students are quiet or unsure of how to respond, try some follow-up questions:

- Is reading going faster or slower than you expected?
- What’s tripping you up?
- What have you figured out about reading or annotating that is helping you make progress?

When students inevitably bring up interesting moments from the book that they want to discuss, celebrate their excitement, but remind them to record their thinking on sticky notes or in their reading journal to save for discussion when everyone has finished reading.

## Differentiated Supports for Reading

Some students will benefit from different access points, additional reading support, or alternative formats for responding to the text. Explore the ideas below to see if they are a good fit for your students:

- **Offer audiobooks** to any student who might benefit from an auditory reading experience, including those who struggle with decoding and/or fluency. If students are using an audiobook as their primary text, they can record annotations in a reading journal or follow along in the print text and add sticky notes as they would otherwise.
- **Use partner reading** with a protocol to focus students' attention on what's particularly difficult or interesting about a given novel.
- **Take advantage of other adults** such as parents, reading specialists, media specialists, librarians, speech and language pathologists, and other content teachers.
- **Lead strategic re-reading** of select passages, either as a whole class or with small groups. This can unlock meaning in more challenging texts and simultaneously teach a reading skill that students can apply on their own.
- **Try targeted questioning and informal conferencing** to help struggling readers access the text and to model literal, inferential, and critical responses.
- **Allow alternative response formats** like longer sticky notes or double-entry journals for students who have demonstrated consistent mastery of the basic annotation format and are interested in different methods for recording their thinking.
- **Provide sequels or related novels** for particularly fast readers to read during in-class reading time if they finish the novel early.

## Phase Three: Small Group Discussion

### Phase Three Objectives:

- Provide a loosely structured opportunity for students to explore their personal reactions to the text
- Invite empathetic responses to characters and events
- Move students gradually from reacting to the text to analyzing and evaluating the text

### Purpose

Opportunities for small group discussion give students a chance to share and explore their personal responses to the text, preparing them for a more directed, analytical discussion in the whole-class seminar. This is a key practice in helping students become more critical readers. It honors and values students' personal reading experiences, but it also gives them a "way in" to analysis and evaluation by first surfacing their responses so they can then interrogate those responses and analyze what in the text elicited them.

During the Small Group Discussion phase, focus on:

- Student-facing question handouts
- Three-round discussion structure
- Differentiated support

### Student-Facing Questions

Each Novel Study Lesson Plan includes a student-facing page with novel-specific discussion questions. You can provide the questions to students as a handout, project or post them where they can be seen by everyone in the room, or cut out and laminate the questions to create a card deck.

### Three-Round Discussion Structure

Small group discussion questions are provided in three rounds to give students a loosely structured opportunity to share their thinking about the book with peers. Each round of open-ended questions has a specific purpose:

- **Round One: Zoom Out** questions give students a chance to step back from reading and share their initial reactions. These questions are the equivalent of casually asking, "So what did you think?"
- **Round Two: Zoom In** questions invite students to start connecting their reactions to the text itself. Questions are still open-ended but call for students to comment on elements of the text (e.g., title, setting, point of view, characters) or make connections to the world and other texts.
- **Round Three: Focus** questions invite students to dig deeper and think about moves the author makes to develop the story and elicit reader reactions. While these questions may point to elements of author's craft, they do not assume that students have prior knowledge of specific literary devices.

After each round, students should record their most significant insights and questions on chart paper or in a discussion log. These notes may yield great additions to the formal Seminar in Phase 4.

### Differentiated Support

Most students will benefit from some scaffolding as they learn how to participate in self-led, small group discussion effectively—and with enjoyment! Tailor the level of structure and support to your whole class or to specific groups and individuals.

**Open Structure:** If students are experienced and comfortable with self-led small group discussion, place them in pairs or trios, set a time limit for each round of discussion, and let them loose. Students can pick questions to ask one another, or pick the ones they want to answer themselves.

**Light Structure:** If students are not yet practiced in self-led discussions, providing some light structure can help them experience immediate success and work toward independence.

- Have students work in groups of three. Trios can be a sweet spot between pairs, which may put too much pressure on anxious or hesitant students, and groups of four, which can make it too easy for one student to “sit out” the conversation.
- Use heterogeneous grouping so students get exposure to many different perspectives and ways of thinking about text.
- Consider changing groups between rounds of discussion if groups aren’t functioning well or discussion is stagnating.
- Teach students how to supportively encourage one another to expand and elaborate on their ideas. Model this in your own teaching, and give students concrete tools like discussion cues and sentence frames.

**Discussion Cues:**

- “Can you say more about that?”
- “Can you give an example?”
- “Why do you think that?”
- “What in the text makes you think that?”
- “Can you say that again? I’m not sure I fully understood your point.”

**Sentence Frames:**

- “I think \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.”
- “What I heard \_\_\_\_ say is that \_\_\_\_.”
- “I agree/disagree with \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.”
- “When \_\_\_\_ said \_\_\_\_, it made me realize/ think \_\_\_\_.”
- “Have you considered \_\_\_\_?”

**Tight Structure:** If students are still working on fundamental elements of discussion like turn-taking, provide a simple discussion protocol like “The Final Word,” also known as “Save the Last Word for Me”. This is particularly helpful in a virtual space, where natural turn-taking can be more difficult.

- Model the protocol at least once before sending students into their groups to use it.
- As students get more comfortable, they can drop the protocol and let discussion flow more naturally, using some of the lighter structure ideas above as needed.

## Phase Four: Whole Class Seminar

### Phase Three Objectives:

- Work collaboratively toward a deeper understanding of the ideas in the text
- Revisit the text to analyze literary elements and support ideas with textual evidence
- Help students articulate and negotiate different points of view and emphasize that texts can have multiple valid interpretations

### Purpose

In teaching literature, we have many goals: to give kids opportunities to enjoy being carried away by a good story, to provide mirrors that allow students to see themselves more clearly, to open windows that foster empathy, and, of course, to teach critical literacy skills. A seminar accomplishes the best of all these worlds. Students think and talk through increasingly analytical questions, revisiting the text at every turn, supported by a learning community that pushes them to hone their communication skills and ability to grapple with multiple perspectives. It also gives kids opportunities to discuss substantive ideas and texts the way that college students and professionals do every day. A growing body of research in the last two decades strongly supports the idea that discussion-based instruction, when paired with high academic expectations, significantly enhances reading comprehension and deeper literacy skills. After seminar discussions, students' written responses to text tend to be better conceived, developed, and supported.

During the Seminar phase, focus on:

- Using the seminar plan
- Generating engagement

### Using the Seminar Plan

The seminar plan is a guide that can be customized and will shift from moment to moment during discussion. The goal is not to answer the specific questions in the seminar plan; it's for students to think deeply about the text and to look closely at the text to generate, justify, and revise their ideas. To facilitate a truly open-ended discussion and honor student thinking, consider these ideas:

- Work with students to create and regularly practice discussion norms that allow all students to feel heard and safe in sharing ideas.
- In addition to the preplanned questions, use student responses to generate follow-up questions.
- Add questions based on students' small group discussion notes in Phase 3.
- Shift the order of the questions within the "core questions" section as needed so the conversation among students can follow interesting lines of inquiry rather than feel scripted or tightly controlled.
- Regularly ask probing questions like "Why?", "How do you know?", "Can both ideas be true?", and "Why is this important?" to help students expand their thinking and elaborate on their ideas.

### Tips for Success

- Always start with a “round robin” for the opening question. The opening question in every seminar plan is designed to call for some kind of “forced choice”—a yes/no, agree/disagree, etc.—so that every student can confidently respond from a limited set of options. This breaks the ice, ensures every student’s voice is heard at least once, and creates momentum. Remember, students should NOT explain or elaborate on their answer right away. Some students will find this difficult—and that’s a good thing! These students will likely be ready to go when you open the floor with the follow-up question, which will help kick off open discussion.
- Hand raising can be a useful scaffold. However, the goal should be to wean students from this and to move toward student-to-student talk that is minimally moderated by the teacher.
- Establish community rules for discussion; ideally, cocreate these with students.
- Use sentence frames for discussion ([see Phase 3](#) of this handbook for examples).
- Take notes on what students say and refer back to them when relevant.
- For long-term growth of speaking and listening skills, engage students in personal goal-setting and reflection to bookend each discussion. Before seminar begins, help students reflect on their own tendencies in discussion and set an appropriate goal. After the discussion, give students an opportunity to reflect on how well they did in achieving their personal goal and adjust their goals for the next discussion.

### Generating Engagement

Achieving a balance of engagement with the whole class is one of the most challenging aspects of facilitating a whole-class seminar. Three very common engagement styles can present challenges to achieving this balance: the Overtalker, the Undertalker, and the Naysayer. Approaching these behaviors with curiosity and support for metacognition can go a long way toward helping every student find value and feel valued during discussion.

#### Using Personal Goals to Support the Overtalker

Long-winded students sometimes need to set a personal goal to talk less, or to talk more concisely. However, positively framed goals tend to be more effective than negatively framed goals like “talk less” or “only talk three times.” Help these students recognize their specific habits in discussion—do they talk too frequently? For too long?—and set an appropriate, positively framed goal. Positively framed goals for overtalkers:

- Ask more questions to invite my peers into discussion
- When I have a thought I want to contribute, wait for two or three other people to speak before deciding whether I want to share my thought
- Prepare to speak by condensing my idea down to one or two sentences. Write it down first if I need to.

#### Using Personal Goals to Encourage the Undertalker

Students who hesitate to speak up are not a monolithic group. Reasons for staying quiet during a discussion range from insecurity (*My question seems dumb!*) to overwhelm (*The conversation moves too fast!*) to perfectionism (*I won’t say anything unless I’m certain it’s right!*). Students who don’t talk much may need to start with reflection about the reasons for their hesitation, followed by support in making their goals bite-sized and actionable. “Talk three times,” while concrete, may still be too overwhelming for a student who is nervous to speak up, or one who wants to talk but isn’t sure what to say. Actionable goals for undertalkers:

- Write down my idea or question when I have it, and use a pause in the conversation to share it with the group even if the discussion has moved on to a different topic
- Ask someone else a question about what they said
- Start by saying I agree or disagree with someone else’s comment
- Share my idea even if I feel uncertain about it

**Welcoming in the Naysayer**

It's important to keep in mind three things: 1) Not liking a book is a perfectly valid response. As adults we don't like everything we read, and we have a lot more freedom to just put the book down if it's not resonating with us. 2) Sometimes students who express dislike of a book are really more interested in testing the boundaries of our openness to all responses. 3) Sometimes "not liking" a book stems from confusion or lack of comprehension.

For all three of these reasons, it's important to be truly receptive of negative responses to the book. In all three cases, the best response is to probe for more information with a relaxed, neutral tone. "Tell me more. What didn't you like?" "Tell me about one specific thing that was particularly bad. A chapter, or a character, or an event." Give wait time. Prompt students to go back to their annotations. When they respond, explore and build on their response the same way you would any other. See if you can help students get to the root of their dislike.

Don't be too concerned that not liking the book will leave a permanent bad taste in students' mouths. Sometimes these students end up enjoying discussion the most because they can tease apart their responses to the book, and rich discussion often leads them to a more favorable, or at least a more neutral, opinion of the text itself.

**Momentum Techniques**

If discussion stagnates, or if students seem on the verge of a breakthrough but aren't quite getting there, try one of these moves to get ideas flowing again:

- Invite students to turn and talk to a peer for 30–60 seconds about the question or topic at hand.
- Be comfortable with silence—some students need that wait time. This can offer the time needed for a quieter student to gather courage to speak.
- Pause and invite students to quickwrite for 30–60 seconds about the question or topic at hand.
- Split the discussion across two class periods. Stop when ideas are still bubbling up and let that momentum carry into the second discussion—the additional thinking time between sessions can create space for students to formulate more thoughts and questions to bring to the second round.

**Balancing Engagement with the Whole Class: Redirection Techniques**

Achieving a balance of engagement is always a work in progress. Even with goal setting, metacognition, and practice, some students may still dominate the discussion. In the moment, try these redirection techniques to shift the balance:

- Give a subtle cue to invite others in: "What do the rest of you think about this?"
- Use another round robin to "reactivate" the whole class.
- Give a less subtle cue: "Let's give preference to those we haven't heard from yet/in a while."
- Give a very direct cue: "We haven't heard from in a while. (Name), what do you think?" Use this strategy **only** if you know putting a student on the spot won't cause them to shut down! This one works well immediately after students have paused to quickwrite or talk with their neighbor; at that moment, you know each student has something they can share.

### *Large Class Management Techniques*

Sometimes, engaging the whole class in discussion at once just isn't feasible. If your classes are particularly large, try one of these alternative structures:

- **Schedule discussions with half the class at a time;** engage the other half of the class in silent work such as revising other writing assignments in response to feedback, writing in response to one of the optional extension prompts, or completing short fiction writing assignments that connect to the novel.
- **Use a fishbowl method for discussion,** in which one half of the class sits in the “inner circle” to discuss while the other half sits in the “outer circle” to listen, observe, and even provide feedback to the participants in the discussion. With a fishbowl, you can use the same set of questions for both groups, or divide the seminar questions between the groups.



## Phase Five: Post-Write Assignment

### Phase Five Objectives:

- Give students an opportunity to deepen and extend their thinking in writing
- Bring closure to the reading process

### Purpose

The seminar post-write is an analytic response to elements of the text that were explored in discussion, but it is not a fully developed, revised, and edited literary analysis essay. It is an opportunity to “write to think” and to practice applying the analytical skills learned in the core curriculum to a longer text.

During the Post-Write phase, focus on:

- Support and expectations
- Assessing student work

### Support and Expectations

Give students the opportunity to choose the post-write prompt that they connect with best. If you are comfortable allowing students to propose alternative topics or prompts (with your feedback and approval), that can be a great way to continue supporting students in developing their own inquiry-based approach to analyzing literature.

Provide time in class for students to write for one or two focused sessions of 20–30 minutes. If you break the writing time across two days, inviting students to start their second writing session with five minutes of peer discussion of their ideas can help them generate momentum and deepen their thinking.

The goal is for each student to produce a multi paragraph response that uses textual evidence but consists mostly of the student’s commentary. As an optional extension, you can support students in developing this commentary into a fully developed and formally structured literary analysis essay.

### Assessing Student Work

Whether you choose to use a rubric, a simple rating scale, or points to evaluate students’ post-write assignments, stay focused on the quality of student thinking and the reasonableness of their interpretation of the text. Because students are not engaging in a full writing process with drafting, revision, and editing, this is not the moment for a trait-based writing rubric that focuses on the quality of written expression.

## Annotating Your Novel

When we read novels for the first time, our main goal is to enjoy the story and get a strong sense of what's going on in the book. When we revisit the text together in class, we'll do close reading and discuss specific questions to analyze the text. But for now, you'll use annotation simply to capture your thoughts while you read—whatever they may be. This will make it easier to talk and write about the book once you finish it. Follow your teacher's instructions on how to annotate, and be sure to bring your book and annotations to class every day!

For each day's reading assignment, you'll be responsible for at least **four annotations**, though you are welcome to write more if you want! Your annotations can fall into any of these categories:

### Noticings

What's going on? What do you notice? What stands out to you?

#### Examples:

- It seems like Ms. G's class is going to be important to Imani. That's the only class she mentions specifically.
- He keeps making jokes about his dad, but it sounds like he really wishes his dad understood him better.

### Questions

What are you wondering about? What's not clear? Does this make sense?

#### Examples:

- Why is she reacting that way?
- I wonder if this is going to cause a fight between these two characters.
- What does it mean when she says "My house is a tomb?"
- Why does she ask that character for help? I thought she didn't like him?

### Reactions

What do you like? What do you dislike? What does it remind you of?

#### Examples:

- I loved it when they sat in the park and talked about music. That felt like something my friends and I would do.
- I thought the end moved too fast. It didn't seem realistic that they would make up so quickly.

### Moments We Need to Discuss!

When you read something particularly interesting that you know you want to talk about in class, mark it with a specific color sticky note or a special code. If you're using sticky notes, let these ones stick out of the book so they are easier to find later!

## Appendix B: Three Ways of Reading Lesson Plan

### Preparation:

1. Choose a short, engaging narrative text to share with students orally. For example:
  - A folktale — perhaps one that reflects your own culture and heritage, or one that reflects the culture and heritage of students
  - The opening scene of a novel (choose one that is particularly compelling or engaging)
  - A short vignette, like one from *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, or a very short story that can be read aloud in 10 minutes or less
  - A short film or a long-form film trailer
2. Prepare a space for recording student responses, e.g., chart paper, a whiteboard, or a document projected for all to see.
3. Prepare an anchor chart/reference poster with definitions for **literal**, **inferential**, and **critical** responses, like the ones below:

<b>Literal</b>	A statement about something that was stated directly in the text. You make literal responses by “reading the lines” of the text.
<b>Inferential</b>	An educated guess about something that is not stated directly in the story, but is hinted at or suggested by specific evidence in the text. You make inferential responses by “reading between the lines” of the text.
<b>Critical</b>	An original thought, opinion, connection, or question that is related to the text but goes beyond the text itself. You make critical responses by “reading beyond the lines” of the text.

### Instruction:

1. **Share the Text**
  - Invite students to simply relax and listen (and/or watch) as the story unfolds.
  - Read, recite, or show the text for students. Do not give them their own copy.
2. **Invite and Record Student Responses**
  - Ask students to share their unfiltered responses. Encourage them to share responses in the form of **statements**, rather than **questions**. Prompts you might use:
    - What do you think?
    - What do you notice?
    - What stands out to you?
    - What do you remember?
    - What do you wonder?
  - Write down each student’s response exactly as stated by the student, offering no judgment or commentary. Aim to record at least 10 responses.

### 3. Introduce the Three Ways of Reading

- Share the purpose of the lesson: to learn about three ways of thinking about text and to categorize the class's thoughts and responses to the text.
- Introduce definitions for **literal**, **inferential**, and **critical** responses, either all at once or one at a time as you guide students through the categorization process.

### 4. Categorize Student Responses

- Begin by asking students to identify which responses fall into the **literal** category, introducing or reviewing the definition of "literal" as needed. Invite debate and discussion, allowing as many students as possible to weigh in until the class arrives at agreement. Mark each literal response with an L. (Optional: Color code the terms and definitions on your anchor chart; use the corresponding color to label each student response.)
- Repeat the process with **inferential** responses, followed by **critical** responses. This will often be an area with shades of gray, so you may need to guide students to a clearer understanding of the distinction between inferential responses and critical responses:
  - For **inferential** responses, you should be able to point directly to one or two specific pieces of evidence.
  - Some **critical** responses may be interpretations that are suggested by the work as a whole, but the reader must put together several thoughts and pieces of evidence to come to a conclusion about the whole story.
  - Occasionally, a response might be categorized as hybrid (L/I for Literal/Inferential or I/C for Inferential/Critical), but this should only occur if there are truly compelling arguments on both sides of the debate or if different components of the response fall into different categories.

### 5. Reflect

- Point out that the class naturally shared a range of responses that fell into all three categories of thinking. Remind students that we use literal, inferential, and critical thinking in lots of everyday contexts, not just in reading literature. Invite brief discussion of when and how students apply these three kinds of thinking in contexts outside of the classroom.
- OPTIONAL: Use the opportunity to teach the concept of **metacognition**, or thinking about our own thinking. Ask students to discuss why it might be helpful to become more aware of our own thoughts, both generally and while reading. Record some of these responses on or near the anchor chart/reference poster for the three types of responses to help maintain a focus on the reason for the habit and not just the habit itself.