

LIT CIRCLES WITH “BLOGS” & DOUBLE-ENTRY JOURNALS

Welcome to something new, something exciting, and something “cutting edge.” We are about to experiment with the latest in literacy and learning...BLOGGING and LIT CIRCLES!

FIRST, LET’S TALK ABOUT BLOGGING!

What is blogging? It’s short for “web logging” and it involves going on the Internet and writing about whatever concerns you. In this case, we will be blogging about the books you’ll be reading for your lit circles. Everyone in the class, as well as other people in classes around the province, will be able to read what you’ve written, respond to your ideas, and “chat” with you about your learning and ideas online. Sounds cool, eh?

We are using a program that is approved by teachers and has all sorts of safety features put into place to keep you safe. It’s called Ontario Blogs and our class is already set up! Here’s how you can check it out:

Go to:
<http://blogs.enoreo.on.ca>

When you are ready to post an article (a blog) you will need to login as yourself:

Login: _____ Password: _____

Encourage your parents to visit it with you, and have them read and sign the “Blogger’s Pledge” (attached) as well. Oh, and we would LOVE it if they decide to blog along with us! (If they’d like their own access, let me know and I can add them to our class, too!)

YOUR FIRST TASK:

When you have computer class, or from home, go to the link I’ve given above. You will find the latest posts from all the project schools when you first log on. Select students - “my teacher name” on the righthand side to get to our own class’s “blog” page. I’ve already posted a starting comment to which you can respond (and so can your parents!) By clicking on the word “comment” under the posting, you can respond to the blog I started (with “_____” as the title). The best plan is always to use a word processing program like Star Office, Microsoft Word, Appleworks, etc. to first type out the message. This allows you to check for spelling mistakes, save your work if you run out of time before you post it, etc. (You can also save a half-written blog, but it’s trickier.) You may decide not to do this, but be prepared for some frustration along the way. That’s part of the learning experience if you take short cuts. The ultimate decision will be yours!

Once you have written a response to my blog in the space that appears below, you can check your spelling one last time (use the appropriate button) and then select the “submit” button. THAT’S how easy it is! You can also read other people’s blogs within our class blog, or check out some in other classes that are in Ontario Blogs by going back to that first homepage: <http://blogs.enoreo.on.ca> .

NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT LIT CIRCLES!

I've decided to use blogs in this version of lit circles because I think they will motivate you better, and all the current research suggests they are a really wonderful learning opportunity, especially for reluctant readers and writers (which a few of you are...and you know who you are! <grin>)

You've recently been introduced to Double Entry Journals and how neat they are for making connections between you and what you read. They will be part of our lit circles as well. You have two choices. You and your group can read aloud, and you can use post-its to keep track of things that triggered connections as you read. Alternatively, you can read silently, and make your connections as you go along. It will be up to you to work on finding all three types of connections...text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-self. I know you can do it!

Here's how this version of lit circles will operate, compared with what we usually do:

TRADITIONAL LIT CIRCLES:	THIS NEW METHOD:
"Oral Reading" within the group	Independent, silent reading within the group, and an oral reading passage selected by the student and read at the end of the unit for assessment.
"Retell" (a summary)	No summary
"Relate" (connecting story elements to personal experiences, world events, or other texts)	"Double-Entry Journals" (where students individually record connections to the text as they read independently. Connections should consist of text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-self connections)
"Reflect" (a personal journal where student reflects on the text in writing, to be handed in at the end of each cycle)	Blogging a reflection (which is first written in rough copy and shown to the teacher to ensure completeness before posting)
"Oral Discussion" within the group after reading	"Oral Discussion" within the group at the end of the cycle, where Double-Entry Journal connections are shared and discussed. Blogging will also result in an "online discussion" as students blog a reply to each of the group members' posted reflections, and "chat" online about their perceptions
"Response" (where teacher writes to student about his or her reflections)	Blogged response from teacher online
"Reply" (where student writes back to the teacher, answering the teacher's questions)	No official reply is required, but all students can and should be blogging back to the teacher and each other within the blog. The more <i>meaningful</i> and <i>thoughtful</i> blogs posted, the better the assessment (i.e. mark).