

USING ‘LITERATURE CIRCLES’ TO ENRICH STUDENTS’ READING EXPERIENCES IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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What are Literature Circles (LC)?

- Small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article or book. (Daniels, 2002)
- Other names: Reading Circles / Book Clubs / Reading Groups

Eleven Key 'Ingredients' (Daniels, 2002)

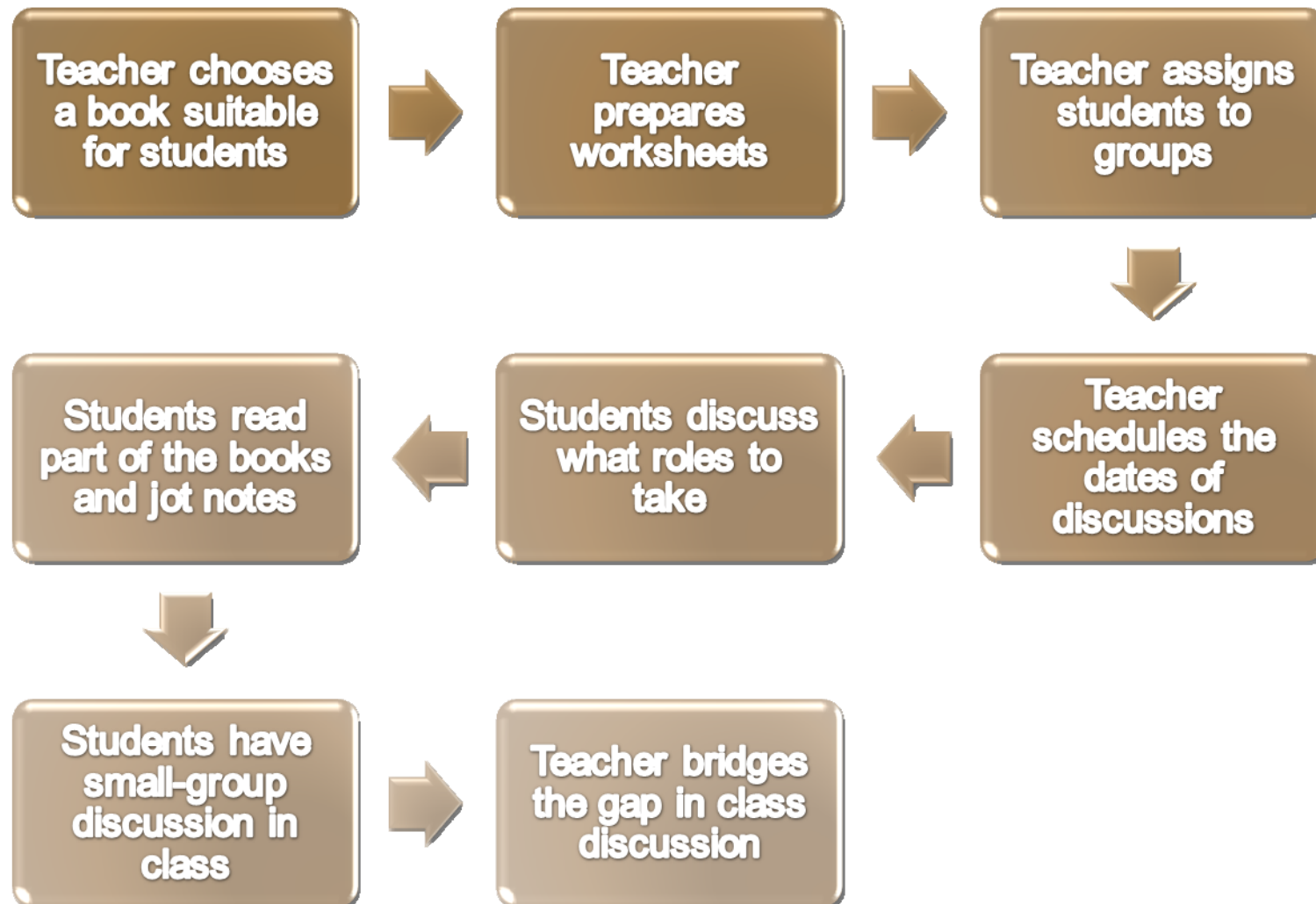
1. Students choose their own reading materials.
2. Small temporary groups are formed, based on book choice.
3. Different groups read different books.
4. Groups meet on regular, predictable schedule to discuss their reading.
5. Kids use written or drawn notes to guide their discussion.
6. Discussion topics come from the students.
7. Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about books.
8. The teacher serves as a facilitator.
9. Evaluation is done by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.
10. New groups form around new reading choices.
11. A spirit of playfulness and fun pervades the room.

11 Key 'Ingredients' in EFL Classrooms

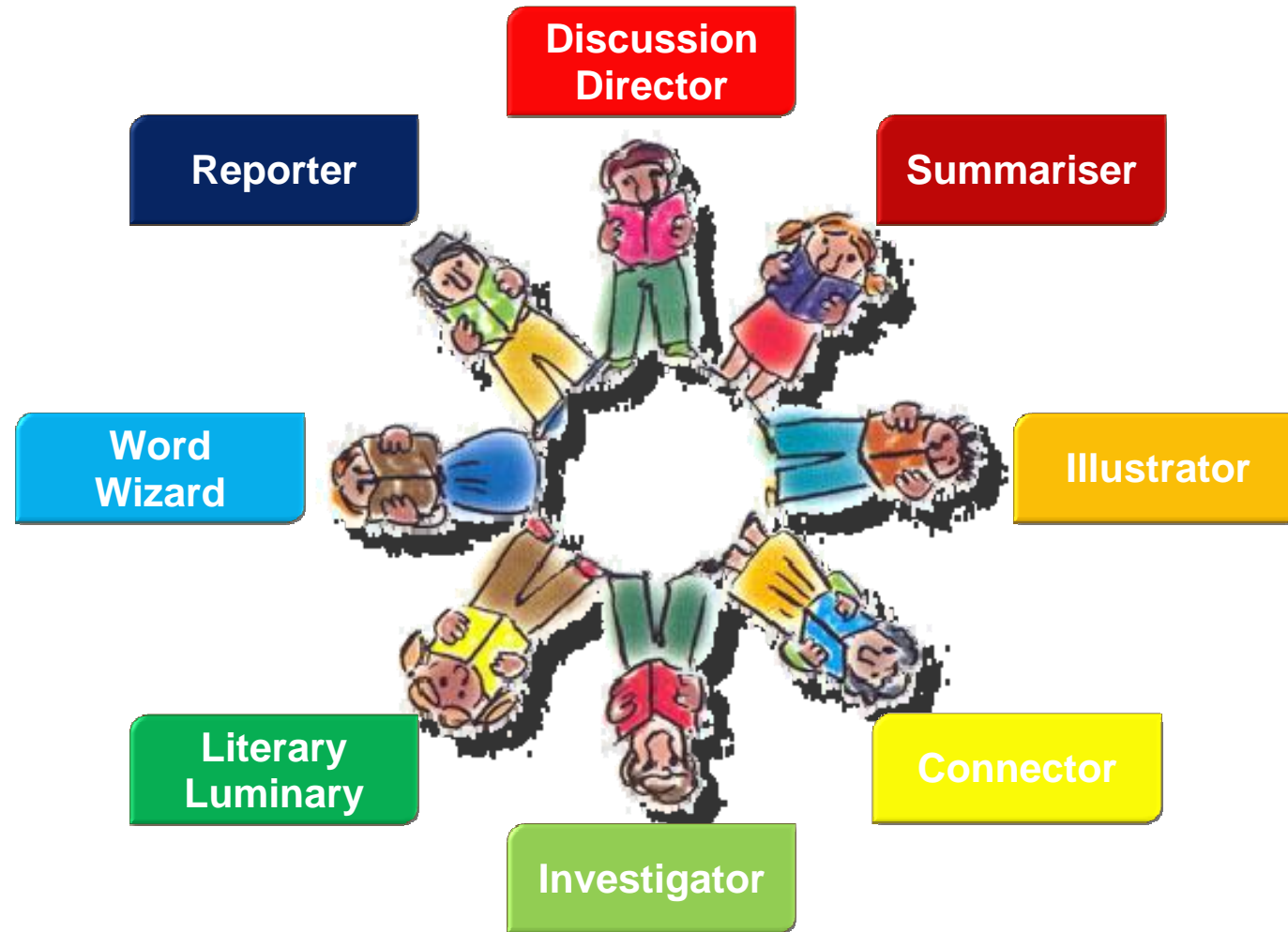
(Furr, n.d.)

1. The teacher selects reading materials appropriate for their students.
2. Small temporary groups are formed by the teacher.
3. Different groups read the same text.
4. Groups meet on regular, predictable schedule to discuss their reading.
5. Kids use written or drawn notes to guide their discussion.
6. Discussion topics come from the students.
7. Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about books.
8. The teacher serves as a facilitator.
9. Evaluation is done by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.
10. New groups form around new reading choices.
10. The teacher provides additional information to "fill in some of the gaps".

How are LCs conducted?



Roles



Summary of Roles

Discussion Director	
Summariser	
Illustrator	
Connector	

Summary of Roles (con't)

Investigator	
Literary Luminary	
Word Wizard	
Reporter	

Benefits of LCs (Fayne & Weiss, n.d.)

- All students have an *important role* to play in the discussion.
- Difficult points are presented from *different perspectives*.
- Students of *differing abilities* can be put in one group and *benefit* from one another.
- Books can be broken into *manageable pieces*.
- *Comprehension* and *vocabulary* are significantly enhanced.
- Students take *ownership of their own learning*.
- Different *generic skills* can be developed - communication skills, critical thinking skills, creativity and collaboration skills.
- Questions and discussion promote student *reflection*.
- Students read, talk, question, feel, and think *out of the box*.

Higher Order Thinking Skills



Source: Bloom B. S. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay Co Inc

LITERATURE CIRCLES IN THE SCHOOL-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

School Background

- An EMI co-educational school
- Reading programmes in the school-based English Language curriculum:
 - S.1 – S.3: English reading lessons (twice per cycle)
school-based Reading Award Scheme
 - S.4 – S.6: Extensive Reading Programme (SBA)

Preparing Junior Secondary Students for LCs

- S.1 – S.3 Literature Sets
 - Including reflection questions asking students to relate the stories to their lives
- S.1 – S.3 Language Arts Elements
 - Example: (S.3) The Miracle Worker – Including discussion and individual presentation topics related to the movie

CARMEL DIVINE GRACE FOUNDATION SECONDARY SCHOOL

Secondary One 2008-2009

ENR Language Arts Programme:

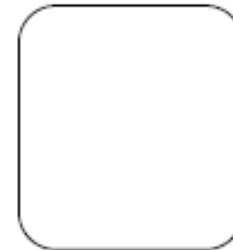
Novel

Cam Jansen Mysteries



Name _____ ()

Class: _____



Could you draw a picture for each of the any other two important characters?
And give them short introductions like the following one for Cam Jansen?

This is Jennifer Jansen.
Her friends call her
"Cam" which is short for
"Camera" because she has
a photographic memory.
She goes "click" and she
can remember things.



Could you draw a picture of
where the story happens? And
give a brief introduction of the
setting? _____

Draw three objects which are important in the story and state your reason:



Frindle

Complete the Venn diagram: Compare your life to Nick's life in the book. Find out TEN similarities/ differences you two have. Two examples are given to you.

Your life

Nick's life

e.g. The Principal has never visited my parents.

e.g. Both Nick and I like to ask silly questions in class to keep the teacher too busy to give homework.

e.g. The principal goes to visit Nick's parents to discuss the problem Nick has created at school.

Carmel Divine Grace Foundation
 Secondary School
 S.3 English Reader

**THE
 MIRACLE
 WORKER**

Helen Keller &
 Anne Sullivan



Class: _____ Name: _____

THINK ABOUT...

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

Helen Keller

1. Helen Keller not only overcame her disabilities, but she went on to help others as well (refer to p.1 for details). What is your understanding of the above Helen's saying? Do you agree with her?

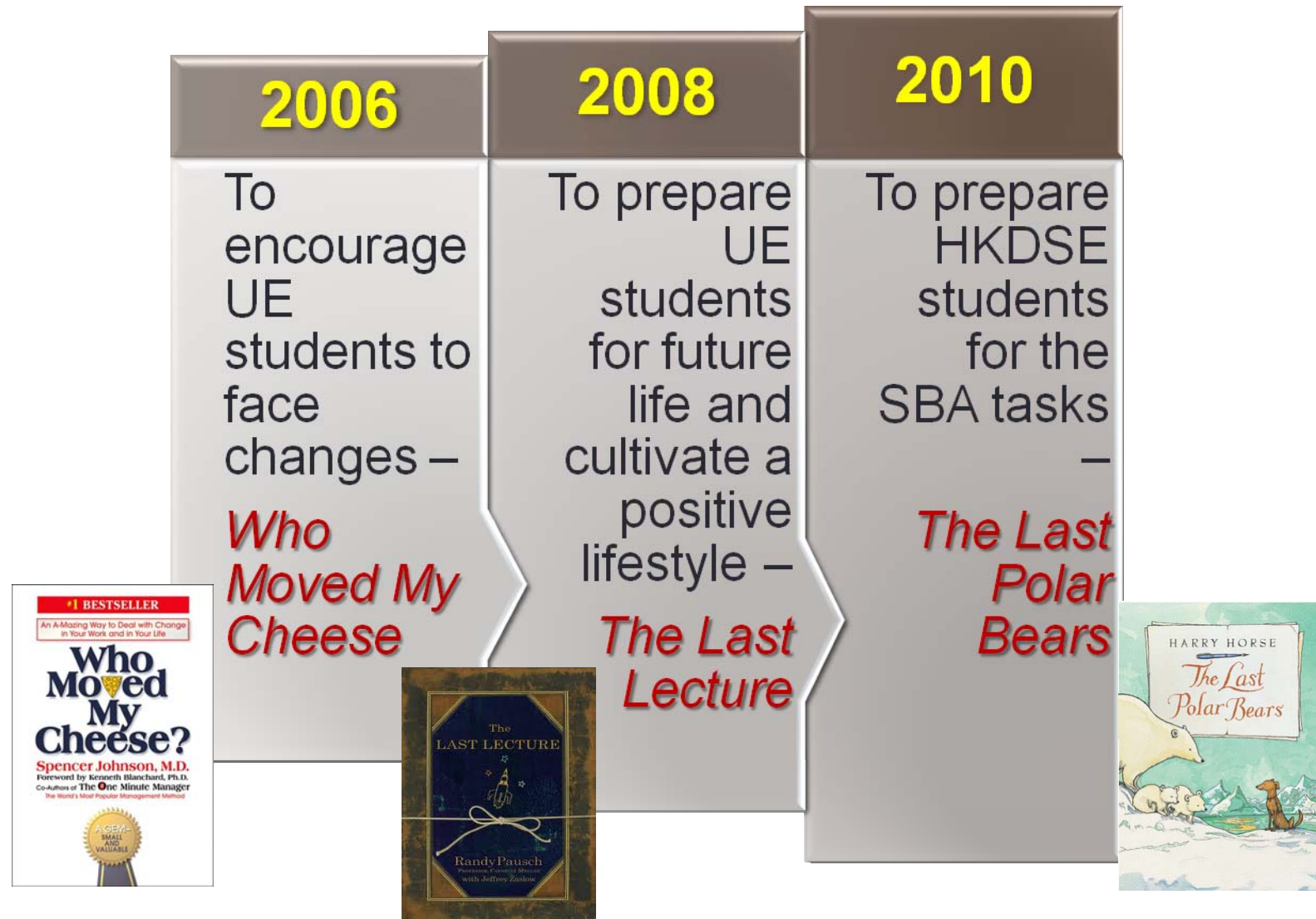
2. Can you think of a person around you or a person in Hong Kong who often helps others? Give examples of the good things that he/she does.

3. Why do people offer help to others? What do you think these people feel when they do so?

4. After learning about Helen and Anne's story, would you like to do more to help others? What would you do?



How LCs Started in CDGFSS



Purposes of Introducing LCs

Through Literature Circles, we would like to help our students to

- take ownership of their learning
- develop their speaking skills for SBA
- think and respond more critically (Bloom's taxonomy)
- become more reflective
- read, talk, question, feel, and think out of the box for purposeful communication

Reasons for the Choice of Reading Texts

HKALE UE

THE LAST LECTURE

- Complementing the theme “Stress and Adversity”
- Students mature enough to understand life stories

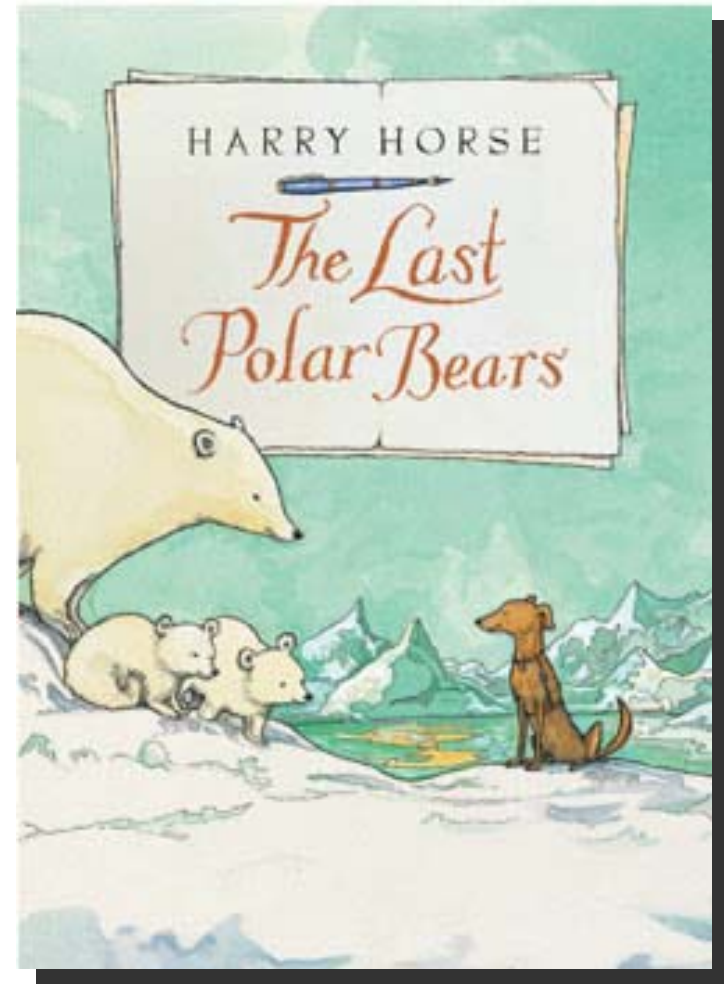
HKDSE ENG

THE LAST POLAR BEARS

- One of the recommended SBA books
- Lots of interesting details → open for imagination

The Last Polar Bears

- **Level of students:** S.5
- **Time to conduct LCs:** 2nd Term
- **Number of lessons:** 8-10
- **Materials:** The book and school-based Literature Circle booklet
- **Purpose:** To prepare students for SBA
- **Grouping:** Teacher assigned



Worksheets

	1 st meeting	2 nd meeting	3 rd meeting	4 th meeting	5 th meeting
<i>Date</i>					
<i>Reading</i>	p.1 – p.30	p.31 – p.49	p.50 – p.62	p.63 – p.72	p.73 – end
Role	Names	Names	Names	Names	Names
<i>Discussion leader + Summariser</i>					
<i>Connector</i>					
<i>Literary Luminary</i>					
<i>Illustrator</i>					
<i>Investigator</i>					
<i>Reporter</i>					

Catering for Learner Diversity

Discussion Director

Date: _____

Assignment: pages _____ to _____



Discussion Director: Your job is to develop a list of questions that you want to discuss about this part of the book and direct the discussion. You will call on each member for their input based on their current role. Don't worry if you don't have all the answers. Your task is to help people talk over the "big ideas" in the story and share their reactions. Usually the best discussion questions come from your own thoughts, feelings and concerns as you read, which you can list below, during or after reading.

Possible discussion questions or topics for today:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Sample Questions:

What was going through your mind while you read this section?
What questions did you have when you finished this section?

Connections: What did today's reading remind you of?

Discussion Director

The Discussion Director's job is to . . .

- read the story twice, and prepare at least five general questions about it.
- ask one or two questions to start the Reading Circle discussion.
- make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and joins in the discussion.
- call on each member to present their prepared role information.
- guide the discussion and keep it going.

Usually the best discussion questions come from your own thoughts, feelings, and questions as you read. (What surprised you, made you smile, made you feel sad?) Write down your questions as soon as you have finished reading. It is best to use your own questions, but you can also use some of the ideas at the bottom of this page.

MY QUESTIONS:

No	Question
1	
2	
3	
4	

Sample Questions:

What was going through your mind while you read this section?

What questions did you have when you finished this section?

Other general ideas:

• Questions about the characters (*like / not like them, true to life / not true to life ...?*)

• Questions about the theme (*friendship, romance, parents/children, ghosts ...?*)

• Questions about the ending (*surprising, expected, liked it / did not like it ...?*)

• Questions about what will happen next. (These can also be used for a longer story.)



Connector

Date: _____

Assignment: pages _____ to _____

Connector: Find connections between the book outside. Connect this reading to your own life, to community, to similar events at other times and places you are reminded of. Connect to other books or writings on the same topic.

Some connections I found between this reading and other events, authors...

Connector

The Connector's job is to . . .

- read the story twice, and look for connections between the story and the world outside.
- make notes about at least two possible connections to your own experiences, or to the experiences of friends and family, or to real-life events.
- tell the group about the connections and ask for their comments or questions.
- ask the group if they can think of any connections themselves.



These questions will help you think about connections while you are reading.

Events: Has anything similar ever happened to you, or to someone you know? Does anything in the story remind you of events in the real world? For example, events you have read about in newspapers, or heard about on television news programmes.

Characters: Do any of them remind you of people you know? How? Why? Have you ever had the same thoughts or feelings as these characters have? Do you know anybody who thinks, feels, behaves like that?

Some connections I found between this reading and other people, places, events, authors...

How to Teach Students to Conduct LCs

- Teacher's role: facilitator
 - Showing students products done by previous students
 - Playing videos of Literature Circles (YouTube)
 - Monitoring the progress of individual groups and providing assistance whenever appropriate
 - Leading class discussion to 'bridge the gaps'

Discussion Director

MY QUESTIONS:

No	Question
1	Do you think the grandfather died in the end of the story?
2	Do you think the grandfather really saw the polar bears? Is he dreaming?
3	After reading the whole book, what is the theme of the story?
4	What questions did you have when you finished this section?

Literary Luminary

3. Page <u>61</u> Paragraph(s) <u>3</u>	<p>It is funny and impossible to have the sun and the moon together. Maybe this indicates that something strange is going to happen.</p>
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3. Page <u>47</u> Paragraph(s) <u>2</u>	<p>Thought-provoking since more snow are melting and caused avalanche. We can see how global warming affect people's safety and the environment.</p>
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Summariser

MY KEY POINTS:

Main events:

Grandfather, Roo and Penguin continue their journey of seeing the Last Polar Bears. However, they face a lot of difficulties such as lack of food and lost their tent. They are not feeling well at this moment.
→ But they still want to continue their expedition.









Characters:

Grandfather: insists to go on the journey, tries to cheer his partner up.
Roo: saves food for her master, very clever

MY SUMMARY:

The expedition of seeing the Last Polar Bears comes to the final part. Grandfather, Roo and penguin have a hard time because they get very little food. Grandfather does not give up and he tries to encourage Roo by telling story to her. On the other hand, Roo is so clever that she keeps a tin of macaroni cheese so that they can still have food to maintain their lives.

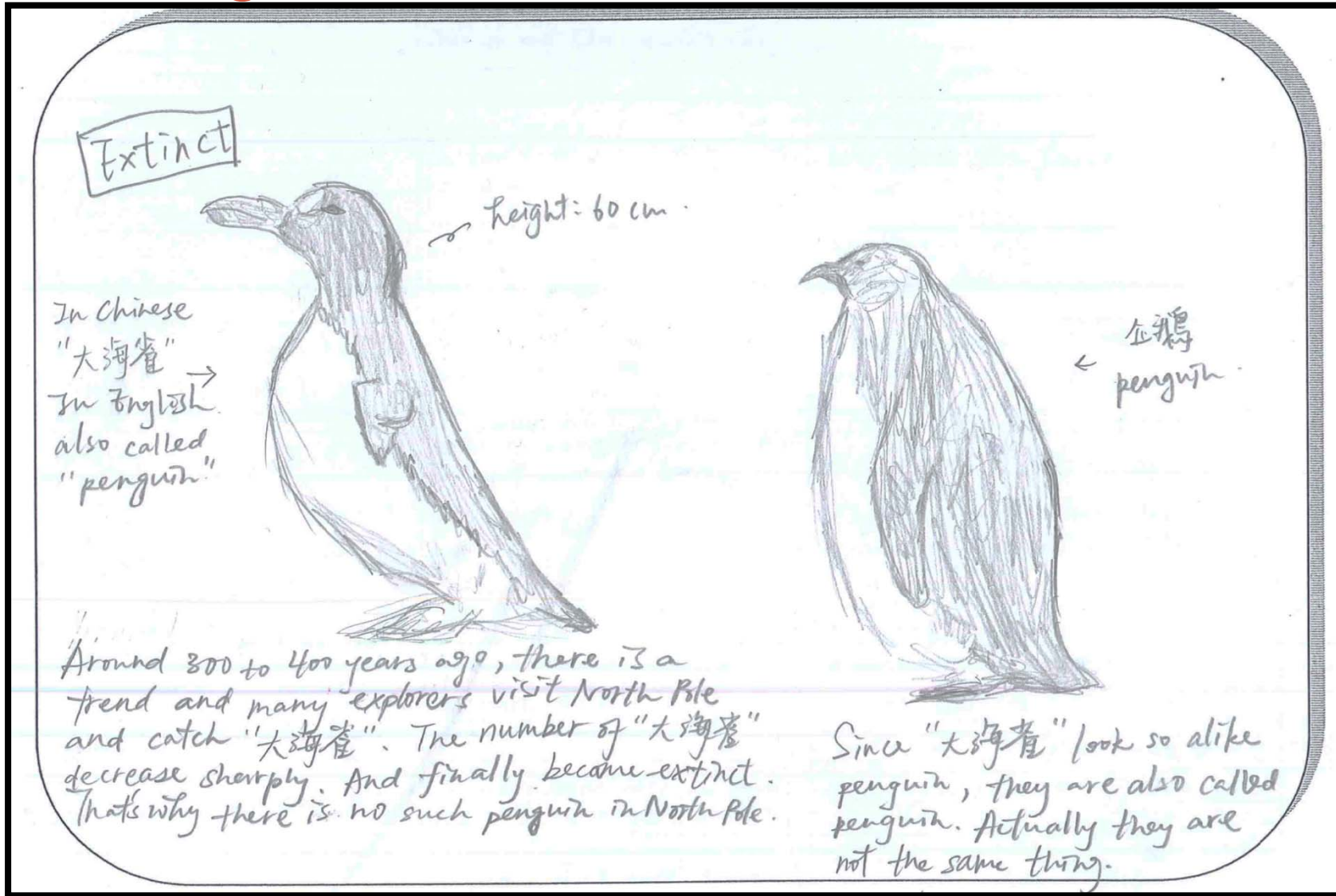
Reporter

Key Points	
1	<p>- burn all belonging →  2000 wools disturb for food</p> <p>  take care</p> <p>32nd October (end)</p>
2	<p>left home for 1g trip</p> <p>Aus for studying (BIO)</p> <p>- diffc. choice</p>
3	<p>p. 50 parag. 5 - funny</p> <p>- Roo & Grandpa (son & mum) → warm</p> <p>p. 56 parag. 2 - informative</p> <p>p. 58 parag. 2 - controversy</p> <p> NP / SP</p>
4	<p>Cheer Roo up</p> <p>ice cream = hill  ≈ diet. 100 Mum & me</p> <p>ice </p>
5	<p> inviting animals in North Pole</p> <p>> 30 north pole → x animals. ✓ artic</p>
6	<p>Date 32/10</p> <p></p>

Word Wizard

Page / paragraph	Word + Part of Speech	Definition	Sample Sentence
Page 1 Para. 1	expedition (n.)	an organized journey with a particular purpose, especially to find out about a place that is not well known	They did an expedition to the Himalayas.
Page 32 Para. 3	cabin (n.)	a small house or shelter, usually made of wood	My uncle lived in a log cabin.
Page 58 Para. 1	unconscious (adj.)	In a state like sleep because of an injury or illness, and not able to use your senses	She was knocked unconscious.
Page 59 Para. 3	melancholy (adj.)	very sad or making you feel sadness	The melancholy song died away.
Page 65 Para. 1	crawled (v.)	to move forward on your hands and knees, with your body close to the ground	Our baby is just starting to crawl.
Page 67 Para. 3	despondent (adj.)	sad, without much hope	She was becoming increasingly despondent about the way things were going.
Page 69 Para. 1	moaning (v.)	to make a long deep sound especially of the wind	The wind was moaning through the trees.
Page 16 Para. 2	steer (v.)	to control the direction in which a boat, car, etc. moves	He steered the boat into the harbour.
Page 20 Para. 2	hearty (adj.)	large, making you feel full (of a meal or sb's appetite)	He prepared a hearty dinner for us.
Page 23 Para. 1	growl (n.)	a deep angry sound made when sb/sth growls	There was a growl of thunder.

Investigator



IMPACT AND REFLECTION

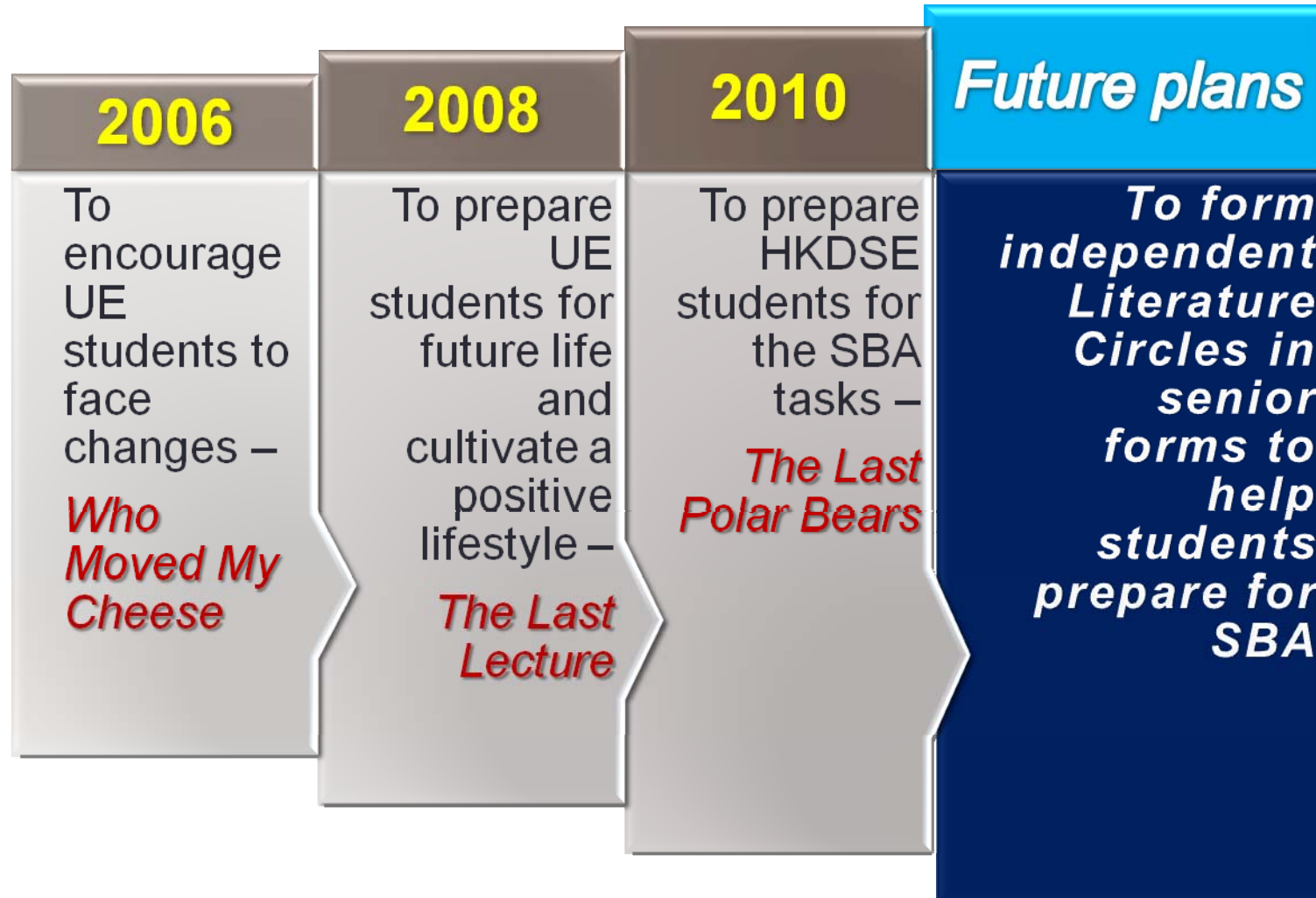
Students' Reflection

Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understanding a text from different perspectives - sharing ideas in the group - knowing more about the text and the related issues
Speaking Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - becoming more confident in speaking English - improved fluency - learning communication strategies: leading a group, initiating a discussion, turn-taking, sustaining a discussion, responding to others
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expanding their vocabulary bank - recycling vocabulary learnt from the text in discussion
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - willing to try something that they may not be good at without any pressure - appreciating others' effort

Teachers' Reflection

	Before	After
Teaching	Teachers were not very confident in conducting student-centered activities.	Teachers become more confident in conducting student-centered activities.
	Teachers doubted whether discussion was an effective way of learning.	Teachers are convinced that discussion can be an effective means to facilitate learning and teaching.
	Teacher-student interactions were limited.	Plenty of meaningful teacher-student interactions are observed in the lessons.
	The lesson atmosphere might be a bit 'serious' for students.	LCs contribute to livelier lessons.
	Learner diversity was an issue.	Learners help one another in groups.
Learning	Students did not know how to elaborate on their ideas.	Students ideas are well-elaborated.
	Students did not read critically.	Students know how to be critical readers.
	Students lacked confidence in speaking English.	Students are more willing to speak in English in class.

Our Future Plan



Other Possible LC Activities

- Inclusion of Literature Circles in ERS
- E-learning: Literature Circles online

References

- Roles:
http://www.sd67.bc.ca/training/Instructional_Capacity/Literature%20Circle%20Jobs.pdf
- Resources:
<http://faroutlinks.net/blog/documents/LiteratureCirclesMaterial.pdf>
- Steps:
<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/northernadelaide/files/links/mysterylessonplans.pdf>
- Example:
<http://bonniecampbellhill.com/Handouts/Handouts/NESALitCircleHandoutAthens07.pdf>

Q & A

Thank You!