



# READING CIRCLE ON DIVERSITY "I READ, YOU READ, AND READING BRINGS US TOGETHER!"

**Level:** 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of secondary school

**Duration:** 6 hours + homework (over several weeks)

**Goal:** To help students become aware of the role they can play in creating a more inclusive school.

**Summary:** In this learning exercise and evaluation, teams of 5 students read a variety of novels on diversity (one novel per team). Based on their readings and playing one of the the 5 different roles outlined to organize the activity, students have the opportunity to participate in a rich and stimulating reading experience. All teams are asked to create a poster on the book they read and to present it to the class. Following the presentation participants will reflect on the role they can play in becoming more accepting of diversity.

| LINKS TO THE PROGRAMME         |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Broad Areas of Learning</b> | Citizenship and Community Life.   |
| <b>Educational Aim</b>         | To enable students to take part in the democratic life of the class or the school and develop an attitude of openness to the world and respect for diversity. |
| <b>Focuses of Development</b>  | Participation, cooperation and solidarity.  |
| COMPETENCIES                   |   |
| <b>Competency</b>              | Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts.   |
| <b>Competency</b>              | Produces texts for personal and social purposes.  |
| <b>Competency</b>              | Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn.   |

# PRESENTATION OF THE LEARNING AND EVALUATION SITUATION

| PERIOD | TIME           | DEVELOPMENT  | STUDENTS   | TEACHER  |
|--------|----------------|--|--|--|
| 1      | 5 min          | Introduce the project.   |  | The teacher distributes the <b>getting prepared</b> document to the students and introduces the project.   |
|        | 25 min         | Propose various representations of diversity.<br><br>Draw out different notions of diversity and the importance novels have in providing windows into other worlds.      | In pairs, students answer question 1 on the page entitled Diversity and Novels.<br><br>Students justify their responses orally.<br><br>Students answer questions 2 and 3 (see the <b>getting prepared</b> document). | The teacher writes the word "diversity" in the middle of the blackboard.<br><br>The teacher notes each team's responses and underlines recurring words.<br><br>Responses to questions 2 and 3 (see ' <b>getting prepared</b> ' document) are shared. |
|        | 10 min         | Introduce reading circles and how they work  | Students follow along in the <b>reading journal</b> .  | The teacher distributes the <b>reading journal</b> , explains each of the roles all students will be asked to play, and presents the evaluation criteria (see the <b>evaluation grid</b> ).  |
|        | 10 min         | Propose books.   |  | The teacher presents the books selected (there are 5 copies per choice). See the list of books below.  |
|        | 5 min          | Students select books they would like to read.   | Students list 3 books in order of choice.  | The teacher gathers the lists of choices.  |
|        | <b>At home</b> |  | The teacher creates teams.   |  |
| 2      | 5 min          | Books are distributed.<br><br>Students read on their own.<br><br>The first team exchanges take place.<br><br>The number of pages to be read for each session is planned. |  | The teacher announces the teams and their members and distributes the books. He assigns a first role to each team member (see the <b>reading journal</b> ).  |
|        | 30 min         | Students read on their own and make notes in their reading journal according to the role they have been asked to play.   | Students begin reading their novel and take notes according to the role they have been asked to play (in their <b>reading journal</b> ).   |  |

**PRESENTATION OF THE LEARNING  
AND EVALUATION SITUATION (CONTINUED)**

| PERIOD                | TIME                  | DEVELOPMENT  | STUDENTS  | TEACHER   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>2<br/>(cont'd)</b> | 20 min                | The first reading circle takes place covering the pages all students are to have read. | Students get together with their team members, share their notes, discuss, and jot down notes following the discussion.   | The teacher circulates throughout the classroom and fills out the <b>observation grids</b> .  |
|                       | 10 min                | A group discussion takes place to evaluate the process.                                | Students explain what went well and what did not go well and suggest improvements.  | The teacher indicates what went well and what did not go well and suggests improvements.  |
|                       | 10 min                | Planning the pages to be read and the roles to be played for the next sessions.        | Students fill out the activity chart in their <b>reading journals</b> .   |   |
| <b>3</b>              | 20 min                | Reading circle.  | Students get together with their team members, share their notes, discuss, and jot down notes following the discussion.   | The teacher circulates throughout the classroom and fills out the <b>observation grids</b> .  |
| <b>4</b>              | 20 min                | Reading circle.  | Students get together with their team members, share their notes, discuss, and jot down notes following the discussion.   | The teacher circulates throughout the classroom and fills out the <b>observation grids</b> .  |
| <b>5</b>              | 20 min                | Reading circle.  | Students get together with their team members, share their notes, discuss, and jot down notes following the discussion.   | The teacher circulates throughout the classroom and fills out the <b>observation grids</b> .  |
| <b>6</b>              | 75 min +<br>home-work | Creation of a poster.  | Students get together in teams and share tasks.   | The teacher asks students to explain how to go about creating a poster (see <b>getting prepared</b> document) and to summarize what elements are pertinent in the <b>evaluation grid</b> . He then circulates throughout the classroom. |
| <b>7</b>              | 75 min                | Oral presentation and self-evaluations.  | Each team presents its poster. The remainder of the class listen to the presentations and take notes. Finally, they answer the last question in the <b>getting prepared</b> document. | The teacher organizes the oral presentation schedule. He reminds students to take notes in the <b>getting prepared</b> document. He evaluates students using the <b>evaluation grid</b> .   |

# BOOK SUGGESTIONS

| THEME            | CYCLE | AUTHOR, TITLE AND SUMMARY  |
|------------------|-------|--|
| Sexual Diversity | 1     | <p><b>NELSON, Jandy. <i>I'll Give You the Sun.</i></b></p> <p>Jude and her twin brother, Noah, are incredibly close. At thirteen, isolated Noah draws constantly and is falling in love with the charismatic boy next door, while daredevil Jude cliff-dives and wears red-red lipstick and does the talking for both of them. But three years later, Jude and Noah are barely speaking. Something has happened to wreck the twins in different and dramatic ways... until Jude meets a cocky, broken, beautiful boy, as well as someone else—an even more unpredictable new force in her life. The early years are Noah's story to tell. The later years are Jude's. What the twins don't realize is that they each have only half the story, and if they could just find their way back to one another, they'd have a chance to remake their world. This radiant novel from the acclaimed, award-winning author of <i>The Sky Is Everywhere</i> will leave you breathless and teary and laughing—often all at once. (<a href="https://www.goodreads.com">goodreads.com</a>)</p>            |
|                  | 1     | <p><b>FARIZAN, Sara. <i>Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel.</i></b></p> <p>High-school junior Leila has made it most of the way through Armstead Academy without having a crush on anyone, which is something of a relief. Her Persian heritage already makes her different from her classmates; if word got out that she liked girls, life would be twice as hard. But when a sophisticated, beautiful new girl, Saskia, shows up, Leila starts to take risks she never thought she would, especially when it looks as if the attraction between them is mutual. Struggling to sort out her growing feelings and Saskia's confusing signals, Leila confides in her old friend, Lisa, and grows closer to her fellow drama tech-crew members, especially Tomas, whose comments about his own sexuality are frank, funny, wise, and sometimes painful. Gradually, Leila begins to see that almost all her classmates are more complicated than they first appear to be, and many are keeping fascinating secrets of their own. (<a href="https://www.goodreads.com">goodreads.com</a>)</p> |
|                  | 2     | <p><b>ALIRE SAENZ, Benjamin. <i>Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe.</i></b></p> <p>Aristotle is an angry teen with a brother in prison. Dante is a know-it-all who has an unusual way of looking at the world. When the two meet at the swimming pool, they seem to have nothing in common. But as the loners start spending time together, they discover that they share a special friendship—the kind that changes lives and lasts a lifetime. And it is through this friendship that Ari and Dante will learn the most important truths about themselves and the kind of people they want to be.</p>  |
|                  | 2     | <p>🍁 <b>FITZGERALD, Meags. <i>Long Red Hair.</i></b></p> <p><i>Long Red Hair</i> is Meags Fitzgerald's follow up to her acclaimed <i>Photobooth: A Biography</i>. In this graphic memoir, Fitzgerald paints a childhood full of sleepovers, playing dress-up, amateur fortune-telling and renting scary movies. Yet, Fitzgerald suspects that she is unlike her friends. The book navigates a child's struggle with averageness, a preteen's budding bisexuality and a young woman's return after rejection. Fitzgerald takes us from her first kiss to a life sworn to singlehood, while weaving in allusions to witches in history and popular culture. <i>Long Red Hair</i> alluringly delves into the mystique of red hair and the beguiling nature of alternative romantic relationships.</p>   |

**BOOK SUGGESTIONS (CONTINUED)**

| THEME                          | CYCLE                | AUTHOR, TITLE AND SUMMARY  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| <p><b>Gender Diversity</b></p> | <p>1<br/>+<br/>2</p> | <p><b>PRINCE, Liz. <i>Tomboy: A Graphic Memoir.</i></b></p> <p>Growing up, Liz Prince wasn't a girly girl, dressing in pink tutus or playing Pretty princess like the other girls in her neighborhood. But she wasn't exactly one of the guys either, as she quickly learned when her Little League baseball coach exiled her to the outfield instead of letting her take the pitcher's mound. Liz was somewhere in the middle, and <i>Tomboy</i> is the story of her struggle to find the place where she belonged. <i>Tomboy</i> is a graphic novel about refusing gender boundaries, yet unwittingly embracing gender stereotypes at the same time, and realizing later in life that you can be just as much of a girl in jeans and a T-shirt as you can in a pink tutu. A memoir told anecdotally, <i>Tomboy</i> follows author and zine artist Liz Prince through her early childhood into adulthood and explores her ever-evolving struggles and wishes regarding what it means to «be a girl.» From staunchly refuting anything she perceived as being «girly» to the point of misogyny, to discovering through the punk community that your identity is whatever you make of it, regardless of your gender, <i>Tomboy</i> is as much humorous and honest as it is at points uncomfortable and heartbreaking.</p> |
|                                | <p>2</p>             | <p><b>ROSOFF, Meg. <i>What I Was.</i></b></p> <p>Toward the end of his life, H looks back on the relationship that has shaped and obsessed him for nearly a century. It began many years earlier at St. Oswald's, a dismal boarding school on the coast of England, where the young H came face-to-face with an almost unbearably beautiful boy living by himself at the edge of the sea. At first, the mysterious Finn appears to have no past: his home is an ancient fisherman's hut with a wood stove, a case of books, striped blankets, and a cat. H insinuates his way into Finn's life, stalking him with perfect patience until an unlikely friendship is kindled; a confused idyll of devotion and longing set against a background of blazing wood fires and fishing expeditions. Their friendship deepens, offering H both the freedom and the human connection that has always eluded him. But in a world of conformity, can one eccentric idyll be allowed to survive?</p>   |
|                                | <p>1<br/>+<br/>2</p> | <p><b>PETERS, Julie Anne. <i>Luna.</i></b></p> <p>Regan's brother Liam can't stand the person he is during the day. Like the moon from whom Liam has chosen his female namesake, his true self, Luna, only reveals herself at night. In the secrecy of his basement bedroom Liam transforms himself into the beautiful girl he longs to be, with help from his sister's clothes and makeup. Now, everything is about to change-Luna is preparing to emerge from her cocoon. But are Liam's family and friends ready to welcome Luna into their lives? Compelling and provocative, this is an unforgettable novel about a transgender teen's struggle for self-identity and acceptance.</p>   |

**BOOK SUGGESTIONS (CONTINUED)**

| THEME                          | CYCLE           | AUTHOR, TITLE AND SUMMARY   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| <p><b>Family Diversity</b></p> | <p><b>1</b></p> | <p><b>PETERS, Julie Anne. <i>Between Mom and Jo.</i></b></p> <p>Nick has a three-legged dog named Lucky, some pet fish, and two moms who think he's the greatest kid ever. And he happens to think he has the greatest Moms ever, but everything changes when his birth mom and her wife, Jo, start to have marital problems. Suddenly, Nick is in the middle, and instead of having two Moms to turn to for advice, he has no one. Nick's emotional struggle to redefine his relationships with his parents will remind readers that a family's love can survive even the most difficult times.</p>  |
|                                | <p><b>2</b></p> | <p><b>HOMES, A.M. <i>Jack.</i></b></p> <p>In <i>Jack</i>, A. M. Homes gives us a teenager who wants nothing more than to be normal—even if being normal means having divorced parents and a rather strange best friend. But when Jack's father takes him out in a rowboat on Lake Watchmayoyo and tells his son he's gay, nothing will ever be normal again. Out of Jack's struggle to redefine what "family" means, A. M. Homes crafts a novel of enormous humor, charm, and resonance.</p>  |
| <p><b>Ethnic Diversity</b></p> | <p><b>1</b></p> | <p><b>🍁 BELL, William. <i>Zack.</i></b></p> <p>In this intriguing story that will appeal to younger teens, a boy goes on a journey in search of his roots. Zack is the son of an unlikely but happy marriage: his mother is a black blues singer and his father is a white Jewish college professor. Zack is resentful and bitter toward his parents for moving—in his last year of high school—from Toronto to a small college town in the country. He misses the excitement of the city, and things are rough at school, where he meets racial rejection for the first time in his life. Zack is comfortable with his Jewish heritage through his paternal grandparents, but his mother has without explanation cut off all contact with her relatives in Mississippi, so he knows nothing about his own black history. When he finds an old chest buried in the back yard and discovers that it belonged to a freed slave, his interest in exploring his African American background is piqued. While his parents are on a trip, he commandeers the family truck and drives to Mississippi to meet his grandfather. There Zack discovers a part of himself that he never knew, but he also must face the bitter understanding that racism can be a double-edged sword.</p> |
|                                | <p><b>1</b></p> | <p><b>🍁 SHAW, Carol Anne. <i>Hannah &amp; The Salish Sea.</i></b></p> <p>This is the second book in the Hannah series. Here, Hannah and her friend Max become acquainted with troubled teen, Izzy Tate, a girl trying to deny her First Nations background. The three teens, with the help of Hannah's raven Jack, unknowingly uncover an illegal operation taking place on the abandoned ship in Cowichan Bay, the Orca I. Hannah, Max and Izzy work together to solve the mystery and bring the criminals involved to justice. Shaw's previous book <i>Hannah and the Spindle Whorl</i> was the 2011 winner of the Moonbeam's Children's Book Award and was shortlisted for the 2011-12 Chocolate Lily Award.</p>   |

**BOOK SUGGESTIONS (CONTINUED)**

| THEME                                   | CYCLE                | AUTHOR, TITLE AND SUMMARY   |
|---|----------------------|---|
| <p><b>Ethnic Diversity (cont'd)</b></p> | <p>2</p>             | <p><b>ROBERTSON, David Alexander and HENDERSON, Scott B. <i>7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga</i>.</b></p> <p><i>7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga</i> originally published as a four-part graphic novel series; Stone, Scars, Ends/Begins, and The Pact. This graphic novel follows one Plains Cree family from the early 19th century to present day. For Edwin, the story of his ancestors from both the distant and recent past must guide him through an uncertain present, to the dawn of a new future. <i>7 Generations</i> explores the life of Stone, a young Cree warrior, the smallpox epidemic of 1870, the residential school system of the 20th century and its familial legacy.</p>  |
|   | <p>1<br/>+<br/>2</p> | <p><b>TAN, Shaun. <i>The Arrival</i>.</b></p> <p>Tan captures the displacement and awe with which immigrants respond to their new surroundings in this wordless graphic novel. It depicts the journey of one man, threatened by dark shapes that cast shadows on his family's life, to a new country. The only writing is in an invented alphabet, which creates the sensation immigrants must feel when they encounter a strange new language and way of life. A wide variety of ethnicities is represented in Tan's hyper-realistic style, and the sense of warmth and caring for others, regardless of race, age, or background, is present on nearly every page. Young readers will be fascinated by the strange new world the artist creates, complete with floating elevators and unusual creatures, but may not realize the depth of meaning or understand what the man's journey symbolizes. More sophisticated readers, however, will grasp the sense of strangeness and find themselves participating in the man's experiences. They will linger over the details in the beautiful sepia pictures and will likely pick up the book to pore over it again and again.</p> |
| <p><b>Social Differences</b></p>        | <p>1<br/>+<br/>2</p> | <p><b>ROWELL, Rainbow. <i>Eleanor &amp; Park</i>.</b></p> <p>Two misfits. One extraordinary love. Eleanor... Red hair, wrong clothes. Standing behind him until he turns his head. Lying beside him until he wakes up. Making everyone else seem drabber and flatter and never good enough... Eleanor. Park... He knows she'll love a song before he plays it for her. He laughs at her jokes before she ever gets to the punch line. There's a place on his chest, just below his throat, that makes her want to keep promises... Park. Set over the course of one school year, this is the story of two star-crossed sixteen-year-olds—smart enough to know that first love almost never lasts, but brave and desperate enough to try.</p>  |
|   | <p>2</p>             | <p><b>GANSWORTH, Eric L. <i>If I Ever Get Out of Here</i>.</b></p> <p>Lewis "Shoe" Blake is used to the joys and difficulties of life on the Tuscarora Indian reservation in 1975: the joking, the Fireball games, the snow blowing through his roof. What he's not used to is white people being nice to him—people like George Haddonfield, whose family recently moved to town with the Air Force. As the boys connect through their mutual passion for music, especially the Beatles, Lewis has to lie more and more to hide the reality of his family's poverty from George. He also has to deal with the vicious Evan Reininger, who makes Lewis the special target of his wrath. But when everyone else is on Evan's side, how can he be defeated? And if George finds out the truth about Lewis's home—will he still be his friend?</p>   |

**BOOK SUGGESTIONS (CONTINUED)**

| THEME                                     | CYCLE        | AUTHOR, TITLE AND SUMMARY  |
|---|--------------|--|
| <p><b>Physical Differences</b></p>        | <p>1</p>     | <p><b>WHITE, Ruth. <i>Belle Prater's Boy</i>.</b></p> <p>Everyone in Coal Station, Virginia, has a theory about what happened to Belle Prater, but twelve-year-old Gypsy wants the facts, and when her cousin Woodrow, Aunt Belle's son moves next door, she has her chance. Woodrow isn't as forthcoming as Gypsy hopes, yet he becomes more than just a curiosity to her—during their sixth-grade year she finds that they have enough in common to be best friends. Even so, Gypsy is puzzled by Woodrow's calm acceptance of his mother's disappearance, especially since she herself has never gotten over her father's death. When Woodrow finally reveals that he's been keeping a secret about his mother, Gypsy begins to understand that there are different ways of finding the strength to face the truth, no matter how painful it is. <i>Belle Prater's Boy</i> is a 1996 Boston Globe - Horn Book Awards Honor Book for Fiction and a 1997 Newbery Honor Book.</p>  |
|   | <p>2</p>     | <p>🍁 <b>LANGSTON, Laura. <i>The Art of Getting Stared At</i>.</b></p> <p>From the first chapter, the rich storytelling capability of Langston is evident. . . The Art of Getting Stared At painfully portrays the self-consciousness of a seemingly strong teenage girl who is faced with a non-life-threatening disease that affects her appearance. . . This book deals with issues that many teens wrestle with in some way: issues of image and identity, self-acceptance and the judgments that we make about others, as well as ourselves.</p>   |
| <p><b>Différences intellectuelles</b></p> | <p>1</p>     | <p><b>GOLDMAN RUBIN, Susan. <i>Emily Good as Gold</i>.</b></p> <p>Thirteen years old and «developmentally disabled,» Emily Gold longs to be like other teenagers, but she knows she's «special»—a euphemism she's grown to hate. Realizing that she's maturing (she's proud to be menstruating), Emily resents her parents' protectiveness, especially her father's insistence on regarding her as a little girl. She adores her brother, a lawyer, but feels betrayed by his unexpected marriage. Yet her sister-in-law, Phyllis, eventually charms Emily with her warmth and generosity, and becomes a valuable friend. It's Phyllis who clarifies Emily's notions about sex and reproduction, teaching her about «nice boys and not so nice boys,» a crucial lesson for the pretty and eager-to-please girl. Rubin paints her character with contrasting colors: she's naive yet perceptive (she always knows when people are discussing her and what they are likely to be saying), sweet but sometimes temperamental, obedient but occasionally deceptive. Emphasizing what her heroine has in common with the audience while not glossing over her differences, the author provides a meaningful, hopeful glimpse into a rarely visited world.</p> |
|   | <p>1 + 2</p> | <p><b>EUWER WOLFF, Virginia. <i>Probably Still Nick Swansen</i>.</b></p> <p>A strong, compassionate story about a student with minimal brain dysfunction. While all 16 year olds have problems, Nick Swansen's are unique: they involve his identity outside the Special Education classroom and coming to terms with the accidental death of his sister, Dianne, seven years earlier. Told from his viewpoint, the story follows the events of several seminal weeks in Nick's maturing. Readers come to identify strongly with him and with Shana, another Special Ed. student who has "gone up" to the regular classes. The parents of both students provide a revealing contrast: Nick's are warm and understanding, Shana's stumbling and confused. The brilliance in Wolff's book is that she never preaches: rather, through a series of involving events and through characterizations that are consistently sympathetic, she draws readers into Nick's life. Unlike many books that deal with disabilities, Wolff's story stresses the similarities between Nick and other teens rather than highlighting the differences.</p>  |

Please consult our bibliography for more book suggestions dealing with sexual diversity, family diversity and gender identity:  
[www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/CFH\\_MELS\\_Module5\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/CFH_MELS_Module5_ENG.pdf)