

THE LITPICK EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

What happens after my student reads a LitPick book? Does that book get addressed in the classroom? How? And how can it be incorporated into my curriculum?" This guide provides specific activities that answer these questions.

*The LitPick Online
Reading Program*

Welcome to LitPick

Hi there. We are happy to be working with you and your students, and we feel that the LitPick reading program offers a unique and valuable online learning tool.

Here's why you should choose LitPick:

- *When your students write book reviews on our site, you are empowering them. The world will see their writing, making their work meaningful.*
- *On LitPick, your students are interacting in a safe reading community where they can see the writing styles of their peers and develop their own writing skills.*
- *You and your students extend your reading library for free with our database of eBooks.*
- *Our educator interface makes it easy for you to integrate students' book reviews into the curriculum.*

We are glad to assist you in tailoring LitPick to your group of students. Below are two methods which educators can use to take full advantage of LitPick. Of course, they aren't mutually exclusive nor are they the only ways to implement the LitPick student reviewer program.

Method 1 – Independent Reading Activity

LitPick can serve as an independent reading activity parallel to your classroom activities. As students write reviews, you will be notified and will be able to evaluate the reviews before they are posted to the site. Students can receive “extra credit” for posted review or prizes for completing a specified number of review within a period of time.

Method 2 – Integrating The LitPick Reading Program into Your Curriculum

Our reading program can be integrated into your curriculum, and the book reviews can be used as a springboard for classroom discussions and activities, helping students to think critically about what they have just read and reviewed. The following outlines a potential LitPick lesson plan.

Integrating The LitPick Reading Program into Your Curriculum

I. Before Reading

Week 1

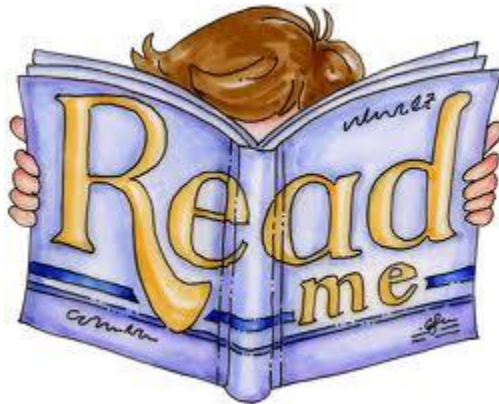
Note: Before assigning books to read, login to LitPick and make sure your Educator Interface is working. Email Gary Cassel at gary@litpick.com if you encounter any problems.

Interest and Genre

Help students choose a book based on interest. One of the ways LitPick books are organized is by genre. Having students choose a book of a specific genre can help them get interested in reading. Students who choose the same genre can be grouped together so that they can help identify common themes and ideas within their genre.

Age Level and Reading Ability

In addition to genre, LitPick books are sorted by age level. Age level can reflect reading ability, which is helpful for students to find books appropriate for their age or grade. This category can also help students hone in on their interests within a specific age group.



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II. During Reading

Weeks 1- 4

Passages and Notes

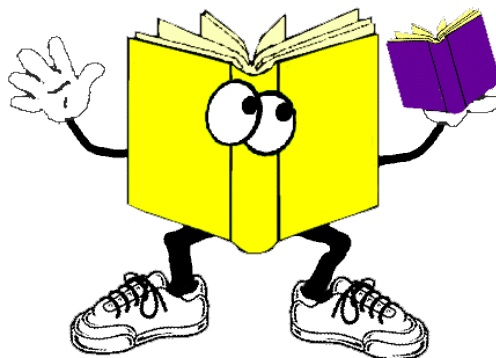
Give students strategies to understand the book they are reading by helping them focus on specific content. While reading, encourage students to underline passages. Students can make note of passages which have touched them in some way or ones that simply sound interesting. Students can also take notes as they are reading. To help them organize the notes, encourage students to use a graphic organizer such as the one below.

Questions

The following three columns can be completed by students as they are reading their LitPick book. This helps them get into the mindset of asking thoughtful questions.

What do you know?	What do you want to know?	What do you think?
This column summarizes the information the student has read so far.	This column is for students to write their thoughts in the form of a question. They could be specific questions about the plot or they could be general, open-ended questions.	In this column, students try to answer their own questions from Column 2. Students make predictions based on what they already know.

Keep adding rows for each chapter. Educators can assign work, such as one or two rows per chapter. (See **Appendix A** for example)



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III. After Reading

Weeks 4 - 6

Summary

Students begin their review with the book summary. To help them complete the summary, they can refer to the graphic organizer they completed or to the notes they have taken while reading. While the summary is a list of chronological events that take place in the book, it can also include questions student had while reading (column 2 of the graphic organizer). The summary could end on a question which also serves as a cliff-hanger and won't give too much of the story away. (See **Appendix B** for example)

Opinion

Help students write a review by finishing with their opinion. They should be off to a good start just by writing the summary and thinking about the story. In addition to thinking about the plot, ask students to think about the author's intent and whether it was conveyed well in the book. Ask your students what they have learned while reading the book and whether or not they would recommend it to others. (See **Appendix C** for example)



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IV. In the Classroom

Weeks 4 - 6

Presentations

(2 class periods)

Students plan presentation individually.

They then share in groups of 3-5 students. Groups of students can be organized by genre/interest or age level/reading ability. Within each group, they could highlight one of the following in the story: (See **Appendix D** for example)

1. Characters
2. Quotes
3. Literary elements

Socratic Seminar

(1 class period)

With the help of the graphic organizer they completed, students will pose one or two open-ended discussion questions for the entire class. The class discusses these questions in Socratic Seminar style in which one person speaks at a time in order to answer the question posed the class. Students can draw from their own books to answer these questions. (See **Appendix E** for example)

Connections to the Curriculum

(2 class periods)

In order to connect the material to other parts of the curriculum, students can answer a set of questions that focus on a different core curriculum. For example, educators can ask students to examine their books through the lens of “community.” In other words, students are asked to think about characters they have read about and to understand how that character conforms into (or doesn't conform into) the community they are a part of. Students then further examine themselves as part of the community. They may draw examples from other classes as well, helping them think about the issue across multiple disciplines. (See **Appendix F** for example)

Describe a character in the book

1. Who is this person? Who is s/he as an individual? As a member of their society?
2. How does s/he conform to their community? How does s/he stand out? Give specific examples.

3. Is s/he different by the end of the book? How so? Is s/he happier? Does the way others see them change?

Relate this to you or someone we have learned about

1. Can you think of an experience in your own life, in a subject we have studied in school, in current or historic events that is similar to something the character has experienced? In what ways are the two experiences similar?
2. In this experience, is the individual part of their community? Why or why not?

Share with others

1. In groups of ~5 students share your answers.
2. Based on your answers, can your group define “community?”
3. All groups share their answers with the whole class.

Integrating The LitPick Reading Program into Your Curriculum

What's the end result?

By now students are well on their way to thinking critically. They have read their books, written their reviews, and discussed their opinions in groups of their peers. With the guidance of educators, they learn to ask each other thought-provoking questions, and, with practice, they will apply that level of thinking to all the books they read hereafter.



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Appendix

The following sections are examples of the activities that are used throughout the reading Book used for activities: Splendors and Glooms by Laura Amy Schlitz
<http://litpick.com/books/splendors-and-glooms>

Appendix A: Table Graphic Organizer

What do you know?	What do you want to know?	What do you think?
Prologue – A witch named Cassandra is sick and lonely. She is in pain, maybe dying.	Why is the witch dying? Why is she in pain? What is the fire opal?	She is in pain because of the fire opal. The fire opal might be evil.
Chapter 1 – Clara is a girl who is rich and pampered. She isn't exactly happy even though it's her birthday.	Why isn't Clara happy? How are she and the witch related?	Clara's life seems stifling. Maybe her parents don't let her leave her home or do what she wants. Clara and the witch might have a magical connection. Maybe Clara helps the witch overcome the fire opal and saves her.

Appendix B: Summary

Clara Wintermute is the only child of a filthy rich family. Her life does seem to be picture perfect, but, in reality, her parents are always mourning over her dead brothers and sisters. She herself goes missing. Clara is kidnaped by an evil puppeteer/magician named Grisini who has two apprentices named Lizzie Rose and Parsefell. Although the two apprentices are just children, they must face great danger trying to rescue Clara while making an honest living in the world. Their adventures take them to a witch's house far away. They discover that the witch has the power to bring Clara back. How are the children, the witch, and the evil puppeteer Grisini all related? Read the book to find out!

Appendix C: Opinion

I think the author wanted to write a story that was sympathetic towards kids. Usually, in the real world, kids are told the adults are always right. However, in “Splendors and Glooms” nothing is black and white. Sometimes the adults are bad people, and sometimes the kids are the ones who have to set things right. In the end, adults can learn from them. I think this book is for readers of all ages.

Appendix D: Presentations

Lizzie Rose is an orphan girl who wants to lead a decent, respectable life and help others do the same. She may be orphaned and poor, but she makes decisions that an adult would make, and she is in charge of raising the orphan boy Parsefell on her own. Lizzie Rose is a great example of a person who has a strong sense of morality and does not compromise her morals in any situation.

Quote about Lizzie Rose being pure and good (need to locate quote in book). Those who are good still face moral dilemmas. Being good means being able to make the best decision in that situation. For example, Lizzie Rose chooses not to steal the fire opal because stealing is wrong. However, the fire opal is evil and hurting Cassandra, which means Lizzie Rose should help Cassandra. And to confound this, Cassandra is not a nice or likable person. Should Lizzie Rose help someone in pain and yet violate their sense of right and wrong?

There is clear symbolism in Splendors and Glooms. Puppets and puppetmasters serve as symbols for power and powerlessness. Some characters are powerful and others are helpless. There are two ways in which this is demonstrated in the book – Power is unevenly distributed between adults and children, with children being the powerless ones; they follow in the footsteps of adults with little choice of their own. Also, puppetry can symbolize a power of wills. Some characters, such as Lizzie Rose, are willful while others are weaker, such as Parsefell and Clara at the beginning of the book. By the end of the story, Clara escapes the spell that kept her as a puppet, and the puppetmaster Grisini dies. This symbolizes the breaking of the cycle. There are no more puppets nor puppetmasters; everyone is free to act as they will.

Appendix E: Socratic Seminar Questions

How are people sometimes puppets?
How are people puppetmasters?
Are some people naturally good and some bad?
What does it mean to be good or bad?
Should parents make all decisions for their children?
What is freedom? Is it earned?

Appendix F: Connections to the Curriculum

Character:

1. Clara Wintermute is born into a rich family, and her life seems perfect on the surface. She is mature for her age and has her own opinions, but because her family doesn't really listen to her, she keeps her opinions to herself. Her family is endlessly mourning the death of Clara's siblings. Clara wants to respect her parents' wishes, but she also struggles to be free from all the mourning and just be happy. She dreams of being a dancer.

2. Clara is different from her family and her family's circle because she likes street performers. She invites them to her house and laughs loudly and inappropriately at their puppet show performance. She is the only one to find their "dance of death" funny.

3. By the end of the book, Clara undergoes a major change. Following her disappearance, her family is heartbroken, and this causes them to reevaluate her wants and needs. As a puppet, she can dance, and she feels like she can do anything. When she is human again, she is able to communicate better with her parents. She finally tells them she would like to be a dancer.

Relate to self or history or current events:

1. Clara Wintermute's journey to self-discovery is similar to Dave Pelzer's stories (e.g. "A Child Called 'It'") about the abuse he suffered as a child. Although Clara was never abused, she was neglected by her parents. When she was trapped in a puppet's body, she began to reflect on her life. She made decisions about who she wanted to be when she returned her human form. Her experiences are similar to Dave's; they have both been trapped and powerless. It is through their powerlessness that they discover how strong they truly are.

2. Both Clara and Dave are sort of loners, which neither of them chose to be. Their family circumstances forced them to be alone or lonely most of their childhood. Their isolation probably shaped their notion of community. Neither of them felt like they belonged to their family; however, after overcoming their struggles and abuse, they do find that they belong somewhere. Clara finds that she belongs to both worlds -- that of her rich parents and that of the street children. Dave finds that he belongs to the outside world, one in which strangers are sympathetic and kind.