

# **Novels in the Classroom: Using literature circles to promote reading engagement and critical thinking skills**

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Wednesday, Mar 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011



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- Literature circles offer opportunity for differentiation of
    - instruction
    - groupings
    - tasks



## Classroom management: Different scenarios

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- One teacher
- More than one teacher: Co-operative teaching
- Whole class use same novel
- Different novels used in different groups
- Different types of groupings – Mixed-ability groups, grouping by ability or instructional level, choice



## One teacher/many teachers

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- May be more than one teacher supporting class - LS, RT, EAL, Traveller support
- Withdrawal model
- In-class support model
- Mixture of support settings
- Literature circles offer opportunity for effective in-class support in small-group settings



## Role of class teacher/support teacher(s)

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- Can vary
- Class teacher or support teacher can take lead role or share responsibility
- Requires much collaboration and shared decision-making, especially at the beginning
- Roles - organise groups, choose novel(s), lead lesson, teach mini-lesson, organise additional resources, set tasks



# Using the same novel

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## Advantages

- Easier to organise/source novel
- Good for whole-class mini-lessons
- Groups can share/compare their discussion points at the end of lesson
- Teacher can choose to use novel on whole-class basis if support teachers unavailable
- Support teacher can help prepare text with children who struggle

## Disadvantages

- Level of text may not suit all readers in the class
- Some children may have read text
- Text may not interest all readers



# Using different novels

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## Advantages

- Opportunity to challenge high achievers
- Match text more closely to childrens' instructional level
- Appeal to a variety of interests
- Opportunities to use strategies with different texts

## Disadvantages

- Planning after-reading activities
- Monitoring each group
- Classroom management



# Mixed-ability groups

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## Advantages

- Peer-tutoring/  
support
- Variety in  
discussion
- Vocabulary  
development
- Higher-level  
questioning
- Working in small  
groups

## Disadvantages

- Accessing text may  
pose difficulty for  
some children  
(preparation required)
- May not offer same  
opportunity to  
challenge high  
achievers



# Grouping by instructional level

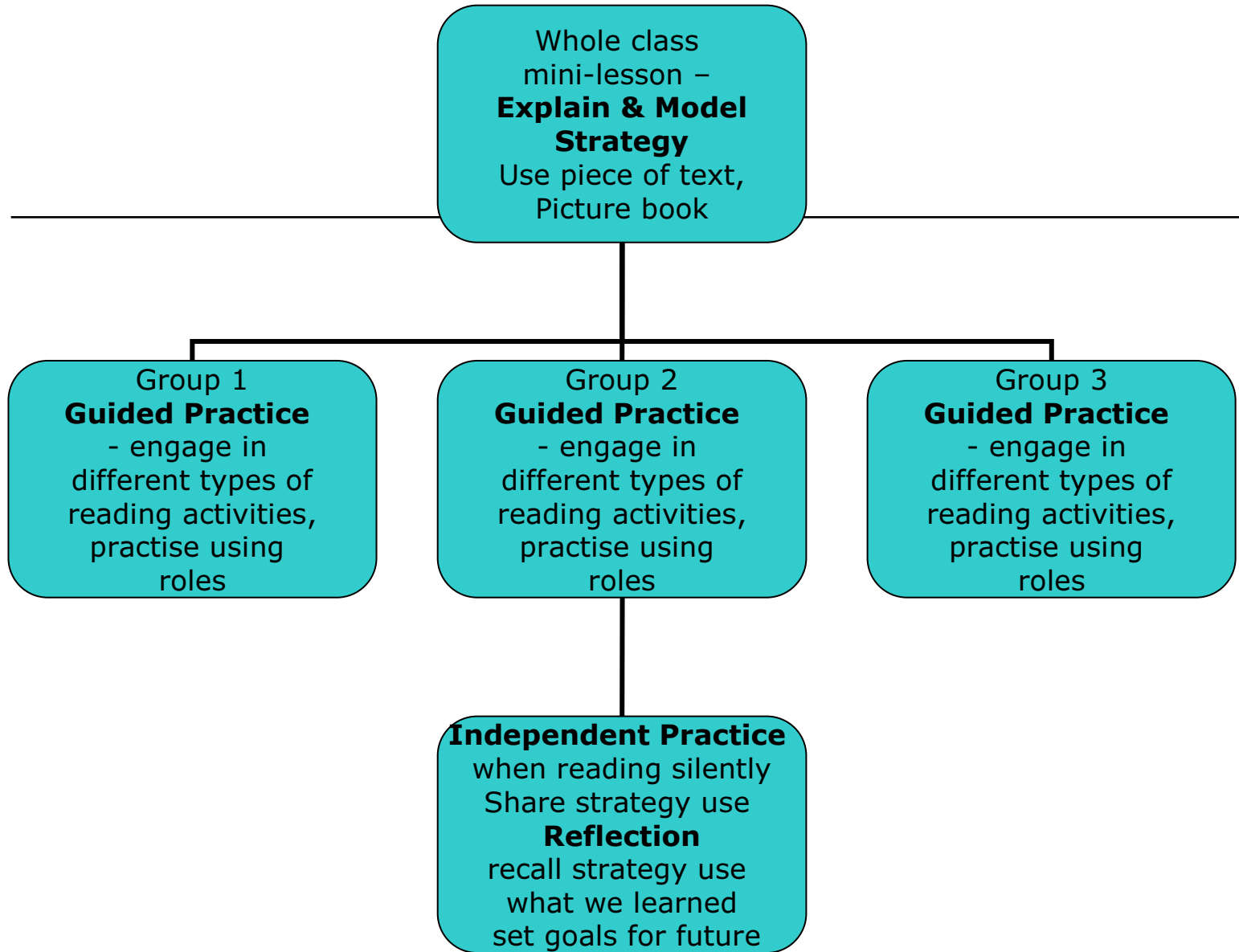
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## Advantages

- Texts are at a more appropriate level
- Differentiation of instruction on a needs-basis
- Can be beneficial if grouping is dynamic

## Disadvantages

- Self-esteem
- Danger of lowering expectations, focusing on lower-order skills
- Challenges of placing children in correct group
- Difficulties with dynamic grouping





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- With time and practice, strategy use should transfer to other texts, genres, subject areas  
“I have a connection...”
  - Provides children with the vocabulary to engage in discussions about texts



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RAI 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference – Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> & Oct 1<sup>st</sup>