

WHAT ARE "GROUP SHARES"?

When I am curled up on the couch reading a book, I am not only reading for the storyline, but I become caught up in the world of that novel and its characters, captured by the author's craft. I savor the author's nuances of language and may interrupt my husband's reading to comment on an idea or read him a delightful passage. It is this intensity of experience that I am trying to capture in this learning experience. I want the reader, my student, to notice something that is so compelling that he or she wants to SHARE it with the class (our GROUP). I began to call this activity GROUP SHARES.

GROUP SHARE, a speaking/listening activity, emanates from a student's independent reading experience. Each reader identifies some "piece" of written expression from his or her personal reading selections that makes a personal connection and fits our definition of literary merit. *Literary merit* is defined as a group of words that reveal the author's craft and teach something about style, voice, poetic devices, or elements of design. It may refer to the author's purpose or a reader's interpretation. It may also involve a discussion of grammar or syntax or may show vocabulary development. More than one of these areas may be discussed in the same presentation.

The gist of the learning experience is this. The reader finds some passage in his or her personal reading that signifies a "teaching moment." The reader then crafts a three-to-five minute oral presentation using that passage as the core of the lesson. The student must elucidate the passage's literary merit and relate its personal connection. This is the essence of the GROUP SHARE.

However, the oral presentation is not the only focus. Listeners are expected

to be able to gently critique the presentation in terms of speaking skills and content. Following the oral presentation, during a feedback session, class members are asked to validate the speaker about his or her presentation and then offer suggestions for improvement based on their notes or the rubric. After this oral exchange one or two students write a critique of the presentation.

This experience helps students become critical readers and writers as well as speakers and listeners. It highlights literary devices and infuses the classroom with the voices of many different authors. It allows for creativity and encourages innovation. It works to develop life-long readers by showing the power of words that affect our lives. Students also learn how to listen critically and practice articulating constructive, yet rigorous, evaluation. Listeners learn to discern meaning and avoid repetition. Writers of the critique incorporate their assessment with ideas from their peers, striving to compose a complete and fair interpretation of the presentation. These are essential skills for literacy.

This prototype describes a learning activity that meets all of the ELA Standards and uses all four of the modalities: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Since students select the material they will present from their independent reading, students often choose, selections that make interdisciplinary connections. Sometimes students choose biographical material that emerges from social studies themes. Students often refer to lessons they have learned in health when they choose selections that relate to self-esteem. Students have focused on science issues and have shown how that discipline relies on language use. Since the choice of topic depends on a student's personal connection, any discipline or genre may be used in creating a GROUP SHARE.

CONTENT	PROFESSIONAL	APPRENTICE	NOVICE	AMATEUR
INTRODUCTION The opening of the speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flawless opening statement, question, anecdote, or opinion that draws in the listener Books/ title/author/page # are smoothly woven into presentation and source is shown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening is interesting, drawing listener in with question, anecdote, statement or opinion Title/author/page # are mentioned and source is shown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening is awkward with little focus Title/author/page # or source is omitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening begins with: "My presentation is about..." or "The book I read was..." Title and author are not included; no source to show; no page number
BODY The reading and sharing of ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concisely sets the passage in context so the listener knows the setting and characters Thorough and sophisticated discussion of literary merit is provided with cogent analysis Analysis is supported by rich examples that enhance understanding of literary merit A compelling detailed connection between passage and own life or a personal response that emphasizes its significance is made Attractive handouts/visuals are effective reference guide and used skillfully to enhance presentation Fascinating additional information about author, genre, related books or vocabulary created interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details about setting and characters help provide essential contextual information Literary merit is explained in an interesting way with adequate analysis Examples help provide a clear analysis of literary merit A clear personal connection or personal response is included Handouts/visuals are used to make presentation more understandable Additional information about author, genre, related books or vocabulary created interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal details of setting and characters leave listener unclear Literary merit is mentioned with little elaboration or analysis Supporting details are vague or insignificant making analysis weak The connection to own life or significance of passage is vague Handouts/visuals are confusing, difficult to read or see which detracts from presentation Little additional information was added to increase interest in presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No link between passage and book or no direct reading from the text No analysis of literary merit is provided Few or no supporting details were given to support analysis No personal connection is offered No handout/visual was used so presentation was difficult to understand No additional information was included
CONCLUSION The ending of your presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending concisely wraps up presentation by restating main points or relating back to opening question/statement or giving an opinion or encouraging audience to read the book, leaving audience with something to ponder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending refers back to opening in an interesting way, leaving audience with something to think about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending is lacking in elements that help the listener recall the presentation and confuses the listener 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending is unplanned: "that's it" or there is no planned ending

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: STUDENT HANDOUT TO EXPLAIN PROJECT

GROUP SHARES

GROUP SHARES is a learning experience that encourages you to delve into the world of literacy, to make discoveries about the use of language, and to share these insights with your peers. This activity is designed to help you learn how to present orally and make independent choices that show that you are learning about the power of language. I will demonstrate a GROUP SHARE for you so you will understand the kind of presentation I am talking about.

There are two significant parts to a GROUP SHARE: the content and the oral presentation. The content involves "literary merit." I want you to find some piece of writing that you like and that you think teaches about the power of language. This snippet of writing can be of any genre and of any reasonable length. It needs to meet two criteria. First, it must make a personal connection with you and your life or evoke in you a significant personal response. In other words, it has to have meaning for you (and, hopefully, our peers). Second, it needs to teach us something about the power of language (that's the *literary merit* part). Here you can discuss the way the author used words, its grammar and/or structure, its use of literary terms if they apply, or any other meaningful analysis. You could also compare and contrast two pieces or two authors. You could comment on the way the author developed his or her ideas. There are no limitations here because each piece of writing could be analyzed in many different ways. Again, I will discuss some models with you.

Often it is advisable to use a handout or a visual to help the audience "see" the connections you are trying to make or understand the intricate analysis you are explaining. Providing information about the author's personal life or career, making connections to the genre, indicating other related books by theme or author, and introducing unfamiliar vocabulary words also add to the presentation.

These presentations should be about five to seven minutes. Since the way you present is also a significant part of this assignment, you need to consider the construction of an interesting opening; issues of voice, rate, poise, and eye contact; and an effective conclusion. These areas are clearly described on the rubric.

Another significant part of this assignment is the feedback stage. After each speaker finishes, class members will offer compliments and suggestions for improvement. This part of the process is designed to help us learn more about the skills of listening and speaking and will give us a chance to review what we have learned in the presentation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: SABRINA'S SELF-REFLECTION

SELF-REFLECTION ON GROUP SHARE

1. What was a strength of your GROUP SHARE?

I think a strength of my group share was that my introduction and conclusion were strong. In my conclusion I think ending it with one of Dr. Seuss' rhymes was interesting because it summed up everything I said about success. I also believe that my vocabulary and background information on Dr. Seuss was very informative and enticing because I gave the real name of Dr. Seuss and other facts one might not have known. Overall I think that my speaking was good because I am generally a good public speaker with good projection, posture and eye contact.

2. What was a weakness in your presentation?

In my presentation I think a weakness I had was the speed of my voice. A few times I sped up because I messed up the words. I think though this was brought on by my nervousness at the beginning of the presentation, but later on I felt more comfortable. Another weakness in my presentation was that I "muffed" up a couple of words which made me repeat myself once or twice.

3. What do you wish you had done differently?

If there was one thing that I wished I had done differently was that I could have better organized the literary merit part of my presentation. I think I repeated myself once because I didn't really go over and practice that section. It was hard to make a transition from the poem to my speech without losing my place. I also wish that I could have double-spaced my text so that I wouldn't have been so tied to it and would have made

even better eye contact. Throughout the whole presentation I was worried about skipping a line or losing my place because I didn't double-space it.

4. What is the hardest part of this project?

The hardest part of doing this project was probably organizing my speech for the oral presentation and writing it too. First of all when I was writing it, it was hard to start. I didn't know how I wanted my intro to sound and was too focused on that so it took a lot of time to do. Organizing my speech was also difficult because I had a lot of information in different spots and I needed to make it all fit and flow nicely. I also think that actually giving the presentation was hard because I was somewhat nervous that I would mess up and ruin the presentation. Overall I think that I did well.

5. What was your impression of the feedback session that followed your GROUP SHARE?

My impression of the class discussion that followed my presentation was that I was surprised at how many hands went up for "suggestions for improvement." When I saw the hands go up I thought that I did a really bad presentation, but when one person said, "she spoke too fast in some parts" most of the hands went down. I was a little bit relieved because I figured that I didn't do such a bad job after all. I was also glad a lot of kids liked the presentation and pointed out my strengths and some of the weaknesses too because there is always room for improvement.

6. What did you learn from this project?

From this project I learned a lot of new and intriguing information about Dr. Seuss and the bizarre things he has done in his life. I got to know the author's style better and also enhanced my vocabulary at the same time. I used a lot of words that were

sophisticated such as whimsical and deigned that just added to my presentation. I hope to use these words in future writing and speaking. I have also learned how to better analyze literary merit and main points of a book due to this spectacular project.