

Literature Circle Curriculum - *The BFG*

Title: *The BFG*

Author: Roald Dahl

ISBN: 0-14-031597-7

Publisher: Puffin Books

Group: A voluntary group of 4th and 5th graders at church, based on the reading level of the book. This would be a great program to do following your church's weekly fellowship dinner.

Initial PR: see attached flier to be mailed out and posted at church.

Number of Meetings: 4 meetings total. 1 introductory meeting and 3 child-led discussion meetings.

Meeting 1: Introductory Meeting: Children and Parents: 45 minutes

In this meeting the concept of literature circles will be introduced to the children and the parents. Both groups will have the opportunity to practice a literature circle involving making predictions about the book. This will get them used to holding their own discussions and get them excited about what they are about to read.

Materials Needed: Extra copies of *The BFG*, copies of role sheets, 1 zip-loc baggie for each child including pen, post-it notes, and sheet stating next week's assigned chapters, board or paper to write on up front.

Welcome: Welcome both children and parents. Make sure every child has a copy of the book. (Have extras in case someone was unable to get their own) Introduce book without giving away much (or anything!) about the plot.

Initial Group Discussion: Together, as a class, have the children try and guess what "BFG" stands for. Even if someone gives the correct answer, encourage more guesses. Looking at the illustration on the front cover may help. Don't let them know what the right answer is- they will figure that out from the reading.

Lit. Circle Training: Explain to class that they get to read this book in an exciting new way. Explain concept of small groups where the children can freely discuss what they have read each week. Questions about the book are great, stories or experiences from your own life that the book reminds you of are great, comments about favorite or not-so-favorite parts are great, etc. Explain that kids get to help one another answer questions or share in their own ways. We want lots of great conversation!

Explain that each week we will have some fun new tasks to help us with reading. At this first meeting, to experience what a literature circle can be like, we are going to meet for

about 10-15 minutes to make some predictions about what we are going to read. In each group some of you will have specific roles to help lead the discussion. But everyone is welcome to share! You don't even have to go in a specific order or raise your hand. Again, let's just have some great conversation! But just to help, in case you get stuck, here are some roles. (*Have these role titles written on the board or poster up front, then add a description as you talk about each one*)

Literary Luminary- person who picks out special sections or quotations from the book that they would like to discuss with the group. Tonight, since we haven't read anything yet, this person will read aloud the summary on the back of the book or ask someone else in the group to do so.

Questioner- This person will write down some questions they have about the reading. This can be things you are wondering about while you are reading, questions about what a word means, questions about what will happen next, or even questions about the whole thing- what does it mean? Tonight, think of 1 or 2 questions to pose to the group after we read the back cover.

Connector- This person will make connections between what we read and you or the world around you. What does it remind you of? Have you ever experienced anything like this before? Have you ever read anything that sounds like this story before? Share some thoughts with the group and see what connections they may have made too.

Word Wizard- This person chooses words or phrases that seem important to the story, words that the author seems to use a lot, words that you think are funny, scary, etc. or words you may not understand. Jot down these words as you read and feel free to point them out to the group as you have your conversation.

Assigning Groups: Separate parents from children. The parents will have their own lit. circle groups at the same time in which they get to practice the technique as well to help their children later, as they read. Have the children number off or assign groups if you have an idea who should/should not work together. Keep groups small if possible, 4-8 kids. (it's okay to have more than one child assigned the same role). Once they are seated in their literature circle groups, you can assign the roles by handing out role sheets. Kids can write or draw on these sheets to help them remember things they want to discuss.

(See attached role sheet handouts)

Once kids and parents have their role sheets, suggest that the best way to start is to have the Literary Luminary begin by reading or choosing someone to read the back cover of the book. Take a minute to think silently and review the role sheets. Then the great conversation can begin!

~10-15 minutes of small group discussion time.~ Be available to answer questions

kids/parents have about the roles or discussion. Notice which groups seem to be talking freely and which seem stuck. Offer more questions to encourage discussion as opposed to answers or facts.

Re-group/Feedback: Bring children and parents back together into the large group and ask them about their experiences in the small groups. What was fun? What was difficult about leading your own discussion? Any new insights about what BFG might mean or what the book will be about?

Assignment for next week: Read from the beginning of the book *through* the chapter called “Journey to Dream Country”. You can read it by yourself or with a family member if you would like. We have a new reading tool to use for next week! (*Begin to pass out zip-loc baggie with assignment sheet, pen and pad of brightly colored post-it notes to each child*) Explain to group that while they are reading they should use a post-it note to stick on a page where they find a passage that interests them. They can stick it right at the part they would like to bring up to the group next week (but make sure some sticks out of the edge of the book to make it easy to find later). Kids should be encouraged to write or draw on the post-it notes to help them remember what it was that caught their attention- a word? an important event in the plot? a character they like or dislike? an experience in their own life that the story reminded them of? Anything at all! (*Demonstrating this process with your own book may be helpful.*)

Closing Scripture: Write this scripture on the board so the children can learn it. It will be said collectively each week before the end of the session. Don’t try an explain it, just let them learn it. Then at the last session the kids can make their own connections.

Job 33:4 The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Literary Luminary

Help your group predict what this book is about by reading aloud, or asking someone from your group to **read aloud the back cover of *The BFG***.

If you would like to, use this sheet to write down some predictions you and your group are making about this book.

Questioner

As you read the back cover, **what questions come to your mind that you could pose to the group?** They can be questions about what will happen in the story or about a character or any other type of question. Try and think of at least 1 or 2 and write them down on this paper.

Connector

Your job is **to find connections between the book and you**, or the book and the world around you. Does what you read on the back cover remind you of anything you have experienced at home, school, church or other place? Does it remind you of something you have read before? Write down what comes to mind and share it with the group.

Word Wizard

Your job is to **be on the lookout for words** the author uses that may have special meaning. Maybe it is a silly word or a mysterious word. Maybe it is a word you have never heard before or you are not sure of the meaning. Jot down some of them here and share them with the group.

Meeting 2: Chapters “The Witching Hour” – “Journey to Dream Country”: 45 minutes

This meeting, and subsequent meetings, should be with the children only, with some parents or teacher’s helpers, mainly for crowd control if needed.

Materials Needed: Notebook for each child to take home which includes a sheet explaining the roles used last week.

Gathering: Welcome children back and get some initial responses about the book. Encourage them to save the detailed discussion (post-it notes) for their small groups. See what the group thinks BFG stands for now that they have read the first part of the book.

Instructions: Explain that in the small groups, children should use their post-it notes to guide the discussion. It may be helpful for the children to tell the group what page they are on and remind the group what was happening at that part of the story. The group should listen to what someone else noted and then feel free to respond. Stories, questions, and comments are encouraged! Suggest that whoever was the word-wizard last week should begin by choosing one of their own post-it notes to share with the group. If they can’t remember who that was, simply pick someone to start.

~25 minutes of small group discussion time~

Re-group/ Feedback: Ask if there are any insights anyone would like to share with the whole class. Get their feedback on using the post-it notes. Explain that they are going to use a new reading tool for next week, but they are always welcome to keep using the post-it notes if they want to.

Assignment for Next Week: Read chapters “Dream Catching” through “The Palace” Begin handing out a notebook to each student. Explain that this week they get to use something called a “reader response log”- a notebook where they get to write down their own responses to what they are reading. Their responses can be in the form of comments, questions, even illustrations and doodles. Show the children that you have included a sheet that describes the roles they used in last week’s discussion to help them think about their reading in different ways. Remind them that this is just to be a guide, they don’t have to respond using all of the roles! There’s no page requirement and no right way to respond. Just write down what comes to mind and what you would like to discuss with your small group.

Closing Scripture:

Job 33:4 The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Meeting 3: Chapters “Dream Catching” – “The Palace”: 45 minutes

Materials Needed: A sealed envelope for each student labeled “VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION” containing one of the following questions (feel free to add or change these):

1. Sometimes, people think of God as a giant. How about you? What kind of giant would God be, if God were a giant?
2. Sophie was very surprised to learn that the BFG was not a mean, human-gobbling giant. He was a friendly helpful giant! Share about a time when you thought someone was one particular way, but then learned they were quite different than what you thought.
3. The BFG breathed good dreams into the rooms of little children while they were sleeping and didn’t know it. Now think about God. In what ways does God help make us happy even when we don’t know it?
4. With the help of the BFG, Sophie was able to be very brave and save the children of the world from the human-gobbling giants! Think about a way you would like to make the world better. What kind of help would you need to be brave and accomplish your plan?

(Number the outside of the envelopes to correspond with the questions to ensure even distribution among the groups.)

Gathering: Welcome children back and get initial responses from this week’s assigned reading. How did the children like using their reader response logs?

Instructions: Explain that in small groups they will use the things they wrote down in their reader response logs to guide the discussion. Children should be more comfortable now with this type of free, less-structured discussion. Tell them that once they are in their groups they can decide among themselves who will begin the discussion.

~25 minutes of small group discussion time~

Re-group/ Feedback: Ask if there are any insights anyone would like to share with the group. Ask how the reader response logs helped their small group discussion of the book. Encourage them to keep using them next week!

Assignment for next week: Finish the book! Read chapters “The Queen” through “The Author”. Explain that while they are reading the final portion of the book, they should continue to use the post-it notes or their reader response log, or both! But this time they have a special task to do *only after they finish their reading*. Instructing the children not to open them, hand each student a sealed envelope containing their “Very Important Question”. Make sure to give each small group a variety of questions so they don’t all have the same one. Explain that in their very own envelope, they have a specific question

to think about when they *finish* reading. They can keep it to themselves or talk it over with family members. Most importantly, they should respond to it in their reader response logs in whatever way they would like. (comments, stories, pictures, or more questions). Tell them that next week they will have a chance to share their “Very Important Question” with the group and talk together about it. (Students may be concerned if they end up with the same question as another person in their group, so talk up how exciting it will be to compare different responses to the same question—because there’s not just one right answer!)

Closing Scripture:

Job 33:4 The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Meeting 4: Chapters “The Queen” – “The Author” : 1 Hour

Gathering: Welcome the children back and get initial responses from the assigned reading now that they have finished the book. Did they love it? Were they surprised? Check to make sure everyone remembered to answer their “Very Important Question”.

Instructions: Tell the children that they will meet in their small groups for a little longer today, 30 minutes, because you suspect they have a lot to talk about. Ask them to use any post-it notes or reader response log notes to guide the discussion first- but don’t talk about the “Very Important Question” yet! Tell them they can talk to each other about the “Great Plan” or the ending of the book, and share their feelings about the book as a whole. Then explain that you will give a signal when it’s time to get out the “Very Important Questions”.

~First 15 minutes of small group discussion~

Then--- after 15 minutes have passed, give the signal. Ask everyone to get out their “Very Important Question”. Ask the children with question number 1 to begin and let others in the group respond. Make sure everyone gets to share their question.

~Second 15 minutes of small group discussion~

(Some groups/children may be more conversational than others at this point. These are different, deeper kinds of questions that might require more time to respond to. But that’s ok! Just encourage the children to share their question/response and bring it back to the large group.)

Re-group/ Feedback: Ask if anyone would like to share something they heard from a small group member with the larger group. Ask if they were surprised to see that some of the questions were about God when they had just read a book about giants. Why or why not? Let them take the conversation!

There is no “moral of the story” to get from the BFG, but it can spur some great conversations about the nature of God (scary, far-off giant or big, caring friend?), the courage of children to do what is good, and God’s desire to breath good things into our lives. If the conversation stalls, ask some questions relating to these topics but don’t look for a right answer, just let the children think and talk.

Closing Scripture:

Job 33:4 The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

This literature circle curriculum was prepared by Union Presbyterian Seminary student Megan Arbabrite. Please credit her work if you use this material in your own setting.

FROBSCOTTLE, WHIZZPOPPERS, AND TROGGLEHUMPING, BOGTHUMPING GIANTS!



CALLING ALL 4TH AND 5TH GRADERS! WHAT DO FLESHLUMPEATING GIANTS, A LITTLE GIRL NAMED SOPHIE, AND A JOURNEY TO DREAM LAND ALL HAVE IN COMMON? COME TO WEDNESDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP AND WE'LL FIND OUT TOGETHER.

For the month of April, we will be reading and learning about Roald Dahl's classic book *The BFG* each week after Wednesday night fellowship supper. This will be a great opportunity for your child to discover a new book and discover new things about God. Not sure how a book about giants can teach us about God? Come see for yourself!

Please RSVP by March 15th if you would like your child to participate and bring a copy of the book for your child if you can!