

Assessment and Reflection

Great Books K–12 programs encourage teachers and students to regularly reflect, both informally and formally, on their achievement and growth in Shared Inquiry. The teacher’s materials provide a variety of assessment and reflection tools.



Assessment Tools in Great Books Programs

Great Books classroom programs provide a number of assessment tools (described below). Choose the assessment tools that best fit your own and your students' needs. Varying the tools you use from unit to unit will enable you to evaluate student progress in a thorough and manageable way.

Activity scores: To track students' participation in any activity, Junior Great Books programs for grades 2–8 recommend a simple scoring method to indicate a student's level of participation.

Rubrics: Great Books rubrics provide a detailed view of development in critical thinking, expository writing, and interpretive drawing. They help teachers assess and give feedback on students' growth in these areas (see sample rubrics on pp. 77–79).

Comprehension tests: Junior Great Books Series 2–5 and Junior Great Books Series 6–8 provide a test for each unit. Tests consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions (see sample test on p. 80).

Portfolio assessment materials: Junior Great Books Series 3–5 and Junior Great Books Series 6–8 provide guidelines and reproducible masters to help students select pieces for a portfolio and communicate with their teacher about their achievements, as well as a rubric for assessing the portfolio as a whole (see sample portfolio comment sheet and assessment rubric on p. 81).

Student and teacher reflection forms: Student reflection materials in all Great Books programs help students self-assess individual and group strengths and areas for growth. The teacher reflection form helps you choose strategies for developing your own skills in leading Shared Inquiry (see sample reflection forms on pp. 82–84).

Sample Assessment and Reflection Materials

Critical Thinking Rubric

The critical thinking rubric assesses the three main areas of critical thinking developed through Shared Inquiry: **idea**, **evidence**, and **response**. You can use this rubric with Shared Inquiry discussion, students' Shared Inquiry discussion pages, or written work based on interpretive questions. The critical thinking rubric in the teacher's materials for each grade shows an age-appropriate range of performance levels.

Critical Thinking Rubric (Junior Great Books Series 3–5)

	IDEA Coming up with an interpretation	EVIDENCE Using support from the story	RESPONSE Listening and responding to other students
4	OFFERS A WELL-DEVELOPED ANSWER TO THE FOCUS QUESTION - Makes inferences about motives and causes - To clarify, specifies meaning of words or phrases - Explores implications of an idea	EXPLAINS HOW EVIDENCE SUPPORTS IDEAS - Habitually looks back at whole story for evidence - Explains how specific words or phrases support an idea - Sees when evidence works against own idea	CONSIDERS OTHER STUDENTS' IDEAS WHEN DEVELOPING OWN ANSWER - Understands that classmates' ideas are valuable - Responds directly to other students without prompting - Agrees or disagrees with specific parts of other students' ideas
3	OFFERS A DETAILED ANSWER TO THE FOCUS QUESTION - Thinks carefully before answering - To clarify, tells more about answer	LOCATES EVIDENCE FROM THE STORY TO SUPPORT IDEAS - Often looks back at the story without prompting - Recalls or locates relevant parts of the story	EXPLAINS AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT WITH OTHER STUDENTS' IDEAS - Acknowledges differing ideas - Builds on or offers counterarguments to other students' ideas - Responds directly to classmates with prompting
2	OFFERS A SIMPLE ANSWER TO THE FOCUS QUESTION - Does not elaborate on answer, or offers a snap judgment - To clarify, repeats or paraphrases answer	REFERS TO THE STORY IN GENERAL TO SUPPORT IDEAS - Looks back at the story when asked to do so - Recalls major story facts	AGREES OR DISAGREES SIMPLY WITH OTHER STUDENTS' IDEAS - Allows classmates to speak - Reacts to other students' ideas but does not give reasons for reactions - Speaks only to teacher and not directly to classmates
1	STRUGGLES TO ANSWER THE FOCUS QUESTION - Does not answer when called on - Repeats other students' answers	HAS DIFFICULTY SUPPORTING ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE FROM THE STORY - Talks about things other than the story - Struggles to recall key story facts - Considers answer self-explanatory	HAS DIFFICULTY LISTENING TO OTHER STUDENTS' IDEAS - Ignores or interrupts other students - Struggles to understand that classmates have differing ideas - Distracts other students or does not follow the discussion

Writing Rubric

This rubric aligns with the elements that students consider when they plan their writing using the Evidence Organizer and the Drafting Guide: content (ideas and evidence) and organization.

Writing Rubric (Junior Great Books Series 6–8)

WRITING RUBRIC		
PERFORMANCE LEVEL	CONTENT: IDEAS AND EVIDENCE	ORGANIZATION
5	The essay develops a convincing and illuminating argument. - Supporting paragraphs develop and explain a compelling thesis. - Strong evidence from source(s) is cited and well explained; the reader finds the entire essay convincing.	The essay explores an idea in an orderly way, with each part contributing effectively. - The introduction and conclusion clearly relate to the thesis; each body paragraph develops that thesis. - The essay lays out evidence logically and explains how all evidence supports the thesis.
4	The essay makes an interesting, mostly convincing argument. - The thesis is clear and engages the reader. - Enough evidence is cited and explained to support the thesis; the reader is convinced by most of the argument.	The essay is mostly organized logically and focused on the thesis. - The introduction leads to the thesis; the reader grasps where the essay is going. - Each paragraph has a point related to the thesis and supports it with evidence.
3	The essay makes an argument that is partially developed and supported. - The thesis is relatively clear; it interests the reader. - Evidence supports several aspects of the thesis; the reader is convinced by parts of the argument.	The essay is focused on the thesis throughout, though there are some gaps and repetition. - There is an introduction; the reader can connect it to the thesis. - Most of the essay deals with the thesis and offers supporting evidence; the reader can usually see how the parts are connected.
2	The essay states a thesis and offers some support for it. - The thesis makes sense; the reader can grasp it. - Some evidence is given; the reader cannot follow explanations of how it supports the argument, or such explanations are missing.	The essay sometimes wanders from the thesis. - The essay starts with minimal or no introduction; the reader can identify the thesis. - Parts of the writing are not connected to the thesis; the reader sometimes gets lost.
1	The essay addresses the topic or issue. - There is an answer to the question; the reader can identify a general opinion. - There is some reference to evidence; the reader has difficulty connecting it to the thesis, and explanations are confusing or missing.	The essay is minimally organized or very short. - The essay is fragmented or incomplete. - The reader has trouble seeing how parts of the essay are connected.

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Series 7

Interpretive Drawing Rubric

In Junior Great Books Series K–1, students can respond to questions about the story through drawing. The interpretive drawing rubric provides a way to assess students' comprehension and their ability to interpret language in a concrete, visual way.

Interpretive Drawing Rubric (Junior Great Books Series K–1)

LEVEL	CRITERIA
4	• Drawing responds directly to the prompt and includes many details from the text • Student can explain details from the text when asked
3	• Drawing responds directly to the prompt but may have minimal details • Student can explain details from the text when asked
2	• Drawing depicts things in the text but does not respond directly to the prompt • Student cannot explain how the drawing relates to the prompt when asked
1	• Drawing depicts things unrelated to the text • Student cannot relate drawing to the text when asked

Comprehension Tests

Comprehension tests include multiple-choice questions that assess students' ability to identify:

- ◆ Explicit and implicit facts in the text
- ◆ Word meaning in context
- ◆ A correct sequence of events
- ◆ The best summary of the text
- ◆ A central idea or argument in the text

Short-answer questions ask students to support answers with evidence.

Story Comprehension Test (Junior Great Books Series 2–5)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Thank You, M'am

INSTRUCTIONS

- Read the question carefully.
- Read all the answers carefully. You can look back at the story to answer the question.
- Fill in the circle next to the answer you choose.

1. On page 15, Roger is described as looking frail. What does the word frail suggest about Roger's appearance?

Ⓐ He looks dangerous.
 Ⓑ He looks dirty.
 Ⓒ He looks quick.
 Ⓓ He looks weak.

2. Which word best describes how Roger feels when Mrs. Jones is dragging him to her home on page 15?

Ⓐ scared
 Ⓑ angry
 Ⓒ hungry
 Ⓓ sorry

3. Roger's plan to steal Mrs. Jones's purse fails. What detail from the story supports this?

Ⓐ Mrs. Jones's purse is slung across her shoulder.
 Ⓑ Roger gives the purse strap a single tug.
 Ⓒ Roger falls on his back on the sidewalk.
 Ⓓ Mrs. Jones is a large woman.

4. Why does Mrs. Jones give Roger ten dollars?

Ⓐ to buy some blue suede shoes
 Ⓑ to pay him for his company
 Ⓒ to go to the store for her
 Ⓓ to buy food for himself

Thank You, M'am (continued)

5. What does Mrs. Jones do **right after** she and Roger finish eating?

Ⓐ She asks him to gather up the plates.
 Ⓑ She invites him to come back.
 Ⓒ She gives him ten dollars.
 Ⓓ She tells him to wash his face.

6. What word is a synonym for (or means the same thing as) the word latching in the following sentence? "And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook *nor anybody else's*."

Ⓐ opening
 Ⓑ grabbing
 Ⓒ stealing
 Ⓓ closing

7. What is this story mainly about?

Ⓐ all the bad things Roger has done
 Ⓑ how Mrs. Jones looks after Roger
 Ⓒ Roger's missing parents
 Ⓓ what Mrs. Jones did when she was young

8. Where does Mrs. Jones work? Answer in a complete sentence.

9. Do you think Mrs. Jones should have turned Roger in instead of taking him home? Give two reasons for your answer.

Portfolio Assessment Materials

Forms in Junior Great Books Series 3–5 and Junior Great Books Series 6–8 prompt students to choose pieces for a portfolio and identify evidence of progress in their work. The portfolio assessment rubric enables a teacher to give feedback on a student's entire portfolio.

Portfolio Assessment Materials (Junior Great Books Series 3–5)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Portfolio Comment Sheet

Choose a piece of work that you have done in Junior Great Books that you are proud of. Attach a comment sheet with your comment. Your teacher will also comment after collecting your portfolio.

STUDENT: I'm proud of this piece because _____

TEACHER: This piece shows me that you _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Portfolio Comment Sheet

Choose a piece of work that you have done in Junior Great Books that you are proud of. Attach a comment sheet with your comment. Your teacher will also comment after collecting your portfolio.

STUDENT: I'm proud of this piece because _____

TEACHER: This piece shows me that you _____

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Portfolio Assessment Rubric

STUDENT: _____

TEACHER: _____ **DATE:** _____

SCORES				
5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement	Unsatisfactory

Your portfolio . . .	Comments	Score
. . . shows interesting ideas about the stories you read.		
. . . includes several different kinds of work.		
. . . was done carefully and completely.		
. . . explains why you included each piece.		

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Student Reflection Forms

Junior Great Books programs for grades 2 and up provide age-appropriate versions of individual and group reflection forms for students.

Student Reflection Form (Junior Great Books Series 2)

REFLECTION: STUDENT REFLECTION <i>How I Worked in Discussion</i>			
Name: _____			
Story: _____			
			
Fill in the circle that describes your work in the discussion.			
	A lot	A little	Not really
I shared my own ideas about the story.	☐	☐	☐
I looked back at the story to give evidence for my ideas.	☐	☐	☐
I listened to others and learned from them.	☐	☐	☐
I talked to others in a respectful way about their ideas.	☐	☐	☐
I learned a lot about the story.	☐	☐	☐
Something I did in the discussion that I am proud of: _____			

My goal for next time: _____			

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Group Reflection Form (Junior Great Books Series 6–8)

OUR COLLABORATION DURING DISCUSSION

Name: _____ Date: _____

For each pair of statements, circle the number that describes the whole group in Shared Inquiry discussion. A **1** means you strongly agree with the statement on the left. A **5** means you strongly agree with the statement on the right.

A few people do most of the talking.	1	2	3	4	5	Almost all of us contribute.
We stray from the focus question and never get back to it.	1	2	3	4	5	We explore the focus question thoroughly.
We all tend to say the same thing.	1	2	3	4	5	We develop different ideas about the text.
We state ideas but don't give much evidence for them.	1	2	3	4	5	We use evidence to support our ideas.
We don't pay much attention to what others say.	1	2	3	4	5	We listen carefully, comment on one another's ideas, and ask each other questions.
It's hard for us to say more about our ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	When asked, we try to explain our ideas and make them clearer.
We aren't interested in discussion, and we don't learn much.	1	2	3	4	5	We're interested in discussion, and we learn a lot.

Our goals for next time:

Teacher Reflection Forms

The teacher reflection form helps you assess your progress as a Shared Inquiry leader by considering your classroom culture and the behaviors your students exhibit. The form offers specific suggestions and strategies for improvement.

Teacher Reflection Form (Junior Great Books Series 2–5)

APPENDIX A

Teacher Reflection

Teacher Reflection Form

Complete this reflection form after every three or four units. If possible, meet with other teachers to share insights and suggestions. For each statement, circle the number that indicates how often you see students exhibiting the behavior (where 1 = “almost never” and 5 = “almost always”).

Classroom Culture	ALMOST NEVER	1	2	3	4	ALMOST ALWAYS
1. My students say what they think without worrying about being wrong. Tips • Show interest by listening intently and asking follow-up questions, even about less immediately promising ideas; students may surprise you when they explain further. • Avoid direct praise, which may inadvertently signal a “right” or favorite answer on your part.	1					5
2. My students develop their own ideas, rather than looking to me for the “right” answer. Tips • Let students know that you are as curious about the story as they are and eager to hear their answers. • Ask follow-up questions rather than leading students to particular answers or offering your own ideas.	1					4

First Reading, Sharing Questions, and Second Reading	ALMOST NEVER	1	2	3	4	ALMOST ALWAYS
1. My students ask and answer questions about the story. Tips • Remind students that any question they have about the story is worth asking. • Give students time to think by pausing for several seconds after asking questions.	1					4
2. My students are engaged during the second reading activities. Tips • Pause to model reading comprehension strategies and have students follow your examples. • Patiently pursue students’ ideas by asking follow-up questions, rather than paraphrasing for them or finishing their thoughts.	1					4

Appendix

APPENDIX A

Shared Inquiry Discussion

Shared Inquiry Discussion	ALMOST NEVER	1	2	3	4	ALMOST ALWAYS
1. My students understand and respond to the focus question with different ideas about the story. Tips • Choose a focus question that reflects your students’ curiosity about the story. • Allow plenty of time for students to think and write about the question before the discussion. • Remind students that there are many possible answers to the focus question.	1					5
2. My students support their answers with specific evidence from the story. Tips • Before the discussion, have the class sequence story events. • Rather than moving on when a student cannot offer evidence, use follow-up questions to help the student locate a relevant part of the story, or enlist other students’ help in searching.	1					5
3. My students extend their ideas and their understanding of the story over the course of the discussion. Tips • Be sure not to skip the second reading. • Use the student reflection forms to determine which areas of critical thinking students need to practice. In the next discussion, ask the follow-up questions related to those areas. • Give students plenty of time to write in their Reader’s Journals about new ideas they heard in the discussion.	1					5
4. My students listen to each other respectfully and respond to each other’s ideas. Tips • Before the discussion, review discussion etiquette with students using the student introduction (pp. 30–31) or conduct a mini-lesson on good discussion behavior (pp. 296–297). • Before the discussion, give students time to write their answers to the focus question in their Reader’s Journals. During the discussion, call on quieter students to share what they wrote. • During the discussion, use follow-up questions to help students respond to each other.	1					5

The Teacher Resources section of the Teacher’s Edition (pp. 292–302) has more suggestions to help you meet your goals. If you are working with a Great Books consultant, he or she can also help you set and meet goals.

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