

MASTEROPPGAVE

Reading for Pleasure through Literature Circles

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Abstract

The present thesis investigates how, participating in a community of readers impact reading enjoyment and reading engagement. In Norway, the new syllabus for English in upper-secondary school states explicitly that reading should contribute not only to language acquisition, but also the joy of reading (ENG1-04, 2020, p. 4). Consequently, one of the main concerns of the language teacher is finding methods which not only promote language learning but also stimulate pleasure in reading.

The thesis is based on an eight-week project with a class of first year upper-secondary school students using a method called Literature Circles (LCs) (Daniels 2002), a discussion-based, student-centred and collaborative approach to reading. In an LC, the students participate in a community of readers in which the voice and choice of the students are central, moving beyond traditional teacher-led approaches to literature. With the aid of pre- and post-reading questionnaires, a focus group interview and reflection notes this study examines whether the LC methodology is successful in a Norwegian upper-secondary school ESL context in terms of stimulating reading enjoyment and engagement.

My results indicate that the LC method has the potential to nurture young people's pleasure in reading. The data show that a clear majority of the students enjoyed the novel they read and enjoyed participating in an LC. Indeed, the data reveal a high level of reading engagement among the students, and a clear improvement in how comfortable the students were in taking part in conversations about literature. In addition, almost half the students state that participating in an LC gave them a greater desire to read for pleasure in their spare time.

The study also seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that either promote or discourage pleasure and engagement in reading in the school context. The most salient points which emerged from the data were *the social aspect, student-led discussions, role sheets, free book choice, reading for a deadline* and *assessment*. Among these, the social aspect of the LCs was most emphasised by the students. The students highlighted the positive group experience of the LCs, underlining the pleasures of sharing experiences of literature and discussing responses to texts with others as well as the significance of creating a good group atmosphere, indicating that the students discovered the social pleasures of reading through the LC project.

Keywords: Literature Circles, reading for pleasure, reading engagement

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To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries.

A.C. Grayling

1 Introduction

This thesis is based on the conviction that adolescents should be encouraged to read for pleasure and that school represents an important arena for exploring the joy of reading and fostering young people's desire to read literature. In Norway, reading is one of the basic skills specified in the new syllabus for English in upper-secondary school. In addition to teaching young people the skills of reading, the syllabus states explicitly that reading should contribute not only to language acquisition, but also the joy of reading (ENG1-04, 2020, p. 4). This is not a new development: in the three previous syllabi for English, literature is regarded as a source of lifelong reading enjoyment, as well as a foundation for personal growth, maturation and creativity (ENG1-01, 2006, p. 1) and a deeper understanding of others and ourselves (ENG1-02, 2010, p. 1; ENG1-3, 2013, p. 1). The syllabi thus emphasise reading, and not only for literacy attainment, but for wider learning. Consequently, one of the main concerns of the language teacher is finding methods which not only promote language learning, but also nurture the pleasures of reading.

Cremin (2020) defines reading for pleasure as “essentially volitional, choice-led reading of any kind of text (...), undertaken for the personal satisfaction of readers in their own time” (p. 92). Considering that this definition portrays reading for pleasure as an essentially free activity, emphasising free will, free choice of material and reading in your spare time, how is it possible to stimulate pleasure in reading in a school context which traditionally focuses on achievement? This is an important feature of my research questions specified in chapter 1.2.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to conduct a study using an approach to reading called *Literature Circles* (Daniels, 2002). I will investigate how, from the students' perspective, participating in a community of readers such as a Literature Circle can impact upon reading enjoyment and engagement. Literature Circles (LCs) (Daniels, 2002) is a discussion-based, student-centred and collaborative approach to reading. It is one of many

methods to approach literary texts in the English language classroom. In an LC, the students participate in a community of readers in which the voice and choice of the students are central, moving beyond traditional teacher-led approaches to literature. A key component of the method is that students select books that spark their interest and form small temporary groups, based on book choice (Daniels, 2002, p. 18). The students come together on a regular basis to share interpretations of what they have read, primarily achieved through the use of various roles or focused tasks, which function as support structures and provide different access points to approach and discuss a text (Daniels, 2002, p. 13). LCs have become very popular and successful in mainstream L1 teaching in the US, mainly in primary education (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005; McElvain, 2010; Elhess M. and Egbert, J., 2015). The methodology has also been adapted to L2 contexts worldwide, primarily in college education (Kim, 2004; Shelton-Strong, 2012; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019).

Research has clearly demonstrated the benefits of the LC methodology to promote both reading and language skills, in addition to learners' engagement, enjoyment and reading motivation in the ESL classroom. From my review of the subjects of *Literature Circles* and *reading for pleasure*, I have not been able to find any significant contribution in a Scandinavian secondary-education context. Hopefully, the findings of the present study can contribute to more implementation of the LC method in Scandinavian settings, with the purpose of promoting reading enjoyment and engagement in a school context.

The research discussed here is based on an eight-week project carried out in the autumn of 2021 and focusing on LCs with a class of 24 first year upper-secondary students in Western Norway. Only 19 of 24 students participated in the study, which will be discussed further in the methods section. Out of six Young Adult novels, category of fiction written for readers from 12 to 18 years of age, the students were asked to choose a novel. The LCs were then formed based on their choice. In the LCs, they explored the chosen novel in student-led discussions, which were facilitated by the teacher. The data was collected using questionnaires, and with the aid of a focus group interview as well as reflection notes written by the students during the project. This thesis also draws on a project outline and a literature review submitted as a part of an obligatory master course in "Methods and project" at the University of Gothenburg (Midtbø, 2021).

1.1 Background

Teachers and researchers know that students' engagement with reading often begins to decline in late primary school (Rutherford, 2017; Wilkinson et al., 2020), with mid-adolescence as a particularly vulnerable age for reading engagement (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2020). There is cause for concern both nationally and internationally about the degree of reading for pleasure among adolescents. The recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report of young people aged 15 years (OECD, 2019), for example, shows that reading habits and reading interest among Norwegian adolescents have moved in a negative direction since PISA 2000 (Roe, 2020).

- One half do not read for pleasure, compared to one third in 2000
- 41 % rarely or never read a book
- 58% only read if they have to
- Online reading activities have increased

Similarly, international research suggests that the time young people spend reading for pleasure generally declines as students' progress through adolescence. Roberts & Foehr (2004), for example, maintain that the increased time spent on reading done in and for school is a factor that probably reduces the desire for, and time to read outside of school during late adolescence. In addition, they note that “myriad additional activities sports vie for young people's time – sports, extra-curricular activities, social events, earning a driver's licence, part-time jobs, dating” (Roberts & Foehr, 2004, pp. 100-101). In a Norwegian context, Roe (2020) suggests that the great increase in students who say they do not read for pleasure has taken place parallel to the digital development and that time used on traditional reading has been replaced by time spent on mobile phones and tablets. She contends that even though online reading activities have increased, it is a major challenge to get children and young people to read books instead of watching YouTube-videos, playing computer games, or chatting with friends on the mobile phone (Roe, 2020, p. 109).

The PISA findings show that attitudes towards reading among Norwegian adolescents are among the least positive in the OECD. Clark (2012) makes an interesting claim that young people do not necessarily like reading any less than before, but that they are doing it less due to many other, competing demands on their time. This lead Laurenson and her colleagues (2015) to question whether students might be more positively disposed to reading than might be concluded from the PISA findings. The vast majority of secondary-school students they

interviewed while conducting their study had a positive attitude to reading. One student in their study claimed, for example, that “I like reading. I just don’t really do it much” (Laurenson et al., 2015, p. 10). When teachers started to place greater emphasis on reading for pleasure in school, they seemed surprised and pleased by the degree to which the students willingly engaged with reading and how much they enjoyed it. This demonstrates the danger of making misleading assumptions concerning students’ attitudes to reading, which could potentially deprive them of valuable reading experiences. The findings also indicate the importance of supporting young readers, whose lives are more crowded than ever before and makes a strong argument for setting aside space and time for students’ reading for enjoyment. This discovery corresponds with the findings of my study of LCs, where close to half the students stated that participating in an LC increased their desire to read for pleasure in their spare time, some expressing that they rediscovered the fun and interest of reading. These findings will be presented in the results section.

In the international report PISA 2018, *Insights and Interpretations* (Schleicher, 2019) it is clearly stated that the teacher’s enthusiasm to inspire students to read in their spare time plays a major role: « (...) teacher enthusiasm and teachers’ stimulation of reading engagement were the teaching practices most strongly (and positively) associated with students’ enjoyment of reading» (p. 15). Referring to research from Norwegian secondary school classrooms, Roe (2020) likewise suggests that there is an untapped potential for teachers to inspire and motivate students to come to love reading and read more in their leisure time (p. 109). In one study, where 42 pupils in 9th grade were interviewed, only two students answered that a teacher had inspired them to read in their spare time; most students referred to friends and family (Roe, 2016). The LISA-project, investigating the link between reading instruction and student achievement, showed similar results (Frønes & Roe, 2020). In 178 lessons in 47 classrooms, the researchers found no examples of teachers speaking enthusiastically about the importance of voluntary reading or suggesting funny, interesting, or exciting reading material for the students to engage with (Klette, Blikstad-Balas & Roe, 2017).

The importance of the role of the teacher is also supported by the American scholar, John T. Guthrie, who was a leading figure in the PISA expert group on reading. He regards the teacher as the primary motivator of adolescent reading. He claims that teachers who neglect this challenge, prevents students from developing as readers (Guthrie, 2008). Recognizing the many proven benefits of reading for pleasure not only for literacy attainment but for wider learning (which will be explored in chapter 2.3), teachers have both the opportunity and obligation to push back against this tendency. Hence, the challenge for the

teacher becomes: how can reading for pleasure be translated into a classroom practice which promotes reading enjoyment? This is an important feature of my research questions, which are specified in the following chapter.

1.2 Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the chosen LC methodology can contribute to reading enjoyment and engagement in a Norwegian upper secondary ESL classroom, using research from an eight-week project of LCs with a class of first year upper-secondary students in Western Norway. The inquiry will focus on the students' experiences and opinions. The research questions are as follows:

- a. *From the students' perspective, how does participating in a community of readers such as a Literature Circle impact on reading enjoyment and reading engagement?*
- b. *Which factors in the design and implementation of Literature Circles influence the level of enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience?¹*

In order to find answers to my research questions, a survey, in the form of a pre-reading and post-reading questionnaire, was carried out among the students. At the end of the project, a small group of 8 students participated in a focus group interview in which they discussed their experiences with participating in LCs. In addition, the students wrote reflection notes during the project, of which more in the method section. These were analysed to find answers to the two questions presented above.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. After the introduction, the theoretical framework is presented in the second chapter. In the third chapter, the research design is described. In the fourth chapter the results are presented and discussed, followed by a conclusion including a discussion of the limitations of the study in the fifth chapter. A bibliography and appendices are included at the end.

¹ These questions are in essence very wide, but, as will be demonstrated later, the number of choices given the respondents was in fact limited, in order to discuss the respondents' answers in more detail.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Reading for pleasure

First, it is necessary to discuss the term *reading for pleasure*. According to Nell (1988), reading for pleasure, also called ludic reading, is a form of play, a free activity, usually pursued for its own sake, and which allows us to experience other worlds and roles in our imagination.

In a report published by the National Literacy Trust in the UK (Clark & Rumbold, 2006), reading for pleasure refers to “reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else’s request we continue because we are interested in it. It typically involves materials that reflect our own choice, at a time and place that suits us.” (p. 6). This definition opens up for an activity that is not only initiated by the reader herself but also requested by someone else, e.g. a teacher.

In a more recent definition, Cremin (2020) also emphasises the importance of free will, free choice of material and personal satisfaction in relation to reading for pleasure, which is defined as “essentially volitional, choice-led reading of any kind of text (...), undertaken for the personal satisfaction of readers in their own time” (p. 92). Cremin refers to the OECD’s recent definition of reading literacy, which is used in the PISA tests, stating that: “Changes in our concept of reading since 2000 have led to an expanded definition of reading literacy, which recognises motivational and behavioural characteristics of reading alongside cognitive characteristics” (OECD, 2018). Cremin (2020) calls this “a reconceptualization of reading” which should urge educators to “work to support young people’s emerging identities as readers, their reading behaviours, preferences and practices, and their desire and capacity to discuss texts they choose to read” (p. 92).

Reading engagement is an integral part of reading for pleasure (Cremin, 2020, Laurenson et al. 2015, Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012). According to Guthrie, Wigfield & You (2012) *reading engagement* refers to an individual’s actual involvement in reading, reflected in behaviour, affect, or cognition. For instance, behavioural engagement may be apparent in sustained attention while reading, affective engagement may be evident in body language and facial expressions when discussing a book, and cognitive engagement may be observed in thoughtful responses in a literary discussion. Laurenson et al. (2015) argue that the choice of material is essential for stimulating engagement in reading. In their study among secondary-school students where the students willingly engaged in reading for

pleasure, all teachers expressed very strongly that the choice and range of material plays an important role in the students' enthusiasm for and engagement with reading.

Wilhelm (2016) makes a convincing case for the motivational power of pleasure in the school context, not only to motivate and sustain engagement in reading, but also to bring other emotional, psychological, and cognitive benefits. In a three-year qualitative study of 29 middle-grade and secondary-school students who were highly engaged readers, Wilhelm identified five distinct kinds of pleasure: the immersive pleasure of play, intellectual pleasure, social pleasure, the pleasure of functional work and the pleasure of inner work (p. 30). With the exception of intellectual pleasure, the pleasures identified were not encouraged in any of the schools where the study was carried out. However, Wilhelm claims that these pleasures could easily be stimulated by teachers if they allowed time and space for reading books of one's own choice and promoting the pleasures of reading in the classroom.

Several scholars accentuate the social pleasure literature offers. Nodelman & Reimer (2003), for example, contend that the pleasures of reading involves entering into communicative acts not only with the text, but with others. They advocate the pleasure of sharing experiences of literature with others and of discussing responses to texts with others, calling it "a meeting of different minds", or a conversation. "The pleasure of literature is the pleasure of conversation – of dialogues between readers and texts, and between readers and other readers about those texts" (p. 27).

Olsson (2009) likewise underlines the importance of the social experience of reading in a school context, stating that reading enjoyment in school can be both "an act of subjective pleasure and thrill for the individual reader or listener yet it also has an intersubjective dimension which is of educational importance" (p.1). She argues that when students express and discuss their reading experience "its meaning is altered in ways which may be of fundamental importance for the development of the self/identity of the student" (p.1). She further questions whether there is space for such creative exploration in classroom conversations in what she calls "the narrow genres of the classrooms in secondary school" (p. 1), indicating that the traditional didactic practices seldom challenge students. In the same vein, Cremin et al. (2014) advocate recognising the highly social nature of reading in contrast to the traditional view of reading as an individual act. They suggest building interactive and reciprocal communities of engaged readers to foster children's pleasure in reading.

The LC methodology offers just such an approach to reading where the social experience of reading is fundamental, where the students' own choices, direction,

engagement, response and ownership are central. In LCs students practise independent reading and are simultaneously participating in a community of readers, structured as small student-led, collaborative groups. As will be examined in the results chapter, the most salient point which emerged from the students' responses after participating in the LC project was that reading as a group and the feeling of community created by sharing thoughts and ideas in the book discussions, enhanced their reading experience.

2.2 The benefits of reading for pleasure

Evidence supporting that reading for pleasure is growing, showing its benefits not only for reading outcomes but also for wider learning. Clark & Rumbold (2006) contends that “we must see reading for pleasure as an activity that has real educational and social consequences” (p. 28). So, what are these educational and social consequences which makes promoting reading for pleasure worthwhile?

Several studies reveal that reading for pleasure has a strong link with reading attainment (OECD 2002; Sullivan & Brown, 2015; Cheema, 2018), indicating that the *will* influences the *skill* and *vice versa*. For example, the findings of the longitudinal study of Sullivan and Brown (2015), suggest that children's leisure reading lead not only to better reading skills, but to substantial cognitive progress between the ages of 10 and 16. This cognitive development is not only connected to progress in reading but is also associated with enhanced performance in mathematics. Additionally, Schugar & Dreher (2017) found positive associations between students' leisure time reading engagement and information text comprehension. Their findings suggest that children enjoy reading and who read different genres of text, are more effective when tackling the cognitive challenges of reading information texts.

Data from major longitudinal studies show that reading enjoyment is the most explanatory factor of both cognitive progress and social mobility over time (Sullivan & Brown, 2015; Guthrie et al., 2001; OECD, 2002). Reading for pleasure is a more powerful predictor than even parental socioeconomic status and educational attainment. According to PISA (OECD, 2002), being a frequent reader brings more benefits than having well-educated parents. Hence, one of the most effective ways to leverage social change may be to find ways to foster students' engagement in reading.

Genre adds another layer of nuance when it comes to reading for pleasure. In a 2019 study, John Jerrim & Gemma Moss compared the 2009 PISA results on reading and reading

frequencies of different types of text by young people. They found a fiction effect: young people who frequently read of narrative fiction books, tend to have significantly stronger reading skills than their peers. However, whilst their peers might read frequently, the same does not apply to reading non-fiction, magazines, comic books, or newspapers. The authors concluded that the fiction effect cannot be overlooked, making it critical to encourage young people to read fiction. Studies have also found that reading fiction also has a far stronger link to verbal abilities relative to non-fiction (Mar & Rain, 2015; Martin-Chang et al., 2021).

Reading skills are undoubtedly necessary to navigate modern life, function as a well-informed citizen and work in a knowledge economy. The studies above focus on an instrumental justification for reading for pleasure. That is, they establish that reading for pleasure is positively associated with academic achievement such as reading comprehension, vocabulary development and verbal skills. However, as noted in the introduction, the recent syllabi for English (ENG1-01, 2006; ENG1-02, 2010; ENG1-3, 2013; ENG1-04, 2020) regard reading literature not only as instrumental to language acquisition but also as source of enjoyment and wider learning such as personal growth, maturation, creativity and a deeper understanding of others and ourselves.

Reading for pleasure among adolescents has been found to provide emotional and psychological benefits. In a study conducted by Kidd and Castano (2013) the researchers found that reading for pleasure resulted in enhanced imagination, empathy and mindfulness of others. Similarly, a report conducted by Sue Wilkinson for The Reading Agency revealed convincing evidence that reading for pleasure can improve relationships with others, increase empathy, reduce the symptoms of depression and improve wellbeing throughout life (Wilkinson, 2015). Cremin and her colleagues (2014) found that new “reader to reader relationships” were formed when they were engaged in reader communities, also observing that “many readers, depending on text and context, become affectively engaged in their reading, whether fiction or non-fiction, and are motivated as readers of past satisfactions in the text and in the interaction often triggered by it” (Cremin, 2020, p. 94).

Ultimately, the most obvious benefit of reading for pleasure is, of course, pleasure. People who are avid readers of literature tend to do it for the interesting and exciting experiences it provides, and the personal satisfaction it brings, as explored in the chapter above. It is particularly interesting that the new syllabus for English explicitly mentions the joy of reading as a goal its own right, challenging teachers to promote pleasurable literary experiences in the classroom. Nodelman & Reimer (2003) make the case that literary enjoyment is not merely an activity that some people like to indulge in, but a skill that can be

learned: “The ability to respond to literature with an understanding of its subtleties, and with a flexible attitude to the possibilities of meaning, the ability to enjoy literature - is a learned skill (...) Children in particular can learn to become more perceptive readers of literature – and greatly increase their pleasure in the act of reading as a result” (p. 114). Young people thus need a knowledgeable teacher to guide and encourage them if they are to appreciate literature.

2.3 Literature Circles

Literature Circles (LCs) is a discussion-based, student-centred, collaborative approach to reading. The method has become popular and has been shown to be very successful in mainstream L1 teaching in the US, where the method was first introduced in the 1990s by Harvey Daniels. The methodology was primarily used for extensive reading of novels in the lower grades and has later been revised and adapted to support reading and literature discussions at various stages and contexts of education, including ESL/EFL classrooms worldwide.

In Harvey Daniels book *Literature Circles – Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* (2002), LCs are defined as “small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article or book” (p. 2). It is an approach to reading where, as the title suggests, both the choice and the voice of the students are essential, moving beyond traditional teacher-led approaches to literature. A key characteristic of the method is that students choose their own reading material and form small temporary groups, based on book choice (Daniels, 2002, p. 18). Daniels emphasises the value of choice and empowerment for promoting pleasure in reading: “For reading to become a lifelong habit and deeply owned skill, it has to be voluntary, anchored in feelings of pleasure and power” (p. 19). Additionally, in allowing the learners to select their own books, everyone has the opportunity to get “a readable, interesting just-right book for them” (Daniels, 2006, p. 11). In the LC project, the students could choose from six Young Adult novels in a variety of genres and levels, and data from the study shows that free choice of novel was an important source of enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience.

In LCs, learners meet regularly and collaboratively they explore the literary work to obtain an in-depth and enriched understanding of the text. According to Daniels (2002), sharing views and discussing thoughts about written texts is the core of LCs (p. 30). The method draws on principles from reader response theory, formulated by Rosenblatt. She

insisted that the process of reading is a dynamic “transaction” between the reader and the text. The text is not a separate entity from which the meaning is to be extracted, but the readers actively make meaning by bringing their prior experiences and immediate responses to the text (Rosenblatt, 1968).

Daniels points out that the structure LCs provide can “welcome, build on and gradually broaden students’ responses to what they read” (p. 38). Using a tool called *role sheets* (Daniels, 2002, p. 103), the method offers an inventory of reading strategies, the sheets serving as aids to capture the learners’ responses to reading. The students are assigned various roles, or focused tasks like *Summarizer*, *Questioner*, *Passage Finder*, *Connector*, *Word Master* and *Illustrator*. The roles provide a clearly defined purpose for reading and each student makes notes while reading. The roles rotate for each new reading cycle and are meant to provide scaffolding for the student-led discussions and supply them with a variety of material to talk about (Daniels, 2002, p. 2). However, having observed that role sheets have become popular in many classrooms, Daniels (2006) warns that role sheets are for “temporary use only” and cautions against “the mechanical discussions that can stem from over-dependence on these roles” (p. 2). Alternatively, Daniels suggests that learners can express their responses in reading response logs that will provide a solid basis for productive, peer-led discussions.

As a student-led activity, focusing on “the voice and the choice” of students (Daniels, 2002), the method encourages a great deal of self-regulated, autonomous learning, a principle which has gained more terrain in teaching in recent years. According to Oats (2019), “work on collaborative enquiry learning and the inclusion of learner voice are ... factors in [a] paradigm shift in teaching” (p. 1). In the LC method, each LC chooses their own reading material, makes their own reading schedule, and carry the responsibility for managing the interaction and content of their discussions, learning how to rely on themselves and each other.

According to Daniels (2002), the teacher serves only as a “facilitator, not as a group member or instructor” (p. 18). However, Daniels underlines that the teacher’s contribution is essential in providing scaffolding to help students deepen their book discussions, build a respectful classroom community and support the students’ self-regulatory practices. Daniels suggests starting each LC using *literary mini-lessons* to enhance book-talk by drawing attention to literary techniques used by the author or *procedural mini-lessons* teaching the learners routines, norms and procedures to make the LCs function well (p.87).

2.4 Literature Circles research

Over the last three decades, a considerable body of research has been conducted to investigate the adoption of LCs in L1 and L2 classrooms. This literature review will focus on a selection of six notable studies: Kim, 2004; Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005; McElvain 2010; Shelton-Strong, 2012; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019. Some empirical studies of LCs include data that measure the effect of LCs on students' performance and literacy development in pre-tests and post-tests such as reading comprehension, vocabulary size, text analysis skills and oral fluency (e.g., Elhess & Egbert, 2015; Ahmed, 2019), possibly providing a utilitarian justification for the use of this methodology. These results are not the focus of this literature review, as its primary aim is to review research on LCs concerning reading enjoyment and engagement among L2 learners. Nonetheless, several of the studies on LCs use a mixed-method design (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005; McElvain 2010) presenting both quantitative and qualitative data on performance, practices, and attitudes, pointing in so doing to the correlation between reading comprehension and reading motivation.

All six studies presented above yielded positive results in the areas of reading enjoyment, while at the same time emphasising different factors affecting the success of LCs in promoting positive reading attitudes. The most prominent factor which emerged from the studies was the powerful degree of scaffolding inherent in LCs, especially through peer support in small group collaborative conversations, enabling both reading comprehension and enjoyment of reading (Kim, 2004; Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005; McElvain, 2010; Shelton-Strong, 2012; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019). These findings are similar to my own findings when it comes to LCs. The social aspect is, I have discovered, strongly accentuated as a source of enjoyment by the students. This topic will be discussed in chapter 4. Some of the studies also attribute positive results in reading enjoyment to the scaffolding provided through the use of roles (Shelton-Strong, 2012; Sambolin & Carroll 2015; Avci 2019). However, as will be explored in the results chapter, the roles were a subject of much debate both during the LC project and in the focus group interview.

The role of the teacher is emphasised as a crucial factor in all the studies. Despite LCs being a mainly student-led activity, the teacher certainly plays a significant role in organizing and facilitating both the students' interaction with the text and with each other and plays thus an important part in the scaffolding of the LCs. Kim (2004) and Avci (2019) suggest that the success of the LCs might be dependent on an enthusiastic teacher promoting student

engagement and motivation. However, the role of the teacher is not the focus of my investigation, as the research questions concentrate on the *students'* experiences with the LCs.

An additional salient factor in the research is the importance of providing relevant reading material that connects with the students' own lives, creating a more personal and enjoyable reading experience (Kim, 2004; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019), a point that was also voiced by the students in my study of LCs. Discussing relevant literary texts provide opportunities to use the target language for real and authentic purposes, considered especially important for L2 learners in developing language skills, indicating that the LC methodology is particularly useful with L2 learners.

Kim's study (2004) of how LCs work in the context of adult L2 instruction report evidence for affective engagement. Her study revealed students who were engaged in highly authentic and responsive social interactions, practicing the target language in meaningful ways. The interviewees expressed an enthusiasm of the high level of involvement with both the text and with one another, leading to both an enhanced comprehension and enjoyment of reading. Given the critical role of social interaction in L2 development, Kim's study suggests that LCs generate an opportunity for promoting both language development and pleasurable L2 reading experiences.

Several researchers have also observed an increase in self-confidence and self-efficacy which assisted in surpassing the barrier of reading and speaking a second language (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005; Shelton-Strong, 2012; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019). In Carrison and Ernst-Slavit's (2005) study, which included both native speakers and English Language Learners (ELLs), the researchers found that the greatest benefits in terms of growing levels of enthusiasm towards reading and growth in oral communication were particularly evident among the ELL students and the reluctant readers.

Although the above findings suggest that the use of LCs can bring about positive reading experiences in an ESL classroom, it is not clear whether the method can actually contribute to the joy of reading in a contemporary, L2 upper-secondary-school setting. As mentioned in the introduction, I have not been able to find any significant research on the subject of reading for pleasure through LCs in a Norwegian setting. This is, I suggest, an important feature which deserves more attention.

3 Research Methods and Materials

To answer my research questions, I have found Sandra Lee McKay's *Researching Second Language Classrooms* (2006) particularly useful as a handbook when choosing my research design. According to McKay (2006), "Research contributes to more effective teaching, not by offering definitive answers to pedagogical questions, but rather by providing new insights into the teaching and learning process" (p. 1). As outlined in the introduction, the present study aims to explore the students' views on participating in LCs and if this methodology can represent an effective means of stimulating enjoyment in reading. More specifically, I attempt to find answers to the following two questions:

1. *From the students' perspective, how does participating in a community of readers such as a Literature Circle impact on reading enjoyment and reading engagement?*
2. *Which factors in the design and implementation of Literature Circles influence the level of enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience?*

In this section I will present the research project, my methodology and the research design used in collecting and analysing the data for this study.

3.1 Research project

The empirical part of this study consists of an applied research project using the LC methodology in a first-year upper-secondary class of 24 students in the Western part of Norway, whereof 19 students volunteered to participate in the study. Applied research as a method focuses on finding solutions to real-life human and societal problems (McKay, 2006, p. 4). As explained in the introduction, the reason why I wanted to conduct this study is I hope to find methods that can stimulate pleasure in reading and increase young people's desire to read. Permission from the administration at my school was applied for and granted in May 2021 and the study was carried out in autumn 2021.

The experiment included one cycle of LCs conducted over the course of eight weeks, with a total of 19 lessons (Teaching plan – Appendix 2). For the sake of convenience, the circles were popularly called *Lit Circles* in our class, the term which will be used henceforth when referring to the literary discussion groups in this particular project. The term *LCs* will continuously be used for the method developed by Daniels (2002). As the students had no previous experience of the LC method, the first part of the cycle consisted of a 3 x 45-minute

session where the students were introduced to the project and the method, using a short story to practise the roles and the student-led literary conversation in groups. Together, they also worked out a list of qualities that characterise a good conversation.

Thereafter, students chose their novels by participating in a “book tasting” event. It took place in the school library in order to offer a different and more comfortable setting for the reading experience than the traditional classroom. To focus on reading as an enjoyable experience, involving much more than “ink on paper”, the students were also asked to bring their favourite cup to the event and hot chocolate was served. The students were then introduced to six Young Adult novels in a variety of genres and at different levels of reading difficulty:

- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky (1999)
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (2007)
- *Black and White* by Paul Volponi (2005)
- *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (1993)
- *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff (2004)
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Mark Haddon (2004)

They spent five minutes reading and reviewing each book and moved on to rating the books according to interest. The teacher collected their top three book choices and, ensuring that every student got their first or second choice of novel, placed the students in groups of five students (one group of four). In their first Lit Circle meeting the students made their own ground rules for “friendly, lively and interesting discussions”, agreed on a reading schedule and distributed roles (Appendix 3) for the first Lit Circle.

Being aware of the danger of mechanical discussions possibly disturbing the real interaction between the students, I decided to employ the role sheets as they can provide an important source of scaffolding for the students. To reduce distraction and to focus on the face-to-face interaction, no digital devices were allowed. During the following five weeks, the students met for 2 x 45 minutes in the school library for their discussions, rotating the roles for each Lit Circle session. All five Lit Circle sessions followed the same basic structure:

- 5- minute warm-up activity in groups
- 5- 10 minute literary or procedural mini-lesson by the teacher
- 15-25 minutes Lit Circle discussion using prepared notes

- 5-minute debrief of highlights and/or procedures with the full class
 - 30-45 minutes of silent reading time and preparing notes
- (Daniels & Steineke, 2004)

The project ended with a “book-sharing” event in the library. The students used Power Point to present their books for each other. After the presentations they filled out a ‘book interest’ rating form to guide the selection of novels for future Lit Circle projects.

In the Lit Circle project, I made the choice to avoid assessment and grades, so as not to associate reading for pleasure primarily with achievement but be able to focus on reading with the purpose of promoting enjoyment and appreciation of reading. As grading is a central practice of upper-secondary school both in Norway and worldwide, the extensive use of teaching hours in the project (19 lessons) would normally end in a graded assessment situation. However, recently researchers and teachers have reconsidered the place of assessment in teaching (Guskey, 2014; Sackstein, 2015) and there is a growing interest in “going gradeless” in Norwegian secondary schools, which means reducing or eliminating grades (Eriksen & Elstad, 2019; Gillespie & Burner, 2019). The requirement for grading in upper-secondary school is only for mid-term and final assessment, thus I could justify removing grades from the project. I also decided to conduct the first cycle of the Lit Circles in the first term, in the first year of upper-secondary school, when the focus is normally more on learning process than grades. This aspect of the project was also discussed with, and approved by the principal of the school who saw the project as an important part of giving the students challenges that promote *the desire to learn*, a central term in the Norwegian Education Act of 1998.

3.2 Method: Survey research

To find answers to my research questions I chose a mixed-method survey research. According to McKay (2006), survey research gathers information about the views of learners about language learning using oral interviews or written questionnaires (p. 35). In this study, the data collected was gathered from both questionnaires and a focus group interview.

Anonymous digital questionnaires were conducted in class before and after the project as this research method makes it possible to collect a good deal of information within a short period of time. Also, it was a way to ensure that the opinions of all students in the class would have a chance to be heard, not only the ones who chose to participate in the focus group interview.

However, the risk is that students give very superficial and simple responses in a questionnaire (McKay, 2006, p. 36).

To provide a richer understanding of the students' experiences, a focus group interview was conducted on completion of the project. The students were also asked to submit reflection notes on their experiences participating in Lit Circles in the course of the project. They were asked to reflect upon a variety of topics such as aspects of their discussions that worked well and aspects that needed work, how the use of role sheets influenced their discussions and discoveries they made about reading and discussing literature. This was done to gain additional insight into the students' thinking and be able to adjust the project design during the project according to the students' needs.

3.3 Participants

The participants in the Lit Circle project were a class of 24 students whereof 19 students, 13 girls and 6 boys, agreed to participate in the study. They were studying first-year English in a general studies course in an upper-secondary school in western Norway and were between 15 and 16 years of age. In this project, I held the role as both the teacher and the researcher, a role that will be discussed at the end of the thesis, under the subheading *5.3 Replication and limitations*. The students represent what McKay (2006) calls "a sample of convenience" (p. 37). They are a group of students I have access to. They represent a diversity of ethnicities (including Polish, German, Lithuanian, South Korean, Afghan), academic levels, and interests and are thus representative of the student population in general. As McKay (2006) notes, it is important to try to sample a group that in some way is representative of a larger population (p. 37). Daniels (2002) maintains that heterogeneous groups are important for successful LCs as "effective reading discussion groups tend to see diversity as an asset" having access to "a range of responses, ideas, and connections in the group" (p. 37). The students' diverse backgrounds in the sample may have strengthened the Lit Circles, allowing multiple perspectives in the group discussion.

The gender difference favouring girls when it comes to reading habits and attitudes towards reading is well known (Roe, 2020). This aspect is not the topic of this study; however, it is worth noting that initially, only 14 students of 24 students volunteered to participate in the study, and among them only 3 boys. When I asked the boys why they would not participate, they all gave a variation on the explanation of not liking reading much, that it was not their "thing". After explaining to them the value of their participation in the study to

secure a representative sample of participants and their voices as reluctant readers being especially interesting, three more boys were convinced to participate. Still, however, only 60% of the boys in class chose to participate in the compared to 93% of the girls, which might indicate more reluctance towards reading among boys, as reading attitudes among girls are more positive (Roe, 2020). Also, in the focus group interview, where 8 students participated, only one boy volunteered. It could be seen as a problem that the majority of the respondents were female, which might impinge on the possibilities of replicating the study. This will be briefly discussed in the conclusion, under sub-heading 5.3 *Replication and limitations*.

Before the project started, both parents and students were informed about the study. As there was no sensitive personal information to be stored, consent to gather information needed to be given only by the students (Appendix 1). The anonymity of the participants was maintained throughout the thesis and the data was processed according to the relevant data protection legislation and the guidelines of the data protection services as defined by the Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata (NSD).

3.4 Materials

3.4.1 Questionnaires

The students were given two different questionnaires, a pre-reading questionnaire to be answered before the study started (Appendix 4) and a post-reading questionnaire to be answered at the end of the study (Appendix 5). The questionnaires were answered via nettskjema.no, a tool approved by Høyskolen i Østfold for designing and conducting online surveys which ensures a high degree of security and privacy (Høyskolen i Østfold, 2022).

Both questionnaires sought to retrieve behavioural and attitudinal information from the students (McKay, 2006, p. 35). The anonymity of the students was secured, as no factual information about the students was retrieved. The pre-reading questionnaire was very brief and consisted of 9 close-ended questions which took on average 4-5 minutes to complete. The questions aimed to reveal the students' reading attitudes and reading habits prior to the project, as well as their attitudes towards participating in discussions about literature.

The post-reading questionnaire was more extensive, with 17 questions; 10 were close-ended and 7 open-ended. It took on average 10-15 minutes to complete. The purpose was to find out about the students' reading experiences when participating in the Lit Circle project

and if their participation had impacted their desire to read for pleasure and/or changed their attitude towards reading literature. For most close-ended questions, a 4-point Likert scale was used to code and analyse the quantitative data. The relatively high number of open-ended questions was included to provide richer qualitative data, especially concerning the factors of the Lit Circles which promote or discourage reading enjoyment. The students could choose to write in English or Norwegian, to prevent difficulties in responding due to inadequate English language proficiency.

All 19 students who had consented to participating in the study, answered the digital pre-reading and the post-reading questionnaires. However, after downloading the results of the post-reading questionnaire I discovered that two extra students had answered the questionnaire, having missed the information that only the students who had consented to the study and answered the pre-reading questionnaire should respond. However, as I had already downloaded the results with matching number of participants on my computer at an earlier time, I chose to disregard the last two responses. Subsequently, the 19 answers were identified, categorised, and served as a starting point for a recorded focus group interview.

3.4.2 Focus group interview

The interview study invites a more thorough investigation of the issues emerging from the questionnaires and gives room for a larger variety of responses, including explanations and clarifications which can provide a deeper understanding and a wider platform for analysis.

According to Tjora (2017), an additional interesting aspect in focus groups is observing opinions in the interaction which occurs between the participants which can contribute to generating answers that are more spontaneous than many other forms of qualitative data generation (p. 123). Also, as the participants stimulate each other in the discussion, multiple aspects can be both identified and discussed.

8 students volunteered for the interview, which, as noted by Tjora (2017), is a suitable number for focus group interviews (p. 124). Among the 8 interviewees, all five Lit Circle groups were represented, securing that a variety of experiences was present in the discussion. However, among the interviewees in the focus group, only one boy volunteered. In hindsight, I could have made more of an effort to recruit boys to take part in the interview into better mirror the gender distribution in the study and avoid the strong female bias in the interview. According to Roe (2020), gender differences favouring girls in terms of reading attitudes and reading engagement are significant.

The interview contained a warm-up question, a main part and a concluding part. In the main part, the students were initially divided into two groups, spending 10 minutes discussing two topics: what promoted and what prevented reading enjoyment and engagement in the LC project. As noted by Tjora (2017), the topic of interest needs to be clearly defined before the interview starts, to provide a better chance of generating good group discussions (p. 130). The group discussions were followed by a plenary session where each group summed up their reflections which served as a starting point for a loosely structured plenary discussion. Here the students presented and explored the issues that came up in the group discussions and I as the moderator asked follow-up questions and encouraged the students to expand on topics that appeared in the questionnaires but were not necessarily presented in the sum-up by the two groups. The interview was conducted in Norwegian to ensure a fluent conversation. The interview lasted for 45 minutes and was audiotaped, transcribed in Norwegian (transcript available upon request) and then translated to English (Appendix 6). The group discussions were not recorded. In the findings, the students' answers are categorised according to the two research questions and will be found in section 4.2.

As the teacher also has the role of the researcher in this study, it is crucial to recognize that the asymmetrical relationship between participants is one of the fundamental biases in in teacher-student interviews (McKay, 2006, p. 54). In order to minimise the effect of this relationship, the students were clearly told the purpose of the interview and the value of their contribution to the study and for future students and teachers using the LC method at their school. In addition, they were assured that I as a researcher was equally interested in negative comments as positive comments and that their statements would in no way affect their relationship to me as a teacher or their grades. The discussion was conducted in Norwegian to avoid possible difficulties when using English. To reduce nervousness and tension, it was also important to create a permissive, relaxed and friendly atmosphere during the focus group interview.

3.4.3 Reflection notes

After each Lit Circle, the students were asked to write reflection notes on different topics pertaining to their experiences of the Lit Circles. These notes provided a valuable contribution to guiding my decisions as the project unfolded. For this thesis it has been my aim to carry out a dynamic and coherent project. Although the framework of the Lit Circle project was carefully planned, in my research I aimed to follow the students' development rather than sticking to a rigid schema. In the journey undertaken with my students, I have tried to allow

the students' responses to steer me to the next step, in order to make maximum use of the benefits of the circles. The reflection notes contain a wealth of material, such as the students' reflections on aspects of their discussions that worked well and aspects that needed work, how the use of role sheets influenced their discussions and discoveries they made about reading and discussing literature. Due to restrictions of space, I will only briefly expand on the contribution of the notes in the results chapter. The reflections notes are available upon request.

4 Results and Discussion

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how LCs can stimulate reading enjoyment in the ESL classroom. The study focused on the students' experiences and views and was based on two research questions:

1. *From the students' perspective, how does participating in a community of readers such as a Literature Circle impact on reading enjoyment and reading engagement?*
2. *Which factors in the design and implementation of Literature Circles influence the level of enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience?*

In this section, the results from the questionnaires, the focus group interview and the reflection notes will be presented and analysed. Results and transcripts can be found in Appendices 4-6.

4.1 Questionnaires

As stated above, the aim of the questionnaires was two-fold: the pre-reading questionnaires sought to gain insight into the students' reading attitudes and habits prior to the Lit Circle project; and the post-reading questionnaire aimed at retrieving data about the students' views on participating in Lit Circles as well as establishing if the chosen method is effective for stimulating enjoyment and engagement in reading. Enjoyment in reading here refers to the concept *reading for pleasure*, meaning the personal satisfaction one takes from reading (Cremin, 2020). *Reading engagement*, which is an integral part of reading for pleasure, refers to an individual's actual involvement in reading, reflected in behaviour, affect, or cognition (Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012).

4.1.1 Pre-reading questionnaire

The pre-reading questionnaire (Appendix 4) was divided into three topics: “Reading attitudes”, “Reading habits” and “Attitudes towards participating in discussions about literature” and contained 9 close-ended questions. The questions and the distribution of student answers are listed in tables 1-9. The findings of this questionnaire will be compared with the findings of the post-reading questionnaire to ascertain if there has been any change in attitudes among the students towards reading and participating in literary discussions.

4.1.1.1 Reading attitudes

Four statements were used to map the students’ attitudes towards reading. For every statement the students got four alternative answers: *I strongly agree*, *I agree*, *I disagree*, or *I strongly disagree*. In the following, I will use the sum of students answering *I strongly agree*, and *I agree* to write about the share of students who agree. I have chosen to model this part of the study on the most recent PISA survey (OECD, 2019) to see whether my sample of participants is comparable to that of Norwegian 15-years-olds in the PISA survey, as this can say something about the validity of my results.

| 1. I enjoy reading in my spare time (any kind of reading material). | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 5 | 8 | 4 | 2 |
| Percentage | 26.3 % | 42.1% | 21.1% | 10.5% |

Table 1 shows that a clear majority of the students, 13 of 19 students (68.4 %), enjoy reading in their spare time. This is a relatively high frequency, compared to the PISA survey (OECD, 2019), where only 50 % of Norwegian 15-year-olds the say that they read for pleasure. However, in the PISA survey there is a considerable gender difference as 60% of the girls and only 40% of the boys indicate that they read for pleasure. This tallies more with the results in my study, considering that there is a majority of female respondents (13 girls and 6 boys), as only 60 % of the boys chose to participate in the study compared to 93% of the girls.

| 2. Reading is one of my favourite hobbies. | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Percentage | 15.8 | 21.1 | 26.3 | 36.8 |

| 3. I read only if I have to | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 2 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| Percentage | 10.5 | 36.8 | 31.6 | 21.1 |

| 4. I read only to get the information I need | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 4 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| Percentage | 21.1 | 26.3 | 36.8 | 15.8 |

The responses to statement 2, “Reading is one of my favourite hobbies”, show that 7 students (37%) in this class are keen readers, which is far above the PISA average of 20%. 9 students (47.3%) agree to the negative formulations in statement 3 and 4: “I read only if I have to” and “I read only to get the information I need”, which is somewhat lower than the PISA average (58% - 62%) which corresponds to the relatively positive reading attitudes reflected in statement 1 and 2. To sum up, it seems that the reading attitudes of this particular sample are more positive than those identified among the average Norwegian 15-year-olds. This condition might have influenced the success/outcome of the Lit Circles, as the results of the post-reading questionnaire show that a clear majority of the students enjoyed the novel, and a vast majority enjoyed their participation in the Lit Circles. This point will be explored in chapter 4.1.2, when presenting the results of the post-reading questionnaire.

4.1.1.2 Reading habits

| 5. During the last three years, have you read any kind of novel (any language) in your spare time? | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| | none | 1 novel | 2 novels | 3-4 novels | 5-6 novels | More than 6 novels |
| Number | 7 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Percentage | 36.8 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 5.3 | 26.3 |

| 6. During the last three years, how many English language novels (any kind) have you read? | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| | None | 1 novel | 2 novels | 3-4 novels | 5-6 novels | More than 6 novels |
| Number | 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Percentage | 36.8 | 26.3 | 10.3 | 5.3 | 5.3 | 15.8 |

Statements 5 and 6 seek to reveal the students' reading habits when it comes to literature, more specifically novels which were the reading material in the Lit Circles project. It is interesting to note that even though the above findings on reading attitudes show that a clear majority of the students enjoy reading (13 of 19 students) and there is a relatively high frequency of avid readers among the students (7 of 19 students), only 5 students have read more than 6 novels (in any language) during the last three years. A little more than one third of the students have not read a single novel in their spare time in the last three years and the majority of the students have read 2 novels or less. This finding correlates with the PISA survey, which found that 41 % rarely, or never read a book.

However, the section on reading attitudes focused on the reading of any kind of text, not novels in particular. The discrepancy between the students' positive reading attitudes and their actual reading habits, which shows that the majority of students in this sample rarely read books, may be explained by another discovery explored in the PISA survey. Despite the decrease in book reading, the survey reveals that online reading activities have increased (Roe, 2020). The fact that many young people engage in online reading activities, may have influenced students to answer that they actually enjoy reading. Also, as mentioned in the introduction, Clark (2012) counters the assumption that young people like reading less than before, claiming that the reason why they read less is because their lives are full of other activities that compete for their time. This claim is supported by the research of Laurenson and her colleagues (2015) referred to in the introduction. In their study of secondary-school students, a majority held a positive attitude to reading and the researchers found that the students willingly engaged with reading for pleasure when this was promoted in a school context. This form of reading enjoyment will be examined in the following sections of this chapter, in the analysis of the post-reading questionnaire, the reflection notes and the focus group interview.

4.1.1.3 Attitudes towards participating in discussions about literature

| 7. I enjoy talking about books with others | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 2 | 9 | 6 | 2 |
| Percentage | 10.5 | 47.4 | 31.6 | 10.5 |

| 8. I am comfortable participating in FULL CLASS DISCUSSIONS about literature | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 5 | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| Percentage | 26.3 | 31.6 | 26.3 | 15.8 |

| 9. I am comfortable participating in GROUP DISCUSSIONS about literature | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 5 | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| Percentage | 26.3 | 63.2 | 5.3 | 5.3 |

The majority of the students, 11 of 19 (57.9 %) say that they enjoy talking about books with others, which is far above the PISA average of 24% (OECD, 2019). This indicates a relatively good starting point for the use of Lit Circles in this class, given that talking about books is the main activity in a Lit Circle. Nevertheless, there is a relatively high frequency of students who disagree with this statement, i.e., 8 students (42.1%), which suggests that there may be resistance towards engaging in the literary discussions. However, it may also imply that talking about books is not something the students normally practise in their spare time. Nonetheless, the vast majority of students (17 of 19 students) state that they are comfortable participating in group discussions about literature, only two students disagree. A far larger group of students, 8 out of 19, have reservations about participating in full class discussions about literature, suggesting that the Lit Circles focusing on groups discussions will be a more suitable and effective approach to promote engagement in the discussions.

4.1.2 Post-reading questionnaire

The post-reading questionnaire (Appendix 5) was divided into three topics: “Participation in reading and group discussion”, “Reading enjoyment” and “Overall experience with the Lit Circle project”. The questionnaire contained 10 close-ended questions and 7 open-ended questions. The questions and the distribution of student answers for the close-ended questions are listed in tables 1-4, 6-8, 11 and 14-15 and comments to the open-ended questions are found in appendix 5 and will be presented below. The findings of this questionnaire will be compared with the findings of the pre-reading questionnaire to examine if there has been any change in attitudes among the students towards reading and participating in literary discussions due to participation in the Lit Circles project.

4.1.2.1 Participation in reading and group discussions

| Question 1: For how many Lit Circle discussions did you read the agreed part of the novel? | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|------|-------|----------|
| | none | one | two | three | all four |
| number | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 12 |
| percentage | 0 | 0 | 21.1 | 15.8 | 63.3 |

| Question 2: For how many Lit Circle discussions did you prepare notes? | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|------|-------|----------|
| | none | one | two | three | all four |
| number | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| percentage | 10.5 | 5.3 | 26.3 | 21.1 | 36.8 |

| Question 3: On average, how much did you participate in the Lit Circle discussions? | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------------|------|-------------|------------|
| Participation involves, for example: | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering my own ideas • Asking questions to others • Encouraging and showing respect for others' opinion | | | | | |
| | a lot | quite a lot | some | very little | not at all |
| number | 6 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| percentage | 31.6 | 47.4 | 15.8 | 5.3 | 0 |

Statement 1-3 was designed to reveal behavioural information from the students (McKay, 2006, p. 35). The students' reports on how much they read, prepared for and participated in the discussions can indicate their level of behavioural engagement with the reading experience (Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012).

The responses to statement 1 show that the majority of the class, 12 students, read all four parts of the novels, i.e. the whole novel, whereas 7 students read 2 or 3 parts. None of the students read only one part or none. On the question on preparing notes for the Lit Circle discussions the answers were more distributed across the scale. Only 7 students prepared notes for all the Lit Circle discussions. During the project, the students' notes were not checked and they were not required to hand them in. The idea was that through participating in a peer-led, collaborative Lit Circle the students are encouraged to take responsibility for their role, not to be accountable to the teacher, but to their classmates and their mutually developed norms (Daniels, 2002, p. 38). This will be further commented on in the next section (chapter 4.1.2.2) dealing with the factors that influenced reading enjoyment and engagement.

The results concerning the students' participation in the discussions (statement 3) show a high level of engagement, with a clear majority of the class (15 of 19 students) stating that they participated *a lot* or *quite a lot*. Only one student says that he or she participated *very little* and none of the students report not participating at all. In this study I have no basis of comparison and no data on how much these students would read and participate in a more traditional approach to reading novels in the classroom. Nonetheless, the high frequency at the high end of the scale on all three questions indicates that the level of engagement with both reading and participating in the Lit Circle discussion was high.

The high level of engagement corresponds with my own observations as a teacher/researcher. In the course of the project, the discussions were scaffolded with procedural mini-lessons and students' evaluating their discussions according to their self-made ground rules. As the project progressed, I as a teacher/researcher observed students gradually moving towards more our own ideal of "friendly, lively and interesting" discussions. While at the beginning of the project it was necessary to prompt and support the discussions, the discussions closing at 10-15 minutes, towards the end the students needed to be reminded of the time limit because they were totally involved in their discussions. Thus, the students gradually showed more enthusiasm and competence to discuss and explore the novel more deeply and at greater lengths, indicating an increasing level of engagement, in a behavioural, cognitive and affective sense (Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012).

4.1.2.2 Reading enjoyment

| Statement 4: I enjoyed reading the novel | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 6 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| Percentage | 31.6 | 47.4 | 10.5 | 10.5 |

A clear majority, 15 students, agreed that they enjoyed the novel. 4 students disagreed. In the pre-reading questionnaire 13 students said that they enjoy reading, whereas 6 students disagreed. This finding shows some progress in reading enjoyment, however, the statement in the pre-reading questionnaire included any kind of material, so the results are not directly comparable. In hindsight, I realise that it would have been useful to ask the students in the pre-reading questionnaire whether or not they enjoy reading novels in particular, which would have provided more relevant data for comparison. This will be briefly discussed at the end of the thesis, under the heading 5.3 *Replication and limitations*.

Question 5: What was it about the novel that made you enjoy or not enjoy it?

In question 5, the students were asked to explain what made them enjoy or not enjoy the novel (See all comments in Appendix 5). All 19 students commented on the question. As indicated in the answers to question 4, 15 of 19 students enjoyed the book, giving a variety of reasons. Several students highlight that it was interesting to see the world through someone else's eyes. One student says: "It was mostly Christopher and his way of thinking which made me want to read the book. I was really invested in his mental development and his views on the world". Four students accentuate the fact that they could relate the book to their own life. The importance of providing relevant reading material that connects with the students' own lives was also one of the most salient factors that emerged for the research on LCs (Kim, 2004; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019). Three students highlight the humour of the book as a source of enjoyment and three students say that they found the book enjoyable because it was easy to read and contained, as one student put it, "not so many complicated words".

All of the four students who did not enjoy the book explain that the book did not engage them, using expressions such as "too slow", "too long to establish the main conflict", "boring", "not particularly exciting". Even though the students chose the novel, the range of novels was restricted to six Young Adult Novels. This again underlines that offering a range of reading material in keeping with the students' preferences plays an important role for students to take pleasure in, and engage with reading (Laurenson et al., 2015). This topic was further explored in the focus group interview and will be presented in chapter 4.2.

| Statement 6: I enjoyed participating in a Lit Circle | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 10 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| Percentage | 52.6 | 36.8 | 0 | 10.5 |

The vast majority, 17 students, agree that they enjoyed participating in the Lit Circle. This number corresponds to the number of students who reply that they are comfortable participating in group discussions about literature (17 students). However, the number of students who say that they enjoy talking about books to others (statement 7) in the pre-reading questionnaire is lower, 11 students. The fact that 17 report that they enjoyed the Lit Circles may thus indicate that participating in a Lit Circle has increased their enjoyment of talking about books with others given that this is the main activity in a Lit Circle. The two remaining students in the sample seem to have strong feelings against participating, as they state that

they strongly disagree with statement 6. This number corresponds with the number of students (2 students) who say in the pre-reading questionnaire that they strongly disagree that they enjoy talking about books with others (statement 7) and that they disagree or strongly disagree (2 students) on being comfortable participating in group discussions about literature (statement 9).

| Statement 7: Participating in a Lit Circle made me enjoy the reading experience more than reading the novel on my own. | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 4 | 9 | 6 | 0 |
| Percentage | 21.1 | 47.4 | 31.6 | 0 |

Two thirds, 13 of 19 students, feel that participating in a Lit Circle helped them enjoy the reading experience more than reading the novel on their own, which suggests that being part of a reading community enhanced their reading experience. This is also reflected in the research literature on LCs, where all the reviewed studies yielded positive results in terms of reading enjoyment (Kim, 2004; Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005; McElvain 2010; Shelton-Strong, 2012; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019). One third of the students, however, disagree and seem to prefer reading a novel on their own.

Questions 8-13 were designed to find answers to the second research question: *Which factors in the design and implementation of Literature Circles influence the level of enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience?* In question 8, the students were given ten factors to choose from, whereas in question 9 they were given the opportunity to expand these factors. In question 10 I wanted them to say something about what the most significant factor was and why. Likewise, in questions 11-13 I was interested in discovering possible factors in the Lit Circle project that prevented them from enjoying the reading experience and engaging in the Lit Circle.

| Question 8: What was it about the Lit Circle project that made you ENJOY the reading experience? You can click on more than one alternative. | | |
|---|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Free choice of novel | 15 | 71.4 |
| The novel itself | 7 | 33.3 |
| Reading as a group | 12 | 57.1 |
| The student-led discussions | 9 | 42.9 |
| The group atmosphere | 16 | 76.2 |
| The roles | 2 | 9.5 |
| The book sharing event | 8 | 38.1 |
| The library setting | 10 | 47.6 |
| No use of digital devices in the library | 5 | 23.8 |
| No grades | 17 | 81.0 |

For question 8, the students could click on more than one alternative among the pre-made categories. I chose this solution because the tool for designing the digital questionnaire that I used, nettskjema.no, did not contain a feature that allowed the students to range the categories in order of importance. Nonetheless, the table provides some clear indications of the most important factors which influenced the students' enjoyment. As can be observed in the table above, all ten categories received clicks – in total, 101 clicks, indicating that there a number of factors that stimulated enjoyment in the reading experience.

However, three categories stood out as they were chosen by a clear majority of the students: no grades (17 students), the group atmosphere (16 students) and of novel (15 students). It is also interesting to note that one factor stands out among the answers chosen by only two students as a source of enjoyment: the roles. These findings will be explored in chapter 4.2 and 4.3, as these categories were further commented on in the focus group interview and the students' reflection notes.

Question 9: Was there ANYTHING ELSE about the Lit Circle project that made you ENJOY the reading experience?

14 of 19 students chose to expand on what made the enjoy the reading experience, which suggests a high level of engagement on this topic. The most common topic, touched upon by seven of the students, was that sharing different opinions, “hearing others thoughts and meanings”, made the experience more enjoyable. One student states that:

The opportunity to talk to people that had read the same thing as me was such an amazing thing, it really just elevated the entire experience of reading the book. It was so much fun to theorize about what would happen next, and to share our opinions

about the book. It was also really fun to see what others noticed in the book that I hadn't, and this helped give a more complete picture of the book and story.

Three students highlight that the atmosphere in the library, where hot chocolate was served, enhanced their reading experience. As one student expresses it: "I enjoyed having hot chocolate and gingerbread and making a cosy atmosphere in the library. Also, it is a great way to begin a Wednesday morning!"

Question 10: What have you ENJOYED THE MOST about participating in the Lit Circle project, and why?

Question 10 was designed to find out which factor held most importance for the students in terms of their enjoyment of the Lit Circles. 18 students chose to answer the question, again indicating a high level of involvement. It is interesting to compare these answers to question 8, where the students were asked to tick off factors that contributed to their enjoyment, to see whether the categories which received the highest number of clicks correspond with the students' comments.

The factor that is most often mentioned by the students as most important for the enjoyment of the Lit Circles in question 10 is the group atmosphere, which corresponds to the factor which got second most votes in question 8, where 16 students say that the group atmosphere was important for their enjoyment of the Lit Circles. In question 10, 6 students reply that this was the most important factor. In their replies they explain what contributed to the group atmosphere: that they felt safe, respected and could listen to each other, had a friendly atmosphere, had fun and came closer to their classmates. One student comments as follows: "In my group, we all respected each others' opinions and listened to one another. There was no negativity in the air and everybody had a great time". Another student writes: "I also liked the fact we got to interview each other on topics at the start of each circle. It truly helped me learn more about my classmates." The student is referring to the warm-up activity which initiated every Lit Circle, where the students interviewed each other on different topics each time, with the purpose of getting to know each other better, practicing asking questions and showing interest in each other.

Five students mention the sharing of ideas and reading as a group as the most important factor in promoting enjoyment in the Lit Circle project. This is also reflected in the answers to question 8 where reading as a group was among the top four factors. Two students mention the novel itself as their most important source of enjoyment, and two say that they

fact that they had completed a whole novel gave the most pleasure. Interestingly, taking into consideration that as many as 17 students answered that *no grades* contributed to their enjoyment of the reading experience in question 8, only one student mentions this as the most important factor in question 10. In the focus group interview, which will be presented in chapter 4.2, the topic of assessment was touched upon by the students, but it was not a topic that received a great deal of attention, possibly because students consider grades a normal part of upper-secondary school.

| 11. What was it about the Lit Circle project that PREVENTED YOU FROM ENJOYING the reading experience? You can click on more than one alternative. | | |
|--|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Free choice of novel | 0 | 0 |
| The novel itself | 6 | 28.6 |
| Reading as a group | 3 | 14.3 |
| The student-led discussions | 0 | 0 |
| The group atmosphere | 1 | 4.8 |
| The roles | 16 | 76.2 |
| The book sharing event | 5 | 23.8 |
| The library setting | 1 | 4.8 |
| No use of digital devices in the library | 3 | 14.3 |
| No grades | 2 | 9.5 |

Overall, the above ten factors that prevented the students from enjoying the reading experience had a total of 30 clicks, compared with 101 clicks referring to the factors that promoted enjoyment. The fact that the students clicked far more frequently on factors that promoted enjoyment compared to factors that prevented enjoyment confirms the results of question 6, where 17 of 19 students agree or strongly agree that they enjoyed participating in a Lit Circle.

The factor that clearly stands out in terms of receiving more than half the clicks (16 clicks) is *the roles*. This corresponds to the answers to question 8, where only 2 students say that the roles were a factor that made the Lit Circles enjoyable. This topic was further explored in the focus group interview and in the reflection notes. It will be presented in chapters 4.2 and 4.3. 6 students say that *the novel itself* prevented them from enjoying the reading experience, and 5 students choose *the book sharing event* as one of the factors.

Question 12: Was there ANYTHING ELSE about the Lit Circle project that prevented you from enjoying the reading experience?

8 of the 14 students who responded to this question gave specific examples of what prevented them enjoying the experience, the remaining students answered variants of “No”. Several of the alternatives were mentioned again. *The roles* were the only category which was mentioned by more than one student (2 students). One of the students explains that “I felt like the roles prevented us from having good and real conversations” whereas the other student says that some roles were “tricky” and hard to understand. Some hitherto new factors were touched upon such as the issue of slackers, meaning students who do not “take their tasks seriously”. One student expresses an annoyance with this lack of discipline as “(...) it messed up the flow of the discussion when one member not had finished his or her role or even read their part”.

Question 13: What have you ENJOYED THE LEAST about participating in the Lit Circle project, and why?

15 students chose to comment on this question, two of them stating “Nothing” and “I don’t know”. The two most important categories that emerged from the students’ answers were *the pressure to read*, mentioned by 5 students and again, *the roles*, also mentioned by five students. Among the comments on *the pressure to read*, students express that the amount of reading and reading for a deadline could be stressful. One student explains that “... when you know you have to read it takes away the cozy experience of reading”. This point was further discussed in the focus group interview and will be presented in chapter 4.2.2.

Concerning the roles, one student states that “(...) they did probably keep helping the conversation in the start, but we all have something to add up to the theme, even without them”. Another student also expresses that it was good having the roles when one did not know what to say, but that “(...) the roles did not do much towards the end”. These comments seem to suggest that the roles served a purpose in the beginning of the project, but that the students did not need this kind of scaffolding as they got practice responding to the text they were reading. One student points out that the roles constrained the discussion and “(...) prevented me from getting completely lost in the story while I read (...) just pulled me out of the magic that is reading”. The student suggests that the escapism that one can experience while reading, the feeling of being immersed in another world, was obstructed by having to consider the role task when reading.

| 14. Did participating in a Lit Circle make you more or less comfortable with participating in group discussions about literature? | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Much more | Some more | No change | Less | Much less |
| Number | 4 | 9 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 21.1 | 47.4 | 31.6 | 0 | 0 |

The majority, 13 of 19 students, say that participating in a Lit Circle have made them much more (4) or some more (9) comfortable with participating in group discussions about literature. Six students report no change and none of the students respond that participating in a Lit Circle made the less comfortable. In the pre-reading questionnaire, most students agree they were already comfortable with group discussions on literature before the project. The findings on question 14 nonetheless show that for the majority of students (13 of 19) there is an increase in how comfortable they are with conversation about literature. This finding is reflected in Carrison and Ernst-Slavit’s (2005) study which found a growth in oral communication among the ELL students participating LCs, due to “abundant opportunities for dynamic interaction among readers and text” in the LC model (p. 110).

| 15. Did participating in a Lit Circle give you more or less desire to read for pleasure in your spare time? | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Much more | Some more | No change | Less | Much less |
| Number | 4 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 21.4 | 26.3 | 52.5 | 0 | 0 |

Close to half the students state that participating in a Lit Circle produced more desire to read for pleasure in their spare time. 4 say *much more* and 5 say *some more*. A slight majority, 10 of the students report *no change*, and none say that their participation in the Lit Circle gave them *less* or *much less* desire to read for pleasure.

4.1.2.3 Overall experience with the Lit Circle project

Question 16: Did participating in the Lit Circle project in any way change your attitude towards reading literature? Please describe the change.

Question 16 allowed the students to explain whether participating in the Lit Circle project had changed their reading attitudes. All 19 students answered the question. None of the students describe a negative change, three students answer that the Lit Circles has not changed their reading attitudes, whereas the 16 remaining student all describe various forms of positive

change. Four students explain that it made them more interested in reading novels in English. One student writes: “It did not change my attitude a lot, when the fact is that i actually enjoy reading, but it gave me a bigger interest in reading English novels and not just Norwegian ones”. Four students mention the importance of finding the right book to enjoy reading (Daniels, 2002; Laurenson et al., 2015), one student stating that: “(...) I found out that if you find a good book that suits you, then the experience will be exiting” and “I found myself relating to a book for the first time”. Two students mention discovering reading as a way to connect with people, one student explaining: “What it changed was how I viewed reading as a way to connect with people, participating the lit circles gave me a new view on reading as a bridge between people. It showed that reading can be a social activity, it doesn’t have to be something you do alone in your room when you need to be away from everyone and everything.” The second student comments as follows: “I already love reading, but I really enjoyed sharing my opinions and hearing others talk about the book”. Here the students indicate that they recognize the social pleasures of reading (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Olsson, 2009; Cremin et al., 2014; Wilhelm, 2016).

Question 17: What is the most important thing you would like to say about your participation in the Lit Circle project?

Question 17 was designed to reveal what was the most important take-away from the Lit Circle project and all students answered the question. There was a great variety of answers. However, the group experience was again the most notable factor. Sharing different opinions in a group was mentioned by most students (5 students) and the importance of feeling comfortable in your group (4 students).

4.2 Focus group interview

As explained in the methods section, the aim of the focus group interview (Appendix 6) was to acquire a more thorough insight into the topics that emerged from the questionnaires, opening for a larger variety of responses, including explanations and clarifications in search of a deeper understanding of the issues.

4.2.1 Literature Circles’ impact on reading enjoyment

In the initial part of the interview, as a warm-up question, the students were asked to share their experiences with the Lit Circles in general. The question corresponds to the first research

question: *From the students' perspective, how does participating in a community of readers such as a Literature Circle impact on reading enjoyment and reading engagement?* The most salient point which emerged from the students' responses was that reading with others gives greater reading enjoyment. When exploring the nature of this pleasure student G explains that when sharing ideas and reacting to a text "... you get very close to the people you read with", highlighting the community as an important ingredient in reading enjoyment (Cremin et al., 2015). Student F notes: "It is one thing to read alone, but when you have someone to talk to the book about and see other points of view, you often get a more complete picture of the book. In addition to that you can have someone to talk to about theories and such that just makes the pleasure a little greater". This point is reflected in the findings from question 8 in the post-reading questionnaire, where reading as a group was indicated as an important factor for making an enjoyable reading experience by a majority of the students (12 of 19). The sharing of different ideas and opinions was one of the factors that was commented on most often in question 10, where students explained what they enjoyed most in the Lit Circle project and the most salient point in the answers to question 17 where students describe the most important aspect of their participation in the Lit Circle project.

Student D observes that "I've always liked reading, but when I got older, I've kind of stopped it". This is in line with the international research presented in the background chapter which suggests that the amount young people read generally declines during adolescence (Roberts & Foehr, 2004; Roe, 2020). The student further explains that participating in the Lit Circle project has allowed her to set aside time for reading, rediscovering the "fun" of it. Student A says that "I found that I had a much greater interest in reading books than I thought".

4.2.2 Factors that influenced reading enjoyment and engagement

The group discussions (groups 1 and 2) and the following plenary session focused specifically on the second research question: *Which factors in the design and implementation of Literature Circles impact on the level of enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience?* This question corresponds to questions 8-13 in the post-reading questionnaire, as presented in chapter 4.2.1. The two groups were asked to discuss which factors promoted and which factors prevented reading enjoyment and engagement in the project, and then sum up the main points from their discussion in the plenary discussion which followed. I chose not to present the students with the results from the post-reading questionnaire so that they would have a "blank canvas" as a starting point for their discussion and would not be restricted by the

categories from the questionnaire. The students discussed several topics in relation to the factors which promoted and prevented reading enjoyment and engagement in the Lit Circle project.

In the following section I will present the most salient factors that emerged from the discussion: *the social aspect, student-led discussion, book choice, roles, reading for a deadline and assessment*. I have chosen not to present the categories divided into positive and negative impacts on reading enjoyment and engagement, as the students expressed that the factors presented below could be sources of both enjoyment, challenges and frustration.

4.2.2.1 *The social aspect*

In the sum-up following the group discussions, both groups point out the social aspect of the Lit Circles as very important for their enjoyment. Group 1 report: “It was a very good atmosphere that made us feel comfortable talking about everything. Everyone respected each other, and so there was no one judging or anything”. In that vein, the students also mention making ground rules for discussions to create a good atmosphere where the students felt comfortable and the warm-up questions as helpful in getting to know each other. The group size was also noted as important for being able to include everyone in the discussion: “... that we were like 4-5 persons, that helped to somehow really see each individual, being able to help them to be included in the conversation” (Student A). Student F mentions that the book sharing event at the end of the project contributed to the feeling of community: “...because we had gotten to know the people in the group, but when you could kind of have a presentation where no one really thought it was so serious and just had fun, then you kind of got connected a little more to the whole class, you somehow got to do something fun”.

The feeling of community created by the sharing of thoughts and ideas in the book discussion was another topic brought up in the discussion. Several students expressed enthusiasm about this Lit Circle experience. Student G explains: “You experience things from other perspectives ... it’s very fun because ...you kind of feel like you belong in some kind of little bubble where you talk about a special thing and then you feel very much at home, because then you have something in common”. As mentioned above, the sharing of different interpretations of the text as a source of enjoyment corresponds with the findings in the post-reading questionnaire. According to Daniels (2002), collaboratively exploring a text to obtain an enriched understanding is the core of the LC method and of the reader-response theory, which is one of the principles upon which the method is based (p. 38). The engagement expressed by the students was also evident in Kim’s study of LCs (2004), referred to in

chapter 2.4, which revealed that students were engaged in highly authentic and responsive social interactions. The students were enthusiastic about the high level of involvement with both the text and with one another, which added to the enjoyment of the reading process.

4.2.2.2 *Student-led discussion*

The LC method encourages self-regulated, autonomous learning (Oats, 2019), focusing on the “voice and choice” of the students (Daniels, 2002). In LCs, the students carry a great deal of the responsibility for managing the content and the interaction of their discussions as opposed to more traditional, teacher-led approaches to exploring literature. In the post-reading questionnaire, 9 of 19 students answered that student-led discussions contributed positively to their enjoyment of the reading experience and none of the students replied that this was a factor that prevented their enjoyment. In the interview, several students comment that making the questions themselves made the conversation more authentic, using words such as *meaningful, open, fun, organic* and *more engaged* to describe the student-led discussions. When describing teacher-led discussions versus student-led discussions, student H explains:

I feel when teachers make a list of questions, a lot of people start to think that: Oh, now I have to get through this as quickly as possible. And then it's over a little bit. Often when you're done with the questions early, it just goes completely quiet. And it just gets a lot more organic when we're allowed to just talk about what we actually find interesting and we do it not just to do it, but to actually figure out what we think about this. What... what it means to us.

Student G expands on teacher-led discussions: “(...) it kind of feels like it's not real, like it's not a question one is actually passionate about knowing, because we haven't asked it ourselves”. Daniels (2002) argues that ownership is essential in the LC method, where “students are in charge of their thinking and discussion” (p. 22). He contends that focusing on the voice and the empowerment of the students is necessary for reading to become “a lifelong habit and deeply owned skill (...) anchored in feelings of pleasure and power” (p. 19).

4.2.2.3 *Book choice*

The significance of book choice and offering relevant and engaging reading material for an enjoyable reading experience (Kim, 2004; Sambolin & Carroll, 2015; Avci, 2019) was discussed by the students in the interview. This was also seen in the post-reading

questionnaire where 15 students ticked off the factor “free choice of novel” as important for their enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience. Book choice is a key ingredient in the LC method and is considered vital for promoting pleasure in reading and creating lifelong readers (Daniels, 2002, p. 19). In the post-reading questionnaire, a clear majority of the students (15 of 19 students) replied that they enjoyed the book that they had chosen. In the interview, student F comments “(...) although we couldn't choose from all the books in the library, we could choose from five quite different books in both writing style and content, and then you can choose a book that you are interested in. And if you are interested in the content, then you are automatically more happy to talk about it.” This comment underlines the importance of providing a variety of reading alternatives, allowing the students to find a book that is interesting and readable for them.

However, when discussing factors that inhibit reading enjoyment, both groups in the interview mention that they felt that the books in the selection were quite similar and agreed that they should be able to recommend books themselves to achieve a greater variety of genres and topics. The students agree that it might be a good idea to do a small survey in advance and find out interests and genres. One of the main ideas behind LCs is that they should be done in cycles, to ensure that students can choose from a range of novels including different genres, topics and levels through the course of the cycles. Providing this variety of book choices can be challenging as it entails having a well-stocked school library and willingness from the school administrators to provide funding for book purchases. Thankfully, the principal in my school appreciated the value of offering students a variety of relevant and engaging reading material and was willing to fund the book purchases.

In the discussion, student H underlines the importance of finding a book with the right language level to be able to engage in the discussions: “I think that also in made it much easier for those who may not be so good at understanding English that they got to choose the book they actually understood and the book in which they actually managed to understand the language, instead of getting a book where they might not understand anything, and they couldn't keep up. And I'm sure it helped a lot to actually get into the discussion.”

In the discussion, several students mention that they should have the possibility to recommend books to their classmates. The pre-reading questionnaire showed that 7 students in the class are avid readers and in the interview some of them voiced that they would like to inspire their classmates and motivate them to read. Student C says: “I liked the idea that we could recommend books because some of us read a lot of books and then maybe that person can come up with some books that she or he thinks others might be interested in. That maybe

are a little more appropriate for some people, because I think that can really help, because there are a lot of people in our class who don't read books. But there are also a lot of people who like to read books, and then those who like to read books can influence them to maybe start liking it". Here the students describe what Cremin and her colleagues (2014) call "acknowledging and developing diverse reader identities" and "building communities of engaged readers". The students' comments indicate that they are discovering reading as a social process and see the possibilities in their class for creating a reciprocal reading community.

4.2.2.4 *Roles*

The roles were a much-discussed topic during the project and was treated both in the post-reading questionnaire and in the focus group interview. In the interview, both groups mention the roles as a factor which both promoted and prevented enjoyment and engagement in the Lit Circle project. In the literature on LCs, the roles are described as "intermediate support structures" (Daniels, 2002, p. 13), to give the students a variety of material to talk about when learning how to operate peer-led discussions groups. In the discussion, both groups agree that the roles were useful and positive in the beginning of the project, student B explaining that "(...) that's kind of what gave variation in the conversation because then we could sort of talk about different topics", "(...) because then everyone had to contribute and be kind of warmed up to talk" (student C), and that the roles helped "so that we got things done" (student C).

However, as the project progressed the students observed that "(...) we found out that it worked just as well without them (...) We ended up with people talking more outside anyway. And then, after a couple of times it became a very natural discussion. Everyone was quite active, and we were able to pull in those who weren't that active" (student F). Student G explains how they used the roles as support but in a less structured manner: "I feel like gradually we kind of started to take responsibility, that we started dropping the roles, but we still took them into the discussion, so we kind of took those roles in the discussion that we felt were best suited to us, so we really took different roles into the discussion all the time". This practice formulates the purpose of the roles, that students "learn to read better and discuss better" (Daniels, 2002, p. 13). However, group 2 report that the scaffolding which the roles were meant to provide could somehow disturb the enjoyment: "(...) eventually it just got really tiring, and then you couldn't really enjoy the book and you felt in a way you had a task and then you focused more on that task than on enjoying the book". The comment suggests

that over-dependence on the roles may lead to a mechanical discussion, a danger which Daniels (2002) cautions against.

Also, the students note that some of the roles were more challenging than others: “(...) there were some complicated roles like connector and passage finder (...) there were no example questions for these roles that could help us sort of get started on what to look for in the book” (student B). The students had a booklet with the description of each role, but for some roles it seems that this was not sufficient. The comment suggests that the students needed more scaffolding to use certain roles, something which was also discovered in the reflection notes after three Lit Circles, which will be further explored in chapter 4.3. From the the focus group discussion and the reflection notes I learned that there seems to be a need to spend more time on clarifying and practicing the roles at an early stage in the project, preferably in the initial stage when using a short story to practice student-led discussions. In hindsight, I realize that it would be a good idea to rehearse the roles with two different short stories, instead of only one, in order for the students to gain a clearer understanding of each role.

With regards to the next cycle of Lit Circles to be conducted in class, the students recommend that each group can decide whether they want to use the roles according to the needs of the individual group. This is in line with Daniels’ suggestions who warns against clinging to the roles for too long, as they are meant to be “book club training wheels, a temporary, getting-started tool” (Daniels, 2002, p. 99). Student G suggests moving on from fixed roles to using them inspiration to giving responses to the text: “(...) it’s better to just have a list of points that we have to discuss together that could be the roles, rather than each person having a role, so that we can sort of go over all these roles with each other.” This is in accordance with Daniel’s (2002) recommendation of using open-ended response logs as a tool for collecting responses as the students get more practice with peer-led, productive discussions.

4.2.2.5 Reading for a deadline

Having to read for a deadline was discussed in the interview as a factor that prevented reading enjoyment. This finding tallies with the results of the post-reading questionnaire where reading for deadline was mentioned as one of the aspects of the Lit Circle project which was least enjoyable (question 13). In the interview, student G points out that the expectations to read at home and finish a certain number of pages can be “a little stressful when you're actually going to relax to read the book”, referring also to their busy lives with other

commitments to attend to. In the sum-up, this topic was also mentioned by group 1 as problematic, seeing as “everyone reads at different paces and not so many people have free time or so much free time”.

The reading plan agreed upon by each group challenges the idea of free will in reading for pleasure. Student D states: “(...) being able to kind of enjoy the book and like to read, it's important that you don't feel any pressure or stress about having to do it, because that there are requirements, that you have to do it, often ruins being happy and doing it out of free will”. The feeling of pressure to read seem to collide with the Cremin's (2020) definition of reading for pleasure as “essentially volitional, choice-lead reading” and Clark & Rumbold's (2014) description of it as “reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfactions that we will get from the act of reading”.

However, as the Lit Circles were conducted in a school context and as an obligatory part of the course, the volitional aspect is not as clear-cut as in leisure reading. Student D sees the necessity of having a deadline and a plan for reading “(...) otherwise you don't progress and it is not possible to have a discussion at all”. Nonetheless, as Clark & Rumbold (2014) points out, reading for pleasure also can refer to “reading that having begun at someone else's request, you continue because you are interested in it” (p.6), which highlights the importance of providing students with positive reading experiences that may lead to an appreciation of reading in their own spare time.

The above findings also indicate the importance of supporting young readers by setting aside sufficient time during school hours for students to enjoy reading, avoiding it to become yet another chore. The results of question 15 in the post-reading questionnaire, where close to half the students (9 of 19) state that participating in a Lit Circle gave more desire to read for pleasure in their spare time, indicate that using the LC method in a school context may foster young people's desire to read for pleasure outside school. This is in keeping with the ideals of the syllabus for English in upper-secondary school which states that reading in school should contribute to experiencing the joy of reading and regards literature as a source of lifelong reading enjoyment (ENG1-04, 2020, p. 4).

4.2.2.6 Assessment

As explained in the methods chapter, I decided to remove grades from the Lit Circle project in order to focus on reading for pleasure and not achievement. In the post-reading questionnaire 17 of 19 students marked that “No grades” was a factor that made them enjoy the reading experience. However, in the sum-up of factors which promoted enjoyment only group 2

mentioned the fact that the project was not to be assessed contributed to their enjoyment. Student A explains the effect: “(...) since we didn't get a grade on it, I think it helped us be more open and feel comfortable and really had fun and kind of enjoyed ourselves”. Student B confirms that “(...) if we had been assessed, it would surely have prevented the enjoyment of reading for quite a few.”

However, student D expresses the downside of not having grades: “(...) it will also make people not do as much as if there had been grades”. The discussion revealed that the issue of “slackers”, people who did not read the pages agreed upon or did not prepare the role task, caused some annoyance in some groups. Student A reports that this “lowered the engagement a little in the whole the group. When there are some who feel that they have to do other people's tasks in order for the discussion to go around, (...) I felt it kind of ruined the group dynamics”. As a student-led activity, the LC method encourages students to exercise self-regulation and carry the responsibility for managing the interaction within the group, learning how to depend on each other. Still, learning how to manage this dynamic is a learning process for the individual, the group as a whole and the teacher as the facilitator and guide. For the teacher, the procedural mini-lessons and the debriefing sessions present an opportunity to address this issue, bringing attention to the conditions that make the discussions engaging for everyone in the group.

4.3 Reflection notes

The students were asked to write reflection notes after each Lit Circle, which provided a valuable contribution to guiding my decisions as the project unfolded. As explained in the methods section, the notes gave me insight into the students' thinking in the course of the project and enabled me to modify the project design according to the students' needs. I have analysed the notes, but due to the wealth of the material, I will not be going into detail. I have selected some topics and quotes to illustrate examples of issues that came up. For reasons of space, the notes have been excluded from the appendices. They are, however, available upon request.

Every Lit Circle discussion was preceded with a mini-lesson and ended with a short debrief. In the debrief, students were first asked to individually write reflection notes, to share their thoughts with the group members and then report from each group in full class. Acknowledging the danger of some voices and opinions dominating the plenary session and the short length of time available for it, I collected the reflection notes from each Lit Circle. These gave the students the possibility to reflect on their learning and allowed me to discover

problem areas and opinions that were not expressed in class. This provided a more balanced observation of the groups' reactions to the project.

For example, in one debrief discussing the roles, some strong student voices maintained that the roles should be dropped, arguing that the group discussion went very well without them. In the reflection notes however, several students expressed that the roles still were a valuable support in their discussions in terms of both focus and inclusion, as pointed out in the following comments: "They help us keep on track (...) and gives everyone the opportunity to speak" " , "they make me be more aware of what I am reading", "the roles helped since everybody had something to say". One of the students in a group who voiced that the roles had become obsolete, wrote that leaving the roles resulted in "(...) an imbalance in bringing up points. We have certain people that mostly speak, not giving others the opportunity to speak". This was useful information, revealing that many students still needed the scaffolding provided by the roles and led me to address the concept of "airtime" in the following procedural mini-lesson.

The reflection notes also allowed me to discover problems that arose and take measures to resolve them. For instance, after the third Lit Circle the students were invited to reflect upon what they had enjoyed so far in the project and if anything had been problematic. In the notes some students indicated that they needed more scaffolding to use certain roles. Upon this discovery, I held a mini-lesson focusing on these particular roles, especially connector, passage finder and illustrator, whereby I could invite students to share examples of responses to illustrate a scope of possibilities within the roles.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate how, from the students' perspective, participating in a community of readers impact reading enjoyment and engagement. The thesis is based on an eight-week project with a class of 19 first year upper-secondary school students using a method called Literature Circles (LCs) (Daniels 2002), a discussion-based, student-centred and collaborative approach to reading. By conducting an experiment using LCs in an ESL classroom this study has examined whether the LC methodology is successful in a Norwegian upper-secondary school context to stimulate reading enjoyment and engagement. Through pre- and post-reading questionnaires, a focus group interview and reflection notes, the study has sought to gain a deeper understanding of the factors which promote or discourage pleasure and engagement in reading in a school context.

5.1 First research question

- a. *From the students' perspective, how does participating in a community of readers such as a Literature Circle impact on reading enjoyment and reading engagement?*

The data from the students' responses after participating in the LC project, indicates that the LC method has the potential to nurture young people's pleasure in reading. A clear majority (15 of 19 students), stated that they enjoyed the novel they read and the vast majority of the students (17 of 19 students), replied that they enjoyed participating in the Lit Circle. Two thirds of the students (13 of 19 students) responded that participating in a Lit Circle made them enjoy the reading experience more than reading the novel on their own, which suggests that being part of a reading community enhanced their reading experience. This finding was confirmed in the focus group interview where the students claimed that reading with others gave greater reading enjoyment.

As mentioned in the results chapter, the students' responses in the pre- and post-reading questionnaires show some progress in reading enjoyment. However, there is a weakness in the wording as the statement in the pre-reading questionnaire asked about enjoyment of any kind of reading material, whereas the post-reading questionnaire asked about the novel in particular, so the results are not directly comparable. In hindsight, I realise that it would have been useful to ask the students in the pre-reading questionnaire whether or not they enjoy reading novels in particular, which would have provided more relevant data for comparison.

The study also demonstrated how the LC method may promote reading engagement. Responses in the questionnaires, interview and reflection notes revealed a high level of engagement when it came to reading the novel, preparing notes and participating in the Lit Circle discussions, and a clear improvement in how comfortable the students were with conversations about literature. Supported by the group atmosphere of the reading community, and the structured, peer-led discussions, central to the LC method, I, as the teacher/researcher, observed that the students showed an increasing level of enthusiasm and competence to discuss and explore the novel they had chosen.

However, it should be noted that the pre-reading questionnaire revealed that the reading attitudes of this particular sample are more positive than those identified among the

average Norwegian 15-year-olds, a condition which might have influenced the outcome of the Lit Circles. Nonetheless, the study shows that for the majority of students there is improvement in how comfortable they are with conversation about literature after participating in the Lit Circle project. In addition, close to half the students state that participating in a Lit Circle gave more desire to read for pleasure in their spare time. In the interview students also express that they rediscovered the fun and interest of reading and became more interested in reading novels in English which makes a strong argument for setting aside time at school to read and discuss literature.

5.2 Second research question

- b. *Which factors in the design and implementation of Literature Circles influence the level of enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience?*

Concerning the factors in the Lit Circle project that had an impact on the level of enjoyment and engagement, the most salient points which emerged from the data was *the social aspect, student-led discussion, roles, book choice, reading for a deadline and assessment*. Among these factors, the social aspect of the Lit Circles was most accentuated by the students. Several student comments highlighted the group experience of the Lit Circle, underlining the significance of creating a good group atmosphere where everybody felt comfortable to speak and share their interpretations of the novel, which indicates that many students discovered the social pleasures of reading through the Lit Circle project.

The data showed that the student-led discussions, fuelled by the students' own inquiries had a positive impact on enjoyment and engagement. The voice of the student is essential in the LC approach, allowing students to share their interpretations of the text. Many of the students' responses related to the sharing different ideas and opinions as a source of pleasure and a way of becoming involved.

The roles, which were introduced to help the students learn how to operate in peer-led discussion groups, was much debated by the participants of the Lit Circles throughout the project. The responses and comments of the students revealed that these offered valuable scaffolding of the students' discussions in terms of focus, engagement and inclusion, in line with other research on LCs (Shelton-Strong, 2012; Sambolin & Carroll 2015; Avcı 2019). However, students in this study explained that they gradually became less dependent on the roles as they gradually learned to take more responsibility and practiced responding to

literature, which underlines the purpose of the roles as “transitional, temporary devices” (Daniels, 2002, p. 14). Some students also pointed out that more clarification and practice was needed at the beginning of the project to understand what each role tasks entailed and that too much focus on the roles could take the attention away from the reading experience and disturb the enjoyment.

Another prominent theme from the questionnaire and interview data was that the free choice of novels promoted enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience. In their comments, the students accentuated the importance of providing a variety of books to suit different tastes and needs when it comes to genre, topic and language level. In the interview keen readers suggested recommending books to the class, indicating that through the Lit Circle project, they discovered future possibilities for creating a reciprocal community of engaged readers.

The study found that reading for a deadline was a factor that could have a negative impact on reading enjoyment. The pressure to follow the agreed-upon reading plan and prepare notes seem to collide with reading for pleasure as an activity motivated by choice and free will. However, considering reading as a social activity, the students seem to acknowledge the necessity of following a plan and expressed annoyance about the issue of “slackers”, which was said to lower the engagement of the group. Nonetheless, the above finding stresses the importance of setting aside sufficient time during school hours for students to enjoy reading, thereby avoiding it becoming yet one more duty.

The data showed that having no grades contributed to the students’ enjoyment, openness and willingness to discuss the novel. However, the discussion revealed that an assessment-free project also had a downside, as students expressed that poorly prepared classmates could cause the group dynamics to suffer.

5.3 Replication and limitations

The description of the Lit Circle project, the teaching plan (Appendix 2), the questionnaires (Appendix 4 and 5) and the analysis of the focus group interview made available in this thesis are some of the strong features that would enable somebody to replicate this study. In addition to the limitations described previously in this chapter, some further limitations should be mentioned. As noted in the methods section, it could be seen as a problem that the majority of the respondents were female. In the study, only 60% of the boys in class chose to participate in the compared to 93% of the girls. Were I to repeat this study, I would attempt to secure a

more even gender distribution to avoid the strong female bias present in the current study, especially in the focus group interview, where only one of eight interviewees was male.

Unfortunately, the bias in the student sample weakens the generalizability of the findings in this study and might impinge on the possibilities of replicating the study. In addition, considering the small number of participants (19 students), the data will not be sufficient to generalise over a larger population. Despite these limitations, what was found in the analysis of the answers given by this particular cohort may offer insight into issues concerned with conducting well-designed and productive LCs.

Another limitation is the relatively short time span of the study, which was restricted to only one cycle of LCs. One of the key elements of LCs is that they should be done in cycles, where “new groups form around new reading choices” (Daniels, 2002, p. 25). In the focus group interview the students underlined the importance of being able to choose from a range of novels including different genres, topics and levels, as book choice is one of the most significant factors in an enjoyable reading experience, according to the students. Conducting two or more cycles of LCs would provide the students with more opportunities to pursue their own curiosities and tastes in the world of literature. Offering students a variety of relevant and engaging books entails gaining knowledge of students’ reading preferences, for example through doing a survey of students’ reading interest, as suggested by the students in this study. It also necessitates having a well-stocked school library and willingness from the school administrators to provide funding for book purchases. If the school has a librarian with good knowledge of Young Adult literature, it would be a valuable resource.

Conducting a study with two or more cycles of LCs would also strengthen the quality of the research in terms of validity and would be an interesting approach to further research on the LC method. Were I to repeat this study with more time available, I believe that action research would be a useful approach to gain more insight into how to conduct successful LCs. It could be fruitful to carry out research where teachers work collaboratively over an extended period of time with several classes and cycles of LCs, planning, acting, observing and reflecting, to gain a deeper understanding of how to conduct LCs which lead to more reading enjoyment and engagement.

From the reflection notes and the focus group interview I learned that the students needed more scaffolding to use certain roles at an early stage in the project. In retrospect, I realize that it would be preferable to rehearse the roles with two different short stories instead of only one, in order for the students to get a clearer understanding of what each role entails and become more familiar with using them in a student-led discussion. Also, as the students

suggested in the focus group interview with regards to the next cycle of Lit Circles to be conducted in class, it seems preferable to gradually let go of the “training wheels” which the roles represent (Daniels, 2002, p. 99) and rather use them as inspiration for writing open-ended response logs.

The fact that the teacher also held the role of the researcher in this study may represent an additional limitation. Despite taking steps to minimize the effect of the power relationship present in teacher-student communication (McKay, 2006, p. 86), as mentioned in the focus group interview chapter, the inherent power structures may have corrupted the data for example in terms of students’ desire to please their teacher or influence their grades. An alternative approach would be to have an independent researcher observing and interviewing the students to reduce the possible bias in the data. Nevertheless, as both teacher and researcher I have been in a unique position to discuss aspects of the Lit Circles as the project progressed, building on the trust and my relationship with the students. Using the students’ responses from the pre-reading questionnaires, the class discussions and the reflection notes I could, throughout the project, work on translating the reading for pleasure philosophy into practice in the classroom, honing and adjusting the design of the project according to the needs of the students.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the result of the study can, I believe, provide insight and guidance for teachers considering alternative approaches to incorporating literary texts in the ESL classroom with the purpose of stimulating pleasure in reading and raising motivation for reading literature among adolescents. The present study suggests that, using the LC method as a catalyst, it is possible to stimulate pleasure in reading in a school context. It also highlights the importance of setting aside space and time to support students’ reading enjoyment and engagement.

LCs evolve over time as teachers and students change, acquiring experience, insights and confidence to do things differently. Hopefully, the understanding gained by studying this project may illuminate issues concerned with conducting successful LCs for other teachers with the purpose of guiding the students to discover or rediscover the joy of reading literature.

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Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet *Reading for Pleasure Through Literature Circles?*

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke om en spesiell metodikk for litteraturundervisning, kalt *Literature Circles*, kan bidra til å skape leselyst og leseglede i en VG1 engelskklasse i videregående skole. I dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med prosjektet er å undersøke hvordan deltagelse i *Literature Circles* i engelskundervisningen påvirker leselyst og leseglede hos engelskelever i videregående skole. Metodikken *Literature Circles* er en diskusjonsbasert tilnærming til lesing av skjønnlitteratur hvor du deltar i en elevstyrt lesesirkel med elever som har valgt samme roman som deg. Jeg ønsker å undersøke hvilke faktorer i designet og gjennomføringen av *Literature Circles* som påvirker leseopplevelsen.

Prosjektet vil foregå over 5 uker, til sammen 10 skoletimer og er en del av min masteroppgave i studiet *Fremmedspråk i skolen – engelsk* ved Høyskolen i Østfold.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Høyskolen i Østfold er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Jeg inviterer nettopp deg fordi du dette skoleåret er elev i min VG1 engelskklasse på Spjelkavik videregående skole.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Deltakelse i studiet innebærer at du deltar i

1. To spørreundersøkelser; den første før deltagelse i lesesirkelen (*Literature Circle*) og den andre etter deltagelse i lesesirkelen. I spørreundersøkelsene krysser du av for ulike svaralternativ (engelsk) og får anledning til å utdype noen av svarene i kortsvar (på

engelsk eller norsk). Spørreskjemaene vil ta ca. 5-15 minutt å svare på og inneholder spørsmål om:

- a. Dine lesevaner og dine holdninger til lesing og deltakelse i diskusjoner om skjønnlitteratur
- b. Dine leseopplevelser og din deltagelse i lesesirkelen

Dine svar fra spørreskjemaet blir registrert elektronisk.

2. Innlevering av refleksjonsnotater (på engelsk) av dine leseopplevelser i forbindelse med romanen du skal lese.
3. 7-8 elever vil bli spurt om å delta i et gruppeintervju om sine leseopplevelser og deltagelse i lesesirkelen. Gruppeintervjuet vil forgå på norsk.

Foreldre/foresatte kan få se spørreskjema/intervjuguide etc. på forhånd ved å ta kontakt.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Deltagelse i lesesirkelene og innlevering av refleksjonsnotat inngår i normal undervisning, men det er frivillig å besvare spørreskjemaene og delta i gruppeintervju.

Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Det vil heller ikke på noen måte påvirke ditt forhold til meg som lærer eller dine karakterer.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Spørreundersøkelsene og lydopptak blir lagret i form av *Nettskjema* som er en sikker løsning for datainnsamling via nett. Spørreskjemaene er anonyme og i transkripsjon av lydopptak vil du bli anonymisert, og opplysningene kan ikke spores tilbake til deg. Jeg vil bare bruke opplysningene du gir til formålene jeg har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Jeg behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Det er bare jeg som masterstudent og min veileder som behandler data og data vil være lagret på forskningsserver. Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i utviklingsarbeidet eller publikasjon og all data vil være anonymisert ved prosjektslutt. Studien er meldt og godkjent av NSD.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene slettes når prosjektet avsluttet og oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er 20.06.22.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Høgskolen i Østfold har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Lærer og student Anne Rogne Midtbø, e-post: anne.rogne.midtbo@mrfylke.no, +47 416 04 041
- Høgskolen i Østfold v/veileder Jane Mattisson Ekstam, jane.m.ekstam@hiof.no, +47 696 08 175
- Vårt personvernombud: Line Mostad Samuelsen, line.m.samuelsen@hiof.no, +47 696 08 234

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Jane Ekstam
(Veileder)

Anne Rogne Midtbø
(Lærer og student)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Reading for Pleasure Through Literature Circles*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i spørreskjema (flervalgsvar på engelsk, kortsvar på engelsk eller norsk)
- å delta i gruppeintervju (vil forgå på norsk)
- at deler av mine refleksjonsnotater (engelsk) kan bli sitert i masteroppgaven (anonymisert)

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 2 – Teaching plan

| Teaching plan - Lit Circles project | |
|--|---|
| Week 1 3 x 45 minutes | <p>Introduction of the project and the method using a short story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and consent form (Appendix 1) • Pre-reading questionnaire (Appendix 4) • Reading aloud a short story - “Brotherly Love” by Francisco X. Stork • Practice the roles individually, then in groups with the same role (Appendix 3) • In groups, then in full class: Make a list of qualities which characterizes a good discussion • Practice a literary conversation in Lit Circles |
| Week 2 2 x 45 minutes | <p>Book Tasting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the reading experience: Library setting. Bring your favourite cup. Hot chocolate served. • 6 Young Adult novels in a variety of genres and levels – 5 minutes for each novel • <i>Book Review Sheet, My Top Three Book Choices</i> |
| Week 3 2 x 45 minutes | <p>First Lit Circle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up activity – Getting to know each other (group) • Literary mini-lesson: How does the author hook us on the first page? • Read the first page - make predictions (individually – group) • Make reading schedule - distribute roles (group) • 45 minutes silent reading time. Write responses using role sheet. |
| Week 4 2 x 45 minutes | <p>Second Lit Circle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up activity (group) • Procedural mini-lesson: Make ground rules for a friendly, lively and interesting discussion – to be revisited and revised (group – plenum) • 15 minutes Lit Circle discussion based on role sheets • Debrief: 10 minutes reflection on key ideas and process – ground rules (group – plenum) • 30 minutes silent reading time. Write responses using role sheet |
| Week 5 2 x 45 minutes | <p>Third Lit Circle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up activity • Literary mini-lesson: <i>Coming-of-age stories</i> • 20 minutes Lit Circle discussion based on role sheets • Debrief: 10 minutes reflection on key ideas and procedure – ground rules (group – plenum) |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection notes • 30 minutes silent reading time. Write responses using role sheet |
| Week 6 2 x 45 minutes | Fourth Lit Circle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up activity • Introduction: Key ideas from the reflection notes • Procedural mini-lesson: <i>Save the Last Word For Me</i> (Daniels & Steineke, 2004, p. 138). <i>The Roles of the Illustrator and the Passage Finder</i>. • 20-25 minutes Lit Circle discussion based on role sheets • Debrief: Reflection notes on the roles (group – plenum) • 30 minutes silent reading time. Some groups using role sheets, others not. |
| Week 7 2 x 45 minutes | Fifth Lit Circle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up activity • Introduction: Key ideas from the reflection notes on roles • Literary mini-lesson: <i>The Role of the Connector</i> • 20-25 minutes Lit Circle discussion based on role sheets • Debrief: 10 minutes reflection on the roles and process (group – plenum) • Work on book sharing presentation. |
| Week 8 2 x 45 minutes | Work on book sharing presentation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Google Slides |
| Week 9 2 x 45 minutes | Book Sharing event in the library <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring your favourite cup. Hot chocolate served. • Share Power Point presentations • Two interested teachers invited as guests • After the presentations: <i>Book Interest Rating</i> • Post-reading questionnaire (Appendix 5) |
| Week 10 | Focus group interview (Appendix 6) |
| Total: 19 lessons | |

Summarizer

Your name: _____

Book: _____

Meeting date: _____

Assignment: page _____ to page _____

Your job is to prepare a brief summary (2 min.) that covers the most important events in this part of the book. The other members of your group will be counting on you to remind them of the key points, the main ideas and the action that happens in the story.

What is the most important event in this reading?

What are the key points to remember about this section? (facts, plot summary)

Questioner

Your name: _____

Book: _____

Meeting date: _____

Assignment: page _____ to page _____

Your job is to develop a list of questions that your group might want to discuss about this part of the book. Don't worry about small details: Your task is to help people talk over the big ideas in the reading and share reaction. Notice what you are wondering /asking yourself while you are reading and write down some of those questions along the way. For example, perhaps you were wondering about some of the following questions:

- What was going through your mind while you read this?
- How did you feel while reading this part of the book?
- Why something happened?
- Why a character did something?
- Did anything in this part of the book surprise you?
- What are one or two important ideas in this part of the book?
- What is going to happen next?
- Which questions did you have when you finished this part of the book?

Possible discussion questions or topics for today:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Passage Finder

Your name: _____

Book: _____

Meeting date: _____

Assignment: page _____ to page _____

Your job is to find a few special passages or quotations from the text for your group to talk over. In other words, what passage really stands out for you? What is interesting? Powerful? Funny? Confusing? Read the passage aloud for your group and share your reason for picking the passage and discuss.

| PAGE #/PARAGRAPH | REASONS FOR PICKING |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

Possible reasons for picking a passage to be shared:

Important

Controversial

Confusing

Informative

Funny

Thought-provoking

Well Written

Touching

Surprising

Connector

Your name: _____

Book: _____

Meeting date: _____

Assignment: page _____ to page _____

Your job is to find connections between the book your group is reading and the world outside. This means connecting the reading to your own life, to happenings at school or in your community, to similar events at other times and places, to other people or problems that you are reminded of. There are no right answers!! Whatever connections **you** make are worth writing down and sharing.

Some connections I found between this reading and other people, places, events, authors, movies ...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Word Master

Your name: _____

Book: _____

Meeting date: _____

Assignment: page _____ to page _____

Your task is to look out for new words. It can be words that are **unfamiliar, puzzling, difficult, repeated a lot or seem to be important to the story**. Write them down in the chart below. Try to figure out what the word means from the context in which it is used. Write down your guess. Then use a dictionary to find the real meaning.

| WORD | PAGE/ PARAGRAPH | DEFINITION | REASON FOR PICKING |
|------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Illustrator

Your name: _____

Book: _____

Meeting date: _____

Assignment: page _____ to page _____

Your job is to **draw some kind of picture** related to the reading. It can be a **sketch, cartoon, diagram, or stick-figure scene**. You can draw a picture of something that is discussed specifically in your book, or something that the reading reminded you of, or a picture that conveys any idea or feeling you got from the reading. Any kind of drawing or graphic is okay—you can even label things with words if that helps. Make your drawing on the other side of this sheet or on a separate sheet.

Presentation plan: Show your picture without comment to the others in the group. One at a time, they get to speculate what your picture means, to connect the drawing to their own ideas about the reading. After everyone has had a say, you get the last word: tell them what your picture means, where it came from, or what it represents to you.

Appendix 4 - Results pre-reading questionnaire

Number of respondents: 19

Reading attitudes

| 10. I enjoy reading in my spare time (any kind of reading material). | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 5 | 8 | 4 | 2 |
| Percentage | 26.3 % | 42.1% | 21.1% | 10.5% |

| 11. Reading is one of my favourite hobbies. | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Percentage | 15.8 | 21.1 | 26.3 | 36.8 |

| 12. I read only if I have to | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 2 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| Percentage | 10.5 | 36.8 | 31.6 | 21.1 |

| 13. I read only to get the information I need | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 4 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| Percentage | 21.1 | 26.3 | 36.8 | 15.8 |

Reading habits

| 14. During the last three years, have you read any kind of novel (any language) in your spare time? | | | | | | |
|--|------|---------|----------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| | none | 1 novel | 2 novels | 3-4 novels | 5-6 novels | More than 6 novels |
| Number | 7 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Percentage | 36.8 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 5.3 | 26.3 |

| 15. During the last three years, how many English language novels (any kind) have you read? | | | | | | |
|--|------|---------|----------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| | None | 1 novel | 2 novels | 3-4 novels | 5-6 novels | More than 6 novels |
| Number | 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Percentage | 36.8 | 26.3 | 10.3 | 5.3 | 5.3 | 15.8 |

Attitudes towards participating in discussions about literature

| 16. I enjoy talking about books with others | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 2 | 9 | 6 | 2 |
| Percentage | 10.5 | 47.4 | 31.6 | 10.5 |

| 17. I am comfortable participating in FULL CLASS DISCUSSIONS about literature | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 5 | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| Percentage | 26.3 | 31.6 | 26.3 | 15.8 |

| 18. I am comfortable participating in GROUP DISCUSSIONS about literature | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 5 | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| Percentage | 26.3 | 63.2 | 5.3 | 5.3 |

Appendix 5 - Results post-reading questionnaire

Number of respondents: **19**

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer this anonymous questionnaire.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out more about your reading experiences when participating in the Literature Circle project. The data will be used as a basis for a Master's Thesis on the topic of reading enjoyment at Østfold University College.

Instructions:

In the questionnaire there are multiple choice-questions and short-answer questions. For the short-answer questions: You can write your answers in English or Norwegian. Ask the teacher if any of the questions are unclear. The questionnaire will take +/- 15 minutes to complete.

NB: There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses are confidential and anonymous and will not affect your grades. There are no risks or benefits to you from participating and you can stop at any time.

Participation in reading and group discussions

| Question 1: For how many Lit Circle discussions did you read the agreed part of the novel? | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|------|-------|----------|
| | none | one | two | three | all four |
| number | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 12 |
| percentage | 0 | 0 | 21.1 | 15.8 | 63.3 |

| Question 2: For how many Lit Circle discussions did you prepare notes? | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|------|-------|----------|
| | none | one | two | three | all four |
| number | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| percentage | 10.5 | 5.3 | 26.3 | 21.1 | 36.8 |

| Question 3: On average, how much did you participate in the Lit Circle discussions? | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------------|------|-------------|------------|
| Participation involves for example: | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering my own ideas • Asking questions to others • Encouraging and showing respect for others' opinion | | | | | |
| | a lot | quite a lot | some | very little | not at all |
| number | 6 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| percentage | 31.6 | 47.4 | 15.8 | 5.3 | 0 |

Reading enjoyment

| Statement 4: I enjoyed reading the novel | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 6 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| Percentage | 31.6 | 47.4 | 10.5 | 10.5 |

Question 5: What was it about the novel that made you enjoy or not enjoy it?

1. The story I read contained two dogs, and since I love dogs with all of my heart that made me like the book too. It was also interesting to see the world from Christophers' perspective. Even though the plot became quite obvious in the end, I would say it is a book worth reading.
2. I enjoyed how it was unique in its own way, whilst presenting an important point of view that can be used later on in life.
3. It was a very good book with a lot of great parts and persons.
4. it was not a bad book, but i think it was a little to predictable and it felt like a very ordinary and bland book. Some parts were fun to read, but there were not so many of these in the book. THE INCIDENT IN THE NIGHT TIME DOG
5. It was mostly Christopher and his way of thinking which made me want to read the book. I was really invested in his mental development and his views on the world.
6. It was very exciting
7. It was interesting and exciting doing something different during the English lessons. The novel itself didn't have to be the best, it was fun discussing the different parts of the book. Like what part we thought was funny or rare, and what would happen next. I look forward to be introduced to new novels after Christmas.
8. I liked the humor and that it was easy to read, small amount of hard words. I also enjoyed the illustrations.
9. it was humoristic, realistic and self ironic, and i loved how it was written like a diary.
10. The small details like parties etc is fun because it makes the novel feel more youthful and interesting. At the same time it makes it less boring
11. The novel took too long to establish the main conflict. Halfway through I felt as if the plot and setting was still being established, which made me lose interest.
12. it was a pretty slow start and the build-up took too long in my opinion.
13. it was easy to read, not so many complicated words, the book was full of emotions
14. Jeg likte å lese romanen fordi det var lett og kjenne seg igjen i boka. Den forteller hvordan det kan være å føle seg alene, samtidig som at man har mennesker som er glad i deg rundt seg.
15. eg likte denne boka fordi den var lett å lese, og den var godt relatert til mitt eget liv.
16. den var ikke så spesielt spennende.
17. It was very relatable.
18. i enjoyed the novel because it was interesting to get to know more about the world and how peple sees the world.
19. I enjoyed the novel because it was very engaging and I struggled to put it down most times. It was incredibly refreshing to read a book without huge death-defying stakes right from the start. I really enjoyed the book all around and the opportunity to discuss it with others really helped, as this gave an opportunity for me to talk about theories

and opinions on the book. Having the lit-circles around the books really heightened my enjoyment of it overall.

| Statement 6: I enjoyed participating in a Lit Circle | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 10 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| Percentage | 52.6 | 36.8 | 0 | 10.5 |

| Statement 7: Participating in a Lit Circle made me enjoy the reading experience more than reading the novel on my own. | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|
| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
| Number | 4 | 9 | 6 | 0 |
| Percentage | 21.1 | 47.4 | 31.6 | 0 |

| Question 8: What was it about the Lit Circle project that made you ENJOY the reading experience? You can click on more than one alternative. | | |
|---|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Free choice of novel | 15 | 71.4 |
| The novel itself | 7 | 33.3 |
| Reading as a group | 12 | 57.1 |
| The student-led discussions | 9 | 42.9 |
| The group atmosphere | 16 | 76.2 |
| The roles | 2 | 9.5 |
| The book sharing event | 8 | 38.1 |
| The library setting | 10 | 47.6 |
| No use of digital devices in the library | 5 | 23.8 |
| No grades | 17 | 81 |

Question 9: Was there ANYTHING ELSE about the Lit Circle project that made you ENJOY the reading experience?

1. I guess having fellow students reading the same book as me, and being able to discuss it afterwards made me enjoy it the most. Books are always fun, but the best part is sharing them with others I think.
2. The hot chocolate we were served. I certainly enjoyed that.
3. Hearing others thoughts and meanings about the book
4. it was very fun to read with the group because we all had different opinions and it was very cool to see what everyone thought about the book. no grades made it less stressful to read and made it more enjoyable
5. It was also the different opinions that made it more enjoyable, also getting to know people better.
6. The fact that we didn't have grades made me feel relaxed while reading and participating in the group discussions. It led to me being more freely and reading out of willing and not force. However, some in my group made the fact that it had no grade as an excuse to not participate, read their parts or finish their roles. I found this annoying as I felt like I had to put more effort into speaking and sharing with others. I

enjoyed having hot chocolate and gingerbread and making a cosy atmosphere in the library. Also, it is a great way to begin a Wednesday morning!

7. Having a PP at the end
8. the atmosphere in the group and my choice of novel.
9. the discussion of the book in the groups
10. Jeg likte det at jeg kunne diskutere boka med noen som hadde lest akkurat lang som meg.
11. At vi hadde det koslig opp gjennom med kakao.
12. There was a good choice of novels, so everyone found something they enjoyed.
13. The opportunity to talk with people that had read the same thing as me was such an amazing thing, it really just elevated the entire experience of reading the book. It was so much fun to theorize about what would happen next, and to share our opinions about the book. It was also really fun to see what others noticed in the book that I hadn't, and this helped give a more complete picture of the book and story.
14. Det er ikke noe annet jeg kommer på enn det som står over.

Question 10: What have you ENJOYED THE MOST about participating in the Lit Circle project, and why?

1. Kind of the same, I got a little bit closer with some of my classmates whom I would probably not have talked to as much if not for the Lit-circles.
2. I enjoyed the fact that I was surrounded by like-minded people, people that chose the same book as I did. I also liked the fact we got to interview each other on topics at the start of each circle. It truly helped me learn more about my classmates.
3. Reading with others to share our opinions and thoughts about the book
4. i enjoyed the part where we did our parts as, passage finder, illustrater etc.
5. The people in my group were friendly and I felt comfortable around most of them.
6. I liked my reading group after all, even though we often talked about other things than the topic, it was fun and I really had a good time. Being with a group that you feel safe in is in my opinion an important factor towards a good flow in the discussions and developing yourself in the English language.
7. Det var gøyere, enn en vanlig muntlig engelsk time
8. In my group, we all respected eachothers opinions and listened to one another. There was no negetivity in the air and everybody had a great time
9. it made me finish a whole english novel for one of the first times.
10. taking our time, didn't feel pressure about the time
11. That it was a group project and you had different angles and ideas on different situations.
12. what i liked the most, was that i could discuss my thoughts and views around the things that happened
13. Jeg likte boka
14. å fullføre ei bok
15. jeg likte å lese å drikke kakao.
16. The book, I enjoyed it alot.
17. What I enjoyed the most was the relaxed theorizing, opinion sharing, and just overall quality time spent at the library. It is such a nice change of pace from a normal school

week, to just being able to sit around a table with your classmates and talk about a book you're all reading. And with the addition of the warmup activity I also got to know my classmates better, it was win-win all around.

18. jeg likte at du ikke trengte å tenke på karakterer og vurderinger også det med at vi snakket om handlingen av boken. vi ga nye ideer til hverandre.

| 11. What was it about the Lit Circle project that PREVENTED YOU FROM ENJOYING the reading experience? You can click on more than one alternative. | | |
|--|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Free choice of novel | 0 | 0 |
| The novel itself | 6 | 28.6 |
| Reading as a group | 3 | 14.3 |
| The student-led discussions | 0 | 0 |
| The group atmosphere | 1 | 4.8 |
| The roles | 16 | 76.2 |
| The book sharing event | 5 | 23.8 |
| The library setting | 1 | 4.8 |
| No use of digital devices in the library | 3 | 14.3 |
| No grades | 2 | 9.5 |

Question 12: Was there ANYTHING ELSE about the Lit Circle project that prevented you from enjoying the reading experience?

1. I wouldn't say I absolutely DISLIKED all of the above, I just think it would be even more chill without the sharing-event. But, as I said, I have nothing completely against it either.
2. The fact that it is easy to forget that other people are involved in the discussion as well. This can leave people feeling unheard or ignored.
3. Sometimes I felt like the roles prevented us from having good and real conversations.
4. I enjoyed it, but not so fun
5. Some of the roles were tricky and made it a little bit harder to understand the task.
6. The lack of discipline in the group made not everyone take their tasks seriously. Also, it messed up the flow of the discussion when one member not had finished his or her role or even read their part.
7. No.
8. it was a big novel, and it was kind of hard to read so many pages till next time.
9. the expectations to finish your task and role to the next meeting, and not being able to.
10. the warm up exercises
11. no
12. No.
13. Det var ikke mye jeg ikke likte og jeg kommer ikke på flere.
14. No

Question 13: What have you ENJOYED THE LEAST about participating in the Lit Circle project, and why?

1. Hmm... I guess the fact that it was kind of stressing having to do our tasks in addition to reading about 60 pages each week ++ other other homework. The roles did probably help keeping the conversation going in the start, but we all have something to add up to the theme, even without them.
2. Deadlines.
3. the reading was not so fun and it took a long time to read the book
4. Maybe when there was only one person which was supposed to be "leading" the group. It should have always been everyone.
5. I dont know
6. Especially when you know you have to read, then it takes away the cozy experience of reading. I would rather read as much as I want, and not worry about not being done by the next lit circle
7. nothing, i really enjoyed it.
8. some of the people are reallt loud
9. The novel was not quite my favourit.
10. what i enjoyed the least was the warm up exercise and the roles
11. Jeg var ikke veldig flink til å lese utover uka, så jeg måtte ta nesten alle sidene de to siste dagene. Dette er selvsagt min skyld og skal forbedres til neste gang.
12. Jeg likte ikke at rollene.
13. The book sharing event. Probably because I didn'd feel very comfortable in my group.
14. What I enjoyed least was the roles, and this is purely because I found they constrained the discussion and prevented me from getting completely lost in the story while I read. The roles, and the notion that there were things I was expected to pay attention to, just pulled me out of the magic that is reading. A lot of the escapism of the book got lost because of the little nagging voice that kept saying "pay attention, you need to be prepared to do your role". The only roles I really liked were the illustrator and the summarizer, though I think the latter should have been a collaborative effort by everyone in the group.
15. jeg valgt rollene som til slutten ikke gjorde så mye. det var egentlig bra å ha rollene om man ikke viste hva man skulle si.

| 14. Did participating in a Lit Circle make you more or less comfortable with participating in group discussions about literature? | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Much more | Some more | No change | Less | Much less |
| Number | 4 | 9 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 21.1 | 47.4 | 31.6 | 0 | 0 |

| 15. Did participating in a Lit Circle give you more or less desire to read for pleasure in your spare time? | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Much more | Some more | No change | Less | Much less |
| Number | 4 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 21.4 | 26.3 | 52.5 | 0 | 0 |

Overall experience with the Lit Circle project

Question 16: Did participating in the Lit Circle project in any way change your attitude towards reading literature? Please describe the change.

1. Not really. I got reminded a little that books are great, and I could read some more in my sparetime I suppose. But I also got reminded of my preferred genre.
2. It taught me that there are always things in-between the lines and that the more you seek, the more you'll find. It showed me that literature isn't always direct.
3. I already love reading, but I really enjoyed sharing my opinions and hearing others talk about the book.
4. after reading a book for the first time i feel the urge to read huckleberry finn
5. I do not think participating changed my point of view towards books. When I have to read a book it is not as if it was difficult for me to read it, it's just that I don't have a need for reading books.
6. I want to read more English in my spare time.
7. I have always liked to read, but not so much in English. The reading in class made me realise that reading also in English is fun and interesting as the language and way of expressing oneself is quite different.
8. no
9. i never liked to read, and i was not a fan of doing lit circles. But it was fun and i enjoyed it. I probably haven't found the right book.
10. it did not change my attitude a lot, when the fact is that i actually enjoy reading, but it gave me a bigger interest in reading english novels and not just norwegian ones.
11. i didn't like to read before, now i don't mind but i will still not read books in my spare time because i get kinda tired of reading after a while
12. I used to read a lot when I was younger, and this made me remember why. Although I don't think it'll cause me to start reading books much more, I do believe it has made me more open to the concept of doing so again.
13. To be honest, it was fun, but it did not change my feeling towards reading.
14. yes, cuz i have never read a whole english book before
15. Jeg tror ikke jeg kommer til å lese noe mer på fritiden, selv om jeg likte boka.
16. ja ej ser no at ej er mulig til å lese ferdig en bok og like det. men da trenger ej å finne den riktige først
17. Yes, it did. I found myself relating to the book for the first time.
18. yes, i found out that if you find a good book that suits you, then the experience will be exiting.
19. It didn't really change my attitude towards reading all that much, considering I already loved reading, but it did change a little bit. And what it changed was how I viewed reading as a way to connect with people, participating the lit circles gave me a new view on reading as a bridge between people. It showed that reading can be a social activity, it doesn't have to be something you do alone in your room when you need to be away from everyone and everything. It showed me just how social reading can be.

Question 17: What is the most important thing you would like to say about your participation in the Lit Circle project?

1. Participation is important in a group. Everybody has to do their part for a good conversation for example. So, all in all, it went fine with my part since I tried to cover mine.
2. I would like to do this more often, and I also loved the fact that we could read about a boy with autism. It opens us up to seeing from different people's perspectives and learning more about why people are like they are. Basically, accepting differences.
3. My thoughts and meanings about the book because everyone interprets the book differently and sharing what you interpreted can change someone else's thoughts
4. that if you dont participate in the group chat, the experience will be half the fun then normally
5. I did enjoy the book and I liked my group, which were the two most important factors for making the experience enjoyable.
6. It was a great and fun time in the lit circle.
7. I would like to be placed in a group where I can feel confident and safe. That would make me, and hopefully, the others in my group, participate more and bring a good flow into the conversation.
8. My drawing from one of the roles
9. i liked to discuss the book with others who read the same book, and get to hear their opinions
10. i would say that the most important thing about my participation is that i discovered an interest for english novels, and that i had a much bigger understanding than i thought.
11. nothing
12. Can't think of anything.
13. Just being a part of the group and sharing your thoughts.
14. Jeg ble mer komfortabel med å snakke engelsk siden vi var den samme gruppen alle fire gangene.
15. at eg likte å lese, gleda meg til onsdagsmorgenene
16. Alle har rett til å snakke.
17. Nothing, really.
18. it was a enjoyable experience and i would like to do it again.
19. I think the most important part of my participation in the Literature Circle project was getting to know the people in my group, but also just how to talk about a book in general. It was a great learning experience because previously the only way I've been able to talk to people about books is telling someone about a book I've read, but which they have only heard of.

Thank you very much for answering the questions! I greatly appreciate it.

Anne Rogne Midtbø

Østfold University College

Focus group interview

Date: December 6, 2021

Participants: Students A-H

Interviewer: Anne Rogne Midtbø

Warm-up question – Lit Circle experiences and discoveries

Interviewer: Can you tell us a little about how you have experienced participating in the Lit Circle project this autumn? And then I'm thinking about: Is there anything you've discovered about yourselves when it comes to reading or being in Lit Circle, was there anything that surprised you? Would you like to share some experiences? How have you experienced this?

Student E: When I was a kid, I've always liked reading, but when I got older, I've kind of stopped it. I haven't had time for it, but since we've had it as a kind of homework, you have to set aside time to prioritize it and do it at home yourself, so then you have to read, so you'll find time to read, even if you may not have time for it.

Student F: Yes, how have you experienced setting aside time?

Student E: Fun!

Interviewer: Yes, yes, anyone else who want to share some experiences?

Student G: There can certainly be quite a bit of stress, because you have a lot to do at home. Based on what your routines are and so, so it might be that the day before, you kind of have to read 60 pages to get to..., so it gets a little stressful when you're actually going to relax to read the book and stuff. Yes, but I also feel that you get very close to the people you read with, because then you can sort of read together and react to what's written together.

Interviewer: Yes, interesting.

Student F: I very much agree with what she said about the fact that you get close to those you are reading with because it is one thing to read alone, but when you have someone to talk to the book about and see other points of view, you often get a more complete picture of the book. In addition to that you can have someone to talk to about theories and such that just makes the pleasure a little greater.

Student G: And then you also get a lot of different points of view and things you might not have seen in the book, so it might be more interesting to hear what they think and what they have picked up and so on.

Interviewer: Others who want to share some experiences from the Lit Circle project? What's it been like to be a part of it? Was there something you discover about yourselves? Or is there something that you were surprised by in terms of how you thought it would be?

Student A: Yes, I found that I had a much greater interest in reading books than I thought. Because I've enjoyed reading quite a bit, but it's kind of been Norwegian books. But then I got to have a go at an English book, then I found that it was quite interesting too.

Student B: I have never liked to read and may have read three books in my life, but I noticed that I read quite quickly when it comes to English books compared to Norwegian ones. So I found it very easy to read an English book and discuss it with others.

Interviewer: Was that something that surprised you?

Student B: Yes!

Interviewer: Anyone else who wants to share experiences? Only as a small warm-up. We're going into the different things eventually, but overall? We can take that a little bit in due course. What we're going to do now, it's that we're going to spend ten minutes, and then we're not going to use audio recordings, but you're going to divide into to groups. And then I think we'll do it's as simple as saying that you four at the end of the table you're going to be a group, and then you're a group sitting here, and then you're going to get two questions that you're going to discuss. One is: What was it about the Lit Circle project that contributed to reading pleasure and engagement, what were the most important factors? And why was this important? That's what we're most interested in finding out. What, what was the most important factor and the second question, what was it about the Lit Circle project that prevents reading pleasure and engagement? And what was the most important thing there? Make sure everyone contributes. As I said this should not be used as part of the interview these group discussions, but I want you to choose a person who reports back what you have come up with and you do not have to agree, different experiences and views that is very interesting and it can be useful to write down some points that you can bring back to the joint discussion afterwards. And then we're going to try to explore these different points together. Does that sound all right? Yes? Do you have any questions about this? No?

Group discussion

- Group 1: Students A-B-D-E
- Group 2: Students C- F-G -H

Main part - Plenary

Question 1 – Factors that promote reading enjoyment and engagement

Interviewer: Yes, then we are going back to the plenary part here we will discuss the first question: What was it about the Lit Circle project that contributed to reading pleasure and engagement, and what were the most important factors? And why was this important, and then I'm thinking that it is important that we talk one by one, so it becomes clear and, but I would like to hear from you first now. Is it you K2 who's going to report a little from your group?

Group 1

Student B - reporter: We thought that hearing different points of view and opinions about the same book, about the same situations that you have read and like, that others come up with what they have thought and with different theories and maybe that are slightly different from yours. And then, of course, it was a very good atmosphere that made us feel comfortable talking about everything. Everyone respected each other, and so there was no one judging or anything, so it was a very nice atmosphere, we think. And so those who have chosen the same book they have the same interest, it was sort of a very good factor that contributed to the fact that it was very easy to talk about the book, because that then in a way, you have this flow in the conversation. And then you learn to discuss with respect and accept the opinions of others, which was also a very good part of the circle. And there was no assessment. It contributed to the fact that perhaps there was not so much pressure, and that it really felt good to be able to read and discuss with others. And the thing about the roles, the fact that there were different roles every time, then it was very interesting to find out how others ... how will I put it... how others managed this role, that you might have had before. And that's kind of what gave variation in the conversation because then we could sort of talk about different topics. And then we thought that it var very OK with warm-up questions before we start with the whole Lit Circle, because then of course it is getting to know each other better that made us comfortable

Interviewer: Thank you very much. I'm thinking we will go into the different things in due course. And then from your group, ML. Would you like to briefly summarize? What did you find in terms of reading pleasure and engagement? What contributed to that?

Group 2

Student C - reporter: What contributed to it was that there were small groups with a good atmosphere where one really could discuss the book and hear everybody's opinions. And about the groups, it worked so that, no, what worked ... it was okay to have the roles at the beginning, because then everyone had to contribute and be kind of warmed up to talk. And since there were small groups with a good atmosphere, there were a lot of different people in the groups, who made some talk maybe more. But it could also put pressure on those who ... who didn't talk quite so much to talk them too. Participating in choosing the book was quite okay because then people get something they might be a little interested in, and then maybe they got a little more interested in reading the book. And we also thought it was really okay that it was assessment free because there wasn't that much pressure like to read a book and have a presentation and stuff like that, and it was kind of just really fun. And then we think it was very okay with those warm-up questions as well, because then you kind of get a little bit warmed up before you were going to discuss the book.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you, many interesting points you make. I hear you're talking a lot about the same, too. If we.... I hear you mention this with the atmosphere of the group, the social part. Can you say something about the significance of, that is elaborate a little more about the significance of it, that there is a good atmosphere in the group? How did you do that?

Student E: How did we do it?

Interviewer: Yes.

Student E: Yes, we made these group rules, so we had to sort of agree on different rules we should have within the group, such as respecting other people's opinions and waiting for your turn, being quiet and smiling.

Student C: I also feel that the groups were very mixed, that there were people that maybe you weren't normally with that much, even though we're in the same class, and that could make you kind of get to know people you didn't know very well from before.

Student G: And you quickly notice if there's someone who's very quiet and stuff like that, so you kind of take the initiative to ask them what they think and things like that, so that they can also be involved in the group, so then you kind of learn to include people, when you might not have realised before that they might have felt a little like an outsider.

Interviewer: Yes.

Student A: Yes. Yes, about the small groups, that we were like 4-5 persons that helped to somehow really see each individual, being able to help them to be included in the conversation, so it was very okay with small groups here.

Interviewer: Yes. Right.

Student H: I think the roles helped a lot. Because it was guaranteed that everyone had something to say, so if someone didn't talk, or, there were always questions about what you did with your role. How many words you found or how many connections you found. So it was always guaranteed that someone had something to say, and it really helped the conversation. Because then you could always just ask.

Interviewer: We need to discuss the roles more as well, but there you have an interesting point that we can discuss.

Student F: The book sharing thing that we had in the end, the presentation, was also really nice because we had gotten to know the people in the group, but when you could kind of have a presentation where no one really thought it was so serious and just had fun, then you kind of got connected a little more to the whole class, you somehow got to do something fun and just kind of make the rest of the class laugh a little bit.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, do you think that it helped the social bit in all of this?

Student F: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: Yes, something else that you mentioned here. About there being different opinions and thoughts. What was the significance of that? Yes?

Student G: When you sort of read a book on your own, then you have no one to share your point of view with, and when you talk to someone else, who might have read the book, then they can give their point of view, and then maybe you can get some insight into something you may not have thought much about. And then it can be almost the case that you experience things from other perspectives as well, that it kind of, and then you can also

discuss theories about what is going to happen, and it is also very fun because then you kind of feel like you belong in a kind of little ...

Interviewer: Yes, yes, what do you mean there? Can you finish that sentence?

Student G: That you kind of feel like you belong in some kind of little bubble where you talk about a special thing and then you feel very much at home, because then you have something in common.

Interviewer: Does anyone else have any thoughts on this, or can comment a little further?

Student F: Yes, that's it, and especially sharing theories on something like that. Even though it's a book and the key is right in front of you, it's how you experience it, it may be that you have an understanding of it, whereas the person on the other side of the table might experience it differently and think that this will happen instead. And then the possibility of discussing together and then finding out who is right in the end also kind of gives you some kind of learning in how to discuss topics with others, sort of, without it being a very serious topic and then you are more prepared to discuss something more serious another time.

Interviewer: Yes, right.

Student C: You kind of learn that people can interpret the same book or text differently. As it was in our group, there were a lot of different points of view and different interpretations of the same chapter and the same sentence, and it was very interesting to see that there were so many different opinions.

Interviewer: Yes. There are several people who mention assessment. What role do you think it played that we had no grades in this project? Did it, did they matter for reading enjoyment and your engagement?

Student E: Yes, I think so, because the aim was the joy of reading and to somehow get proper, like being able to kind of enjoy the book and like to read, it's important that you don't feel any pressure or stress about having to do it, because that there are requirements, that you have to do it, often ruin for being happy and doing it out of free will.

Student A: Yes, we young people also have a lot of daily pressure, in terms of grades and then friends and family. And of course, had we learned that we are getting a grade towards the end of this project, it might have really affected how, how engaged we were in reading this book and how engaged we were in discussing. But since we didn't get a grade on it, I think it helped us be more open and feel comfortable and really had fun and kind of enjoyed ourselves.

Interviewer: Kristine, did you have a comment? No? Yes, another factor in the survey was the student-led discussion. I wonder, was it significant that it was you the students who created the questions and led the discussion, perhaps compared to a more traditional method where it is the teacher who creates questions and leads? Do you have any thoughts on that? Yes?

Student F: I feel like it is a little more open-ended when it's the students who creates the questions and the students who control it, and we don't have an assessment of it because if the teacher is standing there asking questions, then you're going to get the feeling that this is going to affect my grade or is going to affect how the teacher sees me. But if it's just other

students, that's the way it is, then you can be open. You can be that with the teacher also, but it's more open when you're with others who aren't sitting there giving you a grade.

Student A: Maybe it's a bit about us students getting a bit of a sense of mastery and a sense of responsibility that we actually manage this ourselves. And the feeling that you have to follow up a little more. Yes.

Student B: Yes, we can talk about questions that we ourselves find interesting, than that a teacher comes up with questions that maybe we don't think it's so much fun to talk about, then when we lead, we talk about what we think is fun, and what we think it's fun to discuss, does not mean that the teacher finds it absolutely useful to somehow talk about, so I think it was very good and that students could control this.

Student G: I kind of thought if the teacher had asked the question, then it would have been a little more synthetic, because then it might not be the students themselves who are somehow wondering about it, it's the teacher. And then we kind of don't get the feeling that we're actually giving someone an answer, because we just gave the teacher an answer. Whereas if you're going to ask the question to friends, you feel like you might give them the answer they want, and then you feel connected in a way, that you're helping someone, that you're more engaged.

Interviewer: What do you mean by synthetic, is that what you said?

Student G: Yes, it kind of feels like it's not real, like it's not a question one is actually passionate about knowing, because we haven't asked it ourselves.

Student H: I feel when teachers make a list of questions, a lot of people start to think that: Oh, now I have to get through this as quickly as possible. And then it's over a little bit. Often when you're done with the questions early, it just goes completely quiet. And it just gets a lot more organic when we're allowed to just talk about what we actually find interesting and we do it not just to do it, but to actually figure out what we think about this. What... what it means to us. Yes.

Interviewer: The goal that we reminded ourselves of every time was having interesting, lively and friendly discussions. Do you think we succeeded? Yes. yes, a lot of people who nod. Yes, did you have a comment?

Student E: Yes, only to the question you asked. When the teacher asks questions, it is often limited what to answer, and then you always kind of stop the discussions to that question. When we invent it ourselves, we can always kind of ask new questions, and then also contribute to somehow more fluid transitions in the discussion. So it helps to keep the conversation flowing.

Interviewer: Yes. Interesting questions and ... and points that you are discussing here. Someone who wants to add something to this section which is about the factors that contribute to reading enjoyment and engagement. Was there anything else that we didn't include in that part? Yes?

Student E: That you made it so nice in the library. It made it a lot more fun to be there, like hot chocolate and... (everyone laughs)

Student C: To be in the library, it is a different environment in a way, than it is in the classroom.

Student A: Yes, it's true.

Student G: There's also a lot of learning in it, like you can create new questions and sort of gain experience from a lot of different roles and see what suits you best. I think it's really nice, because then you kind of get to figure out what's best for yourself and things like that.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes, now I'm taking a little break while I look at what you've answered. I see that someone mentioned that choosing books is important, can anyone say anything about it? How about the fact that it is not the teacher who chooses a book that everyone should read. What significance does it have, the freedom of choice?

Student F: You have the opportunity to choose something you are interested in reading yourself. And although we couldn't choose from all the books in the library, we could choose from five quite different books in both writing style and content, and then you can choose a book that you are interested in. And if you are interested in the content, then you are automatically more happy to talk about it.

Student C: Yes, I feel like the other classes, they didn't get to choose a book, and then they seem much more negative about reading, because everyone had to read the same book. Then they were very like that, oh, we're going to read this book. I don't really want to, I'm not really interested. While our class was much more positive because we were allowed to choose, and in a way make a choice ourselves. And I feel that once you're allowed to make a choice yourself, you kind of get a lot happier and much more positive about what's happening.

Interviewer: Yes.

Student H: I think that also in made it much easier for those who may not be so good at understanding English that they got to choose the book they actually understood and the book in which they actually managed to understand the language, instead of getting a book where they might not understand anything, and they couldn't keep up. And I'm sure it helped a lot to actually get into the discussion. If you read something you knew you could get and understand.

Student G: And if you somehow don't get to choose a book, then it's very easy not to have an interest in it. There are a lot of people who lose interest, and when you lose interest, then you also lose a lot of motivation, because you, like, you don't take it too much seriously, and you don't take it into your heart in a way.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes. More things we're going to add, someone who wants to say something more at this point?

Question 2 – Factors that prevent reading enjoyment and engagement

Interviewer: Then I think we'll move on to the next one, and that was: What is it about, what was it about the Lit Circle project that contributed to reading enjoyment and engagement? And what were the most important factors? And why was this important? We're going to get a little brief summary from both groups, and then we can discuss it afterwards. You want to start student A? No, it was student B (laughter).

Group 1

Student B (reporter): But what we discussed was that everyone reads at different paces. The fact that we had like a deadline, how many pages we were going to read for every Wednesday. It was kind of like ... yes, it wasn't that nice. Because yes, as I said, everyone reads at different paces and not so many people have free time or so much free time. Many surely have a lot to do and it is not everyone who has the time to sit at home and read 60 pages each... every day. And after you've been away or sick, it's very hard to get back in, because then already everyone on your group has been through 100 pages, whereas you're very far behind, and then you kind of have to try to get back in or read all these pages, or the others in the group have to tell you what has happened, and then there will be some spoilers here and there.

Interviewer: How many pages were there to read per week, approximately?

3 students: 60 – 70 – 50

Interviewer: It depends on the book?

Several students: Yes

Student B: Yes, and then there were some complicated roles like connector and passage finder. It was a little hard to find it when you first started with this Lit Circle, because then we had no idea what it was. It was a bit bad, that it wasn't, there were no example questions for these roles that could help us sort of get started on what to look for in the book. And we could have liked to have decided genre ourselves, yes, because we felt that many of the books were quite similar and many of us like very different genres that we would like to see in these five books, and so...

Interviewer: Can I stop you there for a minute? Are you thinking, for example, that one can take a small survey in advance and find out interests and genres and things like that?

Several students: Yes

Student B: And that if we had been assessed, it would surely have prevented the enjoyment of reading for quite a few. We've discussed that as well, and that there was little time set aside for the presentation, so we felt, so we didn't quite get to prepare properly, but otherwise it was okay.

Interviewer: Yes. Would you like to take a brief summary from your group? (Turning to group 2).

Group 2

Student C (reporter): Yes, okay, we thought the roles were okay at first, but then eventually it just got really tiring, and then you couldn't really enjoy the book and you felt in a way you had a task and then you focused more on that task than on enjoying the book. And we should also have a way that one could recommend books oneself so that there are slightly more different books, as was said. And what was stupid, the fact that some people, they did not do tasks that they have been assigned, and then it became a little difficult to carry out their roles. And roles can also be a stress factor for many people, that in a way they have a role to play, which maybe makes them focus on other things, and if you have roles you become less open minded, if you have a role. And then there were a little bit few books, so maybe a little more different books on very different topics, because it's very much about being on the outside and school and stuff like that, and it can get a little bit like ... Yes, we could have had a little more different like, maybe a little fantasy or something, action, yes.

Interviewer: Yes. Interesting.

At this point, students ask for a little break for toilet visits.

Interviewer: Then we're back and we're at this: What can hinder reading enjoyment? You have mentioned that you could have recommended books yourselves, take a test of interest perhaps. And concerning the roles, and I think you have a lot of different points of view on the roles, but can you say a little bit about how the perception of the roles developed? I mean, how...? They're thought of as a support, aren't they? And? But how did the roles evolve over time?

Student E: At first it was very like ... we were very dependent on everyone doing what they were supposed to do in order for actually being able to have the conversations, so then everyone had to do their part and everyone had to contribute what they had been thinking about. But as the weeks went by, we didn't need them as much. So even if someone didn't do it or someone wasn't there, it didn't matter that much because we had done, or some of us had done, that role before. Or we knew what it was about because we had it before, so it was just inventing questions.

Student F: Yes, I quite agree with that too, that it was very positive at first. No, gradually, when people started forgetting what role they had, or when you didn't give us time to assign the roles, we forgot about it and then we found that it worked just as well without them, and then it just was a little hassle to go back.

Interviewer: But you can say a little more about how it worked out just as well without them? Can you elaborate a little?

Student F: Well, we were, at least in our group, we were very lucky. We ended up with people talking more outside anyway. And then, after a couple of times it became a very natural discussion. Everyone was quite active and we were able to pull in those who weren't that active. It worked, we really got all that done without anyone needing to know.

Student G: I feel like gradually we kind of started to take responsibility, that we started dropping the roles, but we still took them into the discussion, so we kind of took those roles in the discussion that we felt were best suited to us, so we really took different roles into the discussion all the time, and we sort of discussed it with others, so we maybe discussed a point that was connection, and then we all discussed the connections that we found.

Student C: Now I have to think a little bit, yes, I think roles were fine the first, the first time and the second time maybe, because it kind of did so that we got things done, because at the beginning of the book it's really important to catch everything that's going on, in a way you can kind of get on and understand in the book going forward. But gradually, in a way, it just became a struggle. And my group was very good at talking about it and things like that, so eventually, in a way... I feel some parts of the roles were not as important as others. I felt that summarizer and illustrator was really important to kind of include, because then everyone remembers what happened, but passage finder and word finder, or whatever, they weren't equally important for you to understand, to have a discussion and stuff like that, but connector and summarizer were quite important.

Interviewer: Yes, what would you recommend that we do next time when we have Lit Circles with regard to roles?

Student E: Yes, I think that the groups should decide for themselves whether they want roles.

Interviewer: Yes, do you think that it might well work without?

Student E: Yes, I think some groups can do it.

Interviewer: Yes, mmm, why?

Student E: No, as with my group, it was like often everyone was sick and we forgot to give each other roles, so we just collaborated and found out all of it, what happened in the chapter.

Interviewer: Yes.

Student G: I think that it's better to just have a list of points that we have to discuss together that could be the roles, rather than each person having a role, so that we can sort of go over all these roles with each other.

Student E: I think some roles as connector and passage finder, all can contribute to them, for example, that instead of a person doing three things, everyone can do one. Then you get more contributions and everyone participates.

Interviewer: Yes. Okay, another thing you mentioned it was this thing about slackers, i.e. the ones who don't do what they're supposed to. Do that in any way hinder the joy of reading? Or the engagement in any way?

Student A: I really feel like I'm thinking this lowered the engagement a little in the whole the group. When there are some who feel that they have to do other people's tasks in order for the discussion to go around.

Interviewer: Yes, yes?

Student E: I think it's like the downside of not having grades, and it will also make people not do as much as if there had been grades.

Student C: I think maybe, if someone hadn't done their task, then I felt a little annoyed because these tasks weren't for us to do, it was for us to kind of have something to focus on when we read the book, so I was annoyed at those who didn't do it in my group. Because I felt it kind of ruined the group dynamic.

Student H: I think it depends on the group, because for us it wasn't exactly a big problem, since from the start we really were, really, we didn't care much about the roles, so if someone didn't do their role, then it wasn't a very big crisis. We had a lot of other things to talk about. And they also helped sometimes, maybe having to explain all this to a person who might not know this because then you have to think about how to explain this in a way that they understood. A person who had never read this, that part exactly, understood it and not only summed it up so that everyone else remembered it.

Student E: I don't think that, there were many, or not many, but there were some who didn't do their role, but also didn't read. And then it was the case that that person could not contribute to the conversation at all, and then we had to spend a lot of time trying to understand what had happened.

Interviewer: Yes. yes, guys, I'm thinking that now we're going to go to the end of the interview. We are starting to get a little tired, too. I'd like to just sum it up: The purpose of the discussion, was to investigate what kind of factors in this method affect the reading experience and help create reading enjoyment and engagement in the reading experience and what might inhibit the enjoyment and engagement. And you've pointed out different things in the discussion. So, I'd like to ask you, are there any other things that we haven't talked about now that you think might affect reading enjoyment or involvement in the project? Is there anything that should be mentioned or something that you would like to add? Anything?

Student C: Maybe that ... I liked the idea that we could recommend books because some of us read a lot of books and then maybe that person can come up with some books that she or he thinks others might be interested in. That maybe are a little more appropriate for some people, because I think that can really help, because there are a lot of people in our class who don't read books. But there are also a lot of people who like to read books, and then those who like to read books can influence them to maybe start liking it?

Interviewer: Yes, mmm. Yes.

Student E: It ... K2 mentioned it earlier... it could create stress if you had a deadline to read something. But I really think it's so important that we have a deadline, because if not then it's... you must like have one ... a time and plan on how to read otherwise you do not progress and it's not possible to have a discussion at all.

Interviewer: Anything else you would like to add that might be interesting to include in terms of later use of Lit Circles? Yes?

Student F: That it might have been... that if there should still be two, for example, rounds of Lit Circles, that you might ask if in the first round of the Lit Circle, you have the start of a series, then maybe that group should get the possibility to continue with the number two next time to somehow continue together, when you've somehow experienced the first one together.

Student C: What I was talking about earlier, that if it's kind of like that people who have read books can recommend books, maybe they could also be allowed to have a short presentation

or summary of the book so that people can kind of get a little interested, because if there is a person who is interested in a book and likes to read that book and thinks it's awesome, then they may be allowed to have the chance to make others like it, just by summing up the book.

Interviewer: Yes, right.

Student F: To build on what she said, because if someone who doesn't care stands there with a monotonous voice and is like: "This book is about..." Then you don't want to read it, but then if someone like is really passionate about this, and it's kind of close to their heart when they talk about it, it automatically sounds a lot more interesting because that person is so "into it" sort of.

Interviewer: Yes, mmm, yes, exciting. Yes, I'd like to say thank you for the interview. Thank you for your dedication and your commitment, and that you wanted to share your experiences. It has great value for my research and for the students who come after you. You may be excused.