

ESL360

Weekly Book Club Roles & Responsibilities

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60-Second Summarizer

A 60-Second Summarizer is someone who helps the group remember and understand the main events in the story by retelling what happened.

Role Description:

- Give a short overview of the reading (in 60 seconds)
- Include the main events in order
- Include what problem or conflict occurred in the reading

Skills you'll practice: summarizing, sequencing, identifying plot, time awareness

Why this helps you learn English: When you retell a story in your own words, you practice organizing your ideas and speaking fluently. Summarizing requires you to understand what you read and then produce language—both are essential for learning a language. Retelling stories in order helps you learn how to organize information in English. The time limit builds fluency and helps you speak more automatically without planning every word.

Assignment Checklist:

- Did I say which chapters I'm summarizing?
- Did I focus on the BIG events?
- Did I explain the problem or conflict?
- Did I use transition words to show order: *First, Then, Next, After that, etc.*?
- Did I mention what changed from the beginning of the reading to the end?
- Did I use the literary present tense?
- Can I read my summary in approximately 60 seconds?

How to be a 60-Second Summarizer

- 1. Introduction (5-10 seconds):** Tell the part of the book are you summarizing and introduce the main character(s) or situation.

What to include:

- Which chapters you read
- Who the main character(s) are in this section
- Where and when the story is happening (if important)

Example: "In chapters 1-3, we meet Salva, an eleven-year-old boy in southern Sudan in 1985. He's at school when the war comes to his village."

- 2. Main Events & Conflicts (35-40 seconds):** Explain what happened—the most important events only. Use transition words to show order: First, Then, Next, After that, Finally, etc.

What to include:

- The main things that happened.
- Problems the characters are facing.
- Important actions the characters took
- Key moments that moved the story forward

Example: "His teacher tells all the students to run into the bush and not go home because it's dangerous. Salva runs with other people but gets separated and doesn't know where his family is. Scared and alone, he must survive on his own in a dangerous situation. He joins a group of refugees who are walking away from the fighting. An older woman lets him walk with her group, even though she doesn't really want him there."

- 3. Change/Conclusion (5-10 seconds):** Compare how the situation is different at the end of this section.

What to include:

- What's different now?
- What changed for the character(s)?
- Where does this leave the story?

Example: "Everything has changed for him. He went from student to refugee in one day."

Deep Thinker

A Deep Thinker is someone who sparks meaningful discussion by creating thoughtful "why" or "how" questions that encourage the group to think critically and explore different perspectives.

Role Description:

Prepare 2-3 "why" or "how" discussion questions about the assigned reading that don't have one right answer

Skills you'll practice: question formation, critical thinking, discussion leadership, higher-order thinking

Why this helps you learn English: Creating good questions requires you to think deeply about what you read and engage actively with the text. "Why" and "how" questions lead to richer conversations where you practice extended speaking in English—this is important for developing academic language. Forming questions also gives you practice with complex grammar structures in English, including question words, helping verbs, and embedded clauses, which are all essential for fluent communication.

- Assignment Checklist:**
- Did I write 2-3 "why" or "how" questions that don't have one right answer?
 - Do my questions encourage discussion and different interpretations?
 - Do my questions demonstrate deep thinking and close reading of the text?

How to be a Deep Thinker

Step 1: Understand What Makes a Good Discussion Question.

Good questions:

- ✓ Have multiple possible answers
- ✓ Ask "why" or "how" (not just "what" or "when")
- ✓ Make people think deeply
- ✓ Lead to conversations where people might disagree

Weak questions:

- ✗ Have only one right answer
- ✗ Can be answered with "yes/no"
- ✗ Can be answered by finding one sentence in the book

Step 2: Choose a Topic from the Reading. Think about the reading and identify something interesting, important, or confusing.

Good topics for questions include:

Character decisions or actions:

- What might a character be feeling?

Themes or big ideas:

- What does this tell us about people or society?

Predictions:

- What might happen next?

Interpretations:

- Why did the author include this detail?

Moral or ethical questions:

- What would you do in this situation?

Step 3: Turn Your Topic into a Question. Use question words that lead to deeper thinking. Make sure there's no single right answer.

Examples:

✗ WEAK: "What did Salva's teacher tell students to do?" (One factual answer)

✓ GOOD: "Why do you think Salva's teacher told students to run instead of protecting them?"
(Multiple answers possible: safer scattered, avoid being targets, teacher was scared)

Vocabulary Builder

A vocabulary builder is someone who teaches new words by showing how they're used in context and demonstrating their meaning through original sentences.

Role Description:

- Select 3-5 words you didn't know before. Choose words that are important to the story's context and that you could use in your own life.
- For each word:
 1. Write the sentence from the book where you found it. Include the page #
 2. Look up the word in the dictionary.
 3. In your own words, write the definition and part of speech according to how the word is used in the text.
 4. Find or draw a picture that represents the word
 5. Write a new sentence using the word (about your own life, a current event, etc., but NOT about the book.)
 6. Bonus: Use the word in a real English conversation. Describe your experience to the group.

Skills you'll practice: vocabulary acquisition, understanding words deeply, sentence construction, using new words

Why this helps you learn English: You learn words best when you see them in real sentences from books, explain them in your own words to understand them deeply, and then create your own sentences to practice using them. The more actively you work with a word—finding it, explaining it, using it, sharing it—the better you'll remember it. This is why you'll encounter each word multiple times in different ways.

- Assignment Checklist:**
- Did I select 3-5 words that could be used in other conversations?
 - Did I write the original sentence from the book?
 - Did I provide the part of speech and explain the meaning in my own words?
 - Did I write an example sentence from my own life [not from the book]
 - Did I include a picture representing each word?

How to be a Vocabulary Builder

Step 1: Choose 3-5 words from the reading assignment that is unfamiliar to you.

Tips for Choosing Words:

- ✓ Pick words you might use in other conversations (not just rare words)
- ✓ Choose words that are important to understanding the story
- ✓ Look for words that describe feelings, actions, or situations

Example: trek

Step 2: Copy the complete sentence from the book, including the page number. This shows the word in context.

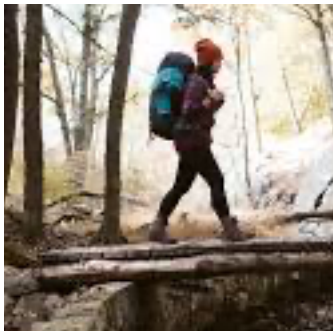
Example: "The long trek through the bush was exhausting."(page 41)

Step 3: Look up the word in the dictionary. Choose the definition and part of speech that matches the how the word is used in the book.

Step 4: Explain what it means in your own words. Don't copy a dictionary definition. Explain the meaning as if you're teaching it to a friend. Be sure to include the part of speech.

Example: Trek (noun). A trek is a long, difficult journey, usually on foot. It's not just a regular walk—it's hard and tiring and takes a long time.

Step 5: Find or draw a picture that represents the word.



Step 6: Write your own sentence. Create a NEW sentence. Write about YOUR life (real or imagined), not the book.

Example: My family went on a trek through the mountains, and we walked for three days.

Bonus Challenge: Use one of your vocabulary words in conversation or writing this week.

Tell the group how you used it. Example: "I used the word 'anxious' when I told my friend, 'I'm anxious about the job interview tomorrow.'"

Sound Spotter

A sound spotter is someone who helps the group improve pronunciation by identifying challenging words and modeling how to say them correctly.

Role Description:

- Select 3-5 words that are difficult to pronounce. Choose words that are important to the story's context and that you could use in your own life.
- For each word:
 1. Write the sentence from the book where you found it. Include the page #.
 2. Write its IPA (International Pronunciation Alphabet) spelling
 3. Write why it is difficult for you to pronounce it
 4. Write a new sentence using the word (about your own life, not the book)
 5. Bonus: Practice one or more of the words in real-life English conversations during the week.

Skills you'll practice: pronunciation, confident speaking, understanding sound patterns

Why this helps you learn English: When you pay attention to difficult pronunciation patterns, you become more aware of English sounds and speak more clearly. Noticing what's challenging is an important part of learning. Practicing words in full sentences (not just by themselves) helps you develop natural rhythm and intonation in English, which makes you sound more fluent.

Assignment Checklist:

- Did I select 3-5 words that are difficult to pronounce?
- Did I write the original sentence from the book?
- Did I write its IPA (International Pronunciation Alphabet) spelling?
- Did I explain why it is difficult for me to pronounce?
- Did I write a new sentence using the word (about my own life, not the book)?
- Did I practice one or more of the words in real-life English conversations during the week?

How to be a Sound Spotter

Step 1: Select 3-5 words that are difficult for you to pronounce.

Tips for Choosing Words:

- ✓ Choose words you'll actually use - Don't just pick the longest or weirdest words
- ✓ Focus on patterns - If "drought" is hard, other "-ought" words (thought, brought) might be too
- ✓ Consider your native language - What sounds or patterns don't exist in your language?
- ✓ Pick important words - Choose words that help you understand and discuss the story

Example: Drought

Step 2: Write the sentence from the book (include page #). Copy the complete sentence where you found the word. This shows how the word is used naturally.

Example: "The drought in Sudan meant there was no rain for many months." (page 12)

Step 3: Write its IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) spelling. Look up the word in an online dictionary that shows IPA pronunciation. Copy the IPA symbols exactly.

Example: drought → /draʊt/

Step 4: Explain why it is difficult for you to pronounce. Be specific. Consider:

- Silent letters
- Letter combinations that don't match the sound
- Sounds that don't exist in your native language
- Stress patterns or syllable breaks
- Similar-looking words that sound different

Example: This word is difficult because it has the letters "ough" but they sound like "owt" (not like "off" or "oo"). The "gh" is completely silent—you don't pronounce it at all. It's spelled very differently from how it sounds, and in my language, we don't have silent letter combinations like this.

Step 5: Write a new sentence using the word (about your own life, not the book). Practice using the word in your own context.

Example: My grandmother remembers a terrible drought when she was young, and the crops all died.

Step 6: BONUS - Practice in real-life conversations. Try to use one or more of your words in actual English conversations during the week.

Example: "I used the word 'drought' when I was discussing climate change with my classmate.

Character Analyzer

A character analyzer is someone who helps the group understand characters more deeply by identifying personality traits and supporting them with evidence from the text.

Role Description:

- Choose one character from this week's reading
- Describe his or her personality using one specific trait (use adjective words like: stubborn, lonely, proud, kind, judgmental, hopeful, etc.)
- Give evidence: What did they say, do, or think that shows this trait?

Skills you'll practice: characterization, using textual evidence, making inferences, descriptive vocabulary, analytical thinking

Why this helps you learn English: Understanding why characters act the way they do requires "reading between the lines"—this is a critical skill for understanding any English text. Using evidence from the text to support your ideas builds academic language skills and helps you move beyond just understanding what happened to understanding why it happened. Learning descriptive adjectives in context helps you remember them, and explaining your reasoning with evidence helps you practice complex sentences and cause-effect language needed for academic English.

Assignment Checklist:

- Did I choose one character from this week's reading?
- Did I choose a clear personality trait?
- Did I explain what the trait means in my own words?
- Did I give specific evidence from the text (not vague statements)?
- Did I explain HOW the evidence shows the trait?
- Would someone who hasn't read the book understand my analysis?

How to be a Character Analyzer

Step 1: Choose a Character. Pick any character who appears in this week's reading who did or said enough in the reading that you can find evidence about their personality.

Example: Salva, the older woman, the teacher, another refugee

Step 2: Choose ONE Personality Trait. Think about the character's personality. What word describes how they act, think, or feel?

Tip: Choose a trait that you can prove with evidence from the text.

Step 3: Explain What the Trait Means. In 2-3 sentences, define the trait in your own words. What does it mean when we say someone is [trait]?

Example:

Trait: Obedient

What it means: "Obedient means someone follows instructions and respects authority, even when it's difficult or scary. An obedient person listens to what they're told to do and does it, even if they don't want to."

Step 4: Find Evidence from the Text. This is the most important part. You need to prove your point with specific examples from the book.

What counts as evidence?

- ✓ Something the character said (dialogue)
- ✓ Something the character did (actions)
- ✓ Something the character thought (internal feelings the author tells us about)
- ✓ How the character reacted to a situation

Step 5: Write 3-5 sentences describing the evidence. Be specific. Don't just say "Salva was scared." Instead, describe the scene where we see his fear.

Example of GOOD evidence: "When Salva's teacher tells the students to run into the bush and not go home, Salva obeys even though he desperately wants to find his family. He trusts his teacher's judgment and follows the instructions, even though every part of him wants to run home to see if his family is safe."

Example of WEAK evidence: "Salva listened to his teacher." (Too vague - needs more detail!)

Step 6: Explain How the Evidence Shows the Trait. Don't assume others will automatically understand the connection. Explain HOW your evidence proves the personality trait.

Example: "This shows that Salva is obedient because he follows his teacher's instructions even in a terrifying situation when his instinct would be to run home. He respects authority and does what he's told, even though it's incredibly hard for him emotionally."

Word Artist

A word artist is someone who brings scenes to life for the group using sensory, descriptive language that helps everyone visualize the setting.

Role Description:

- Pick a scene from the reading and imagine what it looks like
- Help your group "see" and "feel" the setting using sensory, descriptive language
 1. Describe **where and when** the scene takes place.
 2. Use first-person singular pronouns to describe the scene. What does it look like? Feel like? Sound like? Smell like? How does it make you feel?

Skills you'll practice: setting analysis, descriptive language, sensory vocabulary, adjectives, understanding mood, cause-effect relationships

Why this helps you learn English: Creating mental pictures of what you read helps you understand the story better. This task builds your vocabulary by requiring you to use adjectives, location words (prepositions), and sensory language. Explaining how the setting affects the mood or characters helps you practice cause-and-effect language structures, which are important for academic English. Describing in detail also helps you practice elaboration—saying more about your ideas, which deepens both your understanding and your language production.

Assignment Checklist:

- Did I identify where and when the scene takes place?
- Did I describe what it looks like?
- Did I describe what it feels like (temperature, texture)?
- Did I describe what it sounds like?
- Did I describe what it smells like (if possible)?
- Did I explained how the setting makes me feel?
- Did I use my imagination?
- Did I use first-person singular pronouns?
- Did I used specific, descriptive adjectives and sensory language?

How to be a Word Artist

Step 1: Pick a scene from this week's reading.

Step 2: Close your eyes and let your mind wander. imagine you are in the scene.

Step 3: Use sensory, descriptive language to paint a picture for your group so they can "see" and "feel" what is in your mind. Write in first person singular.

What to Include:

Basic Information

- Where is this scene happening? (location)
- When is it happening? (time of day, season, year)
- Who is present in the scene?

Sensory Details. Use descriptive language to help your group experience the scene.

- What does it LOOK like? Colors, shapes, sizes; Light or darkness
- What does it FEEL like? Temperature; Textures (rough, smooth, soft, hard); Physical sensations (wind, sun, cramped space)
- What does it SOUND like? Music, voices, nature sounds, silence
- What does it SMELL like? Pleasant or unpleasant; Strong or faint; Food, smoke, dust
- What does it TASTE like? (if relevant). Does the air have a taste (salty, dusty)?

Mood. Describe how this setting makes you feel.

Tips for Success:

- ✓ Be creative
- ✓ Use specific adjectives - Don't just say "hot," say "scorching" or "sweltering"
- ✓ Use comparisons - "The sun felt like fire on their skin"
- ✓ Include small details - Specific details make scenes come alive
- ✓ Show, don't just tell - Instead of "it was scary," describe what makes it scary

Example:

Scene: Salva running from school into the bush (Chapters 1-2)

This scene happens in southern Sudan in 1985, in the middle of the day. Salva and the other students are running from their school into the bush—the wild, open land with scattered trees and tall grass. It's extremely hot and dry. The sun is blazing overhead with no shade, and the air feels thick and dusty. I can hear gunfire in the distance—sharp, cracking sounds that make everyone run faster. I can also hear people's footsteps pounding on the hard, dry ground and their heavy breathing as they run. The landscape looks brown and yellow—dried grass, dusty earth, and scattered acacia trees with thorny branches. Everything is covered in a layer of red-brown dust that gets kicked up as people run. The bush feels endless and empty, with no clear path and no shelter.

Connection Maker

A *Connection Makers* is someone who deepens the group's appreciation of the story by linking events, characters, or themes from the story to real life, culture, current events, or other texts.

Role Description:

A connection is when you find something in the story that reminds you of something else. It helps make the story more meaningful and memorable.

Types of connections:

- Text-to-Self: The story reminds you of your own experiences
- Text-to-World: The story reminds you of current events or real-world issues
- Text-to-Text: The story reminds you of another book, movie, or story

Make connections between the story and one or more of the following:

- Your personal life or native culture
- News/current events
- Other stories/books you know

Skills you'll practice: critical thinking, cultural discussion, making connections across texts, personal expression

Why this helps you learn English: When you connect a story to your own experiences and knowledge, you understand it better and remember it longer. Using what you already know helps you understand new texts in English. Sharing personal connections also gives you practice talking about meaningful topics in English—which is more effective for learning than practicing with topics that don't matter to you.

Assignment Checklist:

- Did I identify a specific moment, character, or theme from the story?
- Did I explain what it connects to (personal life, culture, news, or other text)?
- Did I give specific details about both the story and what I'm connecting it to?
- Did I explained WHY I made this connection?

How to be a Connection Maker

Step 1: Identify what in the story you're connecting to. Choose a specific moment, character, situation, theme, or feeling from the reading.

Examples:

- Salva being separated from his family
- The refugees walking long distances
- Feeling like an outsider
- Having to be brave in a scary situation
- War affecting children's education

Step 2: Explain what it connects to. Describe your personal experience, cultural background, current event, or other story. Be specific. Don't just say "this reminds me of my life."

Step 3: Explain WHY you made this connection. What's similar? What did this connection help you understand about the story or about your own experience?

Examples of Strong Connections:

Text-to-Self Connection:

"When Salva had to leave school suddenly and couldn't go home, it reminded me of when I had to leave my country quickly because of political problems. My family had only a few hours to pack, and I couldn't say goodbye to my friends or take most of my things. Like Salva, I felt scared and confused because everything happened so fast. This connection helped me understand why Salva feels so lost—when you have to leave suddenly, you don't have time to prepare emotionally or say goodbye properly."

Text-to-World Connection:

"The story of refugees walking long distances to find safety reminds me of news reports I've seen about Syrian refugees walking across Europe. In the news, I saw families with young children walking for weeks, just like Salva's group. Both situations show how war forces normal people—teachers, students, families—to leave everything behind and walk incredible distances just to survive. This connection helped me realize that Salva's story isn't just historical; this is still happening to people around the world today."

Text-to-Text Connection:

"Salva's experience of being separated from his family reminds me of the book 'Inside Out and Back Again' by Thanhha Lai. In that book, Hà also has to leave her home in Vietnam because of war, and she doesn't know what happened to her father. Both characters are children who lose their normal lives because of violence they didn't cause and can't control. Reading both stories shows me that the experience of being a refugee child has similar emotions—fear, loss, confusion—even when the specific details are different."