



Junior Great Books® and the Primary Years Programme

The Great Books Foundation publishes effective, inquiry-based language arts programs for grades K–12 that improve students’ achievement in reading, thinking, and communicating. Great Books programs feature anthologies of world literature combined with the Shared Inquiry™ method of learning—our unique, collaborative approach. This marriage of literature and method helps develop critical thinking, cross-disciplinary connections, and greater global perspective and understanding.

Primary Years Programme

I.

The philosophic components of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) include an:

- **International perspective** that celebrates the diversity of students’ backgrounds and experiences and aims to ease students’ transitions between schools and systems
- **Inquiry-based approach to learning**, encouraging and supporting student-driven knowledge and interests and emphasizing learning “how to learn” and “how to find out”
- **Integrated approach to teaching** through inter-disciplinary themes promoting connections and providing opportunities for in-depth learning
- **Individualized, flexible framework** that provides schools and individual teachers the opportunity to develop curriculum that answers the specific needs of their school and classroom populations

Junior Great Books

The Junior Great Books program incorporates reading, writing, and discussion activities using the Shared Inquiry method and is noted for its:

- Literature by some of the world’s greatest classic and contemporary authors, providing opportunities for students to gain insights and perspectives by wrestling with questions and issues of enduring human concern embedded in these texts
- Inquiry-based model of collaborative learning, which is at the heart of the method that helps students hone skills of close reading and critical thinking and develop habits for well-informed global citizenship and civil discourse
- Professional development modules that support teachers in their development of authentic inquiry-based classrooms and interdisciplinary units
- Components of prediscussion activities and postdiscussion extensions that are intended to be used flexibly by teachers and school systems to fit into a variety of curriculum models

Primary Years Programme

II.

The aim of the international schools' model, which drives its strong conceptual framework, is to nurture value-laden attributes in students and thereby to develop globally minded citizens who are:

- Communicators
- Thinkers
- Inquirers
- Risk-takers
- Knowledgeable
- Principled
- Caring
- Open-minded
- Well-balanced
- Reflective

These attitudes are not unwritten assumptions but visible, present reminders in every classroom, and they are inculcated as part of all unit inquiries. Teachers and students are encouraged to keep their “eyes on the prize.”

Junior Great Books

In the Shared Inquiry method, students work collaboratively to unearth answers to authentic questions of meaning that lie embedded in great texts of world literature. By discussing and writing about these selections, they gain knowledge about the ideas of some of the world's great writers and thinkers. Through this process, they learn to:

- Look first to their own experience and thinking for insights into a story's meaning
- Reflect carefully on the ideas presented in challenging texts
- Communicate orally, stating their ideas clearly and fully
- Work confidently in a group, listening carefully and respectfully to their peers and developing their abilities to weigh and analyze different perspectives
- Develop, articulate, and support their ideas with textual evidence

Through participating in this method, students learn the art of collaboration, building new intellectual alliances across different backgrounds and perspectives and engaging in civil discourse. By thinking in depth about a text, they learn to sustain focus and transfer the strategies and insights gained and apply them to other areas.

Primary Years Programme

III.

This international model features an inquiry-based classroom. At the center of the Primary Years curriculum are key concepts that have relevance within and across content areas and are expressed as questions to be explored through thematic units. These questions include questions about form (What is it like?), function (How does it work?), causation (Why is it like it is?), change (How is it changing?), connection (How is it connected to other things?), perspective (What are the points of view?), and reflection (How do we know?). Students are encouraged to ask questions, and teachers are encouraged to plan and modify thematic units with their student-driven inquiry. In addition, the cycle of learning always uses reflection as a springboard to prompt action, specifically global action, and an inquiry into “What is our responsibility?”

Junior Great Books

The Shared Inquiry method is based on the principles of Socratic teaching, philosopher-educator Mortimer Adler’s understanding of active reading, and John Dewey’s work on reflective thinking and inquiry learning. Great emphasis is placed on understanding the use and levels of questioning strategies, with numerous opportunities for both teacher and students to become better at developing questions. The collaborative discussion, at the heart of the method, builds intellectual stamina through an examination of interpretive issues in the text. The process, driven by focused, authentic questions, engages students to delve deeply into both the meaning and the resonance of a great work.

The Shared Inquiry method offers an accelerated cycle of learning, which bears parallels to the international school cycle of reflection, choice, and action. In the Shared Inquiry method, comprehension is attained first through a series of prediscussion activities that raise and shape student inquiry. Then the discussion process launches individual student interpretations that, in turn, create a springboard for evaluative discussion, writing opportunities, and other applications both personal and global in scope.

Primary Years Programme

IV.

In the international curriculum model, teachers are encouraged to teach across content in interdisciplinary units. Subject areas are integrated through six organizing themes that facilitate transdisciplinary units of inquiry and help students make meaningful learning connections between the subjects. These themes are:

- Who we are
- Where we are in space and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organize ourselves
- How we share the planet

Junior Great Books

The Junior Great Books student anthologies and Leader's Editions are designed to be used flexibly, making the program compatible with the needs of the International Schools Curriculum.

A schedule of possible activities is attached to each story unit in the Leader's Edition, and teachers are encouraged to pick and choose those activities that best suit their curricular needs, the developmental needs of their students, and the time available. Art and drama activities are included, and many opportunities exist for transdisciplinary extensions, including social studies and technology.

Teachers may teach any number of stories in any sequence, selecting texts that best fit into their thematic units. Audio recordings of the selections are also available for students at different reading levels. Anthologies in Spanish are also available at some levels for dual-language programs.



Foundation

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35 East Wacker Drive, Suite 400 • Chicago, Illinois 60601
800.222.5870 • greatbooks.org