

Mini-Lesson: OWL Logs

Purpose:

Use this mini-lesson to prepare students for the use of their OWL logs.

Time Frame:

15 to 20 minutes

Supplies:

Student Activity Sheet: "Be as Smart as an OWL" and teacher- or student-selected short story

Procedures:

1. Select a short story for this activity. Ask students to read the story before this activity takes place. This may be a homework assignment, or you may give students class time to read.
2. Distribute the student activity sheet "Be as Smart as an OWL."
3. Explain the purpose of OWL logs and purpose of this mini-lesson. Tell students: "The purpose of OWL logs is to provide a framework for you to respond to literature in a meaningful way. Use the OWL logs to initiate discussion about the books you are reading. Today you will have the opportunity to explore how to use the OWL logs for successful collaborative literature discussions."
4. Set your expectations for group discussions. This may already be established in your classroom. If it is not, you may have to take extra time to collaborate with your students and generate an agreed-upon set of expectations. This will also help in building your literature community. Consider expectations such as respect others' ideas, allow everyone to contribute, expect individuals to have unique ideas and perspectives, raise questions, etc. You may refer to the Sample Discussion Guidelines found in the Lesson Builder on the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6-8* Web site (www.learner.org/envisioning-literature).
5. Select one student book group to model the OWL log process. Ask the group to sit in the center of the classroom, so that all students can see how the group interacts, like a fish bowl effect.
6. As the classroom facilitator, keep a running list of observations, wonderings, and links, as students discuss a passage of literature. Consider using an overhead projector, chalkboard, or poster paper for this purpose. You may create a chart with three columns to list student responses, labeled O, W, and L. Tell students you plan on recording comments, so that everyone can see what each type of contribution in a discussion may look like. Keep in mind that you will have to keep the pace of the discussion moving along, so that the group has the opportunity to sample each category of the OWL log.
7. Ask students in the book group to select a discussion leader. Ask the discussion leader to focus the group's discussion around the questions on the OWL log. As the group discusses the short story, interject comments and guide students to contribute meaningful input for their observations, wonderings, and links. Students may need examples before responding on their own. Consider referring to texts familiar to the students, providing them with sample responses to the OWL categories.

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8. After the group comments on each category, allow students in the class to add their ideas to the discussion. This will keep the whole class focused on this "how to" mini-lesson, and all students will have the opportunity to participate in a rich discussion about the story.
9. **Wrap Up:** At the end of the discussion, ask students if they would like to refine, add, or change anything in the expectations for group discussions. This is a nice opportunity for introducing your written expectations for OWL logs or for distributing a rubric for student reference. You may also consider constructing the rubric in collaboration with your students, as a follow-up activity to this mini-lesson.