

## Classroom Lesson Plan 4

# Literature Discussion Groups

**Teacher:** Rich Thompson, Canyon Elementary School, Hungry Horse, Montana

**Grade Level:** Fourth

**Topic:** *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo

## Materials Needed:

- Copies of *Because of Winn-Dixie* for each group member
- Copies of the Student Activity Sheet “Critical Reader Thoughts”
- Copies of the Student Activity Sheet “Using Response Logs”
- Response logs for each student

## Background Information:

Small-group discussions, where students choose their texts from several possibilities, form a core component of Rich Thompson’s envisionment-building classroom. In addition, during regular read-alouds, Mr. Thompson chooses high-interest literature that may be beyond the independent reading level of many of his students. He uses these literature experiences to frame discussion and sharing activities that help students expand their repertoire of textual responses. Student response logs and the formulation of what Mr. Thompson calls Critical Reader Thoughts, expand the range of possibilities students have available for individual response. One-on-one reading conferences allow Mr. Thompson to check individual student progress on a regular basis.

In preparation for the literature discussion groups, Mr. Thompson begins with book talks about the texts available. Students then list their first, second, and third choices. From these Mr. Thompson makes assignments, considering the number of students in each group while trying to give as many as possible their first or second choice. Once the groups are complete, he schedules the meeting dates and times for each group.

Students each receive a copy of their chosen book as well as copies of “Critical Reader Thoughts” for that book, and “Using Response Logs,” if they have not received it earlier.

During the discussion group meetings, response log sharing often begins discussion. Students discuss their responses, reflections, and materials from the “Critical Reader Thoughts” activity sheet, referring to the text as appropriate. Literature discussion groups end with the members determining a way of sharing their book with the rest of the class.

## Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- read and enjoy literature.
- read the assigned pages from the literature before each meeting.
- prepare for discussion by writing in their response logs and preparing Critical Reader Thoughts.
- participate in group discussions of the literature by sharing their thoughts and connections.
- participate in planning and presenting the book-sharing activity at the end of the reading.

## **Expected Products From Lesson:**

- Regular entries in student response logs
- Regular formulation of Critical Reader Thoughts
- Presentation of a book-sharing activity to the class

## **Instructional Strategies Implemented:**

- Regular read-alouds
- Modeling of response and discussion strategies
- Small-group discussions of shared texts
- Ongoing assessment of student response and discussion strategies

## **Collaborative Structure of Class:**

Students in this class choose a text from a selected list and read them independently. Every other day they gather at a meeting table at the back of the classroom with Mr. Thompson for their literature discussion groups. Full-group activities often find the class seated on the floor in a carpeted area of the classroom. Independent reading and response log writing typically happen at individual student desks.

## **Lesson Procedures/Activities:**

- Independent reading of a shared text
- Writing in response logs
- Formulating Critical Reader Thoughts
- Discussing shared texts

## **Follow-Up or Culminating Activities:**

- Discussion of readings and interpretive processes
- Sharing text with classmates through a group presentation

## Classroom Lesson Plan 4: Literature Discussion Groups, page 3

### Assessment:

Students may be assessed on a daily basis through:

- completion of assigned reading for discussion,
- response log entries,
- preparation of Critical Reader Thoughts,
- discussion participation, and
- individual and small-group meetings with the teacher.

The following activities might receive holistic or scaled evaluation (see the Teacher Tool Assessment and Evaluation: Some Useful Principles for a detailed explanation of holistic and scaled evaluation).

- Quality of response logs
- Quality of Critical Reader Thoughts
- Book-sharing activity