

Workshop 5: Why Do I Have to Read This Book?

Description

This workshop explores the core question (and sometimes bitter complaint from students), “Why do I have to read this book?” The video examines various ways in which novels are challenged by students as well as by communities, and highlights positive reasons for reading. You will develop strategies for helping students find compelling reasons to read assigned novels.

Workshop 5 Timeline

Getting Ready

30 minutes

In pairs or groups of three, share the lesson plan that you created as homework after the previous workshop. Distribute copies to the site participants.

Distribute the first paragraph of your novel to the participants at your site.

Watch the Workshop Video

60 minutes

During the Video

First 15-second break. Question on screen: How can a novel you teach connect you and your students with issues it raises?

Five-minute break. On screen: Discuss a work of fiction that profoundly changed you.

Second 15-second break. Question on screen: How can you get your students to connect their experiences to the novels you teach?

Going Further

30 minutes

Identify and share strategies for encouraging students to read books that they would not read on their own.

For Next Time

Homework Assignment

1. Write a lesson plan that encourages students to read an assigned novel—one that they would not read on their own. Bring copies to distribute at the next workshop.
2. ✎ Rewrite or extend the first paragraph of your novel, this time giving more attention to details of either character or setting. Bring copies to distribute at the next workshop.

SUPPLEMENTAL

3. Write a follow-up assignment for students just beginning to write fiction.
4. ✎ Freewrite: How did you learn to like a novel that you once did not enjoy?
5. ✎ Freewrite: How can film (other than adaptations) augment teaching a novel?
6. Go to the “Teachers and Lesson Plans” section of the *In Search of the Novel* Web site, www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel. Read Diana Russell’s lesson plan for teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Reading Assignment

1. Prose, Francine. “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read: How American High School Students Learn to Loathe Literature.” *Harper’s Magazine* (September 1999).
2. Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. New York: Perennial Classics, 1998.
3. Go to the “Why Do I Have to Read This Book?” page on the *In Search of the Novel* Web site, www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel. Read the “Participants’ Comments and Observations” section.

