

Video Clip 3

Asking Questions

Length of Clip:	18:55
School:	Howard A. Doolin Middle School
Location:	Miami, Florida
No. of Students in School:	1,980
Teacher:	Ana Hernandez
No. of Years Teaching:	4
Grade:	7th
Subject:	Language Arts
No. of Students in the Classroom:	30

"I feel sometimes that I'm asking more questions than I should; that they should be the ones that are asking. So I just monitor myself—like today I had the students come up with their own questions." — Ana Hernandez

About This Video Clip

Ms. Hernandez motivates students to get involved with the texts they read by selecting engaging young adult literature that features adolescents struggling with real problems. Ms. Hernandez believes that students get highly engaged in their reading experiences and gain greater literacy when they see themselves and real-life conflicts in the literature they read.

In this lesson, students in Ms. Hernandez's class are reading the young adult literature novel *Tears of a Tiger* by Sharon Draper. These students have been identified as gifted and talented within their school. Students read aloud short passages and discuss the text with teacher facilitation. As they read, students pose and respond to questions about the text. Students are encouraged to express their own interpretations and unique perspectives about the passages. Ms. Hernandez pushes the class discussion along by returning students' comments with additional questions, constantly asking students to consider how characters behave in the story, what the students would do in the characters' situations, and what lessons about life they can take from the text.

Students are assessed through participation in class discussion, written questions and answers, and culminating projects and assignments.

Visit the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature to access the classroom lesson plan Ms. Hernandez prepared for this activity, as well as other resources related to this video.

Featured Texts

Tears of a Tiger by Sharon Draper

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

Ms. Hernandez selected the novel *Tears of a Tiger* for this lesson. The novel focuses on adolescent conflicts of peer pressure, responsibility and consequences for actions, and drinking and driving. *The Chocolate War*, which the class read previously, contains similar adolescent conflicts and themes.

Visit the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature to access suggested companion texts, brief summaries, and additional resources related to this literature.

Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Video

Teachers and teacher educators can use this video as a professional development or preservice education tool to see how one teacher guides students to respond critically to literature by posing their own thought-provoking questions, inviting multiple perspectives and student inquiry.

The video can also provide an opportunity for teachers who reach out to the school community at PTA meetings or back-to-school events. In these settings, the video can be the centerpiece of a program where they can share instructional goals, practices, and expectations.

Curriculum planners can use this video as a focus for both content and best practices meetings, looking at the innovative strategies in language arts instruction it offers.

Administrators and lead teachers can use this video in presentations to their groups, to focus on and talk about the instructional practices presented there, examining what they add to the students' experiences with literature.

Before Watching

Before viewing this video, think about these questions:

- How can teachers encourage students to critically think about literature?
- What instructional approaches invite students to pose questions and challenge ideas as they construct their own understandings of literature?
- How do you select texts for use in your classroom? Which ones are engaging students in lively discussions?

Suggestions for Post-Viewing Discussion

Teachers involved in professional development and preservice education may want to discuss:

- What is the role of the teacher in this classroom? What is the role of the students? Give examples.
- How are the students in the video encouraged to think critically about the literature?
- How would you describe the instructional approach used in this video? What ideas can you take from the video and implement in your own instructional practices?
- How can the teacher bring about further discussion in this lesson? How do you bring about meaningful literature discussions in your own classroom?
- What criteria do you use when selecting literature for your students?

Teachers holding PTA meetings, back-to-school events, or other outreach meetings can use questions like these to start group discussion:

- What questions do you ask in your head as you read literature? Do you ever wonder about what's going to happen next, for example?
- What is an open-ended question? Why do you think these kinds of questions might be useful in reading literature?
- What do you think you might gain by asking questions as you read?
- How can you encourage your children to ask questions as they read?

Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

Curriculum planners can discuss:

- How does this instructional approach provide opportunities for students to interact with literature?
- How can these instructional practices become part of our existing curriculum?

Administrators can discuss:

- What is the value of having students pose their own questions of literature?
- How can this video be used as a centerpiece for a professional development opportunity?

Suggestions for Post-Viewing Activities

For teachers involved in professional development and preservice education:

- Brainstorm ways to encourage students to generate thought-provoking questions about literature.
- Implement a seminar discussion in your own classroom, in which students carry the discussion using their own questions and the teacher facilitates. You may want to arrange students in a circle or a circle within a circle, depending on the size of the classroom and the number of students. Ask students to come prepared with open-ended questions. Encourage them to pose questions they may not necessarily know the answers to or questions with no definite answers. You may give students a Question Guide for this purpose. Visit the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature to access a Question Guide.
- Generate a list of student expectations for whole-class literature discussions, and share these expectations with your students. Allow students to suggest other expectations. You may want to revise the list, based on their suggestions. This will help build your literary community and provide the groundwork for respecting multiple perspectives in the classroom. Visit the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature to access Literary Community Discussion Guidelines from the Lesson Builder resources.
- Videotape a class discussion. View the videotape with your students, analyzing the class session for hallmarks of a successful discussion. You may pre-select segments of the discussion for this purpose, instead of viewing the whole videotape.

For teachers reaching out to families:

- Ask families how they expect their children to behave in school. Explain to families what you expect when your students participate in classroom discussions, and discuss how this might differ from what they expect. Express your interest in their children raising questions, offering their unique perspectives, and opening their minds to others' views. Talk about ways families can support this at home. Keep in mind that, in some cultures, this kind of classroom behavior is not expected.

For administrators:

- Use this video as a professional development tool with language arts teachers. Ask them to consider the instructional approach in this video, the value in it, and what facets can be folded into their own practices.
- Videotape English and language arts teachers in your school as they facilitate literature discussions in their classrooms. Use the videotapes as an opportunity for teachers to examine dialogue in their literature classrooms. Direct teachers to look at ways in which the videotaped teachers decide when to step in to the discussion, and when to stay out of it, and how they encourage participation from less involved students. Ask teachers to pay close attention to the videotaped teachers' interactions with the students through interjections, posing questions, and asking additional questions to probe students' thoughts further. Ask teachers to consider what they can do to continue to promote meaningful discussions about literature in their classrooms.

Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

- Provide opportunities for teachers to visit their colleagues' classrooms to see how other practitioners are facilitating literature discussions with their students. Schedule release time for teachers to meet and discuss what they observed in their colleagues' classrooms. This will provide a professional support network within your own school, encouraging teachers to share their instructional practices. Create a teacher feedback form for visiting other teachers' classrooms. Feedback forms may be used as discussion starters when teachers meet about their classroom visits. Access a sample Teacher Feedback Form at the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, under "Teacher's Tools."
- As a follow-up to the above professional development activities, ask teachers to read one of the articles from the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement about conversation in the literature classroom. These articles can be accessed at the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, under "Additional Resources" for this video clip.

Additional Resources

The classroom lesson plan, student activity sheets, and links to related resources are accessible at the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature.

You may also be interested in the following texts, many of which can be purchased through the National Council of Teachers of English at www.ncte.org:

Allen, Janet, and Kyle Gonzalez. *There's Room for Me Here: Literacy Workshop in the Middle School*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 1998. ISBN 1-57110-042-3.

Andrasick, Kathleen Dudden. *Opening Texts: Using Writing To Teach Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990. ISBN 0-435-08522-0.

Ash, Barbara Hoetker. "Student-Made Questions: One Way Into a Literary Text." *English Journal* (September, 1992): 61–64

Atwell, Nancie. *In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-86709-374-9.

Beers, Kylene and Barbara G. Samuels, eds. *Into Focus: Understanding and Creating Middle School Readers*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gorden Publishers, Inc., 1998. ISBN 0-926842-64-1.

Commeyras, Mitchell and Georgiana Sumner (Jamie Metsala, ed.) "Literature Discussions Based on Student-Posed Questions." *The Reading Teacher*. (November, 1996); 262-265.

Daniels, Harvey. *Literature Circles*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 1994. ISBN 1-55138-048-X.

Evans, Karen S. *Literature Discussion Groups in the Intermediate Grades: Dilemmas and Possibilities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2001 ISBN 0-87207-293-2.

Golub, Jeffrey. *Activities for an Interactive Classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1994. ISBN 0-8141-0046-5.

Golub, Jeffrey, NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices. *Focus on Collaborative Learning: Classroom Practices in Teaching English, 1988*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1988. ISBN 0-8141-1753-8.

Kaywell, Joan, editor. *Adolescent Literature as Complement to Classics, Volume 2*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1994. ISBN 0926842439.

Krogness, Mary Mercer. *Just Teach Me, Mrs. K: Talking Reading, and Writing With Resistant Adolescent Learners*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995. ISBN 0-435-08815-7.

Langer, Judith. *Envisioning Literature*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1995. ISBN 0-8077-3463-0.

Langer, Judith A. "Discussion as Exploration: Literature and the Horizon of Possibilities." *Exploring Texts: The Role of Discussion and Writing in the Teaching and Learning of Literature*. George E. Newell and Russell K. Durst, eds. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1993. 23-43. ISBN 0-926842-24-2. Also available at cela.albany.edu/discussion/index.html, Report 6.3.

The Language of Literature classroom anthology series and teacher support materials. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2002.

Routman, Regie. *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. ISBN 0-325-00109-X.

Samuels, Barbara G. and Kylene Beers, eds. *Your Reading: An Annotated Booklist for Middle and Junior High 1995–96 Edition*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996. ISBN 0-8141-5943-5.

Schoenbach, Ruth, Cynthia Greenleaf, Christine Cziko, and Lori Hurwitz. *Reading for Understanding*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999. ISBN 0-7879-5045-9.

Additional Resources, cont'd.

Soter, A. O. *Young Adult Literature and the New Literary Theories: Developing Critical Readers in Middle School*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999. ISBN 0-80773-8808.

Tchudi, Stephen and Susan Tchudi. *The English/Language Arts Handbook*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991. ISBN 0-86709-288-2.

Tiedt, Iris McClellan. *Teaching With Picture Books in the Middle School*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000. ISBN 0-87207-273-8.

Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995, ISBN 0-1404-6971-0.

Whitin, Phyllis. *Sketching Stories, Stretching Minds: Responding Visually to Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996. ISBN 0-435-08879-X.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. *You Gotta BE the Book*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8077-3566-3.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D., Tanya N. Baker, and Julie Dube. *Strategic Reading: Guiding Students to Lifelong Literacy 6–12*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2001. ISBN 0-86709-561-X.

Yokota, Junko, ed. *Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K–8*. 3rd ed. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. ISBN 0-8141-2540-9.

Notes
