

# Video Clip 7

## Readers as Individuals

Length of Clip:	18:55
School:	Picacho Middle School
Location:	Las Cruces, New Mexico
No. of Students in School:	907
Teacher:	Flora Tyler
No. of Years Teaching:	21
Grade:	6th
Subject:	Language Arts
No. of Students in the Classroom:	20

*"I am excited. The kids are excited. I see what they've done and what they can do. I think it's important that we expect the best from these kids...and that [our] expectations are high because they can do it." — Flora Tyler*

# About This Video Clip

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Flora Tyler says her classroom design is strongly influenced by the reading and writing workshop model described by Nancie Atwell in her first edition of *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning With Adolescents* (1987). The theory underpinning this model centers on the importance of students learning to make informed choices about what they read and what they write, and taking charge for both the planning and execution of their work in both areas. The role of the teacher is to suggest, guide, offer individual instruction through targeted mini-lessons, and keep track of student performances and progress. In addition, the teacher ensures that students have adequate time for silent, independent reading; reading is the central activity of the literature program.

Although a reading workshop may seem disorderly to outsiders, clear rules govern its operation. Typically the period begins with a mini-lesson. After that, students must read (a book—no magazines or comics are allowed) for the entire period (they cannot do homework or work for other classes). They must have a book and be ready to read when the bell rings, and they may not disturb others. In addition, they are expected to offer written responses to their reading, either to the teacher or to other students.

In Ms. Tyler's class, we see a teacher working with 20 students who come to class with a wide range of educational experiences as well as diverse abilities. Students are taught how to locate, choose, and read texts appropriate to their reading levels and areas of interest independently. They then learn ways to share those readings with others. Clearly, the organizational structures—and their skillful implementation—in such workshops provide the glue that holds the classroom together. Students have to be clear about their short- and long-term obligations and be willing to accept individual responsibility for meeting them. Teachers have to come to such workshops with a wide range of knowledge about both young adult literature and adolescent psychology. In addition, such workshop settings demand that both teachers and students are tolerant and accepting of occasional dead ends as well as an atmosphere of creative commotion.

Both the online and print materials connected with this video will focus on the reading workshop, although it should be understood by viewers that within the classroom, reading and writing are integrated, and that the instruction in each workshop is grounded in the same theory.

Visit the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature) to access the lesson plan Flora Tyler used to organize this classroom experience, as well as other related resources.

## Featured Texts

In Ms. Tyler's reading workshop, students have complete freedom when selecting what they read. If they start a book and find it too difficult, or not to their liking, they are free to abandon it after a few pages and find something else. If Ms. Tyler feels that her students are overwhelmed by the prospect of reading a complete novel, she helps them set their sights on more personally manageable goals, perhaps offering them a selection of short stories from which to choose and then helping them expand their goals until they are ready to tackle longer works. Ms. Tyler has provided viewers with *Picacho Picks* (available online), a list of favorite books chosen by her sixth graders, as a way to give viewers of this video a sense of their selections. You will note that many of the titles selected by her students are ones introduced in other videos in this series.

Visit the *Making Meaning in Literature: A Video Library, Grades 6–8* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature) for *Picacho Picks* and related Web sites.

# Viewing Suggestions

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## Who Should Watch This Video

**Teachers and teacher educators** can use this video as a professional or preservice education tool to see how a reading workshop might operate in a classroom. Viewers might notice the organizational and monitoring strategies that can be employed to keep students on track.

The video might also assist teachers who reach out to families in the school community at PTA meetings or back-to-school events. In these settings, the video can be a vehicle for demonstrating parent response to classroom practices that many will find unconventional.

**Curriculum planners** can use this video as a springboard for discussions about how a core curriculum supporting a workshop approach across grade levels might look. Curriculum planners might also find it useful to define a range of mini-lessons (or kinds of mini-lessons) that would be appropriate at various grade levels.

**Administrators** can use this video with teachers considering implementing a reading workshop with their students as well as with parent or community groups interested in how such an approach might work.

## Before Watching

Before viewing this video, consider the following:

- What are the implications of asking students to set their own learning goals?
- What are the implications of allowing students complete freedom in choosing their reading materials?
- How can teachers help students set and meet appropriate goals in such a setting?
- How can teachers help students learn to choose appropriate reading materials?

## Suggestions for Post-Viewing Discussion

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

- What are the positive features you observed in this approach to literature instruction?
- What drawbacks do you foresee in implementing such an approach with your students? How might these drawbacks be overcome?
- What questions do you have about the value and implementation of reading workshops?
- What responses to this approach might you anticipate from students? From parents? From administrators? How might you respond?

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

- How might your child be likely to respond to a reading workshop approach to literature?
- Did you observe anything that surprised or intrigued you in the video? Give examples.
- How might a reading workshop approach help reluctant readers? How might it support active readers?
- What did the responses of the parents in this video suggest to you about the reading workshop approach?

# Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

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## **Curriculum planners can discuss:**

- How extensive a range of materials do teachers need to have available to make a reading workshop approach workable?
- How might this approach be used to support the goals of the existing curriculum?

## **Administrators can discuss:**

- Do the teachers in your building have the appropriate resources to implement a reading workshop approach? If not, what else do they need and how might those needs be met?
- What professional development is available (or might be made available) for teachers interested in implementing reading workshops in their classrooms?

## **Suggestions for Post-Viewing Activities**

### **For teachers involved in professional development and preservice education:**

- Make a list of the record-keeping strategies that you might implement to help a reading workshop operate smoothly.
- Create a list of useful mini-lessons to include when first introducing a reading workshop. With a partner, or in a small group, develop one such lesson and prepare to share it with the entire group.

### **For teachers reaching out to families:**

- List ways you could introduce the philosophy and the processes of reading workshops to parents. Consider using brief notes, email, a newsletter, or a Web site to keep families informed about their children's responsibilities and experiences with this approach.
- Suggest that families find time to discuss the reading workshop approach with their children over a period of several months to gain an understanding of how it works and how their children are responding to it.
- Invite family members into your classroom to observe.

### **For administrators:**

- Share this video with language arts teachers in your school. Discuss the value and the complexities of a reading workshop approach. Provide time for teachers to share their responses and their concerns.

# Additional Resources

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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](http://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](http://www.ncte.org):

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

Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994. ISBN 0-87120-230-1.

Atwell, Nancie. *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning With Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987. ISBN 0-86709-163-0.

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.

Berghoff, Beth, Kathryn A. Egawa, Jerome C. Harste, and Barry T. Hoonan. *Beyond Reading and Writing: Inquiry, Curriculum, and Multiple Ways of Knowing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000. ISBN 0-8141-2341-4.

Brozo, William G. *To Be a Boy, To Be a Reader: Engaging Teen and Preteen Boys in Active Literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2002. ISBN 0-87207-175-8.

Elliott, Joan B. and Mary M. Dupuis, eds. *Young Adult Literature in the Classroom: Reading It, Teaching It, Loving It*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2002. ISBN 0-87207-173-1.

Graves, Donald H. *Build a Literate Classroom: The Reading/Writing Teacher's Companion*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991. ISBN 0-435-08488-7.

Hoonan, Barry. "Drawing on the Artist's Perspective: Ventures Into Meaning." *Literature Circles and Response*. Ed. Bonnie Campbell Hill, Nancy J. Johnson, and Katherine Noe. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1995. ISBN 0-926-684-248 X.

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 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*. Eds. George E. Newell and Russel K. Durst. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1993. 23–43. ISBN 0-926842-24-2.

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

Langer, Judith A., ed. *Literature Instruction: A Focus on Student Response*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1992.

*The Language of Literature* classroom anthology series (Grades 6–12) and teacher support materials. Boston: McDougal Littell, 2002.

Lazear, David. *Seven Ways of Knowing: Teaching for Multiple Intelligences: A Handbook of Techniques for Expanding Intelligence*. Palatine, IL: Skylight Publishing, 1991. ISBN 0-9322935-18-4.

Nicholson-Nelson, Kristen. *Developing Students' Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 1998. ISBN 0-590-93101-6.

Rief, Linda. *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts With Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH, 1992. ISBN 0-435-08598-0.

Rief, Linda. *Vision and Voice: Extending the Literacy Spectrum*. Portsmouth, NH, 1998. ISBN 0-3250-0097-2.

# Additional Resources, cont'd.

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Rief, Linda and Maureen Barbieri, eds. *All That Matters: What Is It We Value In School and Beyond?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995. ISBN 0-4350-8848-3.

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

Samuels, Barbara G. and Kylee 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.

Smagorinsky, Peter. *Expressions: Multiple Intelligences in the English Classroom.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991. ISBN 0-8141-1664-7.

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.