

Classroom Lesson Plan 1

Envisionment Building in the Literature Classroom

Teachers: Various

Grade Levels: Sixth through eighth

Topic: Reading and appreciating literature

Materials Needed:

- Literature books for students; either a class set or selected titles from which students can choose
- Sticky note pads for each student
- Writer's notebooks or other areas for written responses
- Student Activity Sheet:
 - Read, Notice, and Wonder: A Guide to Literary Response (generic directions for encouraging student responses to literary texts)
- Other materials as appropriate for specific titles (i.e., handouts for specific extension activities, copies of topically related poems or other short works, art materials, etc.)
- Teacher Tools:
 - Using Personal Writing To Extend Literary Envisionments
 - Assessment and Evaluation: Some Useful Principles

Background Information:

This is a generic envisionment-building lesson that can be adapted to and used with any literary text. Its design reflects the key tenets of envisionment-building: 1) students are life-long envisionment builders whose ideas are at the center of the classroom; 2) questions are essential to envisionment-building; 3) students come to class after reading equipped with understandings about the literature. It is assumed that they will develop those understandings during class discussions; and 4) multiple interpretations of literary texts are to be expected and are helpful, both to the individual and to the class as a whole.

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- read and enjoy literature.
- use writer's notebooks (or other forms of personal writing) to record their responses to their reading.
- use sticky notes (or mark the text, if allowed) to indicate passages of interest, or areas about which they have questions.

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- participate in thoughtful discussions of the literature (in small groups and as an entire class) where they listen to and interact with one another about the interpretations they are developing.
- develop fuller understandings of the literature through reflective writing, discussion, and other support activities.
- use language to develop as a classroom community of thinkers and learners, respectful of views other than their own.
- connect issues raised by the literature with their own lives.
- create original products that demonstrate their understandings of the literature.

Expected Products From Lesson:

- Regular written responses in writer's notebooks; the Teacher Tool "Using Personal Writing To Extend Literary Envisionments" offers useful strategies
- Regular use of sticky notes for comments, questions, and identification of specific passages
- Various extension and support activities as appropriate (see other programs for specific suggestions)
- A final product designed to help the students and the teacher evaluate the students' understandings of the literature

Instructional Strategies Implemented:

- Student questioning
- Class and small-group discussions
- Writing as a tool for making meaning
- Teacher facilitation, guidance, and feedback
- Use of drama and/or artistic activities to develop and broaden understandings

Collaborative Structure of Class:

Envisionment-building classes work well when the physical space is flexible and furniture can be rearranged to accommodate changing activities. Teachers directing whole-class discussion might favor circular arrangements so students can talk with one another easily. Desk clusters of four or five serve small-group discussions well. Linear rows of desks create an environment where easy conversation among peers is more difficult and where, as a result, a teacher has to overcome physical restrictions to keep student questions and ideas at the center of the literary experience.

Lesson Procedures/Activities:

- Reading independently and in groups
- Listening to oral reading
- Writing responses to and/or questions about the literature
- Group discussion of the literature and the human issues it presents
- Possible dramatic, poetic, and/or artistic presentation of ideas
- Vocabulary development within the context of developing literary understandings

Follow-Up or Culminating Activities:

Teachers typically wish to give students some sort of closure after extended engagement with a literary text. In addition, they may need a tool for formal evaluation at this time. Final projects, written formal papers, and oral reports are all possible means of addressing these needs. See the Support Materials for the various programs in this series to observe the choices these teachers made for their students.

Assessment:

Students may be assessed on a daily basis through:

- preparation and participation, and
- writer's notebook entries.

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).

- Responses to specific passages
- Quality and quantity of writer's notebook entries
- Visual, poetic, or dramatic representations of passage or scene
- Vocabulary activities
- Formal paper in response to a literary work