

# Teaching Literary Conversation With Classroom Read-Alouds and Conversation Partners

**Teacher:** Katherine Bomer, Pleasant Hill Elementary School, Austin, Texas

**Grade Level:** Fifth

**Topic:** *The Color of My Words* by Lynn Joseph

## Materials Needed:

- Copy of *The Color of My Words*
- Writer's notebooks for each student

## Background Information:

Ms. Bomer's overarching goal is that all her students become life-long readers. To that end, she centers her literature instruction on reading aloud and discussing a shared book. She believes that in this way she can introduce students to books that they are not yet ready to read on their own as well as teach them how to have good conversations about literature. She follows this instruction with Reading Groups in which groups of five or six students read and discuss a common novel. Nightly independent free-choice reading forms the final component of the literature program.

## Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- listen to the text being read aloud.
- use language effectively to create knowledge, make meaning, challenge thinking, and expand their literary envisionments.
- respond to what they have heard through informal writing in their writer's notebooks.
- use language to develop as a classroom community of thinkers and learners, respectful of views other than their own.
- respond to what they have heard through group conversation.
- share their thinking about passages and events in the book with conversation partners.
- transfer the interpretive and conversation strategies they learn by participating in the read-aloud activities to their reading and discussion in small groups.

## **Classroom Lesson Plan 2: Teaching Literary Conversation With Classroom Read-Alouds and Conversation Partners, page 2**

### **Expected Products From Lesson:**

- Notes in writer's notebooks
- Participation in conversations with conversation partners and in whole-class discussions

### **Instructional Strategies Implemented:**

- Reading aloud
- Asking questions
- Modeling uses of informal writing, responses, and questions
- Modeling respectful conversation strategies

### **Collaborative Structure of Class:**

Ms. Bomer's classroom is divided into two main areas. At the back of the room, student tables are arranged in groups of five to six. This is where students meet during their Reading Groups. At the front of the room, a large carpeted area offers space for the entire class to meet for the read-aloud and ensuing conversations. A comfortable chair allows Ms. Bomer to sit in a relaxed manner while reading aloud.

### **Lesson Procedures/Activities:**

- Students gather on the rug. Ms. Bomer reminds them of where they are in the reading and reads a new segment.
- Ms. Bomer pauses and asks students to reflect on what they have just heard, incorporating it into what has transpired earlier in the book and making predictions about what they think will happen next. She encourages a number of students to contribute to the conversation before continuing.
- Ms. Bomer identifies a particularly suggestive passage and reads it (perhaps more than once), asking students to listen closely. She then asks them to use their writer's notebooks to record a response to the passage before joining their Conversation Partner for a few moments of discussion.
- During these discussions, Ms. Bomer circulates and listens in to what students are saying.
- Bringing the entire group back together again, Ms. Bomer uses the opportunity to share some of what she heard during discussion and note effective student responses.

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

- After the read-aloud and conversation, students move into their Reading Groups to discuss their shared novels.
- Typically, an assessment activity such as Sketch to Stretch or a written assignment follows the completion of a Reading Group's work with a novel. For example, a group reading *Maniac Magee* wrote poems based on their reading.

## **Classroom Lesson Plan 2: Teaching Literary Conversation With Classroom Read-Alouds and Conversation Partners, page 3**

### **Assessment:**

Students may be assessed on a daily basis through:

- using a checklist to track their contributions during whole-class discussions or while they are working with their Conversation Partners, and
- observing Reading Groups and noting the range of student responses.

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).

- Sketch to Stretch
- Poem based on a novel