

# Making the Invisible Visible: An Inquiry Approach to Literature

The lesson shown in this video is an excellent example of a teacher planning instruction to “make the invisible visible.” That is, he is working to help students learn the *processes* central to envisionment building. He uses mini-lessons, classroom demonstrations, and guided practice to help students learn how to puzzle out complex texts, how to pose and answer questions as they read, and how to track their insights and developing understandings of a literary work. Furthermore, the role he assumes in groups as participant-observer allows him to highlight strategies students are finding useful (making them conscious to the user as well as potentially available to others). That is, Mr. Hoonan centers his instruction on teaching students *how* to understand and enjoy literary texts rather than simply assuming that they can do so without support.

Here are some specific areas of instruction that you may wish develop and some suggestions to get you started.

## Asking Questions

- Read the first sentence or paragraph of a story and ask the class to brainstorm a list of questions the text generates so far.
- After reading, ask each student to write two or three questions to bring to group discussion.
- Design a mini-lesson focused on authentic questions.
- Design a mini-lesson focused on questions without answers.

## Making Personal Responses

- Teach students to keep a literature response journal and ask them to write for five minutes as they finish reading. Ask several students to share these journals aloud with the class (or use an overhead to present models) to demonstrate the many different ways in which readers respond (some teachers tell students that “the only way to do this wrong is not to do it!”).
- Ask students to respond visually to a passage—either by drawing a response, or by choosing a color that they feel represents the passage and explaining their choice.

## Choosing A Book

- Use a mini-lesson to demonstrate how the front and back covers of a book can provide information that can help readers decide if it will interest them.
- Teach students the “three-finger rule” for determining if a book is too hard: Ask them to choose a page in the middle of the book to read. When they encounter a word they don’t know, instruct them to raise a finger. If they have raised three fingers by the end of the page, the book is too difficult for easy reading.
- Teach them to notice their developing tastes as readers. If they find a story they like, suggest that they try to find other works by the same author. If they find a topic they enjoy, help them find a range of books on the same subject.