

READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Guided Instruction for Independence Video Transcript

Jennifer Roberts:

If I ask you to write me a paragraph about Montresor and prove all those things, what else can you prove about him besides that he wants revenge? What can you say about Montresor that you could prove, that you could show me evidence in the text to prove it? Tara, you had something?

Tara:

He's completely xenophobic of people from certain countries because he talks about Fortunato as being a quack, like people from that certain country.

Roberts:

Okay, and you can find a quote to prove that?

Tara:

Yeah.

Roberts:

Okay. Daniel, what have you got?

Daniel:

He's rich because he likes to buy expensive wines.

Roberts:

And you could prove that?

Daniel:

Yeah, because in the story it says he likes to buy expensive wines.

Roberts:

We want to now take this to another level. Compare Montresor with Fortunato.

Today was their first real exposure to the kinds of comparative language that they'd be using. Building toward a larger end unit goal where they will compare the techniques Poe uses in Cask of Amontillado to the techniques that Charles Laughton uses in Night of the Hunter, which is a 1955 film noir.

I need you to open the T-chart example that's listed for you on the blog. And when you open it, it's going to look like this. Comparing Montresor and Fortunato. I'm asking you to tell me some things that they have in common, some similarities, some things that they have different. Don't worry about the right side yet. Take about one minute, I really am only giving you one minute, to write down one or two things they have in common and one or two things they are different about. Go.

Eventually they need to be able to write about this text at a very deep level. So all of this is all still sort of about getting them to know Cask of Amontillado better.

So what did you say were some things they had in common?

Student:

They're rich, because they can buy the wine, I bet they can buy like pretty expensive good wine.

Roberts:

Okay, so they're wealthy people, right? What would you say were some of their differences? There's a really stark difference, people.

Student:

Montresor wants to kill Fortunato.

Roberts:

Yeah, one of them's a murderer, right? Do you see what's coming here?

Student:

Yeah, you want us to find evidence.

Roberts:

Okay, so to the right you need your evidence. In the form of what?

Student:

Quotes?

Roberts:

Yeah, you're going to need quotes from the story. Find some evidence that proves the things you said they were similar or different about. Whether your similarities and differences are the same as what we have on the board or not, you need to be able to back it up. What in the story do you find that backs up what you said on the left side?

I was asking for them to compare the two characters, and then a column next to that that they're fairly familiar with now that asks them to present evidence for their thinking about those two characters.

Tell me what you're looking for.

Student:

Evidence.

Roberts:

What does that mean to you?

Student:

Quotes, right?

Roberts:

So does a quote have to be like the character actually talking or what kind of quotes are we talking about?

Student:

No, it's just pieces that prove what I'm looking for.

Roberts:

Okay, can you do that?

Student:

Okay.

Tara:

You definitely get more out of books after being in this class because after having to analyze books and really get into the deeper meaning of the book, I start doing that with every book, which is something I didn't used to do. So that's really good.

Roberts:

You have the high level thinking about this story, but I need you to back up what you're thinking with evidence from the text.

Tara:

Okay.

Roberts:

Okay? Share what you got, share the wealth.

Every time they have an opportunity to be exposed to what's happening in that text, I'm giving them another chance at that.

Student:

I used, "We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs," which are a place...of the Montresors.

Student:

I got, "The skillful Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could," for Fortunato's like a better winemaker than Montresor.

Student:

And then for a difference I put, "I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation."

Student:

Okay, I didn't read that. Was that for the similarities?

Student:

No, for the differences.

Roberts:

For this next part, on top of your T-chart, which is in your writer's notebook, I would like you to write for me a paragraph comparing Montresor and Fortunato using the evidence you've already found. Now, I have a couple things to help you with this. You can just write this paragraph. Some of you are totally capable of just writing this paragraph. Some of you may want to refer to the words for writing about compare and contrast, phrases you can use when things are the same, phrases you can use when things are different. If you would like more support for writing your paragraph, on your table is a paragraph frame for comparison, okay? So you can use that. On the back of that is even more words for using comparison, okay? So whatever you need to support you as you write this paragraph, you can do that.

That was a scaffold. Students today I think tend to see it as an end in itself. I'll just throw out this graphic organizer and I'll be done. But it's always about organizing your thinking and marshaling your evidence to be able to write about it in more depth. So that is what the second piece of what our lesson was today where they were writing a compare/contrast paragraph.

Student:

Should I have put more quotes in it? I only have one.

Roberts:

No, I just want to make sure I'm making sense of what you're saying.

Today I found a student that I needed to take longer with and it wasn't a student I would've expected to need to take longer with.

Student:

He just doesn't want...So the opposite of Montresor.

Roberts:

You don't have to make them the opposites to make them different.

Student:

Well, not the opposite, but he just doesn't want to kill.

Roberts:

Okay, so "Fortunato does not seem to have any inclination..." I think the preposition you're looking for is toward killing.

Student:

Yes, toward.

Roberts:

Makes sense? Okay, like I can like football and you can like soccer, and those aren't opposites, they're just different. I think you're trying to set up a direct opposition thing between them, like you're trying to make Fortunato the opposite of Montresor, and you kind of did that in the last sentence. The conflict between them is not that one of them's a killer and one of them doesn't want to be a killer. They're not arguing over whether they should murder someone. The contrast is that one of them's a murderer and the other one is naive, innocent, trusting. Have they explained that evidence correctly, is their logic flowing correctly? Can you revise maybe that last couple of sentences to maybe not make them quite so opposite?

Student:

Okay.

Roberts:

Try that for me?

Student:

Yes.

Roberts:

Today I was teaching comparative language because my students are moving toward a process piece that will involve a lot of comparative language and they needed that. But along the way I'm also teaching writing skills, and reading skills, and standard one, which is find your evidence, and standard four about character.

Question time: anything that helped you write this paragraph?

Student:

The T-chart.

Roberts:

Okay. So without that, you think it would have still been easy to write this paragraph?

Student:

Easy but not as easy.

Roberts:

They can write a comparison paragraph, but it was much more helpful to have that T-chart there with their evidence all lined up already.

In the future, I and other teachers will say things to you like, "For homework, write a paragraph comparing these two characters," or you know, "Compare these two methods for cell division." Or "Compare..." you know, you're asked to compare things all the time, right?

Tara:

You learn actually how to get information out of something. You know, it's not just trying to fill book quotas, or fill, like, essay quotas. We're actually learning.

Roberts:

So today we wrote a paragraph. What comes next?

Student:

More writing.

Roberts:

Yeah, can you see the landscape where this is going, right?

I would much rather my students left my class with a self-efficacy in reading, to be able to deconstruct a text on their own, than to leave my class knowing

absolutely everything about Cask of Amontillado because they won't remember that, but they will take with them that reading skill.