

Methods for Book Discussions



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Philosophy and Rationale

- *Whether reading for academic purposes or for pleasure, we “react” in some way to the literature we read-- that’s why we read.*
- *Students can develop those very necessary critical thinking and language skills by reading literature, making personal connections to it, and then offering recommendations to their peers.*
- *Students can formulate their own “world perspective” by learning to identify an author’s perspective and analyzing how and why an author embraces the ideas that he does.*



Questions to Generate Connections

- Ask students how this text or idea relates to those studied in the past.
- Ask students to find connections to what they are studying in other classes.
- Ask students to make both intellectual and emotional connections so as to take into account both public and private responses.
- Ask students to challenge the textual meanings.



Sample Questions

- How does that relate to the themes of _____ we studied last semester?
- Can anyone explain how Huck Finn's and Jim's attitudes relate to the Bill of Rights?
- What would this poem sound like if you played it as music? What instruments would you use and why?
- How would you feel if you were forced to wear a scarlet A like Hester Prynne? Would public humiliation work as a method of punishment in today's society?



Think...Pair...Share

- Step One: Solo reading and written response to formulate initial ideas and questions. (THINK)
- Step Two: Pair discussions to share and compare ideas with a follow-up, independent reflection time to adjust or add to original ideas. (PAIR)

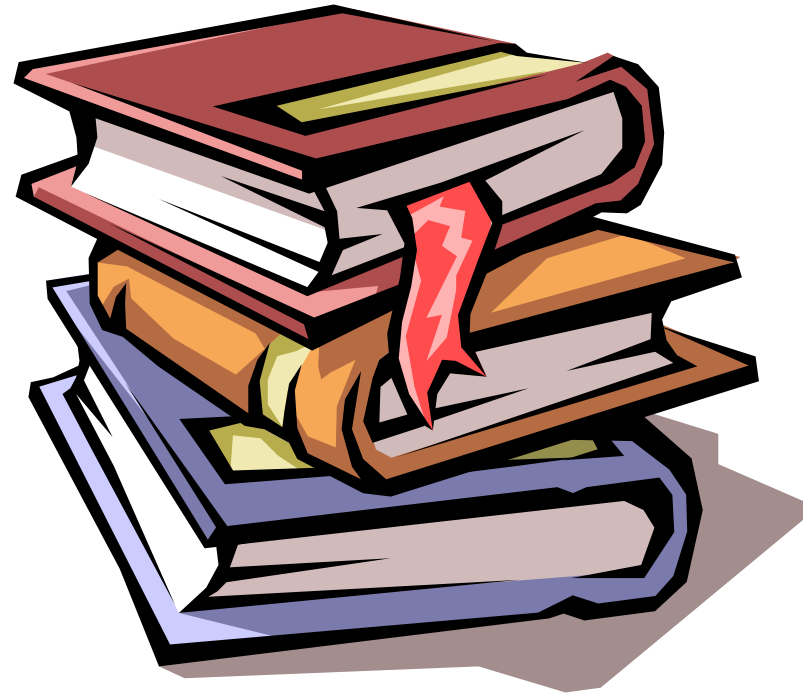


Think...Pair...Share

- Step Three: Small group discussions to expand understanding. (SHARE)
- Step Four: Full class discussions to report what was learned and discuss how students arrived at their interpretations. (SHARE)

Venues for Talking About Reading

- *Think, Pair, Share*
- *Literature Circles*
- *Socratic Seminars*



Literature Circles



- What is it?
- What takes place?
- How the discussion works
- Roles of the student
- Evaluation



What Is It?

- A small group
- A temporary group
- A group of readers who read the same piece of literature



How the Discussion Works

Students:

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Read favorite passages aloud.
- Discuss critical or difficult passages to better understand the meaning.
- Anchor their discussions in the text, continually turning to it for evidence to support their ideas or to settle disagreements.
- Involve all group members in the discussion.



Four Roles of the Student

- **Discussion Director:** Responsible for creating provocative discussion questions and soliciting contributions from other members.
- **Passage Master:** Directs group members to memorable and important passages in the text.



Four Roles of the Student

- **Connector:** Helps the group to see connections between the text and the real world.
- **Recorder:** Offers notes (in the form of brainstorming, such as a web or chart) for all group members to review.

*Roles Rotate



Evaluation of Literature Circles

Teacher evaluation can take the following form:

1. Observe group discussion, focusing on each individual and his role.
2. Hold student conferences in which the teacher discusses and monitors the student's knowledge.
3. Have students keep learning logs about the literature circle discussions and reading.

Shared Inquiry

A decorative horizontal bar consisting of a series of colored segments in shades of blue, teal, yellow, and black, arranged in a slightly wavy pattern across the width of the slide.

Another technique to build
oral communication and
higher order thinking skills



Shared Inquiry

- Students help one another to search for answers to fundamental questions raised in the text.
- Students come to the discussion with their own unique way of interpreting the text.
- They build on their personal views through a sharing of ideas.



Guidelines for Shared Inquiry

- Only those who have read the selection can participate in the discussion.
- Limit the discussion to a specific passage or selection.
- All student opinions need to be supported by evidence from the text.
- Leaders may only ask questions, not answer them.



Role of the Leader

- Help group participants to arrive at answer.
- Ask questions that prompt thoughtful inquiry.
- Refrain from judging others' opinions or ideas.

Socratic Seminars

A decorative horizontal bar consisting of a series of vertical rectangular segments in various colors including black, blue, teal, light blue, yellow, and grey, arranged in a slightly wavy pattern across the width of the slide.

A final technique for helping students connect to literature



Socratic Seminars

- Based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers.
- Socrates regularly engaged his pupils in dialogues by responding to their questions with questions, instead of answers.
- This process encourages divergent thinking rather than convergent.



How Socratic Seminars Differ

- No clear leader; all students are expected to participate.
- Students are given questions to address rather than formulating their own questions.
- Students are encouraged to query one another.



Similarities Among the Three Techniques

- All three techniques require textual support
- Students arrive at their own interpretations.
- All three techniques require students to engage in higher order thinking skills.
- All three techniques develop both interpretation skills and communication skills.



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