Reaching Reluctant Readers

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How To Make Shakespeare (and Others) Sexy

Charles Ellenbogen

No Child
LEFT BEHIND

How do we get reluctant readers to start reading and to continue reading?

Defining Reluctant Readers

Reluctant Readers -

- **Are able to read any material that is interesting to them**

- **Are frustrated by text they find difficult**

- **Do not understand how to effectively apply reading strategies to ease their burden**

- **http://www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/educationupclose.phtml/29**

Why Emphasize Shakespeare?

- **Required**

- **Intimidating**
        -students
        -teachers

- **NEH Summer Institute**

- **http://www.neh.gov/projects/si-school.html**

Curriculum Concerns

- **Lack of choice**

- **Genre approach**

- **Historical approach**

- **Chronological approach**

What is an Essential Question?

A thematic, or essential question, is a genuine, open-ended question that can be addressed, though not necessarily answered, through the study of literature.

Why are Essential Questions Useful?

- **Give students reason and focus for reading**

- **Give students a way to link texts and genres – what do these books (*Frankenstein* and *Macbeth*) say about how men turn into monsters?**

- **Promote the use of relevant reading and research strategies**

- **Give students some control over what they are studying**

How Do You Generate an Essential Question?

- The students need to be part of the process – choice gives students a sense of control

- Start with a word – if it's American Literature, put "American" in the center of the page and have students brainstorm words, phrases, and questions related to it

- Start with a word that is key to a piece of literature: 'Friendship' for *Of Mice and Men*, 'Parents vs. Children' for *Romeo and Juliet*

- Turn their statements into questions – why do parents and children always battle?

Examples of Essential Questions

To Kill A Mockingbird

What is courage?

What is justice?

What does it mean to grow up?

What makes someone a good parent?

What does it mean to be an individual in society?

Why Use Backwards Planning?

Alice in Wonderland

Alice is lost.

"Which way should I go?"

After a moment of silence, the Cheshire Cat said, "That depends. . ."

Alice said, "Depends on what?"

The Cat said: "It depends on your destination. Where are you going?"

"I don't know. . . I just don't know. . ." answered a confused Alice.

"Then," said the Cheshire Cat, while grinning broadly, "It really does not matter."

What is Backwards Planning?

What is it that you want your students to know and be able to do by the time they finish reading the book?

- **concepts**
- **skills**

Your objectives must be aligned with your school, local, state, and national standards.

<u>Skills</u>

Maryland Core Learning Goal I.1.A.2

"The student will use during-reading strategies appropriate to both the text and purpose for reading by visualizing, making connections, and using fix-up strategies such as rereading, questioning, and summarizing."

Students will be able to –
- **paraphrase an extended passage**
- **summarize a scene**

Sample Objectives for *Macbeth*

Core Learning Goal I.2.A.2

"The student will examine meaning by determining how the speaker, organization, sentence structure, word choice, tone, rhythm, and imagery reveal an author's purpose."

- **Use what they know about iambic pentameter to interpret and perform a line**

Macbeth Objectives

Concepts

Core Learning Goal I.3.A.1

"The student will explain how language and textual devices create meaning."

- **Motif**

Macbeth Objectives

Core Learning Goal I.1.A.3

"The student will use after-reading strategies appropriate to both the text and purpose for reading by summarizing, comparing, contrasting, synthesizing, drawing conclusions, and validating the purpose for reading."

- **Fate vs. free will**
- **Tragic hero**

Why are introductory activities essential?

What is an Opinionnaire?

An opinionnaire is a set of 10-15 statements. The students are given a range of possible responses.

SA   =   Strongly Agree

A   =   Agree

D   =   Disagree

SD   =   Strongly Disagree

What is an Opinionnaire?

Note: The options do not allow students to take a middle or neutral ground. They must choose a side. For the same reason, do not allow students to put something like 'A/D' for their response.

The statements should be –
- **Short**
- **Controversial**
- **Based on thematic elements of the text**

Process for Opinionnaire

Step 1: Distribute opinionnaires. If possible, leave room on the handout for students to explain their responses. Give them 10–15 minutes to complete the handout.

Step 2 (Optional): Put students in groups of 3–5 and give them a clean opinionnaire. Have them work through the handout together.

■ **Practice discussion behaviors**

■ **Students who are quiet in large group discussions may feel more comfortable talking in this format**

Process for Opinionnaire

Step 3: Give a clean opinionnaire to a student with leadership qualities. Have that student lead the discussion.

Other Uses for Opinionnaires

- They can be used as a kind of pre- and post-test. Have students repeat the process at the end of the book to explore how and why their responses have changed.

- They can be used to monitor continued reading. Have the students fill it out as though they were a certain character.

Opinionnaires and Writing Assignments

Examples:

- **"Ambition is always a good thing" can become the basis for the question – Is Victor a tragic hero?**

- **"Friends should be loyal no matter what" can become the basis for the essay question – Compare and contrast Hamlet's relationship with Horatio and his relationship with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.**

What are Scenarios?

- **Scenarios are based on 'what is?' questions designed to get students thinking about the meaning of a key idea in a text.**

- **They should be based on the essential question that you and your class have chosen.**

- **Text: *To Kill A Mockingbird***

- **Essential Question: What is courage?**

What is 'Cued Reading'?

- **Is a process that prompts the students to engage in a conversation with the text**

- **Helps the students realize that reading does not go in just one direction**

- **Encourages students to mark the text and to ask questions of the author**

- **Slows students down so they are reading for understanding, not just to complete the assignment**

Background on Role Plays

- **What are role plays?**

- **Why should you use them?**

- **How do they work?**

Sample Simulation

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

- **Situation – School Board Meeting**

- **Conflict – Should *Huck Finn* be read in public schools?**

- **Participants – Parents, Teachers, Students, School Administration, Members of the NAACP, Librarians, Lawyers, School Board members, etc.**

Guidelines for Simulations

- **Research and preparation**

- **Format**

- **Implications for writing**

"The Play's the thing. . ."

Why use drama?

Why Use Introductory Readings?

- **The expanding definition of literacy – what do students actually read?**

- **Meeting standards**

Why Use Introductory Readings?

Maryland Core Learning Goals I.2.A.4-6

"The student will

4. explain connections between and among themes and styles of two or more texts."

Example: "The Lottery" and *Lord of the Flies*

Why Use Introductory Readings?

*"*The student will

5. extend or further develop meaning by explaining the implications of the text for the reader or contemporary society

6. extend of further develop meaning by comparing texts presented in different media.*"*

Example: newspaper articles about cloning and *Frankenstein*

Why Use Non-Fiction?

- **What do students actually read?**

- **Immediate feedback, exportability** (Smith and Wilhelm)

- **Test preparation**

Implications for Writing

- **Definition essay and *Lord of the Flies***

- **Narrative writing and *The Catcher in the Rye***

- **Argument writing and *Of Mice and Men and Frankenstein***

How Do You Know If You've Made a Difference?

- **The testing trap**

- **Baselines / milestones**
  - Choosing passages
  - Glossing vocabulary
  - Asking comparable questions
  - Constructing a rubric

How Do You Know If You've Made a Difference?

- **Evaluating in teams**
- **The use of anchor papers**
  - For consistency
  - As models
- **Examining (not fearing) the data**
- **Using the data to plan**

A few thoughts on. . .

- **Risk**

- **Controversy**

- **Workload**

What Happens Next?

- **Introductory activities**

- **Assessments**

- **www.teacherquality.us**

Review

- **Backwards Planning**

- **Essential Questions**

- **Introductory Activities**

- **Monitoring Reading**

- **Implications for Writing**

- **Baseline / Milestone Assessment**

- **Submit ideas**

Final Thoughts

- **Questions**

- **Comments**

- **Suggestions**

- **Evaluations**