

Workshop 5

Using Art and Other Disciplines To Enrich Classroom Conversations

"I think it's important to offer many ways for children to express themselves and their understanding of the book. Some kids are not very verbal or they're shy and [alternate modes of expression] reveal a whole other dimension."

—BJ Namba, Third-Grade Teacher, Punahou School, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Introduction

Language—written or oral—is a customary mode when asking students to respond to literature. However, it is certainly not the only one. Some teachers have turned to the visual and dramatic arts to provide students with alternative modes of response. Other teachers have found ways to use music or dance to help students think about texts from additional viewpoints. These alternative forms of response have the benefit of enriching the conversation by encouraging contributions from students who might otherwise be reluctant to participate. In addition, changing the medium of response pushes students to think about texts in fresh ways as they move from literal comprehension to more complex understandings of the text.

In this video, the teachers share how they have integrated these alternative response modes—both formally and informally—into their classrooms. In spite of potential difficulties with organization and order, these teachers feel strongly that the value alternate response modes bring students far outweighs possible disadvantages. Not only are their classrooms livelier, and their students more engaged, but they have also found the conversations more insightful and the levels of meaning enriched.

Key Points

- Students can express themselves and their understandings about literature through writing, drawing, dramatic activities, and music.
- Alternate ways of response to literature help students move from literal to more complex understandings.
- Alternate response modes help readers enrich understandings of the text and of themselves.
- The processes students engage in as they plan a dramatic performance—developing interpretations and choosing how to present those interpretations—may well have more value than the performance itself.
- Drama helps both the performers and the actors develop rich understandings of character and motivation.
- Not only do alternate response modes help students express current ideas, often they cause them to generate new ones.
- When students share their work, their particular responses often influence and expand the responses of their classmates.
- Writing is an effective response mode because it can be private and allows students to focus on ideas that they are in the process of working out.
- Writing slows down thinking, allowing students time to get their complete idea on a page.
- Often spending in-depth time on a particular text has more lasting value for students than trying to “cover” a number of texts quickly.

Learning Objectives

After participating in this session, you will be able to:

- Consider offering students a repertoire of response modes to literature, including drama, art, writing, and music.
- Identify spontaneous moments when a shift from discussion to another response mode might be effective for students.
- Recognize that including drama, art, writing, and music as meaning-making response modes is designed to enrich students' understandings of the literature as well as to offer assessment opportunities.

Background Reading

In preparation for Workshop 5, read "Literature Across the Curriculum" in Dr. Judith Langer's *Envisioning Literature* from the Teachers College Press, 1995.

For additional online resources, visit the *Envisioning Literature* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, select *Engaging With Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 3–5*, and look under Additional Reading for Workshop 5.

Workshop Session (On-Site)

Getting Ready (30 minutes)

This workshop video focuses on ways to use drama, art, writing, and music to help students expand their envisionments of literary texts. The teachers describe specific activities they have used in their classrooms and how their students responded. The video shows students prepare a dramatic presentation for the class, discuss the symbolic values of their artwork created in response to a text, and respond to music played in conjunction with the reading of a poem. As you watch and listen, consider your students. How might they respond to some of these activities? How might such activities enhance their understanding and appreciation of literature?

Site Leader: Use the questions below to spark discussion before viewing the workshop program. Participants may write answers to the questions in their workshop journals, as time permits. You may use all of the questions or select only a few. If you have Internet access, display the companion Web site to this workshop at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, making participants aware of online resources and interactive opportunities.

Discuss:

Discuss the following questions:

- Have you had success using drama or art in your classroom? Describe what you asked students to do and how they responded.
- What are some management strategies you have found helpful when asking students to work on group projects?

Reflect in Workshop Journals:

Respond to the following in your workshop journal:

- What strategies have you found useful as you engage your less verbal students in literary discussions? Why have they worked?

Watch the Workshop Video (60 minutes)

Watch and Discuss:

Pause at the title card "Visual Response: A Tool for Understanding."

- What makes drama such an effective way of responding to literature?
- What difficulties might you encounter with your students as you integrate dramatic responses into your instruction?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

Site Leader: If you are watching on videocassette, you may pause at the segments indicated below to give participants opportunities to discuss, reflect, and interact with the program. If needed, rewind and replay segments of the program so that viewers can thoughtfully examine all pertinent information. If you are watching a real-time broadcast, ask participants to consider the questions as they view the program, and discuss them later.

You may select any or all of the questions below to discuss, as time permits and according to the interests of your participants.

Workshop Session (On-Site), cont'd.

Pause at the title card "Writing To Reach and Express New Understanding."

- What makes the visual arts an effective way to respond to literature?
- What visual arts have you tried and found effective?
- Are there any visual modes that you haven't tried, but are interested in?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

Pause at the title card "Using Music to Expand Meaning."

- What are some of the written response modes you have used with your students?
- What are the benefits of spontaneous, informal written responses to literature?
- When do you like to use formal written responses?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

View program until the end.

- How might music contribute to your literature class?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

Going Further (30 minutes)

Discuss:

Divide into groups formed across grade levels. Each group should choose one response mode (art, music, dance, drama, and writing) and brainstorm a list of ways to use that mode to respond to literature. Share your lists with the entire group. Record key ideas in your workshop journal for future reference.

Between Sessions (On Your Own)

Homework Assignment

Journal:

Respond to the following in your workshop journal:

- Choose one of the response modes discussed in this video—drama, the visual arts, writing, and music—and identify several ways you might invite students to try it with specific texts. How might you introduce it to the class? What safeguards against classroom chaos might you wish to put into place?

Reading:

In preparation for Workshop 6, read “A Practical Pedagogy” in Dr. Judith Langer’s *Envisioning Literature* from the Teachers College Press, 1995.

Ongoing Activity

Channel-Talk:

You are encouraged to participate in an email discussion list called Channel-Talk. Send comments and questions regarding the workshop to other participants around the country. Comments can also be viewed on the Web site. Go to www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, select *Engaging With Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 3–5*, and click on Channel-Talk.

Extension: Classroom Connection

Student Activities:

Try these activities with your students.

- Give your students copies of the “Thinkmark” included in the Appendix of this guide to record their “reader thoughts” as they prepare for discussion about their reading.
- Pause during read-aloud after an emotional moment and ask students to spend several moments writing from the point of view of one of the characters. Use their writing as the basis for discussion.
- Alternately, choose a selection of dialogue from a group text, reproduce copies for everyone, and ask students in small groups to practice reading the dialogue dramatically. Have some students share with the class as a whole.
- Experiment with some of the ideas for reader response from *Alternate Response Modes: Some Suggestions*, found in the Appendix of this guide.

Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner:

Which of the response modes discussed in this workshop are you personally most comfortable with? Why? Which one are you most unsure about? What help might you need to feel confident experimenting with a mode with which you are not personally comfortable?

Additional Reading

- Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994.
- Berghoff, Beth, Kathryn A. Egawa, Jerome C. Harste, and Barry T. Hoonan. *Beyond Reading and Writing: Inquiry, Curriculum, and Multiple Ways of Knowing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.
- Blecher, Sharon and Kathy Jaffee. *Weaving in the Arts: Widening the Learning Circle*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.
- Carreiro, Paul. *Tales of Thinking: Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1998.
- Chatton, Barbara. *Blurring the Edges: Integrated Curriculum Through Writing and Children's Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999.
- Claggartt, Fran with Joan Brown. *Drawing Your Own Conclusions: Graphic Strategies for Reading, Writing, and Thinking*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992.
- Gee, Karolynne. *Visual Arts As a Way of Knowing*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1999.
- Graves, Donald H. *Bring Life Into Learning: Create a Lasting Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999. ISBN 0-325-00170-7.
- Heller, Paul G. *Drama as a Way of Knowing*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1995.
- Hubbard, Ruth Shagoury. *A Workshop of the Possible: Nurturing Children's Creative Development*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1996.
- King, Caryn M. and Peg Sudol. *Fusing Science With Literature: Strategies and Lessons for Classroom Success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.
- Lindquist, Tarry. *Seeing the Whole Through Social Studies*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.
- Lindquist, Tarry and Douglas Selwyn. *Social Studies at the Center: Integrating Kids, Content, and Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000.
- McClure, Amy A. and Janice V. Kristo, eds. *Books That Invite Talk, Wonder, and Play*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996.
- Meinbach, Anita Meyer, Liz Rothlein, and Anthony D. Fredericks. *The Complete Guide to Thematic Units: Creating the Integrated Curriculum*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 2000.
- Pugh, Sharon L, Jean Wolph Hickeys, and Marcia Davis. *Metaphorical Ways of Knowing: The Imaginative Nature of Thought and Expression*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997.
- Pugh, Sharon L., Jean Wolph Hickeys, Marcia Davis, and Tonya Venstra. *Bridging: A Teacher's Guide to Metaphorical Thinking*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992.
- Short, Kathy G. and Jerome C. Harste with Carolyn Burke. *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996.
- Smagorinsky, Peter. *Expressions: Multiple Intelligences in the English Class*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991.
- Sorensen, Marilou R. and Barbara A. Lehman, eds. *Teaching With Children's Books: Paths to Literature-Based Instruction*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1995.
- Stefanakis, Evangeline Harris. *Multiple Intelligences and Portfolios: A Window Into the Learner's Mind*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
- Swarz, Larry. *The New Dramathemes*, 3rd ed. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2002.

Additional Reading, cont'd.

Tiedt, Iris McClellan. *Teaching With Picture Books in the Middle School*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000.

Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Tunnell, Michael O. and Richard Ammon. *The Story of Ourselves: Teaching History Through Children's Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993.

Wagner, Betty Jane. *Educational Drama and Language Arts: What Research Shows*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.

Whitin, David J. and Sandra Wilde. *It's the Story That Counts: More Children's Books for Mathematical Learning K-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.

Whitin, David J. and Sandra Wilde. *Read Any Good Math Lately? Children's Books for Mathematical Learning K-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992.

Whitin, Phyllis. *Sketching Stories, Stretching Minds: Responding Visually to Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996.

Wolf, Dennie Palmer and Dana Balick, eds. *Art Works! Interdisciplinary Learning Powered by the Arts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999.

Wooten, Deborah A. *Valued Voices: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching and Learning*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000.

Zakkai, Jennifer. *Dance As a Way of Knowing*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1997.

Professional journals about literature instruction:

CELA Newsletter: The National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement, State University of New York, Albany, publishes a newsletter in the fall, winter, and spring addressing a wide range of issues concerning literacy.

The National Council of Teachers of English Journals: NCTE publishes many subscription journals including *Language Arts* for the elementary school level.

The Reading Teacher from the International Reading Association typically includes excellent articles about literature instruction as well as regular reviews of new children's literature titles.

Additional Reading, cont'd.

Texts mentioned by teachers in this workshop program:

Souder by William Howard Armstrong
Smoky Night by Eve Bunting
The Jacket by Andrew Clements
Love That Dog by Sharon Creech
Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo
The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis
Yolanda's Genius by Carol Fenner
Walking the Road to Freedom: A Story About Sojourner Truth by Jeri Ferris
The Skin I'm In by Sharon G. Flake
Poetry Matters by Ralph Fletcher
"First Baseball Glove" in *Baseball, Snakes, and Summer Squash* by Donald H. Graves
The Color of My Words by Lynn Joseph
Cages by Peg Kehret
Drawing Lessons by Tracy Mack
The Grand Escape by Phillis Reynolds Naylor
A Family Apart by Joan Lowery Nixon
The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katherine Paterson
Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli
Hey You! C'Mere: A Poetry Slam by Elizabeth Swados

For additional online resources, visit the *Envisioning Literature* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, select *Engaging With Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 3–5*, and look under Additional Reading for Workshop 5.