

Short, 2004

LITERATURE DISCUSSION STRATEGIES

See *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers*, Kathy G. Short and Jerome Harste, Heinemann, 1996.

FREE WRITES (Connection)

After reading the book, set a timer for anywhere from 5-15 minutes. During that time, write continuously about your thoughts related to the book. If you run out of things to write, write "I don't know what to write" until you think of something else. In the group, one person begins by reading aloud all or part of their free write. The group discusses the ideas in that free write and then moves on to the next person. Instead of free writes, group members can create a sketch of their thoughts about the book.

LITERATURE LOGS or POST-FULL THINKING (Connection)

Stop periodically as you read and write about what you are thinking in response to a book. In the group, begin by having a person read an entry. The ideas are discussed by the group until the conversation dies down and then someone shares another entry. You could instead use post-its to jot a quick response or connection to place on a page in the book to share in the group.

ANOMALIES - Write down questions or things that surprise you. Once you finish reading, look back over your questions to identify the ones that you are still wondering about or that you wonder how others would respond to that question. Discuss the questions and generate new anomalies.

MAKING A CONNECTION - Jot down stories or experiences that come to your mind as you read. In the group, share your connections and talk about how they relate to the book. If the group is reading in a text set of different books, look for connections across all the books.

COLLAGE READING/TEXT RENDERING (Connection)

Mark quotes that are significant to you as you read. In collage reading, group members read aloud quotes to each other. One person reads a quote and then someone else comes in with another quote and the reading continues in no particular order. Readers choose when they will read a particular quote in order to build off of what someone else has read. There are no comments about the quotes. Text Rendering is similar except that someone reads a quote and states why they chose it and then someone else reads a quote. There is no discussion about the quotes or the comments until after the text rendering is finished.

GRAFFITI BOARD (Connection)

Put a big sheet of paper on the table. Each group member takes a corner of the paper and writes and sketches their thoughts about the book or text set in a graffiti fashion. The responses, comments, sketches, quotes, and connections are not organized. The major focus is on recording initial responses during or immediately after reading a book.

When the group is ready to discuss, group members share their graffiti. The graffiti can then lead to webbing or charting to organize the connections.

SAY SOMETHING (Invitation; Text-based Response)

Two people share the reading of a short story. The first person reads aloud a chunk of text (several paragraphs or a page) to the other person. When the reader stops, both "say something" by making a prediction, sharing personal connections, asking questions, or commenting on the story. The second reader then reads aloud a chunk of text and again stops and both "say something." The two readers continue alternating the reading of the story, commenting after each reading, until the story is completed.

SAVE THE LAST WORD FOR ME (Invitation; Text-based response)

As you read, note passages or quotes that catch your attention because they are interesting, powerful, confusing, or contradictory and put the quote on a 3 x 5 card. On the back of the card, write your response or why you found that particular passage noteworthy. In the group, one person shares a quote and the group briefly discusses their response to that quote. When the discussion dies down, the person who chose the quote flips over the card and tells why he/she chose it. That person has the last word and the group then moves on to another person who shares a quote. Young children show a page from a picture book and others in the group share their responses, letting the child who chose that page have the last word.

SKETCH TO STRETCH (Invitation; Reader-based response)

After reading a book, make a sketch (a quick graphic/symbolic drawing) of what the story meant to you (not an illustration of the story) - your connections to the book. In the group, show your sketch, letting others comment on the meanings they see in the sketch before you share your meaning. Talk about your sketches with each other and discuss the different ideas raised by the sketches.

WRITTEN CONVERSATION (Invitation, Reader-based response))

Have a silent conversation by talking on paper. Two people share a piece of paper and a pencil and talk about a book by writing back and forth to each other. No talking is allowed except with young children who often need to read what they have written to each other.

STORY MAPS (Invitation, Text-based response))

Create a visual map to tell the story of a book as either a large mural in which one picture contains the major story elements of character, theme, setting, and plot or as a path that follows major story events.

TIME LINE (Invitation, Text-based response)

Create a time line to organize the major ideas or events of the story or to connect the story with other events in history. Can also create a time line to show highs and lows in tension and suspense in story.

STORY RAY (Invitation, Text-based response)

Each person receives a 3 foot long narrow strip of paper. Each person is responsible for one chapter, the cover, or a possible epilogue. On the ray, a visual essence of the selected chapter is created using colors, images, and a few words with various art media and little or no white space. The rays are then assembled on a large mural or wall to reflect the unfolding of the novel.

WEBBING WHAT'S ON MY MIND (Tension)

After sharing initial responses to a book, the group brainstorms a web of issues, themes, and questions that they could discuss from the book or text set. Using the web, the group decides on the one issue that is most interesting or causes the most tension to begin discussion. They continue their discussions by choosing from other ideas on their web. New ideas are added as they come up in the discussion.

CONSENSUS BOARD(Tension)

A board is created with a circle in the middle and 4 sections. The circle contains the title of the book or a key theme from the book. In the individual sections, each person writes down personal connections to that theme or book. The group shares these individual and then comes to consensus on the tensions, issues, or big ideas they want to explore further. These tensions are written in the middle of the board.

CHART A CONVERSATION (Tension)

Discuss a book in a group and fill in a chart with the categories: I Like, I Dislike, Patterns, Problems/ Puzzles. Each group shares what is on their chart and the other groups write anything new in a different color on their charts. The groups then talk about something on the chart that they didn't previously discuss. Each group shares what they discussed in a whole class discussion of the book.

COMPARISON CHARTS or VENN DIAGRAMS (Investigation)

Read and discuss a text set of books and talk about similarities and differences across the books. From these discussions, develop broad categories to use on a comparison chart--What is about this set of books that you want to look at more closely to compare the books? The books are written on the side and the categories across the top of the chart. Both pictures and words are used in the boxes. A venn diagram (two circles that overlap in the center) focus the comparison on one major issue at a time.

HEART MAPS (Investigation)

After an initial discussion of the book, the group chooses a character or a group of characters that they would like to think about further. On a big piece of paper the group maps that character's heart. The group discusses values and beliefs held by the character and what people or events are important to the character's life. These are mapped into a heart shape, using spatial relationships, color, and size to show the relative importance of each idea and the relationships between ideas. (Janine Schall)