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Content Area Learning: Teaching in an Online World

Writing About Your Reading

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Rationale for the Presentation

I identified the need for “Writing About Your Reading” based on having reading response journals in my classroom in the past and finding them to be ineffective. The journals began as a written conversation my students and I shared about their reading. The journals were completed weekly based on a topic generated from Reading GLE R2C and R3C; focusing on text elements, character development, sequencing, and synthesizing. What was ineffective was the time that it took for me to write a meaningful response every week as well as have the students be able to write their responses clearly and completely.

I am continuing to use the reading response journals in my classroom; my research has led me to many different ways I can have students write in their journals. The activity, “Movie in Our Heads”, was created by Elizabeth Dinkins, and will be modeled today. I have used this activity in my classroom to not only assess students’ comprehension skills, but to also build community. Nancie Atwell also explores the reader’s workshop in her book, [The Reading Zone](#) in which she devotes an entire chapter to reading response journals. She asks students to respond in their own journals, as well as responding to each other’s journals, not the teacher. You will also leave today with other activities that you can use or modify for your own classroom use.

Activity Talk

The Movie in Our Heads – activity that was developed by Elizabeth Dinkins

1. Minilesson – How visualization can help your brain get reading to use the words that you read
2. Read Aloud excerpt from Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O’Dell
3. Whole class discussion about the movie we each saw
4. Each student creates his or her own visualization of the excerpt
5. Group discussion about the visualization created
6. Written reflection in the journals about the visualization
7. Whole class share

Follow Ups

My hope is that you are able to use this activity in your own classroom. When students can see what the words are telling them, then they are able to begin that deeper level of thinking.

Other activities that I can use to get my students Writing About Their Reading

1. Written interview with a character from the text
2. Write a reader’s theatre script
3. Ask students how they would rewrite the dialogue

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Notes

Bibliography

Atwell, Nancie. The Reading Zone. New York, New York: Scholastic, 2007.

Dinkins, Elizabeth. They Have to See It to Write It: Visualization and the Reading-Writing Connection. 01 Dec 2007. 11 July 2008.
<<http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2481>>.

O'Dell, Scott. Island of the Blue Dolphins. New York, New York: Scholastic, 1992.

Copy of the excerpt from Island of the Blue Dolphins

There had been wild dogs before on the Island of the Blue Dolphins as long as I can remember, but after the Aleuts had slain most of the men of our tribe and their dogs had left the join others, the pack became much bolder. It spent the nights running through the village and during the day was never far off. It was then that we made plans to get rid of them, but the ship came and everyone left Ghalasat. I am sure that the pack grew bolder because of their leader, the big one with the thick fur around his neck and yellow eyes.



