

Revealing Understanding

Pembroke's Friday Freebie

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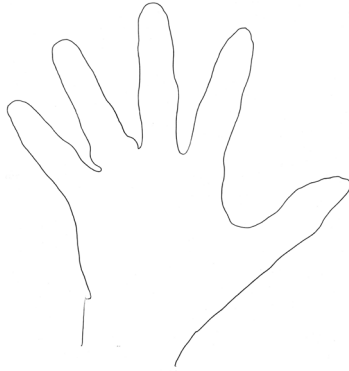
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Revealing Understanding: Activities

The following provides some suggested response activities that integrate reading, writing, talk, and arts responses to literature. These activities are suitable for almost any novel.

Activity 4-1: A Handy Outline

Here is one way to engage students in making inferences about the plot of a novel read.



1. Direct each student to place a hand palm-down with fingers spread out on a blank piece of paper and to trace around the hand.
2. On each finger in the drawing, students list an exciting event from the novel.
3. In the space between each finger, students list an event that they think is important but less exciting than those listed on the fingers. They will now have a total of nine events.

Extension: Students work with one or two classmates who have read different novels and use their hand outlines to retell significant events from the books read.

Activity 4-2: That Reminds Me Of . . .

Invite students to make connections between the novel they are reading and the people, places, and events that are familiar to them. When they record these connections, they may refer to the categories given below, but need not (and likely cannot) respond to all of them. When students can connect a memory in their lives with an incident in the novel, they should briefly identify it and list the page reference.

People in their life
 Relationships they have had
 Adventures or incidents from the past
 Adventures or incidents that happened to someone they know
 Places they have visited
 Conversations they have had
 Feelings they have had
 Problems or conflicts with which they are familiar
 Other people's experiences
 Other books read
 Films or television shows seen
 World events from the past
 Recent news events

Extension: Have students work in groups to share connections they have with a novel they have read. Group members may have read the same novel, or not. Tell the students that, as they share stories about connections made, other group members may tell stories that they are reminded of, too. Remind them to explain how the novel inspired these connections.

“A Novel Pyramid,” on page 113, provides an opportunity for students to distil what they think of a novel into 36 words. Students then use their notes to discuss the title they read with at least one other person who has read a different novel.

Activity 4-3: Deal the Cards

“Deal the Cards” involves students in writing novel plot summaries and in determining important ideas. For this activity, each student will need 12 file cards (or 12 sheets of paper). On each file card, the student writes one or two sentences that describe an important event in the novel. Once the writing is completed, the cards should be mixed up so that they are out of order.

Students then work with a partner who has read a different novel. Each person is challenged to arrange the 12 cards — that is, 12 events — listed by his or her partner in a correct sequential order.

Tell the partners to take turns retelling the story of the novel they read using the 12 file cards as cues. It is important to connect the events by explaining how or why one event led to the next.

Activity 4-4: 100 Words

“100 Words” provides another opportunity for students to summarize, this time by creating a synopsis, or book blurb, that tells others about the novel read. One purpose of a book synopsis is to interest others in the book, to persuade them to read it, so there needs to be a balance between highlighting the plot and problems of the novel and not giving too much away. When preparing a novel synopsis, the writer needs to

- summarize the plot
 - explain the major conflict
 - describe the characters and their relationships to one another
 - highlight the main theme(s) of the novel
1. Direct students to prepare a synopsis of the novel by writing a summary that is exactly 100 words. Doing so means that students will continue to revise and edit and endeavor choose the best words possible to inform others about the novel.
 2. Once their book blurbs are completed, students find a partner who has written a synopsis for the same novel. Partners compare ideas and then combine them to make a new summary exactly 100 words long.

Extension: As a class, students can post these synopses on a class website to inform and invite others to read the recommended books.

Activity 4-5: Going Graphic

This plot-focused activity provides a way for students to make inferences and synthesize events while responding to a novel through use of technology and visual arts.

Ask students to imagine that the novel they are reading is going to be transformed into a graphic story or comic. Prompt them to choose a significant event from the novel and to create a graphic page featuring six to eight panels to tell the story. For the graphic presentation, they might consider these questions:

- Which characters will appear in the illustrations?
- Will the panels show a scene up close, at a middle distance, or far away?
- How will the setting of the story be captured?

- How will narrative captions be used to tell the reader what is happening in some panels?
- Who will be speaking in speech bubbles? Will there be thought bubbles?

Students may wish to use a computer program (e.g., Comic Life) to help them create their graphic stories. If more than one classmate has read the same novel, students can work collaboratively to create a graphic story drawn from a single chapter or several chapters. They can create a comic longer than six to eight panels, if desired.

Activity 4-6: Text-Message Conversations

This activity affords students an opportunity to focus on character and plot while drawing on technology and media literacy to make inferences.

Students select an important or pivotal event or moment in the novel and create an imaginary text-message conversation between two characters from the novel. The conversation might describe or comment on the significant event.

To help them prepare for this activity, have students consider their own text-message conversations so that they duplicate the style and form of a message conversation. Tell them that they should also consider the way the character would text, as well as vocabulary and expressions the character would use as evident in the novel.

Extension: Students can work in pairs to read their conversations aloud and share with the class, thereby giving the class a sense of the characters and issues. The conversations could also be recorded or posted.

Activity 4-7: Movie Producer's Pitch

This activity, focused on a novel as a whole, invites students to promote a novel that they have enjoyed through writing and use of media. Students can work in pairs, in groups of three to five, or as a whole class to make their pitches. By stepping into role as movie producers, they can review and celebrate a novel they have read while the individuals or groups they partner with go into role as directors. Ideally, each group making a pitch has read something that the others have not. Students will have opportunities to practice the comprehension strategies of synthesizing and making inferences.

As an alternative to small groups presenting pitches to each other, each group could present its ideas to the teacher in role as director. In this way, sharing pitches becomes a whole-class activity, and the students can hear all the other groups' pitches. As they present, they should be challenged to convince the director how a movie based on their chosen novel would appeal to an audience.

The line master on page 114 outlines what students need to consider when drafting their persuasive pitches.

Activity 4-8: Calling a Help-Line Adviser

This activity is modeled on call-in radio programs where listeners ask for advice from an expert doctor or social worker or on help lines, such as Kids Help Phone, established to guide troubled youth who seek assistance. It allows students to delve into novel character and theme through the strategies of summarizing,

making inferences, and evaluating. Both guidance and drama are curriculum connections.

Students work in pairs. One partner takes on the role of a character from a novel they have read. The other partner takes on the role of the support line worker or adviser on the radio. The novel character has made the decision to make the phone call and get advice about how to proceed. Each student in that role provides as much background information as possible by describing events and relationships that appear in the novel. The student in role as adviser should be prepared to ask as many questions as needed to understand the problem before offering advice on how to deal with it.

Each partner should have a chance to role-play the adviser and a novel character.

Extension: Allow students to choose one of their dramatized scenes to present to an audience, either another pair or the whole class. These scenes can serve as case studies to demonstrate some tough issues drawn from life. After watching a scene, students can discuss strategies for dealing with the issues central to the novel. The questions below can be used to consider the issues presented:

- How did the character come to be in the circumstances?
- What advice might be given to deal with the problem?
- Who might the character speak to about the problem?
- What are some of the challenges of having this conversation?
- How might this person help deal with the problem?

An alternative way to present these scenes is to videotape a conversation between a troubled youth and a social worker. The videotapes can serve as case studies to present to others.

Activity 4-9: Designing a Character's Bedroom

One way to understand a character in a novel is to think about where he or she lives. This activity offers a way for students to focus on a novel's character through the visual arts. Students have opportunities to visualize and make inferences.

To prepare for this art activity, students list information that they know about a central character from the novel they have read. They may consider words to describe the character's personality, personal relationships, hobbies, interests, possessions, skills and talents, and accomplishments.

Students then use this information to create a two-dimensional drawing of the bedroom that this character might have. They may want to use the Internet to find and modify images to help create the bedroom. These questions may help them to develop their illustrations:

- What posters or pictures might appear on the walls?
- What books might be in the room?
- What equipment, souvenirs, or gifts received might be on display?
- What kind of bed would the character sleep on?
- What other furniture would be in the room?
- Is the room tidy or messy?
- What colors would be favored?

Extension: Once students have completed their drawings, let them share the drawings in groups. For this activity, each student can be a tour guide to describe and explain what is in the character's bedroom, what it might look like, why it is in the bedroom, and why something is significant to the character.

Activity 4-10: Location! Location! Location!

Imagining that the novel they have read is going to be made into a television mini-series is a way for students to focus on novel setting.

In a mini-series, there will likely be many different settings where the action takes place, so choices will have to be made. Tell students to think of themselves as location managers hired to recommend different locations where the film will take place. Some of these settings will be real; others might require the building of sets. Ask: "If you were the location manager for a film of your book, what settings do you think would be required to make the movie?"

Tell students that the cost of including all locations would be expensive, so they will need to decide which scenes from the novel are essential and which can be excluded. Responding to the following questions and statements will help them identify and consider the importance of the novel's settings:

Where did most of the action take place?

What location would be easiest to produce?

List scenes that took place outdoors.

List scenes that took place indoors.

What scenes could be eliminated or combined with other scenes?

Extension: Invite students to provide an illustration of *at least one* setting that would be required for the filming of this novel. This illustration will help the director and the set designer for the production of the film.

Activity 4-11: Readers Theatre Presentation

Readers Theatre is a literature-based ensemble activity whereby participants have authentic reasons to interpret and practice delivering a text in order to give a polished presentation. Preparing a presentation based on a novel engages students in considering an author's writing style and choice of language. Readers Theatre connects with the drama curriculum. A detailed student line master sets out a Readers Theatre activity for students on pages 115 and 116.

Activity 4-12: Capturing Voice

Students focus on style and language when they consider the effects of writing a novel in either first-person voice or third-person voice. In this exercise, they use the comprehension strategy of making inferences as they rewrite a novel excerpt in alternative voice and discuss the effects of changing voice with a partner. The line master on page 117 discusses first-person and third-person voice and outlines the activity in detail.