

*MINNESOTA WRITING PROJECT
DEMONSTRATION LESSON*

Title: Pre-writing activities for improving students' connections to literature.

Grade appropriate: Any grade. This lesson was specifically written for 5th and 6th grade classes of English Language Learners.

Approximate length of time to complete lesson: 50 minutes

Objective (s) to be covered: Students will be able to:

- a. create a list of connections they have to various themes or items tied to a book that will be read with the class
- b. categorize their connections, as well as the connections of their classmates, into the following types: Text to Self, Text to Text, and Text to World

Specific standards addressed:

Minnesota Academic Standards in Language Arts

Grade Level	Strand	Sub-Strand	Standard	Benchmarks
GRADE 5 and GRADE 6	I. READING AND LITERATURE	D. Literature	The student will actively engage in the reading process and read, understand, respond to, analyze, interpret, evaluate and appreciate a wide variety of fiction, poetic and nonfiction texts.	8. Respond to literature using ideas and details from the text to support reactions and make literary connections.

While this lesson focuses on working with 5th and 6th grade students, the Minnesota Academic Standards in Language Arts requires that students be able to make connections between their own lives, literature, and other written and spoken works throughout the K-12.

Brief summary/outline:

Making connections is a reading strategy used to help students improve their comprehension. By having students connect a piece of text to their own lives (Text to Self), another piece of text (Text to Text), or their knowledge of the world (Text to World), students are able to make more accurate assessments of their own comprehension. They are also able to extend their understanding of the text by accessing their prior knowledge. Prior to this lesson, the class would have spent time working with these connections.

This lesson is a pre-learning activity done prior to introducing a new novel to the class. It can also be used if the class is preparing to use literature circles with several novels. In that case, the challenge will be to find themes that are represented in all the books.

Steps for the lesson:

1. The teacher opens up the class by explaining that we are going to be brainstorming possible connections about a new book. The teacher does not tell the students what the book will be.
2. Teacher draws a grid on the white board (chalk board) with 4- 6 boxes, each box large enough for both the teacher and the students to write in.
3. Students create a matching grid in their notebooks. This can also be done on a loose-leaf piece of paper. A notebook is preferred, however, because this sheet should be saved for use later in the unit.
4. Teacher reviews the types of connections that students can make to a piece of literature: Text to Self, Text to Text, and Text to World. Students will have already worked on these types of connections in an earlier unit.
5. The teacher then writes one theme or item from the new book in one of the boxes, leaving plenty of room to write connections in the box. Students copy the theme onto their own papers.
6. Teacher explains that students should jot down words or phrases that remind them of a connection they made to the theme. The teacher should jot an example of a connection in the box to help guide students.

For example, if the theme were “Arguing with your parents,” students would jot down words or phrases that remind them of a time they (or someone they know) argued with their parents. They might also write down the title of a book they have read in which characters argue with parents. An important point here is that they should not worry about writing full sentences. Students just need to write down words or phrases that will jog their memories later.

7. The teacher and the students repeat this process, inserting one theme in each box of the grid, until all boxes have been filled.
8. Students then come to the board and write one or more of their jottings in each theme’s box. This works well with a small group. With a larger class, the teacher can split the class into smaller groups and give each group a piece of butcher paper to mirror what is happening on the board.

9. The teacher reviews the students' jottings. Students categorize each jotting by type of connection. Students are encouraged to add any connections with which they identify onto their own sheet.

As the class reads the book, students will be asked to make connections in their reading journals. By brainstorming possible topics prior to reading, the students have activated prior knowledge. They have also created their own list of potential writing prompts to use when making connections.

Contact for additional information:

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