

# Connections to Literature

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## **Overview**

In order to comprehend literature, students need to become engaged in what they are reading. Engagement for some becomes difficult when the characters, setting and plots look, feel and are nothing like what a child has experienced. The purpose of this curriculum unit is to enhance student's comprehension by instilling strategies for connecting to texts of any genre, involving any and all cultures.

This unit is intended to complement the School District of Philadelphia's pre-existing reading curriculum (Harcourt Trophies). The allotted time for this unit is a week in the fall and a week in the spring during "re-teach weeks"- when teachers have a chance to review strategies with alternate materials. In the fall, the focus will be creating the connections and deepening a student's ability to do so on their own. In the spring, the focus will be "walking in a character's shoes," inserting oneself into a story in order to better understand it.

## **Rationale**

Historically our country has primarily focused on the majority to represent everyone in television, literature and many other aspects of media and everyday life. The obvious problem with this is the fact that our country is not only composed of the majority. Many other ethnic groups make up the population and at times do not feel represented, especially in the literature chosen for students in schools. Many times, when African-American selections are chosen for anthologies for students, they contain token selections that do not adequately portray the African-America that is experienced by many (Minor, p.85). There are occasionally a few sightings, however for the most part, the struggles, everyday drama and conflicts that occur within the African-American community are missing (Minor, p.87). School literature could be said to be "one note" with few instances of variation.

Multi-ethnic literature is imperative to racial harmony (Alexander, p.96). Literature that speaks to all (or most) cultures is needed in schools, not only in our country, but all over the world. Curriculums, including anthologies that accurately reflect the lives and contributions of a variety of ethnic groups, will help to reduce the cultural gap.

Learning is easiest for students when certain identifiable aspects of the situation are present with which the student can relate (Alexander, p.97). However, they also need to experience other cultures in reading without being turned off. Therefore, as we work toward changing anthologies to become more inclusive, devising ways for students to connect to the passages they read is imperative for comprehension.

## **Objectives**

This unit is intended for an audience of fifth grade students in a low to mid-income urban Philadelphia neighborhood.

The objectives for the unit will be as follows:

- Students will develop strategies for connections to any text.
- Students will develop a richer love of various types of literature in the process.

## **Background**

There are three main ways for students to connect to literature: text to self, text to text, and text to world.

Text to self will be the primary focus of this curriculum unit. Text to self involves the student identifying with a character's feelings, situation or lifestyle and being able to relate to the passage in some way, shape or form. This connection may come in the form of similar experiences, character traits, values or family structure.

Text to text connections show the similarities and differences between the passage being currently read and others that the student may have read in the past. These skills seem to come easy to students because they are directly taught on a fairly frequent basis.

Text to world connections have the student comparing the passage they are reading with current events happening in the world around them. This can be, depending on the passage, more difficult. Many of the passages used in our curriculum are from within the past decade, but not current enough for students to see how they relate to our modern world. This will not be touched upon in this paper.

## **Strategies**

Students will use graphic organizers, fairy tales - along with alternate versions of the tales, and group and partner work/discussion for much of the beginning and ending stages of this curriculum.

The graphic organizers will include a Double Entry Journal and a Venn Diagram. The Double Entry Journal is an organizer that consists of two columns. One column is titled “Events/Text” and refers to things directly from the passage that is being read. The other side is titled “Connections” and students - directly across from the text that was pulled out - write what their connection is to that particular event or section of text. This organizer can be prepared beforehand by the teacher or students can copy it into notebooks after it has been modeled on the front board.

Venn Diagrams will be used later in the unit to compare an original passage and another version of it. This diagram will eventually guide the student in preparing their own version of the passage. Pulling out the similarities and differences will assist them in knowing which elements to change for their version and which to keep constant.

Classic fairy tales and alternate versions of them will be the primary focus for this unit. They are named in the Materials and Bibliography sections. There are also passages from the student’s reading anthologies that are used in the very beginning of the unit to introduce the topic of connecting to literature.

Throughout the unit, lessons will be modeled and students will have a chance to work independently or with a partner or group to complete their work. Partner and group work will aid those students who may have a tougher time understanding or completing the assignment.

Then, for the second half of the unit, students will rewrite and possibly publish texts from their own perspectives using the above strategies. The goal of this assessment project is to deepen their understanding of making literary connections and to cement their ability to do so. It will also give the teacher an idea of how well the student understands the concepts shown to them.

## **Classroom Activities**

The lessons for this unit will occur in the following order:

- Introductory Lesson
- Self Discovery Lesson
- Creating Connections Lesson
- In the Author’s Shoes Lesson
- Assessment Project

The standards remain the same for each lesson and are listed in the appendix.

## **Lesson Plan– # 1 Introductory Lesson**

Objectives:

The students will be able to understand that passages can be written from various perspectives.

Materials:

- *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by Eugene Trivizas
- *The Three Little Pigs* by Paul Galdone

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Teacher reviews the story of the three little pigs through summaries from volunteers in the classroom.

2. Model (10 minutes)

- Teacher reads the above selection to the class.

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

Teacher invites a discussion on the content of the passage with the following questions:

- How is this passage different from the original passage?
- What did the author do to create this passage?
- Why do you think the author did this?
- What advantages might there be in changing the perspective of a given tale?

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- Students discuss the answers amongst themselves and then as a class.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- Students discuss and record at least one way that they would change the original story and why they would make that change.

## **Lesson Plan– #2 Self Discovery Lesson**

Objectives:

The students will be able:

- to understand the importance of making connections
- to discover the link between making real connections and enhanced understanding

Materials:

- Double Entry Journal
- Two short passages (one highly relatable to student's lives, the other far removed from the student's experiences; the teacher chooses these based on their students)

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Teacher reviews what a text to self connection is.
- Teacher lets students know that they will be discovering the purpose of the lesson on their own. Through guided activities, students will determine the objective of the lesson on their own. They will however be asked to summarize two texts after they read them.

2. Model (10 minutes)

- Teacher gives a quick example of making a connection using the Double Entry Journal.
- Teacher reads a part of the less relatable selection aloud, writes an event or feeling from the passage on one side of the journal and writes a connection to it on the other side.

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- Teacher continues reading the selection and asks for a volunteer to choose an event, feeling or circumstance that they can relate or have a reaction to.
- Both are noted in the journal. This is continued one or two more times.
- Students continue with a partner or small group until they are finished.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- Students are then posed the following prompt: Give a one paragraph summary of this passage. Try not to use the passage at all, unless you really need to. Students complete this with a partner or small group in their reading notebooks.
- Students are asked to do the same with a more relatable text and given the same prompt.
- Once students have completed this activity come together as a class to discuss the work.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

Students are asked to go back to the first passage and come up with a rating of how easy it was to create the summary according to the following scale:

- 3-Difficult- there were frequent looks back at the passage; writing the summary took some time and/or **required** the assistance of a classmate or teacher.
- 2-Not too bad-the passage was looked back at a few times, but students were able to share ideas and create a summary with only a few difficulties.
- 1-Easy-students did not have to look back at the passage at all; students were able to write a summary with no help.

Once students rate their ability to write their summaries, the students are asked to compare and then analyze what differences exist between the ratings, if any. Then students are asked which passage was the most difficult and if they notice a relationship between their ability to connect to the passage and their ease with remembering it (they discuss with a classmate, then share our conclusions).

We close with students discussing their conclusion - the more one can connect with a passage, the more the passage is understood and remembered.

### **Lesson Plan– # 3 Making Connections Practice Lesson**

Objectives:

The students will be able:

- To make text to self connections while reading using student's reading anthology.
- To discover the link between making real connections and enhanced understanding.

Materials:

- Double Entry Journal
- One passage from student's reading anthology

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Teacher reviews what a text to self connection is and its importance in comprehension of a passage. Teacher reviews text to text and text to world connections, but lets students know the focus of this lesson and our future lessons in this curriculum will be text to self.
- Teacher reviews the Double Entry Journal format and students are made aware that they will be creating their own connections to various aspects of the text as they are reading.

2. Model (10 minutes)

- Teacher gives a quick example of making a connection using the Double Entry Journal. Teacher reads a part of the selection aloud, writes an event, or feeling from the passage on one side of the journal and writes a connection to it on the other side.

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- Teacher continues reading the selection and asks for a volunteer to choose an event, feeling or circumstance that they can relate or have a reaction to. Both are noted in the journal. This is continued one or two more times.

4. Independent Practice (5 minutes)

- Students continue completing the journal with a partner or small group until they are finished.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- Students share out some of their connections with the class and with a partner.

## **Lesson Plan– #4 Changing perspectives**

Objectives:

The students will be able:

- To understand that changing perspectives is one way of making connections easier.

Materials:

- *Hansel and Gretel* by the Brothers Grimm
- *Hansel and Granita* by Fred Crump

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Teacher reviews what a text to self connection is and how connections help students to better comprehend passages.
- Teacher lets students know that they will be listening to a passage in order to review changing perspective.
- Teacher will review how changing perspective is one way of connecting to a passage.

2. Model (10 minutes)

- Teacher reads the above passage.
- Teacher will note one way that the passage has been changed to accommodate a different perspective.

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- Teacher will guide students to name one additional way that the passage has changed according to the author's perspective.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- Students are then posed the following prompt: Give one reason why the author rewrote the passage with a different perspective and how hearing/seeing the passage differently assists with understanding it.
- Students work with a partner to complete the prompt.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- Students share out their answers.

## **Lesson Plan– # 5 Connections Application Lesson Pt.1**

Objectives:

The students will be able:

- To note the cultural differences between two passages using a Venn Diagram.

Materials:

- *Little Red Riding Hood (the traditional version)* by the Brothers Grimm
- *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young
- Venn Diagrams

Plans:

1. Introduction (20 minutes): an overall summary of the complete lesson is given to the class.

- Teacher reviews what a text to self connection is and its importance in comprehension of a passage.
- Teacher announces that they will listen to a traditional version of a familiar story, and then another version of the story told through the eyes of another culture.
- Teacher then describes how students will take notes on the “other” version of the familiar passage of things that stand out to them as different while they are listening to the story. And, once they are done analyzing the cultural changes in the second version, students will write their own version of the passage, told through their own eyes, with their own cultural references. (Preliminary actions and activities for this lesson are handled.)
- Teacher announces that for this first part of the lesson, they will read both passages and note the cultural differences. The traditional version of the passage is read. Students discuss and summarize the major points orally with a neighbor.

2. Model (10 minutes)

- Teacher will then read the alternate version of the passage. As the teacher is reading, students will take notes on the differences and similarities they notice between passages. Students will fill out a Venn Diagram as they listen, to record their findings.
- Teacher stops after the first few pages and jots down a similarity and a few differences on a drawn Venn Diagram on the board or overhead.

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- Teacher reads, then stops after a few pages for volunteers to contribute at least one similarity and one difference between the passages.

4. Independent Practice (5 minutes)

- Students continue on their own as the teacher reads the passage.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- Students share out their results and complete their diagrams.

## **Lesson Plan– # 5 Connections Application Lesson Pt.2**

Objectives:

The students will be able:

- to generate a list of elements that can be altered in a passage to create an adaptation.



Materials:

- Chart paper
- Completed Venn Diagrams from the previous lesson
- *Little Red Riding Hood* (the traditional version) by the Brothers Grimm
- *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Teacher reviews what was done in the previous lesson.
- Teacher explains that in this lesson, they will generate a list of things/elements that can be changed in the passage in order to create a unique adaptation.

2. Model (10 minutes)

- Teacher chooses one of the “differences” from the previous day’s Venn Diagram and states it in general terms: “I see that the title is changed to reflect the language/culture of the author. I am going to add ‘changed title’ to my list of things that can be altered.
- Teacher writes “changed title” on chart paper where the day’s work will be recorded.

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- Teacher asks for volunteers to note the areas/elements that can be changed to reflect the author’s culture/viewpoint. Examples-names of characters, what happens to the wolf, etc.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- Students work in partnerships to continue the list.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- Partnerships share out their ideas to add to the class list.

### **Lesson Plan– # 5 Connections Application Lesson Pt.3- Assessment Project**

Objectives:

The students will be able:

- to create a short adapted narrative using a familiar tale and notes from previous lessons.

Materials:

- Chart paper from previous lesson
- Completed Venn Diagrams from the previous lesson
- *Hansel and Gretel*
- *Little Red Riding Hood*
- *The Three Little Pigs*

Plans:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Teacher reviews what was done in the previous lesson.
- Teacher explains that in this lesson, they will use the list that they have created to help them create their own adaptation of a passage.

2. Model (10 minutes)

- Teacher chooses a tale and one of the items from the list, then uses that as a starting point for the new passage.

“I’m going to use *Hansel and Gretel*. One of the things that I can change to adapt this passage is the title. I am going to change the title to names that are more familiar to me (but I am not going to use Hakim and Grenita). I am going to use Haneef and Gracie. They have the same beginning sounds, so the reader realizes that it may be related to the original story. Next, I have to remember that I have to keep a certain amount of things the same so that the reader recognizes that this is an adaptation and not a brand new story. So, I am going to have them belong to a poor family with a mean step-mother. I think I may change the setting. That was one of the things we decided could be changed to reflect a culture. I think I will use....

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- Teacher asks for volunteers to assist with a beginning of a tale that is an adaptation of *Hansel and Gretel*.

4. Independent Practice (15 minutes)

- Students work in partnerships to begin their own adaptation.

5. Wrap up (15 minutes)

- Partnerships share out their idea beginnings.

\*\*Students will continue their passages for homework and for one additional lesson period. They have the option of making cover art for their tale, typing it up and “binding” it into a small booklet.\*\*

## **Annotated Bibliography/Resources**

### **Teacher Bibliography**

Alexander, Jean A. "Culturally Deprived Curriculum: Who are the Losers?" Negro American Literature Forum: St. Louis University, 1970.

Minor, Delores. "Public Schools and Black Materials," Negro American Literature Forum: St. Louis University, 1971.

### **Student Bibliography**

Two passages from student's reading anthology. These are chosen by the teacher based on the audience of this lesson. One is highly relatable to the students in the class, one is highly unrelatable.

Crump, Jr., Fred. *Hakim and Grenita*, Nashville, Tennessee: Winston-Dereck Publishers, 1991. *A variation of the classic Hansel and Gretel using African-American characters.*

Galdone, Paul. *The Three Little Pigs*, HMH Books, 2011. *The classic version of the tale.*

Hunt, Margaret. *Hansel and Gretel, Grimms Fairy Tales*, Dover Publications, 2007. *The classic version of the tale.*

Tatar, Maria M. *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2002  
*The classic version of the tale Little Red Riding Hood.*

Trivizas, Eugene. *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1993. *A variation of the classic tale, in this version, the roles of the wolf and pig are reversed.*

Young, Ed. *Lon Po Po*, Penguin Group, 1996. *This version is based on Chinese characters and has a few other slight differences from the original.*

## **Classroom Materials**

Double Entry Journals

Literature

Reading Notebooks (in which the Double Entry Journal can be copied or stapled into)

Making Connections Graphic organizers

Venn Diagrams

## **Appendices**

Literary Standards used in this unit:

1.1.5.G.2: Connect the new information or ideas in the text to known information. (R5.A.1, R5.A.2, R5.B.1)

1.1.5.G.3: Clarify ideas and understandings through rereading and discussion. (R5.A.1, R5.A.2, R5.B.1)

## Double Entry Journal

Event/Feeling from Passage	My Connection to this Event/Feeling