

Helping Students “Read like a Writer”

Reading with the End in Mind

Students should know what type of writing and the topic they will be responding to before they begin reading the text. This way they can be thinking about the reading in a meaningful and purposeful way.

We have learned that teaching students strategies to focus on the author’s structure and craft *during* the reading of a text is more effective in supporting students’ understanding of the text than reading quizzes, which are often punishments for neglecting homework rather than valid measures of a students’ independent thought and engagement. And reading quizzes are not helpful when it comes time to write about the text.

We recognize that if we want students to craft literature responses that demonstrate deep thinking about text, we, as teachers, must teach and model reading strategies that enable deep thinking. We are well aware of the number of students, particularly high school students, who have mastered their skills as “fake readers” (Tovani 2000). Our antidote to “fake reading” is an emphasis on strategy, “an intentional plan that readers use to help themselves make sense of their reading” (Tovani 2000, 5). We use these strategies to support students’ understanding and to push students to develop their thinking beyond just basic comprehension of the text.

Kinds of Responses

In support of reading strategies that nurture students’ thinking and writing in response to literature, we use the following kinds of responses to literature in our units. These responses support reading strategies as well as developing solid written response to literature.

- **Comprehension:** What does the text say?
- **Personal:** What connections can I make to my text-based experience?
- **Interpretive:** What might the text mean?
- **Form/ Craft:** How did the author accomplish the effect of the text?
- **Text to Text:** How does this text compare / contrast with other texts?
- **Authoritative:** What is my stance and what evidence do I have from the text in support of my argument?
- **Critical:** Why does the text matter?
- **Inspirational:** How can I use the text as a mentor for my own writing?
- **Habits of Mind:** What strategies do I use to read and understand this text?