Reading Toolkit: Grade 5 Objective 3.A.8.b

Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Literary Text

Indicator 8. Read critically to evaluate literary texts

Objective b. Identify and explain questions left unanswered by the text

Assessment Limits:

Questions and predictions about events, situations, and conflicts that might occur if the text were continued

Table of Contents

Objective 3.A.8.b Tools

- Lesson Seeds
- Public Release Item #1 - Selected Response (SR)

Indicator 3.A.8 Tools

- Clarification

Handouts

- Strongest of All

Lesson Seeds
Reading Grade 5 Objective 3.A.8.b

Activities

To begin, make certain that students understand the role of an epilogue in a literary text. Students may be familiar with epilogues from motion pictures, or the teacher may be able to share an epilogue from written text through a teacher read-aloud or student silent reading. After students have read a literary passage, the teacher and students will create an epilogue for that passage. Through discussion, the teacher will designate particular characters and have students suggest and justify future actions or plans for those characters. The teacher should record student suggestions. Once all characters have been discussed, individual students may create their own story epilogues selecting the particular "future" for each listed character.

After reading a literary text, students should work in small groups with each group assigned a different character from the text. Each group should prepare a set of three to five interview questions for the assigned character. Each question should not be answerable by the text, but each question must be based upon the text. For example, an interview question would be based upon something the character did, said, or thought and predict an action or an interaction that does not actually occur in the text. An example from Langston Hughes's "Thank You, M'am": Mrs. Jones, why did you not call the police after the attempted purse snatching? In the text, there is sufficient detail to relay a plausible response to the question, and knowing the answer to that question would extend a reader's understanding of character and character interactions. Then students should indicate the action, speech, or thought on which their question is based and formulate their response on specific details from the text. Students should explain why knowing the answer to each question extends and deepens their understanding of the text. In a presentation to the class, students may act out the questioning by assuming the roles of the characters and the interviewer. Extension: This same activity can be accomplished with a set of author interview questions, but instead of different characters, the teacher can assign different literary elements.

Prior to this activity, the teacher should select and prepare an age-appropriate literary text. First, the text should be "chunked" into sections and at the conclusion of each section should appear a question left unanswered by the text. Together the teacher and students should read the first section of text. Following the reading students should offer a series of responses to the question and be able to support their plausibility from the text. This procedure should continue until the entire text has been read. Next, students should read a second text which has been "chunked" but for which questions have not been prepared. Students should read and pause at the end of each section to ask a question about that section of text. As students continue through the text, they may find that certain questions will be answered by the text but others may remain unanswered. To complete the process, students might give responses to unanswered questions and defend their validity from the text.

Prior to this activity, the teacher should select and preview an age-appropriate literary text that will yield a single or a number of subtle shifts in plot and/or character developments. Together, the teacher and students should read the text stopping at junctures where these shift/s occur. The teacher should identify the shift to students and then direct students to a plot/character development or character speech within that section of text that could be interpreted in a variety of ways. Working with a partner, students should discuss an

interpretation of the plot/character development or speech that is valid within the context of the text. Next, students should share their interpretations with the entire class and discuss the important points of each interpretation. Students might select what they consider the top three interpretations. If additional shifts are present in the text, students can continue the process independently. An example of a subtlety would be Toni Cade Bambara's "Raymond's Run" which has a series of subtle shifts that reveal and define the narrator's character. A suggested area to focus interpretation is the last paragraph where the narrator discusses girls smiling at each other.

Prior to this activity, the teacher should select and preview an age-appropriate literary text that will yield direct shifts in plot or character that are in contrast to the development of that plot or character. An example would be chapter 11 in Christopher Paul Curtis's The Watsons Go to Birmingham 1963 where the character of Byron undergoes a direct shift. The teacher should identify the shift for students and then assist them in back mapping the development of that character to determine whether the shift in character was suggested in any way in the text.

Clarification

Reading Grade 5 Indicator 3.A.8

To show proficiency of critical evaluation of literary texts, a reader must form a number of judgments about a text. To begin this process a critical reader must read a text purposefully and focus thoughts on the interaction of literary elements within the text. During and after reading, the evaluation of the text requires a reader to determine the role of the literary elements, the relationship between the text and its historical, social, or political context, and the relationship between the structure of the text and its purpose. A full critical evaluation of a literary text requires attention to each of these components.

When a reader approaches a text critically, that reader is reading or listening to that text with a definite purpose and bringing to that text any prior knowledge that he or she may have. Knowing how one story is structured helps a reader understand each new story. Beginning at early stages to determine what story plot or characters are real or believable and what story plot or characters are fantasy establishes a groundwork for the more difficult determination of what plot and characters are plausible where people and events appear to be true or reasonable but often are not so. An analysis of a plot's plausibility begins with an identification of each element of a plot: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. A reader must decide whether each individual element is the business of everyday life or if the element is fanciful or futuristic. Once judgments about the plot elements are established, a reader needs to focus on characters. Given the background of the plot in which the character must act, a reader must analyze the character, determining whether the character's appearance, speech, and actions fit the plot. If the character does fit, the whole of the story will appear reasonable and true. If the character or an element of the plot stands out from or is in contrast to the whole of the story, the story will lose its believability.

A critical reader should be able to extend thinking from the text. At early stages after reading a text, a reader should review the plot and decide what plot or character details are incomplete and form a logical question about that character or plot development. Or given incomplete plot or character details, a critical reader should be able to make a logical prediction about furthering the plot or determining a realistic course of action or a change of beliefs for a character. A critical reader could expand upon a prediction and explain how, if that prediction were to occur, it would affect the plot and characters. A more sophisticated critical reader might query whether the author purposefully left unanswered questions about plot and character development to engage a reader. To that end, a text might contain ambiguities, subtleties, and contradictions.

- Ambiguity—the possibility of one or more correct interpretations of a plot development or character speech
- Subtlety—the not-so-apparent difficult-to-perceive shift in a plot or development of a character that gives rise to discussion and interpretation
- Contradiction—a shift of plot which belies all previous plot movements or a development of character which appears to be in direct conflict with how that character has been established

To fully appreciate historical fiction, a critical reader must be aware that certain elements of plot and certain characters are true historically while others are fictional. Fictional characters and events can be written and developed to appear plausible and can serve as a realistic backdrop for true historical events and characters or the reverse can be true. The historical characters and events can serve as a backdrop for the fictional characters and

events thereby making what is fictional appear more believable. Creating characters and events that are true to their historical context gives a critical reader a full picture of an historical time period.

The social context of a literary work addresses the social roles of characters based upon the time period of the work. Those issues may concern gender, race, or socio-economic status and will reflect the bias of that time period. These social issues may impact character development and motivation and plot development. Creating characters and events that are true to the social context of a literary work's time period create plausibility and give a reader a broader picture of a time period.

The political context of a literary work addresses how a society chooses it leaders, how rules are made and enforced and how governmental processes or decisions impact daily life. Just as political processes affect the lives of real-life citizens so do these processes when featured in a literary work affect the plot development of stories and the lives of fictional citizens.

When a story is crafted that attends to the historical setting and the social and political context of a time period, a plausible re-creation of that period is presented. A critical reader receives a fully developed picture of that time with characters who respond believably within the parameters of the story. To a critical reader, themes developed in such literary works comment upon the prevailing social and political standards of that time period and invite comparison to contemporary issues.

The structure of a literary work refers to its literary form. At its simplest a difference in literary form can be the difference between prose and poetry. As structure becomes more complex it can address different forms of poetry like limerick, couplet, sonnet, etc… or the difference in prose structures which can refer to the use of flashback, foreshadowing, journal entries versus chapters, sentence structure, etc…For each literary work, an author has a purpose; it can be as general as entertainment to as specific as pointing out a social injustice. For a critical reader to analyze the relationship between the structure of a literary work to its purpose, a critical reader must first read carefully to determine the author's purpose. Next, a reader will identify the structure of a literary work as specifically as is possible. Finally, a critical reader can determine whether the structure of a literary work best showcases the author's purpose and be able to explain why that structure works for that purpose.

Public Release #1 - Selected Response (SR) Item

Handout(s):

- Strongest of All

Reading Grade 5 Objective 3.A.8.b

Read the story 'Strongest of All' and answer the following question. Which of these is *not* explained in the story?

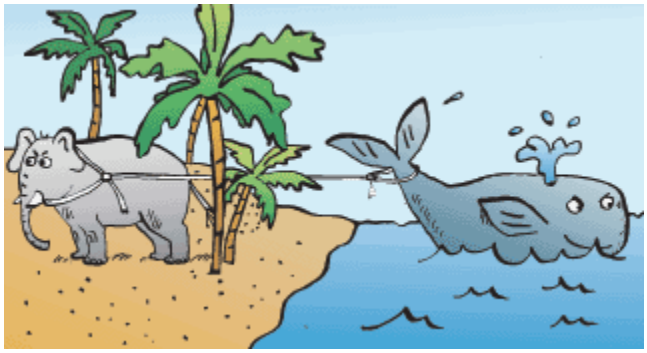
A. How did the rope break?
B. How did Rabbit signal the others who were so far away?
C. How did Rabbit get a rope that was long enough?
D. How did the elephant and the whale decide which kingdom each would rule?

Correct Answer:
C

Handouts

Strongest of All

By Pleasant DeSpain



One day long ago, clever Rabbit was walking along the seashore. Hearing voices, he stopped to listen. Elephant and Whale were having a conversation. He wanted to hear every word.

"Sister Whale," said Elephant, "you are the largest, strongest, and most beautiful animal of the sea. Naturally, I'm the largest, strongest, and most beautiful animal on the land. We two should rule over all the animals, birds, and fish on the earth."

"Yes, it's true, Brother Elephant," said Whale. "We are the greatest. You should rule the land. I'll be happy to rule the sea."

[4]Rabbit decided to play a trick on these two behemoths.

"I'm twice as smart as both of them," he said. "All I need is a long, strong rope and my jungle drum."

Later that afternoon Rabbit found Elephant in the woods and said, "Hello, Powerful Ruler of All the Animals that Walk and All the Birds that Fly. I'm in need of a small favor."

Elephant liked Rabbit's compliment and was willing to listen.

"What can I do for you, my little friend?" he trumpeted.

"My milk-cow is stuck in the sand on the beach. I'm not big enough to pull her out. Let me tie one end of this rope around you and the other end around my cow. When you hear me beat my drum, you'll know it's time to pull hard, really hard."

"It's a good plan," said Elephant. "You are wise to come to me as I'm the strongest friend you have."

"Thank you, Elephant. Wait for the drum!"

So saying, Rabbit ran to the beach and found Whale sunning herself near the shore.

"Hello, Friend Whale. My, but you look sleek and powerful today," said Rabbit.

Whale smiled and replied, "Yes, Rabbit, I'm strong today and every day. I rule all the creatures of the sea."

"Of course," responded Rabbit. "That's why I've come to you with my small problem."

"What can I do to help?" asked Whale.

"It's my milk-cow. She"s mired deep in the bayou-mud way up in the woods. I can't get her out. I'd like to tie one end of this rope around your tail and the other end around my cow. I'll beat my drum so you'll know when to pull."

"Of course I'll help," said Whale.

She swam closer to shore so that he could tie the long rope to her massive tail.

"Pull hard when you hear my signal," said Rabbit as he ran back into the woods.

He found his drum and pounded hard and loud. *Boom! Boom! Boom!* The sounds carried to both Elephant in the forest and Whale in the sea.

They both began to pull, each against the other, and were shocked at the resistance. Elephant tugged so hard that Whale hit the sand in the shallow water. Whale pulled back so hard that Elephant was being dragged out of the woods.

"That cow must be stuck in the sand up to her neck," bellowed Elephant.

"That cow must be buried in the mud up to her nose," cried Whale.

Next thing they knew the rope snapped! One end flew back and stung Elephant on the ear.

"Ouch!" he cried.

The other end smacked Whale on the tail.

"Ouch!" she cried.

Rabbit began to laugh. His laughter carried deep into the woods and far out to sea. Elephant and Whale realized that they had been tricked. They also discovered that when it came to cleverness, Rabbit was the strongest of all.