

Reading Toolkit: Grade 7 Objective 3.A.8.d

Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Literary Text

Indicator 8. Read critically to evaluate literary texts

Objective d. Analyze the relationship between the structure and the purpose of the text

Assessment Limits:

In the text or a portion of the text

In the text or a portion of the text

Table of Contents

Objective 3.A.8.d Tools

- Lesson Seeds

Indicator 3.A.8 Tools

- Clarification

Lesson Seeds

Reading Grade 7 Objective 3.A.8.d

Activities

Provide students with a complex, age-appropriate literary text. Students should silently read the text. Once reading is complete, both teacher and students should complete a literature chart like the one below.

Title
Key Words
Feelings
Ideas
Images
Structure

When the chart is complete, the teacher and students should determine the purpose of the text from the key words, feelings, ideas, and images presented within it. Next, the teacher and students should determine and discuss whether or how the structure of the text is effective in relaying the purpose of the text.

Provide students with multiple age-appropriate literary texts. Each of the texts should be structured differently but have a common idea or situation. For example, Irene Hunt's *Across Five Aprils*, Walt Whitman's "Captain, O My Captain," and Jim Bishop's *The Day Lincoln Was Shot* have a common situation, the death of Abraham Lincoln. *Across Five Aprils* is a novel divided into chapters. "Captain, O My Captain" is poetry, and *The Day Lincoln Was Shot* is journal-like in that it moves hour by hour in telling the events of that day. The structure of each text is different as is the mood, tone, and author's style. Students should read entire texts or designated portions of text and discuss the relationship between structures and purposes of the texts. After the discussion is finished, students should be able to explain how the common situation or idea is presented differently in each text and how the structure of each text helps determine that difference.

Select a literary text where the structure includes a flashback. The teacher and students should read the text together, and the teacher should indicate the beginning and end of the flashback. Teacher and students should discuss the information given by the flashback and determine its purpose in the text. Does the flashback enhance the reader's understanding of a character, the setting, the mood, etc...? Next, the students should determine how the purpose of the flashback affects or reflects the purpose of the complete text.

An adjusted form of the previous seed requires a literary text where the structure includes a flashback. Prior to students reading, the teacher should remove the flashback from the text. After reading, the teacher and students should discuss the literary elements in the text and determine reasons for them. Once that discussion is complete, the teacher should show students the correct placement of the flashback within the text and have them reread with the flashback in place. Once that reading is finished, the teacher and students should review their previous discussion to determine whether the altered structure of the text affects their understanding of character, setting, mood, tone etc...

Clarification

Reading Grade 7 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 its 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.