CURR 440: Teaching Reading in the Content Areas

Menu of Cross-Curricular Literary-Enhancing Activities & Techniques

**1. Exit Tickets**

Exit tickets will be used at the end of both Social Studies and English lessons as both a wrap-up writing exercise and as an informal, quick way to assess student learning in the lessons. For the exit ticket, the teacher will ask the students a question grounded in the main idea or key concept of the lesson, and the students will write the answer to this question on a sheet of loose-leaf. Typically, it will require a paragraph response. The exit tickets will be the student’s ticket out the door, and can be used by the teacher to inform instruction, enabling him/her to compare what was learned to what students still seem unsure of confused about. Confusions evident in the exit tickets can be incorporated into the following day’s “Do Now” activity/prompt. Especially for the English classroom, many times the exit ticket will not adhere to its usual brevity. They will be extension prompts that will start at the end of class but then carry into their homework. For example, on Day 3 of the English unit, students are asked to compare and contrast Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech with Javon Johnson’s “Cuz He’s Black” poem in an exit ticket that will require more than the last ten minutes of class.

Fisher, D., Brozo, W. G., Frey, N., & Ivey, G. (2011). 8: Exit slips. In 50 Instructional Routines to Develop Content Literacy (2nd ed.) (pp. 27-28). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

**2. Four-Square Vocabulary Cards**

On the parallel English and social studies days that address modern-day racism, students will complete one four-square vocabulary card in each lesson. Both days address “white privilege” and “racial profiling,” but each lesson emphasizes one more than the other. Therefore, students will design a vocabulary card for the more prominent term in each lesson – as it will be easier to derive from that lesson – and bring that vocabulary card to the parallel class in the other content area where they will be better able to understand how that term is implied (rather than directly addressed as it was in the lesson where they devised the vocabulary card). In a slightly adapted format from what the textbook outlines, the four-square vocabulary cards will include the word, the definition, a contextual sentence, and an illustration. Having students manipulate and work with the word in several ways will make students reflect on the word longer and in more meaningful ways (not in isolation or out-of-context).

Fisher, D., Brozo, W. G., Frey, N., & Ivey, G. (2011). 45: Vocabulary Cards. In 50 Instructional Routines to Develop Content Literacy (2nd ed.) (pp. 135-137). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

**3. Semantic Map**

As the primary activity to activate students’ prior knowledge, semantic maps will be used at the beginning of many lessons. As a “Do Now” prompt, students will have to brainstorm ideas about a key concept that will be discussed - and referenced - over the course of the lesson (i.e. Holocaust, 9/11 and War on Terror, poetry form, modern-day racism, etc). After the independent or partner-work brainstorming, the class will come together to compile an anchor semantic map on the front white board with student volunteer responses. Since all students should have at least one item on their semantic maps by the time the class comes together, these “Do Now” prompts allow the teacher to call on a quieter student to read one of their bubbles/branches. Since the student should have their web in front of them, it should be a low-risk means of participation for them.

**4. Summarization Activities**

In both the English and social studies classroom, students will work on summarizing, a reading strategy. Students will be required to summarize various texts. For example, they will summarize a Critical Lens quote, slam poem videos, and informational texts (including both primary and secondary sources). Three primary activities will help students summarize: summarizing by drawing, tweet summaries, and biopoems/bio-pyramids. In order to interpret a section of a long quote, students will work with a partner to compose an illustration of it. For multiple texts, students will be required to write a summary in Twitter language, meaning they can use hashtags and are limited to 140 characters. Such an activity will help them write concise, straightforward summaries. Lastly, in social studies, students will use the biopoems and bio-pyramid structures as a guideline to write a summary poem about their civil rights activist. Students will not be restricted to either skeletal frame, so it will act more as a prompt and guide to support their summaries.

Elliott, J. (2007). Summarizing with drawings: A reading comprehension strategy. Science Scope, 30(5), 23-27.

Knipper, K. J. & Duggan, T. J. (2006). Writing to learn across the curriculum: Tools for comprehension in content area classes. The Reading Teacher, 59(5), 462-470.

McLaughlin, M., & Allen, M. B. (2002). Bio-pyramid. In Guided comprehension: A teaching model for grades 3-8 (pp. 91-95). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

**5. Think-Pair-Share**

This strategy was used in lessons in both English and Social Studies. In the first Social Studies lesson, an introduction to African American Civil Rights, students used the Think-Pair-Share strategy to brainstorm information they already knew on the topic. In this, the teacher asked the students to think about the African American Civil Rights movement individually, then pair up with a partner, share ideas, and then share these ideas out with the class. This same activity was done in the first poetry lesson, in which students thought about and discussed what they already knew about poetry.

**6. Twitter-Enhanced Fishbowl Discussion**

As part of the summative assessment for the social studies unit, a Twitter-enhanced fishbowl discussion will enable student groups to converse about a key event in the African-American Civil Rights Movement and by doing so, inform their peers and peer teach as “experts” on their researched topic. In the outside-circle, students will be taking notes on the inner-circle group discussions while also tweeting their comments and opinions to the social studies Twitter feed, offering feedback and input in real-time. This will be their means of participation. Students will have their cell phones or computers to do the tweeting. Screens will have to be closely monitored by the teacher, as students may be distracted by the devices and use them to surf the Internet, log into their Facebook accounts, etc. When each inner-circle group discussion is finished, students will be able to ask questions and the teacher will pull several tweets from the Twitter feed to share with the class, using them as potential conversation starters. Students will prepare for the Twitter participation component in a number of ways: Critical Lens tweet interpretation practice in ELA, the “Promotional Tweet” component of their ELA slam poem final project, Tweet summaries in ELA, and an “Introduction to Twitter” day in social studies.

Fisher, D., Brozo, W. G., Frey, N., & Ivey, G. (2011).9: Fishbowl Discussions. In 50 Instructional Routines to Develop Content Literacy (2nd ed.) (pp. 29-30). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

**7. Venn Diagram Graphic Organizer for Compare/Contrast Activities**

    Compare and contrast activities will appear in several lessons across the two content areas. For example, students will be differentiating between integration and desegregation in their social studies classroom and looking at foil characters in a television episode that portrays the tensions in Dylan Thomas’s “Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night.” The graphic organizer format will allow students to map out the similarities and differences between key people or key jargon in an organized and visual fashion.