

Children's Literature Insights

- We respond more deeply, more in-depth, when we can engage / enjoy a particular text. The more it interests us, the more we respond. Think about the books that did not connect with you and how you responded, what you wrote about them. Was the reading experience or discussions different from the books you enjoyed?
- We have to learn to respond to children's literature texts as READERS first, and as teachers second.
- The teacher's role in literature studies: DOCENT- it is our job to help children "see" better what is possible in texts and their transactions with texts, it is our job to illuminate texts, to bring them to life for our students, to help them reach new insights, new perspectives and deepen their literary experiences.
- There is a fine line between a "gentle inquisition" and a "Grand Conversation". We don't just jump into dialogue with students. We move through conversation into dialogue when we are comfortable offering our ideas, have perspectives, ideas to share, understand texts and connect with them. It is important to help students learn how to talk about books and to really listen to their classmates' ideas.
- The difference between Gentle Inquisitions and Grand Conversations, I believe, is a matter of who controls the conversation. Teachers respond to students, not the other way around. These discussions are more democratic than the traditional Initiate-Respond-Evaluate type of discussion. It is a completely different relationship than what is traditionally taught in school or some methods classes.
- We have to allow / support students to respond AESTHETICALLY first, then we can begin to analyze stories, develop themes, discuss elements of the story. Their emotional, lived through experiences come first and are what we base our discussions and analyses upon.
- The Hermeneutic Cycle: we understand the parts of a text by understanding the whole and we understand the whole by analyzing the constituent parts.
- As "docents" we teach INTO childrens' responses and their discussions, as well as IN FRONT of them (pre-planned questions for example). We have to listen first, and respond second. I believe that statements made by the teacher, honest responses to the text, are more effective in developing grand conversations than questions.
- Don't ask questions you already know the answers to: students can see through this a mile away. They learn that what the teacher thinks is more important than what they think.

- Student responses to literature must be allowed to develop. Students need to know that their "half-formed" ideas have a space. That they can offer ideas without reprisal. If, as teachers, we focus on correct answers and don't allow students to think, we end up shutting down discussions to the "guess what's in the teacher's head" game.
- On the other hand, to allow an "anything goes" discussion atmosphere does not help students analyze literature and talk about it critically. Some ideas are more warranted, more viable than others. These ideas must be defended in public forums and open to revision.
- Instead of asking, "Is the student's answer correct?" we should be asking, Is it plausible? Can they defend their interpretations? Why did the student respond that way? What is this response telling me (teacher) about the student as a reader?
- When we ask questions during a read aloud or classroom discussion we need to consider what kinds of questions we are asking and for what purposes are we asking these questions.
- We create new expectations for our students when they know they will have to discuss the book with their peers. It changes how we read books. We prepare differently. No matter which response strategy we employ, it must support our discussions or our expectations for our readers.
- Readers discuss more when they feel comfortable with the groups and can trust that their ideas will be accepted and gently challenged. The discussions should support an extension of our understandings of the literature that we read.
- Choice of books is very important. We engage with what we are interested in and what is relevant in our lives at the moment. Choice of books helps foster engagement by readers.
- There are many ways to prepare for literature discussions. Post-its, journals, response logs etc.. These should interfere with the reading of the book as little as possible and support students' going deeper into a story and making more sophisticated responses and interpretations.
- The "level" or degree of sophistication of student responses to literature is correlated to their understandings of the structures and elements of literature, experience reading literature and time spent sharing and discussion their responses.
- Students need to accept responsibility for responding personally to the literature they read BEFORE they share their ideas in groups. They must be willing to generate interpretations, to have the aesthetic, lived through experience of reading before they

can move to literary analysis.

- In some ways, we don't teach reading, we teach literary interpretations and critique.
- How do we know a Grand Conversation when we see one?
- Students respond to literature in a variety of ways. Readers attend to personal connections, the language and writer's craft, the relationship between the story and our world, the characters exploits and challenges, the relationship to other literary texts and experiences and the emotions that the story evokes in us as readers.
- How do we prepare students to enter into Grand Conversations? It seems that demonstrations, time, picture book and poetry studies, setting social interaction expectations and extending students' knowledge of the elements and structures of literature play a role in creating better discussions.
- Reading connected texts may support better conversations.
- Readers do not develop in a vacuum, they develop as members of a community of readers. Becoming a reader is about learning how to make meaning with texts and share those meanings with others.
- Reading strategies are best taught through explicit instruction that occurs in the context of REAL reading events. Students need to have strategies demonstrated, guided practice, and opportunities to use strategies during their reading time.
- Organizing the classroom and creating a "preferred vision" for what your instructional practices and reading curriculum could be like is an essential first step in developing an effective literature based curriculum.
- All things done "with and to" literature are not the same. It's just as easy to "basalize" a piece of literature as it is a story from a commercial anthology.
- Brian Cambourne suggests that student engagement is predicated on three essential concepts:
 1. learners must think they are capable of doing the task
 2. learners must see relevance in the task
 3. learners must not be punished for not being able to do it

Double Entry Journal- use post its, then record the following from side 1, then wait awhile and reflect on these ideas in side 2.

Noticings
Impressions
Quotes
Particular language
Aesthetic responses

Reflections
Connections
Implications