Understanding the Reading Process: Say Something Activity

Purpose:
• to help students understand the reading process as they gain practice reacting to text, drawing inferences, predicting, and confirming and disconfirming their ideas,
• to provide experience responding orally and in writing to text.
• To provide positive, entertaining experiences with reading

Preparation: Find a good short story that holds students’ attention and keeps them guessing about what will happen next. For a basic reading course choose an essay approximately two pages long. Divide the story into six or seven parts, each on a half a sheet of paper. Divide the story at significant lines that will keep them predicting. Staple the sets of pages together. Usually there are a few paragraphs per page.

Directions:
1. Each student is assigned a partner. Each student receives a copy of the stapled essay.
2. Direct the students to read the first page. Then ask them to talk to each other-
Say Something: What is happening? Who are these people? What might happen? Why do you think as you do? etc.
3. Give them a few minutes to talk and then direct everyone to read the second page. Once more they each Say Something. Students may not turn the page and read the next page until you direct them to do so.
4. Have them work their way through the story stopping and talking after each page.

*You can ask each team to share what they said after each page or wait until the end to share. When you are done, you can talk about the reading process and what we do when we “read”: read, react, infer, predict, make judgments, confirm, disconfirm, and draw conclusions.

*You can put three in a group for more conversation but the team of two forces everyone to be involved.

*With my Rea 071 class, I begin with having a short story up on the Smart Board that is divided into 5-6 parts or pages. I show the first page (1-2 paragraphs) Then, they read it and as a big group I elicit reactions, then we move on to the next page and repeat the process. I find in this class students need the modeling of what I expect before I let them work in pairs. When they come back to the next class, we repeat this procedure in pairs with a new story.

Note: You can use short essays without permission for a one time in-class use. Some suggested titles are listed below. If you are familiar with any of these stories you will get the idea of the type of essay that works well. The trick to making this a successful activity is finding clever stories that provide suspense, fun and/or the element of surprise.

These are short, easy reading, appropriate for a real basic reading course.

1. The Gentle Giant and the Reluctant Robber, Tom Hinkle
2. Ticket to Nowhere, Andy Rooney (I remove the title from this one)
3. Water Over the Dam, Frank E. Heard
These are longer, more challenging essays. I don’t use them in the most basic course.

4. The Alchemist’s Secret This is a short story, I do not mean the novel with this title
5. The Chase, Annie Dillard
6. The Thing I Know, Dean Koontz Great story to teach figurative language.

I don’t know the author of # 4 The Alchemist’s Secret

Written Conversations

This activity follows the same procedure as the previous one only the two students in the team cannot speak to each other at all, their responses to each other are carried out only through a writing dialogue in which both students share one piece of paper.

Directions:
1. Direct students to read page one, then stop. They must read a page, write a reaction in a few sentences, pass the paper to the other person who reads it, and writes back on the same piece of paper.

2. Then as a class, the instructor directs students to move on to page two, three and so on. You have to wait sometimes since all students will not read and write at the same rate. When the story is finished, the reaction page is a written dialogue between the two students.

3. At the end of class students turn dialogues in and the instructor looks them over and shares some of the writing with the whole class.

• This activity is great if you have some deaf students in class as they are able to communicate in the same way as the other students- no signer is needed.

• It is also a good activity for students who don’t like to speak out loud in class because of shyness or concerns about their limited English proficiency.

• It provides students with an opportunity to practice their writing in an informal, non-threatening way.

• When you find some clever, suspenseful stories, it is an appealing and enjoyable way to stimulate students’ curiosity about reading.

Adapted from
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