

Lesson – Strong Readers Make Strong Connections

Activities adapted from Junior Great Books Foundation to be used at home, spring 2020

Materials needed: a copy of *The Hundred-Dollar Bill*, by Rose Wilder Lane (provided), a pencil, paper

Interdisciplinary Connections: Critical Thinking, Writing using the Creative Writing Model, Language Arts – reading comprehension & vocabulary, Social Studies – American history

Outcomes/Objectives:

Critical Thinking – Identify evidence that supports an idea; Use information to support logical conclusions; Assess accuracy and relevance of evidence used by others

Creative Writing – Use the steps of the Creative Writing Model: daydream, draft, rewrite, edit, share; Use evidence from the text to support opinions; Use precise words and phrases

Reading comprehension – Connect prior knowledge to the story; Identify new vocabulary words; Draw conclusions based on evidence in the story.

Social Studies – Create a mental image while reading; consider the prior knowledge that helped developed the image

Vocabulary Expansion: Words identified as new by the student, deliberation, rapture, scalded, staid behavior, roan brown hair

Activity I:

1. Prereading activity – Ask your child to consider the typical household environment in the 1890s. Consider guiding the child's thoughts as you bring up a variety of senses: smells, sight, sounds, comfort; discuss the value of \$1 in the 1890s as compared to today.
2. Ask your child to follow along in the story as you read *The Hundred-Dollar Bill* aloud.
3. Explain to your child that strong readers make connections between their own life experiences and the events in the story. Strong readers also think of questions as they read a story.
4. Ask your child to mark a **C** in the margin next to places in the story when they are **connecting** something in the story to his or her own life experiences and mark with a **?** in the margins where he or she has questions about the story.
5. Read aloud to your child with expression. As you read, look for places that you can pause and mark a **C** next to a paragraph in the story and mark a **?** next to the story. If your child does not appear to understand, you may briefly explain your reason for marking **C** or **?** to your child before continuing to read aloud.
6. Ask your child to look back over the story to identify the connection he or she would like to share first. Take several minutes to allow your child to explain how this connection to the story helped to better understand something in the story. As time allows, work through several of your child's self-identified connection. Each time the child needs to explain the connection made and how that connection improved comprehension. There is no need to do this activity in one setting. The quality of the activity might improve if spread out over

several hours in several different settings (during dinner, taking a break while working on a different subject, after coming inside during a play break). It is also helpful for your child to talk with different people. The purpose of this activity is to deepen comprehension and to give your child multiple opportunity to organize thoughts and explain those thoughts using precise words and phrases. It is unnecessary to provide critical feedback. Your child will grow more verbally organized and precise with practice.

****note to parents – It is important to focus primarily on the process when helping young children develop their critical and creative thinking. As your child grows older, attention shifts from the process to the product. Gifted and AP English classes along with Speech and Debate Tournaments will give your child ample opportunities to focus on the product at a more appropriate age. ****

7. The next day, ask your child if he/she has a question formed while reading the story. Not every question will have one correct answer. Questions may be answered with evidence from the story, guesses, or other questions. Keep in mind that the ultimate purpose is to use questioning as a tool to improve comprehension, mental organization, and precise language. Take this opportunity to look up unknown vocabulary and to clarify misunderstandings that involve culture, place, or background.
8. Ask your child to read the story a second time. This time your child should mark a **P** in the margin next to an area where the narrator is pleased with something or someone and mark a **D** next to the areas when the narrator is displeased.
9. After your child has finished reading the story, ask him or her to read aloud the areas that are marked with a **P** or a **D** and explain why they marked those passages.
10. Ask your child follow up questions that will help him or her to explain the reason why they thought the narrator was **pleased** or **displeased** more clearly. These questions will also help improve comprehension. Examples of follow up questions. *Why did you mark that passage? What are the characters trying to do? How do they see things? Why did the author choose to use a narrator? What might the author have been thinking when she wrote the paragraph that way? Would you feel the way the child felt? Why was it important for the family to do that? What might have happened had ____ been different?*

Activity II:

1. Prewriting activity – Ask your child to find the passage in *The Hundred-Dollar Bill* that starts with “I perched on a stump,” and ends with “She looked lovely; she was beautiful.”

On a piece of paper list *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last* and provide the actions Rose’s mother takes while getting dressed. An example is written below:

<i>First</i>	<i>Next</i>	<i>Then</i>	<i>Last</i>
Rose's mother brushes her hair.	She braids her hair.	She starts whistling again.	She dresses herself.

Ask your child to add details from the story under each phrase. Below is an example of what your child's work may look like after he or she finishes. Requiring a certain number of details is unnecessary. Your child will self-sort and include the information that he or she finds meaningful. Allow your child to select and write the details. Check for accuracy.

	<i>First</i>	<i>Next</i>	<i>Then</i>	<i>Last</i>
actions	Rose's mother brushes her hair.	She braids her hair.	She starts whistling again.	She dresses herself.
Details	"roan, brown, very thick, and fine"	"tortoise shell pins"	"She whistled like a bird"	"her skirt hid her new shoes"
Details		"fluffed her bangs"	"Whistling O' Suzanna, don't you cry for me"	"glittery jet buttons"
Details		"usually hung down her back in one braid"		"black wedding dress"

Tell your child that he or she will write a detailed description of a person that they see most days. This can include a teacher or friend normally seen at school.

After your child has chosen a person to write about, have your child close his or her eyes. Ask your child to picture the person. Then slowly and in a calm voice ask the following questions to help your child visualize in greater detail. Pause between each question for a couple of seconds. The child will not answer the questions aloud, rather add the details to the scene being visualized. *Where is your person? Are you inside or outside? What noises do you hear? What are the different sounds? What is the lighting? Do you smell anything? What's the temperature? Are you hot or cold? Is eating part of what you are seeing or not? Is this person doing something that you see them do often? Do you see common gestures? What exactly is your person doing? Is it a special action or something done all the time? Is your person happy, sad, angry, interested? Are there other people with this person? What are they doing and why? Look around and notice as many details as you can about this person and what is happening around the person. When you have noticed every detail, open your eyes.*

This is a good time for your child to take a quiet break if one is needed.

Ask your child to create a *first, next, then, and last* chart about the person visualized. Your child should select four actions done by their person and order the actions under first, next, then, and last. Then your child should add details about each action under it as seen in the previous chart.

When your child finishes his or her chart, it is time to write a draft detailed description.

2. Drafting – Insist that your child write a draft before taking a break or changing to a different assignment. If the child is having problems getting started, remind your child that a draft is written quickly. Spelling, mechanics, and neatness does not count. Remind your child that he or she has already done most of the work creating the chart. Take the information on the chart and put it into sentences that form a paragraph(s).

Allow ample time for your child to write. Some children are eager to get started. Some children have writing anxiety. If this is the case with your child, call attention to positive behaviors. For example, point out a few details that you like on his or her chart. Let your child know that you respect the hard work done to this point. Assure your child that the draft can be short. If necessary, assure your child that a draft need only to include the details written on the chart. Leave your child alone with no distractions. Prompt your child with positive remarks every five minutes or so. Yes, your child may type rather than handwrite.

When your child has finished the draft, praise the effort without commenting on needed corrections. This is a draft. When completed according to the directions, it is always a job well done. If you or your child are tired, this is a good time to take a break or move on to work on a different subject. You can move forward in the steps of the Creative Writing Model later the same day or on a different day.

3. Rewriting is the next step in the writing model. Enthusiastic writers may rewrite several times. Let them write and rewrite but set a point in time that rewriting ends and editing begins. If your child loves to rewrite, I suggest giving him or her 24 hours to work with their thoughts. If your child hates writing, tell him or her to concentrate on the organization of the paragraph(s). If the paper is organized, editing is much easier. During the rewriting phase, add, rearrange, remove, and replace information. It is acceptable for your child to ask others to read the description and make suggestions. When your child announces that the rewrite is finished, accept it and move to the editing phase when time allows.

4. Editing is often the most difficult step in the process for both the child and the teacher or in this case, parent. Children, especially intellectual children, tend to think that their words are golden. If the teacher is overly critical, the child is more likely to shut down, disrespect the process, lose the ability to self-assess.

Editing suggestions:

- ✓ The parent, as teacher, should start by identifying what your child did well. If a child receives compliments, the child will continue working to improve strength. We want our children to move themselves from being good writers to being great writers. Positive feedback builds the motivation. Depending on the age, maturity, and skill level of your child, you may see many mistakes. Mistakes are not necessarily a bad thing. It is evidence that your child is an ambitious

writer. A 2nd grade child who wants to write using an adult's words and phrases should be complimented for using a strong vocabulary and a mature syntax. In this case, select one or two words misspelled for the child to correct throughout the description and work to commit to memory. Point out your child's most common grammatical error and ask him or her to correct the mistake throughout the description.

- ✓ If your child's writing is almost flawless, sandwich your comments. Identify something well done, then point out something incorrect, then call attention to something good. In other words, identify twice as many things your child did right than you identify things your child did wrong.
- ✓ Tell your child to make these final corrections by writing the description one final time. Allow up to 24 hours for your child to complete this assignment.

5. Publishing or sharing a child's writing is a highly personal thing. Returning your child's work to his or her Spotlight teacher is a form of publishing or sharing. Your child may want to share this work with others. If so, post it on the wall; share it with friends and family. Ask your child if he or she would allow you to post it on Facebook and respect the answer.

Activity III

1. Ask friends or family to give your child opportunities to talk about the story. These people should ask questions, and follow up questions, that require your child to express understanding at a deeper level.

2. Examples of questions and follow up questions include:

Why does the narrator say that everything changes when the family loses the money?

What in the story made you think that changed?

Why did the girl feel "scalded" when her mother asks her if she took the money?

Would you feel that way? Why?

What might have caused Rose's father to tell her mother not to blame herself for the loss of the money? Was that important?

How serious is the loss of the money to the family?

How would their lives change without money?

Would they still eat?

Would they still live in the same place?

3. Remind your child that a discussion is not a competition. People who want to talk with your child are not looking for the best idea or best answer. People who want to discuss a story want the opportunity to learn. A discussion helps all involved to consider multiple ideas and to deepen or to broaden their own understanding of the story. Students should understand that different ideas can all be correct if these ideas are supported by logical evidence found in the story.