

Teaching Literature Through Discussion

by

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Abstract

Classrooms today face the problem of engaging students in literature. Literature instruction should be adaptable to individual student needs as well as comprehensively educating students in necessary content and subject matter. In this project, this problem was addressed through the use of discussion as an assessment tool. Throughout the project students were taught how to have a meaningful discussion to correspond with the literature that they were reading. They were given topics for discussion and taught how to listen and respond effectively.

While determining how well students participate in conversation is difficult to measure, there is a clear indication that their ability to process information and respond accordingly improved. In addition, discussion as an assessment tool was able to confirm the student's understanding of the literature. Discussion of literature allows for greater student comprehension and should be implemented into classrooms as a regular practice.

Acknowledgments

Throughout my educational career as a student, many teachers encouraged me along the way to pursue and enrich myself in literature. My eighth-grade teacher, Mr. Mark Boehme, showed me the value in a rich story. In college, Dr. Cynthia Whaley and Dr. Rolland Menk were instrumental in showing me how to portray that personal love of literature into a functional design for the benefit of students. As a teacher, Mrs. Diana Kramer helped me to hone the design to fit the individual learner. Professors Jonathan Roux and Kristina Rouech have been extremely helpful in guiding me with this project. All of these teachers combined influence led to this unit of loving, sharing, and personalizing literature for the next generation of readers.

My family has been extremely supportive of my efforts. My parents encouraged me to work hard at all things. When life has threatened to get in the way, their work ethic has been tremendous motivation. I have four very different girls that challenge me to provide the best possible teaching that celebrate differences and encourage children to dive into reading with fervor. My daughters refresh the necessity of education matching the learner. Justin, my husband, has consistently been an encouragement; his belief in me never faltered, even when mine did. Most importantly, God's guiding hand has led to this completion. My sincere hope is that this work glorifies my Savior.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The Purpose of the Project

The work of Paul & Russo (2019) indicates that engaging readers begins with identifying the needs of them as individuals. Educators need to be able to teach academic content in a way that allows for student individualization; this project was created to meet that need. One need for students today is training in communication skills as evidenced by Caine & Caine (2011) “higher order thinking, personal decision making, and depth of knowledge” (p. 37) in order to participate with their peers effectively. With practiced communication skills they will be able to then apply what they are learning to their lives. Connecting students with their learning and specifically with literature in a way that is engaging, while also fitting the parameters of being educationally appropriate can be a challenge. Educators strive to teach students to learn and grow as they interact effectively with the ideas of their peers and with texts and not just to regurgitate answers. The goal of education falls short if only to force facts and figures at students, without engagement in practical life. Wiles (2009) explains how defining education as achievement on tests remains narrow; education in a broader sense develops a whole person. A curriculum should be able to meet the needs of each student academically as well as personally. This project is a curriculum unit consisting of novels for 5th and 6th grade classrooms to teach students how to participate in and engage in discussion as one type of assessment used to comprehend and connect with literature.

A shared novel reading allows for different points of access for different groups of students. The potential variety of subject matter along with abstract fictional characters in a novel can allow students to participate in meaningful discussions without

having the exposure of personal information. Discussion about abstract fictional characters allows for more freedom during a discussion because “students can discuss topics as they impact characters that are separate from their personal life stories” (Nilsen & Donelson, 2009, p. 14). A classroom situation allows for students to “learn the conventions of our discourse communities, conventions about what kind of people have the right to speak, and what kinds of discussion are accepted” (Holden & Schmit, 2002, p.29). When students have participated in abstract discussions often, they can develop the skills necessary to have personal conversations about their life choices, a vital skill as they mature. According to Wolfe (2001), abstract discussions are able to include terms for which there is no concrete example, and can grow with students as their skills mature. Discussion allows students to explore and experiment within a safe environment. Through this development they are working on their communication competency. Competency in communication includes being able to participate with peers in a classroom setting as well as with others in the world beyond the classroom (Butler & Stevens, 1997).

Importance of the Project

Teaching literacy has undergone many changes over generations of education. Marzano (2009) noted that “the focus must always be on student learning and the perspective must always be that instructional strategies are a means to an end” so as not to constrain classroom learning by adhering rigidly to ineffective instructional tools. As educators and researchers continue to discover the best way for the human brain to learn, process, and understand the written language, the way that students are educated continues to change. As society develops and cultures shift, the literature of the age

adapts to a new standard. A curriculum that adheres solely to classical texts depreciates in value as it ages. The same is true for educational methods. If educational research can identify a more productive method of teaching, that method should be able to be implemented readily. If more applicable literature to a specific concept is available, it should have the opportunity to be taught (Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, & Willingham, 2013). An assessment tool that can be adapted to fit a wide range of literature is discussion. Educators with varied levels of experience and vastly different classroom demographics can apply discussion to a novel that applies to their ever-changing classroom needs (Gritter, 2011).

Administrators must consider how their instructional resources work together to create a cohesive curriculum. This unit could be added in as a resource to supplement an already worthwhile and valuable curriculum or replace parts of a curriculum that are not currently meeting all of the school's educational needs or required standards. Units that focus on discussion as a means of assessment are highly adaptable to situations in life. Teachers have developed relationships and have a unique insight into the needs of their students. The individual literature could be changed to fit a school demographic, changing trends in education, or address complex societal issues at play in student's lives. Flexibility in literature can also be made to comply with new requirements, or simply to make use of materials already present in the school.

Novels are able to introduce discussion topics and "can be surprisingly philosophical, taking on notions like fairness, justice, freedom, and compassion" (Paul & Russo, 2019, p. 98). These topics can be introduced in their classroom reading, and then expanded upon in light of our role as Christians in the world. One of the greatest benefits

gained with small numbers in the classroom is the ability to individualize curriculum to meet the needs of the students. Teachers can do this if the educational tools and assessments at their disposal are flexible in design.

An instructional tool that is both adaptable to the new literature being written and addresses current curricular concerns is classroom discussion. Discussion units can vary widely based on the type of discussion and on the content being discussed. The fishbowl technique is most effective when the inner small group is comfortable speaking with each other (Fitzgerald, 1975). Small group and large group discussions serve different purposes depending on the desired outcome. Small group allows for deeper discussion and greater participation, but larger group allows for a broader range of ideas presented. Discussion units and their “questions lead students to interpretive conclusions that will need to be tailored specifically to the text at hand but that will inevitably lead students to interrogate the ways in which the text is or is not meaningful” (Holden & Schmit, 2002, p.121). Educators can use the versatility of discussion to apply the unit to the text most applicable to their individual classroom. The specific text chosen can allow the teacher to “consider curriculum areas that they need to address during the year and select books that expand a curriculum concept” (Strickland, Galda, & Cullinan, 2004, p. 82). When teachers have this versatile unit at their disposal, they can adapt it to fit the needs of their classroom. This project provides educators with a specific resource to use with *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, as well as a discussion template that can be applied to other novels.

Project Goal

This project provides schools with a discussion-based unit for 5th-6th grade literature classes. The discussion rubric (Appendix J) and a schedule template (Appendix B) can be adapted to other novels and instructional settings. The project includes lesson plans (Appendix E) aligned to state standards (Appendix A) using a sample text. The format outlined in this study provides students with both a reading schedule for their novel and accompanying prompts to help guide discussion. This structure was applied to *The Chronicles of Narnia* series by C.S. Lewis, as sample texts. The books in the series are *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), and *The Last Battle* (1956). The fantasy genre of books was chosen for their applicability both to the readers and to the state literacy standards because “fantasy novels offer fully thought-out worlds that have their own rules, with just enough similarity for a young reader to reflect on the rules of his own world.” (Paul & Russo, 2019, p. 100).

This instructional method for utilizing discussion as an assessment tool can be implemented to combat several problems currently present in education. Research from Caine & Caine (2011) identified that not all individuals develop the same in their executive functions, which are used extensively in discussion. Communication skills specific to literature discussion will be beneficial for students being educated in a system predominately focused on the results of the latest standardized test rather than the tools necessary to compete in an advanced society. Educational standards have struggled to grow with our society and “schools and school districts are under enormous pressure to

demonstrate adequate performance.” (Guo-Brennan, 2020, p. 256). The goal of the project is to move the benchmark for success from being able to answer a multiple-choice question for which you have been coached to being able to contribute creatively and independently about a topic.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Discussion

A challenge faced by educators evaluating curriculum is that they are looking for a curriculum made for not only one learner, but the school in general. Discussion based on peers sharing information with the teacher as a guide allows for independence in thought and background knowledge, with a cooperative discussion about a shared text (Butler & Stevens, 1997). An individual curriculum plan meets the learning goals of each learner. Curriculum developers must then have in mind the needs of each learner, and how each learner fits into the classroom and wider learning community as a whole. Wiles (2009) offers practical application for how that task can be accomplished. Curriculum developers should view their educators as a team working together, supporting one another in the common goal to create the best environment for learning. Educators should be continually learning and staying abreast of continually advancing educational research in instruction making use of technology. Steiner (2017) reports, “The rapid growth of online, personalized learning platforms will likely change classroom instruction further” (p. 6). Educators have remarkable tools available to them through the use of online programs and research tools. These tools should be utilized to see all opportunities possible for the learners in each classroom. In a discussion unit this manifests itself through students doing research with technology to help form an educated opinion. Educators are able to record discussions and thus be monitoring multiple discussion groups at the same time. These recordings are also available to students for reflection to see individual growth.

As research continues to advance within the field of differentiated instruction and curriculum development, it becomes apparent how necessary it is to offer opportunities for students to enrich their communication skills and problem-solving abilities. “Choices, puzzles, and solving problems, along with decision making offered by the natural approach to learning . . . are critical to developing the student and citizen ready to handle the knowledge age” (Caine & Caine, 2011, p. 43). The combined work of Pressley and Allington (2014) concluded, “Children who live in a richly responsive interpersonal world and who thus learn how to communicate with others are going to be cognitively far ahead of agemates who do not” (p. 120). Human beings yearn for interaction and were created as a species meant to communicate positively with one another. However, the prevalence of technology in modern society has decreased the need for interpersonal communication skills. Communication with human beings involves a sensory reaction that observing a screen cannot offer. Information transmitted via interpersonal communication will have a better chance of being understood (Wolfe, 2001). Educators that want their content to be understood can benefit from demonstrating this skill in the classroom and allowing for student practice and demonstration. Students today need instruction in how to communicate effectively with others, not only so that they can understand, but also so that they can be understood. According to Marzano (2017), “students need to practice skills, strategies, and processes.”

One method for students to communicate with their peers about literature is through the use of literature circles. Scott (1994) defined them as “groups of three to eight students who have read the same story” that “gathered to discuss their reading.”

When students are able to collaboratively discuss literature, their engagement in the text increases. Many educators have noted the benefits of literature circles in their own classrooms (Daniels, 2006). As students “grapple with unfamiliar content” they can promote within the classroom “engaged and prolific conversations” as found by Peterson (2016). Discussion between peers increases taps into socio-emotional learning and connects content areas to life experiences relevant to the lives of students as found by Venegas (2019). The students are able to learn both about themselves and about their classmates as they connect the world around them to the book they are reading through their conversations. These conversations can meet educational standards if framed appropriately in a classroom setting. The design of the classroom groups, the method of assessment, and the topic of discussion can be set in place by the teacher, but the actual talk and progression of discussion should be student-led (Fitzgerald, 1975). Teachers can provide training in how to actively listen and respond appropriately and then create opportunities for students to practice those skills with their peers using literature that tailors to their interests (Daniels, 2006).

There are many different discussion techniques available to educators for use in the classroom. The fishbowl technique allows for a small group of students to be encircled by a larger group of students. The inner circle of students will have a discussion, with the outer circle actively listening, but not verbally participating (Fitzgerald, 1975). Pair discussions or small group discussions may happen in pockets throughout the classroom with 2-6 students verbally participating (Gritter, 2011). One large group technique, called “sharing the airtime” (Clarke and Holwadel, 2007) involves students having a limited number of turns to share with a whole group before they must

be silent. Another method of discussion researched by Wei, Murphy & Firetto (2018) involves teacher initiation, student response and then teacher evaluation. This method is teacher-led, with the students responding to the teacher with discussion instead of peers. Wei, Murphy & Firetto (2018) also examined small group discussions that were centered around a specific idea and given explicit criterion for discussion. The methods used within this project included the fishbowl technique, small group discussion with a specific focus, as well as the large group discussion with limited opportunities. Those were chosen based on the natural progression of the class during the novel reading as well as their educational effectiveness.

Individualization

Every reader is different and every text is different, so also every interpretation of a text by a reader is different, depending on the experiences of that individual. Connell's (2000) research of Louise Rosenblatt's work supports the claim that an aesthetic experience with a text will be essential to a student's understanding. Reading and experiencing a text can impact both the individual and the society around them. The experience can influence the reader and have a measurable change in their life (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 24). It is necessary to use the correct text for the reader. In selecting texts, one must consider not only the reading comprehension level regarding vocabulary and word choice, but also to deeper meaning and context stored within the wealth of literature (Hiebert & Sailors, 2009, p. 17). Central Elementary School, as noted in Beecher and Sweeny's (2008) work, *Closing the Achievement Gap with Curriculum Enrichment and Differentiation: One School's Story*, found differentiated instruction to be the key to engaging learners; differentiated instruction involved beginning with a

shared content knowledge base and working forward using assessments and methods that fit the individual learning styles of each learner. Enrichment experiences suited to individual needs were found to positively benefit children, especially in the area of literacy comprehension. According to Baker, Afflerbach, & Reinking (2012), “Personal characteristics of the child must also be considered. Various self-system factors, such as self-efficacy, impact a child's interest and willingness to read” (p. 17). It is important for educators to consider the needs of each individual student when considering a curriculum.

Thematic connections

Some students are naturally gifted at scaffolding the connections between their real-life experiences and the content that is being covered in the classroom. For these students a thematic unit of study will seem very natural. For the students that struggle to connect their classroom content into practical application, a teacher designed themed study that bridges curriculum areas can be the missing piece (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012). The thematic curriculum unit connection should create new pathways for learning “whereas students are engaged in the study of a particular theme, they also do a variety of other things” (Strickland, Galda, & Cullinan, 2004, p. 22). The thematic portion would be created by the teacher through connections to other areas of the curriculum. The real-world application of communication skills and discussion techniques are broad abilities that can be adapted to a variety of situations. Teachers can do this by providing their students with, as Strickland, Galda, and Cullinan (2004) put it, “opportunities to construct knowledge in a supportive social setting” (p. 173-174) by cohesively blending discussion topics around content area and necessary social

skills. The specific nature of the content of the novel helps give a focus to the broader approach of the skills being learned. Novels in the fantasy genre have a unique ability to offer a safe space to discuss real world problems (Nilsen & Donelson, 2009, p. 216). It offers all learners the ability to connect amidst a creative setting without fear of societal differences or economic backgrounds because fantasy literature can be adapted to many different students.

Peer Interaction

The ability to express personal thoughts clearly and confidently is not a skill that is endowed upon all individuals. Some may possess this skill inherently, but in a world dominated by computerized interaction, students of tomorrow may need help in navigating the world of interpersonal communication. Students in classrooms are learning in an age where, “people are losing the art of face-to-face contact, that people are more negative in less personal forms of communication” (Antonucci et al., 2017). This leads to an understanding of communication via technology, but not being able to use communication skills in a practical sense. The art of communication can be seen as a skill to be learned, just like a math problem. If the basic order and function is understood, variables can be altered and the process can remain the same. If students understand how to discuss and express thoughts and have experience in one area, that skill can transfer into other subject areas (Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, Willingham, 2013, p. 44). Educators can apply this premise, as it is simply another way of scaffolding, that is to offer help as necessary until a student has mastered a skill. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development’s report in 2000 discussed the importance of scaffolding specifically within the realm of literacy learning and

assessment. A component in literacy success that they noted was the opportunity for students to have silent guided reading practice followed by instruction reinforcement. A practical application would be to have a class read a novel and follow their reading with a discussion based around the text. “Thus, there is a need for classroom performance assessment approaches that allow young students to demonstrate in a direct way how well they can communicate orally” (Butler & Stevens, 1997). A benefit of this type of instruction within a classroom setting is that it allows for students to learn from one another. When instruction flows from a teacher to student the student will naturally feel at a disadvantage because they do not possess skills or knowledge that belong to the teacher. When the students are interacting and communicating with one another, it removes a barrier of instruction. They are able to teach one another simultaneously as they are learning from each other. During the instruction, a few students naturally emerged as leaders in discussion. They were able to practice their skills of leading their group and managing to keep discussion on track. These students stepping into their natural roles allowed the guiding hand of the teacher to be removed as they encouraged participation amongst each other organically. The more hesitant students to speak up also showed greater comfortability when a peer was leading their group. The small groups allowed for individual strengths to be showcased more effectively.

Educational research has shown the benefits of individualized instruction, valuing the importance of the student within the learning experience, and the necessity for high-quality instruction by informed educators (Duke & Mallette, 2011, p.464). Discussion allows individuals to speak from perspectives and provide a richer experience for all involved. It demonstrates that “literary experiences might be made the very core of the

kind of educational process needed” for quality instruction to occur (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 274). Teacher knowledge, texts, and student background knowledge are all integral pieces and different components of a curriculum. Students should be given texts that engage them intellectually as well as fit them regarding their reading abilities. Educators should remember the personal experiences of students help to contribute to whole classroom learning and should be valued. Curriculum development should remain current and adaptable as necessary so that the most useful techniques can be applied in a variety of ways across a myriad of subjects. According to Cunningham (1996), there is vital importance with regard to reading that readers be able to back up their beliefs with knowledge. Research by Harvey and Goudvis (2013) supports those readers are growing strategically when evaluating texts and using problem-solving skills to apply their personal situations to explain a text. The result of that type of activity would be individualized instruction using student strengths to their advantage and allowing educators to apply instructional techniques to help push learners further academically.

Chapter III: Implementation

Introduction

Due to the nature of open-ended discussion, a series consisting of fiction novels fit best for the curriculum unit. As the students are learning how to discuss, a fictional storyline offers more student ease with the concept of having the right or wrong answer. The series chosen for the project is *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. The series follows a fictional world from before its creation until after its finish. Discussion will be the main assessment tool to determine understanding; the teacher will be an observer to the discussion, only an active participant if necessary (Gersen, 2017). There will be smaller formative assessments along the way to help the teacher best determine what areas need greater focus and to help enhance student's ability to participate in the discussions. The entire unit addresses themes of right vs. wrong, ethical questions, and shows character progression and development.

Procedures

Students and caregivers will be provided with an informational packet at the start of each novel (Appendix F). It included a schedule of classroom activities, the discussion topics, extension projects, and the content quiz benchmarks. Activities include work with characterization, plot development, and setting. The classroom activities are designed to educate the whole student, not simply focus on strengths of a few. The informational packet is designed to keep caregivers knowledgeable about the education their child is receiving.

The discussion days will be used to teach students how to apply their understanding of the literature in a real-world application. Reading will be assigned

outside of class time, but there will be no time outside of class designated to individual assignments. Occasionally class time may be spent reading selections from the literature, either to reinforce concepts or help with foreshadowing discussions. Due to various students reading different books in the series, they filled out a reading calendar cooperatively with the teacher. This reading calendar gave them a reasonable amount to read each night and content to have prepared to discuss; the calendar also allowed the teacher to ensure that students had enough content of their text finished to be able to participate effectively. It also allowed for individual readers to adjust the pace of their reading to fit their lifestyle. As identified by Duke and Mallette's (2011) findings, big picture reflection is helpful for individuals who may struggle with close-ended questioning peppered during a reading. Throughout the course of the unit a student may only read one book. If discussion focuses around a specific part in their book, the teacher should help them adapt their calendar to read that section before that discussion.

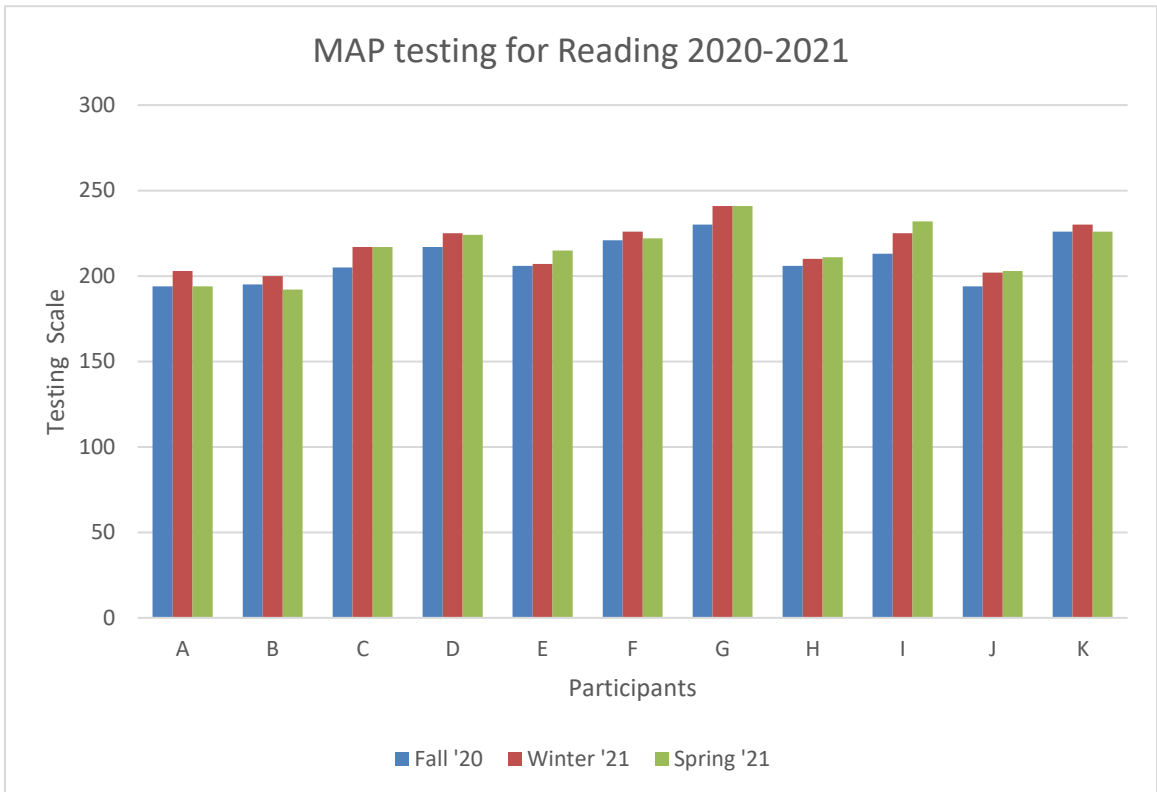
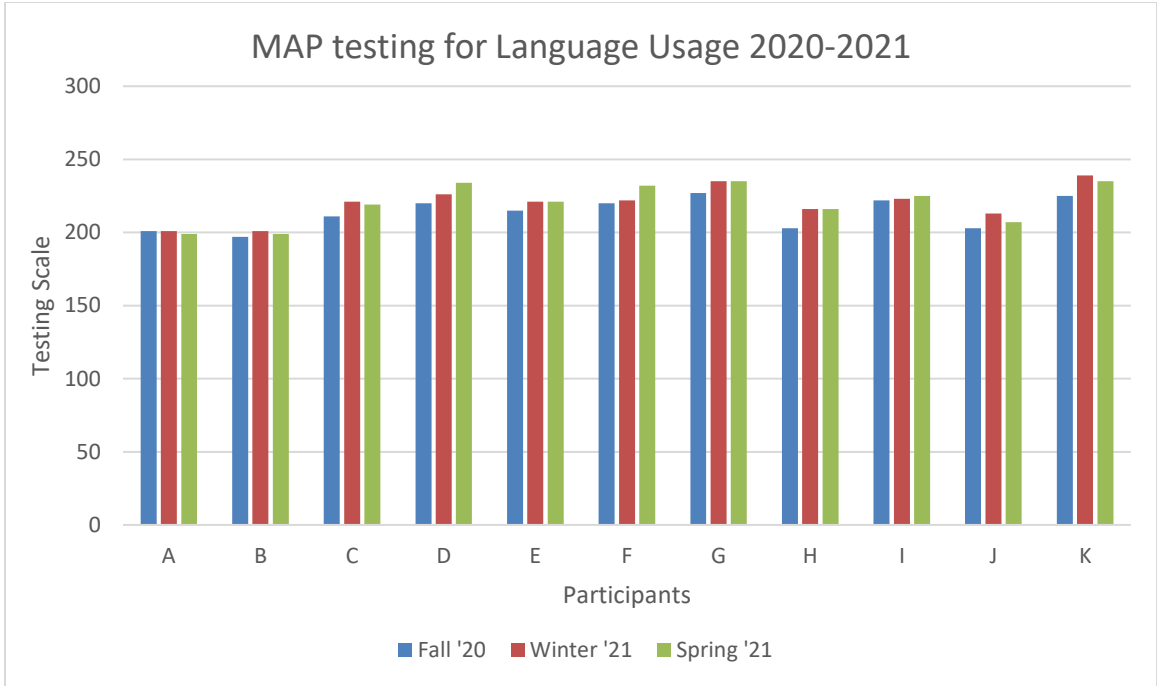
The majority of the assessments are discussion based. There are a few course work assessments throughout the unit to help further student understanding and participation during discussion. General content quizzes are given three times throughout the course of the unit. The quizzes are a formative assessment; this type of assessment alerts a teacher prior to discussion that a student may need additional assistance with the comprehension of the storyline before participating in classroom discussion. The quiz assessment accounts for 15% of the final grade. Approximately 85% of the unit grade for the student will be taken from discussion results or coursework assessments relating to discussion.

Artifacts

The discussions will be assessed based on a rubric (Appendix J). Each time the student offers participation in the discussion the student will be recorded. To receive full marks for the day each student should participate with at least 6 meaningful comments. A meaningful comment is determined by the teacher; students will be instructed that it should be an original thought that is articulated based on either an observation from the book or a response to a classmate comment. Disagreement or agreement is welcome, as long as they are accompanied by explanation. Participation will only be counted on the rubric if it is presented respectfully. To help facilitate enough time for a rich discussion, multiple small groups during discussion would be beneficial.

Results

For this unit, both quantitative and qualitative data was recorded. Prior to the beginning of the curriculum unit each student completed one session of Northwest Evaluation Association Map Growth (2015) testing. After finishing the novel unit, another session of Northwest Evaluation Association Map Growth (2015) testing was conducted. The data received on the testing is quantitative data. Qualitative data was recorded through the use of student, teacher, and caregiver surveys. Prior to the unit all three groups (students, teachers, and caregivers) were given a survey (Appendix K) with open-ended responses to questions about each child's ability to express their opinions effectively. After the unit the same question were given to the groups. This data along with teacher observations and discussion rubrics provided qualitative information.



The curriculum unit is designed to foster creative thinking and discussion about literature. The implementation has a purposeful focus away from a classroom setting where students read aloud and respond with close-ended activities. Individualization of curriculum can be present through adapting to varied reading levels and paces by allowing the students to do the reading of the text outside of class. Assessments were chosen based on their similarity to applicable situations from life as well as authentic connection to the literature. There is not an effort to have students prove what they know each day, but rather apply what they know. Discussion allows for a variety of ability levels to participate and highlights strengths of students that are difficult to measure with write and respond activities that are focused on low-level questioning. (Revelle et al., 2020). Comprehension questions that rely primarily on regurgitating content that was consumed are challenging for students that have difficulty in literacy. Discussion puts the focus more on being able to apply the information and less on the method in which that information is transmitted to others.

Chapter IV: Reflective Essay

Introduction

The process of connecting students to literature is a complicated task that does not have one correct method. Discussion is one method that worked effectively in this situation to connect these students to the reading. A challenge with this type of tool being used in a classroom setting is that discussion requires a comfortability with conversation that is not universally present in all people. Before discussion can be used, the process of how to have a discussion must be taught. The components of discussion that were the most challenging in this situation were the skill of reaction without preparation and identifying the comparison between real life application and the events from the literature.

Experiences

Standards (Appendix A) were applied relating to speaking and listening; the standards require students to demonstrate a level of skill regarding active listening and competent response that was not present in all students. The first few lessons were to establish ground rules for discussion and answer basic questions. This step was surprising because the questions asked by the students were not necessarily the ones that were expected. Students did a remarkable job of coming to class prepared with an answer to the question. Listening to their classmates and responding in an authentic way with their own thoughts was the greater challenge.

For future implementations I would recommend to start slowly with discussion. The challenge of not being comfortable with peers was not as difficult with my class because they were familiar with one another and had almost a full year of learning

together. Even with that level of communication, they still struggled with the skill of listening actively to what a peer had said and formulating a response on the spot. I found that their ability to do this improved over time and with practice, but many did not realize this shortcoming on their own; the personal feedback to individuals in the first few discussions was invaluable in alerting students to that step.

Comparing sample situations from the reading to a discussion based mainly on real life application was also a skill that needed to be honed in the students. Most of the class was able to have a competent discussion about the literature, even if the questions were higher level; most students could have a discussion about their own opinions and did formulate ideas on their own. The greatest challenge for the class as a whole was to bridge the two skills. For example, the discussion question on day 12 of the project was “Which situations do not involve absolute right and absolute wrong?”. Almost all students had multiple examples from their personal lives to apply to this question. On day 13 the question was “What do you think about the statement: It is not about the destination; it is about the journey?”. For this discussion most students had items from their book to share with their classmates. As an educator I identified on both days that the class struggled to reinforce their personal life experiences with facts from the novels as well as to take situations from the book and superimpose them onto experiences from their lives. After class discussion on both of those days we talked about how the discussion for the day progressed and while the students correctly identified what I had noticed, they struggled to fix the problem. I spent a few minutes after class each of those days citing specific examples from the day and augmenting what they had said with additional support. After seeing that demonstrated, their conversational skills shifted

somewhat in subsequent discussions and they improved in their ability to bridge the book knowledge with their personal application.

Scaffolding

Discussion including higher level questioning and requiring real life application to literature is not consistently taught through all levels of education. Therefore, scaffolding was required to help students develop the ability. The demonstration of discussion in the first few days was helpful to students. Individual feedback was another step that should not be forgotten. Another scaffolding tool that helped to support the individual learners involved in this project was to have flexible group dynamics. In the first few days of discussion there were students that separated themselves through their natural communication skills. I then used those skills in different ways as needed during the project. For example, there was a particularly quiet student who felt self-conscious and combated that by preparing comments to say and having them written so they could read their own words when nervous. The student demonstrated a greater amount of participation when paired with a confident student. The more confident student would respond often, justifying their comments. It gave the self-conscious student a personal cheerleader in their group that gave them the external motivation necessary to keep trying.

Another example of scaffolding that was helpful for struggling readers was used when they needed to identify specific characters or items from their reading. There were three students in particular who had a tough time recalling specific characters. I encouraged them to make sheets of notes to have with them to help them reference specific items from the book. One student wrote their favorite moments from that

character and used it at least three times to help him recall what that character had done. Another student drew pictures of the different creatures. The visual representation helped to cue the memory of how that character had behaved. Both of these tools were formed organically as students developed an individual need. These types of activities were not needed by all, but very helpful in raising the ability level of a few students.

While these particular examples were beneficial during my teaching of the project, the scaffolding needed by each classroom must be determined by the educator. Teachers need to develop relationships with their students and understand what is needed and when. Discussion allows for a fair representation in the classroom, whether or not students use additional tools or have scaffolding provided. The ability to communicate their thoughts about the questions was enhanced by these small adjustments, but the discussion still remained fair and inclusive for all learners. This was a benefit of an assessment tool that is flexible and open-ended.

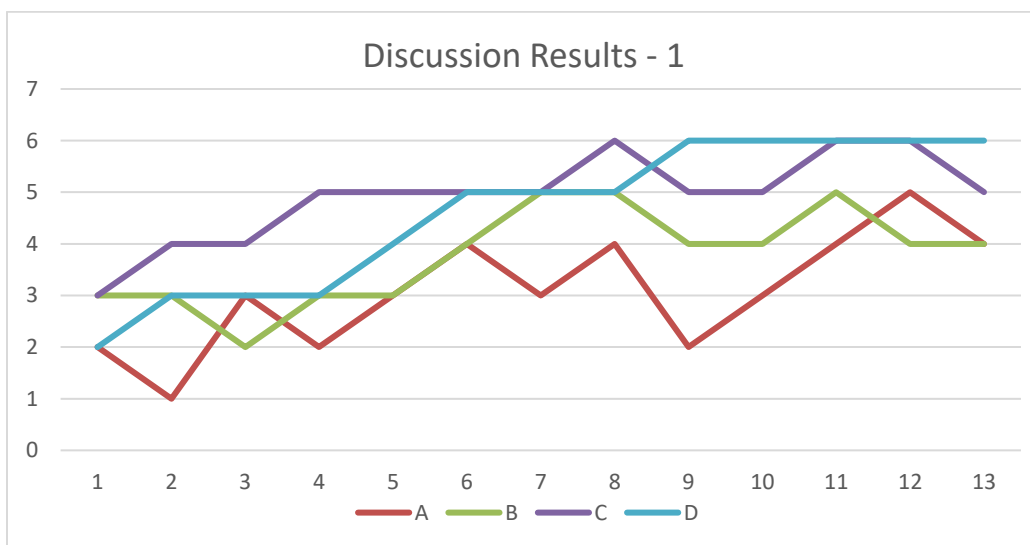
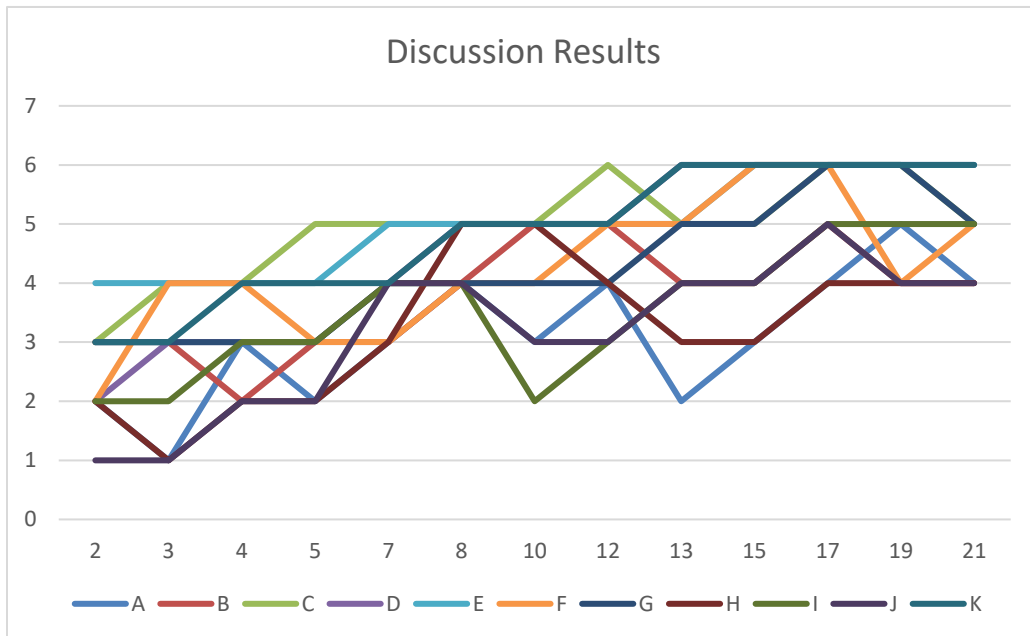
Strengths

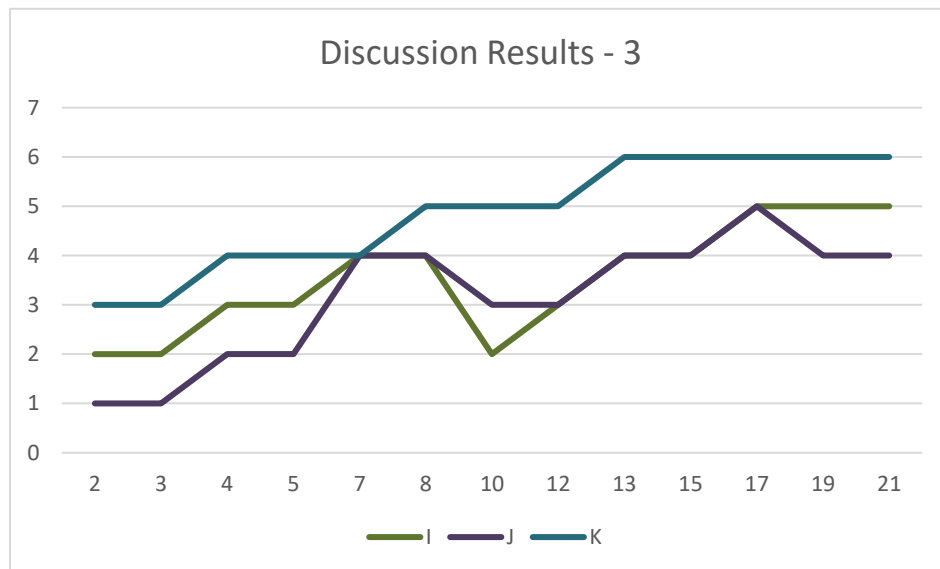
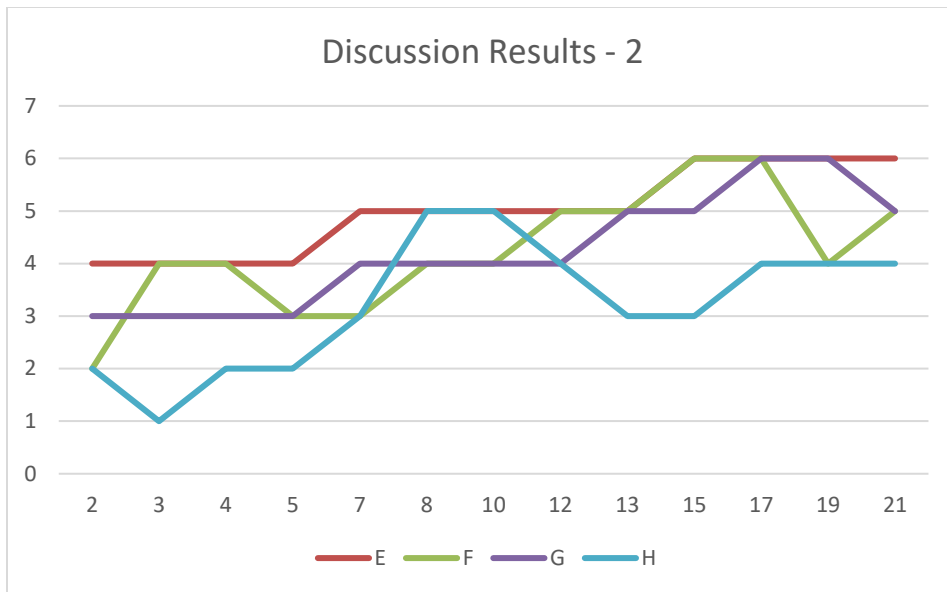
During the instruction, a few students naturally emerged as leaders in discussion. The fishbowl discussion practice early in the unit allowed students to express their comfortability with speaking to the group; It is designed to work with volunteers, so the students were able to take responsibility as they felt capable. This type of pattern is seen in the work of Parker and Hess (2001) as students were developing their communication skills, they were able to lead their group and keep discussion on track. Very few students began the unit with the capability to lead a discussion well; many early attempts revealed a few vocal participants, with other students hardly contributing to discussion actively. Conversation without clear right and wrong answers put “focus on cooperating to develop

mutual understanding rather than on competing or winning” (Bickmore & Parker, 2014, p. 293) The graphic shows a sample of the data of recorded comments on Day 3 and Day 17. Throughout the unit, the class as a whole required some of Clarke and Holwadel’s (2007) “share the airtime” technique. I utilized this in a way that if you were identified by anyone in the group as dominating the discussion, you could be paused with a index card. The index card notified the student to listen to three other students speak before responding.

As the more vocal students learned techniques for balancing their talking time, they naturally progressed into allowing the guiding hand of the teacher to be removed as they encouraged participation amongst each other. Evans’ (2002) study among fifth grade students discovered similar traits emerging. Pair and small group discussions were more helpful to students who were naturally quiet. The more hesitant students showed greater comfortability when a peer was leading their group. The small groups allowed for individual strengths to be showcased more effectively. One individual student was consistently coming to class looking prepared but then hardly speaking up. Their participation flourished when the class used a discussion method of having a small group spokesperson. The students met in small groups first and identified a spokesperson and then that person was their representative in a fishbowl discussion. The individual student felt confident have their thoughts expressed by a more vocal peer and thus were able to be represented in discussion without feeling overwhelmed by the group dynamic. The overall improvement of the students can be seen through the upward progression in the graph included. Each student is represented by a different colored line. The numbers across the horizontal line indicate the discussion day that was recorded. The vertical axis

corresponds to the number of responses registered in a specific day as meeting the qualifications of participation in discussion. To receive a mark for participation independent thought was required. The comment had to be presented respectfully and demonstrate an understanding of the discussion of the day. The dips in individual student performance on particular days are representative of a new learning experience.





Recommendations

Surveys at the beginning and end of the unit proved extremely valuable for further insight. They allowed students to self- assess the skills learned, and they suggested instructional techniques that could be utilized in future units. The feedback from caregivers was especially helpful in highlighting how well the students were able to transfer their skills into life application. However, the survey data was difficult to demonstrate because of an organizational problem in the design. In order for the data to

be an effective measure, the caregivers should have some further explanation of what they are looking for in discussion from their students. In addition, it would be more beneficial to have the same caregiver complete the survey. While teaching my unit, many caregivers share responsibility and the results received were not reliable because the same person did not fill out the survey at the beginning and at the end of the unit.

Discussion as one assessment technique was helpful. However, the amount of discussion that is used for assessment should be balanced with other forms of assessment throughout the school year. I would not recommend that discussion be the main form of assessment used for every novel. The amount that discussion is used to assess students should be evaluated with each novel, both based on the content provided, and the sequence of learning during the school year calendar. Discussion served well as an assessment later in the year as students had a chance to become comfortable with each other and had developed relationships with each other. The art and skills of discussion should be introduced early in the school year as a tool to gauge understanding while building connections.

After being used specifically for discussions about shared literature choices, the discussion skills learned by students could also be applied to other subject areas. The discussion rubric would be applicable for a social studies or science unit as a measure of student learning. The rubric could be utilized during a religion discussion in confirmation class. The questions specifically on day 5 and 10 could generate a discourse about the use of evangelism. Day 12 and 15 had questions that could be directly correlated to passages from the Bible. Character discussions, like the question posed on day 8 could begin with fictional characters and expand into real situations.

Students may struggle with identifying troublesome behavior when presented in reality, but can practice that identification when it is shown in a fictional setting, similar to how role-play situations can be helpful in problem solving. The philosophical question from day 13 would be an excellent jumping off point to talk about classroom work ethic as applied to our life of service as Christians. Discussion could be introduced within the context of a reading class, but then springboard the class into using the skills within other disciplines as well.

A curriculum unit with adaptable assessments that can be applied to different individual pieces of subject matter would allow WELS schools to learn, grow, and change as beneficial for their ministries. Discussion grows and changes with students as they grow and change. If it has not worked in one situation or with one content area, it can be adapted to a different subject. It is imperative for educators to be open to new instructional tools.

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Appendix A: English Language Arts Standards

The Common Core Standards are provided as a reference to the specific standards that were reached through this Curriculum Development Project.

Reading: Literature » Grade 5

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#)

Speaking & Listening » Grade 5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.A

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.B

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.C

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.D

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.6

Reading: Literature » Grade 6

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5](#)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6

Speaking & Listening » Grade 6

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.A

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.B

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.C

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.6

Appendix B: Template Teacher Guide for Unit

For a unit that will use discussion as the primary assessment of understanding, this can serve as an example of how to pace the unit.

Before the students are expected to begin reading, the teacher must lay out expectations clearly for both in class and out of class. This can be completed in one or two days of instruction.

Time: 1-2 days of instruction

A few days of discussion to practice their new skills in active listening and creative response is necessary. These should not require a great deal of information from their novel, as they are just beginning reading it. These discussions are to practice the basic skills of discussion, including being able to listen to the conversation and simultaneously create a comment for response.

Time: 3-5 days of instruction

Activities that relate to the reading can be interspersed throughout the unit. This provides students with a chance to reflect on what they have learned and exercise a different skill than is being used during discussion.

Time: 1-2 days of instruction

Discussion relating to the reading can now be used more thoroughly. Students should at this point have a proficient understanding of discussion and be able to apply items from their reading.

Time: 2-4 days of instruction

Novel projects and group work allow students to continue working on interpersonal communication in a different setting. These activities can also launch thinking for the next round of discussion.

Time: 1-2 days of instruction

Discussion at this point should be comfortable for the class. Questions and prompts can now come from students and discussion should be led mainly by students.

Time: 3-5 days of instruction

Novel projects at this point can be wrapping up what has happened throughout the book. They can be more reflective of the entire novel. This fuels the final phase of discussion.

Time: 1-2 days of instruction

Discussion at the ending of the unit should be comprehensive of the skills learned and the content gained. Students should be sharing demonstrating their understanding of the entire piece of work.

Time: 3-5 days of instruction

Appendix C: Teacher Guide for Specific Unit

Classroom Activities:

Day 1 -

- Novel introduction - Teacher introduces the series through explanation. Books will be passed out to individual students.
- Discussion instruction - Teacher will use a role play simulation with students to demonstrate discussion protocol. The prompt will be “What makes a book interesting to you?” Discussion will be led by students, so the teacher will be an observer more than participant.
- Author study - Students will have 4 websites to peruse for information about C.S. Lewis. Their research will prepare them for discussion question, “Why do you think this author chose to write a fantasy series?”

Day 2 -

- Discussion: “Why do you think this author chose to write a fantasy series?”
- After the discussion the teacher will review the recording and provide written feedback for each student about their participation including direct quotes. The teacher will color-code comments made by students as fact or opinion.

Day 3 -

- Teacher will pass back feedback about the previous discussion.
- Class begins with a brief talk about the introduction in a book. Introductions should include basic introduction of the main character or characters and a description of the setting. It does not need to lay out the entire plot or provide all details about the characters. Students should already have background information from previous units.
- Discussion: “What do you like or dislike about an introduction?”

Day 4 -

- Teacher explains the timeline and map projects. They are designed to visually represent the continuity of a series and help visual learners absorb the locations mentioned in the series.
- Discussion: “What are some benefits and downfalls of creating a fantasy universe for a story?”

Day 5 -

- Discussion: “What information do you need about a person in order to know them?”

Day 6 -

- Teacher explains character presentations. (Appendix G) They are designed to highlight differences between the same characters as they progress through the series. The presentations will also help students develop a richer understanding of each individual character to help in their future discussions.
- Take quiz on Socrative.com. The purpose is to show basic comprehension of the novel. Each quiz consists of 4 items allowing for a typed response. The items are: 1. List a main character. 2. What is a problem

they are currently facing? 3. How do you think that problem will be resolved? 4. Why did you come to that conclusion?

Day 7 -

- Discussion: “What do you reveal about yourself in an introduction and why do you choose that information?”

Day 8 -

- Discussion: “What makes a character good or bad?”

Day 9 -

- In a small group students reading the same book will compare a Narnian creature with the closest counterpart in our world. (Appendix H) They will provide a picture comparison along with 5 details from the book that show the comparison to the real world creature. These comparisons will highlight progression and evolution of characters important for discussion on Day 12 and Day 13.

Day 10 -

- Discussion: “How important is the motivation behind what you do?”

Day 11 -

- Students present character projects in small groups. In groups of 3-4 students they explain the character they chose. They lead their group through their character’s traits, events in their life, and their motives.
- Teacher explains the Aslan project. (Appendix I) The purpose is for each group reading a book to team up to demonstrate to the class the role that Aslan plays in their book. Understanding the character of Aslan will help during discussion on Day 15 and 17.

Day 12 -

- Discussion: “Which situations do not involve absolute right and absolute wrong?”

Day 13 -

- Discussion: “What do you think about the statement: It is not about the destination, it is about the journey.?”

Day 14 -

- The Aslan groups will work together in class on their project.
- Groups can add items to the map if they have pieces to add.
- Groups can work on items for the timeline.
- Take quiz on Socrative.com.

Day 15 -

- Discussion: “What makes it seem like the hardest time in your life is right now?”

Day 16 -

- Students present their Aslan projects.

Day 17 -

- Watch video clips of scenes from each of the movies. The students that read those books can share what matched the book and what did not.
- Discussion: “Why do movies not match books exactly?”

Day 18 -

- Students work in a large group to add pieces to the Narnia map.

- Students work in small groups to complete items for the Narnia timeline.
 - Reminder for students to finish reading the book by Day 20!
- Day 19 -
- Discussion: “Why do authors often make their stories finish with a happy ending?”
- Day 20 -
- Take final quiz on Socrative.com.
 - The entire class works together to form the completed Narnia map and timeline of events from the creation of Narnia to its end.
- Day 21 -
- Discussion: “How do you like books to end and why?”

Appendix D: Discussion Day Lesson Plan Template**OBJECTIVES**

- The student will contribute to discussion with examples from the text.
- The student will contribute to discussion with real life application.

PROCEDURE**Introduction –**

The teacher writes the question on the board in front of the class.

Lesson –

The teacher will communicate discussion groupings to the students. Each discussion group should have their own designated area. The students will separate into their groups and begin their discussion.

Throughout their discussions, the teacher is monitoring the conversation as an observer. Taking notes on specific items that were brought up, answering questions that are stalling discussion, and maintaining classroom order may all be done during this time.

When the discussion portion of the class is nearing the end, alert the groups so students can have a chance to make any final remarks.

Application –

After the class is back together as a whole, the teacher can ask for students to share items they felt were important from their discussion. A student representative to speak from each group could be designated if necessary. Then the teacher can pose to the entire class items that they found noteworthy from discussion. If multiple groups centered on a same idea or if they were all very different, that can be helpful to point out to the whole group.

Alert students to upcoming discussion questions.

Appendix E: Specific Unit Lesson Plans

Day One - Detailed Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVES

- The students will participate in a discussion simulation.
- The students will research the author, C.S. Lewis.

PROCEDURE

Introduction -

Teacher passes out copies of the Student Guide

The Chronicles of Narnia is a series of 7 books. The books explore another world, the world of Narnia. The entire series is fiction in the fantasy genre. While some of the books take place in the real world at certain points, they are not historical or realistic fiction because the majority of the writing falls within the fantasy genre.

Books within a series follow a pattern. In order to be considered a series, they will need to have some continuation between the books. Our class will be reading the entire series. Each of you will be reading different books along the continuation of the series. Some books in a series must be read in a certain order. However, C. S. Lewis, the author of the series, wrote this about his books, “it does not matter very much in which order anyone read them.” Each individual book in *The Chronicles of Narnia* does contain its own story, but some elements about the plot or characters are carried over between books. The entire series happens within the same setting.

The book that you will be given is the first book for you to read. You may read at your own pace, but you must be finished by Day 20 of our unit. If you would like to read more than one book in the series, first finish the book given to you. Then you will have the choice of what book in the series you would like to read next. When we work in small groups you will work with other people that are reading or have read the same book as you.”

Teacher passes out books to students. Answer questions as necessary at this point.

Lesson -

“Throughout this lesson you will have a variety of different activities to show your understanding of what you are reading. One of the main activities will be discussions. On discussion days we will split the class into groups of the teacher’s choosing. Each group will be discussing a question for the day. Your assessment for the day will be based on your participation in class discussion.”

Teacher passes out blank rubric as an example.

“The teacher will have a copy of this rubric as you have your discussion. For each contribution that you make to discussion, your response will be recorded. Take a few minutes and read carefully what will qualify as a contribution to discussion.”

While students read, teacher writes on the board, “What makes a book interesting to you?”

“Now we will have a chance as a class to watch a sample demonstration. The question written on the board will serve as our guiding question today. Right now on a piece of paper write 3 comments you feel you could give to this discussion. They can be about books in general or you can mention specific books or specific examples from books that are interesting. Please write a complete thought for each one and write clearly.”

Give students a few minutes to write answers.

“Our class will be observing a discussion that will serve us as an example for future days. The teacher should be mainly watching and stepping in only as necessary. Keeping the discussion going will rely on you as students. You will watch each other for visual clues to show that someone is ready to speak. If someone’s hands are over their mouth or they are looking down, that is generally a clue that they are not ready to share. Leaning forward with your body and making eye contact are two examples of visual clues to show that a person has something they want to share. Part of a discussion is preparing what you will say. Part of it is also being an active listener. While you are speaking, speak in a clear voice and take your time to be understood. While you are a listener, think about what the speaker is saying. Consider how you feel about their comment and start formulating what you will say in response.

I would like 6 volunteers from class to be brave and be willing to serve as our speakers today. Would anyone like to volunteer?”

Teacher will wait for 6 volunteers. Encouragement may be necessary.

“Now put all of your comments that you have written onto the front desk. Our 6 volunteers can look through these comments and they may use them if they would like. These comments represent the comments that you come prepared with by reading our discussion questions before class. I would like the other students to form 2 circles of chairs. 1 inner circle will have 6 chairs for our volunteers. The remaining chairs will be around the outside so that we can watch their simulation.”

Students work with the teacher to create the 2 circles of chairs. When volunteers have gathered any comments they would like to use, they choose a chair in the inner circle. Everyone else has a spot in the larger circle.

“As the teacher I will read the question aloud for everyone. What makes a book interesting to you?” The first person ready to share will raise their hand. After they are done speaking the other members can respond by watching for the visual clues that we

talked about. Someone may have a lot to say about a topic. To allow enough time for everyone to share, after you have contributed to discussion, you must hear two other speakers before you talk again.”

A volunteer should have raised their hand during the previous paragraph. The volunteer starts the discussion. Each consecutive comment should come after one person is done speaking. The teacher will only speak up if there is a delay with no one speaking. At that point the teacher could suggest the name of a volunteer who has not shared recently. The reminder about prepared comments can be given if students need guidance. After the students have gone through 2 or 3 comments each, pause the discussion.

“How are the other group members noticing that someone wants to talk? They should be showing the other groups members through their body language that they are ready to share. They can also tell when a person is done with their point based on their body language. They may lean back in their chair or clear their throat. Careful observation will make these more obvious with practice. Were there any problems that we need to address?”

Teacher answers questions as necessary. Some sample problems might be someone dominating the conversation or someone not sharing at all. Discuss as a group how to counteract those problems. If a person is not sharing, is it because they are unprepared, or just not demonstrating that they are ready to share? If someone is dominating, could a teacher step in to enforce the rule of waiting for 2 speakers? Offer the volunteers a chance to share some feelings about coming prepared. If the class seems to need more practice, the simulation can be run as many times as necessary. Different volunteers can be used.

Application -

“During our next class we will be having a discussion about the author of the series, C. S. Lewis. Our discussion question is ‘Why do you think this author chose to write a fantasy series?’ For the remainder of class the teacher will answer questions as needed about the series. During that time you will be independently working on researching the author so that you are prepared for discussion. There are links for informational websites about the author. Make sure to take notes so that you do not forget the information that you want to share.”

Websites:

<https://www.cslewis.com/us/>

<http://www.cslewis.org/resource/cslewis/>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/C-S-Lewis>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C. S. Lewis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._S._Lewis)

The teacher circulates to make sure students are on task with research. Questions can be answered on an individual basis at this time.

Day Four - Detailed Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVES

- The students will plan items to contribute to a classroom project.
- The students will participate in a discussion.

PROCEDURE

Introduction -

Instruct students to open their Bibles to a map (either in the front or back). If not available, show an example: https://www.bible-history.com/geography/helpful_maps.html

“As a class we will be creating a map that includes locations important to the world of Narnia. Throughout your reading you will be keeping a record of when specific locations are mentioned. An example is: “The lampost on pg. 15” If you have already reached some of these locations in your reading, you will need to write them down today. At a few different times throughout the unit we will be cooperating together to put these locations onto a map of Narnia. Put everything you can list as landmark. We can edit these documents later and will include main landmarks, but not every specific place.

Show the example of a timeline: <https://venngage.com/blog/timeline-template/>

“We will also cooperatively be creating a timeline of major events throughout the series. Everyone who has read your book will decide together after you have finished reading on 6 specific events important to either your book or the series as a whole. You do not need to actively work on this right now, but rather make a mental note of main events in the story.”

Lesson -

Instruct the students to form a circle of chairs for each group. Groups should be approximately 6 people each. Each group should have students reading different novels in the series. The teacher could choose to define groups each day or have some days when students choose groups. While they are getting organized write the question, “What are some benefits and downfalls of creating a fantasy universe for a story?” on the board. Choose a group leader for each group that will help regulate the flow of ideas and enforce the rule of taking turns for talking. Teacher circulates during all discussions and steps in with leading thoughts or questions only if necessary.

Application -

Students work independently to write locations from the books on a Google Doc. The document will be added to throughout the unit.

Day Nine - Detailed Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVES

- The students will choose a Narnian creature that is comparable to an earthly creature.
- The students will compare the two creatures.

PROCEDURE

Introduction -

Display an example on the board of two items that are similar, but different. Some



examples:



“Today you will be working in small groups to take two creatures that are similar and list their similarities and differences.”

Lesson -

Divide the class into groups based on the novel that they are reading. If a student has read more than one book, they will be placed into one of the groups based on the novel they read, but should contain their contributions to what was specific to the group novel. Groups should have about 2-4 members each.

Pass out the page titled “Creature Comparison” (Appendix H).

“In your groups you will be creating a comparison between a Narnian creature and the closest creature we have here. Your group will decide on a creature - it cannot be a human - from the novel. Then agree on an earthly creature that closely compares. The line above each box is for writing the name of the creature. In the box you will draw a picture based on a description from the book. For the picture in the earth box, you may use a picture online for guidance, but inside the box must be a drawing.

The five lines under each box are for writing specific examples for each creature. Some examples could be physical characteristics, behaviors, or family structure. When using an example from the book, provide the page number for reference.

If number one for the earthly creature is a physical characteristic, then number one for the Narnian creature should be a physical characteristic as well. Try as much as possible to have the matching numbers have similar comparisons.

There will be 1 point given for each element included on the sheet. The names of the creatures will earn 2 points total, the pictures 2 points total, and the descriptions 10 points total. The entire assignment will be worth 14 points total.”

Groups can spend class time working as teacher circulates to help as necessary.

Application -

“After your group has finished, review the items that you wrote about the Narnian creature. In a few days we will be discussing the concept of right versus wrong and how life is a journey. Talk with your group members about your specific Narnian creature and their journey through right and wrong and how they have developed in their life.”

Students hand in finished assignment pages.

Day Seventeen - Detailed Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVES

- The students will compare text to a movie adaptation.
- The students will participate in a discussion.

PROCEDURE

Introduction -

Watch video clips -

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe when the armies are assembling before the great charge.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5KI1Z8r7RE>

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader when Lucy looks into the mirror. (stop at 2:36)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eT1QuChB54>

Prince Caspian meets the children when they return to Narnia. (stop at 3:30)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44SVPS8LjLg>

Lesson -

Instruct the students to form a circle of chairs for each group. Groups should be approximately 6 people each. Each group should have students reading different novels in the series. While they are getting organized write the question, “Why do movies not match books exactly?” on the board. Choose a group leader for each group that will help regulate the flow of ideas and enforce the rule of taking turns for talking. Teacher circulates during all discussions and steps in with leading thoughts or questions only if necessary.

Appendix F: Guide for Students**CAREGIVER/STUDENT GUIDE**

For the next month the students will be reading books in the series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Each student in the class will be reading different books in the series. Students are welcome to read at their own pace. If they finish their book, they can absolutely move into the next book.

In class we will be having discussions regularly. This will make up the majority of the assessment for the unit. It is designed to teach the students how to express their opinions respectfully and participate in a group conversation about a text. For each discussion day there will be a question prompt. The discussions will be happening in class, but if you would like to ask your student about them at home, you are welcome to do so.

There will also be some days where students will work on activities specific to their novel and some days where we will work as a group to show the continuity of the series. Due to the majority of the days being based on discussion, you will not see written homework coming home each day.

Day 1 -

Novel introduction

Day 2 -

Discussion: "Why do you think this author chose to write a fantasy series?"

Day 3 -

Discussion: "What do you like or dislike about an introduction?"

Day 4 -

Discussion: "What are some benefits and downfalls of creating a fantasy universe for a story?"

Day 5 -

Discussion: "What information do you need about a person in order to know them?"

Day 6 -

Content quiz

Day 7 -

Discussion: "What do you reveal about yourself in an introduction and why do you choose that information?"

Day 8 -

Discussion: "What makes a character good or bad?"

Day 9 -

Compare Narnian creatures to our world

Day 10 -

Discussion: "How important are motives?"

Day 11 -

Character presentations

Day 12 -

Discussion: "Which situations do not involve absolute right and absolute wrong?"

Day 13 -

Discussion: "What do you think about the statement, It is not about the destination, it is about the journey.?"

Day 14 -

Work day for projects

Content quiz

Day 15 -

Discussion: "What makes it seem like the hardest time in your life is right now?"

Day 16 -

Aslan presentations

Day 17 -

Discussion: "Why do movies not match books exactly?"

Day 18 -

Work day for projects

Day 19 -

Discussion: "Why do authors often make their stories finish with a happy ending?"

Day 20 -

Content quiz

Day 21 -

Discussion: "How do you like books to end and why?"

Appendix G: Character Presentation

CHARACTER PRESENTATION

You will choose 2 characters from your book. 1 character must be “good” – on the side of Aslan. 1 character must be a villain.

You will then write two sentences to describe each character (4 sentences total). The description should not just include what they look like but also what they have done or how they behave. A complete sentence that is able to describe a character should have at least 6 words.

You will also need to have a picture to go with your characters. You are welcome to draw one yourself or find a picture that you can color. The pictures must be in color. You may not use a picture that you cut out of a magazine or a picture printed in color from a printer.

You will need to explain each part of your poster to the class.

Name of book	1 pt
Name of good character	1 pt
Picture of good character	2 pts
2 describing sentences of good character	4 pts
Name of villain	1 pt
Picture of villain	2 pts
2 describing sentences of villain	4 pts

TOTAL: 15 pts

This is an example of how your poster should be displayed.

Name of book	
Name of good character picture	Name of villain picture
describing sentences of good character	describing sentences of villain

Appendix H: Creature Comparison

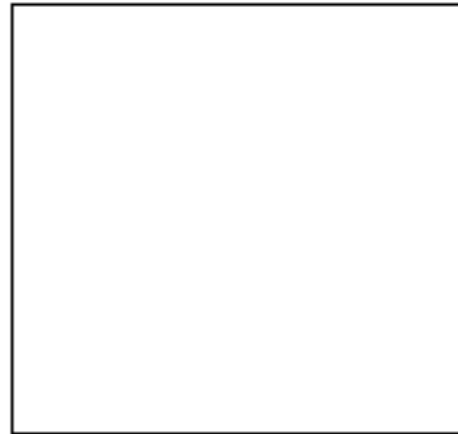
Group Names: _____

Novel Title: _____

CREATURE COMPARISON

Earthly creature

Narnian creature



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Appendix I: Aslan Presentation

ASLAN PRESENTATION

The purpose of the presentations is to see how C.S. Lewis compares Aslan to Christ throughout his whole series. The presentations will be done on Chromebooks, and then shared with the teacher. You will work with other students that are reading the same book. The presentation will consist of a Google Doc to project on the board and this page, filled in.

Project requirements:

1. Picture of Aslan and a picture of Jesus. (2 pts)
2. Passage from the Bible that explains the picture of Jesus. (5 pts)
3. Picture of Jesus should match up to at least one of the examples from the book.
4. 3 quotes from the book talking specifically about Aslan. (3 pts each)

Name _____

Book you are reading _____

A quote is copying the EXACT words from the book, also include the page number.

Pg. _____ 1. _____

Pg. _____ 2. _____

Pg. _____ 3. _____

Bible passage

Appendix J: Discussion Rubric*Discussion Rubric*

Date: _____

								%
Student A	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____	
Student B	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____	
Student C	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____	
Student D	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____	
Student E	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____	
Student F	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____	

1 = 75% 2 = 80% 3 = 85% 4 = 90% 5 = 95% 6 = 100%

4 = Exemplary participation - Comments were both original and responsive to classmates.

Sample: I disagree with your position that the character was polite because on page 45 I felt that the character's attitude was rude to her mother.

3 = Proficient participation - Comments were either original or responsive.

Sample: I think that the character is rude on page 45 in how she talks to her mother.

2 = Satisfactory participation - Comments made were on topic and maintained respectful.

Sample: I disagree because of page 45.

1 = Developing participation - Comments were brief and needed greater purpose.

Sample: I think she is rude.

Appendix K: Surveys

Caregiver Survey

1 = Very well 2 = Well 3 = Average 4 = Not well

How do you feel your child does at expressing factual information?

1 2 3 4

How do you feel your child does at expressing their opinion?

1 2 3 4

How well do you feel they are distinguishing between fact and opinion?

1 2 3 4

How well do you feel your child receives opinions that are different than their own views?

1 2 3 4

How have you seen the above skills demonstrated in conversation?

Student Survey

How can facts and opinions be different?

What is a discussion?

What at least three ways you can show you are listening to someone else?

How do you feel about sharing your opinions with your classmates and why?

(before unit) What would you like your teacher to know about your feelings during discussions?

(after the unit) How do you feel you have improved in your abilities participating in discussion?

Teacher Survey (to be completed for each individual in the class)

What level of participation has been given by this student in past discussions?

What may be challenges to this student's participation?

What may be blessings associated with this student's participation?

How can you assist this student in expressing themselves during discussion?