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How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex and are exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages describe how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the book.

Before students begin reading, have them complete the *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 14). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to keep students' papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 60). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the book. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before they read the book to what the characters discovered during the story.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Analyzing the Literature

After you have read each section with students, hold a small-group or whole-class discussion. Provided on the teacher reference page for each section are leveled questions. The questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. These questions are focused on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the book with students.

Reader Response

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below average writers. So much time and energy is spent in classrooms getting students to read on grade level that little time is left to focus on writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and opinion. Before students write, you may want to allow them time to draw pictures related to the topic. Book-themed writing paper is provided on page 70 if your students need more space to write.

Guided Close Reading

Within each section of this guide, it is suggested that you closely reread a portion of the text with your students. No page numbers are given because some versions of the book do not have page numbers. The sections to be reread are described by location. After rereading the section, there are a few text-dependent questions to be answered by students.

Working space has been provided to help students prepare for the group discussion. They should record their thoughts and ideas on the activity page and refer to it during your discussion. Rather than just taking notes, you may want to require students to write complete responses to the questions before discussing them with you.

Encourage students to read one question at a time and then go back to the text and discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the text to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Guided Close Reading *(cont.)*

The generic open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- What words in the story support . . . ?
- What text helps you understand . . . ?
- Use the book to tell why ____ happens.
- Based on the events in the story, . . . ?
- Show me the part in the text that supports
- Use the text to tell why

Making Connections

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, or other curricular areas. These activities require higher-order thinking skills from students but also allow for creative thinking.

Language Learning

A special section has been set aside to connect the literature to language conventions. Through these activities, students will have opportunities to practice the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing what the common story elements are in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, plot, and theme can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers begin discussing these elements in early childhood, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another very important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

In the story elements activities, students are asked to create work related to the characters, setting, or plot. Consider having students complete only one of these activities. If you give students a choice on this assignment, each student can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to him or her. Different intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

Vocabulary Overview

Key words and phrases from this section are provided below with definitions and sentences about how the words are used in the story. Introduce and discuss these important vocabulary words with students. If you think these words or other words in the story warrant more time devoted to them, there are suggestions in the introduction for other vocabulary activities (page 5).

Word or Phrase	Definition	Sentence about Text
Amazon Rain Forest (preface)	a forest with heavy rainfall located in South America	This story takes place in the Amazon Rain Forest .
canopy (preface)	a roof-like covering	In a rain forest, the tops of trees are called the canopy .
understory (preface)	plants and trees that grow under the canopy of a forest	The understory is the lower level of the rain forest.
Kapok tree (preface)	a large tree that grows in tropical places	Many animals make their homes in the Kapok tree .
emerges (preface)	comes into view	The Kapok tree is so tall, it emerges above the canopy of the rain forest.
community (preface)	a group living in a particular area	The rain forest is home to a large community of animals.
moments	a short amount of time	The animals make noises moments before the men enter the rain forest.
squawking	a sudden, loud cry	You might hear squawking birds in the rain forest.
howling	an animal's loud cry	The noise monkeys make is called howling .
lulled	calmed or made someone feel relaxed	The sounds of the forest lull the man to sleep.

Vocabulary Activity

Directions: Draw lines to complete the sentences.

Sentence Beginnings

The Great Kapok Tree is the story of a **community**

Squawking and **howling** sounds are made

The great Kapok tree is so tall

The **canopy** is a high and sunny place that

The heat and sounds of the rain forest

Sentence Endings

looks like it touches the sky.

it **emerges** above the other trees in the forest.

lull the man to sleep.

of animals that live in a tree.

by the birds and monkeys in the forest.

Directions: Answer this question.

1. What things would you see in the **understory** of a rainforest?

Name _____ Date _____

Guided Close Reading

Closely reread the first section of the book. Start with the preface and read the first two pages of text in the story.

Directions: Think about these questions. In the space below, write ideas or draw pictures as you think. Be ready to share your answers.

❶ What words in the book describe how it feels to be in the Amazon Rain Forest?

❷ Use the text to tell how the animals feel about the men who enter the forest.

❸ Which of the two men is in charge? Use the text to tell how you know this.

Name _____ Date _____

Story Elements-Character

Directions: Read the list of animals from the story. Select your favorite animal. Use modeling clay to create your favorite animal. Write a description below of the animal you created.

Materials

- modeling clay in assorted colors

Animals from the Story

boa constrictor	bee	monkeys	toucan
macaw	cock-of-the-rock	tree frog	jaguar
tree porcupines	anteaters	three-toed sloth	
