

3rd ELA Reading
Pre-Interview

Interviewer: Why did you choose to teach this lesson?

Teacher: I chose this lesson because it shows that the students can be self-directed at a third grade level. It shows if you set up guidelines that the kids can create their own literature circles and be self-directed and still get what you're wanting out of the lesson without you needing to be there with each group. It also gives me time to work with my students that need a little extra help with reading. Once I put this into place, it gives that structure that then I can start doing small group and reaching the kids that need that extra attention, and then the other kids are still getting a great experience out of it also.

Interviewer: What are the learning outcomes for this lesson, and how are they related to the larger [inaudible 00:00:48]?

Teacher: The learning outcomes are to hit the reading anchor standards, and they're going to be just having a group discussion, really focusing on talking about the book when they're done and making sure that they understand what they're reading. It's kind of a mix of language arts, but also just working together and having discussion skills. Some of the students are great readers, but they can't talk about what they just read.

It's reaching all the students in the fact that some, I just want them to get through an entire book, through a quarter, and there's other students who need that practice of talking about the book when they're done. There's a lot of different things I'm trying to hit, also, just them having that independence of being able to read in a small group without a teacher hovering over them, so there's actually a lot of ultimate goals, but really it's reading and summarizing and understanding the story.

Interviewer: How would you describe this lesson as meaningful, useful, or relevant to the student's life?

Teacher: It's relevant because I've made it into an entire unit. We are studying Chinese culture. We're doing it through social studies. We're throwing it into math here and there.

[00:02:00] They're reading it every day. The kids are really excited about this story, so they come in every day like, "How many chapters do we get to read today?", or, "Are we reading today?", because there's days here and there we have to skip. They're definitely invested in this and the process of trying to get through the story because it's an exciting story.

It's also meaningful. Like I said before, there's students in third grade who've never completed an entire book besides the easy-reader-picture book, and you see these kids, they finish, and it's just like a light bulb goes off like, "That's how it feels when you finish a story?" They get that feeling of pride and the excitement that the story had a finish, and it ended, and they completed it. Because I think, a lot of times, your lower students may have a chapter book in their hand, but they're reading just a few pages here or there and trading out the book. For a teacher, for me, it's most meaningful to see those

few kids that have never read a complete book, read a complete book and the satisfaction they get out of it.

Interviewer: Why do you think they're so excited about the text?

Teacher: Part of it is because it relates to their culture a little bit because it's Chinese culture. There's a lot of similarities of Hawaiian culture in there. It's also just a little girl. She's on an adventure. There's a dragon in it, so that pulls the boys in too. They love how exciting it is. I read the book before I taught it, and I couldn't put the book down, so I knew ... I also play it up like, "This is the best book you're ever going to read," and I get them all excited, so it gets that buy-in for the kids before we even start when they see how excited I am. Now that I have a teacher who comes in just during reading time to help me with small groups, and she gets excited about it, there's just that all around excitement for the kids, and they're ready for it.

Interviewer: What are the big questions you're using to drive the student discussion?

Teacher: We don't really have a big, overall question. I do have some discussion questions that they can ask if it doesn't naturally come. Most of the time, they're so excited. They're naturally coming up with wonderings and questions. We do the Philosophy for Children Circle, so that helps them know how to build those wonderings and those questions where they're predicting, and they're already trying to think ahead of what's going to happen next in the story?", or, "I wonder who this character is?", because there's a lot of characters that they have connections into the folk tales that are embedded, and you slowly start to realize that, so the kids are already getting that discussion.

I do have some just open-ended like, "Was there something interesting? Was there something surprising? Do you have a connection, or do you have a wondering?" Those are the stems that they have if they're struggling with coming up with discussion, but usually it's just that natural want to talk about what they just read because it was a really exciting part.

Interviewer: How are you planning to check their understanding, so student outcome?

Teacher: When the groups finish, they go back to their seats because we're not all finishing at the same time. They go back to their seats, and they write a summary of what they read today. For my lower groups, I just say, "Give me one sentence about each chapter," because I know that they're needing a little more help with it. I get kids who are writing a half a page, a full page, summarizing what they read. We're also creating an ongoing map for social studies, where they're mapping the characters' journey. When they finish every day they do their summary. They update their map, any places that she visited for that day. We're also keeping track of character traits. They picked one character to follow throughout the story, and they're updating how the character's evolving and changing throughout the story.

All three of those help me see are they understanding visually what's going on with the

[00:06:00] map? Do they understand what they just read through the summary? Then the character traits, how they're thinking about their characters. I also switch up the groups I work with. My one group always has to be with an adult, but because I have another adult come in, we rotate through all the groups. We'll at least work with one group one day through the week, so I can check for understanding when I work with the groups also. Because not necessarily the higher readers are getting the most out of it if they're not really stopping to talk about it.

Interviewer: How would you describe the lesson as engaging for students?

Teacher: Like I said, they're really into it, so it's engaging in the fact that they're into the story. They love talking. They love talking to each other and sharing their ideas, so giving that discussion group, that they're in a small group, and they're required to talk about the book, I mean, I probably wouldn't have to make it a requirement because they want to talk about it, and they want to share like, "I think this is what's going to happen," or, "I think this is who that character really is," so that naturally just happens because they're in those small discussion groups.

Interviewer: How do you plan to manage student behavior throughout the lesson, starting with expectations?

Teacher: Well, that is one thing, for third graders to be doing independent groups, I couldn't have done this first quarter. It is a second, third, or fourth quarter thing I need to do. I do roll it out. We do wonders in the beginning of the year, and I try and do one day a week where they work in small groups, so they can get practice and see how the structure should be going and the expectations. There's definitely a built expectation already in before we start. They also have a sheet in front of them of guidelines and expectations that they need to make meaningful contributions; they need to respect what everybody's saying in the group. They have a list that they can reflect to. I pick a leader every day, switch a leader in the group, and they kind of are in charge of making sure discussion is happening, making sure that everyone's getting a chance to share.

[00:08:00] Those expectations that are pre-built, and the expectations they have as a reminder are what make the groups work. There's days that, whatever it may be, a full moon, or extra windy, or just Valentine's party, that they're a little more ... I have to maybe get up. I'll tell my group, "Okay. Talk about what we just read," and if I have to get up, I'll go redirect a group, but it doesn't happen very often because they're pretty into the story, and they want to finish and be able to talk about it. It did take work. It did take practice before they could get to this. I wouldn't suggest trying this first quarter, by any means, because they need to learn what it means to work in a small group, especially at third grade.

Interviewer: Awesome.