Alligator River Session Notes

PART I: (Read and Respond)

Pass out the story to the students. Have the students read the story silently to themselves. When they complete the story, instruct them to complete their graphic organizer in which they rank the characters from 1-5 (1 being the worst character in the story to 5 being the least worst). It’s very important that the students work silently for Part I and don’t share their answers with anyone.

PART II: (Group Discuss and Debate)

Using whatever routine/ritual you have in place within your classroom, put the students in groups of 4. For the second part of this activity, the students will have 10 minutes to “argue” the validity of their lists using both information from the story and their own personal judgements. The idea within the group is to eventually come to a consensus around listing the characters from 1-5.

PART III: (Whole class analysis and discussion)

Have each of the group put their agreed upon lists on chart paper and post around the room. Students then turn back to their graphic organizer and take notes as we discuss, as a whole class, the following questions:

- What similarities do you notice between the lists?
- What primary differences do you notice between the lists?
- Why is it so challenging to get the whole class to agree upon the meaning of the same 225 word story?
- What logical conclusions can we make about how we “read,” how we “analyze” and how we come to “common understanding” based on your experience with this activity?

PART IV: (Individual Student)

Now that students have completed the process of reading, deciding, discussing, and debating, it’s time for them to take all the information they know possess about the story and re-rank their characters into a “final” list. They will complete this ranking on the exit ticket organizer provided to them for the end of class.

They will answer the following reflection question after completing their final list?

- What changes, if any, did you make to your list from the first list to the last?
- What were some of the reasons you decided to make those changes?
- Based on the changes you made (or lack of), what does it tell you about the practice of reading and understanding?

PART V: (Extension Activity)

Students will complete the extension writing activity “Writing For Meaning” for homework (or next class)
THE ALLIGATOR RIVER STORY
Part I—Reading for Meaning

Instructions: Please read the following story. After, on a separate sheet of paper, rank the five characters in the story, beginning with the one you consider as most offensive, and ending with the one you consider as least objectionable. Also, briefly note your reasons as to why you ranked them in that order.

There lived a woman named Abigail who was in love with a man named Gregory. Gregory lived on the shore of a river. Abigail lived on the opposite shore of the same river. The river that separated the two lovers was teeming with dangerous alligators. Abigail wanted to cross the river to be with Gregory. Unfortunately, the bridge had been washed out by a heavy flood the previous week. So she went to ask Sinbad, a riverboat captain, to take her across. He said he would be glad to if she would consent to make out with him prior to the voyage. She promptly refused and went to a friend named Ivan to explain her plight. Ivan did not want to get involved at all in the situation. Abigail felt her only alternative was to accept Sinbad’s terms. Sinbad fulfilled his promise to Abigail and delivered her into the arms of Gregory.

When Abigail told Gregory about her amorous escapade in order to cross the river, Gregory cast her aside with disdain. Heartsick and rejected, Abigail turned to Slug with her tale of woe. Slug, feeling compassion for Abigail, sought out Gregory and beat him brutally. Abigail was overjoyed at the sight of Gregory getting his due. As the sun set on the horizon, people heard Abigail laughing at Gregory.
Writing For Meaning

Directions: Select one of the two writing prompts below and construct a two-page (minimum) story. Make sure your story has a heading that is proper MLA Format (see example provided).

Part I—Writing For Meaning (20 points)

1. Write a two page creative short story that is a continuation of the Alligator River Story.
   - You CANNOT change any of the facts that occurred within the original story
   - Your story may take place before, during, and/or after the events that occurred.
   - Your story must include dialogue/conversation

2. Write a two page news article as if you were a reporter working for the Detroit News or Detroit Free Press.
   - You may write a news story in which you recap the terrible events that occurred OR you may write an expose on one or more of the characters included within the story
   - Your story CANNOT change any of the facts that occurred within the original story.
   - Your story must include quotes from at least three different sources

Part II—Reflecting for Understanding (10 Points)

Directions: On a separate page, please answer the three reflections questions. Your answers must be in complete sentences. There is no limit to your reflection answers as long as you provide your best, detailed response.

1. What was your primary takeaway from the reading/discussion portion of this activity? What did you learn about “reading” that perhaps you didn’t think about before?
2. Why did you select the writing assignment that you did and what did you find challenging about it?
3. As we move forward in the class, what is one area within your writing that you are hoping to improve?