

2006

# Implementing Reading Response Logs in an Intermediate Classroom to Increase Student Interest and Comprehension

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IMPLEMENTING READING RESPONSE LOGS IN AN INTERMEDIATE  
CLASSROOM TO INCREASE STUDENT INTEREST AND COMPREHENSION

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A Project  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education  
Reading Specialist

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by  
Carrie Winegar Risley  
November 2006

## ABSTRACT

### IMPLEMENTING READING RESPONSE LOGS IN AN INTERMEDIATE CLASSROOM TO INCREASE STUDENT INTEREST AND COMPREHENSION

by

Carrie Winegar Risley

November 2006

This study includes a brief explanation of the history of reader response and the purpose behind the theory as well as how to apply the theory to classroom practices when teaching literature and reading. Reader response is the reader's reaction to what he/she has read. This can include making connections, asking questions, clarifying information, evaluating the author's craft and making predictions. The reader's response can be oral or in written form. The study includes examples of the application of reader response in classrooms ranging from the primary level through the high school level and an explanation of why it can be used so successfully at all grade levels. The author will also discuss ways of expanding the use of reader response and taking it beyond reading class by explaining ways to incorporate it into content area classes. Finally, some problems and drawbacks of reader response logs will be discussed.

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## Chapter One

### Background of the Project

#### *Introduction*

Currently there is a trend for reading instruction to be based on direct instruction with a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics. The basal reading series commonly used in elementary classrooms often encourage repeated readings of decodable text (Allington, 2006) and come with practice worksheets that are meant to reinforce the reading strategies and comprehension skills listed in the teacher's guide (Routman, 2003). One of the major drawbacks of these reading series is the limitation of the workbook pages. Often these workbook activities consist of questions and practice sheets that only require the student to use literal level thinking skills. True understanding of the selection comes from students being able to use higher order thinking skills and make connections between the words on the printed page and events in their own lives. This is the idea behind reader response. The reader makes meaning from words written on the page by combining what is on the page with what he/she knows from his/her own experiences and responding accordingly. Louise Rosenblatt said, (as quoted in Fountas and Pinnell, 2001) "A novel or poem or play remains merely ink spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols. The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between the readers and text" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 277).

Rosenblatt developed the theory of reader response because she felt that written words were meaningless until the reader gave meaning to them in connection with his or her own life and experiences (Rosenblatt, 1995). Reader response allows readers to reach within themselves and make connections between the text and their own life. It allows

readers to ask questions, draw conclusions, study characters, make comparisons and admit a lack of understanding that is not possible when working with workbook pages (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). Students learn that there is not always just one right answer when questions come to mind during reading. Elisa, a student, discovered, “When I make discoveries about reading when I write in my reading journal, I become more involved in my reading and enjoy it more because of the questions I am solving.... Usually I find that there are feelings locked up inside me and writing in my reading journal is the key that unlocks them” (Wilson, 1989, p. 68). Using reader response activities not only allows students to use higher order thinking skills, it actually forces them to because they are not given the option of filling in the blank on a workbook page. They have to draw their own conclusions and use examples from the text to back up their conclusions and opinions.

### *Purpose*

Students can become bored and lose interest while doing repeated readings from a basal reader and completing skill sheets that generally only generate lower order thinking. Research shows that using reader response logs can encourage student interest and promote higher order thinking skills at the same time (Au, Scheu, Kawakami, & Herman, 1990; Kelly, 1990; Heuser, 2005; Hancock, 1992; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). Response logs can be made from any kind of a notebook. It is a place where the reader can write down responses to and reflections on what he/she has read. The purpose of this project is to research methods of using reader response logs in the classroom and provide intermediate level teachers with lesson plans to get started using the response logs



successfully. The reason for using the logs is to increase student comprehension of the selections while engaging and motivating the student at the same time.

### *Significance of the Project*

Teachers can become overwhelmed when making changes in their classroom practices and procedures and give up on new methods of teaching when these methods do not prove to be successful when first implemented. Implementing the use of reading response logs is not an easy transition to make in a classroom (Routman, 1994). It is much easier to correct workbook pages and multiple-choice tests that come with the basal readers. However, the level of understanding and comprehension the students achieve is much greater when the students are encouraged to challenge themselves instead of relying on finding the one right answer to a question (Kelly, 1990; Wilson, 1989). This project is to help teachers implement response logs and provide students with the needed skills and strategies to use the logs successfully.

Reading response logs are not meant to replace basal reading programs rather the use of the logs is meant to be one piece of many in a reading program. The reading curriculum should consist of direct instruction of strategies and skills as well as the use of response logs, literature circles, guided reading, and the reading of self-selected books (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). A reading program such as this teaches the needed skills and encourages the love of reading. Incorporating reading response logs into the classroom also allows students who are reading at various reading levels to be challenged at their own ability level (Kelly, 1990).

### *Limitations*

1. Although response logs can be used successfully from late first grade all the way through high school (Routman, 1994), this project is directed toward intermediate level (3-5) teachers.
2. Response logs can be used successfully in many areas of the curriculum, but this project is limited to focusing on using the logs for reading instruction by introducing reading strategies using books read aloud to the class, modeling responses for the students orally as well as in writing, and finally eliciting responses from the students both orally and written.
3. This project is limited to twenty lessons for getting started with reading response logs in the classroom. How the response logs are used in the classroom for the remainder of the year depends on the needs and dynamics of the individual classrooms. The response logs can be used in literature circles, as dialog journals, as a basis for classroom discussions, and in the content areas.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following definitions apply to the terms listed as they apply to this project.

*Reading Response Log.* A reading response log is a notebook used to record responses to literature. It can be a three-ring binder, a spiral notebook, a composition book, or simply paper stapled together in a cover used for one book only (Routman, 1994).

*Reading Response Theory.* Reading response theory is a theory presented by Louise Rosenblatt in 1938 that states words are meaningless symbols on a page until a

reader connects the written word with experiences in his/her own background to bring meaning to the passages. No two readers will comprehend the book in the same manner (Rosenblatt, 1995).

*Phonics.* Phonics has two components. It is the relationship between letters and words and the symbols that make up a language. In education, it involves teaching students the relationship between letters and spoken language. (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005).

*Direct Instruction.* Direct instruction is teaching by following a certain sequence of scripted activities generally from a skills-based program (Routman, 2003).

*Basal Reader.* A basal reader is a textbook consisting of excerpts from literature and is used to teach reading skills and strategies. The basal reading program often comes with a practice book complete with worksheets designed to go along with the story. Many of the practice book pages consist of fill in the blank lessons and the teacher guides are often very scripted (Routman, 2003).

## Chapter Two

### Review of the Research

#### *The Problem*

For decades many educators believed that teaching reading meant dealing with the visible or audible, rather than cognitive, manifestations of reading. If children completed drill sheets and workbook pages, and sat in their ability groups to discuss the story, the spiral curriculum built into the basal series would ensure that students could comprehend complex text. But we never really considered what they might have been thinking about while they were reading. In fact many children were not (and are not) learning to comprehend using this approach, and they certainly weren't becoming proficient, independent, confident, critical readers. The belief system that formed the foundation for reading instruction in most American schools appeared to rest on quicksand. (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 16)

The preceding passage outlines the belief that using drill and practice worksheets and asking literal level questions does not lead students to develop higher order thinking skills. In direct comparison with worksheets, the use of reader response logs allows for the development of these higher order skills and even encourages higher-level thinking.

The review of the research in this chapter includes a brief explanation of the history of reader response and the purpose behind the theory as well as how to apply the theory to classroom practices when teaching literature and reading. The review will include examples of the application of reader response in classrooms ranging from the primary level through the high school level and an explanation of why reader response

can be used so successfully at all grade levels. The author will discuss ways of expanding the use of reader response and taking it beyond reading class by explaining ways to incorporate reader response into content area classes. Finally, some problems and drawbacks of reader response logs will be discussed.

### *History of Reader Response Theory*

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Reader response theory was originally the brainchild of Louise Rosenblatt and was first published in 1938 in her book *Exploration of Literature*. The book was meant to be a “how to” guide for teaching literature to high school and college students, but it ended up being much more far reaching than just affecting the teaching of literature at the secondary and post secondary education levels. Reader response theory has had a tremendous impact on how reading is taught, even in the primary grades. Students are taught from a very young age to make personal connections with what they read to increase their comprehension of the text and make connections from their own life to what the author is trying to say.

Rosenblatt’s premise was that words on a printed page were just meaningless symbols until they were brought to life as a result of a transaction between the writer and the present reader of the written work. Meaning was a result of what was written on the page coupled the reader’s past experiences and the current situation. Different readers would read the same selection and come away with different ideas. In fact, the same reader may come away with different viewpoints of the same text at different stages of his/her own life (Rosenblatt, 1995).

Rosenblatt strongly supported the premise that all students should be taught to derive meaning from literature; the teaching of literature should not be reserved only for

English majors and future critics of the classics. She also felt that not all students should be reading from the same list of classics. Instead the students should be taught to respond to literature that is meaningful to them. Rosenblatt (1995) used the example of Native American children having to read Restoration literature. The stories had no relevance to the Native American students because the stories had no connection to their lives, and they were unable to generate any meaningful connections to the reading.

Rosenblatt goes on to say that often times textbooks and teachers do a disservice to students with their well-meaning questions and assignments. Students can be developing a response of their own to the work just read when they are interrupted with questions in the textbook to answer or are given a book report format to follow that does not match the response or connection the student was formulating in his or her own mind. The interruption takes away from the connections and ideas that the student was developing in response to the text. Once the student's train of thought has been interrupted so suddenly, it may be difficult for him/her to retrieve the thoughts again. This is not to say that students should not be asked questions or taught literary concepts in connection to the books they are reading - of course they should. What Rosenblatt was advocating was allowing the students time to develop their own thoughts and reactions to a literary work before discussing the work or talking about literary devices. Students are often asked to summarize what they have read, outline the plot in story grammar format, compare characters in a literary work, or respond to the work in some other way. These assignments do not necessarily connect with what the student has just gotten out of what he/she has just read. As a result, the meaning that the student had derived from the text is

lost and the original goal of getting the student to connect with the text is no longer being met.

Louise Rosenblatt's reader response theory has endured decades of scrutiny by educators and her book recently went into a printing of a fifth edition almost sixty years after the original was published. Her book is still used as a guide for teaching literature courses even though the education pendulum has swung back and forth many times in the last half century with teachers advocating that reading and literature be taught in many different ways. Many educators have used Rosenblatt's theory over the course of the last sixty years. In fact, Rosenblatt herself changed the name of her theory to transactional theory of reader response as a direct result of being influenced by others who were implementing her theory into practice.

Many of the researchers cited in this review acknowledge Rosenblatt as the leader in developing the theory of using reader response to increase comprehension and list many of her works as references in their own research (Hancock, 1993; Kelly, 1990). Ruggieri (2006) comments,

“While discussing my opportunity to review *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays*, one of my pre-service English education teachers asked, ‘Why read Rosenblatt?’ My answer was, unequivocally, because she is relevant to everything that we do as teachers of English. From teaching students about the pleasure inherent in text to the necessity of presenting reading as a purposeful meaning making activity, Rosenblatt's influence is undeniable.” (p. 106)

### *Going Beyond Theory to Classroom Application*

Using response logs allows the students to search within themselves and make connections with their own backgrounds and experiences to derive meaning from the text rather than search for canned responses to a teacher's questions. Research supports the theory that response logs can be used successfully across grade levels (Gillespie, 1993; Hancock, 1993; Klobukowski, 1995; Kelly, 1990; Wilson, 1989).

One study follows the progress of students using response logs in a first grade classroom (Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1995). The students were introduced to the concept of responding to literature when the teacher included modeling the practice of reader response during her read aloud time. In this study students were encouraged to share their responses to the read aloud story *James and the Giant Peach* written by Roald Dahl after the teacher had modeled responding for them several times. According to Wollman-Bonilla even though many of the early written responses were text-centered, the teacher found that the responses actually contained higher order thinking and were not simply retellings of what happened in the book.

The teacher found the students eager to write and illustrate responses after listening to the story, and they were very willing to share their journals. They were able to use their responses to help them participate in classroom discussions concerning the story. The students were able to read their own responses even with their very inventive spelling; the students were learning to concentrate on content rather than spelling when responding to the text.

During the initial introduction to response logs, the entire class was involved and the teacher surprisingly found little difference in the responses between the strongest



readers and the weaker ones. Even the low level readers were able to write responses that showed higher order thinking skills. Putting their ideas down in writing allowed all of the students to feel that their ideas were valid; it was not just the few students who spoke up in class who got recognition. Instead all of the students were recognized when the teacher read and responded to their logs. Because of time constraints, the teacher concentrated on using response logs with just the top reading groups for the remainder of the year after they finished *James and the Giant Peach*. According to Wollman-Bonilla, the students showed a great deal of progress and growth in their responses over the course of the year, and the teacher had more students using response logs regularly as the year progressed. How the growth and progress of the students was measured was not defined in the article.

In another study using response logs third graders were introduced to the concept of using buddy journals for reader response (Klobukowski, 1995). With buddy journals, two people read the same book and respond to the book and each other's comments in a journal or notebook. The teacher had been using response logs for a while and was feeling frustration because the students could not seem to move beyond writing a summary in their logs. After reading about buddy journals, she decided to try them in her classroom. After some initial success with this new format, she decided to invite parents to become buddies with their children and read with them and respond to the book to generate new interest in reading. According to Klobukowski,

The results of this assignment far exceeded my expectations. I found the parents were wonderful models of what good readers do. The children's responses to

their parents were much more open, and they easily followed the lead of their parents and were able to make more in-depth responses to what they read. (p. 349)

The author did not explain how she measured the student responses to quantify improvement.

After completing the book, parents and children were asked to critique the assignment. While acknowledging that time constraints made doing the assignment very difficult, they shared that they enjoyed the time spent together working on a project.

Book buddy journals have also been used successfully at other grade levels. In one article, the use of journals with a seventh-grade class was explained (Gillespie, 1993). The author had tried scheduling reading conferences and using reading logs to encourage critical thinking in her students but had become frustrated with time constraints and lack of interest on the part of the students. After being introduced to the concept of buddy journals at a conference, she decided to try them with the seventh graders. The students read and corresponded with both classmates and an adult partner in separate units. Both ideas were equally well received by the students. About half preferred reading with the classmate and about half preferred reading with the adult.

In both units, responses in the buddy journals included all levels of understanding on Bloom's taxonomy according to the researchers. The students pushed themselves to go beyond literal level interpretations of the literature and make meaningful responses to their partner's questions and responses in the log.

Many teachers incorporate reading response into their reading program because they agree with Rosenblatt's theory that students comprehend text better when it is combined with the background knowledge the student possesses (Kelly, 1990). Students

are encouraged to trust their own response based on their own perspective, that there is no one right way to react to a literary work. Kelly began teaching and modeling how to use reader response to her third graders in a similar manner as other teachers mentioned previously have – with books that she read aloud to the class. Using the read aloud text gives the students a common base to begin responding to literature. Responses can be shared in small group or whole class discussions and posted on chart paper to serve as examples for the class to refer to when doing future responses to books, stories, poems or articles that the students read on their own.

Kelly began by modeling oral responses and having the students respond orally before moving into the realm of having the students compose written responses in reading logs. This oral practice gives the students the needed confidence to be successful with putting responses down in writing. They have said or heard oral responses enough times that they are able to put down in words a reaction they have to the story or make some kind of connection between the text and their own lives. Kelly advocates having students begin by responding to Bleich's prompts (as found in Kelly, 1990) a) What did you notice in the story? b) How did the story make you feel? c) What does this story remind you of in your own life? This allows the students to have something more than a blank page to work with. In many cases students started with very short responses, but over time they were able to write longer and more meaningful responses to the literature.

By collecting student responses, I was able to document both individual and class development in response patterns over time. Moreover, on another level, not only were students actively involved in both written and oral response modes, they were enthusiastic about literature, and their enthusiasm was sustained throughout

the year. Overall, responding to literature fostered comprehension, discussion, and writing skills, and promoted emotional involvement with and appreciation of literature. (p. 470)

Many teacher-researchers advocate the use of dialog journals to incorporate reading response into a classroom (Wollman-Bonilla, 1989; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Dialog journals are just what the name implies -- a correspondence between two people. However with the dialog journal, often the dialog is between the student and the teacher, and the correspondence often takes on the form of a letter. Students are assigned to write a letter to the teacher periodically telling about the book they are currently reading. The teacher then writes back to the students. This can become very time consuming on the part of the teacher depending on how many students are in the classroom, but it is an essential part of dialog journals.

Wollman-Bonilla (1989) outlines how she successfully used dialog journals in her fourth grade classroom. She describes how these dialog journals enable the students to become engaged with the text because it puts the students "at the center of their own learning" (p. 112). Writing letters to the teacher gives the students an audience to direct their responses to and makes the writing authentic because the students know that the teacher is going to read and respond to their letters. This gives the students motivation to write well thought out connections, questions, inferences, predictions, and other responses into their letters.

By writing and receiving my supportive feedback, the children recognized that they were able to respond, independent of given questions and that their personal

responses were valued. The result was a new view of self-as-reader and an increase in self-selected independent reading. (Wollman-Bonilla, 1989, p. 119)

The researcher did not quantify how she arrived at these results.

The response logs not only encourage students to look deeper into their own thoughts and feelings and how they connect to the book, the logs also give the students extensive opportunities to write and reflect upon what they have written. This helps the students to increase not only their reading skills, but also their writing skills. The students learn to express and describe their feelings and reactions without trying to follow some scripted formula of how they should be writing. They learn that reactions to literature do not always need to be written into a five-paragraph essay. The dialog journals make responding to the literature take on a conversational tone that is more comfortable for the students. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) suggest teaching the students to respond using dialog journals in a series of mini lessons. In the beginning, the teacher models the letter writing and suggests ways for students to get started. This allows the students to have a place from which to start writing and will allow the students to expand on how they respond to literature as they become more comfortable with the dialog format.

Hancock (1992) followed the patterns of response recorded by a sixth grade student over the course of a school year and documented the findings. The study was conducted in connection to a dissertation that involved response logs and sixth-grade literature. The student, Amy, was encouraged to record all of her thoughts in reaction to what she read without fear of evaluation or being graded. According to Hancock (1992), using the journals as a basis for a grade takes away value from the students' responses

and encourages students to write down the answer that they perceive the teacher is looking to find. She adds that the journals move out of the realm of encouraging student thoughts when evaluation of the journals is done.

In the study, Hancock found that Amy's responses followed a pattern which included 1) character interaction, 2) character empathy, 3) prediction and validation, 4) personal experiences, and 5) philosophical reflections (Hancock, 1992, p. 38). Amy was able to become a character herself in some responses. In other responses, she advised the character, made predictions and connected the stories to her own life. She moved beyond what she thought the teacher was looking for and gave honest reactions to the stories according to the researcher.

In a second article, Hancock (1993) suggests eight different types of reader responses to model for intermediate students to help them get started using response logs. She calls four of these response types "personal meaning-making options" (p. 468). Included in this group are responses that: monitor for understanding; make inferences; make, validate, or invalidate predictions; and express wonder or confusion. All of these types of responses encourage students to understand the story on a personal level, to make an attempt to relate to the story. They serve as a catalyst for students to delve deeper into the meaning of the story being read.

Hancock calls three of the suggested response models "character and plot involvement options" (p. 469). Names given to these response types are character interaction, character assessment, and story involvement. All of these responses encourage the reader to become more involved with the characters or action of the story.

The final category that Hancock refers to is “literary evaluation” (p. 470). This category can include reactions to the story such as what the reader liked or did not like about the book. It can also include reaction and comments on the author’s style of writing. Students need to be given support and examples of how to respond. Otherwise they will become comfortable with one type of response and always use the same format when writing in their logs. “Suggestions by their classroom teachers to expand their response horizons can move them even further along on their journeys through literature” (p. 471).

According to many researchers, an important component of using reading response logs successfully is the need for teachers to comment on the student responses (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Hancock, 1993). Teachers can help students to expand their responses by writing comments that encourage students to explore other ways to respond than the student is currently using. For example students who never use predicting can be encouraged to make predictions and students who rely on summarizing can be encouraged to respond in a more personal way. It adds value for the students to have the teacher personally validate their writing; it gives the student’s opinion a higher level of importance.

In addition to the positive reaction that response logs have received in the elementary and middle school grades, reader response logs have also been used very successfully at the high school level. The high school students were initially confused when Susan Reed (1988) first told them they would be responding to what they read during English class in journals and she wouldn’t be reading or grading their initial

response journals. Questions such as “What’s the point?” and “Why do them?” arose from the students. Reed explained that the logs were for the students, not the teacher.

Once students had their initial entries completed they were to revise and rewrite their best entries into another journal that Reed called their WOW log. This log would include their best work (this is where the name “WOW” comes in) and the students were to share these entries with their classmates and the teacher. This encouraged the students to revise and edit their own work and look at their responses in a critical way. The students were not only developing their understanding of the literature, they were fine-tuning writing skills at the same time. The students later took the WOW logs one step further and turned their best work into critical response essays or reaction papers of some sort. They were encouraged to do their own type of response. This response might be a critical essay; it might be a compare and contrast paper; it may even be a series of original poetry that a student was inspired to write in reaction to a piece of literature. The students were discouraged from responding in a formulaic manner such as a standard five-paragraph essay (Reed, 1988).

Reed goes on to say that she has had success with the use of response logs in all of her classes including both remedial classes and honors classes. She sometimes has to do more modeling of response logs using her own logs on an overhead projector when teaching the remedial classes, but all of the students respond to and enjoy using the logs in connection with reading the assigned literature and books of their own choosing.

In another high school, in 1981, Nancy Wilson (1989), working in conjunction with classroom teacher Audre Allison, struggled with how to get eleventh graders in Allison’s classes who did not like reading motivated to read and actually enjoy what they



read. They decided to walk away from the traditional thesis-based papers and make responding to literature more authentic by having the students use response logs. In the years since changing her curriculum to incorporate response logs, Allison has seen students achieve great success when using them. (She does not quantify how she measures success or compare the results to how much success her students had previously). Her students use the logs to respond to both what is read in class and what they read on their own outside of class. They also use their response logs as a source when gathering information to write essays for the class.

The response logs give the students a place to connect with the characters, to react to what they read, to tell what they like and don't like, to ask questions, and to express confusion. Writing about what confuses them in the reading helps the student to clarify what it is that they have read.

Students who keep reading logs, we have noticed, do on their own what their teachers have urged them, in vain, to do. They ask questions, make predictions, form opinions, reread the text to find evidence to support their opinions, notice subtleties of a writer's craft. They fill whole notebooks with their responses. And in the process many come to care about the books they read. 'I love this book!' student after student writes, about book after book. 'It's the best book I ever read!' They are in love, we think, not only with the books they read but also with their own powers as readers. (p. 68)

Wilson goes on to explain that a student is not allowed to respond in his/her own voice when writing a formulaic essay, and shy students often do not get a chance to speak up in class discussions. Using reader response logs eliminates both of these problems.

The student is allowed to use his/her own voice and even the shy students get a chance to respond and be heard with the logs.

### *Response Logs in Other Content Classes*

Students can also be taught to use reading response logs in content area classes such as science and social studies. The students can use the logs to record notes on what they read, ask questions on parts that are confusing, and record thoughts on further areas of research to find out more information on a topic. Using response logs in content classes to record quotes from the reading and respond to the quotes is another way of using the response logs in content classes. Response logs can also be used to record observations while following a scientific procedure in a class. Logs have been used in classrooms to record scientific inquiry as early as first and second grade (Heuser, 2005). Heuser suggests having young students respond to two questions following an inquiry. The first question responds to the inquiry topic and the second question is meant to get students to expand their thinking. Although the prompts used in content areas may not be the same as those used in reading class, the intended outcome – increased reading comprehension – is the same in both instances.

Knipper and Duggan (2006) stress that there is a difference between writing to learn and learning to write. Using response logs in the content area classroom to encourage students to write to increase comprehension of the content area is very different from the process writing used to complete published student writing. Both methods of writing need to be modeled in the classroom in order for the students to use the processes successfully. Just because a student has been taught the writing process,

does not mean that the student knows how to use writing skills to increase comprehension in the content areas.

### *Negatives of Using Response Logs*

Along with all the positives that go with the use of response logs, there are a few negatives. One of the biggest issues for teachers when implementing reader response logs is time. It takes time to teach the students the purpose of the log, how to use the log, and how to begin making responses. Using worksheets is much less time consuming. Basal reading programs often come with worksheets already created and an answer key provided to expedite the correcting process. Teachers committed to using response logs have found that the work involved in changing the curriculum was well worth it by the reactions and learning the students displayed.

Another problem expressed by teachers using response logs is the issue of assessment. How is a response log assessed? If it is not assessed, how is student progress documented? Teachers have found ways to assess students that did not directly involve assessment of the journals. One such method of assessment is having students write papers stemming from ideas that they recorded in their logs. This causes the students to review thoughts and reflections they have written in their logs and further develop their ideas into a paper (Reed, 1988). The paper is assessed but the response log is not. Another alternative for assessment is to develop checklists and profile sheets that match state grade-level benchmarks and determine goals for above grade level, on grade level, and below grade level to measure achievement (Au, Scheu, Kawakami, & Herman, 1990).

Teachers also express concern that the overuse of journals can cause the students to become bored with response logs. Manning (1999) suggests “one way to solve the ‘too many journals’ dilemma is to limit the number of journals to three general types: literature response, personal journal/writer’s notebook, and an inquiry journal” (p. 89). Brewster (1988) suggests using logs in a variety of ways to keep students motivated. Routman (1994) suggests a limit to the number of responses a student is required to complete. Sometimes stopping to respond causes a student to lose interest in the story. It can be especially frustrating if students are really involved in the text and they are asked to stop reading to respond. The responses should be a natural extension of the reading, not a disruption.

### *Conclusion*

Response logs have been used successfully in both literature and reading classes to respond to reading selections as well as in content area classes to explore information found in textbooks and reflect on scientific inquiries and historical events. The logs have been successfully implemented in classes ranging from first grade through high school and even in college level classes. The logs are used to encourage students to evaluate their own thinking rather than reiterate what the teacher says or fill in the blanks on worksheet pages and promptly forget what they were supposed to get out of the story or lesson. The students are also asked to arrive at their own conclusions based on evidence they find in the reading and what they know from their own background and experiences. Response logs allow students to have a say in their learning and offer a way for the students to let their voices be heard and have their thoughts and writing validated.

Some student reactions to response logs include:

- “I just want to take some time before I forget to thank you. I think reading these books and writing in the journal really helped me...most of all thanks for not knocking my opinions” (Hancock, 1992, p. 41).
- “Writing in my journal helps me pay attention to what I like or don’t like, not what someone else likes or doesn’t” (Wilson, 1989, p. 64).
- “I think the reading journal helped me a lot. I get so much more out of a book when I reflect and relate about the book and write my feelings down...I never really enjoyed reading much. As a matter of fact I hated it, but now I love it -- reading takes me away to another place – another time...(Wilson, 1989 p. 68).
- “I become more involved in my reading and enjoy it more because of the questions I am solving....My reading journal allows me to get all my emotions, ideas, and reactions down on paper, so I can organize them. I reflect and question what I have just read...(Wilson, 1989, p. 68).

Once the students become familiar with the response logs, they can be used for several purposes in both reading class and content area classes. First of all, the logs can be used as dialog journals to respond to literature. The dialog can be between the teacher and student, student and parent, or student and student. The logs can also be used to springboard class discussions of the selection read or in small groups such as literature circles. Finally the logs can be used in content areas to record reactions to nonfiction, take notes, and develop graphic organizers for study guides.

The research included in this review clearly demonstrates “there is no one right or best way to use the literature response log” (Routman, 1994, p.105). Teachers use the

logs in a variety of ways with a variety of purposes. Students are encouraged to personalize the logs and come up with responses that are individualized and meaningful to each one of them. They do not need to repeat and regurgitate what the teacher has said or what is in the textbook. They expand on what has been learned in class and from the reading to make it meaningful to their own situation and background experiences. The challenge is to try a variety of ways to use response logs in the classroom in order to find what works best for the teacher and the students and eliminate boredom.

## Chapter Three

### Purpose of the Project

#### *Introduction*

The author works with a curriculum that includes a basal reader with a workbook that has been approved for use under the Reading First grant. The restrictions of the grant require the teachers to have fidelity to the program and not bring in outside resources to supplement the program. Several of the teachers in the school have expressed frustration with the practice book pages because of the fill in the blank format on some pages and the confusion with some of the activities that are meant to be higher order thinking. The consensus is if the pages are confusing for the teachers, how will the students get anything from the activities? There is also frustration because the students are told to use the reading strategies listed in the basal, but there is no instruction on how to implement these strategies. The author wants to supplement the reading curriculum with meaningful activities to help the students work with reading strategies and still follow the guidelines of the grant.

One of the suggestions in the basal program is to have the students use a response log to write about the selections in the reader. However, there is no guidance on how to implement the use of response logs in the classroom. Response logs have been used successfully in classrooms to increase comprehension and encourage higher order thinking. The desire to know how to use response logs meaningfully to teach reading and writing lead the author to do the research for this project. The research for this project was obtained from the Central Washington University Library using both ProQuest searches and books found in the library. The author did searches for response logs,

reading response, writing about reading, and reading response logs. The author also used professional books written by experts in the field of teaching reading and writing.

### *Purpose of the project*

The purpose of this project is to organize and implement a method of using reading response logs in the classroom to enhance student comprehension when reading both fiction and nonfiction. The author has tried to use response logs in the past and has been dissatisfied with the results. This project is meant to be a guide to begin implementing response logs by first modeling oral responses for the students by using read aloud stories and books, followed by guided practice in the classroom and finally ending with students writing in response logs independently. Response logs also provide students with a way of responding to Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) stem questions in connection with the regular curriculum in order to prepare them for the WASL test given in the spring.

The project needs to be implemented in a classroom to test for effectiveness. The author has used many of these ideas in the classroom; but not in an organized, sequential manner testing for effectiveness of the practices or comparing assessment results found with other methods of teaching reading strategies and comprehension.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Implementing Reading Response Logs**

#### **In an Intermediate Classroom**

#### **To Increase Student Interest And Comprehension**

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## Chapter Four

### The Project

Reading response logs are journals kept by students allowing them to respond to and reflect on what they are reading and/or what they are learning about in class. The logs can take on the form of a spiral or composition notebook, a three-ring binder, or be as simple as sheets of notebook paper stapled in a construction paper cover. Students are asked to write their thoughts, questions, concerns, and reactions to classroom reading selections and activities. The logs are meant to encourage the students to explore and expand their own cognitive development rather than repeat what the teacher or textbook has to say.

Response logs have been used successfully in both literature and reading classes to respond to reading selections as well as in content area classes to explore information found in textbooks and reflect on scientific inquiries and historical events. The logs have been successfully implemented in classes ranging from first grade through high school and even in college level classes. The logs are used to encourage students to evaluate their own thinking rather than reiterate what the teacher says or fill in the blanks on worksheet pages and promptly forget what they were supposed to get out of the story or lesson. The students are also asked to arrive at their own conclusions based on evidence they find in the reading and what they know from their own background and experiences. Response logs allow students to have a say in their learning and offer a way for the students to let their voices be heard and have their thoughts and writing validated.

Reader response theory was originally the brainchild of Louise Rosenblatt and was first published in 1938 in her book *Exploration of Literature*. The book was meant to

be a “how to” guide for teaching literature to high school and college students, but it ended up being much more far reaching than just affecting the teaching of reading and literature at the secondary and post secondary education levels. Reader response theory has had a tremendous impact on how reading is taught even in the primary grades.

Students are now taught from a very young age to make personal connections with what they read to increase their comprehension of the text and make connections from their own life to what the author is trying to say.

The author has used reading response logs in the past and has been frustrated with the results. The students and teacher had a hard time setting a direction to follow with the response logs to make them work. Research shows the importance of teaching reading and writing as connected units and the positive effect that writing has in connection with reading comprehension. Yet getting started in the classroom has proven to be difficult. This project is meant to be a plan set in motion to make the use of reading response logs in the classroom to increase comprehension a successful endeavor for both the teacher and students. The intended audience for the project is teachers at the intermediate level specifically grades 3-5.

These lessons are meant to be completed in the first few weeks of school, but that should not be the end of the explicit instruction involving reading strategies or using a reading response log. Many students will need continued modeling from the teacher and peers as well as repeated practice to master learning the reading strategies. Getting students to move beyond retelling the stories in their response logs may also take repeated practice, but the research shows that the time and energy used to achieve these

goals is time well spent. Students are driven to higher order thinking by using these methods.

The first four lessons in the project are meant to be preparation leading up to the use of reading response logs and have been adapted from *Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The teacher and students review the elements of literature and discuss genre and strategies for choosing books of interest. This is followed by a lesson on suggestions for setting up a reading response log and some suggested response prompts. There is also a lesson on getting started with using cooperative groups in the classroom.

The greatest portion of the project consists of lessons on how to introduce the reading strategies and use the response log to increase comprehension. Many of the reading strategies covered in the project are the strategies recommended by Harvey & Goudvis (2000) in *Strategies that Work* or Keene & Zimmerman (1997) in *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. These include inferring/predicting, summarizing, finding main ideas and details, visualizing, making connections, and asking questions. The strategies are just introduced in the project and will require further modeling by the instructor and guided practice for the students in most instances before the students are ready to practice reading response independently.

This project includes a quick two-lesson introduction for each strategy and allows for the teacher and students to decide how to proceed from there. Some students may prefer relying on one strategy much of the time whereas others may use a combination of the strategies. Readers will often utilize more than one strategy while reading a selection (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

The final lesson in the project involves modeling fix-it strategies for the students to utilize when comprehension breaks down for them. Students need to have some direction on what to do when they are confused in order to keep them from giving up on the reading.

All of the lessons presented in the project will need to be revisited and expanded on during the school year. Mastery of the strategies is not expected after the twenty lessons; however by completing the lessons in this project, students will have been introduced to responding to literature in writing, by drawing pictures, and by using graphic organizers. Using all of these strategies will lead to greater comprehension for the students than just reading the selection alone would.

Responding to the literature allows the students to interact with the text and bring personal meaning to the selection (Rosenblatt, 1995). Making personal connections allows the student to retain and recall the information more easily.

Response logs can be used for personal reflection as part of a small group for literature circles or as part of a large group or whole class discussion. The logs can be used as dialog journals between teacher and student, student and student, or student and parent. The logs can also be used as a study aid in content area classes.

Using response logs makes lessons more meaningful and interactive for students.

*Recommendations:*

1. Begin to use reading response logs in increments. Do not try to do too much too soon.
2. Model responses for the students one at a time by using read-aloud books and selections read as a class. Modeling reading strategies gives the students a starting point for responding to the literature.
3. If one lesson does not work, do not give up. It often takes several lessons before students are comfortable responding to reading.
4. Teacher comments encourage students to make higher order thinking responses to move beyond the literal level responses.
5. Use response logs to practice Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) questions stems provided by Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).



## **LESSON 1**

What is fiction? Introducing the Elements of fiction

### **Purpose:**

Review what fiction is with the class and introduce the elements of fiction.

### **Materials:**

White board/markers or transparency/overhead/markers

Chart paper/markers

*Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown

### **Procedure:**

Begin by asking the class what fiction is and call on students to respond. Once it is established that fiction is not true then ask the class to list what fiction stories have in common.

List responses on board or overhead. Prompt students until the list is established.

Put a “Components of Fiction” list on chart paper and post it in the classroom for the students to refer to when needed. Below the heading should be listed:

- Characters
- Setting
- Problem
- Solution
- Conclusion
- Author’s message.

Read aloud *Stone Soup* to the class. Stop periodically to ask questions.

- Who are the main characters?
- Where does the story take place?
- What problem do the characters face?
- How is the problem solved?
- How does the story end?
- What does the author want the reader to learn from the story?

Model making a story map – Write out a story map on chart paper as students respond to the questions. Post it in the room for later reference.

Encourage students to think about story elements as they do independent reading.

## **LESSON 2**

Ways we choose books/genre of books

### **Purpose:**

Students will learn strategies to help guide them when choosing a book to read.

### **Materials:**

Chart paper/markers

### **Procedure:**

Head a chart paper page with the heading – How we choose books

Ask students how they choose books to read and list their responses on the chart paper.

Responses may include:

- Familiar author
- Books in a series
- By reading the back cover
- Recommendations from friends

Repeat the procedure for genre. Head chart paper with the heading – Genres of books then discuss with students what genre is and ask for examples. List student responses such as:

- Mysteries
- Humorous stories
- Sports stories
- Poems
- Biographies

Post the lists in the classroom for the students to refer to when needed.

Have students select a book from the classroom library for independent reading. Then have students share with a partner why they chose the book they did.

### **LESSON 3**

Organize response logs and reading record sheets

#### **Purpose:**

Students will organize and label a response log that they will use to write responses to selections that they read. They will also keep a record of the books they read.

#### **Materials:**

For each student-

Spiral notebook

3 divider tabs

Label for cover

List of response prompts

Glue stick

#### **Procedure:**

Give each student a spiral notebook and a label. The label should say

- Reading Response Log
- Student Name

Label the three divider tabs

- Reading log
- Anthology selection responses
- Independent reading responses

In the first section, the student will keep a list of the books and stories read during the year. The list can include the title, author, reading level, comments, and genre of the book.

The second section is for responding to the stories in the anthology used in reading class.

The last section is for responding to stories read independently or for literature circle.

Each student will glue the list of sample response prompts inside the front cover of their response log.

## READER RESPONSE SAMPLE PROMPTS

I wonder...

I feel...

I don't understand...

I'm confused...

My favorite part of the story is...

I liked/didn't like the part when...

My favorite character is...because...

I think the author should have...

I would have changed the part when...because...

The most exciting part of the book was....

I learned...

The book reminds me of the time...

I am like/unlike the character...because...

The author's message is...

I predict...

The setting of the story is important because...

I think the illustrations...

I would read another book by this author because...

**Timekeeper/Supplies** – This person keeps the group members posted on how much time they have and gets and puts away needed supplies.

To practice working in small groups, the teacher will read aloud *The Five Chinese Brothers* to the class.

The students will meet in small groups and complete a story map outlining the characters, setting, problem, solution, and conclusion on chart paper. The teacher will walk around and observe groups and offer assistance when needed.

Each group will share with the class their story map.

End the session by having a class discussion on what worked and how the small groups sessions can be improved next time.

## **LESSON 5**

### Reading strategy – Making connections

#### **Purpose:**

Students will learn and practice the comprehension strategy of making connections as they read.

#### **Materials:**

*Amos & Boris* by William Steig

White board and markers

Chart paper and markers

Response log and pencil

#### **Procedure:**

The teacher will introduce the concept of making connections while reading to the class. Types of connections – text to text (t-t), text to self (t-s), and text to world (t-w) – will be written on the board and explained to the class.

The teacher will read aloud from *Amos & Boris* stopping periodically to discuss connections he/she is making with the story. The connections may include the concepts of friendship, diversity, beaches, boating, travel, etc.

While sharing connections, the teacher will discuss whether the connections are t-s, t-t, or t-w.

The teacher will reread the story to the class and have the students write down connections that they make to the story in their reading response log.

The students will then share a connection with a partner and discuss whether it is t-t, t-s, or t-w.

Volunteers will share their connections with the class and record on chart paper to post in the classroom for later reference.

Students are encouraged to record connections that they make during independent reading in their response log.

#### **Extension Activity:**

Have students write about the traits that make someone a friend during writing workshop.

## **LESSON 6**

Reading strategy – making connections

### **Purpose:**

Students will practice using the reading strategy of making connections between the story and what they already know to increase reading comprehension.

### **Materials:**

*A Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats

Sticky notes and pencils

Chart paper and markers

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will question the students to refresh their memories as to what connections are and the types of connections to the story they can make – text to self, text to text, text to world.

All students need sticky notes (3-5) and a pencil.

The teacher will read aloud *The Snowy Day* to the class.

Students will record any connections they make to the story on sticky notes and label t-s, t-t, or t-w to show the type of connection.

Allow students time to share their connections with a partner.

Have students post their sticky notes on one of three pieces of chart paper. The chart papers are labeled:

**Text to Self**

**Text to Text**

**Text to World**

Share some of the student connections with the class.

Encourage students to practice making connections and record them in their reading response log during independent reading time.

### **Extension Activity:**

Have students write and illustrate their own snow day or winter day experience story during writing workshop.

## **LESSON 7**

### **Reading strategy – questioning**

**Questioning** – the reader asks questions of the characters, setting, plot, or author while reading to help with comprehension.

#### **Purpose:**

The students will learn to ask questions and look for answers in the selection to increase comprehension.

#### **Materials:**

*The Wall* by Eve Bunting

Chart paper and markers

Sticky notes and pencils for the students

#### **Procedure:**

The teacher will begin reading *The Wall* aloud to the class and model asking questions as she/he reads the story.

\*A good strategy is to show students sticky notes with questions written on them that the teacher has placed in the book. Students seem to like using sticky notes.

#### **Sample questions:**

How was the grandfather killed in the war?

Did the man in the wheelchair lose his legs in the war?

Why is the couple crying?

Why does the dad etch his father's name on paper?

Why does the boy say that it is a sad place?

Why does the scout leader say that they wall is for all of us?

After the teacher reads the first few pages and models questioning – continue reading a few more pages and ask for students to share questions that they have aloud. The teacher can record the questions on the chart paper.

At the end of the story, review questions on the chart paper with the class and mark any questions answered in the story with an “A” for answered. Discuss as a class any unanswered questions.

For a closure activity discuss with the class how stopping to ask questions and reflect helps with comprehension.

Encourage students to think of questions and record them in their reading response logs or on sticky notes as they read independently.



## **LESSON 8**

More practice with asking questions.

### **Purpose:**

The students will continue practicing how to use asking questions to clarify the meaning of the story while reading.

### **Materials:**

*Doctor DeSoto* by William Steig

Reading response logs and pencils

Chart paper and markers

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will read aloud *Doctor DeSoto* and have students write down questions they have in their reading response logs as the teacher reads.

Have students mark any questions that get answered in the story with an “A” for answered.

Students will share unanswered questions with a partner and discuss to come up with reasonable answers based on evidence in the story.

Volunteers will share their questions with the class and record them on chart paper. Have a class discussion to come up with answers to the questions. Do the answers differ from what the partners came up with?

Encourage students to record questions and answers in their response logs during independent reading time.

## **LESSON 9**

Reading strategy – infer/predict

**Infer** – combining the information in the story with the readers background knowledge to draw conclusions that are not explicitly stated in the selection.

**Predict** – using information in the selection to make logical guesses as to what will happen next.

### **Purpose:**

Students will learn to use information in the story and put it together with what they already know to make inferences that are not directly stated in the story and logical predictions of what will happen next.

### **Materials:**

*The Table Where Rich People Sit* by Byrd Baylor  
Chart paper and markers

### **Procedure:**

Label the chart paper with the headings:

**What the book says:**      **What I know:**      **I can infer:**

The teacher will show students the cover of the book and read the title *The Table Where Rich People Sit* and have students make predictions as to what they think the book will be about.

The teacher will begin to read aloud from *The Table Where Rich People Sit*. The teacher will model orally inferences as she reads following the format listed on the chart:

The books says...

I know...

I can infer...

The teacher will continue reading the story to the class stopping occasionally to model making an inference always using the same format until it becomes familiar to the students.

The students will be given a chance to share any inferences they made after the teacher finishes the story.

Discuss prediction and making inferences with the class. Reinforce the fact that making predictions and inferences leads readers to understanding the selection better.

Students should practice making inferences and predictions as they read independently.

## **LESSON 11**

Reading strategy – identifying main idea/details

### **Purpose:**

Students will learn to separate the main idea in a story from less important details.

### **Materials:**

*Mrs. Mack* by Patricia Polacco

White board and markers

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will outline:

Main idea

- Detail
- Detail
- Detail

On the white board and refer to it while reading aloud from *Mrs. Mack*.

During reading the teacher will model identifying main idea and details orally following the format on the board. For example after p. 5:

Main idea:

Patricia is going to learn to ride a horse.

Details:

She is so excited she turns cartwheels.

Dad calls her little filly.

Dad tells her that she is now old enough.

After p. 8:

Main idea:

Patricia is really disappointed when she sees the stables.

Details:

Everything is run down.

There is a mean looking man.

The car is old and dusty.

The teacher will continue to model main ideas and details as she reads the book.

At the end of the book, the class will discuss main ideas and details of the story.

The students are encouraged to separate main ideas and details as they read independently.

## **LESSON 12**

More practice with main ideas/details

### **Purpose:**

The students will work in small groups to decide on the main idea and supporting details of a story.

### **Materials:**

*The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein

Chart paper and markers for each group

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will review main ideas and supporting details with the class.

The teacher will read aloud *The Giving Tree* to the class.

The students will break into small groups to discuss the main idea of the story and the details that support the main idea.

Each group will create a graphic organizer to show the main idea and supporting details in the story and share it with the class.

The students will continue working on separating main ideas from details as they read independently.

Remind students that graphic organizers are one way to arrange their thoughts in their reading response logs. Students are encouraged to use graphic organizers to help them with their comprehension.

### **Suggested graphic:**

Draw a circle in the middle of the page for the main idea and add spokes to write details.

## **LESSON 13**

Reading strategy – summarizing

**Summarizing** – choosing only the main ideas when retelling a story and leaving out the unimportant details.

### **Purpose:**

Students will learn to review the most important ideas in a selection and leave out details to help with comprehension.

### **Materials:**

*Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki

Chart paper and markers

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will review the concept of finding main ideas in a story with the class.

The teacher will begin reading aloud from *Baseball Saved Us*.

Stop periodically to discuss the main ideas in the story with the class. Some suggestions:

- Prejudice for Japanese Americans
- Internment camps
- Group living/no privacy – always someone watching
- Anger/frustration with the situation
- Baseball being a way to bring the families together
- Prejudice still there when they return home
- Baseball helped the boy fit in

Discuss the idea of using time connectors such as first, next, then when writing summaries.

Encourage students to practice writing several sentences for summaries in preparation for WASL tests.

Encourage students to practice summarizing during independent reading.

### **Extension activity:**

Have students write their own sports stories during writing workshop. The writing could be narrative or expository.

## **LESSON 14**

More practice with summarizing.

### **Purpose:**

Students will practice writing summaries in a small group.

### **Materials:**

*The Wump World* by Bill Peet

Chart paper and markers for each group

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will review summarizing with the class.

The teacher will read aloud *The Wump World* to the class.

The class will break into small groups and create a timeline summarizing the most important events in sequence on chart paper.

The teacher will reread the story to the class.

The groups will be given a few minutes to revise or change their timelines.

The groups will share their timelines with the class explaining why they chose the events they did as being the most important.

Encourage students to summarize what they read during independent reading time to increase comprehension.

### **Extension activity:**

Have students make a timeline of the significant events in their own lives.

## **LESSON 15**

### **Reading strategy – Visualize**

**Visualize** – Picture the events and characters while reading a selection. (Make a movie in your mind.)

#### **Purpose:**

The students will learn to picture what is happening in the story or selection by combining the author's information with their own background knowledge.

#### **Materials:**

*All the small poems and fourteen more* by Valerie Worth

Chart paper and markers

#### **Procedure:**

The teacher will introduce and discuss visualizing as a reading strategy with the class.

The teacher will read several poems aloud from *all the small poems and fourteen more* and model visualizing by discussing what pictures come to mind when reading the poems.

The class will break into small groups and each group will be given a poem to read aloud to each other.

Suggested poems:

Caterpillar

Fireworks

Sea lions

Sidewalks

Each member of the group reads the poem aloud to the rest of the group. (Everyone reads the same poem). After all members of the group have a chance to read the poem, they discuss what pictures came to mind for them.

One person will record on chart paper what the group members visualized.

Come together as a class and each group will have a member read their poem to the class and another member report on the group discussion to the class.

The students are encouraged to use visualizing as one way of responding to literature in their reading response logs when reading independently.

## **LESSON 16**

Reading strategy – visualize

### **Purpose:**

Students will continue to practice responding to literature by visualizing the setting, characters and events combining the author's words with their own background knowledge and experiences.

### **Materials:**

*All the Places to Love* by Patricia MacLachlan

Reading response log, pencil, colored pencils for each student

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will review visualizing as a reading strategy with the students.

The teacher will read aloud *All the Places to Love* without showing the illustrations and asking the students to visualize as they listen to the story.

The teacher will reread the description of each family member's favorite place on the farm.

The students will draw an illustration for their favorite scene or description from the story. The teacher will monitor student drawings as they work and offer encouragement.

The students will share their drawings with a partner and volunteers will share their drawings with the class.

The teacher will reread the story this time showing the illustrations in the book.

The closure activity should be a class discussion on how student drawings differed from the book illustrations and how we all visualize differently because of our different background experiences.

The students will be encouraged to draw illustrations in their response logs to visualize stories during independent reading.

### **Extension activity:**

Students can write about their favorite places during writing workshop and illustrate their stories or essays.



## **LESSON 17**

### **Student choice response**

#### **Purpose:**

The students will choose a way to respond to literature using one of the response prompts from their list.

#### **Materials:**

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst

Reading response and pencil

#### **Procedure:**

The teacher will read aloud the story to the class.

Students will choose a response prompt from their printed list to write a response to the story in their log.

Students will meet in small groups to discuss the story and share their responses.

Everyone will come together as a class and volunteers will share their responses with the class.

Students will continue writing responses to literature as they read independently.

Periodically students will share their independent responses with a partner and be given the option of sharing a response with the class.

#### **Extension activity:**

Students can choose to write about a bad day that they have had or the reverse – a great day that they have had during writing workshop.

## **LESSON 18**

Student choice response

### **Purpose:**

The students will get continued practice with choosing a way to respond to literature in their reading response log.

### **Materials:**

*My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Polacco

Reading response log and pencil or colored pencils

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will review with the class ways to respond to literature.

The teacher will read aloud the story *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother* to the class.

The students will be given the option of writing a response to the story or doing an illustration in response to the story. Students choosing to do an illustration will be asked to write a paragraph explaining the illustration.

Students will meet in small groups to share their responses.

Volunteers will be given an opportunity to share their responses with the class.

Students will continue to respond to literature in their response logs during independent reading.

### **Extension activity:**

Students can write about a favorite story they have showing their relationship with a sibling or other family member during writing workshop.

## **LESSON 19**

### **Student choice response**

#### **Purpose:**

The students will get continued practice with choosing a way to respond to literature in their reading response log.

#### **Materials:**

*The Patchwork Quilt* by Valerie Flourney

Reading response log and pencil

#### **Procedure:**

The teacher will begin by activating the background knowledge of the students by talking about family traditions and have students share special events and occasions that their families have.

The teacher will begin reading from *The Patchwork Quilt* stopping occasionally to model making connections or asking questions.

The students will have their response logs open and write responses to the story as it is being read. These can be in any form that the student chooses. Students can choose a prompt from the list or just free write as they are listening to the story.

When the teacher finishes the story, the students will share what they have written in their response logs with a partner and discuss each other's responses. The teacher will monitor the discussions and prompt students to deepen their responses when needed.

After coming back together as a class, the students will comment on their reaction to free writing in connection to the story. Is it harder or easier to use a prompt or to write whatever comes to mind?

Students will be reminded that they do not have to use one of the response prompts from the list when writing in their response logs. They have the option of responding as they choose while reading in most instances. (There will be times when certain responses are mandatory for assessment purposes). The prompts are to help them get started if they are needed. The prompts are not mandatory.

Students will continue responding to what they read during independent reading.

## **LESSON 20**

What if I'm stuck? Fix-it strategies

### **Purpose:**

Students will learn strategies to help them when they do not understand what they read.

### **Materials:**

Chart paper and markers

Overhead and transparency

Fix-it strategies bookmark for each student

The first paragraph from *The Once and Future King* enlarged on a transparency

### **Procedure:**

The teacher will begin class by asking – What do you do when you do not understand what you are reading?

The teacher will list student responses on chart paper.

After the students have named their strategies, the class can discuss the strategies and why they work.

The teacher can suggest ideas to add to the list.

The teacher will put the first paragraph from the book *The Once and Future King* on a transparency and project it for the class to see. The teacher will read the paragraph aloud and model questioning, rereading and reading ahead to clarify. The teacher will reinforce that even good readers read selections that are confusing and have to use reading strategies for comprehension.

Give each student a bookmark with fix-it strategies listed on it as a reminder to use fix-it strategies.

Students will practice fix-it strategies as they read independently.

## Suggested Read Aloud Books

### ***Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*** by Judith Viorst

Alexander wakes up with gum in his hair and from that point his day only gets worse. Everything that could go wrong for Alexander does. All the while, everyone else seems to be having a good day. Alexander's mother reminds him that everyone has a bad day on occasion, even people in Australia.

### ***All the Places to Love*** by Patricia MacLachlan

A boy named Eli tells about the favorite spots of his grandparents, his parents and himself on his grandparents' farm. He talks about wanting to share these places with his new baby sister.

### ***All the small poems and fourteen more*** by Valerie Worth

The author writes poetry about everyday items such as safety pins, magnets, hoses, and shoes using descriptive language. She makes the reader stop and take notice of common everyday items.

### ***Amos & Boris*** by William Steig

Amos is a mouse that lives by the sea. He builds himself a boat and sets sail across the ocean. He falls from his boat and is lost at sea. He befriends a whale named Boris who offers to take Amos home. They become friends and learn to admire each other for their differences.

### ***Baseball Saved Us*** by Ken Mochizuki

A young Japanese-American boy and his family face prejudice and are shipped to an internment camp during WWII. Anger mounts and tempers flare at the camp among the detainees from frustration until the family comes up with the idea to make a baseball diamond and play the game to keep themselves busy and keep their minds off the unfairness of the entire situation.

### ***Doctor DeSoto*** by William Steig

Doctor DeSoto is a mouse dentist who treats animals of all kinds except those that like to eat mice. One day a fox with a toothache begs for dental help. The DeSoto's decide to help him, but they have to come up with a plan to keep the fox from eating them.

### ***The Five Chinese Brothers*** by Claire Huchet Bishop and Kurt Wiese

This is a Chinese tale about five brothers who look exactly alike and each has an extraordinary talent. When one brother is sentenced to die another brother takes his place and is able to survive the penalty. It is decided that since he cannot be killed, he must be innocent.

### ***The Giving Tree*** by Shel Silverstein

A young boy loves to play by a tree and they become friends. As the boy grows older, he no longer has time to play with the tree. The boy has needs for money, a house,

a boat, and a place to sit as he grows older. The tree continues to be his friend and provide for him even though the boy no longer has time for the tree.

***Mrs. Mack*** by Patricia Polacco

During the summer that she is ten Patricia learns how to ride a horse from a woman named Mrs. Mack. There are other children at the stables where Patricia goes to learn to ride. At first she is disappointed by the shabby appearance of the stables and the seemingly unfriendly people, but as summer unfolds she comes to love the place and the woman called Mrs. Mack.

***My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*** by Patricia Polacco

Patricia's older brother is always challenging her at different things and winning. She becomes frustrated when she can never beat him at anything, and he teases her about it. She wishes upon a falling star to be able to do something better than him and is surprised by the way her wish is answered.

***The Patchwork Quilt*** by Valerie Flourney

Tanya and her grandmother work together to make a quilt that contains fabric that holds special memories for each member of the family. When grandmother gets sick, the whole family joins together to help work on the quilt that is going to be the grandmother's masterpiece.

***A Snowy Day*** by Ezra Jack Keats

A young boy wakes up to find that it has snowed and goes outside to make tracks in the snow, build a snowman, and make snow angels. He also dreams of being old enough to have a snowball fight. He tries to save a snowball in his pocket only to have it melt.

***Stone Soup*** by Marcia Brown

Three hungry soldiers come upon a village as they are walking. The local villagers are reluctant to share food or lodging with the soldiers. The soldiers decide to make stone soup for the villagers since there is so little food in the village. The villagers learn to share what they have during the experience.

***The Table Where Rich People Sit*** by Byrd Baylor

A young girl calls a family meeting to discuss money and how they need to have more of it. The family sits at a handmade table that looks old and worn. When the girl says her parents need to get jobs that pay more, they decide to make a list of all they have and what it is worth. It turns out that there is more than one way to be rich.

***Teammates*** by Peter Golenbock

Jackie Robinson is invited to try out for the major leagues by one of the managers of the dodgers in order to try to break the color barrier that is keeping blacks out of the majors. Jackie is told that he has to be strong enough not to fight back when he is mistreated. Pee Wee Reese stands up to the prejudice and becomes Jackie's friend in front of his family and friends during a game near his hometown.

***The Wall*** by Eve Bunting

It is the story of a boy and his father going to the Vietnam Memorial in search of the grandfather's name that is on the wall. Others are also at the memorial and the boy learns that it is a sad place. He comes to the conclusion that he would rather have his grandfather with him than have his name on the wall.

***The Wump World*** by Bill Peet

The wumps live quietly on a grassy green earth when suddenly pollutians come for outer space and take over the planet forcing the wumps to live in caves underground. The pollutians build freeways and high-rise buildings until they can no longer breath and must find a new planet to live on because of all the pollution. The wumps are left to pick up the pieces.

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## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

#### *Summary*

This project was based on the need to supplement the basal reading program adopted by the school with meaningful activities that allow students to use higher order thinking skills and practice writing and responding to passages in a format that is similar to the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), a test that is administered in the classrooms every spring. There is a need for the students to have practice using the reading strategies suggested in the basal. The success of using reader response has been well researched and documented for almost seventy years since the theory was first advanced by Louise Rosenblatt in 1938.

The project consists of twenty lessons to help the teacher model reader response for the students. Once the strategies are modeled and practiced, they can be applied to the stories in the basal as well as books read independently and in literature circle.

#### *Conclusion*

By having the teacher introduce and model reading strategies, the students are able to gain a clearer understanding of the strategies good readers use to increase their comprehension of text. Once students can use and apply the reading strategies in response logs, they are able to take ownership of their own learning by making connections, asking questions, visualizing the story, using background knowledge, summarizing, and separating main ideas from details. Students are able to question the author in their response logs and evaluate how well the author accomplishes what he/she sets out to do in the selection. The students learn to use information from the text to

make inferences and to justify their answers and opinions when responding to essay or extended response types of questions.

### *Recommendations*

In order to implement reading response logs successfully, the teacher and students need to have repeated opportunities to model and practice responding to literature.

Students are not accustomed to making meaning from a blank paper in front of them.

Teachers are accustomed to grading workbook pages that have only one correct answer.

There is a lot of trial and error involved in higher order thinking strategies. There is fear on the part of the student that the answer may be wrong. There is fear on the part of the teacher that by straying from the basal reader, students may not be getting all of the skill instruction that they need to be successful.

The recommendation is to try different ways of implementing response logs in the classroom. Using buddy journals may work well in one class while writing letters to the teacher may work better in another class. The research clearly states that success with response logs takes time. It is recommended that if a teacher is struggling with implementing response logs, the teacher should try to modify the curriculum rather than abandon the practice. The teacher could also implement the lessons in this project.

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