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ABSTRACT

This document provides a rationale (theory) and some models (application) to help secondary teachers develop their own "guided assignments"--road maps which offer young readers structured assistance in reading literature. The guide's first section provides a theoretical framework and blueprint for guided assignments. It begins by explaining the nature of literary response and then goes on to describe how "traditional assignments" fail to elicit or develop adequate responses from student readers. It also explains what guided assignments are, how they work, and how to construct them. The second section consists of a set of four classroom tested models of guided assignments. The first model, a guided assignment for "Romeo and Juliet," provides a bridge to the first section by including an "internal teacher dialogue" which shows how a teacher might use the suggestions provided in the first section to construct an assignment. The final three models include only the final product, represent three different literary genres (poetry, short story, and drama), and (depending on the assignment) could be used with upper elementary through senior high students. (SR)

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Using Guided Assignments To Teach Literature

Minnesota Department of Education

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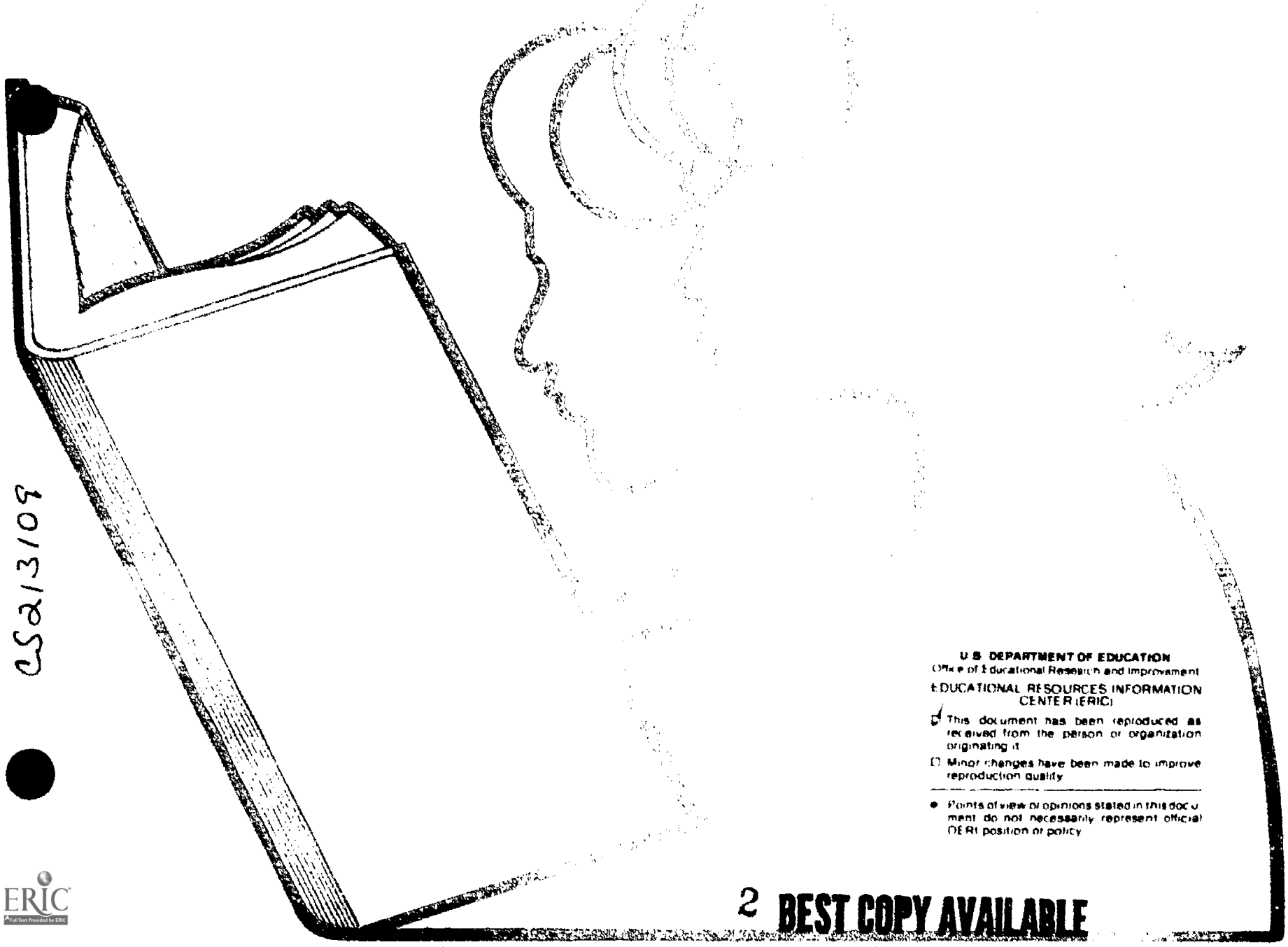

CS213109

USING GUIDED ASSIGNMENTS

TO TEACH LITERATURE

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1986

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INTRODUCTION

* A Small Thing

The bird hop-stumbles
across the forest of grass
our lawn is.
He seeks umbrellaed bushes,
the dark leafy places
at the edge of the yard.

He has fallen
from a pocket in a tree,
from the plump perfection
of his mother,
her halo of wings.

You follow him,
giant step by step,
knowing he cannot live
to share the night
with the neighboring cats.

You make a nest from rags
on a cardboard box.
You dig worms;
he downs them
like a small guzzler.
You pet the sheen on his back
with one large finger.

In the morning he is dead,
lost outside
his bundle of cloth.
A small thing
can make such silence.
You stand by the garage
for a long time.

Margaret Hasse

Eighth Grade Teacher: Has everyone finished reading "A Small Thing?"...Good! Now, who can tell me what the poet is trying to tell us in this poem?

Whether as student or teacher, most of us can identify with the above teaching strategy. Our teachers used it on us and we have probably used it on our students. As students, we probably know this strategy best from college literature survey courses where the goal was to "cover" several literary periods, and there was little time for extended consideration of any given work.

*Margaret Hasse is a Minnesota poet. "A Small Thing" and "Exit Alone," used with her permission, appear in a volume of her works, Stars Above, Stars Below published by New Rivers Press, 1602 Selby Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104.

If the primary task of the reader is to figure out what the writer is saying, then it seems to make sense to start out a discussion with a "meaning question." It moves everyone quickly to the central issue ("What does this mean?") and permits the class to sample a wide range of literary works.

As a strategy for a college survey course, this kind of methodology probably has some merit, particularly since most of the students in college survey courses have reached a stage in their cognitive development where they can begin to process complex texts with minimal assistance. In addition, one would assume that college students have had some previous instruction in reading literature, and therefore understand at least some of the conventions employed by poets and novelists.

Eighth grade students or even high school students are very different readers from college students. Many are just entering the stage of cognitive development which permits them to readily consider abstractions such as "theme" or "author's purpose" (Applebee, 1978). Many have little understanding of literary conventions. As a result, it is often inappropriate to get at questions of meaning too quickly because younger students are simply not equipped to deal with them. They need structured assistance, some kind of road map which helps them find their way.

As an alternative to the first strategy, consider this "guided assignment" approach to teaching "A Small Thing":

1. Read the poem once.

2. Go back and read it more slowly.

3. Look at the following questions (a, b, and c) and then close your eyes and think about them. Then write down your thoughts.

   a. What do you see?

   b. What color do you associate with the poem?

   c. What sound?

4. What are some things that are puzzling you about this poem?

   a.

   b.

   c.

This is only the beginning of the assignment (the complete exercise appears in the application section), but note how simply and gradually it moves. Rather than starting with a complex, abstract question ("What does this poem mean?"), it starts by having the reader get familiar with the poem. It directs the reader initially toward the less complex tasks of listing and describing. In a step by step process, it helps the reader discover what she knows and thinks about the poem.

The purpose of this document is to provide a rationale (theory) and some models (application) so that you can develop your own guided assignments. Both sections of this document are important. The first section, written by Richard Beach, provides a theoretical framework and blueprint for guided assignments. Beach begins by explaining the nature of literary response and then goes on to describe how

"traditional assignments," of the type referred to above, fail to elicit or develop adequate responses from student readers. He also explains what guided assignments are, how they work, and how to construct them. The second or application section, written by Marsha Besch and Candy Haga, consists of a set of classroom tested models of guided assignments. The first model, a guided assignment for Romeo and Juliet, provides a bridge to the first section by including an "internal teacher dialog" which shows how a teacher might use the suggestions provided by Beach to construct an assignment. The final three models include only the final product. These models represent three different literary genres (poetry, short story, drama) and, depending upon the assignment, could be used with upper elementary through senior high students. Obviously, the concept of guided assignments could be used with readers of any age.

Many readers, as they become familiar with the concept of guided assignments through this publication and others, will begin to connect guided assignments to a variety of prominent educational ideas, trends, and movements. Included on that list are cooperative learning, process instruction in writing, higher level thinking skills, recent research in reading comprehension, computer assisted instruction, and active learning. In addition, those who have used the Minnesota Department of Education publication Some Essential Learner Outcomes in Communication/Language Arts (1982) will note that many of the learner outcomes listed for literature are quite compatible with guided assignments.

Finally, we encourage teachers to duplicate and use any part of this publication. We only ask that, where appropriate, proper credit be given.

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SECTION I

THEORY AND BACKGROUND ON GUIDED ASSIGNMENTS

DEVISING GUIDED LITERATURE ASSIGNMENTS

Guided literature writing assignments consist of specific response activities designed to help students develop their responses before, during, and after reading a text.

Purpose For Responding to Literature

Our rationale for using guided assignments in the literature classroom is based on the following assumptions about literary response and teaching literature.

1. The meaning of a text is neither "in" the text nor "in" the reader. Rather, meaning evolves from a transaction between a reader and a text. A reader brings his or her own knowledge, attitudes, expectations, experiences, interpretive skills, personality, needs, and purpose for reading to the text. The text invites the reader to apply these characteristics so that, from the literary experience, readers learn much about themselves and the world. At the same time, readers must also recognize the differences between their own "real world" experiences and the text, realizing that literature differs from life.

2. Understanding texts involves a range of different response activities - reacting emotionally, describing, explaining, assessing, interpreting, evaluating, etc. Because students differ in their ability to use response activities, they need the opportunity to respond in a range of different response types: emotional, descriptive, autobiographical, interpretive, or evaluative, using a variety of response formats: essays, journals, discussion, oral interpretation, creative writing, etc.

   Students also need to relate one response to another, an example being to use descriptions of a character's act to build an explanation of the character's behavior. By linking different types of response activities, guided assignments attempt to teach students to relate to response activities.

3. Students need to learn to go beyond "correct" answers or superficial responses to articulate, expand, and defend their own responses. In order to expand or extend their responses, students need to hypothesize or consider hunches regarding further meanings, (e.g., what a character's act means in terms of her goal). Students then need to test the validity of their hypotheses by meshing that hypothesis with other aspects of the text.

   Guided assignments encourage students to infer and test out their own hypotheses, involving students in the higher order thinking skills of generalizing, synthesizing, interpreting, and evaluating.

4. If they are able, students need to define their own purposes and goals for responding. They are then more motivated to fulfill the assignment because they are not simply following the dictates of the teacher, but are seeking to fulfill their own goals. Once they define their goals, students need to learn how to select those activities which will best help them fulfill their goals.

   Guided assignments can be constructed so that either the teacher or the student defines the goals and/or selects appropriate response activities to fulfill those goals.

5. Readers can further extend their understanding through sharing their responses with peers, parents, or teachers. If students appreciate the value of such sharing, they may be more motivated to respond.

   Guided assignments encourage students to share responses and to work cooperatively with others on specific response activities.

Problems With Traditional Assignments, Essay Questions, and Worksheets

Given these assumptions, there are a number of problems with what we are labeling "traditional" assignments, essay questions, or worksheets:

1. Nebulous instructions. One problem with some assignments/essay questions is that the instructions are too vague. Students do not know exactly what to do to successfully complete the assignment. While some students can intuit the steps necessary for completing an assignment, many students have trouble selecting those activities most appropriate for completing the assignment. For example, the instructions: "Write an essay about the theme of love in Romeo and Juliet," does not provide students with enough direction so that students know what to do to complete the assignment. Students might ask: "What is 'the theme of love'?" or "How could I organize my essay?" While some students are able to determine what to do on their own, many students or helping parents become frustrated without more specific directions.

   On the other hand, the optional solution--providing many specific instructions right from the start--can overwhelm a student, leaving her equally frustrated. What may be more beneficial are more specific instructions, but broken down on a step-by-step basis so that a student can cognitively focus on one step at a time. For example, students might first describe their responses, followed by instructions for organizing those responses.

2. Too cognitively advanced. Another problem with assignments is that they are too cognitively advanced for some students. Assignments are formulated in a manner that assumes students possess certain inference skills which as adults, we often take for granted. For example, when we ask students to explain a character's action or to infer the theme of a poem, we assume they have the requisite logical skills necessary to explain or interpret.

   Explaining or interpreting consists of a series of specific response processes--reviewing and combining information, inferring beliefs, goals, and plans, and inferring reasons or implied themes. In order to explain a character's behavior, a student needs to review that character's actions; group those actions into categories or patterns; select those beliefs, goals, plans, or motives that best explain the actions, and then assess whether or not the explanation is valid.

   Breaking down certain high level inferences into specific response activities--explaining characters' acts or inferring theme--helps students learn to employ specific response activities that lead to higher level inferences.

3. Limits sustained open-ended response. Students are often not required to write sustained, extended responses to text. Much of their writing about literature consists of "correct answer" responses to worksheet or short-answer test questions, questions that require only one specific skill,

such as identifying a character's name or classifying examples of "main character," "setting," "climax," etc. Students are describing aspects of the texts, with no subsequent effort to organize often disparate bits of information in order to explain or interpret that information. These often unrelated questions may actually fragment their attention rather than help students reach synthesis.

4. Deductive versus inductive thinking. Another problem with assignments is that they are often more deductive than inductive. That is, students are asked to deductively apply a thesis or generalization to the text, for example, "apply the theme, 'might makes right,' to this text," rather than having the students inductively derive their own thesis or generalization. Once students have attempted to apply the thesis which is provided, they may then have little motivation to continue, assuming that they are telling the teacher what that teacher already knows. If, on the other hand, students inductively derive their own thesis or generalization from information extracted from the text, they may assume they are providing their teacher or peers with some novel insights into the text. They may then be more motivated to gather sufficient evidence from the text in order to defend their thesis.

5. Generating, organizing, and editing information collapsed into one effort. Another problem with assignments, particularly essay assignments, is that they assume students can readily comprehend a text, generate information, organize that information, and edit their writing all in one effort. Collapsing these stages into one effort creates cognitive strain and apprehension for inexperienced writers. By contrast, separating out these stages and cognitively focusing on "first-things-first," may reduce the cognitive strain and apprehension.

6. Lack of instrinsic motivation. Students often are not instrinsically motivated to do well on assignments; rather they often halfheartedly complete assignments in order to please the teacher. As research by Applebee (1985) indicates, a major reason for lack of motivation is the fact that students have little say in defining the purpose or goal of their response.

What Are Guided Assignments?

We define guided assignments as containing the following features:

1. Sequenced activities. Guided assignments consist of a series of sequenced response activities, each activity building on previous activities. Students often begin with emotional or descriptive responses, for example, listing images in a poem and emotional associations with those images, followed by explaining, interpreting, or connecting these emotional responses or descriptions. For example, having listed information about a character's behaviors or traits, a student then defines a pattern in these behaviors or traits that could explain the character's action.

2. Teacher-or student-defined goals. Depending on the ability level of the student, either the teacher or the student or both the teacher and the student may define the goal or purpose for the assignment.

3. Open-ended responses. Students are asked to give written open-ended responses to texts, encouraging them to make their own original responses rather than "correct answers."

4. Preparation for a final project. In some cases, the response activities can stand alone as guided assignments, for example, as a journal entry. Or, the response activities may be used to prepare students to complete a final project--an essay or a group discussion, etc.--the activities serving as "prewriting" to develop material necessary for successful completion of these projects.

5. Range of response modes. Depending on their ability, students use a number of different response modes--emotional, descriptive, autobiographical, interpretive, or evaluative.

6. Related questions. Rather than a string of unrelated questions, questions are related so that each answer assists students in answering the next question. Response activities and questions encourage students to infer logical relationships among characters' acts, beliefs, knowledge, plans, and goals.

7. Reviewing and self-monitoring. After completing each activity, students review and assess their responses in light of subsequent response activities. In contrast to worksheets, students are monitoring and integrating different responses according to an overall effort.

8. Varied according to students' ability. In constructing guided assignments, a teacher varies the difficulty level and the specificity of response activities according to the ability level of the students. Inexperienced students obviously need more detailed, specific steps than more experienced students.

9. Relating knowledge, attitudes, and experience to the text. Students are asked to define their own knowledge, attitudes, and experience as related to the text. For example, if students are reading a story about the relationship between a grandmother and grandson, students could think about what they know and believe about their own relationship to a grandparent. Having described their own relationship, they then compare it to the relationship in the text.

10. Built-in examples. Along with specific directions for how to complete activities, students are also given examples demonstrating successful use of a certain strategy.

11. Collaborative efforts. Students have the option of formulating their responses with other students in pairs or small groups; if they are writing essays, they then assess each others' drafts. The guided assignments provide students with enough direction, structure, and criteria that pairs or groups can work on their own.

Benefits of Guided Assignments for the Teacher

There are a number of benefits for the teacher in using guided assignments that justify the initial time investment required to develop the assignments.

1. Improved final essays. Completing "pre-writing" activities results in better quality final essays. In three separate studies conducted at the University of Minnesota, secondary and college students who completed guided assignment pre-writing activities, when compared with students who did not complete the same assignments, wrote final essays judged as higher in quality.

2. Improved discussions. Completing writing activities prior to small or large group discussion can help students formulate their thoughts prior to a discussion, often ensuring that they have something to contribute to the discussion.

3. Student autonomy. Because students are given specific directions and written models/demonstrations of how to do an activity, they can work on these assignments on their own at their own rate, reducing the need for teacher intervention. Moreover, by using the catalog described later in this text, students can develop their own guided assignments.

4. Improved student attitude and motivation. Because students have the opportunity to express and share their own unique responses, they may have a more positive attitude toward responding, enhancing their motivation to complete the assignments.

5. Guidance for small-group cooperative learning. With these specific directions, students can work together in small groups with some autonomy, reducing the need for teacher intervention.

6. Students' self-assessing. Because students are assessing their own performance, they may recognize and attempt to deal with limitations in their responses, reducing the need for extensive teacher evaluation.

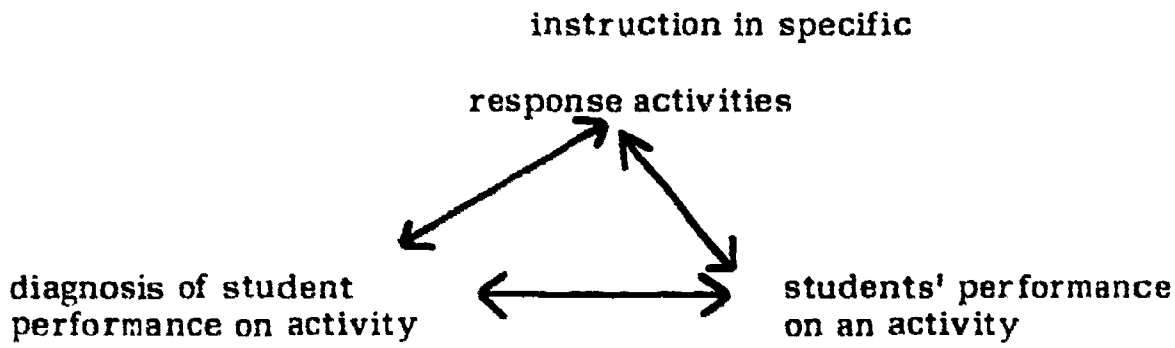
7. Facilitates diagnosis and assessment. Because the teacher knows the activities involved, he can readily diagnose students' difficulties or assess students' performance on specific responses. He can also assess final products in terms of performance on prerequisite activities.

8. Involving parents. Parents want to help students on homework assignments, but they often do not have a clear idea as to what the teacher expects the students to do. The specific instructions and demonstrations in guided assignments may assist parents in helping students on homework assignments.

9. Meeting individual differences. Teachers can alter the assignments according to differences in students ability. For less able students, they may specify the directions or select less difficult activities. For more able students, they may select more challenging activities or have them jump over certain prerequisite activities.

10. Conversion to computer. Guided assignments could also be converted to computer-guided activities, enhancing their appeal for certain students. One example of a guided story-writing computer-based assignment is Writing a Narrative (MECC). Authoring systems such as SUPERPILOT (Apple) or ACCESS (University of Minnesota, for IBM/P-system) can assist teachers in converting these assignments to a computer format.

11. Coordinating instruction, diagnosis, and student performances. By coordinating classroom instruction with assignment activities, teachers, as shown in the illustration, can base decisions about instruction on diagnosis of students performance. A teacher may select only those activities on which students have received instruction. However, if students are having difficulty completing a particular activity, for example, inferring characters beliefs, a teacher may then want to give more instruction in that activity.



Background Theory: The Literary Response Process.

In order to devise guided assignments, it is important to understand the literary response process--how readers make inferences about texts. Understanding this theory gives you some rationale for selecting, sequencing, and assessing certain response activities.

We will briefly summarize some of the relevant ideas emerging from recent theory and research on response to literature. For further reading, please refer to the references in the appendix.

1. Differences in types of responses. Readers respond to texts in a number of different ways. They become emotionally involved in the text. They describe what is happening in the text. They explain characters' actions. They interpret the symbolic meaning of actions in order to infer themes. They judge the quality of the text. And so on.

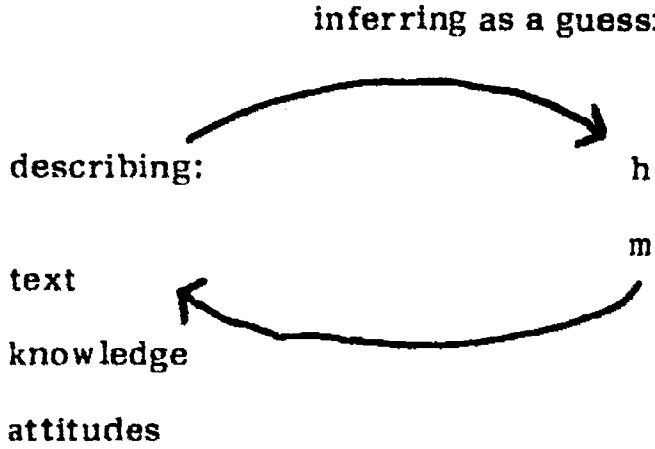
   For the purpose of developing a catalog of response activities for inclusion in guided assignments, we are using five basic types of responses:

   - o engagement/involvement: these responses include emotional reactions and responses
   - o connecting: responses relating the text with readers' prior experiences, attitudes, knowledge, or literary prototypes
   - o describing: responses describing events, characters, language, etc.
   - o exploring/interpreting: responses that explain, interpret, question, define problems, infer themes or symbolic meanings, etc.
   - o evaluation: responses that judge characters' acts or the quality of texts.

2. Developmental differences in types of response. Research comparing readers' responses at different grade levels (Purves and Beach, 1972; Applebee, 1976) indicates that junior high/middle school students respond primarily in terms of engagement/involvement, descriptive, or connecting/autiobiographical responses with less interpretive and little or no evaluative responses. By 12th grade, students are responding with more exploring/interpretive responses. For example, junior high students need to be able to sort out or clarify what happened in a text in order to interpret the text. Or, they may need to infer connections between their own experience and the text in order to understand the text. On the other hand, high school students may not need as many descriptive or connective activities.

3. Inferring as hypothesizing/guessing game. As readers move through or complete the text, they are constantly hypothesizing or making hunches about possible meanings. For example, if they do not understand why a character is doing something, they start hypothesizing about optional reasons for the character's actions, reasons based on what they know about the character. For example, after a character quits her bank job for no apparent reason, a reader speculates that this character may have a history of quitting, of not following through. With that hunch in mind, the reader reviews the text to think about previous instances in which the character has not lived up to her responsibilities in order to verify his hypothesis. If the reader does not find any evidence to support this hunch, then he may consider another hypothesis--maybe she is not interested in banking and really wants another career.

Making inferences is therefore a guessing game in which the reader is constantly hypothesizing and then testing out these hypotheses by reviewing the text. A reader draws on prior knowledge or attitudes about the text and the work to make these hypotheses. As illustrated below, the quality or insightfulness of these hypotheses depends on readers' ability to describe what is happening in the text or their own knowledge/attitudes and to constantly circle back to test out these hypotheses against their descriptions, knowledge, or attitudes.

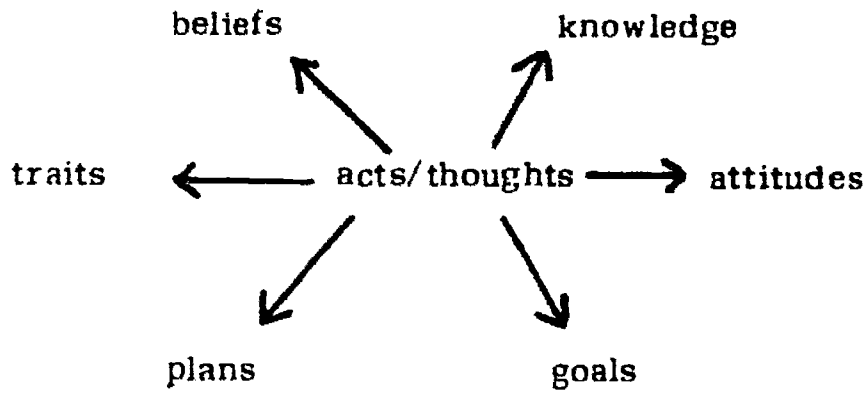


In devising guided assignments, it is therefore important to have students:

- o clearly describe in writing events, character behaviors, traits, setting, as well as related prior knowledge and attitudes in order to inductively derive hypotheses.

- o test out these hypotheses deductively against their written descriptions.

4. Making inferences about characters. In order to understand or explain characters' actions or thoughts, as illustrated in the following chart, readers infer relationships among characters' acts, thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, traits, attitudes, plans, and goals:



For example, if John says to Mary, "Would you go to the movie with me on Saturday," and Mary rejects his invitation, a reader could explain John's and/or Mary's act by making inferences about:

- o beliefs — John believed that Mary would accept his invitation/that Mary likes him/that Mary believed that he had the right to invite her

  Mary doesn't like John and that he did not have the right to invite her

- o knowledge — John knows that Mary likes movies, but also knows that she is dating someone else.

  Mary knows that John wants to establish a long-term relationship

- o traits — John is naive, "traditional," lonely

  Mary is strong, "nontraditional," self-respecting

- o attitudes — John has a more traditional attitude toward women.

  Mary believes that women deserve more respect.

- o plans/goals — John wants to establish a "long-term relationship" with Mary.

  Mary wants to avoid John.

A reader could explain John's and/or Mary's acts using any of these inferences, testing them out as hypotheses against the previous information in the text, as well as their prior knowledge of what one does or how one behaves in various situations--going to a restaurant, teaching a class, inviting, debating, ordering, etc. Readers use this prior knowledge to organize disparate bits of information, filling in the missing gaps. They also use their knowledge of conventions to detect violations of norms, violations that are central to literature. For example, in certain cultural contexts, Mary's rejecting of John would be a violation of the cultural conventions that women should do as they are told. Knowing this convention means that a reader can then infer that Mary's act will have consequences for her in the "world" of that text.

Readers also apply their attitudes to texts. For example, their explanations of John or Mary's acts reflects their own attitudes. A reader with a more traditional attitude toward women might explain Mary's actions in a totally different manner. Therefore, there may be no one "objective," "correct" explanation of John's or Mary's acts. Moreover, different characters have different perspectives on each other's actions/thoughts, perspectives that reflect their own attitudes. Understanding conflict in literature often involves understanding competing perspectives between the traditional vs. the new, the conservative vs. the liberal, the caring vs. the self-centered, etc.

In devising guided assignments, it is therefore helpful to have students make inferences about:

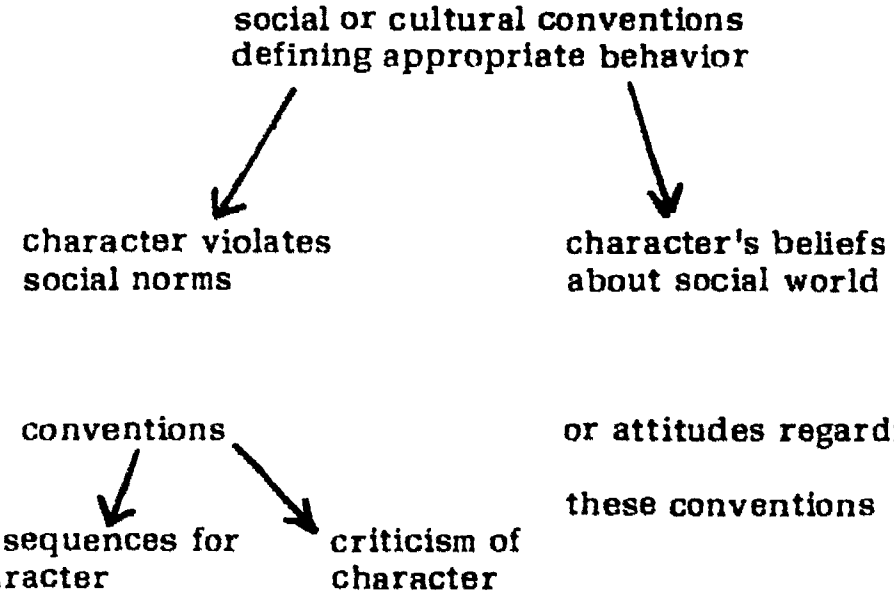
1. characters' beliefs, knowledge, traits, attitudes, plans, or goals

2. their own knowledge about actions, events, or settings

3. their own attitudes related to the characters' behavior

4. differences in the characters' perspectives.

5. Different settings or social contexts. Texts also contain different settings or social contexts. Students are typically asked to classify the place or locale in which the story take place. They also need to understand the social or cultural conventions that define appropriate behavior in the different settings or social contexts, for example, the differences between a formal ball and a battlefield in a Civil War novel. Knowing what is appropriate behavior in these different contexts helps to explain, as illustrated in the chart below, why acts, as violations of norms, may have certain consequences or why a character may hold certain beliefs or attitudes about a social world.



In order to determine the social or cultural conventions operating in a certain context, students could be asked to list instances in which the character "gets in trouble," suggesting violations of social conventions. The students could then determine the main character's and/or other characters' beliefs about these conventions. From that, and from information about the historical or cultural world in which the story occurs, they could define the nature of the social or cultural conventions and how these conventions influence the character's behavior.

6. Inferring beliefs, ideas, and themes. Readers also infer characters' beliefs in or attitudes toward certain ideas or values, inferences that often help in inferring theme. One definition of theme is what a character learns from an experience--that appearances can be deceiving or that competition can destroy relationships. In some cases, as Robert Scholes has demonstrated in Textual Power, characters are often dealing with competing or opposing ideas or beliefs: appearance vs. reality, competition vs. cooperation, conformity vs. individuality, etc. As illustrated in the chart below, inferring characters' beliefs or attitudes about ideas or values helps readers make inferences about theme.

characters' beliefs/attitudes

↓

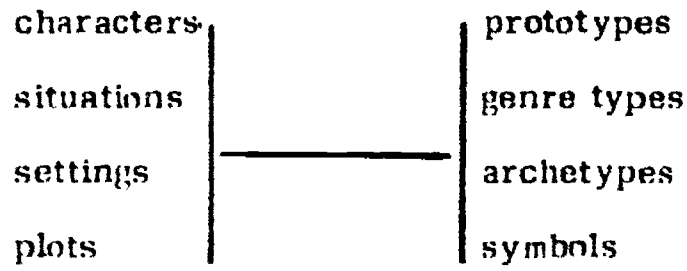
ideas or values

(oppositions/conflicts)

↓

themes

7. Texts and literary protctypes. As illustrated below, readers also conceive of characters, situations, settings, or plots as typical or representative of certain types of character prototypes (hero, sidekick, villian, foil, etc.), genre types (mystery, comedy, tragedy, etc.), or archetypes/symbols (initiation, water, revenge, etc.).



Students' ability to conceive of a text as typical or representative of larger types will vary according to their knowledge of literature and their previous instruction. While students may first need to be taught deductively to apply these concepts to the text, once they understand a concept, for example, the concept of "initiation," they can then, given several different texts, inductively infer that all of these texts deal with "initiation."

In devising assignments, you may want to include texts in which the connections are relatively obvious. If, for example, you are doing a genre unit on mystery and the assignment involves inferring connections between three different mystery stories, those stories should all clearly represent the genre. You may then want to have students list the various aspects of a character, situation, setting, or story and then either ask them to list, or give them, certain character types, genres, archetypes, or symbols; finally ask them to infer connections between the two lists.

Techniques For Developing Guided Assignments

In this section, we will discuss specific steps involved in creating guided assignments. In Section II, we will present an example of a teacher making decisions about the development of a guided assignment for Romeo and Juliet.

1. Define the overall purpose. One of the first steps involved in devising a guided assignment is to begin to define the overall purpose or goal for the assignment. Defining the overall purpose involves defining what the student will learn by completing the assignment. The purpose may simply be defined as learning to use the response activities included in the assignment. For example, from listing events, relating one of those events to her own auto-

biographical experiences, and then interpreting the story event, you may hope that the student learns to use the "describe/autobiographical/interpret" sequence in responding to literature. Or, the purpose of an assignment may be to explore the depiction of the family in a number of different texts.

This does not mean that the overall purpose is initially carved in stone. It may be that the purpose begins to take shape or changes as the student works through the assignment. For example, a student begins an assignment with the purpose of exploring the topic of relationships as depicted in novel, Of Mice and Men. However, the student then discovers that she is more interested in the theme of power and control and how the need for power and control inhibits the development of relationships. The student has therefore shifted the focus and specified the purpose of the assignment.

2. Determine the final outcome. The final outcome for the assignment is the product: an interpretive essay, a storyboard, a role-play session, journal responses, etc. Defining the overall purpose may dictate the final outcome, or, the final outcome may dictate the purpose. If, for example. the purpose is to explore a theme, the final outcome may be an essay. If the final outcome is a parody of a mystery, the purpose may be to understand the techniques unique to mystery stories.

The following are examples of some final outcomes:

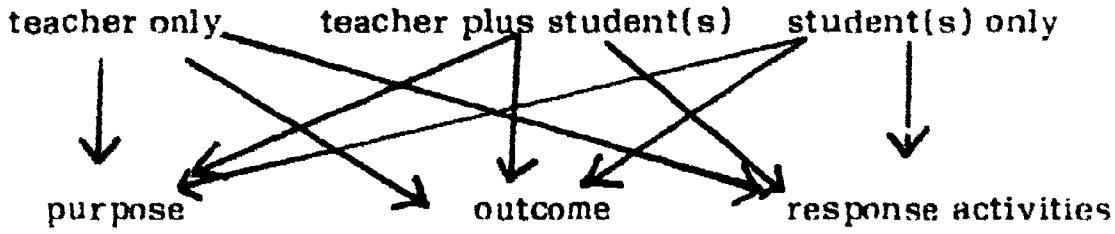
- o written essays or journal entries
- o describing emotional reactions/engagement/experience with the text
- o describing, explaining, interpreting, judging a character(s)
- o inferring relationships among characters, setting, events
- o inferring, applying, or extracting themes or ideas
- o relating texts to readers' experiences/attitudes/beliefs
- o connecting texts/media according to genre/topic/archetype
- o journal responses
- o reacting jotting, logging, charting, mapping
- o group discussion (writing serves as pre-discussion preparation)
- o writing poems, stories, plays, etc./extending or revising texts
- o role play/oral interpretation/video production
- o writing diaries for characters/letters to characters

a. Who defines the purpose: teacher or student?

As previously noted, one problem with assignments is the lack of student motivation. One reason for the lack of motivation is that students have little say in determining the purpose and outcome for an assignment. In a series of studies (Applebee, 1985), secondary students who completed assignments in which they defined their own purpose were more motivated and produced essays of higher quality than when the purpose was dictated by the teacher. Interviews with the student indicated that students often were not able to determine their own meanings because the primary purpose of the assignment was to please the teacher according to the teacher's purpose and assessment criteria.

At the same time, some students may simply not be able to define their purpose without help from the teacher. Or, rather than let the students define purpose totally on their own, a teacher may want to negotiate a purpose with them. Or, a group of students could mutually determine

their purpose or outcome. All of this also applies to defining the final product or to selecting response activities. As illustrated below, either you alone or the student alone or both you and the student may define the purpose, outcome, or activities.



b. Using the overall purpose and final outcome to select activities.

Defining the final outcome and the overall purpose helps you or the student select from the catalog those response activities that will best fulfill the purpose and outcome. The more clearly defined the purpose or outcome, the easier it is to select appropriate activities. A nebulous purpose, such as, 'the students will respond to a poem," does not provide any clear criteria for selecting appropriate activities. In contrast, "the students will learn to contrast the types of character relationships (close vs. distant) in a novel" gives you some basis for selecting appropriate activities.

Defining the final outcome and overall purpose also implies some criteria for evaluating the students' performance on an assignment. For example, if you want students to learn how to contrast character relationships, you can then, for example, assess them on their ability to contrast character relationships according to a number of aspects: beliefs, knowledge, traits, etc. Or, the students could derive criteria for assessing their performance.

c. Specifying the inference process.

Defining the purpose and outcome also helps you determine the degree you need to specify the steps involved in response activities. How specific the steps depends on your students' ability. For you to determine the degree of specificity, you need to step back and think about those steps you need to take to make a certain inference. You are "unpacking" your inference to define other inferences that led up to that inference. You are thinking about prerequisites: ' What do I need to do to make a certain inference?"

For example, you want students to compare different character relationships. In thinking about your own processes of comparing character relationships, you may discover that in order to define each relationship as "close," "distant," "friendly," etc., you need to first describe the characters' acts and beliefs about other characters--acts and beliefs that could be used to define each relationship. Then, in order to compare the relationships, you need to have defined the nature of each relationship--as "close," "distant," "friendly," etc.

Now, considering the students' knowledge, cognitive ability, and previous instruction, think about the difference between how your students would respond and how you responded. You may be taking for granted certain cognitive processes that will be difficult for your students. While you may be able to infer the point of a story, your students may now know what to do in order to infer the point.

By thinking about your students' responses, you may recognize the need to further "unpack" your inferences to the level of the students' inferences. You may also realize that students will need specific models included in the assignment or classroom instruction in order to make certain inferences. Or, you may recognize that certain inferences are simply too difficult for students, regardless of the models or instruction you provide, and decide to exclude them from the assignment.

Even after the students are completing an assignment, and you discover that some or all of them are having difficulty with certain activities, you may need to further "unpack" the activity in order to provide more specific direction.

3. Define the scope of the assignment. Your assignment could range from a multiweek unit with several different texts to having the students write journal reactions to one poem. Your assignment could also center on a genre type (mystery, comedy, adventure, tragedy, detective, etc.), topic, idea, theme, archetype, or narrative pattern.

   One reason for considering the scope is to consider the extent to which you will have students deductively apply genre characteristics, ideas, or themes, or have them inductively extract these characteristics, ideas, or themes from their reading. One problem with many "final essays" in units is that the students are asked to apply a theme ("man vs. society") to texts without extracting their own ideas from their reading. On the other hand, students may need some conceptual framework or direction provided by the ideas you present in the assignment or in your instruction.

   We recommend that you steer a middle course by using the activities to provide some conceptual direction, while, at the same time, letting students inductively derive their own ideas. This means that, if you are going to have students inductively derive connections, you need to select texts that easily invite or imply these inferences. Take for example an assignment that includes responding to three different mystery stories, with the outcome being writing their own mystery story and the purpose being to apply what they learned from reading mystery stories to writing mystery stories. It is therefore important that you select three mystery stories that contain the same or similar mystery-story conventions rather than totally different stories.

4. Select and sequence activities from the catalog. In the next section, we include a catalog of response activities. Read over the catalog and, based on your outcome, purpose, and your own response processes, select those activities that you will include in your assignment. Or, if your students are selecting activities, have them, with their purpose and outcome in mind, select appropriate activities. (Learning to select activities to fulfill a purpose or achieve an outcome is of value for students.) Don't worry about initially selecting all of the activities you need; you may later discover that you need to add more activities.

   You then need to think about how you would sequence the activities "first things first." In sequencing the activities, you are constantly thinking ahead to subsequent activities in order to use engagement/involvement, connecting, or describing activities to prepare students for exploring or judging activities. Or, you are "working backwards" from exploring or judging activities to add necessary prerequisite engagement/involvement, connecting, or describing activities.

a. Specific questions.

In some of the activities, you may be listing a series of specific questions about the text. In devising these questions, sequence them so that answering initial questions will be useful for answering subsequent questions. Your questions should also represent the different types of responses, moving, perhaps from engagement, description, or connecting responses to exploring responses.

b. Unpacking questions.

In some cases, you may realize that to answer a question, a student needs to do some prerequisite activities or questions. For example, you may ask students to explain a character's action, but then realize that to explain that act they need to do some listing of the character's actions. You may then want to build in those activities with your questions.

c. Optional versions.

You may develop optional versions, varying the difficulty of the assignment according to differences in students' abilities within or across different classes.

d. Building-in cooperative group work.

You may build-in directions for students to work together on certain or all of the response activities. You may want to define certain responsibilities for students in the groups or have the students themselves define those responsibilities. If students are writing essays, you could also define ways for them to provide specific feedback to drafts.

In using groups, you need to specify criteria for evaluating students' composite performance, including criteria for the ability to work together with others.

5. Formulating directions. In formulating directions for each activity, specify the directions so that students know exactly what they are supposed to be doing. For example, in using the "THINK-ALOUD" activity with partners (one student serving as the audience), the directions, "Think aloud your responses to the poem," do not provide students with enough specific directions for knowing what to do or how to "think-aloud" while reading." More helpful directions: "Read through the entire poem once. Then, on the second reading, after reading each one or two lines, stop and talk to your partner about any thoughts or responses you had in reading those lines. Think of yourself as a sports commentator reporting "movies of your mind." The directions specify the what and the how.

Specifying the directions is important because one rationale for these assignments is that students can do the assignments on their own, or that they can get help from a parent or peer. If the directions are not clear, they will simply become frustrated.

a. Forecasting.

As previously mentioned, you also need to tell students about subsequent activities so they understand the purpose for doing a certain activity. For example, you would tell students that they would be using their "think-alouds" to develop material for grouping a poem's images into opposing clusters. Students then know they are doing a certain activity.

b. Models.

In some cases, depending on the students' ability and prior instruction, you could provide some models or examples for how to do a certain activity. If you believe that your students won't understand how to make certain inferences, for example, about a character's goal, you could give them examples of your own inferences about a character's goal.

c. Reviewing and assessing activities.

You may also want students to review what they have written in order to assess whether they have successfully completed an activity. To assess an activity, such as listing a character's acts, traits, or beliefs, students need to know why they are doing that activity, for example, to prepare them for completing the next activity--explaining that character's acts. You therefore need to tell the students what they are going to be doing next so they can assess their activity accordingly. For example, after listing the character acts, traits, or beliefs, the students would be told that their next activity involves explaining the character's actions using the listed traits or beliefs. They would then be asked, "Do you have enough information about the character traits or beliefs to explain the character's actions?" With that subsequent task and criteria in mind, the student then has some well-defined criteria for reviewing their responses.

You then need to build-in directions for reviewing their responses. It is important that students be given clear directions as to how to review their responses as well as specific criteria for assessing their responses. For example, "read back over your lists to see what you've said," doesn't direct the student's review in terms of a specific purpose or criteria. Again, the purpose of the review is to help students assess whether they have developed enough material to do the next activity. Thus, you need to refer to your forecasting of the next activity to define the purpose for the review.

A more useful review activity would be to ask students, having listed character actions or traits, to do the following: "The next activity asks you to explain why the character robbed the bank. To explain the character's acts, you need to be able to perceive some consistent pattern in his behavior or traits. Read back over your lists of actions and traits, and see if you can determine any similarity in his actions or traits that could explain the robbery."

Or, in reviewing their responses to re-readings of a poem, a student discovers how his initial responses reflected initial stereotyped perceptions, which, with each subsequent reading, became less stereotyped and more complex. In reviewing their own responses, students therefore discover the value of careful re-reading, particularly in responding to poetry.

You may also set specific criteria in terms of the amount, relevancy, validity, scope, clarity, degree or abstraction, and other criteria relevant to successful completion of a particular task. For example, if students have defined several ways in which three stories are typical of a mystery story, you could then have them assess that information in terms of amount: "Do you have enough information to show that these stories are mystery stories?"

You may also, again depending on the students' ability, have students rate their performance on specific activities using scales ("1" = low, "6" = high, etc.) in which you define the criteria for their rating. You could also have students write open-ended comments that both describe what they did and judge their performance.

6. Formating assignments. By using lists, white space, graphics, charts, and well-designed formats, you can assist students in organizing information in a manner that helps them perceive relationships. For example, by having students list character acts on one side of the page and beliefs on the other, students can recognize the relationships between character acts and beliefs.

   Effective formatting also helps you quickly locate activities to intervene or to assess students' performance.

   In formatting the assignments, consider the following techniques designed to enhance readability:

   a. Subheads.

      Use subheads to title or define the different sections or types of activities.

   b. Numbers for lists.

      Use numbers to give students a sense of how many items to include on a list. Numbers may also encourage students to give more than one or two responses.

   c. Graphics and charts.

      Visual graphics and charts such as the ones employed above to illustrate the different inference processes provide students with useful visual guides for thinking about response processes.

   d. White space.

      Use plenty of white space to enhance appearance and avoid cluttering the page with too much information.

   e. Purpose.

      Keep defining the purpose for different sections or activities so students know why they are reading certain instructions.

   f. Clarity.

      Keep your instructions clear, concrete, and simple. Use examples or models to illustrate what you want students to do.

Evaluating Guided Assignments

In evaluating students' writing, a teacher can function as an examiner, simply assessing how well students performed. Or, a teacher can function as a helper by not only giving feedback to students but also providing them with encouragement, discussion, and demonstrations to help them improve. If students perceive the teacher as only the examiner, they will be less motivated and perform less well than if they perceive the teacher as also a helper (Applebee, 1985).

Ideally, you are giving written or oral comments while the student is completing the assignments rather than after the fact, when the feedback is less useful. Because giving this feedback is difficult, if not impossible for a 30-student class, you may also want to train peers to give peer feedback, complementing your own efforts. One advantage of guided assignments is that you can build-in questions or assessment criteria so that peers have some direction for helping each other.

Effective evaluation involves four stages: diagnosing, describing, judging, and predicting/demonstrating changes in student performance (Beach, in press).

1. Diagnosing. One advantage of the guided assignments is that you can readily identify students' performance according to a specific activity. For example, if students are asked to list character traits, you can determine at a glance how well they were able to list traits. And, by referring to any reviewing or self-assessing work which students may have completed, you can determine students' ability to critically assess their own performance. If students have difficulty assessing, then you may need to demonstrate ways of assessing for them.

   By diagnosing performance, you can then decide which aspects of their performance to focus on. If students are having difficulty doing several different things, you may want to focus on only one or two response phenomena.

2. Describing performance. Once you have diagnosed a student's performance, you (or the peer) describe the students' responses, naming the response strategy and giving some positive comment (e.g., "I liked the number of images you listed."). By naming the strategy, you are providing students with a vocabulary for defining their responses.

   You could also discuss students' performance with them, giving them an opportunity to expand, modify, and revise their responses by providing suggestions, demonstrations, and support for them. In doing so, you are showing them how to do activities. Again, peers could also provide this individual instruction.

   You may also, especially with draft-length responses, want to ask students to describe their own intention--what they were trying to say or show. Once students have defined their intention ("I was trying to show that the main character was deluded") you can ask them to judge whether or not they have fulfilled that intention or indicate whether you believe that they have fulfilled that intention.

3. Judging. Having described the students' performance, you can then judge their performance or have the students judge their own performance in terms of the amount, clarity, validity, relevancy, insightfulness, etc., of the

response. In judging the final product, you may judge how their performance on the preliminary activities influences their performance on the final product. For example, they may have cited little evidence to support their opinions because they failed to list much specific information.

4. Predicting/demonstrating. To encourage students to improve their performance, you could then ask them to preduct how they would improve their performance, or you could demonstrate ways of improving their performance.

Catalog: Response Activities for Assignments

The following are a list of response activities that could be included in guided assignments. Once you and/or your students have determined a final outcome for an assignment, you or they can select those activities that will best help students achieve that outcome.

These activities are divided into five basic types of responses: engagement (emotional responses, involvement with the text), connecting (relating autobiographical experiences, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs to the text), describing (listing, jotting, linking information, charting), exploring (predicting, question-asking, explaining character actions, inferring the point of a story, etc.), and evaluation (judging the quality of the text).

In addition to these response activities, you may also select certain review activities--activities requiring students to assess their responses to determine if they need to do further responding or to determine how that response activity leads to a subsequent activity.

1. Engagement.

   a. Empathizing/identifying.

      Reader adopts character's perspective/relates with character or world positively or negatively:

      "I have a lot in common with the main character."
      "I felt as if I were in the character's shoes."
      "I had difficulty becoming involved with the text."

   b. Responds emotionally.

      Reader responds or reacts emotionally or cites emotional associations to the events, language, or characters:

      "I really liked the way the writer describes her old car."
      "The descriptions of the haunted house give me goose bumps."
      The story was so gripping that I couldn't put the book down."

2. Connecting.

   a. Relates autobiographical experience to text.

      Reader describes similar or related experiences or persons in relationship to events or characters in the text. These autobiographical responses help trigger related knowledge or attitudes which can then assist in interpreting the text.

"The main character's death reminds me of my uncle's death."
"I once had the same kind of run-in with a teacher as did the character."

b. Transports characters or texts into another "what if" context or themselves as readers into the world of the text.

Reader places characters or text into "real-world" or hypothetical contexts. For example, students are given a specific, familiar setting, and asked questions as to how certain characters from the text would behave in that setting. Or, conversely, students are asked to discuss how they would behave within the world of the text. "If Holden Caufield attended my high school, he would be bored stiff." "If I were at one of Gatsby's parties, I would feel really awkward because everybody is trying to impress everybody else."

c. Relates attitudes to text.

Reader defines her own related attitudes and compares or contrasts those attitudes with those of the characters or writers. Students could write about their own attitudes or they could complete various attitude scales (rating attitude statements, rank ordering concepts, etc.--see Writing about Literature) in reference to themselves or to the characters or world of the text (allowing for a comparison between their own attitudes and those of the characters or world):

"I believe in equal rights for both sexes, while the main character believes that men are superior."
"Most people are out for themselves; I believe that as did the main character."

d. Related knowledge or ideas to text.

Reader defines her own knowledge about the world of ideas and relates them to the text:

"From what I know about sailing, this character really did not know what he was doing when he took out the boat."

e. Relates text to similar texts.

Reader describes a similar text, film, or television program to the text:

"The love-hate relationship in this story reminds me of the relationship between Lenny and George in Of Mice and Men."

f. Relates texts to character prototypes, genre types, archetypes, or symbols.

Readers often conceive of characters, situations, settings, or plots in terms of prototypes, genres, archetypes, or symbols:

"This book is a typical detective/mystery story."
"His friend is the typical sidekick figure."

g. Revises expectations/knowledge.

As readers move through the text and learn more about characters or begin to perceive certain patterns, they begin to reinterpret previous events in light of new information or knowledge. As they revise their inferences about current events, they reinterpret the previous events. For example, a reader now realizes that a character, who seemed to be trying to help his employees by loaning them money, was actually hurting them by putting them in debt and making them subservient to him. What seemed to be a pattern of caring was actually a pattern of control.

3. Describing.

a. Lists information about events or setting.

Reader lists, jots, or logs specific information about what happened or about the setting or "world" of the text:

"The story takes place in a rodeo show out west. The first thing that happens is the star of the show is hurt and can't perform. Then, the star is replaced by Sam."

b. Lists information about characters' acts, traits, beliefs, plans, goals, relationships.

Reader lists, jots, or logs information about characters' acts, traits, beliefs, goals, plans that is provided in the text or that a reader infers from the text:

"Sam has had little experience in the rodeo, but he is strong and believes he can be a rodeo star."

Lists can be formatted so that students are encouraged to cite more than one example of a certain type. By having students complete parallel lists, they can compare lists, drawing connections between the listed information. For example, having listed character acts, a student would like some related character traits next to each of these acts. Students can then infer connections between the characters' acts and the traits.

c. Free-associates or "thinks aloud" about text

Reading on a line-by-line basis ("slow-motion reading"), the reader, with a partner or tape recorder, expresses his thoughts about the meaning of the text. Students could be told that they are giving a sports commentary about their own responses.

d. Links or clusters words, concepts, images, actions.

Reader links, connects, or clusters aspects of the text according to similarity of meaning. For example, having listed descriptions of war in a poem, a reader groups those descriptions into two categories: positive and negative descriptions of war.

Readers are constantly combining or clustering information about characters or events. In thinking about what goes with what, readers group characters' behaviors in a story or images in a poem according to certain categories or concepts. For example, a reader may conceive of one character's acts as "good," while others' acts are "bad." Or, a reader may conceive of a character's development in terms of phases in her development. By naming or titling these categories or clusters, a reader develops a useful blueprint or conceptual map for organizing information in the text.

e. Maps, charts, or draws information.

Reader draws a map or chart to visualize the development of events or information about characters' acts, traits, beliefs, plans, goals, or relationships. For example, a reader draws circles representing each of the characters and then places them next to each other or far apart depending on their relationships. Or, after reading a poem, a reader draws a picture of what is being portrayed in the poem. It is often useful to give students an example of a map or chart.

4. Exploring/Interpreting.

a. Infers/explains characters' acts, traits, beliefs, or goals.

Reader explains characters' acts, traits, beliefs, or goals/intentions by using information about acts, traits, beliefs, plans, or goals, or be drawing on prior knowledge, attitudes, or experiences. For example, a reader explains a character's acts according to that character's beliefs or goals:

"This character can never get along with others because she is so self-centered."
"The character keeps trying because he wants to win."

b. Infers author's or characters' intentions.

Reader infers that an author is deliberately conveying certain meanings by having a character do something or by employing certain literary techniques. For example, in beginning a story with a description of a dark street, a reader infers that the author is deliberately developing suspense, or a reader infers characters' intentions, e.g., a character is praising another character in order to ingratiate himself with that character. "The author portrays the brothers as behaving in a different manner in order to contrast their personalities."

c. Infers or explains the characters' or narrator's perspective/outlook/conceptions.

Reader infers or imputes the characters' or narrator's perspective or world view--how they are conceiving of others, themselves, and the world (e.g., the fact that a character may conceive of the world through "rose- colored glasses"). This often involves examining a character's or narrator's use of certain concepts, metaphors, or categories to determine if a character or narrator is objective, deluded, realistic, misguided, etc., in his perceptions of reality or "the truth." Readers may also explain this perspective in terms of a character's traits, beliefs, or goals, noting, for example, that a character describes his playing in a football game as a war due to his competitiveness.

In dealing with perspectives, readers are also dealing with characters' attempt to deal with or avoid the underlying "truths" permeating a text. In some cases, readers may recognize that there is no one absolute "truth," that explains "the facts," but that each character's perspective provides a different avenue for "the truth." "In the beginning, the main character was overwhelmed by the city." "The narrator often described the place in a distorted manner."

d. Infers social norms, conventions, or value assumptions.

Based on information about the characters' actions, beliefs, or perspective, a reader infers certain norms, conventions, or value assumptions constituting appropriate/inappropriate behavior in a certain place, setting, or world. Readers often use inferences about appropriate behavior to detect characters' violation of norms--the fact that something unusual or extraordinary has happened--to infer the point or theme. For example, a reader infers that in the novel The Chocolate War, "might makes right," that those who have power control others. Or, based on inferences about male and female characters' conversations, a reader infers the underlying value assumption: "Women in this small town are second-class citizens."

e. Infers a point or theme.

In inferring a point or theme, readers often infer what they or a character learned from the text. Characters often "learn from their mistakes"--violations of social norms, conventions, or value assumptions. Having inferred that a character has violated certain conventions, a reader can then infer what the character has learned from that violation, for example, that "one shouldn't judge others too quickly because appearances are deceiving."

Readers also infer themes by inferring characters' beliefs or attitudes and whether, from their experience, characters accept or reject their beliefs or attitudes. For example, a character learns that she was misguided by her romantic perceptions, from which a reader infers, "You have to be realistic about the world." A reader may also infer what it is that the writer is "saying" about a society or world--that "less is more," that "power can corrupt," etc.

f. Generalizes to a prototype, symbol, archetype, or idea.

Reader infers that the characters or storyline are representative or typical of a prototype, symbol, archetype, or idea. They may also give reasons why the characters or story represent a certain type: "The hero of the story is the typical "knight in shining armor." "The play was a typical situation comedy."

g. Makes predictions.

Readers predict subsequent events, outcomes, or endings based on their perceptions of certain patterns implying consistent character behavior. Readers then review the text to give reasons for their predictions:

"I think the family will get back together at the end of the story, because, even though they fight a lot, they still care about each other."

h. Defines oppositions.

Readers often infer oppositions in texts between competing themes or ideas ("appearance vs. reality"), characters (heroes vs. villians), worlds (city vs. country), or images (light vs. dark). Inferring these oppositions helps a reader make inferences about perspectives or themes.

i. Asks questions about the text.

Reader poses questions about the text, questions that can encourage further thinking about a text: "Why did the character give up at the end of the story?"

j. Defines difficulties in understanding.

Readers are often puzzled, perplexed, or baffled by things in a text they don't understand. If they can define what it is they don't understand (e.g., the fact that a character is always late for an appointment), and establish a reason for why they don't understand the character's actions (e.g., that they don't know enough about the characters' past relationships), they can then use that reason to review back over the text to find helpful information:

"I don't understand why the character was always late."

k. Creates, revises, or adds to the text.

Readers create their own ending, add information, revise the text, write a parody; readers write letters to or by characters or keep a diary as if they were a character.

5. Evaluation.

a. Judges characters.

Readers are continually judging characters according to criteria such as insightfulness, diplomacy, appearance, etc. They may judge the characters according to assumptions or norms operating within the world of the text, or, they may impose their norms onto the world of the text. For example, within the early 19th century world of Pride and Prejudice, characters behave according to the social conventions constituting that world.

One of the most important criteria is the character's perceptiveness or insightfulness--a character's ability to perceive the reality of the situation. Oedipus fails to perceive the truth that Tieresius perceives. As they mature, Pip or Huck becomes more insightful about his own and others' limitations:

"The main character failed because he was blind to his limitations."

b. Judges the quality of texts.

Reader judges the quality or worth of a text, employing the criteria of style, organization, characterization, etc. In contrast to ENGAGEMENT/INVOLVEMENT with the text, in which a reader responds according to whether he "likes" a text, in judging a text, a reader assesses the quality

or worth of the text. Research studies indicate that secondary students have more difficulty judging texts than older readers because they have not developed knowledge of aesthetic criteria for judging style, story development, characterization, use of descriptions, etc. Secondary students may therefore need instruction in how to use these criteria for judging texts:

"The characters in this mystery story are not well developed."

"The descriptions of the jungle succeed in establishing an atmosphere of horror."

DRAFTING

In preparing drafts for an essay response, you may want to include some of the following activities having to do with organizing information generated by the response activities:

1. Defining purpose.

   Students define their purpose or intention, which may or may not be consistent with the original "overall purpose." Defining the purpose can be used to determine which information will best convey their purpose.

2. Categorizing.

   Using their purpose, students can define the different categories, sections, or parts for organizing the information or defining the content of their material. They often need to experiment with several different categories, each category system providing a different perspective on the material.

3. Employing rhetorical strategies.

   You may include directions for having students employ certain rhetorical strategies: define their thesis, provide supporting evidence, contrast, compare, summarize, refute, define problems, deal with assumptions, etc. (See Alexrod and Cooper, 1985 for examples of specifying rhetorical strategies in guided assignments).

4. Revising drafts.

   Based on students' purpose and self-assessing, they could revise their draft--adding, deleting, changing, and modifying material so that it epxresses their intentions.

5. Editing drafts.

   In editing drafts, students are focusing more on problems of clarity and readability that may entail changes at the sentence or word level. You could ask students to read their drafts aloud to partners or have partners respond to reading difficulties so they could revise draft accordingly.

SECTION II

MODELS OF GUIDED ASSIGNMENTS

GUIDED ASSIGNMENT FOR ROMEO AND JULIET

Internal teacher dialog in creating the guided assignment:

Here it is, almost the end of winter break. We will be starting Romeo and Juliet again in ninth grade English. I would like to get away from spoon feeding the play like I have done before, to get the students to do more on their own, to make more connections.

Should I drag out the filmstrips about Shakespeare and the Globe again. No, I think I will try showing them just the first part of the Franco Zeffirelli film Romeo and Juliet first to get them involved, and we'll talk about the costumes and language. Maybe I should point out the differences between the Hollywood production and an Elizabethan stage production, but I will keep that to a minimum and allow them to make observations.

1. Determining a Final Outcome and Overall Purpose.

   In thinking about the play itself, there is so much in the play that it is easy for the students to become overwhelmed. What should we focus on this year? What is an important idea in the play? We could concentrate on the youth-age question or on the difference between romantic and sincere love. This year we will concentrate on the tragic ending and its causes. I realize I may have to give up some of what we have always considered before, but I think the pay-off will be a stronger sense of purpose and a more unified study. The students usually pick up on Romeo and Juliet's impulsiveness. They need a bit more help in seeing the importance of fate in the final outcome.

   As for a final outcome, I have always had students write a theme before. But I do not know if I can read one more essay on tragic flaws. I think I will try a dialog as the final assignment. Let's see...between the student and Juliet. Why the student? I think it will get the kids more involved. Why Juliet? She dies last. We could stop action right after Romeo's death. She is just about the students' age so they kind of identify with her. She is also a bit more deliberate than Romeo all the way along. In writing the dialog, students should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the causes of the outcome of the play--fate and the characters' behaviors. The dialog should show how well they perceive the cause-effect relationships of the events in the play and how well they can demonstrate character inferencing. But how am I ever going to evaluate that? That is something I will have to keep in mind for later.

2. Define the Scope of the Assignment.

   In this case, the scope of the assignment is the multi-week study of Romeo and Juliet. The students will be given a conceptual direction by the prereading activities. The guided assignment will focus on this concept but will allow students to derive inductively their own ideas. The guided assignment will provide a balance between the close reading of the text and the inferences derived from it and the extension of the ideas to the students' own lives.

3. Define Your Own Response Processes: The Unpacking Process.

   Even though I have read that play 20 times, maybe I had better re-read with my new ideas in mind. I will try as much as possible to define my own response process in a readers' journal.

4. Compare Your Own Responses With How Your Students May Respond.

Sample from teachers' response journal:

After reading the balcony scene:

unpacking: When reading the balcony scene, I am struck by Juliet's admitting that the pace at which the romance is progressing is too fast. "It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden." I mean, at least Juliet realizes that she and Romeo are impetuous.

comparing with student response: My students never pick up on Juliet's observation. At this point, they see Romeo and Juliet as being equally rash, equally foolish. So, I need to help my students see that Romeo and Juliet are not responding exactly the same to this situation.

After reading about Balthazar telling Romeo about Juliet's death

unpacking: Oh! There is another example of fate playing its cruel hand.

comparing with student response: My students tend not to see the quirk of fate involved in this scene. My students do not stop to think that because of Balthazar's telling Romeo, there is not enough time for Friar Laurence's letter to reach Romeo. I will need to have my students think this one through. The most obvious fateful event in the play is the quarantine of Father John. However, students often miss the fateful significance of this earlier scene with Balthazar.

5. Select and sequence activities from the catalog.

Pre-reading (I and II of student sheets)

Because in the final dialog, the students need to demonstrate their understanding of character traits and fate, I need to give them a solid introduction to both concepts so they can more easily discover these ideas in the text.

The prereading

1. introduces the two key concepts
2. provides for involvement through relating autobiographical experiences.

I have often made a reference to the students' own lives at the end of the play, but if I really want the students involved, I should do this at the beginning. It becomes a stronger motivation for reading.

Note: The prereading section is flexible. Student and teacher experiences with fate and character can be shared.

Reading stop point activities (III of students sheets)

I need to remember:

1. to make the directions clear
2. to emphasize to the students that the steps in the guided assignment lead to the final dialog project

3. to set the stop points that particularly emphasize the ideas of fate and the characters' impetuousness
4. to choose a variety of activities so the assignments do not become monotonous
5. to consider having students complete some activities in pairs or small groups
6. to build-in ways to have students share their responses.

Note: The following is a sample of the teacher's internal dialog in choosing activities from the catalog that will guide students in exploring their responses in order to infer the major points of the play. The dialog refers to the balcony and Balthazar scenes mentioned in the teacher response journal.

balcony (See student stop point 8)

1. The "what if" question stops the students in order to have them reflect on the idea that if Romeo hadn't heard Juliet's soliloquy, he probably would not have known how she felt about him. They might have then had a drawn out love affair.

2. The students do not know Romeo and Juliet very well at this point. By having time list key words and phrases from the dialog, they can better describe the characters' traits, beliefs, and relationships.

3. By asking them to discuss the characters' similarities and differences, they are beginning to draw inferences about the character traits, beliefs, and relationships.

Balthazar tells Romeo about Juliet's death (see student stop point 19).

The "what if" question helps students infer a point or theme - that fate continues to play a role in the play.

The evaluation of the guided assignment will depend somewhat on the particular class. For this class, I will plan on two checkpoints and a final evaluation. The grade will depend mostly on effort and participation.

5 pts. per entry	strong effort
3 pts.	average effort
0 pts.	little or no effort

The success of the final dialog depends to a great extent on the students' effort all the way through the guided assignment. I will have the final assignment worth 50 points.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT SHEETS

Romeo and Juliet

At the end of this unit, you will be writing a dialog of at least 30 lines between you and Juliet. The exercises in this guided assignment will provide you with the experiences you need to be able to create this dialog.

Pre-reading

I. WOVEN BY THE HAND OF FATE

"FATE" = the power supposed to fix beforehand and control everything that happens. Fate is thought by some to be beyond one's control.

(The Greeks and Romans supposed there were three goddesses who controlled the birth, life, and death of everyone. These goddesses were Clothe, who spun the thread of life; Lacheses, who decided how long the tread should be; and Atropos, who cut it off. They were called cruel because they paid no regard to the wishes of anyone.)

For example, take a man--Joe--who is quite responsible in his behavior. He is in California with his wife on vacation. The morning they are to return home, Joe oversleeps--something he rarely does--causing the couple to miss their flight by a matter of minutes. Shockingly, the airplane on which they were to have returned home crashes in flight. All aboard are killed. But, the lives of Joe and his wife are spared, and all because he overslept that morning. Fate.

There are all kinds of events in your life and in the lives of those around you--even people in the news--which seem to be guided by the hand of "fate." Think about three different such occasions and list them below. Then we will share a few of these fateful experiences with the class.

Action or decision that led to the final outcome of the event	Outcome of the event
ex) Joe oversleeps	ex) Joe and wife miss airplace which crashes, killing all
1.	1.
2.	2.

II. "I ..... SHOULD-A KNOWN BETTER WITH A GIRL LIKE YOU..."

Still, not all events in our lives are dictated by fate. In fact, most of the events we experience are the direct result--consequence--of our actions, our own behavior.

Take a woman--Josephine--who is not very responsible in her behavior. One of her irresponsible behaviors is that she consistently oversleeps in the morning. No matter what the stakes, Josephine can't discipline herself to get up on time. Her father in California is terribly ill--dying. She is told to fly home at once to be with her father. Well, the morning Josephine was to leave she... you got it... overslept and missed her early morning flight. She instead caught the noon flight, but when she arrived home she was told that her father had already died--15 minutes ago.

Again, as our lives are filled with experiences which seemed dictated by "fate," so too are our lives filled with experiences in which the final outcomes are direct results of our own behavior--the good and the not-so-good. Think of three such experiences and list them below.

Action or decision that led to the final outcome of the event	Outcome of the event
ex) Josephine overslept	ex) She misses her flight home and thus did not get to say goodbye to her dying father.
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

III. "A-JUST LIKE ROMEO AND JULIET (doot-doot-doot-doot)..."

Wait a Minute! Guided Assignment for Romeo and Juliet

Read the play until you reach the first stop point and then do the activities. After completing the activities, return to the text and continue reading to the next stop point. Follow this procedure of reading and responding throughout the entire play. Always be as complete as possible when performing the activities--you will need all this information for your dialog writing project.

Stop Point	Key event or idea
Act, scene, line	
1. I, 1, 89	fight

Shakespeare never gives us the reason for the feud. Why do you think he didn't?

Write what you think could have happened to start such a feud.

Stop point	Key event or idea
2. 1, 1, end	Romeo describes Rosaline

Based on Romeo's description of his love for Rosaline, list your first impressions of him.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Stop point	Key event or idea
3. 1, 2, 76	servant can't read

What if? What difference would it have made if the servant had been able to read?

Stop point	Key event or idea
4. 1, 3, end	Juliet/mother discuss marriage

Rewrite the dialog between Juliet and her mother (lines 38-69) using modern standard English. You may omit the nurse.

Mother: Juliet, I have been wanting to talk to you about getting married. Have you thought about marriage?

Juliet: Get married? Me?

Mother:

Stop point	Key event or idea
5. I, 4, end	before party

What is wrong with Romeo's placing all of his faith in the stars?

What do you think is going to happen at the party?

Stop point	Key event or idea
6. I, 2, 105	first meeting

Today, what would a modern couple probably do in the next 24 hours?

Stop point	Key event or idea
7. I, 5, end	discover that are children of enemies

What do you think they should do?

Stop point	Key event or idea
8. II, 2, end	balcony scene

What if Romeo hadn't overheard Juliet's love soliloquy?

Based on this scene, list key words or phrases from the dialog which gives clues to Romeo's and Juliet's characters?

Romeo	Juliet
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

What are the major similarities?

What are the major differences?

Stop point	Key event or idea
9. II, 3, end	Friar teases Romeo about Rosaline

The Friar is giving Romeo advice about marriage. Rewrite the dialog in modern English having the counselor give advice appropriate for our time. Consider the ideas in lines 24-86, but you may condense it.

Ron: Good morning, Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence: Good morning. You're here so early. You look a little blown away. Is something bothering you or didn't you go to bed last night?

Ron:

Stop point	Key event or idea
10. II, 4, end	marriage consummation plans

How much time has passed since Romeo and Juliet met?

What does this time frame show about them?

about their relationship?

Stop point	Key event or idea
11. II, 5, end	Juliet waits for nurse

Think about Juliet's feelings right now. Write a diary entry expressing those feelings.

Dear Diary:

Stop point	Key event or idea
12. II, 6, end	marriage

How do Friar Lawrence's words tie into his previous advice?

Why do Romeo and Juliet show little evidence of listening to him?

Stop point	Key event or idea
13. III, 1, end	deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt

What if Romeo had revealed to Tybalt the news about his marriage?

Stop point	Key event or idea
14. III, 3, 105	Romeo tries to commit suicide

If you were Friar Lawrence, what alternatives would you offer to Romeo other than pulling a dagger on himself?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Stop point	Key event or idea
15. IV, 1, 68	Capulet sets the wedding day

What if the wedding date had been set for three months off rather than Thursday of the next week?

Stop point	Key event or idea
16. IV, 1, 68	Juliet speaks of suicide

How is Juliet reacting in a similar way to Romeo?

Stop point	Key event or idea
17. IV, 2, end	Capulet moves wedding date up

Draw a storyboard revealing what Juliet is saying to her father and what she is probably thinking. (Lines 15-35)

Stop point	Key event or idea
18. IV, 3, end	Juliet contemplates suicide again

If Juliet were going to leave a suicide note, what would she say?

Dear Mother and Father,

Stop point	Key event or idea
19. V, 1, 23	Balthasar tells Romeo of Juliet's death

What if he hadn't seen her buried?

Stop point	Key event or idea
20. V, 2, end	Friar John quarantined

This final cruel slap by the hand of fate reminds me of

Stop point	Key event or idea
21. V, 3, 159	Friar Lawrence leaves

Why did he leave?

What if Friar had stayed by Juliet's side?

Stop point	Key event or idea
22. V, 3, 286	Prince reads Romeo's letter

Write the first paragraph of the letter from Romeo to his father. In this paragraph, who or what is Romeo saying is at fault for the final end?

Dear Father,

REVIEW

Go back over your responses in the guided assignment. Decide which ideas can best be clustered around the idea of fate and which can be clustered around the character's behavior.

Using the phrases listed under the column titled KEY EVENT OR IDEA, make a decision as to whether or not key events or ideas seem to focus on a fateful happening or on the characters' behaviors. One example has been done for you for each cluster.

fate	behavior	
	Romeo	Juliet
Servant cannot read	Romeo describes Rosaline	Juliet and her mother discuss marriage

From the cluster review, what conclusions have you come to concerning the role of fate and the behaviors of Romeo and Juliet as they led to the tragic outcome of the play?

Write your ideas about fate here:

Write your ideas about Romeo and Juliet here:

Final Dialog Assignment

The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet's deaths was partly due to occurrences of fate. But their behavior also contributed to their tragedy.

But maybe, had the lovers been able to change their behavior in time, the tragedy wouldn't have occurred. Maybe at least one of them could have been saved.

Take Juliet. Maybe if somebody--somebody who could clearly see all the factors which led up to the tragedy, somebody very wise would have talked to Juliet about the entire situation, then maybe Juliet could have seen how wrong it was to take her own life, thus multiplying the tragedy.

If only somebody could have helped her. Somebody like you.

Let us say that you--who are very familiar with the natures of Romeo's and Juliet's characters as well as with the role that fate played in their lives--tear into the burial vault just as Juliet points the dagger at her heart.

You have just got to talk her out of killing herself!

So in modern day English (about 30 lines)

1. Write the dialog that would occur between you and Juliet.
2. And remember you have got to be very convincing, so make certain that you use every bit of evidence available to you within this guided assignment to show Juliet that her character traits, Romeo's character traits, and fate all contributed to her present agony.
3. And you have got to convince her that she has got to give up the idea of killing herself!

Your scene with Juliet begins with Act V, Scene 3, Line 161.

Juliet: What's this? It is a cup in my lover's hand? Poison has killed him. Why did he drink it all leaving not a drop for me. I will kiss him, hoping some poison remains on his lips to allow me to die too.

(Kisses him.)

Your lips are warm.

First Watchman: Show me which way to go.

Juliet: Somebody is coming. I will do it quickly. O happy dagger!

(She is about to stab herself. In comes you.)

_____ ((your name): WAIT A MINUTE! Stop!

Juliet: Who is that?

_____: It is me, _____. Listen to me. You cannot kill yourself. Before you do anything that stupid, think about how one more hasty action will not solve your problems or the problems of Verona.

Juliet:

YOU COMPLETE THE NEXT 30 LINES.

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GUIDED ASSIGNMENT FOR "THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME"

At the end of this story, you will be plotting your own mystery/adventure story. The exercises in this guided assignment will provide you with the experience you need to plot your story.

Read "The Most Dangerous Game" until you reach the first stop point and then do the activities. After completing the activities, return to the story and continue reading to the next stop point. Follow this procedure of reading and responding for the remainder of the story.

STOP POINT 1: Through "Right. Good night, Whitney."

1. A mood is set by the author in this opening section. Jot down the words and phrases which set this mood.

   a. Ship-Trap Island
   b. Sailors have a curious dread of the place.
   c.
   d.
   e.
   f.
   g.
   h.

2. Looking at your list, what one word would you use to describe this mood?

3. What do you think will happen next?

   What evidence did you use from this first section of the story to make your prediction?

   Is "The Most Dangerous Game" reminding you of any other story you have read?

   Which story?

   In what ways?

STOP POINT 2: Through "Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist..."

1. Circle the name of the character you like the best: ZAROFF RAINSFORD

   Why do you like this character the best?

   Why do you like the other character less?

2. "A certain coolheadedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place." How does Rainsford show that he is coolheaded in his efforts to save himself?

   What word besides "coolheaded" can you use to describe Rainsford?

3. Re-read the beginning of this section through the line, "...night was beginning to settle down on the island." What are the clues that prepare us for the revealing of "the most dangerous game?"

   a.
   b.
   c.

4. Re-read the section beginning with the words, "Rainsford's first impression..." and ending with, "Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?" Like Rainsford, you too are forming a first impression of Zaroff. List three words to describe your first impression of him.

   a.
   b.
   c.

   The manner in which Zaroff speaks also helped you to form your first impression. Create two typical lines of dialog for Zaroff.

   Line A:

   Line B:

   But Rainsford and the reader soon realize that there is more to Zaroff's character than meets the eye. List three words to describe your revised impression of Zaroff.

   a.
   b.
   c.

5. Using evidence from the story, write an entry about Zaroff for a book titled WHO'S WHO: HUNTERS OF THE WORLD.

HEIGHT:
WEIGHT:
EYES:
HAIR:
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:
PLACE OF RESIDENCE:
FAMILY BACKGROUND:

MAJOR HOBBIES:

PLACES HUNTED:

GAME HUNTED:

BIGGEST HUNTING CHALLENGE:

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE:

STOP POINT 3: Through end of the story

1. During the hunt, Rainsford senses that Zaroff knows his locations. Why doesn't Zaroff kill Rainsford when he finds him?

2. Zaroff could not possibly have been the victor in this story. Go back over this guided assignment and skim the story, if necessary, and then list the clues the author has given the reader to prepare him for the ending.

STOP POINT 4: With a partner, plot an original adventure/mystery story.

example: Rainsford falls off ship
Swims to Ship-Trap Island
Rescued by Ivan
Meets Zaroff
Discovers Zaroff's "most dangerous game" is hunting people (etc.)

Then, write an introduction to your story including five foreshadowing devices. Underline these clues.

Finally, you will exchange introductions with another group and, based on the five foreshadowing clues, predict the outcome of your exchange group's story.

A SMALL THING

The bird hop-stumbles
across the forest of grass
our lawn is.
He seeks umbrellaed bushes,
the dark leafy places
at the edge of the yard.

He has fallen
from a pocket in a tree,
from the plump perfection
of his mother,
her halo of wings.

You follow him,
giant step by step,
knowing he cannot live
to share the night
with the neighboring cats.

You make a nest from rags
on a cardboard box.
You dig worms;
he downs them
like a small guzzler.
You pet the sheen on his back
with one large finger.

In the morning he is dead,
lost outside
his bundle of cloth.
A small thing
can make such silence.
You stand by the garage
for a long time.

Margaret Hasse

GUIDED ASSIGNMENT FOR "A SMALL THING"

1. Read the poem once.

2. Go back and read it more slowly.

3. Look at the following questions (a, b, and c) and then close your eyes and think about them. Then write down your thoughts.

   a. What do you see?

   b. What color do you associate with the poem?

   c. What sound?

4. What are some things that are puzzling you about this poem?

   a.

   b.

   c.

5. Share your responses to 3 and 4 in groups of two or three.

   a. How were your answers alike?

   b. How were they different?

   c. Did you solve any of the puzzles?

      Which ones and how?

6. How does the narrator feel about the small bird?

7. List words from the poem that gave you that impression.

   a.

   b.

   c.

8. The last line of the poem is "You stand by the garage for a long time." What is the narrator thinking or feeling?

9. Journal or paper assignment

   The narrator says, "A small thing can make such a silence."

   a. In this poem the "small thing" was a bird. Define the word "small" as it is used in this line.

   b. Explain why a "small thing" in your life has significance.

EXIT ALONE

Exiting from a movie theatre at 8 p.m.
I stand in front of sheet panes of glass.
Orange tongues of clouds loll on the horizon.
The relevation of orange, of eating and drinking
and going to a film alone: certain colors
are seen only when a person is alone.

I am all alone walking on a city street,
regardless that a man in a VW honks
or a window shade goes down in an apartment
or, right in front of me, a boy falls off his bike
and, like most people who fall, pretends he didn't,
or that he meant to, all along.

Solitude is like bursting out of a house
where we are warm and loved, but sleepy.
Outdoors is sharp blue.
Its smells slap me awake:
catalpa, wet dirt,
the yeasty odor of grain mills,
the old, dark blast of trains.

Margaret Hasse

GUIDED ASSIGNMENT FOR "EXIT ALONE"

1. Read the poem once.
2. What single word comes to your mind about the ideas in the poem?

   Word:
3. Read the poem again.
4. Do you have that same idea?

   If not, what word comes to your mind now?

5. List words in the poem that create images in your mind.

   a. e.

   b. f.

   c. g.

   d. h.

6. Circle the words that you feel are the strongest in your list.
7. Who is the person talking in the poem?
8. Write a paragraph description of him or her on the back of this page.

9. What details in the poem made you come to these conclusions?

   a.

   b.

   c.

10. There are several other people in the poem. Who are they?

    a.

    b.

    c.

11. How are these people like the narrator?

like

12. How are they unlike the narrator?

unlike

13. Does the narrator feel alone or lonely?

list feelings

14. What are the details in the poem that support your answer?

a.

b.

c.

15. What is the difference between "alone" and "lonely"?

16. Describe an experience in your life when you either had positive or negative feelings about being alone.

17. List some positive ways in which people try to cope with loneliness. (e.g., joining clubs)

a.

b.

c.

d.

18. Now list some negative ways in which people try to cope with loneliness.

a.

b.

c.

d.

19. The poem states: "Solitude is like bursting out of a house/where we are warm and loved but sleepy."

What do you think those lines mean?

20. What would you compare solitude to?

Solitude is like

21. Read the poem again. Go back to your first impression. (Question 1) Would you change the word or leave it the same?

Why?

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