

Teaching *Theme Interpretation Essay* Through the Teaching and Learning Cycle

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Teaching and Learning Cycle is a pedagogy of apprenticeship. It is in stark contrast to the process writing (used in Calkins UOS) where children learn to write by writing. The main premise of the TLC is that children learn to write by being taught how to write.

TLC also makes the following points about writing:

1. All writing is purpose-driven. There is no writing that has no purpose. We persuade, explain phenomena, explain contributing factors to flattening the curve of COVID19, we explain consequences of what happens when we don't enforce social distancing, etc. We recount our favorite memories (memoirs, narratives), we teach others how to make our favorite meals (procedural writing), we write biographies. We write book reviews, we write book summaries. We write **responses to literature** - that's the genre we'll be talking about today.
2. We often teach writing at the sentence level. We need to start at the GENRE level - teaching students that TEXTS HAVE SHAPES. And that texts unfold in ways they do because they meet a particular purpose (ex. recipe). Therefore, we need to teach writing not at the sentence level but at the genre level.
3. Writing is not correct or incorrect but appropriate or not for a particular context of culture and context of situation. Context of culture includes American school culture, current decade, and the socially accepted norms for writing (as measured on standardized tests). Context of situation includes the audience, the topic, our roles and relationship with the audience, and the mode (channel of communication). Students need to be taught that when they write, they make choices, not just string sentences together.
4. TLC integrates reading, speaking, and writing. It doesn't follow Reading Unit this month and Writing Unit next month. It uses Reading to teach Writing.
5. The most powerful idea of the TLC is that it's a model of apprenticeship. Students study how language works in writing and are learning alongside more knowledgeable others (teachers, mentor texts, their peers). It's a very Vygotskian view of teaching in which the teacher is viewed as a mediator of various tools for students to use first with help and then independently.

To see examples and learn more about TLC, go here

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/literacy/writing/Pages/approachescycle.aspx>

Stage of Teaching and Learning Cycle	Activities for Teaching the Theme Interpretation Essay
Building the Field (4-5 days)	Use various picture books with themes that students can relate to and teach students how to identify the theme. Do not start writing yet. The only writing that happens here is taking notes on the character, the setting, and the theme. Use at least 4-5 books. Create graphic organizers for students to use to take notes they can later use in writing.
Deconstruction (4-5 days) learn how language works in a mentor text.	<p>Write your own mentor text (you will see one on the next page) mirroring the final product. Choose a text all students have read. Using that mentor text, do the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show students that the text has a number of paragraphs. Discuss and tell the students the job of each paragraph. Then cut it up by paragraphs and have students match the jobs of paragraphs with the paragraphs themselves. 2. Ask students to underline the language they see at the beginning of each paragraph that gives away what the job is of each paragraph. Look at the beginning chunks of each sentence before the verb. Discuss the pattern they notice. Tell students that we put that at the beginning which is important to tell the reader. 3. Show students that only one paragraph in the mentor text tells the reader what the story is about and gives a brief summary. The rest of the text is persuasion - the job of paragraphs 3 and 4 is to convince the reader of the theme - no more summary here! 4. Do the same with another mentor text - repeat as needed but make it engagement with movement and cut-up text. Do not send students to write independently in this stage. This is the stage for learning the craft of good writers by studying the LANGUAGE used in writing.
Joint Construction (3-5 days)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choose another book and theme that was not used in the Deconstruction for this activity. Allow students to use the deconstructed text for Joint Construction -

	<p>JC is writing together. Allow them to look at the mentor text to give you ideas for starting sentences how to write the new text. Break this up into several days. Do JC for 30 min and then give students time to write a similar paragraph on their own. It's okay to let students copy the jointly constructed text into their notebooks.</p>
Independent Writing (3-4 days)	<p>Discuss with students what the audience is going to be for this writing. Will they be parents? Adults in the school? Other fourth graders? Allow students to use previous resources to write their own theme interpretation essay on a book of their choice. Give students these options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a blank graphic organizer with the paragraphs and jobs of paragraphs labeled• a graphic organizer with sentence starters and jobs labeled• a blank piece of paper or GoogleDoc
Celebration (2 days for prep, 1 day for celebration)	<p>Give students a way to share their writing including all the steps in the process. Have them collect their graphic organizers, deconstructed texts, and other resources they used over the past 3 weeks and have them create a display to share with others.</p>

Theme Interpretation Essay on the Book: The Giving Tree

Written by: Dr. Westerlund

Stages and <i>Phases</i>	Text
Personal Reaction to the book <i>Preview of what the book teaches us</i>	The Giving Tree is one of my favorite books of all time. The reason I like it so much is because of the lesson the author teaches us. Shel Silverstein teaches us that true love is unconditional. He uses his characters to teach us that lesson.
Context: a brief summary of the text (characters and what happened)	There are two characters in the story: the boy and the tree. The story shows us how the boy and the tree grow old together. At first, the tree and the boy spend a lot of time together. Later, the boy wants more things and he keeps taking everything from the tree. The tree keeps giving and giving until there is nothing left to give. By giving everything away, the tree shows how much she loves the boy. Throughout the story, there are many examples showing how much the tree loved the boy. I'm going to choose two.
Evidence from the text Example 1	One example of how the author teaches us to love is in the beginning of the story. When the boy was young, the tree let the boy use her leaves and apples and swing from her branches. Later, when the boy grew up and returned to the tree, the tree said, "Come, Boy, come and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy.", reminding the boy of what he did when he was just a kid. The boy said he was too tired to climb and asked for money, but the tree had no money. Instead, the tree replied with "Take my apples, Boy, and sell them in the city. Then you will have money and you will be happy." All the tree wanted was for the boy to be happy because she loved him so much.
Evidence from the text Example 2	The second example is at the very end of the story. The boy returned to the tree as an old man. He took everything from her, even the trunk. The tree and the boy talked and eventually, the tree says, "... an old stump is good for sitting and resting. Come, Boy, sit down. Sit down and rest." All that was left of the tree was an old stump and even then, the tree gave herself to the boy because she loved him so much.
Theme reiteration <i>Summary of analysis</i>	From these two examples, we see that the tree loved the boy unconditionally. They show that the tree did not stop loving the boy, even when all that was left of her was an old stump. The tree did not ask for anything in return. The tree did not say, "I will love you if you take care of me." The tree kept loving the boy with the same love, from the very beginning to the very end.