



Sample line taken from text and used in the "Text Graffiti" pre-reading activity

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Check Out TeachingChannel.org and Try Text Graffiti

The 2010 National Teacher of the Year, Sarah Brown Wessling, presented and served as facilitator during our recent ToY conference in Dallas. She is a remarkable, bright, funny, and engaging English teacher from Iowa and one of my new Facebook friends. Sarah is one busy teacher! One of her roles is to serve as consultant and model class room teacher for the The Teaching Channel (the .org version). If you are not yet familiar with this wonderful resource for teachers, you must check it out. Visit the site at www.teachingchannel.org to access videos on various teaching topics in all content areas.

One great teaching tool that I acquired from a short video posted on the Teaching Channel by a teacher from Washington Heights, NY and now use as an instructional strategy is how to use "Text Graffiti" to introduce new texts and/or challenging topics for students. The activity meets ELA Common Core Standard RL.11-12.1 which requires that students must "cite strong textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including where the text leaves matters uncertain."

In the activity, students encounter and analyze three to four pieces of text and respond on a page (which remains taped to a desk) as students circulate through to new text pieces and read not only the text but also their classmates' responses before adding their own. "What inferences can we make about the story and characters or about how the author feels about the topic?" No names are required as they respond in writing, but responses are shared aloud. To get some specific formative feedback, an index card is provided for each student to make a prediction about the story or to wonder about something they are inferring about the text. When students later read the story, they usually notice the lines they have encountered in the preview activity and the text makes more sense to them. I have found this strategy particularly useful with my struggling readers, but my Honors English 12 students have benefited from this activity as well.

For the five minute video clip and more information on "Text Graffiti" and how this strategy might be adapted for various grade levels and content areas, click on this link:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/text-graffiti-previewing-challenging-topics>



Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Acquaint Yourself Further with the Work of David Coleman

Recently, David Coleman, lead writer for ELA Common Core Standards, visited Rhode Island. Many administrators, policy makers, education officials, and teachers had the chance to hear Mr. Coleman speak on the standards and what they will mean for our students and for our schools. As 2012 RI Teacher of the Year, I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Coleman in a small group setting. I was able to ask him some questions about supports planned for teachers who may now feel “under the gun” to teach text structures and text complexity in ways which are new to us. I know my colleagues in history, science, and career and tech are particularly anxious to take on full responsibility to teach literacy in their content areas to the extent prescribed by CCSS.

If you haven't Googled David Coleman yet, put doing so on your to do list. I was pretty impressed by his candor and obvious knowledge base (as were many I am sure). *Time* writer, Andrew Rotherham, wrote of Coleman: “Coleman may not be the most well-known education player in his family — his mom is president of Bennington College in Vermont — but his quiet work behind the scenes on the proposed Common Core Standards make him among the most influential figures in American education today. A classicist and Rhodes Scholar who now runs his own consulting firm (after founding and selling a successful education data and assessment company), Coleman wants students to learn to think by analyzing what they're reading.” I think it's safe to say that all teachers want our students doing such at the deepest levels possible.