

Build Engaging Literature Lessons

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- I. Engage them in the Truth** - Teach literature in light of the Word. As you plan reading and discussion of upcoming literature passages, consider some of these questions:
1. How can it point the students to Christ? What can my students learn about who God is through this passage? (sovereignty, redeemer, lord of the weather, creator, good, etc.)
 2. How can my students recognize sin in the story and have disdain for it? How can students recognize virtue in the story and strive for it to the glory of God? Exercise a student's moral imagination!
 3. How does this story/chapter/passage echo a story or situation from the Bible? What happened when a biblical character was faced with the same decision, situation, temptation, or tribulation as a character in the literature? Compare and contrast.
 4. What Biblical advice would you share with a character who is struggling?
 5. Could passages in literature be symbolic of something in scripture?
 6. Is there an allusion to scripture in the reading that can be explored?
 7. Is there a theme in the literature that could be expounded on and studied in scripture? (revenge, betrayal, hidden identity, rejecting wise counsel, murder vs. justified killing, exile, greed, false accusations or imprisonment, suicide)
 8. Is there a literary term or figurative language you are learning that is beautifully exemplified in scripture?
 9. Is there a genre you are studying or an author's craft you are studying that is exemplified beautifully in the Bible, the greatest work of literature?

Ideas for companion Scriptures:

- II. Engage them during in-class reading** - As you read aloud in class, pause to...
- A. Ask questions along the way that will help build suspense and wonder for the story.
 - B. Have the sketch important or descriptive scenes or characters.
 - C. Have students stop to imitate characters (speech, countenance, movements)

- D. If there is a lot of dialogue, read aloud with assigned parts for characters and a narrator.
 - 1. Give personality traits of the characters or directions for the tone in which they should read.
 - 2. Everyone should be following along with books up on the desk where they can be seen.
- E. Read aloud to them for some crucial passages where excellent expression and fluency are warranted for understanding. They still enjoy being read to!
- F. If the text is mostly narration, students can rotate reading paragraphs (or every two sentences) aloud.
- G. Students can read aloud in pairs or groups as they seek to complete a task about a passage.

Ideas for in-class reading:

III. Engage them with drama - Be on the lookout for parts that could be read while acted out in front of the room or elsewhere. Scenes where positioning of characters is important or body language is important make great passages to act out. This activity can help students who struggle with reading comprehension.

Ideas for scenes to act:

IV. Engage them in oral narration - Have partners retell narratives of selected passages or stories 1) as a means of review and 2) developing skills in oral narration.

- A. Students retell the chapter, passage, or homework reading selection in their own words to a partner, trying to avoid fillers, such as "like," "um," "and stuff," and "you know." Encourage them to think before speaking, even if the retelling is slow with pauses. They will improve as the year progresses.
- B. They may have their books out or not, depending on what you would like them to do.

- C. You can give the first sentence in the story, then give directions such as, "Person on the right, continue the story. After 1½ min, I will tell you to switch, and the person to the left will pick up the narration."

V. Engage them in preparing arguments and debate - Students should begin the skill of making a claim that can be argued and supported using evidence from the text, Scripture, and their own reasoning.

- A. Ask students a debatable question from the story. If it is a good question for debate, there will be a split in the answer among the class, not an obvious one-sided answer. (Example: "Is the Green Knight a villain, an evil character whose actions are not justified, or is he virtuous and his actions justified?")

Ideas for in-class debate:

- B. What are the benefits of activities like this?

1. Helps them prepare for Socratic discussions in logic/rhetoric school.
2. Takes them beyond simple recall questions/answers
3. Helps them learn how to respond respectfully to others in class with opposing opinions - You train them in this way. (clarify difference between an argument and a quarrel)
4. Makes them more excited about writing about it!

VI. Engage them in Comparing and Contrasting - Students can compare and contrast characters, places, stories, character motivations, or other topics. (detailed instructions on extended outline)

- A. An idea for in-class activity involves students making charts at their seats in pairs.
- B. They could also read alternate endings of stories to contrast (i.e. fairy tales).
- C. Compare similar texts (i.e. Pyramus and Thisbe with Romeo and Juliet) by highlighting echoes and making notes of comparison in the margins.

Ideas for comparing and contrasting:

VII. Engage them in presenting - One important skill to build as they prepare for logic school is to articulate ideas well in front of the class. (Detailed procedures available on the extended outline.)

- A. Take something they have written for the **eye**, and have them turn it into a short speech written for the **ear**.
- B. Have them build an argument and present it aloud. (details on extended outline)
- C. Read a poem expressively aloud. (Email if you would like a rubric for this!)
- D. Groups present aloud, planning their presentation with all group members involved in speaking at some point.

Ideas for short speech topics or presentations related to your literature:

VIII. Let's keep learning together!

- A. Please share ***your*** ideas with me!
- B. An extended outline with detailed procedures for these activities is available. More topics on the extended outline:
 - 1. Engaging them in the context of the story
 - 2. Engaging them in exemplary answers
 - 3. Engaging them with vocabulary
 - 4. Engaging them with total participation questions
 - 5. Engage them with art