

Oral Recitation Lesson

Description: This intervention builds student motivation and interest by having them participate along with the teacher in repeated public readings of a story across several days. Throughout the process, the entire class discusses the work as literature.



Materials:

- Teacher and student copies of reading series or literature books

Preparation:

- Select and become familiar with a story to be read by the class across multiple days.

Intervention Script:

1. On day 1, introduce the story, giving general information about the characters, setting, and plot. Engage students in a discussion about what they predict might happen in the story.

Read the entire story aloud to the class while students follow along in their own books. Read in an expressive manner (e.g., using a dramatic voice to emphasize dire or urgent situations, changing inflection and tone of voice to reflect the dialog of various characters, etc.). Stop periodically in your reading to ask reaction questions (“How do you feel about the predicament that Mr. Blaha finds himself in? Has anything like that ever happened to you?”) and prediction questions (“OK, we know that Mr. Blaha is in trouble because he is lost in the cave with no flashlight. What do you think he will do next?”).

At the conclusion of the story, discuss its narrative elements with the class. For example, you might ask students to:

- describe the personality of the main character
- talk about other important characters in the story and their foibles or qualities
- give details about the time and setting of the story
- pinpoint the central problem(s) or challenge(s) that the main character faces
- describe how the main character responded to various plot developments
- decide what overarching theme or lesson the story might convey.

Wrap up the lesson by summarizing the story. Be sure to fold into your summary key points that came up in class discussion. Use this opportunity to highlight and define new vocabulary that appeared in the story.

2. On day 2, give a thumbnail review of the story that you read to the class on Day 1.

Inform students that in this session they will have the chance to practice reading the story aloud. Their goal is to read selections from the story with fluency, and feeling.

Read an opening passage from the story. As you read, stop occasionally to point out to students how you use expressive qualities of your voice to make the story “come alive.”

Read another short passage. Then direct the entire class to read the same passage aloud. Next, select a single student to read the passage, directing him or her to use an expressive voice. If the student reader has difficulty, model by reading the passage aloud again. At the end of the student’s reading, gently correct any reading mistakes that interfere with the story’s meaning and praise the student. Ask other students to read additional passages aloud as time allows.

Assign each student in the class a short passage from the story that they will be responsible for reading aloud at the next session. (Day 3). Allow them time to practice their passage (or assign as homework).

3. On day 3, read an introductory passage from the story aloud, again with expression. As you come to a passage assigned to a student, ask that student to read his or her section aloud. Provide supportive feedback to the student about his or her performance and ask other students to comment on the reading as well. Continue through the story until all students have read their assigned selections.

Tips:

Let Students Vote on Stories to Be Recited. To build student motivation for this activity, you may occasionally want to let the class vote on a book that they would like to recite. If your range of book choices is constrained by your curriculum, you might offer 4-5 acceptable stories and have students choose from that list.

Make Your Book Recitations Public Events. Oral recitation lessons are intended as public performances. Once your students become comfortable reading aloud to an audience, you might invite other classes or parents to attend your final readings. Another idea is to help your students to turn an oral recitation lesson into a community service experience. For example, students might ask residents of a nursing home to select a story that they would enjoy hearing and then visit the facility to give an expressive reading.

References:

Hoffman, J.R. (1987). Rethinking the role of oral reading in basal instruction. *The Elementary School Journal*, 87, 367-373.

Reutzel, D.R. & Hollingsworth, P.M. (1993). Effects of fluency training on second graders’ reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Research*, 86, 325-331.