

Literacy: *Discussion Guide*

Overview

Literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening are crucial to communicating with people, as well as to learning more about the world and about oneself. Students at many levels benefit from a focus on developing these skills, which are essential for successful functioning in society as well as for personal fulfillment and satisfaction. The activities that follow engage students in building literacy skills across a range of areas.

Classroom Activities

1. Show the video segment “*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L’Engle: A Book of Imagination” from the program *Science Fiction*.
 - **Oral Reading:** Read aloud excerpts from *A Wrinkle in Time* to get students interested in the plot, and encourage them to “read between the lines” and to identify the traits of the various characters. Encourage students to finish the book to see how it turns out.
 - **Reading Strategies:** Using short poems by Madeleine L’Engle, give students practice in applying reading strategies to help them get more out of their reading. Have them use this checklist to aid their understanding of what they read:
 - Ask questions before you begin reading and as you read.
 - Outline what you are reading.
 - Summarize what you have read.
 - Take notes as you are reading on important ideas, character traits, and events.
 - Preview what you read, noticing headings, format, and illustrations.
 - Look up words you don’t understand and make flashcards for reviewing them.
 - Reread passages that are difficult to understand.
 - **Independent Reading:** Assist students in finding books that would be of interest to them, based on their preferences, interests, and hobbies. Prior to selecting books, have students complete self-inventories where they answer questions such as these:
 - What are your favorite books?
 - What type of book do you enjoy most—mysteries, science fiction, biography, realistic fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, history, or other nonfiction?
 - What are your favorite activities or hobbies?
 - What subjects would you like to learn more about?Use students’ responses to direct them to compatible books to read.

- **Journaling:** Have students keep a journal of their reactions to their reading. Challenge them to answer questions such as these: Which character in the book is most/least appealing to you and why? How do you think the main character grew and changed during the book? What did you learn from the book that applies to your own life? What made you want to keep reading the book? What kind of emotional response do you have to the book? Which parts of the book were most moving and why?
 - **Posters:** Have students create and present posters to interest other students in a favorite book or genre of book (i.e., science fiction, mystery, biography).
 - **Genres:** Brainstorm to come to a definition of science fiction, which might be defined as an imaginative story written about the future or imagined time of life. With intriguing book previews, recommend science fiction authors such as Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, H.G. Wells, and A. C. Clarke. Introduce students to other genres as well, including mystery, historical fiction, fantasies, and Westerns, as you try to get them interested in reading outstanding books.
2. Show the video segment “Active Listening Skills” from *Study Skills I (A Sunburst Title)*. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)
- **Pre-Video Activity:** Explain to students that literacy skills include not only reading and writing but also the oral skills of listening and speaking. See if students can define good listening skills.
 - **Oral Interpretation:** Assign small groups of students a scene or passage to read orally in a dramatic way. Encourage them to stage the scenes as in a play.
 - **Listening Skills:** Review the listening skills discussed in the video, such as paying attention, looking at the speaker, asking questions, repeating information, and not interrupting. Have small groups of students role-play the do’s and don’ts of active listening by giving them situations such as these to demonstrate:
 - You’re babysitting and the parents give you specific instructions for feeding the baby and putting him to bed.
 - Your sister comes to you because she is upset that she can’t go out with her friends.
 - Your teacher explains a major assignment.
 - **Listening Logs:** Have students keep logs of situations where they practice active listening skills, and have them share their experiences in class.
3. Show the video segment “An Example: Some Good General Ideas” from *The Anatomy of an Essay*. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

- **Pre-Viewing Activity:** Introduce writing as a key element of literacy, and tell students that the video will explain how to write an essay, with the topic in this case being professional athletes’ salaries. Ask students to brainstorm about the topic ahead of time, jotting down some of the arguments for and against large salaries for athletes. Also have students create a K-W-L chart showing what they already know about writing an essay, as well as what they want to learn.
 - **Diagramming:** Have students diagram the three main parts of the essay: the introduction, body, and conclusion. At the same time, review the purpose of each and tips for writing each.
 - **Outlining:** Based on the main arguments in the essay about professional athletes’ salaries, have students create an outline of the essay. Review the conventional outline format and stress how outlining can help students with their writing as well as their reading.
 - **Analysis:** The video analyzes the essay using these three criteria: structure, accuracy, and style. Review these elements of a good essay, applying them to a sample student essay:
 - Structure: states a theme clearly, develops main ideas with specific facts and details, uses logical or chronological organization
 - Accuracy: uses articulate words and sentences, good vocabulary, effective sentence structure, correct spelling and grammar, good word choice
 - Style: has a creative approach that holds interest, uses emotion where appropriate, and is clear and well researched
 - **Writing:** Have students write their own essays, taking the opposite point of view from the video—that professional athletes deserve the large salaries they earn. To give students practice in writing for a variety of audiences, have them also write children’s storybooks or advertisements to fans after you discuss ways to adjust content and style to different audiences.
 - **Usage Review:** Review rules of usage, such as subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement, that students have difficulty with in their writing. Students may benefit from an online grammar review such as <http://englishplus.com/grammar> . Have small groups do practice exercises on troublesome concepts. You can find exercises online at sites such as www.chompchomp.com.
4. Show the video segment “Editing” from *How to Write a Report and Personal Letter*. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)
- **Pre-Writing Activity:** Introduce the four stages of the writing process:
 1. prewriting

2. drafting
3. revising
4. editing

Tell students that this video focuses on the final stage, editing, which occurs after all the others have been completed, and that the topic for the writing in the video is a report on the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto.

- **Editing:** Guide students in editing their essays on professional athletes. Provide a checklist for them to make sure they have checked for effective structure, accuracy, and style, as outlined above.
- **Peer Editing:** Have students exchange essays to do peer editing. Provide a form for students to comment on structure, development, word usage, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and spelling.
- **Identifying Good Writing:** Have students bring to class examples of good writing they have noticed in newspapers, magazines, or other sources. Ask them to explain what makes the writing outstanding, and post the best examples on a classroom bulletin board.
- **Writing/Editing Game:** Have students play a story writing game where they first write one sentence of the story and then pass their paper on to the next student, who edits it. Next, students add another sentence to the story and then continue to pass it on, repeating the same editing/writing process several times until you direct students to conclude the story. Encourage good speaking skills by having students read the completed essays aloud with expression.

Academic Standards

This discussion guide addresses the following national standards:

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm

- Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts.
- Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts.
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

Language Arts

- Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process; Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing; Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational text; Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process
- Listening and Speaking: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes
- Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media