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Introduction

Teachers sensitive to the known and unknown individual needs of their students continuously experiment, create new materials and lessons, attend conferences and workshops and share with other teachers, hoping to find that special strategy, technique, unit, book or what have you, that will challenge, excite and create a sense of wonderment for those students in that classroom. The number of individual needs on both a thinking and feeling level in just one classroom can be overwhelming. The time constraints the classroom teacher faces, frustrates the teacher attempting to individualize and be creative.

Additionally, classroom teachers are often faced with students with high ability levels for whom more work is not an appropriate solution. These students need to apply their stores of knowledge and information to broad, realistic, global problems. They need to be encouraged to seek many solutions, try them out and evaluate them. They need techniques to do all this in order to test themselves and the world about them. Reading is the cross curricula tool to accomplish this goal, as necessary a skill in the science class as it is in the social studies class.

Creative reading allows students to confront themselves, issues and values. An adolescent faced with a "need to know" about drugs, for example, may personally experiment with them or may read some excellent biographical accounts of others and their drug experiences. That student may read, comforted by a safe environment, raising questions, seeking answers and searching for guidance.

Creative reading, then, becomes the synthesis of all learning at each student's level of thinking and feeling. It can be the student's unlimited ticket to the past, the future and the present (anywhere, at any time). It can be a mentor, a counsellor confronting him or her with moral issues, global problems and personal decision making. It can be a friend. It may provide the empathetic experience of understanding poverty, disease, war, death – experiences that otherwise may be unavailable to him or her.

Creative reading can be that special tool teachers seek to meet individual needs. For high ability readers and gifted students, creative reading can be their life raft, saving them from hours and days of repetitious, needless and tedious instruction, and washing them upon shores of ideas and feelings they might not otherwise confront and experience.

Thus, teachers in search of an approach to meet individual needs will find creative reading an open vehicle for teaching content, decision making, comprehension, divergent thinking, questioning, evaluating, independent thinking and awareness, to name a few. However, creative reading will not simply happen in the classroom. It must be planned for and incorporated into the teaching process and curricula content. This book, then, is a guide for teachers willing to try teaching creative reading, and an aid to those already teaching creative reading who might need a new idea or two.

Teacher Guidelines

Creative reading involves reading and discussing a book in a very in-depth manner by making the book a very personal and meaningful experience relevant to the reader's life. Creative reading involves a combination of both convergent and divergent thinking. If a student were to deal only on the knowledge level, never asking what if, suppose or why, he or she would not reach the deeper level of understanding which is the goal of creative reading. For the teacher, creative reading is not just giving a student a book to read and saying, "read it". It is teaching the book, but teaching from a different perspective. It is leading; it is guiding; and sometimes, it is even forcing a student into productive thought. It is encouraging creativity. It requires in-depth perceptions and activities to extend a student's interests beyond the pages of the book into his or her own life. Small group discussion and interaction is the "name of the game". Consequently, creative reading is not a total class activity.

Many units are applicable for students from years 4-8. Students who can think on abstract levels are the chief targets of creative reading. Not all students will benefit equally from this type of experience. The teacher must pick and choose from the discussion questions and activities those most appropriate for his or her students. To use all of them would result in "over-kill". Additionally, there is repetition in themes of questions. The teacher must make the decision which questions to ask and when to ask them. For example, *The Pushcart War* can be read and discussed by 9-year-old as well as 13-year-old students. The teacher would expect, given the knowledge base and maturity levels of the students, different responses. In fact, the knowledge and maturity levels of the students will preclude the use of various questions.

We have included pages of various techniques on which the units are partially based. The teacher must be familiar with them, teach them to the students and help the students realize their importance and use in the creative reading process as well as in problem solving in daily life. To guide a student's thinking, the teacher must have read the book (whichever one is chosen) and be "current" in his or her understanding of the book. The teacher must also BE PREPARED TO:

- ** ACCEPT MANY ANSWERS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS. THERE IS NO ONE CORRECT ANSWER, NO ANSWER KEY.
- ** BE A RISK TAKER. YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THE DISCUSSION WILL LEAD AND THAT IS OKAY.
- ** CREATE A WARM ACCEPTING ENVIRONMENT, NOT ONLY FOR THE TEACHER, BUT ALSO FOR THE STUDENT AS WELL. KIDS SHOULD NOT "PUT DOWN" THE IDEAS OF OTHER KIDS.
- ** BE FLEXIBLE.
- ** ACCEPT, AGREE, EXPECT UNUSUAL, UNEXPECTED IDEAS.
- ** ALLOW KIDS TO STRUGGLE WITH THEIR VALUES AND THE VALUES OF OTHERS.

- ** PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUALIZATION TO OCCUR FOR IT IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING AND CREATIVITY.
- ** ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE FOR IT IS THE BASIS FOR EMPATHY, UNDERSTANDING AND VISUALIZATION.
- ** BE AWARE WHEN STUDENT INTERESTS SURFACE AND BUILD ON/ ADAPT THEM TO FOSTER THOSE INTERESTS.
- ** UNDERSTAND THAT CREATIVITY IS MULTIFACETED. ENCOURAGE CREATIVE THINKING IN ALL AREAS, NOT SIMPLY THE ARTS.
- ** ALLOW NURTURING TIME. NOT ALL CREATIVITY OCCURS SPONTANEOUSLY AT A SET TIME.
- ** MAKE SURE THAT ALL THE KIDS ARE INVOLVED AND CONTRIBUTE. BE CAREFUL TO DO THIS IN A NON-THREATENING WAY.
- ** ALLOW STUDENTS TO MAKE CHOICES (GUIDE BUT DO NOT DICTATE THOSE CHOICES).
- ** BE PREPARED TO HAVE FUN. MAINTAIN A SENSE OF HUMOR.

Each unit consists of three basic components:

1. Discussion questions.
2. Activity sheets.
3. Extended or follow up activities.

The discussion questions are based on the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy with emphasis on analysis, synthesis and **evaluation**. To lead students beyond basic literal understanding into deeper and more meaningful insights into problems, values and the world around them, the teacher must ask thought provoking levels of questions. Many of the questions are deliberately open-ended so that students have the opportunity to express differing opinions, viewpoints and values.

Activity sheets are designed to make use of techniques that promote productive, creative thought. They serve a variety of purposes. Some sheets ask the student to apply a technique. Other sheets use the book as a jumping off place to relate the book's content to the student's own world. Still other activity sheets foster student creativity. An information sheet for the teacher is provided at the beginning of the student activity sheets. This sheet tells the teacher what techniques serve as the philosophical base for the activity. It is suggested that the teacher and the student be familiar with the use of the technique before doing the activity sheet.

Extended or follow-up activities are suggestions for independent learning experiences based on interest, self selection and motivation for the creation/development of the independent learner is our ultimate goal.

TIME MANAGEMENT

It is impossible to pinpoint a time span for any unit. The teacher must be flexible. Sometimes a series of questions will generate endless discussion; sometimes a series of questions will terminate after a short time. The art of teaching and sensitivity to the students dictates when enough has been said and it is time to move on. Some units might require two weeks and some a month or more.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

The teacher should mix discussion questions and activity sheets. DO NOT DO ALL OF ANY. Select and mix to avoid saturation. Variety is the spice of life.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Given differences in teaching styles, ages of students and time allotments, classroom management is the prerogative of each teacher.

Technique Matrix

	Bloom's Taxonomy	Williams' Creativity	Scamper	Brainstorming	Attribute Listing	Checkerboarding	Synectics
Frankweiler		*					*
Activity #1		*					*
Activity #2				*			
Activity #3					*		
Activity #4						*	
Activity #5				*			
Activity #6	*						
Activity #7		*		*			

	Bloom's Taxonomy	Williams' Creativity	Scamper	Brainstorming	Attribute Listing	Checkerboarding	Synectics
The Black Pearl					*		
Activity #1					*		
Activity #2		*	*				
Activity #3		*		*			
Activity #4							*
Activity #5		*					
Activity #6					*		
Activity #7	*						

	Bloom's Taxonomy	Williams' Creativity	Scamper	Brainstorming	Attribute Listing	Checkerboarding	Synectics
Z for Zachariah				*			
Activity #1				*			
Activity #2					*		
Activity #3							*
Activity #4				*			
Activity #5		*					
Activity #6	*						
Activity #7				*			

	Bloom's Taxonomy	Williams' Creativity	Scamper	Brainstorming	Attribute Listing	Checkerboarding	Synectics
Westmark	*						
Activity #1	*						
Activity #2							*
Activity #3							*
Activity #4						*	
Activity #5				*			
Activity #6					*		
Activity #7		*					*

	Bloom's Taxonomy	Williams' Creativity	Scamper	Brainstorming	Attribute Listing	Checkerboarding	Synectics
The Pushcart War		*	*	*	*		
Activity #1		*	*	*	*		
Activity #2					*		
Activity #3		*					
Activity #4		*					
Activity #5		*	*				
Activity #6		*					*
Activity #7					*		

	Bloom's Taxonomy	Williams' Creativity	Scamper	Brainstorming	Attribute Listing	Checkerboarding	Synectics
The Blue Sword	*						
Activity #1	*						
Activity #2	*	*					
Activity #3					*		
Activity #4		*					
Activity #5							*
Activity #6		*					
Activity #7							*

Techniques and Models

Bloom: LEVELS OF THINKING AND QUESTIONING

WHAT AND WHY: "Many educators and psychologists have made efforts to help us classify several kinds of learning that can go on at school. One such effort, very commonly used for classifying different levels of cognitive learning is known as 'Bloom's Taxonomy' ". (Bloom, 1956)

PROCESS: "Bloom's cognitive taxonomy includes six levels of increasing complexity, each of which depends on learning acquired at previous levels. They are: 1) knowledge, 2) comprehension, 3) application, 4) analysis, 5) synthesis and 6) evaluation."

KNOWLEDGE - This simplest level of the taxonomy represents the psychological process of acquiring and remembering information. In a subject matter field, this consists of specific facts (names, dates, places, etc.) and terminology (meanings of words). For example, naming five environmental problems facing the world today indicates learning at the knowledge level. Most school learning is of this type, particularly learning to recall, define, identify or recognize.

COMPREHENSION - This level of thinking implies understanding of the facts that can be recalled. The ability to explain some event, or relate it in one's own words is comprehension. Explaining why cutting down a forest is an environmental problem or why spray cans are not environmentally safe are examples of comprehension. Comprehension ordinarily requires more than just a repetition of facts; it implies active thinking and interpretation by the learner. Learning which requires the pupil to illustrate, differentiate, explain or restate is considered comprehension.

APPLICATION - Using what one knows and understands in new situations is described as thinking at the application level. Many regard the ability to apply as a good test of whether the learner understands material. An example of application might be the student's use of his or her knowledge of industrial pollution to write a newspaper article as an environmentalist might. Learning which requires the pupil to apply, generalize, relate or use is application.

ANALYSIS - Breaking down learned information into parts so that the relationship between smaller elements is seen is analysis. It occurs when a learner clarifies content so that he or she is aware of underlying patterns. For example, being able to distinguish the three major causes of pollution of our waterways would require analysis. Learning which asks the pupil to contrast, distinguish, categorize or deduce constitutes analysis.

SYNTHESIS - Putting together elements to form a new or original pattern or structure constitutes synthesis. It consists of rearranging elements of content which have previously been analyzed. Planning and developing an instructional unit much as this Handbook is advocating would be synthesis. Suggesting a way in which the nuclear reactor meltdown incident in Chernobyl could have been avoided, based on an analysis of what events actually occurred, would be an example of synthesis relevant to our content outline. Learning which requires the student to produce, design, develop, or modify is described as synthesis. Although Bloom does not suggest this, synthesis probably involves other thinking skills often associated with creativity.

EVALUATION - Using some criteria to make judgments about some materials or method is known as evaluation. The use of criteria is most important here: evaluation depends on the logic of the thinking done at the five earlier levels. Preferring vanilla to chocolate because it "tastes better" is not evaluation in the sense intended here because the criteria used in defining "tasting better" are subjective and emotional in nature. Using criteria such as environmental considerations, economic conditions, health data, etc. to make a case as to why deforestation of the Amazon should be stopped would be a good example of evaluation. Behavior such as judging, comparing, deciding or validating indicates evaluation.

EXAMPLE: In creative reading, students are encouraged to question and think at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, namely, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. To do that, students must have a knowledge and comprehension level. Students are taught to use Bloom's Taxonomy not only as a guide for their thinking, but also as a guide to their questioning. The Question Construction Wheel becomes a useful device in helping students with these two tasks.

Williams: PUPIL BEHAVIORS

COGNITIVE – INTELLECTIVE

FLUENT THINKING

To think of the *most* - -
 Flow of thought
 Number of relevant responses

FLEXIBLE THINKING

To take *different* approaches - -
 Variety of kinds of ideas
 Ability to shift categories

ORIGINAL THINKING

To think in *novel* or *unique* ways - -
 Unusual responses
 Ability to shift categories

ELABORATIVE THINKING

To *add on* to - -
 Embellish upon an idea
 Embroider upon a simple idea or response to make it more elegant

AFFECTIVE – FEELING

RISK TAKING

To have *courage* to - -
 Function under conditions devoid of structure
 Defend own ideas

COMPLEXITY

To be *challenged* to - -
 Seek many alternatives
 See gaps between how things are and how they could be

CURIOSITY

To be *willing* to - -
 Be open to puzzling situations
 Ponder the mystery of things

IMAGINATION

To have the *power* to - -
 Visualize and build mental images
 Dream about things that have never happened