

# READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

## Collaborating and Writing: Components of Close Reading Video Transcript

### **Kelly Johnson:**

We're really going to determine the theme of this book as it relates to the characters. "The rope slipped out of my grandmother's hand, "the bucket crashing with an echoing splash and I leap into her arms."

I chose "Breath, Eyes, Memory" because it is a difficult text in many regards, so I wanted the struggle to be there with students.

"My mother had sent money for the reconstruction of her old home."

It's a good book to understand just differences in the world. It's written from an author who experienced that. So I wanted to make that connection.

"At night the huts on the hills looked like crowds of candles."

What theme is emerging? Could you pinpoint a theme and back it up with evidence? Let's chat at your tables.

We have been talking about small groups and whole groups. What's this book about?

### **Student:**

Well, I think the main idea of this book is about strength.

### **Johnson:**

The students really get into it and have conversations.

### **Student:**

Well, a person can be happy, but they can also be doubtful at the same time.

### **Johnson:**

Let's mark our text. Will you please mark yours like I am so we can refer back to our text together?

The purpose of small group instruction is to really hear what students are thinking, assess their understanding. It allows me to hear their voice and really tailor my instruction to meet their needs.

When you made a note that "had a disease" who are we talking about?

**Student:**

Her grandma.

**Johnson:**

Her grandma, okay.

I can then guide the rest of the lesson based on what I'm seeing, what I'm hearing, and know what vocabulary might need to be explored, what questions that I need to ask them to get them to push back into the text and find the answers to.

What does "mourn" mean? Is it morning time?

**Students:**

No.

**Johnson:**

It is honor, other ways of saying that? Grief, because who died?

**Students:**

Her husband.

**Johnson:**

So we're going to do our independent reading. We'll have a chance to chat about it in a minute.

With close reading I really want to put the ownership on the students, I want them to struggle with the text, and I always want to give the opportunity of letting them do it on their own. So if it means just another opportunity to read, I'm always going to try that first before I throw in a question. We want to make an independent reader out of them and to use those strategies independently.

Here's what I would like you to do. Think about what character did you want to assume?

I asked them to take a certain perspective or point of view. Hopefully it will transfer into their writing.

So the way that we're going to do this is you're going to go into your Google Docs and you are going to type what your character is going to say. So you're going to introduce the character in your book, what's his or her name. I wrote, "Hi, I'm Sophie and I'm in a book about," and then state your theme. You need to support what you're saying with evidence. You are that character.

This is just a short way for them to write about the theme in a creative way, and it's fun for them, and ultimately to be shared with other people. We're going to have a conversation about what they wrote so it's not just a piece of paper that got turned in to me and nobody ever saw it again. And that way it kind of pushes them to be a little more precise and polished with their work.

What's the evidence that it's a book about strength?

**Student:**

She's being strong in giving her aunt the note.

**Johnson:**

Okay. She had a lot of strength and she was very strong in wanting to give her that Mother's Day card. Okay, good.

They could be informal and say, "Hey, I'm Sophie, and I'm 12 years old," but I still want some academic language and vocabulary to come through in their writing. So hopefully there was a combination of both kinds of writing.

**Student:**

She can't decide whether she wants to stay with her aunt or her mom.

**Johnson:**

So what -- when you -- when that happens to you, what...What can we call that?

**Student:**

It's one of our... words.

**Johnson:**

Okay, it might be, but what...when you have those decisions, I mean what's...

**Student:**

You're like unsure.

**Johnson:**

Okay, or uncertainty, right? Being unsure, it's a book about being unsure, it's a book about uncertainty, okay.

I want my students to love to read, to love to think, to love to write, to love to talk about all different kinds of text, and I want them to really be able to look at text in a critical way, whether it takes them reading it once or five times and really empower them so they feel better about themselves as literacy learners.

Okay, good. Very good.