Engaging readers through children’s literature explorations for empathy and action

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Welcome!

From caring comes courage.

Laozi
Purposes of today's session

- To illuminate the ways in which challenging times, and responses to these times, are represented in children’s literature
- To consider ways to use children’s literature as springboards for empathy and action
- To refocus attention on the role of the affective domain and critical thinking during literary explorations
Rationale for session #1: The world

- Difficult times in which we live
- Daily challenges for all children
  - Friendships
  - Family life
  - School life
- Extreme challenges for many children around the globe
  - Human Crises
  - Natural Disasters
Rationale for Session #2: The Word

- Affective role of literature
- Literature as windows and mirrors
- Literature as a vicarious forum for developing understanding and empathy
Kidd and Castano (2013) found that, as opposed to generic fiction or nonfiction, adults who read a mere 15 minutes of quality fiction significantly increased their levels of empathy. Imagine what 15 minutes of reading high quality fiction could accomplish with much more impressionable youth.
Let’s start with an old favorite...
The world is full of WORRIES!
By the time the first day arrived, Wemberly had a long list of worries.

What if no one else has spots?

What if no one else wears stripes?

What if no one else brings a doll?

What if the teacher is mean?

What if the room smells bad?

What if they make fun of my name?

What if I can’t find the bathroom?

What if I hate the snack?

What if I have to cry?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worries and Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembering my childhood self’s worries...</td>
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Application to our lives and work...
Literature makes important connections

- Literature provides provocative invitations to better understand and care for ourselves in the midst of difficult daily life and crisis-oriented situations.
- Literature demonstrates the complex, layered nature of our lives, even amidst crises.
- Literature provides models of ways to respond to others when confronted with dilemmas.
- Literature provides invitations toward empathy and action by examining the complex internal and external factors.
Literature changes us; it’s a transaction between the reader and the text; the world and the word...

A book’s not a book until we read it.

Tough times and stressors call for ways to deconstruct and to figure issues and ourselves out with vicarious characters in vicarious situations.
I am reminded of … personally.

I am reminded of … locally (something in my life now).

I am reminded of … globally.
A man climbed aboard with a seated dog.
CJ gave up his seat. "How come that man can't walk?"
"Dry, what do you know about aging?" Max told him.
"Some people watch the world with their ears."

"That's a fact. Their ears, too," the man said, folding up the newspaper.
"That's a mighty fine perfume you're wearing today, ma'am.
Max squeezed the man's hand and laughed his deep laugh.
Other crises include…

- Homelessness
- Loss of employment
- Working for minimal pay
- Loss of identity & respect
Other crises include...

- Poverty
- War
- Loss of life
- Homelessness
- Lack of education
- Discrimination against girls
- Leaving friends and the known
Small actions can make a large impact.
Helping those in crisis may require personal sacrifice.
Both material and human costs accompany crises; solving material problems may not resolve related deep human needs and issues.

One day Emaje took me to a place where she said the lion in my belly would never roar again…

‘but I cannot go with you.”
 Literacy Models for Empathy and Action

- One can learn how to meet the needs of those in crisis.
“You worry too much,” said her mother.
“When you worry, I worry,” said her father.
“Worry, worry, worry,” said her grandmother.
“Too much worry.”

Just as *Wemberly Worried*

Literature gives us the perfect avenue for

....__________
Literature changes us;
Some strategies for empathy

- Frayer model for food scarcity; hunger
- Lessons learned
- Poetry
  - Found poems
  - I used to …but now…
  - Collaborative haiku
A day that included a ‘first’ in _____ that reminded you of a ‘first’ in your own life

Connecting through stories

An emotional scene from _____ that reminded you of.... from your own life

A funny scene from _____ that reminded you of a funny story from your life

Write one lesson learned from the characters in _____ that parallels a story where you learned a lesson (or are learning)
Literature changes us; some strategies for action

- Posters
- Graffiti boards
- Petitions
  - Social media impacts
- Everyday Acts of Kindness
- Action plans with community partners
- Maps or timelines for our journeys
- Letters to make a difference
Sharing literature creates caring which creates courage...
Resources

- Fillable T-Chart for Listing and Comparing
  [http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/chart-30225.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/chart-30225.html)
References


References- continued


