

Designing Critically Informed Comprehension Lessons (Elementary Grades)

1. Select a text that lends itself to critical engagement. The text can be read/listened to/viewed, etc. For this lesson, the text is *Not My Girl* (2014) by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, Annick Press.

2. Select a comprehension strategy as the focus strategy for the lesson

(e.g., predicting, connecting to prior knowledge, **inferring**, summarizing, sensori-emotional images, questioning, synthesizing, vocabulary, or text structure, etc.). For this lesson, the focus strategy is inferring.

Explicitly discuss, describe, give examples of the strategy in the context of the story before, during, and after the lesson.

3. Select a content objective e.g., to interrogate the relations of power that led to and maintained the inequity (in this lesson, **Boarding Schools**).

4. Select key vocabulary e.g., outsiders (for *Not My Girl*).

5. Identify discussion points that invite readers to question relations of power impacting the story, informational text, film, poem, painting, sculpture, etc.

6. Design questions that will generate discussion around multiple perspectives from across the classroom (these questions were designed for *Not My Girl*, but they can be adapted to fit many texts):

What do they mean by “outsiders”?

Outside of what? Who are “outsiders”? Why? Who is inside?

How did the schools impact the characters’ relationships, language, etc.?

Who created the schools?

Who was in the schools? Who was not in the schools?

Whose interests were and were not being optimally served? How?

What was the purpose of the schools?

Locate examples of resistance, rebellion, resiliency, etc. throughout the text.

7. Engage students in discussion that is respectful, authentic, and inclusive regarding varying positions before, during, and after the story.

8. Discuss awareness and action. As students uncover inequities, discuss places of resistance, rebellion, and resiliency that might lead to action.

9. Encourage relevant research, writing, hands-on exercises, classroom visits with former Boarding School students, field trips, etc.

Resources

Working definition of Critical Literacy: An approach to text that **questions** the everyday, routine, **unquestioned** ways that those in power create and maintain their power.

Video:

Unspoken: America's Native American Boarding Schools. Retrieved from <https://video.kued.org/video/unspoken-americas-native-american-boarding-schools-oobt1r/>

Critical Literacy Resources:

General:

Sutliff Sanders, J. (2018). *A literature of questions: Nonfiction for the critical Child*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Elementary:

Lewison, M., Leland, C., & Harste, J. (2015). *Creating critical classrooms*. New York: Routledge

Secondary:

Morrell, E. (2008). *Critical literacy and urban youth: Pedagogies of access, dissent, and liberation*. New York: Routledge.

Book Sources and Reviews:

American Indians in Children's Literature:

https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/p/search_18.html

goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/book>

Lee and Low: <https://www.leeandlow.com/about-us>

#Ownvoices: Children's Books by Native American and First Nations Authors and

Illustrators: <https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/606674457/725561467>