SPHERE

Fostering Civil Discourse and Diverse Viewpoints for Every Classroom

Civil Discourse: Discussing Themes in Literature (3)

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Learning Objectives

- Analyze characters from selected short stories to understand the importance of friendship, empathy, and resilience in facing challenges and apply these themes to their own lives
- Apply the lessons learned from characters to examples in their own lives

Essential Questions

How do characters in literature show the importance of good friends during tough times? How do they demonstrate empathy? How do they stay resilient in the face of adversity?

Media

- Copies of the stories being used; students can choose which story they would like to read and then do the work in pairs or small groups, or the class can focus on a whole-class text. Some examples that work well for this lesson:
  - "Thank You, M'am" by Langston Hughes; approximately 5 pages
  - The Treasure of Lemon Brown" by Walter Dean Myers; approximately 6 pages
  - "The Scholarship Jacket" by Marta Salinas; approximately 4 pages
  - "Raymond's Run" by Toni Cade Bambara; approximately 8 pages
  - "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury; approximately 6 pages
- Paper or notebook for notes on the discussion
- Whiteboard and markers

WARM-UP

Before starting, review norms from the first lesson in this unit or use that lesson to discuss and create norms before proceeding.

Here are some norm examples, although it is best if students create these norms as a class.

- Respect other people's opinions.
- Try to understand other people's points of view; listen to understand, not to respond.
- Participate, participate, participate.
- Respect all opinions.
- Be rational in responding; attack ideas, not people

Have students write about a time when they faced a tough situation and how having friends or support helped them through it. Pick 2–3 students to share their ideas with the class.

Read, Share, and Discuss

Divide students into small groups and assign each group a different story or ask them to read and discuss the whole-class text. Give them time to read the text. They may want to read silently or take turns.

Students should take notes as they discuss the story. This discussion needs to be centered around the themes of the story, which you can give them or have them find, and the essential questions, which you should display on the whiteboard. They need to be able to cite specific examples.

Jigsaw so that there are new groups with a person or two from each story in a group. Students should discuss their respective stories.

ASK

What themes are similar in each of the stories? How does each story go about displaying these themes?

As a whole class, discuss the themes in each of the stories.

ASK

Why do these themes help readers connect to the story?

Closing the Lesson

ASK

How can we make and maintain good friendships? What are some ways we can show empathy toward others? How can we build resilience to overcome challenges?

Common Core State Standards

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1:** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3:** Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, group, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, group, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

WRITING STANDARDS

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.