

Fishbowl Analysis with a Primary Source

Poetry as a Historical Artifact, 1-2 days, 5th grade and up

The Fishbowl is a strategy used for analyzing a challenging source. In order to think deeply about the primary source, the students will analyze and study the source several times, going deeper in their thinking each time. They should also be familiar with analyzing a primary source with the Library of Congress Analysis Tool using an observe-reflect-question strategy (O/R/Qs).

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>



1. Have 4-5 students place their chairs/desks in a small circle in the center of the classroom.
This is the “fishbowl.” Choose students strategically to balance participation within the fishbowl.
2. Have all other students place their chairs/desks in a large circle surrounding the small group. Once students know how to do this exercise, two or three fishbowls on the same source can occur simultaneously.
3. Give all students a “Primary Source Analysis Tool”.
4. Display the poem “In the Library” on a projector via the Web page at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/charlessimic/inthelibrary.html>.
(This poem is copyrighted and may not be reproduced or stored.)
5. Provide an investigative question to focus the analysis. i.e.: “How does this poem express the author’s feelings about the library in 1990? What was the poet’s message?”
6. Read the poem aloud as students follow along.
7. Instruct **all** students (inside the fishbowl and outside) to read the poem again **silently** and analyze it using their individual “Primary Source Analysis Tool”. (Allow 3-5 minutes; more time depending on grade level).
8. Instruct the small group to begin sharing with each other about their O/R/Qs using the investigative question to focus the analysis. Depending on the students’ grade level, abilities, and experience, you may wish to facilitate this discussion by posing some questions from the “Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Books and Other Printed Texts”, or from “Thinking about Poems as Historical Artifacts” (listed under “Additional Resources”). Allow 10-15 minutes.
9. Instruct the rest of the class to watch the discussion. Assign roles and tasks for students sitting in the outer circle.
General tasks without roles can be assigned to the entire outer circle group:

Possible roles with tasks to assign the outer circle group:

- *Reporter*-Takes notes and prepares a summary that discusses strengths and weakness of the dialogue
- *Silent Contributor*-What would you say if you were in the inner circle? Provide additional O/R/Qs, answer any of the questions posed by the small group, offer a comment sharing an agreement or disagreement with a particular student and why or why not, offer comments which affirm or acknowledge ideas shared during small-group discussion, and asking a question of a student for clarification. (Resource: KIPP: Edutopia.org, Connectors)
- *Referencing Text Tallyer*- Counts how many times each member references the text [and notes the references]
- *Comment Tallyer*- Records how many times each person speaks
- *Shadower*- Evaluates a member of the inner circle on the following criteria.
Did the member: Speak loudly and clearly? Cite reasons and evidence for our statements? Use the text to find support (that all reflections are rooted in an observation of this source)? Listen to others respectfully? Stick with the subject? Talk to the whole group and not as side conversation? Paraphrase accurately? Avoid inappropriate language? Ask for help to clear confusion? Support others? Seem prepared?

10. Have the “outside” group members take turns sharing aloud what they have observed in step 9. (10-15 minutes)

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11. Allow “inside” group members respond to “outside” group.

12. Lead discussion to bring the experiences and ideas together:

- As the facilitator, be sure to focus the discussion by having students relate to the focus question, “How does the author use poetry to share his message about libraries in 1990? What is his point of view?”
- Discuss with students how they felt being on the “inside” or “outside” of the fishbowl.
- What did they learn about the primary source through the additional discussion from the outside observers?
- What did they learn about their own analysis techniques? and group discussion skills?

13. Have students return to their seats and write about the poem. Students can individually complete the organizer, “Thinking About Poems as Historical Artifacts”. Students should use the information in the source to support their ideas. Encourage them to refer back to their primary source analysis tool and notes.

14. Have students write their own poem about libraries today.

15. Have students share their poem with a partner discussing how libraries are the same and different today based on Charles Simic’s poem and the poem they wrote.

Library of Congress Primary Source

- Simic, Charles. "In the Library." Library of Congress Web Guides. THE BOOK OF GODS AND DEVILS, Harcourt, Inc., 1990. Web. 21 May 2012. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/charlessimic/inthelibrary.html>.

Other Resources and Materials

- Primary Source Analysis Tool:
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf
- Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Books and Other Printed Texts;
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Books_and_Other_Printed_Texts.pdf
- Thinking About Poems as Historical Artifacts; <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/lyrical/tools/docs/poems.pdf>
- KIPP: Edutopia.org, Connectors:
<http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/stw/edutopia-kipp-criticalthinking-toolsforct-socraticseminarconnectors.pdf>.
KIPP: Edutopia.org, Connectors to Help You in Seminar Discussion:
<http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/stw/edutopia-kipp-criticalthinking-toolsforct-socraticseminarstatements.pdf>

Additional Resource

- A Celebration of American Poets Laureate with Charles Simic, Kay Ryan, Rita Dove, Billy Collins, and more (October 6, 2010) - 87 minutes in length. (Chas Simic is introduced at marker 01:04:57)
http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=5092

Fifth-grade Common Core State Standards met by this activity:

CC.5.R.L.1 Key Ideas and Details: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CC.5.R.L.2 Key Ideas and Details: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CC.5.R.L.4 Craft and Structure: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CC.5.W.1 Text Types and Purposes: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CC.5.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.