

Lesson: How To Choose “Just Right” Books

Subject Area: Reading

Common Core Standards Covered:

Supplies Needed:

- Three plain white or solid color t-shirts (x-small, medium, adult xl)
  - one to fit an average sized student in your class
  - one that is way too small, but can still be put on, by an average sized student in your class
  - one that is too large for an average sized student in your class
- Three “t-shirt” posters (small, medium, large – see template you can use to enlarge to three different sized posters. One suggestion is to copy the template onto a transparency and use an overhead projector to create different sized posters.)
- Markers
- Individual student book bags or baskets

Procedure:

- Choose three average sized students in your class. (Some students get embarrassed easily, so be sure to pick some outgoing students to try on the extra small and extra large shirts.)
- Hand each student a shirt and tell them to put the shirts on. (The students will start giggling at the ones putting on the extra small and extra large shirts, so that’s why you need to choose carefully.)
- Once they have the shirts on, ask each student how he/she feels in the shirt. (Try to elicit more than just a “not good” from them...uncomfortable, very comfortable, just right, too tight, too loose). Ask the rest of the class about their observations of all three students.
- Tell your students that choosing “just right” books to read is almost like choosing clothes that fit “just right”. It’s very important!
- Have the students take off the shirts and join the class.
- Display your small t-shirt poster. Tell the class that books that are too hard are very much like shirts that are way too small. They are

uncomfortable and just don't feel right. Ask students how they know if a book is too difficult for them right now and what kinds of questions should they be asking themselves to figure this out? Write their responses on the small t-shirt poster. Some possible questions:

- Does the book feel uncomfortable?
  - Am I confused about what is happening in the book?
  - Does it sound fluent (smooth) when I read it aloud?
  - Are there more than five words on a page that I don't know?
  - Could I talk to a friend about this book?
- Next display your large t-shirt poster. Tell the class that books that are too easy are very much like shirts that are way too large. They are TOO comfortable and easy to wear. T-shirts that are too large are something people wear sometimes to be extra comfortable. They are easy to move around in and some people even sleep in them! They are fine for every now and then, but not something people should wear every day. Ask students how they know if a book is too easy for them and what kind of questions they should be asking themselves to figure this out. Write their responses on the large t-shirt poster. Some possible questions:
    - Is the book way too comfortable?
    - Have I read this book LOTS of times before?
    - Can I read the book VERY smoothly/fluenty?
    - Am I still interested in this book or am I bored?
    - Do I know EVERY word and read them easily?
    - Am I still "wondering" while reading the book?
    - Am I still thinking while reading the book?
    - Am I ready to move on to something a little more challenging?
- Finally, display your medium t-shirt poster. Tell the class that books that are "just right" are very much like shirts that fit perfectly. They are comfortable and feel right. They are something that should be worn/read most of the time, but should still give you a little room to grow. Ask students how they know if a book is "just right" for them and what kind of questions they should be asking themselves to figure this out. Write their responses on the medium t-shirt. Some possible responses:

- Does the book feel comfortable?
- Am I interested in the book?
- Do I understand what I'm reading?
- Are there a few challenging words I can figure out using my reading strategies?
- Am I still thinking and talking about the book?
- Have the students go to their independent reading spots with the task of checking the books in their basket/baggie to see if they are "just right" for them.
- Display the t-shirt posters in your classroom to remind the students of what "just right" books feel like.

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