

Lessons from literature

Grades: (K-2)

Time: 30- 50 minutes

Overview

Students Using literature to understand the environmental effects of our everyday choices on a community.

Materials

Berenstein Bears Don't Pollute (Anymore) by Stan and Jan Berenstein

The Big Idea (The West choice)

The Great Trash Bash by Loren Leery

Just a Dream by Chris Van Allsburg

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

The Warville Wizard by Don Madden

The Wump World by Bill Peet

The Sknuks by Colin Thiele

Window by Jeannie Baker

Procedure

1. Teacher Prep: All the books listed to focus on how our behavior impacts the environment. Each book shows that understanding this connection allows us to make thoughtful choices that can have a positive effect. With the class, decide which book you'll read together. Look in your school library, borrow, or purchase the book of your choice. Review the book prior to reading it with the class. Compose a vocabulary list that can be discussed as part of the activity and displayed.
2. Warm-up: Sit in a circle with the class. Before reading the book to the students, show them the cover. Ask, "By looking at its cover, what do you think the book is about?" Get their responses. Repeat the title of the book and ask again for ideas on what the book is about, guessing by its title.
3. After getting student responses, tell them, "Those are thoughtful ideas you've shared. Let's find out what the author, [insert authors name], has written about and read the book together."
Read the book aloud, share the pictures with the class, and stop every four or five pages to ask to what is happening at this point in the story?
As students respond, paraphrase back to the students what the story has covered to that point. Contrast what the community or environment in the book is like before and after people changed their behavior.
5. When a word comes up that students don't understand, ask them what they think it means. Provide accurate definitions for all unfamiliar words and write them on your chart paper.
Every few pages, pose questions that encourage them to focus on a specific character. You could ask:
 What is this character doing here? What is the result of this action?

At the end of the book, involve the students in a group discussion by asking the questions below. Get their responses and paraphrase overall ideas, validating their feelings and opinions.

- What happened at the end of the story?
- What big idea do you think the author wants you to understand?
- What do you think about this book? Why?
- How did the book make you feel? Why?
- What did you learn from this story that you didn't know before?
- Can you think of any interesting words or ideas the author used? Write these on the along with the vocabulary list from the book.
- Are there any new ideas you'd like to learn more about after reading this story?
- If you were writing this story, what would you have done differently?

If the students are drawn to the overall topic (understanding the environmental effects of our daily choices), plan a series of readings with additional books from the suggested reading list, or books the students bring in with similar themes. After reading several books, ask the students, "Do you see any patterns in the books we've read?"