

THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR

by Stuart Mead

Target Group: 3rd grade

1) Pre-Reading Activity: Brainstorming and Activating Schemata

Part of the reading process involves applying prior knowledge and experience of the world to the text in order to make sense of it. What we already know about the world is sometimes referred to as our 'schemata'. When we read about an unfamiliar topic, reading comprehension becomes much more difficult. One way to help students improve their reading comprehension is to give them background information about the topic and/or help them activate their schemata. In the following activity, students must use their knowledge of the story genre and their imagination to make predictions about the story.

1. Tell students to close their eyes. Play a recording of spooky music to create a feeling of suspense. Knock hard on the desk or door three times quickly.
2. Tell students that what they have heard is a scene in the story that they are about to read. Ask students to guess which story genre it is and why they think so.
3. Accept reasonable answers, such as 'horror story' or 'ghost story'. Students should be able to relate the spooky music and loud knocks to their prior experience with horror stories or ghost stories.
4. Ask students to guess:
 - Who is knocking in the story?
 - What is the person knocking on?
 - Why is the person knocking so loudly?
 - What time is it in the story?
 - Where does the story take place?

5. Record students' guesses on the board.
6. Tell students the title of the story. Ask if they would like to change their responses to the questions.
7. Ask students: If you were in the house alone, would you open the door? Why/Why not?

2) While-Reading Activity: Basic Story Elements

The three basic elements that all short stories must have are:

1. characters – the people, animals or creatures in the story
2. setting – the place and time
3. plot – the events that happen in the story

A story cannot take place without characters who think, speak and act, and characters need to exist in a certain place and time. For a story to develop, something must happen, i.e. there must be a plot. Some stories also have a theme. The theme of a story is the central idea that runs through it.

In this activity, students use a graphic organiser to take notes on the three basic story elements (character, setting and plot) as they read.

1. Explain that all stories have three basic story elements: character, setting and plot. Use a story familiar to students to illustrate this point, e.g. 'The Three Little Pigs' or 'Cinderella'.
2. Distribute the worksheet and explain that it will be used to take notes on 'The Knock at the Door' by Stuart Mead. Ask students to fill in the title and the author first.
3. Students work in small groups to take notes on the setting and characters of the story.
4. Have students work in small groups to take notes on the sequence of events, i.e. what happens at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the story.
5. Discuss answers with the class.

Story Elements

Setting (Place):

Where does the story take place?

Setting (Time):

When does the story take place?

Main Character:

Who is the main character?

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Supporting Characters:

Who are the other characters?

PLOT (SEQUENCE OF EVENTS)

Beginning: What happens at the beginning of the story?

Middle: What happens in the middle of the story?

End: What happens at the end of the story?

3) Post-Reading Activity: Interviewing Characters

Interviewing characters is an activity to take the main characters out of the story and bring them into the classroom. It involves students' understanding of the characters and plot development and their use of imagination. The students playing the roles of the characters in the story have to put themselves in the characters' shoes. They must give answers that reflect the characters' personality and that are relevant to the plot. The students playing the roles of the interviewers pretend that they do not know much about the story. They must ask a series of questions that require the interviewees to draw on the characters' personality and the events in the plot.

In this activity, students have opportunities to role play Joey and his class teacher in an interview.

1. Arrange students in pairs.
2. Distribute Worksheet 1.9 and explain the instructions. Tell students that they will take turns role-playing Joey and the class teacher. First everyone will prepare questions for Role 2, Joey's class teacher.
3. Tell students that they need to prepare five questions for Joey. They also need to be prepared to ask follow-up questions based on the answers that Joey gives.
4. To demonstrate this, ask the question 'What were you doing last night?' Elicit possible answers, e.g. 'I was reading a book.'
5. Explain that a good follow-up question would be 'What were you reading?' because it requires students to recall that Joey was reading a scary story.
6. Give students time to prepare for the role play by writing five W- questions and thinking of possible follow-up questions.
7. Assign roles and give students time to do the role play.

8. Tell students to change roles and do the role play again.

9. Ask volunteers to come to the front of the class and demonstrate the role play.

10. Discuss with the class whether the role plays were successful or not.

Interviewing Characters

In this activity, you will work with a partner. One of you will play the role of Joey Carter from “The Knock At The Door”, and the other will play the role of Joey’s class teacher. It is the day after the storm and Joey has come to school looking very tired and nervous. Joey’s class teacher notices this and wants to ask Joey some questions after school.

Role 1

You are Joey Carter. The day after the storm, you come to school looking very tired and nervous. Your class teacher is worried about your condition. He/she has called you to the teacher’s room after school to ask you some questions.

You must be prepared to answer you class teacher’s questions based on the events in the story. To prepare for the interview, re-read the story and think about how you will answer the questions in role about why you look so tired and nervous.

Role 2

You are Joey’s class teacher. Today Joey looks very tired and nervous. You are worried about his condition. You have called Joey to the teachers’ room after school to ask him some questions.

You must be prepared to ask some questions about why Joey looks so tired and nervous. To prepare for the interview, think about what you would like to ask Joey. Write the questions below in the spaces provided:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____