

Educator Guide for *Elinormal*

By Kate McCarroll Moore

READING

As educators, we know the importance of focusing on the power and the purpose of reading. It's important to stay mindful of the WHY of reading.

We read to step into the world of another.
We read to step into the mind of another.
We read to step into the heart of another.



We read to better understand the other.
We read to better understand ourselves.

What do we mean when we say *reading comprehension*?

Reading a novel allows the reader to be transported, to entertain possibility, to imagine, to connect.

When my students are immersed in a book, and when they finish the story, I want them to be immersed in thinking.

Below are some discussion questions that probe thinking – they can be used to explore the themes and storylines in *Elinormal*, but they can just as easily be used with any other book because they are thinking questions.

To help students develop their thinking, have them choose one or two discussion questions to build a conversation around. Teach them and continue to encourage them to use sentence stems like,

“I wonder...”


“Maybe...”


“Or could it be...?”


“I was confused/surprised/happy/sad when...”


“At first I thought, but now I think/know/realize...”

Teaching these conversational moves will help students to extend the discussion, to dive deep, and to move toward more universal understanding of themselves and others.

 Was there a part of this book where you felt a strong connection to the main character? What did the character say or do that caused a reaction in you?

 The character went through changes, setbacks, and personal growth throughout the course of the novel. How did the character evolve? What did the character come to understand?

 What role do the other characters play in helping or hindering the main character's growth? If one of these characters were to disappear, what impact might it have on the main character?


 When the book ended how did you feel? Do you know what happens next in the character's life? If it were you, what would you do next?

If your students are all reading different books, they can still share ideas and expand their thinking by answering open-ended, non-book-specific questions. They'll soon discover the common themes and storylines that run through all lives, whether fictionalized or real, which will help them build their understanding and empathy for others.

WRITING

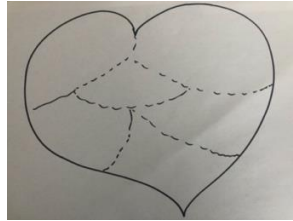
Writers are wonderers, noticers, imaginers, and dreamers. You can encourage your students to write to explore and further develop their ideas. There are some tried-and-true ways that feel authentic and engaging to students which will serve to support their thinking work beyond the book.

Here are three of my favorite strategies. They are designed for use with *Elinormal*, but can really work with almost any text.

 **Mapping the Heart:** This is an adaptation of a portion of Georgia Heard's landmark book, *Heart Maps: Helping Students Create and Craft Authentic Writing* (Heinemann, September 12, 2016).

Readers look inside their character's heart to see what makes them tick.

Draw a big heart and divide it into 6 sections.



Try seeing inside the character’s heart by answering six questions. This can be done individually, in small reading groups or literature circles, or as a whole class activity). Use examples and be specific!

- What does your character want?
- What does your character need?
- What makes your character happy?
- Who hurts your character? How?
- Who helps your character? How?
- What’s a big problem that your character is confronting?

The heart can be filled in as one reads or completed after the fact. It can be applied to any character in the book, not just the main character, and it will help the reader understand character motivation, character relationships, and character complexity. This heart-mapping strategy can be taught as a discussion prompt or as a scaffold to support your students in writing literary essays.



Treasure Hunt Poetry: As readers read, they underline or use sticky notes to mark important descriptions, phrases, and images. These markings can then be arranged into a poem, which is another way of growing thinking and seeing more in a text.

What I love about this activity is that it accomplishes several educational goals at once. It encourages students to reread, to determine importance, to use precise language, and to link ideas. It also allows students to see themselves as poets. This treasure-hunting strategy can be taught to introduce a poetry unit (imagine crafting haikus and sonnets this way!), as a discussion prompt, or as a scaffold to support your students to write literary essays.

Here’s an example of a very short poem I wrote, pulling text from three sentences on three separate pages in the opening chapters of *Elinormal*. As you can see, there are endless possibilities.

Meeting Indira

*I never knew before
how much happiness
could fill you up,
my skin is tingling,
the world is changed*



Image journaling: In *Elinormal*, Indira writes a biography of the park by noticing a series of seemingly ordinary, unrelated objects and weaving them into a story. Your students can follow in Indira’s footsteps by doing the same thing. Encourage them to walk through their home, their neighborhood, or the school campus. They can sketch, describe, or photograph several objects. Ask them to identify and describe a theme that emerges when those objects are brought together. Have them write a few sentences that help explain something new or interesting about the images they chose. What is the story of their house, their neighborhood, or their school as revealed by the objects found there? This is a wonderful writing exercise that goes beyond the book and helps students learn to see with writer’s eyes.

Like any good teaching tool, this guide is meant as a jumping off point. Feel free to make it your own by adapting, revising, and supplementing these lessons. Please share your comments, observations, and questions with me. And please share your student work with me as well – I’d love to see the results of your good teaching. We are all in this together!

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