

FAQ Video Transcripts

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Question: Why do the middle school units feature read-alouds?

Katie Clements:

So one of the questions that we get asked a lot is about why read-aloud is such an emphasis in the units and one of the people that we go to often for this, is Shirley Brice Heath, who talks about how one of the most important things for kids when we're looking at helping kids live literate lives is that they have mentors who are joyful, literate people. In read-aloud, one of the things that we get to do as teachers is model for kids what it looks like to be a joyful, literate person. Read-aloud gives us an opportunity to model what it looks like when you, when we love literature, when we're poring over a book, when we're stopping and modeling some of our own reactions as we go through. And in our modeling of that love of the text we can help kids fall in love with text in the same way. So especially if you've got kids in your class who might be more disengaged as readers, that work with read-aloud becomes even more important.

What you'll see if you look across the units of study is that read-alouds typically kick off each bend of the unit and each bend of the unit will start with a session that's a read-aloud that won't feel like a typical day's workshop. And what will be a little bit different is instead of doing a mini-lesson for just 10 minutes at the beginning and then sending kids off to read for the bulk of the workshop time, you'll spend the bulk of that time reading aloud to kids and you'll just have a little bit of time on that day to read independently and during that time when you're reading aloud to the kids, that read-aloud really gives you an opportunity to introduce a lot of the skills and strategies that you'll be working on with kids over the course of that bend. So you as a teacher might be modeling how you get ideas about a character early on and then read on with those ideas in mind, noticing how the characters can be complicated and how your beliefs about that character might shift in light of new information.

You'll be doing some modeling and thinking aloud and you'll also be asking kids to participate. So kids will be asked to turn and talk and engage with some of the skills that you're modeling. They'll be asked to stop and jot at times, to have longer conversations and so that read-aloud then really becomes a time for you to help the kids orchestrate some of the different strategies that you're teaching across the bend. It's also really lovely because in reading aloud you get a touchstone text that you and the kids know really well. And then that text can be referenced at upcoming mini-lessons, which helps to keep your mini-lessons free because you don't need to read a new text, you can just reference familiar portions of the text, the text. It also really helps when you're conferring and pulling small groups because

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you've got a text that you can go to right away with kids so that the bulk of your time can be focused on the skills you're teaching into. We've spend a lot of time picking out these read-alouds for the units, really thinking about how across those read-alouds, we can have a diverse representation of characters, of authors, of different time periods. So we're excited to see how you bring those texts alive in your classroom.