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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2016 Volume II: Why Literature Matters

Reading for Craft through an Author Study

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by Debra Titus

Why did the author choose to write this way? How can I use what the author wrote to sharpen my skills in writing? These are some of the questions that a student in elementary school may not ask. Students need to be shown how to transform their thinking into that of a writer. Students should be able to identify the craft of an author and know how to use methods to shape their own thinking and writing.

The unit focuses on reading for craft through an author study of a local author, in particular, Sharon Flake, of Pittsburgh, PA. Students review three novels from the author in an effort to indicate occurrences of particular uses of style, such as: language, voice, and description. Students analyze the craft of the author by noting comparisons across the novels to get a better grasp of the methods consistently used by the author. The unit is intended for fourth-grade students in an English Language Arts classroom. The unit can be adapted for varying grade levels with differing contents. When students are thinking like an author, they will develop a system for finding out why an author writes in a particular fashion, and then can students truly read for craft.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 4; recommended for English, grade 10)

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