Purpose:
A directed reading-thinking activity is used to engage students in active comprehension while reading. Specifically, this activity uses prediction through students’ personal experiences and through identification of the author’s foreshadowing. The teacher reads a passage of text aloud with students, stopping at relevant points to assess comprehension and make predictions. This particular DR-TA is meant to be used as an introduction to *A Christmas Carol*; however, for this activity it is important that students do not yet know their new novel (*A Christmas Carol*). Because students are so familiar with movie and picture book versions of *A Christmas Carol*, the names of characters have been changed in this passage so students can still use the strategy of making predictions instead of assuming that the novel is the same as the other versions they have seen. Main questions this activity will be focusing on are:

What is happening?

Why did the author include this in the passage?

What do you think will happen?

Directions:

*Step One:*
Begin by telling students that we will be reading an anonymous passage of text to focus on making predictions about what will happen in the story and what this story is about. Tell the students that we will be reading this aloud as a class and that we are going to move slower than normal so we can employ our prediction strategies.

Read the first two paragraphs aloud, or ask for volunteers to do so.

*Step Two:*
After the first two paragraphs are read, have students take out a sheet of paper and section it off into quarters. Then pose these questions to your students and have them answer one in each quarter of their paper:
What is happening?
Why do you think the author starts the book out with this sentence? These paragraphs?
Why might this be important to the story?
What do you think this book could be about?
What do you think will happen?
Make sure that the students are tangling with the text, using evidence to support their comments and opinions. The discussion should last 5-10 minutes.

Step Three:
Continue the pattern of reading and questioning, stopping at the points as outlined below:

- Read until the paragraph that ends with “an undoubted bargain.” (Do you think Ben is important to the story? Who will be more important to the story, Ben or Jacob? What kind of person is Ben?)
- Read until the paragraph that ends with “his son’s weak mind.” (This reflects on the importance of the first paragraph – that Jacob is dead. Why is this so important? What does the allusion to Hamlet seeing his father have to do with anything? Why did the author put it in here? What do you think will happen in the story?)
- Read until the end of the passage. (What kind of person is Ben, now that we know a little more about him? Is it important that Christmas is mentioned in this passage?)

Step Four:
After the class has gone through the activity and thoroughly discussed their predictions and verifications, ask if any of the students know what book this is from. Tell them that the character’s names have been changed. At what point did students start to suspect that this story was A Christmas Carol? Did they ever figure it out? What were the hints that helped them know what the story was about (textual evidence)? Was Christmas the dead give away? Was it the character description of Scrooge [Ben]?
Discuss with students how sometimes when we know a story or text very well, we tend to skip over important details or assume that we know all there is to know from just a quick reading. There is so much that can be taken from a text if we slow down and look closely.

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Step Five:
Write a one-page reflection on what you know about A Christmas Carol from outside of class and what you learned through this reading activity. Are there any differences so far between the book and the story you are familiar with? What are they? Did this activity change your perspective on the story? How?

Assessment:
Through the class discussions, students will be able to demonstrate their comprehension of what has happened in the text so far and their ability to make appropriate predictions. The final discussion will help students learn the importance of close reading and employing strategies, even with familiar texts. The writing assignments will help them reflect more deeply on this concept and to compare and contrast different versions of the familiar story.

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