CUBING STRATEGY


Purpose of the Strategy
Developed by the Cowan and Cowan (1980), the cubing strategy allows discussion of a topic within the classroom. A 3-D cube is needed and each side has a comprehension level written on it from Bloom’s Taxonomy. The cube will be tossed around the room to different students and whatever side it lands on the student will have to respond to a question. The questions correspond to the different comprehension levels. This will allow students to engage and respond to different levels of comprehension. It will help students think about and discuss the novel or passage at different depths of understanding.

Directions

Step 1
Make a 3-D cube. The cube can be made from any materials available (old cereal box, tissue box, laminated paper, etc.). Add some weight to the cube by filling it with beans, rocks, or something else (it will toss better).

Step 2
Write the different comprehension levels, one on each side of the cube:
- Describe it
- Compare it
- Associate it
- Analyze it
- Apply it
- Argue for or against it
Step 3
To introduce the cube to the class, write the levels on the board as well or on a projector and give examples of what each one is. Next, introduce the passage below. This passage is perhaps one of the most powerful, yet most abstract parts of the novel. It deviates from the rest of the writing style. Instead of having students confused by it, use it for this strategy to really help them see why it is used and how it relates to their lives personally. Put the passage up on the overhead projector. (If one is not available, have students open to it at their desks.)

Passage:
"From the earth, from the air, sustaining forces pour into us—mostly from the earth. To no man does the earth mean so much as to the soldier. When he presses himself down upon her long and powerfully, when he buries his face and his limbs deep in her from fear of death by shell-fire, then she is his only friend, his brother, his mother; he stifles his terror and his cries in her silence and her security; she shelters him and releases him for ten seconds to live, to run, ten seconds of life; receives him again and often for ever.

"Earth!—Earth!—Earth!

"Earth with thy folds, and hollows, and holes, into which a man may fling himself and crouch down. In the spasm of terror, under the hailing of annihilation, in the bellowing of death of the explosions, O Earth, thou grantest us the great resisting surge of new-won life. Our being, almost utterly carried away by the fury of the storm, streams back through our hands from thee, and we thy redeemed ones, bury ourselves in thee, and through the long minutes in a mute agony of hope bite into thee with our lips!" (pp. 55-56)

Step 4
When all students have read through, give them 2-3 minutes to brainstorm the following levels of comprehension; allow them to at least read through the six comprehension level tasks and be thinking of their responses. I suggest that Bloom’s Taxonomy be posted in the classroom year round, but especially for this activity it should be visible. (There is a chart at the end of this file).

Step 5
Start tossing the cube! Whatever side it lands on, the student who has possession of it must answer a question according to the comprehension level visible.

Step 6
Once the student has answered, be sure to conduct a good discussion around their thoughts/ideas. Write the ideas on the overhead and have the students copy it down onto their
individual handouts. Once the discussion ends, the student can then toss it to another person in the class.

**Step 7**

This activity is not just a one-day exercise, it can be and should be used again and again for other passages and topics from the book. Here are some other ideas for further usage:

a. topics/themes to explore:
   i. Loneliness on the battle’s front
   ii. Putting up with bullies
   iii. Developing true friendships—what is true a friend?

b. Potential Passages to use in the future:
   i. page 179 “What is leave?...reminded by it.”
   ii. page 295 “I stand up...is within me.”

**Step 8**

A way to assess if the students are learning is to have them do a “cube passage” of their own. Assign them into groups of 2-3 and have them come up with 2 questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy and lead the class discussion in place of the teacher.
Can you keep up with the Cube?

1. DESCRIBE IT

2. COMPARE IT

3. ASSOCIATE IT

4. ANALYZE IT

5. APPLY IT

6. ARGUE FOR/AGAINST IT

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Teacher Questions Correlating to above passage in Step 3

1. Describe it:
   - What is Paul describing?
   - Where is the setting of this passage?

2. Compare it:
   - Can you think of a time that you felt any of the feelings that Paul says he feels in this passage?
   - What does Paul compare the earth to?

3. Associate it:
   - What things remind you of your mom or brother or friend?
   - Is there an incident that you recall, or a feeling you get from this passage?
   - Describe what Paul is feeling.

4. Analyze it:
   - What does the earth symbolize to Paul?
   - Why does he compare the Earth to his mother?
   - Name one comparison Paul makes in this passage.
   - How does Paul’s relationship with his own mother compare to the one he has with the Earth?

5. Apply it:
   - Think of a time you were afraid, what calms you down?
   - How does the soldier calm his fears?
   - Would you rather have air? Or Earth?
   - What is something that means more to you than to anyone else?

6. Argue For/ Against it:
   - Why does Paul “sing” to the earth?
   - What kind of respect does Paul have for the earth?
   - Why would the Earth mean more to soldiers?
   - Do you believe the Earth does all of these things:
     - shelter
     - bury
     - give life
     - release
     - receive
   - argue for or against

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APPLY IT

DESCRIBE IT

ANALYZE IT

COMPARE IT

ASSOCIATE IT

ARGUE FOR OR AGAINST IT

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# Bloom’s Taxonomy of Thinking Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Taxonomy</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>What Student Does</th>
<th>Verbs for Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Recall or location of specific bits of information</td>
<td>responds absorbs remembers recognizes</td>
<td>tell -- list -- define -- name -- recall -- identify -- remember -- know -- recognize -- repeat -- state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Understanding of communicated material or information</td>
<td>explains translates demonstrates interprets</td>
<td>transform -- change -- restate -- describe -- explain -- review -- paraphrase -- relate -- generalize -- summarize -- interpret -- infer -- give main idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Use of rules, concepts, principles, and theories in new situations</td>
<td>solves novel problems demonstrates uses knowledge constructs</td>
<td>apply -- practice -- employ -- use -- demonstrate -- illustrate -- show -- report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Breaking down information into its parts</td>
<td>discusses uncovers lists dissects</td>
<td>analyze -- dissect -- distinguish -- examine -- compare -- contrast -- survey -- investigate -- separate -- categorize -- classify -- organize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Putting together of ideas into a new or unique product or plan</td>
<td>discusses generalizes relates contrasts</td>
<td>create -- invent -- compose -- construct -- design -- modify -- imagine -- produce -- propose -- what if . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Judging the value of materials or ideas on the basis of a set of standards or criteria</td>
<td>judges disputes forms opinions debates</td>
<td>judge -- decide/select/justify -- evaluate -- critique -- debate -- verify -- recommend -- assess</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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