Guided Imagery: Instructions

PURPOSE:
Guided imagery is a pre-reading and pre-writing technique to generate original writing that contains more sensory descriptions, and it sets a pattern for how students can engage in text. This is an exercise that allows students to enter in a creative mode wherein they are able to develop ideas and visualize images using both sides of their brain (Geske, 1992). Three benefits of using a guided imagery according to Samples (1977) are: 1.) builds a structural base for inquiry, discussion and group work, 2.) explores and stretches students’ concepts, and 3.) encourages problem solving.

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1
Ask students to stand up. Have them reach up to the sky and stretch. Lean side to side, touch their toes. Have them stand on one foot and keep their balance. Now have them sit back down. Turn off the lights and close the blinds. Have a string of twinkle Christmas lights strung along the ceiling perimeter at the front of the room. Have them inhale and exhale slowly as a class to help them calm down. Speak in low tones and eventually into a whisper. Begin the official guided imagery:

Step 2
Place your backpack/book-bag on your desk. Comfortably rest your head on your backpack. Close your eyes. Let your arms hang across your desk and dangle off the edge. Relax your muscles; let all the tension drip out of your dangling fingers. Take a deep breath. Hold it for 6 seconds...1...2...3...4...5...6. Now let it out as slowly as you can...1...2...3...4...5...6...7.... Imagine that you are now a part of the backpack you are laying on. You are part of the backpack. Imagine you are
melting into the backpack. You are slowly melting through the fabric. You are relaxed and the melting is warm, you are comfortable as you melt through the fibers. You are inside the backpack now. Inside there are no other colors—just blank. It’s a night sky with no stars. It’s your ceiling at night with the lights out. It’s looking across an ocean at night. You breathe deeply and the air is colder. It is not scary though, you are not afraid. You feel a calm breeze and breath deeply again---inhale, exhale. What can you smell? Is it damp or dry? You look off into the distance and you see something—light. It’s very faint. Like a small star, a flashlight, car lights far away. You wonder what it is. Will you walk towards it? Or back away? Are you alone or is someone with you? The light gets brighter, bigger. It’s a yellow light. How does it make you feel? Now you look at the rest of the sky and see other colors. It looks like someone has thrown paint onto the sky. There are splotches of color. There are colors dripping down on you like rain. Soft blue. Dark green. Dark purple. Grey. Dark blue. Pale yellow. It isn’t a thunder storm, just like a light drizzle, almost mist of colors around you. The paint beings to cover you. Do you run? Do you hide? Or do you dance? Do you lift up your arms? Imagine the feeling of wet paint on your skin. Is it annoying? Or do you like its moisture? Do you smear it across you skin? Or just leave it? Suddenly the colors get brighter. The sky is filled with a deep red. What feelings come to you when you see the sky this color? As you look up at the sky, the paint falls harder, it pours from the sky and splashes all over you and the ground. There are rivers of paint all around you, puddles of it. Its Orange. Lime green. Hot pink. Neon yellow. Turquoise. Bright red. And black. Thick, black paint falls down. It feels like tar and you have a hard time moving in it because it is so heavy and gooey. Do you panic? You see a boulder. There is now a strong wind blowing and its whipping the paint into your face and eyes. You can hardly see anything. You run towards the boulder to avoid the rivers of the paint swelling up around
you. You cling to the boulder. You hold it tightly. Your backpack is your boulder—hold onto your backpack. You hide behind it; you bury your face in it. Cling to it. It is your boulder. Its your refuge and you are safe now. The paint stops falling from the sky. The colors fade away. The rivers of paint slowly trickle to a stop. The wind stops howling and that nice, gentle, warm breeze comes back. Take a deep breath. Relax. You are safe now. The sky returns to its blank, dark, starless night. 

You let go of the boulder. You breathe in the air. It fills your lungs, you melt back through onto your desk. You wiggle your in your desk. What did you feel? Do you still feel different? Open you eyes. You are back.

Step 3
Keep the lights down and the blinds closed—do not disturb the ambiance of the room. Have students get out a black sheet of paper or their class journal and either draw or write what was most powerfully felt to them in the guided imagery. Have them focus on the colors and images they saw and felt. Have them write adjectives to describe how they felt at the different stages in the process. Give up to 10-15 minutes for them to write and sketch. After an appropriate time, turn on the lights (if possible, turn them on gradually). Ask students, who are willing, to share some the feelings and things that they saw and felt.

ASSESSMENT:
Assign students chapter 9 (any chapter may work with this) and have them write in their journals the feelings that Paul had while on the front. Questions for thought: What did he have to hide behind? Was he alone? What must he have felt? Describe the scenery he was in and how it made you feel to read about it. Compare your experience during our in-class guided imagery activity to Paul’s experience on the front lines of war. Have students write a journal entry or write a short essay on these questions.