K-W-H-L Strategy on War: Teacher Instructions

**Purpose of the Strategy**
Adapted from Ogle’s (1992) KWL strategy for the purpose of bridging students current knowledge with new knowledge, the K-W-H-L strategy allows even more interaction and engagement in the reading/learning task. There are 4 steps: 1.) what the **Know**, 2.) what they **Want to find out**, 3.) **How** thy plan to find new information, and 4.) recording what they have **Learned or still want to learn**. This activity works in small groups, individually, or as an entire class.

**Rationale**
Before reading *All Quiet on the Western Front*, it will be important to assess what students already know about war. The World Wars were very unique. I believe it will be powerful to see what students think they know and help them arrive at the “facts” of what war was then and is now.

**Directions**

**Step 1**
INTRODUCE THE STRATEGY
Place an overhead or pre-made poster board where the entire class can see it. For ideas, refer to the example of a KWHL that is included with this strategy. Explain that “this page/poster will be our ‘thinking page’ that we as a class will write down all we know about the topic of war.” Make sure they know that we will keep this poster/page going during the entire time we read the novel, so we can add to it as we go. Ask the students PRIOR to step 2 to write on a piece of paper their ideas, questions, and knowledge of war. Some questions that may help them get into the brainstorming mode could be posted on the overhead or on the white board:
-What happened in World War I?
- Who fights in wars?
- How do wars get started? Why do people fight?
- How do they end? What stops the fighting?
- What do people in wars live like?
- What do families and countries do while the men are out fighting? How does life change for them?
- What is good about war?
- What is bad about war?
- What do you think it would be like to be a soldier?

Step 2
LIST WHAT THEY KNOW
Brainstorm altogether and record the ideas, thoughts, information, questions on the poster board/overhead. Be sure to make the classroom a “safe place” where students feel they can say anything and will not be made fun of, even if they are wrong. Tell students that the list will be referred to later to see what has been learned. Make sure all kids have the chance to add something to the list.

Step 3
LIST WHAT THEY WANT TO LEARN
Ask students what else they want to know about war. Ask what interests them and ask what they want to study in greater depth. Ask “what do you hope to learn from this book on war?”

Step 4
STUDENTS GENERATE OWN QUESTIONS ABOUT WAR
Spend a few minutes allowing students write on their individual charts some of the questions they have, or some of the things they want to learn more about.

Step 5
DISCUSS HOW TO FIND ANSWERS TO THEIR QUESTIONS
Continue class discussion by asking the students what they think they can do find out more about their questions. Write down the sources offered by students. Be prepared to give a few more sources as a teacher other than encyclopedia and the novel itself. Prompt students to copy these sources from the overhead/poster board onto their individual charts.
Step 6
RESEARCH THE QUESTIONS: FIND ANSWERS
Assess which students have similar questions from their worksheets and form groups of 2-4 with other students who share common questions. Provide books, pamphlets, other sources for students to read through to find answers to the questions they have. One idea may be to schedule the library or a computer lab in which the groups can then read and research for a period on their topic.

Step 7
SHARE ANSWERS WITH THE CLASS
This is a continuation of the previous step. Once students have had time to research, they can present what they learned to the class. Some ideas include: PowerPoint projects, a mini play, create a newspaper page, create a commercial (just act it out in class) commenting on the war—interviewing soldiers or family members. Allow students to be creative. Be sure that after each presentation there is time to record what was learned both on our class chart and the individual student charts. Allow for time to add new questions that may have arisen during their research or from watching another group’s presentation.

Step 8
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES
Use the results from the class and individual charts to create further charts, maps, outlines, and written summaries to organize what was learned as a class. Be sure to explain the purpose of the K-W-H-L chart and the importance of it—don’t lose it or throw it away! Stress the idea that learning is ongoing and as reading continues, new knowledge will be added to the chart.

ASSESSMENT

The K-W-H-L strategy allows the teacher to assess what is known about war before the class begins reading the novel. It will make it clear what needs to be “filled in”—what the students do not understand and the teacher can then give more instruction in those areas. Keep the K-W-H-L chart up all through the unit and ask students to update their personal K-W-H-L charts to show them that learning is ongoing.

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