CHALK TALK (DISCUSSION STRATEGY)

CATCHER IN THE RYE BY J.D. SALINGER

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Context:

This is to be done around day 9 of the unit, after students have read about Holden’s encounters with the nuns and his feelings that religion ruins a good conversation.

Purpose:

Students have just found out that Holden is atheist. This activity will allow them to discuss and analyze how religious beliefs affect a person’s identity. It will call for self-analysis and get students thinking about how they are affected by different groups or ways of thinking. Since this is a heavy topic, the chalk talk will prevent students from angrily shouting or reacting to others’ words. Those feelings might exist, but writing words should help students think more about what they say.

Directions:

Materials: 1 white-board marker per student, signs with the questions, tape

Time: 30 minutes

Step 1:

Draw students’ attentions to the questions that are on the board, on signs:

- Does religion affect your daily choices? How?
- Does religion affect how you view the world? How?
- Are those without religious beliefs also without morals? Why or Why not?

Step 2:

Allow students to free write in their journals about one or more of the questions. After about 10 minutes, proceed to step 3. Check student work by circulating to make sure that there is a flow of ideas being generated by each student, in order to ensure full participation.

Step 3:
Show students the markers and explain that each needs to respond to at least two of the questions on the board, and comment on 2 other student comments. Remind them of the rules of etiquette for discussions: that each opinion deserves to be heard and that above all else, be respectful.

Step 4:

As the activity slows and you see that all students have participated, ask students to take their seat and thank them for their silence. Allow a few minutes for them to read and synthesize the information.

Assessment:

Have students fill out an exit slip where they can write their closing argument on the topic and share their feelings about how the silent discussion went.
Does religion affect your daily choices? How?
Does religion affect how you view the world? How?
Are those without religious beliefs also without morals? Why or why not?