Virginia Euwer Wolff’s Make Lemonade

Questioning Strategy: Cubing with Bloom’s

Purpose of the Strategy
Bloom’s taxonomy is a hierarchy of thinking tasks that encourages students to move towards higher-order critical thinking and analysis. Cubing is a technique that allows students to think about and respond to types of questions along all steps of Bloom’s hierarchy.

Rationale
Bloom’s taxonomy allows students to examine a topic, a character, or a section of the text from a variety of perspectives, thus increasing concept retention and comprehension. Questions and answers generated by the cubing strategy form excellent springboards for extended writing assignments or further class discussion. The cubing strategy itself helps less verbal students participate fully in the class discussion, and helps keep student engagement high thanks to the kinesthetic nature of the cube itself.

Introducing Bloom’s
If students are not already familiar with each of the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, you can introduce the hierarchy using a sorting activity:
1. Create word strips for various types of cognitive tasks that can be sorted into a level of Bloom’s (text for these can be found at the end of this document).
2. Break students into groups and hand out several word strips to each group.
3. Post the six levels of Bloom’s and ask students to sort each type of thinking into one of the categories. Post their strips on a poster or on the board within the categories.
4. Explain/discuss that Bloom’s is a way of thinking about thinking, and that each level asks us to do different kinds of work with a text. Emphasize that we must use all of the levels in our schoolwork and our lives in order to think deeply about a subject at hand.
5. Leave the list of cognitive tasks visible while you teach the cubing activity.

Cubing: Preparation
Create a six-sided cube out of heavy paper or cardboard, fill it with some kind of weight (such as beans or paperclips), and write each of the six levels of Bloom’s taxonomy on a side. Patterns for cubes can be found online (http://www.enchantedlearning.com/math/geometry/solids/Cubetemplate.shtml, for example), or you can use an empty square tissue box.

Cubing: Phase One—Teacher-Generated Questions
Choose a topic, character, or section of the novel to focus discussion on. Prepare a series of questions that addresses that part of the text using each level of Bloom’s (example questions for Part 1 are included at the end of this document).
Toss the cube to a student. Explain that whichever category lands face-up on the cube is the type of question the student must answer (for example, if the cube lands with “Application” facing up, ask the student question 5 or 6 from the list). Encourage students to use the text to answer the questions as needed.

Discuss as a class the student’s answer and why the question is an example of that level of Bloom’s taxonomy. Continue by having the student toss the cube to another student until several questions have been asked, answered, and discussed.

**Cubing: Phase Two—Student-Led Brainstorming and Chaining Activity**

Next, as a group, brainstorm more questions that can be asked about the text that fall into each of the six categories. Write these questions on the board or overhead and leave them posted. Continue to toss the cube around the room, with students choosing a question to answer from those brainstormed by the class.

From here, the activity can be morphed into a chaining activity: Instruct the student holding the cube that she must come up with a question that falls into the category facing up on the cube. She then tosses the cube to another student, who must answer the first student’s question. Then the second student asks a question using the category that landed face-up when the cube was tossed to her, and then tosses the cube to a third student (who, in turn, answers the second student’s question). The activity continues with students building a “chain” of questions and answers around the classroom.

**Cubing: Phase Three—Independent Student Work**

Finally, bring the class back together with a discussion about the activity. Point out that there are so many different questions we can ask about a text or a situation, but that we usually only focus on one kind of question—those in the “Knowledge” category. Ask, “Why is it important to use all of these different levels of thinking?”

Assign students to begin reading Part 2 and to note questions they may ask (using each of the six levels of Bloom’s, of course) based on that section of the text. Have them bring their questions to class the next day as homework, and then pass out the questions to other students to use as an informal quiz on the reading assignment.
Cognitive Tasks for Bloom’s Taxonomy

1. **Knowledge**: arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, state.

2. **Comprehension**: classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate.

3. **Application**: apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.

4. **Analysis**: analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.

5. **Synthesis**: arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.

6. **Evaluation**: appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, compare, defend, estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate.

Matheson, BYU, 2008
Sample Questions Using Part 1 of *Make Lemonade*

1. **Knowledge**: What is the “big idea” that LaVaughn proposes Jolly do at the end of section 1?
2. **Knowledge**: How did LaVaughn’s dad die?
3. **Comprehension**: Why was LaVaughn so upset when Jeremy cut Jilly’s hair? (What was she afraid would happen?)
4. **Comprehension**: Why does LaVaughn’s mom want her to get another job?
5. **Application**: Think of a time when your parents didn’t want to you be around another person. Were they right? Why or why not?
6. **Application**: What would you do if you were LaVaughn’s mom—would you let her work for Jolly or not?
7. **Analysis**: Why does Virginia Euwer Wolff write so much detail about Jeremy and Jilly?
8. **Analysis**: Is Jolly a likeable character? What does Wolff do to make her that way?
9. **Synthesis**: What is one thing you have learned from reading *Make Lemonade* so far?
10. **Synthesis**: What do LaVaughn’s mom and Jolly have in common?
11. **Evaluation**: Is Jolly making the right choice to go back to school? Why or why not?
12. **Evaluation**: From time to time, LaVaughn stops working for Jolly (for example, when her grade in Math slips). Where should LaVaughn draw the line and quit once and for all? What should be her “final straw?” Why?