Purpose: The DR-TA Strategy – or directed reading-thinking activity – is used to foster critical awareness by guiding students through a reading process that involves prediction, verification, judgment, and extension of thought. The teacher reads a selection with students, and stops at pre-determined, logical stopping points and asks three questions, which encourage students to both become more involved in the material and to think more deeply about what is happening:

1) What do you think will happen next?
2) Why do you think so?
3) What else might happen?

Directions:

Step One –

Explain to students that as we are reading Act III, Scene 1 together as a class, we will be stopping at pre-determined points to discuss what is happening, and what we expect will happen next. Tell them not to read ahead of the stopping point. If desired, hand out sticky-notes for them to put over the first line they should not read, so that they do not accidentally go further than they are supposed to. Choose students to read out loud each of the parts of characters involved in the scene (Duke, Claudio, Isabella, Provost). Begin reading the scene.

Step Two –

Stop reading after Isabella’s entrance, after line 43. Ask the three questions, encouraging students to go further with their thinking, and challenging them to back up their opinions with evidence from the text. Discussion should last 3-5 minutes.

Step Three –

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Continue reading. Stop again at the end of Isabella’s statement on line 98 (“…Thou mightst be freed!”) Repeat Questions. Repeat this pattern, reading and stopping at the following points to ask questions:

- Line 135, when Claudio finishes by saying, “…That it becomes a virtue.” (How do students think Isabella will react to Claudio’s plea?)
- After Duke’s entrance, before he speaks, line 150. (Encourage students to predict what action the Duke will take at this point. Later, compare what they thought he would/should do to what he did.)
- Line 257, after Duke finishes saying, “What think you of it?” (How do they think Isabella will react? Will she go along with the Duke’s plan?)
- End of scene.

Step Four –
Discuss how the scene played out. What surprised the students? Why do they think the characters acted the way they did? All the characters acted according to their own personal set of priorities – what priorities does each character display by his or her actions? Do the students think any of the characters should have acted differently? In what way? Why?

Step Five –
Assign writing assignment for homework. First, students will make a list of their top 10 priorities in life. Then, they will write 2-3 paragraphs explaining these priorities and the way they are organized. Third, they will write a page analyzing the actions and priorities of the characters, based on the scene we just read. Prompt questions for this page write-up can be the same as the last questions in the class discussion: All the characters acted according to their own personal set of priorities – what priorities does each character display by his or her actions? Why do they think the characters acted the way they did? Do the students think any of the characters should have acted differently? In what way? Why?

Assessment: Student involvement in the class discussion will display how well they are understanding the text and characters. The end discussion will encourage them to think about how the scene applies to one of the themes of the play: priorities. Their writing assignment will encourage them to think about that theme in relation to themselves and the text. The teacher may either have the students hand in the written assignments for review, or discuss them in class (in groups or as a full-class).

Maybe the Duke’ll take off his disguise and fix the mess.

I think Isabella’s just going to sleep with the guy.

What would I do if it were me?!