Chalk Talk
Instructional Routine Guide

Context: This instructional routine is a great during reading strategy that allows students to tangle with the themes of the text. In this unit, the activity will also help them to think about and form opinions in response to a question that will be part of their final photo essays. For this unit, this activity falls on Day 10, although there are other chalk talks on days 3 and 13. The same instructional routine could be used for those chalk talks as well, but the question or topic for the chalk talk would be different. Before doing this activity, students should have read to page 125 of this book. Reading to here will help them to see how Satrapi and other characters in the book respond to the destruction of their freedom.

Statement of Purpose: Through this activity, students are introduced to one of the main themes of the novel: loss of freedom. Students are given the opportunity to really explore this theme in a structured manner. Each student will get a chance to respond to the question posed during the chalk talk. This question will not only help them explore the theme in regards to the book, but this activity allows them to make personal connections to themes from the book.

Materials Needed:
• White Board/Chalk Board
• Dry Erase Markers/Chalk
• Computer and a Projector or an Overhead Projector
• Class Roll or list of students to mark the number of thoughtful comments they make
• Individual student copies of the novel

Directions:
Step 1: After students have finished their journal write for bellwork on Day 10. Explain to them that for the next twenty or so minutes, you (the instructor) are the only one who can talk. Using an overhead or computer projection, project the classroom directions for this activity. Read through the directions with students and make sure everything is very clear. Tell students that if they have a question during the activity, they can write it down and bring it to you. Students should be somewhat familiar with this activity as you will have previously done a chalk talk on Day 3 of the unit.

Step 2: Focus students attention to the white board where the question “How far should we go to protect our freedom?” should be written on the board. You might want to cover it up and then reveal it once everyone is focused on the board. This gives all the students equal time to think about the question.

Step 3: Start the chalk talk activity. Only allow three students to be writing on the board at once. You may want to only have three markers up on the white board so that even if a fourth student walks up to the board, they won’t have anything to write with. Then you can tell students to remain in their seats until there is an available marker. While they are not commenting on the board, students should write down two or three comments from their peers that they really liked or that they found interesting or that they hadn’t considered beforehand. Have them write down their peer’s comment and then their thoughts about it so you can see both.

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Step 4: Encourage students to not only respond to the question, but also respond to their peers’ responses. I suggest making it mandatory that they make a certain number of comments (say 2 or 3) and that one of them has to be a response to what someone else writes.

Step 5: As the activity goes on, on a class roll write down the number of comments that each student makes. This will allow you to give a grade to students for participating in the activity.

Step 6: While students are responding, note any particularly interesting responses. These can be used as a new discussion prompt if the discussion slows or to push the conversation in a different direction. You may even want to engage in the activity with students and make comments as well. Avoid writing things like “Great comment!” and instead engage in the discussion itself. You may even want to pose a new question, for example, “How should a person respond when, in their fight to protect their freedom, their life is threatened?” Remember though, the students should be in control of the discussion. Your primary role is to sit near the back of the class or out of the way and observe your students.

Step 7: As you are nearing the end of the conversation (either because the time is up or because the question has been thoroughly discussed) make sure each student has had a chance to make their required number of responses. To do so, you might want to give students a five minute warning and encourage those who have not completed the required number of responses to get up and comment.

Step 8: After students have thoroughly exhausted the question, thank students for their participation in the chalk talk. Explain to them that they will need to answer this question in the final unit project so it will be useful for them to continue thinking about this question as they finish reading the book. If you are following this unit plan, you have not introduced the final photo essay assignment yet, so don’t say anything more than that.

Step 9: Have students hand in the comments they recorded and their thoughts on those comments. Then, move into the next activity for the day. Leave the chalk talk up on the whiteboard so that students can see it throughout the class period.

Assessment: This activity is an assessment in and of itself. You should record the number of responses that each student makes during the activity. Give them a specific number of comments they have to make. If you have a particularly engaged class and you are worried that some students will dominate the activity, you may want to tell them that if they have made three or four comments they should stop there. Another part of the assessment for this activity is that students should hand in the comments they recorded and their thoughts about those comments.
1. During this activity you will need to be completely silent. The only person who may speak is the instructor.

2. A question or statement will be written on the board and you should write thoughtful responses in a web format (see below).

3. Your responses should be full sentences.

4. You may also respond to something that one of your classmates writes. When making those types of responses, avoid comments like, “Great idea.” or “I agree.” Make your responses thoughtful and engage with the content of the chalk talk.

5. You should make at least ___ comments. One of these comments should be a response to something one of your classmates writes. Your grade for this activity depends on whether you make the appropriate number of comments.

6. Only three people may be up at the board at once. If there are already three people at the board, wait until one of them sits down before you go up to the board.

7. Be respectful of other people’s comments.

8. While other people are responding, record at least two comments that other people make that you find interesting, you agree or disagree with, or you had not considered beforehand. After recording their comment, write down your thoughts about their comment. This will be handed in at the end of the activity.

9. If you have any questions or concerns during this activity, write them down and bring them over to the instructor.

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