Fishbowl Discussion

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD
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FISHBOWL DISCUSSION

CONTEXT:
This activity would be best used after the students have read through Act II. This act has many references and discussions on death which can be used as prompts for student discussions on death.

PURPOSE:
The Fishbowl Discussion strategy allows for a class discussion in which every student participates. It gives the students who don’t usually speak up a chance to voice their opinions before themselves and their peers.

RATIONALE:
In Act II of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, death is heavily focused on. There are many thought provoking quotes on death as well as viewpoints presented by different characters which students can discuss. This is an ideal time to discuss this topic and this strategy is ideal to involve the entire class.

DIRECTIONS:
MATERIALS NEEDED: Quotes on death handouts. Note taking handout.
TIME: 30 minutes

STEP ONE:
DISTRIBUTE THE HANDOUTS
Pass out the handout which has quotes from Act II, which the students have just read. Tell the students to read through the quotes and generate ideas of good questions to ask and ideas to discuss. Explain to the students that a good question is one that cannot be answered with one word. Tell them to look at the bottom of their sheet of quotes for examples of good questions to ask. They can use these questions in the discussion, or if they think of any on their own, they can use those as well. To help them generate good ideas, show them how to make a mind-map on the whiteboard of all the things they know about death and the characters.

STEP TWO:
PAIR SHARE
Ask the students to choose a specific question they would like to answer, write for 2 or 3 minutes about it, free write on their own paper, and then turn to a neighbor and talk about their ideas, opinions and
questions related to the quotes. Tell the students they may choose to discuss just one quote, or they can discuss them all as a whole. Tell the students to take notes on the discussion they have with their neighbor so that when the discussion begins they may take the notes with them to help guide their discussion. Allow enough time for a reasonable exchange of ideas; you can monitor their progress by walking around the room and listening in.

STEP THREE:

MODEL A FISHBOWL

Demonstrate for the students the format and expectations of a fishbowl discussion by conducting a “dry run” of the activity. Decide on four of five students who have chosen the same question to discuss to come and sit in a cluster of desks in the middle of the room and have the other students form a circle around the cluster. Ask the students to bring with them in the circle only: a copy of the play, the notes they have taken with their neighbors, and some more blank paper to take more notes on as the discussion happens. Ask the students to look to their notes they have taken with their neighbor as the discussion begins. Start them off by asking the question again. Try to get the discussion going in a certain way, only jumping in when they seem stuck. Ask the students in the outer circle to listen carefully to the discussion in the middle and to take notes: Do they agree or disagree with what is being said? What would they add to the comment they agree or disagree with? What in the play lead them to this conclusion? Allow the middle discussion to continue for about five minutes, getting involved only if the discussion dies or to ensure everyone is contributing and taking turns. When discussion time is up, ask the other students to make the comments or ask the questions which have generated during the discussion time.

STEP FOUR:

REPEAT

When the next set of volunteers sit in the middle, this time tell the students that all are to participate. They will all participate by tapping in when they have something to say. Those on the outer circle should be paying attention and looking for places where they can jump in the conversation by simply tapping someone in the middle on the shoulder and taking their place. This could become slightly chaotic, so ask the students to only tap into the conversation one at a time and only to tap out those who have already had a chance to speak.

ASSESSMENT:

This activity has allowed for each student to be involved in a discussion on the topics related to this play and has allowed you to observe the discussions and ideas. Require the students to turn in the notes they have taken during discussion; this will keep them thinking and hopefully generating ideas throughout the discussion.