GUIDED IMAGERY
THE SCARLET LETTER

Purpose of the Strategy

Guided imagery is a strategy that allows students to explore concepts visually. It is commonly used as a prereading/prewriting technique to introduce the text. Guided imagery also can be used during the reading of the text in order to help students “see” in their minds what they read.

The scene chosen for this strategy is actually taken from Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter. It is the opening scene of the novel when Hester Prynne is released from prison. The students will be “put in her shoes” and experience what she experienced.

DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Assistance in Building the Dream

Begin by asking students to first stretch, inhale slowly, exhale, and relax. Help them to find a comfortable position where they can close their eyes and listen. By talking slowly and calmly, take the students into the alternate world that you want them to enter. In this case, they will be lead outside of a prison. Soft music playing in the background (Last of the Mohicans soundtrack-Track 7 or 11) and dimming the lights in the classroom will help the students more easily enter the alternate world desired.

Step 2: Reading

Read the story or series of prompts slowly. Give students about 30 seconds in between statements to visualize each image. The students will listen with their eyes closed.

Step 3: Writing

Have the students open their eyes and write down as many of the descriptive images that they can remember. How did they feel in front of all those people? What were they thinking? What did they do? Give them several minutes to write. If necessary, have them close their eyes again, listen to the music, and relive the experience. What more can they see and feel? Again, have them write down what they have experienced. Encourage those who wish to share to do so with the class.

ASSESSMENT

Because this is generally a prereading technique, there isn’t a required “assessment.” It is a way for the students to open up and connect with what they read. It could be handed in, but some things might be too personal for the students to share.

Shean, BYU, 2003
EXAMPLE OF GUIDED IMAGERY
THE SCARLET LETTER

STEP 1

Close your eyes…Try to relax all the muscles in your body…Clear your mind…You are in a prison…You see the lock of the prison door undone and opened…A guard puts his right hand on your shoulder and draws you forward…You step forward through the doorway and are standing on top of four cement steps…The sun shines in your face for the first time in twelve months…How bright is it?…Your first instinct is to hold on tight to your three month old daughter…There is a huge crowd staring at you with angry faces…The whole town must be there, maybe 1,000 people…You are commanded to walk from the prison-door to the marketplace…You step onto a wooden platform, a stage…Is it weird to walk?…A thousand people yell at you and call you bad names…A roar of laughter is heard while fingers point at you…Why are they so mean?…What are they saying?…You look down at your infant daughter and then look out at the crowd…What do you want to say?…Tell your muscles to begin to move…Open your eyes.

STEP 2

Take about ten minutes to write down what you saw and how you felt. This is a free write, so write down whatever came to your mind. Describe the details of the prison, the town, the people in the crowd, etc. Especially try to recall specific emotions and thoughts.

ASSESSMENT

This is a free write and won’t be turned in. However, hold on to your papers. Do not lose them. You can look at this activity again after we read the novel.

Shean, BYU, 2003