Text set for English as a Second Language Students Grades 9-12

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Introduction

This literature-based text set includes eight books in the genres of fiction and historical fiction. These books will be used as a supplement to the textbook. The common theme of these books is that they are all written as letters or as diary entries. One book is fantasy. The other seven books relate to struggles that students may be facing as they enter new schools or as they enter life in a new culture in these United States. The readability of this text set is from grade 5.0 through 9.8. These books are an excellent source of information for the LEP 3 student. Students at LEP 3 can comprehend the context of many texts independently and can read many books for pleasure. However, they do not always read at grade level.

In the historical fiction students will become aware that immigrants faced many of the same obstacles about language, acceptance and culture that students now encounter. The fiction will help the ESL student understand that teenagers do have problems, even in the United States of America.

The text set includes eight books. These books have both boys and girls as the main characters. The text set will let students see that they are not unique in the difficulties that they have in their homes, schools and in the cultural clashes they may encounter. The students can also envision themselves writing letters or making diary entries.

This literature-based set will serve as a tool to reinforce the skill of “writing letters, short stories and explanations” that is required by the SOL. Each book is written as either a series of letters or as a diary. This introduces letter writing to the class. Since the books in the text set do not provide instruction for creating letters they must be used as a supplement to the textbook. The books are written as a series of letters to encourage the students to view letter writing as a form of communication and not simply as another task to accomplish. The student will also learn that there are many acceptable ways of communicating when they write a letter. Each writer has their own style of writing.

SOL Connection

Writing LEP 3.10  The student will write stories, letters, simple explanations and short reports across all content areas.

The Text Set

1. Dreams In The Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl
   Grade 6.3
   Historical Fiction
   Gender of main character: Girl, Zipporah

Introduction and Summary

This piece of literature will help the student understand some of the difficulties that a twelve year old girl and her two older sisters ages 15 and 17 have when they enter the United States. In this book there are simple explanations for activities that Zipporah,
the main character, does not accept or understand. This book will fulfill the SOL requirement of “writing simple explanations”.

This book is about a girl who comes to this country from Russia. In Russia everyone called America the Golden Country. Zipporah’s apartment is small and dark. This country seems dark for her especially when she enters school and is placed in a first grade class. The following year she finds herself in the eighth grade. As she acculturates her life becomes brighter. She follows her dream to become an actor.

Rationale

This text will be used to introduce the students to journal writing. The book will hold the readers’ attention because it is filled with experiences that immigrant high school students will relate to. Since Zipporah is a twelve year old immigrant with teenaged sisters the students will be able to relate to her. The book is set in the early 1900s. Even so, the process for adjusting to a new culture has not changed. This will allow the students to relate to Zipporah and her family as they make mistakes, learn a new language and adjust to a new culture.

Usage of Text

This book will be used outside of the classroom. While students at LEP 3 are approaching a grade level mastery of language structures and vocabulary many do not read at their grade level. The book is a supplement to the textbook and should be used with the textbook. For scaffolding purposes it is important to provide vocabulary words before students read the novel. Comprehension questions should be provided so that they can be answered as the student is reading the novel. The student will read the book independently and answer questions so that they can discuss important issues upon their return to class.

Readability

The readability of the text is a 6.3 based on the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. A Bader analysis indicates that major ideas are not highlighted. There are few headings or subheadings. The vocabulary does not exceed a seventh grade reading level but does include some Yiddish words that should be reviewed before independent reading since they may not be decodable by the context of the story. The students should read this book independently so that they can improve their reading comprehension. The schema already exists in the ESL student for processing the ideas presented in this book. However, a teacher may provide more scaffolding for a reluctant learner.

Reference:


2. Diary of a Wimpy Kid
Introduction and Summary

Diary of a Wimpy Kid is a novel that is written as a diary in a cartoon format. This book will allow the student to experience a year of middle school with the main character, Greg Heffley. The student will understand that all students experience trepidation in a new school. The students will laugh as Greg describes his frequent awkward social experiences. This book will meet the SOL requirement of “writing stories and simple explanations.”

This is a story of a middle school boy who agonizes about every detail of his school and social life. He records his experiences in a journal. He is very careful to call his book a journal and begins by telling the reader not to expect “Dear Diary”. Greg and his best friend are undersized weaklings in a school where some of the boys are giants. He chronicles nearly anything that could happen to a child in middle school. This includes parents, friends, school, playing (which is now called ‘hanging out’ since he is no longer in elementary school), P. E. class, girls and even snow days in this novel. As his best friend, Rowley, becomes more popular Greg takes drastic action to save their friendship. Greg encounters embarrassment on nearly every page. Even so, he survives the first year of middle school.

Rationale

This story is told in the first person by an adolescent student in a new school. A reluctant reader will find this book engaging because the main character is someone with whom the reader can easily identify. The ESL student could easily feel out of place in a new school just like Greg, the main character. Because the ESL student could easily feel out of place there is an instant connection between Greg and the student. This makes the story more interesting to read, especially for a struggling reader. Also, the font in the book is somewhat large and may seem less intimidating to the emergent reader.

Usage of Text

This book could be used inside and outside of the classroom. Inside the classroom it would be an excellent Buddy Reader since the book requires little prior academic knowledge other than life experiences. Even though the text is mainly for enjoyment it provides an excellent example of journal entries and short stories. Vocabulary words should be provided for the students prior to reading the book. Comprehension questions should be provided so that a brief discussion of the book can be shared. This book could open a discussion about acceptable behavior in the ESL students’ new culture.

Readability

The readability of this book is calculated at 6.1 by the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. A Bader analysis reveals no surprises. There are few headings. Main ideas are not highlighted. The book is short and it does not use words above a seventh grade reading level. At the high school level the instructor should be able to assign the text as
an independent reading assignment. Through the discussion of comprehension questions the teacher will be able to evaluate whether the student is able to comprehend the text.

Reference:


3. **Dear Enemy**
   Grade 9.3
   Fiction
   Gender of main character: Girl, Sallie McBride

Introduction and Summary
   This is a piece of fiction set in an orphanage in New York. The text is composed entirely of letters written from Sallie McBride to her fiancé, her best friend, her best friend’s husband and Dr. MacRae. The book fulfills the requirement of “writing stories or letters”.

   **Dear Enemy** finds Sallie McBride as a new college graduate who has just received a letter asking her to oversee an orphanage. This is of no interest to her. Instead she would like to go to the theatre and spend time with her fiancé. However, she accepts the position and makes changes that benefit both the children and the institution. Along the way she meets Dr. MacRae, who is, at times, charming but more frequently he is moody. During Sallie McBride’s thirteen month stay at the orphanage there is a fire, a break up with Sallie’s fiancé and a new love interest. Throughout the book the reader understands that some of life’s greatest rewards are found when the followed path is different than the one we intended to take.

Rationale
   The text will be used to inspire readers who were uprooted from their homes when their family moved to a new country. The book is filled with drama, humor and a realization that the main character is not following her dream but is adapting to the new challenges around her. The readers will identify with Sallie. She has graduated and is trying to make a new life. The children in the orphanage don’t have their families. The ESL reader can identify with a child who is homesick for their former home and family members that they may have left behind.

Usage of Text
   This text should be used in the classroom. It will supplement the textbook. This book would be an excellent read aloud. The teacher should read the book aloud to the class. It would be appropriate to give advanced readers a text so that they can follow along. For scaffolding purposes vocabulary words should be administered before reading the text. Comprehension questions should be provided so that the book can be discussed.
Readability

The readability of the text is based on the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. It was calculated at 9.3. A Bader analysis indicates that vocabulary is not summarized. Major ideas are not highlighted. The book is near the frustration level of many students in the class. For this reason the teacher should assist the student. The teacher may need to provide more scaffolding techniques to ensure the readers’ comprehension.

Reference:


4. Christmas Letters
Grade 7.3
Fiction
Gender of main characters, Female, a mother named Birdie, a daughter named Mary and a grand daughter named Melanie

Introduction and summary

This book is a short piece of literature that is written as a series of Christmas letters spanning three generations and fifty-two years. The text will aid students in understanding cultural changes that took place during that time. This book will fulfill the SOL requirement of “writing letters stories and short explanations.”

The first letter finds Birdie as a new mother who is filled with sadness because she lives in North Carolina while her family is in West Virginia. Her husband is away, fighting in World War II. As the years progress Birdie’s family grows. She wrote her last Christmas letter in 1967, the year that her husband passed away. Mary wrote her first Christmas letter the same year. The letters are filled with family stories, recipes and emotion. The final letter is written in 1996 by Birdie’s grand daughter. The letters provide a glimpse into the joys and trials that take place over the years in a family. Also, the language used in the letters changes to reflect the language of the era.

Rationale

This book will be used to engage the reader because it is filled with emotion. The ESL student will understand the mixed feelings of sadness, joy, fear and disappointment when they move to a new home. The student will learn about expressing feelings when writing. This text will activate a schema in students who have moved away from what is familiar.

Usage of Text

Christmas Letters will be used to enhance the students’ study of the letter writing skill. The book will be read inside and outside the classroom. It is important to administer vocabulary words prior to reading the text for scaffolding purposes. There are many details in the text. For this reason the text would be ideal for a ReQuest activity. This enjoyable text would also be an excellent Buddy reader. Comprehension questions should be provided to aid in discussion of the text.
Readability

The readability of the text is based on the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. It places this book at a level of 7.3. A Bader analysis reveals that main ideas are not highlighted. There are no headings or subheadings. The book is short. It is important that the instructor assists the students in class by providing some historical background. Some students may be able to read the book independently. Through discussion of comprehension question the teacher will be able to evaluate readers’ ability to understand the text.

Reference:


5. Dear Bruce Springsteen
   Grade 5.0
   Fiction
   Gender of Main Character: Boy, Terry

Introduction and Summary

This book will fulfill the “letter writing” requirement of the SOL. The book is written as a collection of letters to Bruce Springsteen from a fourteen year old boy.

Terry, the main character, has difficulties in his math class, girl troubles and dyes his hair. His father left the family. Terry found him and spent some time with him. Dad has a new girlfriend and plays in a band. After spending time with dad Terry returned home and organized a successful concert to raise money for a neighbor. Terry is not bothered when Bruce Springsteen does not return his letters.

Rationale

The text will engage readers of many levels because the book is written in the first person by a 14 year old who has the same issues that the reader may face. Readers will see themselves in the main character. He is fourteen years old and trying to find his place in the world. The text is written as correspondence, introducing letter writing as a form of communication.

Usage of Text

The text will be used both inside and outside of the classroom. For a struggling reader vocabulary words should be provided. It is critical that the reader reads the text prior to class so that comprehension questions can be answered in class. Comprehension questions can be discussed in groups. This text would be an excellent selection for both buddy reading and choral reading.

Readability
The readability of this text is a 5.0 based on the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. A Bader analysis indicated that there are no subheadings. New vocabulary is not highlighted. Vocabulary words are below a sixth grade level. This should enable the accomplished ESL student to read this book independently. The emergent reader may have some success with this book but the instructor should be available to offer assistance. The teacher should be able to determine if the students are having trouble comprehending through discussion of the comprehension questions.

Reference:


6. **P. S. Longer Letter Later**
   
   Grade 8.1
   
   Fiction
   
   Gender of main characters; girls, Elizabeth and Tara*Starr

Introduction and Summary

This book is a series of letters written by two seventh grade girls when one of the girls moves to another state. It fulfills the SOL requirement of “writing letters.”

This text is about two girls who are best friends even though their economic backgrounds are different. Tara*Starr has young parents. They live in an apartment and barely make ends meet. Elizabeth’s family lives in a large home. They have a maid and a cook. Tara*Starr experiences fear and loneliness as a new student when her family moves to Ohio. She develops strategies for making friends. During this time Elizabeth’s dad loses his job and begins drinking. The big house and furnishings are sold. Elizabeth’s mom gets a job that supports the family in a one bedroom apartment. Dad chooses to leave the family. Life is tough for Elizabeth and her family. The girls discover that they can depend on themselves and each other even though they are miles apart.

Rationale

This text will engage readers because the characters are close to the age of the readers. The characters in the story experience feeling uncertain about their lives. The ESL student will connect with both Tara*Starr and Elizabeth because of their shared experiences of moving and making new friends. The students will realize that even when separated by distance friends can help each other.

Usage of Text

This book will be used in the classroom. It will be a supplement to the text. For scaffolding purposes it will be necessary to administer vocabulary words. Comprehension questions should be provided prior to reading. This book would be excellent for choral reading or as a read aloud. As a read aloud the student could follow the text while the teacher reads. Discussion of comprehension questions will provide the teacher with feedback to determine whether students are comprehending the text.
Readability

Readability is based on the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. It was calculated at a level of 8.1. A Bader analysis indicated no surprises. New vocabulary and ideas were not highlighted. It is necessary to assist the students with reading because for many of the students the book will be at the frustration level. Comprehension questions will aid in discussion of the text.

Reference:


7. Letters From a Slave Boy: the Story of Joseph Jacobs

Grade 8.7
Fiction
Gender of main character: Boy, Joseph

Introduction and Summary

This book is written in letters from a slave boy to his mother and sister. It fulfills the SOL requirement of “writing letters.”

This story is about Joseph Jacobs. He is a mixed race slave and believes that his mother is in New York while she is really hiding in the house where Joseph lives in North Carolina. She hides for seven years. Shortly after being reunited the mother leaves because she fears for her life. Joseph lives in Massachusetts, California, Australia and aboard a whaling ship. Joseph can never be free because his freedom has not been bought.

Rationale

This text will be used to engage reluctant readers. This story is told in the first person by a boy who becomes an adult as he writes this book. There is drama and suspense in the story to help engage the reader. The reader can sense the struggle Joseph faces because he doesn’t know where he belongs. The ESL student may not know where they belong either. However, the student has more freedom to make choices than Joseph has in the book. This text will activate a schema for all students because it is told in first person.

Usage of Text

This book will be used inside the classroom. It is necessary to provide vocabulary words prior to the student reading the novel for scaffolding purposes. This book should be used as a read aloud since there are racial terms in the text that were commonplace during the nineteenth century. The students should be advised not to use these words. Comprehension questions may be used to encourage discussion.
Readability

The 8.7 readability assessment is based on the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. The Bader analysis indicates that new ideas are not highlighted. New vocabulary is not summarized. The book uses vocabulary that the ESL student will not understand. This book is near the frustration level for most LEP 3 students and should be used with teacher assistance. The teacher will be able to evaluate if the student comprehends the text through discussion and comprehension questions. More scaffolding techniques may be needed in order to insure that the students are comprehending the text.

Reference:


8. The Mislaid Magician or Ten Years After
   Grade 9.8
   Fiction
   Gender of main characters: Female, Kate and Cecy
   Male, James and Thomas

Introduction and Summary

This mystery is written as a collection of letters from one cousin to another. The book will fulfill the SOL requirement of “letter writing and story writing.”

This book is set in nineteenth century England. Two cousins, Kate and Cecy, must learn the secret that is shared by a night prowler, a mute girl and a missing magician if they expect to untangle a plot that threatens the unity of the kingdom. Cecy and her husband, James, are sent to investigate while Kate and her husband, Thomas, stay home to care for both couples’ children. The questions in the letters between the cousins multiply as the couples try to unravel connections. Finding answers will require powerful magic.

Rationale

This mystery will hold the attention of students because it is filled with action and intrigue. Boys and girls alike will enjoy the adventure that this novel provides. The text will encourage students to use their imaginations when writing stories and letters.

Usage of Text

This book will be used inside the classroom. It is an excellent read aloud book when read by the teacher. For scaffolding purposes vocabulary words should be administered to the students prior to reading. Comprehension questions should be used inside the classroom. Students will not read this book independently.

Readability
The readability of this text is a 9.8 when evaluated using the Flesh Kincaid Grade Level Assessment. A Bader analysis indicated that new ideas were not highlighted. New vocabulary was not highlighted. This novel is long and will be in the frustration level for most LEP 3 students. The teacher may have to provide more scaffolding techniques in order to ensure that the reader does comprehend the text. The teacher will be able to evaluate whether the student is able to comprehend the text through discussion of the comprehension questions.

Reference: