ACTIVITY TWO: ANNOTATED READ-ALOUD

Reading aloud is a popular reading task in English language classrooms. The task typically targets skills associated with reading, such as fluency, word recognition, and pronunciation. In this week's Teacher's Corner, a read-aloud task is used as the framework for a more demanding task that targets critical thinking skills as well. The task asks learners to process and then summarize the content of a story while reading aloud in a group.

LEVEL

Intermediate and above

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Reading
Speaking

GOALS

During this activity, students will be able to complete the following tasks:

- Read a story aloud.

- Consider, evaluate, and plan a summary of a story while reading.

- Present a verbal summary of a story.

MATERIALS

- Reading: "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allen Poe

PREPARATION

- Print enough copies of the story "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allen Poe for each student.
- Place students into groups of 3-4 students before class by creating a list of students in each group.

1. Begin by putting students in the groups planned before class.

2. Tell the class that today they are going to read a story by Edgar Allen Poe called "The Black Cat."

3. Have each group discuss what they expect the story might be about based on the title and on what they know about Edgar Allen Poe.

4. Ask the class to share what they've discussed in groups, and write the ideas on the board. For example, one group might say they know Edgar Allen Poe wrote scary stories so they expect this story to be scary. Another group might say that black cats are believed to be bad luck in some cultures.

5. Give each group a single copy of the story. Tell the class that one student will read three paragraphs aloud to the group. As the person reads, they will stop at the end of each paragraph to summarize the paragraph for the group. After the first student has read and summarized three paragraphs, the next student in the group will read and summarize the next three paragraphs. The group will continue reading the story by taking turns reading aloud and summarizing.

   a. If possible, model the activity for students using Appendix A as a sample of reading and summarizing. For example, read the first paragraph in Appendix A aloud to the students. At the end, summarize the paragraph using the suggested summary in Appendix A.

6. Once all of the groups have completed the story, hand out more copies of the story so each student has a copy.

7. Direct students to read the story silently.

8. While students read, write the following questions on the board:

   a. What was difficult about reading aloud while summarizing?

   b. What part of the activity was easiest?

   c. Were your group's summaries accurate?

9. When everyone has finished reading, ask students to discuss the questions written on the board in their groups.

10. Finally, bring the class back together and ask for some responses to the questions.

VARIATIONS

Any reading can be used for this activity. The reading should be easy enough for the students to successfully complete the activity, but also difficult enough for them to find the activity challenging.

Another variation might include giving each student a different short text. For example, each student gets a different poem. Students would read aloud and summarize their text, and then the group would evaluate the reader's performance.

APPENDIX A

Sample Annotated Read-Aloud

The Tell-Tale Heart
Edgar Allen Poe

It's true! Yes, I have been ill, very ill. But why do you say that I have lost control of my mind, why do you say that I am mad? Can you not see that I have full control of my mind? Is it not clear that I am not mad? Indeed, the illness only made my mind, my feelings, my senses stronger, more powerful. My sense of hearing especially became more powerful. I could hear sounds I had never heard before. I heard sounds from heaven; and I heard sounds from hell!

Suggested summary:

The person has been sick, but is not crazy. The sickness made the person smarter and improved his hearing. He heard wonderful sounds and horrible sounds.