Elements and Examples: 
A Strategy for Reading and Writing for Literacy Response

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Introduction
I have developed the strategies described in this paper while team-teaching English 10 and 11 Plus classes. These are small team-taught classes composed of many struggling readers and writers who must now pass the ELA 11. Many of these students have difficulties with a variety of skills including (but not limited to) reading comprehension, drawing conclusions from reading material, and writing.

Step One: Identifying the Strategy
Task 3 poses several problems for many students especially those who tend to struggle as readers and writers. The first hurdle is developing a controlling idea that is based on the “Your Task” that is given to students on the assignment page and the two reading passages. This will not be the strategy discussed in this paper but can be found in another chapter entitled, “Take Control: A Strategy For Revising Controlling Ideas”.

This paper will be based on the assumption that students have already developed a strong controlling idea and NOW need to locate examples and literary elements/techniques to back up the controlling idea statement. Students need to stay organized and on track. They need to keep the controlling idea as their focusing point and remember to back up their idea. The examples and literary elements used must support their controlling idea. Often students use
weak literary elements or none at all. Many students also do not locate enough examples from the works of literature.

To help students stay organized and have all the necessary components, I developed a three-page thinksheet for them to complete after they have read the two pieces of literature. The Purpose, Audience, Form section and controlling idea were on the first page. The second page was dedicated to the visuals showing the examples from the story. On the top of this same page the students needed to record their controlling idea again. This was to help them stay focused as to what they were finding examples of. Also at the top of page two, a box labeled “Topic” is given. The students need to jot down what the “Your Task” is asking them to write about. An example of this would be the effects of war on soldiers. Students should also write down the main idea from each passage. This should become their topic sentence for each corresponding paragraph. The third page was for students to record the literary elements/techniques and the examples/details showing how those techniques were used within each passage. Teachers circulated while the students worked on this form.

Step Two: Modeling the Strategy

As a class we completed the Purpose/Audience/Form section. This section is based on the assignment sheet given (the cover page on the Regents exam), in particular the “Your Task” section. Students had to write their own best controlling idea on the proper line. With the Tenth graders, we discussed and listed several possible controlling ideas on the board. Students then had to choose the one they wanted to expound upon.

After the Purpose/Audience/Form section information is completed, the students compile details in the visuals that they will later use to develop their first drafts. Before the students are left to analyze the two pieces of literature on their own, the teacher takes another short piece that the students have already read and shows them how to fill out the example and literary elements visuals. Each visual encourages the students to pay attention to specific examples and literary elements that back up the controlling idea. The visuals are the outline that help the students piece their essays together.

Once the students are familiar with the routine, then they will work on finishing their own thinksheets. Teachers will circulate while the students are working to answer possible questions.
Step Three: Scaffolding the Strategy

After students completed their class assignment, selected students wrote their controlling ideas on the board. These students then discussed the examples they believed proved their controlling ideas. Then they said what literary elements they located and were using from the two passages. They also had to show how each element supported their controlling idea. The other students and the teachers discussed with them whether they made the appropriate choices.

Step Four: Providing Additional Practice

To help students become even more familiar with the visuals, give them the two visuals with several different types of literature. All students need to do is complete the visuals based on what the main idea of the passage is and give the details to support the main idea. Then students need to write the literary elements and the examples that show those elements on the next visual. By having the students complete the forms this way they will become familiar with using them. Students will learn all the necessary parts that they must include in Session 2 – Part A.

Conclusion

This strategy makes use of many steps. Parts are repetitive but it keeps the students focused on the topic, and with lower skilled students having an outline where they can write all the necessary information down is essential. With Session 2 – Part A, students tend to leave certain parts out, especially the literary elements. By following the visuals, students cannot “forget” any part. All parts will eventually become automatic to the students.

Suggestions for other Content Areas

Since the Social Studies and Science tests will be requiring more in-depth writing, part of the thinksheets could be utilized to help students enhance the quality of their writing. Student can fill in the purpose and thesis sentence parts. They can also take the first visual and fill in the main idea part and supporting detail sections.

Thinksheets

Copies are attached.
Thinksheet

What Am I to Include for Session Two Part A?

**Purpose:** For this task, I will be reading for and then writing about....

(topic) ..................................................................................................................

**Audience:** Who is your audience?

..................................................................................................................

**Form:** ............................................................................................................

**Controlling Idea** (Thesis statement that brings the two works together):

..................................................................................................................

.................................................................................................................
**LITERARY ELEMENTS /TECHNIQUES for PASSAGE 1**

| Supporting Detail | Supporting Detail | Supporting Detail |

**LITERARY ELEMENTS /TECHNIQUES for PASSAGE 2**

| Supporting Detail | Supporting Detail | Supporting Detail |