

Rogers, T. (1991). Students as literacy critics: The interpretive experiences, beliefs, and processes of ninth-grade students. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 23, 391-423.

Key Words: Response to reading, text-based discussion

Summary: This study examined how adolescent readers' participation in various instructional processes as literary critics influences responses to reading literature. Eight ninth graders participated. The researchers observed classes and provided a researcher-led instructional unit. All literature discussions were videotaped and transcribed. The students were interviewed before and after the instructional unit. Results revealed that the students tended to build on intertextual critical perspectives and be more interpretive throughout the unit. The traditional type of literary instruction provided the students with limited roles that reduced the complexity of the interpretive process.

Assumptions:

- The processes of literary interpretation are complex and should be understood in terms of students' preferences and beliefs about how literature must be interpreted.

Findings:

- In the regular classes, the students made inferences at an interpretive level that were closely related to characters and events; this behavior reflected their literacy instruction.
- In the instructional unit, the students tended to use more various extratextual sources of information to develop their own interpretations.
- After the students received an alternative response-centered instructional unit, they became more interpretive and intertextual in their reasoning about literary works.
- The processes of literary interpretation varied by individual. That is, the students revealed complex interrelationships between the literary processes, beliefs, and experiences.

Conclusions: Given the importance of students learning to be sophisticated and critical readers, teachers should offer a variety of ways for students to shape their own interpretive processes and build on intertextual information sources.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Analyze the questions you ask in discussion and the types of tasks you ask students to complete. What kinds of thinking and responses to the text do you value?
- Depending on the results of the above, make plans to change or broaden your questions/ tasks.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Help teachers accomplish task #1 above.
- Help teachers consider the theories of comprehension and response to reading that underlie their instructional activities.