Grade 8 Playlist: The Impact of Dialogue

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3:

- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Welcome

How do characters in a story interact with each other? An author's most important tool for creating interactions between characters is dialogue. Dialogue serves many purposes. It can reveal new information about characters and help the reader learn more about them. It can propel the action in a story and build the plot. It can also provoke decisions in stories, which can further propel action or reveal aspects of characters.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- explain how an author uses dialogue to develop characters in literary works.

- identify and understand how dialogue is used to propel action or provoke decisions in literary works.

Review

Key Terms

- **Dialogue** is what is spoken in a story. It includes the conversations between two or more characters in a book, play, or movie.

- An **incident** is something that occurs in a story, or a piece of action in a book, play, or movie. Like dialogue, an incident can reveal aspects of characters, propel the plot, or provoke a decision in a story.

- **Character development** involves the way characters are portrayed to the reader. A successful author will use dialogue and incidents to help portray characters that are believable and life-like. As characters are developed in a story, the reader learns more about them and their roles in the story's plot.

  ◦ **Direct characterization** involves straightforward statements made about the characters. For example, if an author wants to portray a certain character as polite, he or she can do so directly by simply stating, "She was always polite."

  ◦ **Indirect characterization** requires more thought on the reader's behalf. Instead of using adjectives that directly describe a character, an author will portray the character's aspects using words, thoughts, or actions. For example, to show that a character is polite, an author might have the character saying or doing things that a polite person would, such as helping a complete stranger carry groceries or complimenting the cook after a meal.

Practice!

To review how dialogue and incidents in a story build character development, complete this activity:

- https://www.opened.com/homework/8-rl-3-analyze-how-particular-lines-of-dialogue-or-incidents/3711698

Exploring the Standard

Authors develop characters in many ways using dialogue and incidents. Key details assist in revealing aspects of characters, propelling the plot, and provoking decisions in stories.

A Closer Look: Key Details

Many key details can be found in the dialogue of any book, play, or movie. Dialogue can reveal important details about characters, plot, and setting, for example. In this way, dialogue helps to advance the story, whether it is developing characters or propelling the plot. A story may include some lines of dialogue that are more important than others, but it rarely contains meaningless dialogue that serves no purpose at all.

Example 1

In this selection from Chapter II of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom's Aunt Polly forces him to spend his Saturday whitewashing a fence as a punishment after he gets into a fight with another boy and ruins his clothes. At first Tom is very jealous of the other boys, who are heading off to swim and fish while he has to spend the day working. But when he sees his friend Ben walking by with a delicious-looking apple, he gets an idea.

Listen!

Listen to an audio recording of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer:*

- https://librivox.org/tom-sawyer-by-mark-twain/

Teaching Notes: The Impact of Dialogue

The goal of RL.8.3 is for students to understand and be able to explain how **authors** use dialogue and incidents in a story to **develop characters** and **propel action in the plot**. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activities

1. Direct students to read Chapter II of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in its entirety. Then, have them make a list of the incidents that occur in the chapter and to describe how dialogue helps to advance these actions.

2. Choose a selection from the first chapter of *Jane Eyre* that contains dialogue. After the students have read it, direct them to write a character analysis of Jane based on the indirect characterization that Brontë provides through Jane's dialogue with the other characters. Then, ask them to explain how this characterization builds with the events in the selection from Chapter 23.

Writing Prompts

1. Assign students a grade-appropriate excerpt from a fictional text that contains dialogue and direct students to answer the following question in an essay: What purpose does the dialogue in this text serve (character development, plot development, etc.)? Support your answer with at least two examples from the text.

2. Ask students to think about methods in which authors use dialogue for the purposes of character development and plot development. Have students write a short essay explaining their thoughts. Instruct students to use at least **two** different short stories, novels, or poems in their explanation.

Additional Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching RL.8.3:

"The Fence: Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory": This resource discusses the famous fence from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and Mark Twain's own thoughts on how it influences Tom's character.

- http://www.shmoop.com/tom-sawyer/fence-symbol.html/

"Teach Middle School Students to Write Colorful Dialogue with These Creative Writing Strategies": This resource gives ideas for how to teach students to develop exciting and effective dialogue to enrich their narratives.

- http://www.brighthubeducation.com/middle-school-english-lessons/14962-three-creative-writing-teaching-strategies-for-colorful-dialogue/?cid=parsely_rec/