When students had received their graded interviews back, I asked them to share their interviews with the full class. But in keeping with the spirit of good listening that had defined this project, I added one more twist. The students first shared with small groups, and I asked everyone to take notes as they listened to their group mates. Then when we reconvened as a full class, I called on each student and asked him or her to share the details of another student's interview.

As with every stage of this project, the students did a great job in sharing what they'd learned. In addition to the benefits offered by close reading and discussion of a text, I found this interview project and the *Color of Water* unit to be valuable tools in helping students to continue working toward understanding one another and exploring their own identities. The group discussions, identity exercises, and interview project seemed to make students more comfortable in engaging in respectful dialogues with others about differences. Students found that their reading helped them understand themselves and the world around them, and hopefully, they also saw that the connection they made with Ruth and James can be made in other ways, with different books, and that reading really is relevant to life, after all.

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Additional Resources for *The Color of Water* and Interviews about Difference

- November 14th is the fifth Annual Mix It Up Day—sponsored by the Southern Poverty Law Center and intended to help teens break down the walls of division in their classrooms and communities. For details, visit www.tolerance.org/teens/about.jsp
- For another book that could prompt thoughtful classroom discussion on issues of race and difference, try Beverly Daniel Tatum's *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity* (Basic Books, 2003)—a book that Jonathan Kozol calls "an unusually sensitive work about the racial barriers that still divide us in so many areas of life." (dust jacket blurb)
- From ReadWriteThink, try these related literature lessons:

  Reader Response in Hypertext: Making Personal Connections to Literature—In this lesson plan, students choose four quotations to inspire personal responses to a novel that they have read. Students write a narrative of place, a character sketch, an extended metaphor poem, and a persuasive essay, then link all four texts to the quotations.

  http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=782

  Exploring Literature through Letter-Writing Groups—This lesson asks students to discuss literature through a series of letter exchanges. It can be used as a one-time assignment with one work of literature or throughout the year with multiple works.

  http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=397

FOCUS ON READING

Using Double-Entry Journals to Create Student Ownership of a Text

Many of our students, especially English language learners, read without having any idea what the text says. They look at all the words, and even understand what most of them mean, and think they have done the reading. Yet when asked what the text was about, they have only a vague idea. As a teacher, I struggled with this, trying to figure out how to make reading more meaningful to my advanced English language learners. I remembered when I was in high school I always felt inadequate when I read the assigned books. I never seemed to find the "right" deeper meaning of the text. I was an avid and quite skilled reader, so if I felt this way, how must my students who are still struggling to grasp academic literacy in English feel?

I thought about my goals in having students read. Of course I wanted them to understand the text, but I wanted more than simply the ability to answer comprehension questions. I wanted them to become personally involved with what they were reading, to ask questions, form opinions, make connections between their lives and the books and stories they were reading. I wanted reading to take an important place in their lives. I realized that if I was to achieve this outcome, I'd have to rethink how I was teaching.

I decided I'd use a double entry journal to prepare students to talk about what they had read—a useful step for all students, but especially valuable for English language learners. The process went like this:

Reading Assignment

On Monday, students were assigned to read a certain portion of text. It could be a chapter or just a section of a novel—something that I could be sure was possible within the time allotted. Early in a book, especially, it was unlikely they would read on their own, at home, so I allowed time

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in class for them to read. We originally used this strategy when we read *Where the Heart Is* by Billie Letts. Since then we have used it with *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck, *The Alchemist* by Paolo Coelho, and numerous others. It seems to lend itself to any text.

Using the Double Entry Journal for Responding to the Reading

Students were assigned to come to class on Wednesday with two quotes, or "citations," from the text that they wanted to talk about. To facilitate this process, I gave them a graphic organizer that they were to bring to class in completed form. (See sample below.) Copying a short passage and having it handy helps students focus on a manageable text and increases their comfort level, which makes this especially effective with second language learners. In addition, the organizer calls for brief responses, so it's an accessible tool for ELLs and students who lack confidence in their writing.

It took students a few weeks to understand that they were to have done this preparation prior to class. At first some students thought doing it in class on the discussion day would be fine, but they soon realized this plan would only exclude them from the activity. Those who were not prepared were required to do the work before they could join the group discussions.

The instructions for this activity were as follows:

Student Instructions for Completing the Double-Entry Journal

- As you read, be on the lookout for ideas that catch your attention. This could be something you don't understand, something you agree with, have an experience in common with, disagree with, or find any other connection with.
- In the box on the left, write the words of the book exactly as they are written. If the quote is very long, you may just write the beginning and ending phrases. Be sure to include the page numbers of your quote so you can refer to it during the discussion.
- In the box on the right, write your response to this piece of text. Why did you choose this section? What about it had meaning for you?
- Come to class prepared to talk about at least two quotes.

I divided the class into discussion groups, which would remain constant throughout the book. Students were assured that the groups were for the duration of the book, not the school year, which usually assuaged any angst at not being placed with all their friends.

On the discussion day, students were asked to get out their discussion sheet and go to their groups. Students who were not prepared were sent to a different area of the classroom until they were ready, at which point they could join their group's discussion. This process is done individually, as collaboration at this point would detract from the point of the exercise, which is to be prepared for a group discussion.

The instructions for this step were as follows:

Student Instructions for Working in Discussion Groups

- Each person in the group is to read their first quote and then tell why they chose it. (Read the "I say" portion of the organizer)
- Group members listen carefully, and add ideas, or respond to questions. This doesn't mean you must have "the" answer, but by talking about the question together you may come up with some fresh ideas about it.
- Go around the group until everyone has shared all of their quotes and reactions. Remember that the purpose of this activity is to create a way to talk about what you have read.
- After you have talked about everyone's choices, decide on one you'd like to share with the whole class. This might be a question that no one could really answer to your satisfaction, a quote that is controversial and could lead to good class discussion, or any other piece of text that you all agree to share.

A Double-Entry Journal for Responding to the Reading

Page #	The book says:	I say:

At first, students often just read their quote and their reaction, and they speed around the group, finishing quickly. As they become familiar with the process, however, often more than one person will choose the same quote, and they begin talking about it in a natural way, discussing what it means to them, or what they liked or didn't like about it. This step is generally popular, and provides confident readers, reluctant readers, and English language learners alike a chance to practice reading and hearing short passages in an unintimidating setting.

One of the books we read is *The Alchemist,* by Paolo Coelho. Quotes that students have chosen for this activity include the following

- "Everyone, when they are young, knows what their Personal Legend is. At that point in their lives everything is clear and everything is possible. They are not afraid to dream and to yearn for everything they would like to see happen to them in their lives." (page 23)
- "You must understand that love never keeps a man from pursuing his Personal Legend. If he abandons that pursuit, it's because it wasn't true love . . . the love that speaks the Language of the World." (page 122)

The Alchemist is weighty with rich ideas about life, true love, and dreams, and is a good book to use with this activity. Typically quotes like the above will generate heartfelt discussions about true love, or future dreams, and the likelihood of achieving either.

A sample discussion chart for *The Alchemist* is shown below.

Sharing one question from each group at the end of the discussions returns the focus to the group as a whole before the close of the class period. Students usually choose either questions they couldn't figure out as a group, or questions they especially enjoyed talking about. For example, typical questions saved from a discussion on *The Alchemist* include "Why do you think the boy was willing to violate the Tradition of the tribe just because he was leaving? Wouldn't that make it more difficult for him to return later? Or is he just saying he will return, when he probably won't really come back?"

We held these discussions once or twice a week. They are particularly well suited for a block period, but for the past several years we have had 55-minute class periods and it has worked very well.

Benefits

These exercises involving double-entry journals have been very effective with my students. Students learn to talk about what they are reading in an authentic way. They are able to talk about what matters to them or what they don't understand without the whole class listening. The discussion is theirs, as is the experience of reading the text.

Through talking about the characters and experiences in the text, students often discover that reading is something that applies to them, that it enriches their lives. They often

Discussion Chart for *The Alchemist* by Paolo Coelho

Page #	The Book says:	I say:
44	He remembered the sword. It hurt him a bit to think about it, but he had never seen one like it before. As he mused about these things, he realized that he had to choose between thinking of himself as the poor victim of a thief and as an adventurer in quest of his treasure. "I'm an adventurer, looking for treasure," he said to himself.	It seems like this is saying that you should choose your attitude. I never really thought about doing that. I always just react to what happens. I don't think people really have a choice about how they are going to react.
45	When he had gone only a short distance, he realized that, while they were erecting the stall, one of them had spoken Arabic and the other Spanish. And they had understood each other perfectly well. "There must be a language that doesn't depend on words. Ive already had that experience with my sheep, and now it's happening with people."	When I first got here I didn't speak English, but I played on the playground with kids who couldn't speak Spanish and we didn't even notice. I think little kids can do that, but I'm not sure about older people.

come away wanting to read a new book, or asking what else I think they might like. For instance, we read *Where the Heart Is* by Billie Letts using this strategy. This book is very long, and initially students doubted their ability to finish it. After we finished it, I overheard a student say, "If we can read *this* book, we can read anything." Students then willingly moved on to *The Good Earth,* which can be a difficult book for English language learners. The double-entry journal strategy made the text more accessible and helped them make connections along the way. We continued with the discussions, and students became very involved with the story and characters, passing harsh judgment on the choices the main character, Wang Lung, makes in his life. Students' involvement had become personal, their fear of a difficult text forgotten.

Using the Double-Entry Journal for Silent Discussion

Over time, I have discovered other uses for this strategy. One of these is a silent discussion, for which I create an adapted graphic organizer. (See below.)

The instructions are as follows:

Student Instructions for Using the Silent Discussion Double-Entry Journal

- Bring this organizer with the top two boxes filled in, as you would for a normal book talk. You will hand it in at the beginning of class.
- You will be given a paper to read that is not yours. After you read the citation from the text, and your colleague's response to it, write your response to both the citation and the writer's response in the first box. Put your name on the blank line of that box.
- Raise your hand, and I will pick up that paper and hand you another one.
- When you receive your paper back, at the end of the activity, please read all the responses and write a reflection in the final box. Did the other people's comments change your viewpoint at all?

A typical silent discussion might look like the sample on page 12.

This activity is done without talking, and students are usually captivated by it. They are eager to read what their fellow students have written on their paper, and the silence seems to encourage reflection. Those who came to class unprepared are sent to a separate part of the room to prepare. When they are ready, they move to the main part of the classroom and raise their hand to enter their paper into circulation. They will usually arrive prepared, as they enjoy the activity.

While the double-entry journal is not a new strategy, I have found it to be extremely effective in helping all students, and particularly English language learners, connect with the text they read. When students are able to make a personal connection with a book as well as with other students in regard to what they have read, they are more willing to ▶

Silent Discussion Double-Entry Journal

The book says:
I say:
_____ (name) says:
_____(name) says:
_____(name) says:
After reading others' reactions, I now say:

Sample Silent Discussion

The book says: "Actually he was thinking about shearing his sheep in front of the merchant's daughter, so she could see that he was capable of doing difficult things. . . . He also tried to remember some good stories to relate as he sheared the sheep. Most of them he had read in books, but he would tell them as if they were from his personal experience. She would never know the difference, because she didn't know how to read."
I say: Even though this is lying, I can understand why he would pretend he made up the stories. Guys always want to impress girls.
Moua **says:** I don't think he should lie just to impress a girl. Even if she can't read she will probably know he didn't make the stories up. Girls can tell when a guy is lying.
Juan **says:** I would do the same thing. I don't think girls can tell. If the stories are interesting she probably wouldn't even care anyway.
Shoua **says:** It's funny how we want people to think we can do difficult things. Isn't it all kind of a lie, if we are just making stuff up so people will be impressed by us? I think it is better to just be yourself.
After reading the others' reactions, I now say: Well, I agree it isn't really honest but I think making things up to impress people is a natural thing to do. I probably won't change though. It's just how I am.

work to achieve comprehension of the text. Students who are reluctant to read are often eager to talk with one another, and this discussion format is just another pathway to developing an interest in reading, and increasing their ability to use English in literate ways, whether they are second language learners or not.

With the current focus on skills development, reading for fun seems to be taking a back seat to activities structured for success in standardized assessments. While I agree that skill building is necessary, the importance of creating lifelong readers must not be forgotten in the shuffle. We owe that to our students.

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Teacher can support English language learners' literacy development by connecting the readings with the students' background knowledge [and] encouraging students to discuss the readings, including the cultural dimensions of the text."

—NCTE Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners (Visit http://www.ncte.org/edpolicy/ell/about/124545.htm)