NEWS BREAK

Article: Seattle’s Pongo program celebrates 25 years of treating trauma with poetry

Section: THE MIX, E2-E3

Sunday’s News Break selects an article from Sunday, September 20, 2020 of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some teachers might use this as a take-home assignment and others might read and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

*Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.*

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will discuss how writing has impacted their own lives and how it makes them feel. They’ll discuss pieces they are most proud of and why. They’ll discuss the Pongo program and how people deal with multiple traumas in their lives, how it impacts them. They’ll talk about whether there is healing in sharing their stories. They will be asked to write their own piece of poetry, titled, “I am.”
Pre-Reading Discussion:

• What do you think the article will be about? Are there clues in the picture?
• What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using context clues? A context clue is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

The essence of healing is most benefited in an environment of respect, listening and caring.

Essence Guess:

Essence Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. When Richard Gold moved to Seattle more than two decades ago after living and studying in California’s Bay Area, he already had experience working with poetry as a form of what?
2. The founder of Seattle’s Pongo Publishing Teen Writing Project, who is now newly retired, had studied English and poetry both as an undergraduate and in graduate school, and had used poetry and creative writing as tools to do what?
3. Equipped with those tools, he founded the Pongo program, which has grown to include a board, staff and dozens of volunteers dedicated to helping what group of people?
4. Pongo will be celebrating its ___ th anniversary next week.
5. What youth groups does Pongo work with?
6. The techniques Gold developed over 25 years have, according to Pongo’s website, been replicated in similar programs nationally and globally, but at their core are quite simple. What methods do they use?
7. Several studies conducted by University of Washington psychiatrists, among others, the program says, have found that of the 7,000-plus people Pongo has worked with in the last 25 years, what are many still doing?

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:

- How has writing impacted your own life?
- Do you enjoy writing? Journaling? Writing poetry? How does it make you feel?
- What piece of writing are you most proud of? Why?
- Is writing a personal exploration for you? Why or why not?

“Multiple traumas have the impact of internal fragmentation,” Gold says. “At the same time, we intuitively know that when we tell our story we can feel better. There’s healing in that.”

- How do you think people deal with multiple traumas? How does it impact them?
- Do you agree that telling your story makes you feel better? That there’s healing in sharing your personal experiences?

Pongo helps encourage the truth that every voice has value; every perspective offers insight, we need to listen more closely to one another, always.

- How do you feel about this perspective? Every voice has value, every perspective offers insight…that we need to listen more closely to each other? Have you been in classrooms or situations where you felt like this, uplifted, encouraged and respected? How did you react?
- Have you been in situations that were the complete opposite where you might have felt alone, disrespected, unheard or misunderstood? How did you feel?

Pongo provides them with a safe, nurturing space to express their pain, hopes, fears and joy.” “The essence of healing is most benefited in an environment of respect, listening and caring,” says Gold. “Poetry is a wonderful vehicle for that because it allows people to / speak their truth.”

Take a moment and write about yourself, using one of Pongo’s fill-in-the-blank online poetry forms that you can directly email your teacher. This poem is about who you are. Afterward, reflect on the process and how you felt. https://www.pongoteenwriting.org/activities/popular/i-am.html
News Break is posted to the Web on Monday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please register on-line or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655. Copyright © 2020 The Seattle Times Company