

INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 10 MODEL

TASK 10 QUESTION THE AUTHOR

STEP 1: Select a text for student analysis. This could be a larger reading or a passage of text selected for closer review. A longer text could also be divided into sections for pairs/groups of students to review together.

The following is an excerpt from:

THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR IN PITTSBURGH: A MEMOIR

(FROM THE FRENCH AND WASOWSKI BUILDING—COLLECTION #02002)

by Annie Dillard

<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/french-and-indian-war-pittsburgh-memoir>

Throughout these long, wonderful wars I saw Indian braves behind every tree and parked car. They slunk around, fairly bursting with woodcraft. They led soldiers on miraculous escapes through deep woods and across lakes at night; they paddled their clever canoes noiselessly; they swam underwater without leaving bubbles; they called to each other they called to each other like owls. They nocked their arrows silently on the brow of the hill and snuck up in their soft moccasins to the camp where the enemy lay sleeping under heavy guard. They shrieked, drew their Osage bows, and never missed—all the while communing deeply with birds and deer ←

I had been born too late. I would have made a dandy scout because I had taught myself to walk in the woods silently: without snapping a twig, which was easy, or stepping on a loud leaf, which was hard. Experience taught me a special rolling walk for skulking in silence: you step down with your weight on the ball of your foot and ease it to your heel. The Indians who captured me would not torture me, but exclaim at my many abilities, and teach me more, all the while feeding me handsomely. Soon I would talk to animals, become invisible, ride a horse naked and shrieking, shoot things. ←

STEP 2: Students read through the text, noting words or phrases that seem important.

STEP 3: Display and discuss the five questions students will use. If this task is new to students consider modeling the questions with an excerpt they are familiar with.

For an excellent model, see: Reading Quest. "Questioning the Author."
Accessed June 13, 2013. <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/qta.html>

5 QUESTIONS

1. What is the author trying to tell you?
2. Why is the author telling you that?
3. Is it said clearly?
4. How might the author have written it more clearly?
5. What would you have wanted to say instead?



She thought
the Indians
were awesome



She wanted
to be one



INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 10 MODEL (continued)

STEP 4: Using the “Questioning the Author” graphic organizer provided below, students may work independently, in pairs, or in small groups to answer the questions for the selected text or segment of selected text.

QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR

TEXT SELECTION (TITLE OR EXCERPT): <i>The French and Indian War in Pittsburgh: A Memoir</i>	
What is the author trying to tell you?	<i>As a child, she glorified the French and Indian war, and identified with the Indians, almost as mythological heroes.</i>
Why is the author telling you that?	<i>She wants to make the point that as kids we are taught, whether consciously or unconsciously, to glorify war. She felt a special "connection" to this war because it took place where she was living as a child.</i>
Is it said clearly?	<i>She uses a lot of figurative language and irony, playing on the stereotypes of Indians to show how silly and unrealistic her fantasies were. I think it is pretty clear as long as you recognize the sarcasm</i>
How might the author have written it more clearly?	<i>It is supposed to be a memoir, not just a factual document. I don't think she could have made it any "clearer" without losing her voice as a memoirist....</i>
What would you have wanted to say instead?	<i>I would say that I agree with her, especially knowing the era that she grew up in, that kids had a very simplistic outlook on war, "good guys" and "bad guys"....</i>

STEP 5: Discuss student comments as a class, or extend as a formal written argumentative analysis of the text.