Tea Party

**Description:** Students and the teacher participate in a “tea party” to read or reread excerpts from a story, informational book, or content-area textbook. Sometimes teachers have students reread favorite excerpts to celebrate a book they have finished reading, or teachers use tea party to introduce a new chapter in a content-area textbook. For future use, teachers make several copies of selected excerpts, back them with tagboard, and laminate them. Then students move around the classroom, reading their excerpts to each other and talking about what they have read, and trying to make some sense of the material in the case of new information. Teachers usually select the excerpts that students read for tea party to introduce or review important concepts, summarize the events in a story, or focus on an element of story structure. Also, students are encouraged to move around the classroom and socialize with individual classmates during tea party.

**STEP BY STEP**

1. Make excerpts from a story, informational book, or content-area textbook that students are reading, or will be reading. Laminate the excerpts for any future use, or use sentence strips or story boards with younger students.

2. Have students practice reading the excerpts to themselves several times until they can read them fluently.

3. Have students move around the classroom, stopping to read their excerpts to other students. When students pair up, they take turns reading their excerpts. After the first student reads, both students discuss the text; then the other student reads and both students comment on the second student's text. Then students move apart and find other classmates to read their excerpts to. [Adaptation: For material that is “connected”, as in our case, students try to find the other students who have material that is connected to theirs.]

4. Have students return to their desks, or to their group, after a sufficient number of minutes, and invite students to read their excerpts to the class or talk about what they learned through the tea party activity.

**APPLICATIONS AND EXAMPLES**

Tea party is a good way to celebrate the conclusion of a literature focus unit or a thematic unit. Students can pick the excerpts they want to read, and the tea party activity serves to reinforce the main ideas taught during the unit. Teachers also use tea party to introduce a thematic unit by taking excerpts from informational books or content-area textbooks that introduce the main ideas and key vocabulary to be taught during the unit. As was done for our in-class activity, the teacher collected some of the sentences and paragraphs from informational books and/or a textbook chapter on a topic that students would read. Teachers can also write their own excerpts. One or two key words are highlighted in each excerpt to help students focus their attention on key words. Students can also read and discuss the excerpts and began a word wall with the key words.