Professional Development Webinar #6:
X-Rays and Quick Cards

Principles

1. Our first grasp of a work of art (literature) is a recognition of form, including structure and style.

    a. This is true of fiction and non-fiction alike. (Mortimer Adler)

    b. This is true at any level.

2. The form of a work carries part of its meaning.

    a. This is true for works of literature – the objects of our study

    b. This is also true for our study itself.

    c. This is also true for our teaching!

3. Assignments calculated to encourage recognition of form should themselves partake of a corresponding, recognizable form.

    a. Non-fiction: X-ray

    b. Fiction: Quick Card

Practices

1. At the grammar stage, sentence- or paragraph-length summaries of setting and character, and conflict, bullet-list descriptions of plot, and single phrase identifications of theme can be submitted as separate assignments. These can be collected and formatted as Quick Cards for a) the student's use in oral presentations and b) parental verification of student progress.

2. At the logic stage, it is enough to recognize and state the form or structure of a work. Students should be able to complete a blank Quick Card template for any assigned title, either in preparation for a discussion, or as verification of understanding afterwards.

3. At the rhetoric stage, the grasp of form and structure necessary for creation of a quick card (and facilitated by reading it) is a necessary prerequisite for thematic discussion, whether oral or written. Quick Cards may be assigned as preparation for oral reports on theme, or as an effective first step in the writing process.

Grammar-level Application:

Quick Card: The Mouse and the Motorcycle

Logic-level Application:

L5.2 – Quick Card template. Also see completed Quick Cards in the teacher library.

Rhetoric-level Application:

R9.1 – Oral presentation: discuss general and specific theme of assigned title, showing how structural elements support student perspective.

R10.1-2 – Thematic essay thesis and supports.