

TALK TO ME

Conferring to Engage, Differentiate, and Assess 6–12



Cris Tovani

DVD VIEWING GUIDE
by Samantha Bennett

Dear Colleague,

The last few years my learning curve has been pretty steep. Since moving across town to the most diverse high school in Colorado, I have been working like crazy to learn how to better meet the needs of my 9th and 11th grade students. The kids you'll see are pretty amazing. Some are newly arrived immigrants. Others are struggling readers and writers; many of whom face unbelievable circumstances outside the walls of school. I am astounded and encouraged by their resilience.

The focus of this DVD is conferring, the heart of Workshop Model. Often teachers shy away from doing it because they aren't sure what it could look like in a secondary classroom. After you view the DVD, my hope is not that you'll try to copy the way I confer, but rather notice how much can be learned and taught during a short conference.

I'm so happy to share a snippet of my classroom life with you. Join us as I encourage students to talk to me.

Enjoy,

Cris

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This DVD is organized into chapters to help you navigate the clips to meet your own learning needs and/or the needs of your study group.

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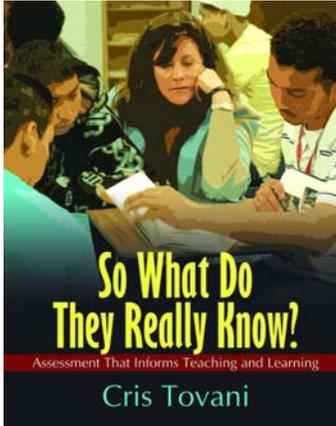
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INTRODUCTION: WHY CONFER?



■ **Companion Reading:** Chapter 6, “Feedback That Fortifies,” in *So What Do They Really Know?*

Cris speaks about why conferring matters, and her students share their thinking about the impact of her class.

Ideas to Promote Teacher Reflection and Learning

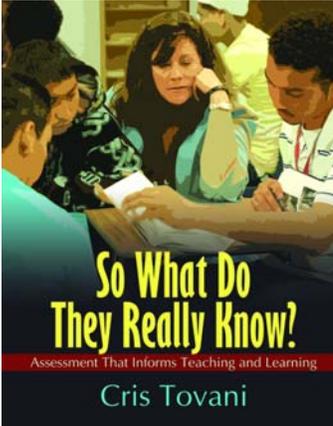
1. Watch this section once. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your classroom practice?
2. For an added layer of analysis, while you watch the introduction you may want to hold your thinking so you can have a richer conversation afterward:

Student said:	Inference about Cris’s classroom practice:

- Discuss: What struck you about the student reflections? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your practice? What might it look, sound, and feel like in your classroom if your conferring is having an impact on student engagement?
3. What do you believe are keys to student engagement in reading and writing? Discuss your thoughts about how conferring matters to student learning and engagement.
4. Watch Cris’s reflection on keys to motivation and engagement in Chapter 5, “Cris Talks.”
5. Discuss: Now what are you thinking? Why confer?

CHAPTER 1: CONFERRING TO ENGAGE

CONFERRING WITH READERS



■ **Companion Reading:** Chapter 4, “Off the Field and Into the Classroom,” in *So What Do They Really Know?*

- Hermon: Finding a “Just Right” Book
- Heidi: Finishing One Book and Starting Another

A key to student engagement in reading is helping students find and read books that are “just right” with regard to both topic and reading level. We meet Cris in her reader’s workshop class working first with Hermon and then with Heidi. Cris reflects on what she knows about Hermon as she heads into the conference with her:



As I monitored the room, I noticed a pattern that during work time Hermon was quickly disengaging from her reading. She would ask to go to the bathroom or distract others around her. When she was reading, she would blast through books and then was unable to write with any depth when it came time for her to record thinking in her reading response journal. Because she regularly complained that everything she read was boring, I inferred that she was not choosing books that were interesting or at her reading level. So, as I head into the conference with her I’m thinking that I have to help her find a book that she can stick with so that I can help her build stamina and endurance.

And about Heidi:



Heidi has discovered a new text structure: narrative poetry. The book she is reading is at her comfort level, but figuring out how this text structure works has been a new challenge for Heidi. She is reading forty to sixty pages a day and feeling very proud of herself for sticking with a book. Heidi’s reflection in her reading response journal indicates that she understands the plot, but I would like to show her more things she can track as she reads. Before I push her into a harder text, I want her to feel successful and confident that she’s understood more than the basic plot with the book she is currently reading.

Heidi will soon be done with her current book and needs to start planning for the next work she will read. She is a compliant student, and I want to help her become more confident and independent about the texts she selects. Next steps for Heidi are to help her read for more than plot; I want to help her plan what she’ll read next and nudge her into reading something a little more challenging. Heidi wants to read the next book in the series and so, for the meantime, I honor that choice, knowing that I’m going to have to push her with the anchor text to go beyond plot.

Ideas to Promote Teacher Reflection and Learning

1. Watch the conferences and reflections once. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your classroom practice?

2. Watch the clips again to add more depth to your analysis. While you watch, you may want to hold your thinking to inform your conversation afterward:

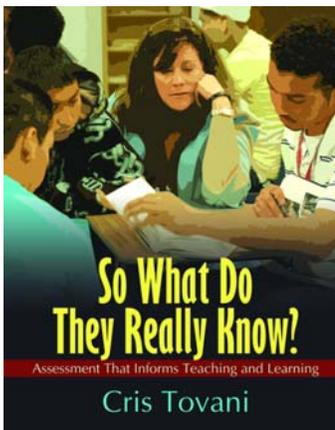
Key Cris conferring moves/beliefs that influence her practice:	Inference about payoff for readers' engagement/stamina/growth:

- Discuss: What struck you? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your practice? What might you try this week? What will it look, sound, and feel like in your classroom if your conferring is having an impact?
3. Discuss your beliefs about helping students find a “just right” book. What is a “just right” book? How do you help every student find a “just right” book when you may have 100–150 student contacts a day? What skills can you help students develop to be better book choosers?
 - Watch Chapter 5, “Cris Talks”: How do you reconcile planning with required texts and your beliefs about choice-based reader’s workshop?
 4. Focus on one class list of students. Taking ten minutes to brainstorm what you know about students—first as people and then as learners—might help you get a “just right” book into their hands. Tackle a different class list each day for one week. Discuss the implications or impact this could have on your planning, instruction, and assessment for each learner and groups of learners.

Student name:	What I know about him or her as a person or a learner:	So what? How will this help me match kids with text and/or get a variety of texts into their hands?

5. What are the top five behaviors of good readers that you want your students to practice on a regular basis? What are the implications for your planning and instruction?

CONFERRING WITH WRITERS



■ **Companion Reading:** Chapter 7, “Grading Is Killing Me,” in *So What Do They Really Know?*

- Andrea: Starting a Writing Assignment: Figuring Out an Audience
- Natnail: Starting a Writing Assignment: Talking It Through Before Writing
- Jose: Starting a Writing Assignment: Brainstorming a Powerful Lead

A key to student engagement in writing is providing them with models. Sometimes a text-based model is not enough; they might need a live example of a writer to show them how to get started.

These conferences take place during a unit on the idea of legacy, anchored by the text *The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore (see Appendix A, “Planning Guide for *The Other Wes*”).

Moore Unit”). The students have finished the book and are now beginning to write advice letters to eighth graders about their upcoming high school experience. Watch Cris navigate getting started on this assignment with three different students, each with different needs and skills.

Cris reflects on what she knows about each student writer before she goes into the conference:



Andrea isn't sure that she has anything worthy to say to another student. She is struggling to find an audience that will value what she has to write. Andrea is discovering that, as a writer, she can choose whom she directs her writing to. Andrea needs to know that there are people in the world like her and that she can share her experiences to let others know that they are not alone. I work to help her identify who could most benefit from her words of wisdom. If she has an audience in mind when she writes, she will be able to make better decisions about tone, word choice, details, and overall message to the readers of her letter.



Natnail is not sure what to write about. His topic is too big, and he isn't sure how to begin. Natnail knows that sometimes school writing can be very different from writing that is done for an authentic audience. As we talk, I get the sense that he is testing out his topic to gauge the appropriateness for his projected eighth-grade audience.

Natnail needs reassurance that it is better to write about something that he cares about rather than to write to just meet the assignment learning targets. I want Natnail to recognize that if he writes about something that he cares about, he will be more excited about the actual process and do a better job with the task. He also needs some rehearsal time to just talk through possible topics that he could share. At the end of the conference, I challenge him to think about his topic over the weekend so that when he comes back to class, he can start getting his ideas down on paper.

Jose is hesitant to begin writing. He's pretty sure he knows what he wants to say but, in his mind, he hasn't been a successful writer in the past. Afraid to fail again, he has trouble getting started on his letter because he isn't sure how to write the perfect first line.

Jose also needs time to orally rehearse what he wants to write. His focus is clearer than Natnail's, but being unable to write that first line has Jose stuck. I need to help him begin the letter and also help him loosely structure what the rest of the letter could look like. We brainstorm an event or a moment in time that taught him something about the way to live his life. I try to listen carefully for a line that he has already written and point out something that he did well. This will give Jose the confidence to dig into his first draft of writing.



Ideas for Teacher Reflection and Learning

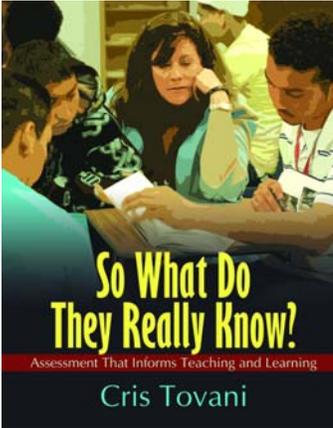
1. Watch this section once. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your classroom practice?

2. Watch the conference that surprised you most a second time to deepen your analysis and prompt an extended conversation with your colleagues:

What is Cris learning about each student?	What impact does the conference have on his or her learning today? What impact might it have over time?

- Discuss: What struck you? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your practice? What might you try this week? What will it look, sound, and feel like in your classroom if your conferring is having an impact?
3. How would you feel if you were Andrea, Natnail, or Jose after a writing conference with Cris? What effects can you infer that Cris’s conferring might have on student stamina and engagement over time?
 4. Review Appendix A, “Planning Guide for *The Other Wes Moore* Unit.” What structures are explicitly built into the unit to help ensure student engagement? What are the implications for your unit planning? What effects might unit planning have on Cris’s conferring? How does it help her meet students’ needs?
 5. What surprised you about Cris’s conversations with Andrea, Natnail, and Jose? Discuss the implications (for both grading and student learning) of giving students time to write during class and providing feedback along the way instead of on a “due date” schedule for drafts and a final product.

CHAPTER 2: CONFERRING TO BUILD BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE



■ **Companion Reading:** Chapter 3, “Game-Time Assessment,” in *So What Do They Really Know?*

In this next set of conferences you’ll see Cris listening carefully to one student at a time, looking for clues about how each one is making sense of text. A thread that ties these conferences together is how students use their background knowledge to make meaning, and how Cris capitalizes on what she hears students say. Cris offers her own background knowledge to help them reengage with the text and the learning. In order to become better readers, each student needs slightly different strategies and feedback. The most effective way to address their needs is through conferring over time.

CONFERRING WITH READERS

- Shaq: Analyzing Content and Craft to Make More Meaning
- Israel: Capitalizing on “Teachable Moments”
- Irving: Focusing on Vocabulary to Dig Deeper
- Aslam: Building Confidence for an English Language Learner

Cris reflects on each of the students you’ll see:



Shaq is big on facts. He likes to show what he knows even if it doesn’t have anything to do with the topic at hand. He has a lot of background knowledge about World War II, and when he mentions Libya I am surprised by his connections. Sometimes Shaq embellishes facts when he doesn’t have all of his information straight. In this conference, I honor what Shaq knows and try to clear up misconceptions he has about the content.

I want to show Shaq that background knowledge about text structures is also powerful information. He can use mentor texts as models to improve his writing. Instead of letting Shaq continue thinking that he needs to build more background knowledge about Israel in order to complete the task, I want to show him that he can build his background knowledge about text structure so he can analyze the mentor text to inform his own writing.

I want him to look for patterns. I invite Xavier to join us. He is the student sitting next to Shaq and is carefully listening to our conversation. Shaq is a better reader than Xavier, but Xavier is very observant. The two of them make a good team.



In this conference with Israel, I talk way more than I should. I have a laundry list of things I want to check for in terms of his understanding. Israel is quiet and compliant—a kid who could easily slip through the cracks. I have a great sense of urgency to teach him as much as possible in the short amount of time I have him. Perhaps I share too much with him in this conference, but—because he is so teachable—I know he will leave the class today a little smarter than when he entered.

I first want to make sure that Israel knows who is who in the book. I get the sense he is confused about the characters. I quickly learn that I am wrong. He knows Mark is telling the story and that it is taking place in a juvenile detention center. I decide to push him a little by introducing the role a narrator can play.

I also want Israel to start taking a more active role in his discussion group. Because he is so quiet, he often gets slighted in groups. So today, I give him the challenge to find a

part in the book that he can read to his group that might entice them to read it when he is done. Knowing that Israel might be too uncomfortable or shy to read aloud his part, I also throw out the option that he can retell the part if he doesn't want to read aloud.



In my conference with Irving, I first check to see if the text is making sense to him. I find this is a pattern for most of my reading conferences: “Is the book making sense?” I know from previous conferences that Irving is really stretching himself with the current text he is reading. To my delight, he is getting a lot out of the book. I decide that I want to reinforce the idea that readers build background knowledge as they read, but sometimes the text they read leaves them with gaps. Irving has a little bit of knowledge about the term green card, a term that comes up over and over again in the book. I encourage him to consciously set a purpose as he reads to look for specific references or information about green cards. If what he reads isn't sufficient, I want him to know that not only is it okay to use his group or go to an online source to find more information, but it is something that good readers do.

Like Israel, I leave Irving with a challenge. I've noticed that, when I do this, it helps students reenter the reading/writing process after I have left. Similar to what I asked Israel to do, I ask Irving to share a part of his reading with his discussion group. In order to do this well, he needs to plan what he will share. One of our yearlong learning targets that I highlight in *So What Do They Really Know?* is that students can use their discussion groups to sustain their reading (133). Discussion groups can be very useful when it comes to clearing up confusion or expanding knowledge and understanding to the prepared reader.



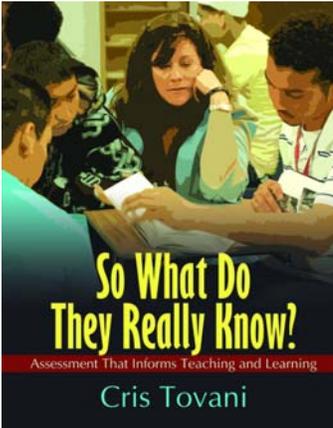
My main goal with Aslam is to increase his time on task. Every day I want him to read, write, and speak in English as much as possible. I could spend the entire class period helping him, but it would require that I ignore my other twenty-seven students. So, one goal of this conference is to make sure he understands the plot of the book so he can continue reading, writing, and discussing. The second goal is to help him understand that good readers know when they are confused, and that he can use his tablemates to help him with unknown words or misconceptions about the plot. I want to build his confidence and reassure him that no one in the room can read in Arabic, and the fact that he is reading as well as he is in a new language is impressive.

Ideas to Promote Teacher Reflection and Learning

1. Watch the conferences and reflections once. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your classroom practice?
2. Watch the clip that most intrigued you a second time to add more depth to your analysis. While you watch, you may want to hold your thinking to inform your conversation afterward:

What is Cris learning about each student?	What impact does the conference have on his or her learning today? What impact might it have over time?

- Discuss: What struck you? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your practice? What might you try this week? What will it look, sound, and feel like in your classroom if your conferring is having an impact?
- 3. What do you notice about students' reasons to read? What are the implications for your planning?
- 4. Read Appendix B, "Planning Guide for Choice-Based Reader's Workshop." After viewing these conferences linked by their connections to students' background knowledge, what are you thinking about the role of choice and variety of text in a classroom? What are the implications for how you plan?



- Read pages 42–44 from *So What Do They Really Know?* to enrich your discussion even more.

CHAPTER 3: CONFERRING TO REPAIR CONFUSION AND ENSURE GROWTH

In these conferences, you'll see Cris work with five different readers in her Choice-Based Reader's Workshop (see Appendix B). The night before these conferences, Cris reads through five to ten students' reading response journals (per class) to look for patterns of understanding and patterns of confusion. Cris uses the conferences to individualize instruction to meet each learner's needs.

CONFERRING WITH READERS

- Samantha: Clarifying Characters and Text Structure to Make Meaning
- Samara: Raising the Bar to Ensure Growth
- Arianna: Going Beyond the Text to Infer Meaning
- Omar: Building Confidence to Tackle More Challenging Texts
- Jose: Analyzing Patterns of Complex Text



From reading Samantha's reading response journal the night before, I can tell that she doesn't understand her book. I haven't read the book, but that's okay because my goal in a conference is to support readers so they can understand more deeply, not necessarily know the plot myself. In this particular case, I decide to read the first twenty pages of the book so I can better understand what is interrupting Samantha's comprehension.

Sometimes when kids are discouraged about not understanding something, I ask them to tell me what they do understand. Samantha comprehends more than she thinks, but she could understand a lot more if she could make some connections to the title and understand how the type changes to denote different speakers. In this conference, we start out very simply.

I model for Samantha that I sometimes have to make a cheat sheet at the beginning of a novel in order to keep track of the characters. I also have to keep checking my own understanding to be sure I know who is talking. I show Samantha how the author is using italics to offset Hannah's conversations on the tapes from Clay's actual narration. I model for her how I help myself get unstuck. I show her how I go back to the last part that made sense and then get a "running start" as I read.

With a new purpose, I continue reading, making sure I know which character is speaking when. The more features of text that I can point out to kids, the more ways they will have to help themselves get unstuck when no one is around to help them.



In this conference with Samara, I want her to know that I know that she is smart and capable of doing much more than she is currently doing. She is pretty good at playing the game of school and giving teachers surface responses. I want to cut through those pat responses but, before I can do that, I need to get her into a book that is more challenging.

Over the years, Samara has learned an avoidance strategy that gets her out of reading. She knows that if she says "This is boring," teachers will give her something else to read—and the cycle just perpetuates itself. So far this year, I've learned that if Samara doesn't have some ownership in her learning she will continue to take the path of least resistance. Just giving her a book and saying "Here, read this" will only encourage her to play the game of school.

Samara needs a juicy book that will push her, but she has to take some ownership in selecting that book. I want her to know that readers make plans about their reading. They have books waiting in the wings, and they take charge of what they want to read and get smarter about.

During my conference with Samara, you'll notice Nichelle, who is disengaged in the background. It is tempting for us to focus on the kids who are not doing the work, but then kids like Samara don't get the attention they need to make gains. Even though I did not meet Nichelle's needs this particular day, after my conference with Samara—or even tomorrow—I have the opportunity to help her get back on track. (See Appendix C for more discussion of off-task behaviors.)



In this conference, I make suggestions galore. I don't want to tell Arianna what to read for. I want to plant some seeds and show her that there isn't one way to read a book. However, there are several different options for how to go beyond plot. Even though I don't use the term, I begin to introduce the idea of connotative value. Arianna doesn't bite. So I look for another entry point. When I ask her which woman in the book reminds her of herself she says, "I relate to all of these girls." I wish I would have taken her lead and gone down the path of helping her make sense of her own life by making connections to the characters and then reflecting on how those connections deepen her understanding about herself. I didn't do that, in part because—at the time—I didn't think about it. That sometimes happens in conferences. You think of the perfect thing to say when the students have left. That's okay, though. When you try to confer with students every class, there is always tomorrow.

Omar was achieving a lot of success and having a lot of fun reading the Skeleton Creek series by Patrick Carmen. I wanted him to see that this series was just the beginning and that there were lots more he could read once he finished this one. Omar has all the makings of a lifelong reader. He is starting to figure out what kinds of books he likes and which kinds of books he wants to read. My goal in this conference is to continue to help him name the patterns, formulas, and structures of series books. Recognizing these threads will support him as he reads more complex books.



Jose is a no-nonsense kind of guy. He wants to be known as a sophisticated reader, so he needs to see how sophisticated readers go beyond plot. One of the things that I want to teach Jose in this conference is that good readers of literature often look for patterns. Sometimes those patterns come in the form of recognizing archetypal characters or complex allegories. Other times those patterns come in the form of noticing how one book is like another. Jose is starting to notice how utopias exist in the eye of the beholder, and that in several books he's read, utopias are really dystopias. I want Jose to know that his opinion matters and that I'd love some feedback on the next book he reads, as it will help me decide my class reading list for next year's students.

Ideas to Promote Teacher Reflection and Learning

1. Watch the conferences and reflections once. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your classroom practice?
2. Watch the clip that intrigued you most a second time, to add more depth to your analysis. While you watch, you may want to hold your thinking to inform your conversation afterward:

What is Cris learning about each student?	What impact does the conference have on his or her learning today? What impact might it have over time?

- Discuss: What struck you? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your practice? What might you try this week? What will it look, sound, and feel like in your classroom if your conferring is having an impact?
3. Discuss: At the end of the conference with Jose, Cris talks about her sense of urgency that kids make at least a “year of growth.” Discuss with your colleagues what it means to ensure that every student has a year of growth. What does a concrete year of growth look like at your grade level? What assessment structures do you have in place to track student growth over time? What structures do you have in place to help students notice their own growth over time?
 4. Read Appendix C, “Hey, Those Kids in the Background Are Off Task!” Discuss the pros and cons of taking some time each day to meet with individual students. What structures of planning and assessment need to be in place to maximize the benefits of conferring with individual students?

CHAPTER 4: CONFERRING WITH SMALL GROUPS

In this next set of conferences, you'll see Cris meeting with small groups. Cris explicitly builds time into her class each day for students to discuss their learning. The more students articulate their thinking, the more background knowledge they build and the smarter they get—the ratio of teacher to student goes from 1:24 to 24:24. Each group has been tasked to “use your group to get smarter about the topic.” In each case, you'll see Cris listening to figure out what they get and what they need to further their learning.

SMALL-GROUP CONFERENCE TO DRIVE ENGAGEMENT IN READING

(See Appendix B, “Planning Guide for Choice-Based Reader’s Workshop,” for background information.)

■ Group 1: What Is the Purpose? How Does Talk Help Us Read Better?

As Cris says, “This conference is good because it is so bad.” This group of girls is unclear about the purpose of their talk and how it might help them get smarter when they are reading different books. Cris listens carefully to uncover the layers of reasons for the students’ resistance.

SMALL-GROUP CONFERENCE TO DRIVE ENGAGEMENT IN WRITING

(See Appendix A, “Planning Guide for *The Other Wes Moore* Unit,” for background on the student letter assignment.)

■ Group 2: Using Annotations and a Mentor Text to Improve Writing

■ Group 3: Using Student Thinking as a Model to Reengage Group Members

In these small-group conferences during writer’s workshop, Cris engages the group members to mine for information that will help inform her planning, and also helps the group members use each other as resources to keep going.

SMALL-GROUP BOOK CLUB CONFERENCES

(See Appendix B, “Planning Guide for Choice-Based Reader’s Workshop,” for background information.)

■ Group 4: Fishbowl Discussion as a Model

In earlier conferences, Cris learned that the small groups needed another model of a “good” conversation about reading. She asks a group to have a discussion and instructs the rest of the class to notice and name the skills and qualities that help drive deeper understanding. You'll see Sam Bennett, Cris’s instructional coach, sitting on the ground and scripting the groups so we can use their talk to inform our planning for future lessons.

■ Group 5: Conversing to Get Smarter

After the fishbowl experience, Cris listens in on a group that uses what they learned from the fishbowl discussion to fuel a powerful conversation.

Ideas to Promote Teacher Reflection and Learning

1. Watch the small-group conferences and reflections once. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your classroom practice?
2. Watch the clip that intrigued you most a second time to add more depth to your analysis. While you watch, you may want to hold your thinking to inform your conversation afterward:

What does Cris learn from listening in on the group?	What impact does the conference have on student learning today? What impact might it have over time?

- Discuss: What struck you? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your practice? What might you try this week? What will it look, sound, and feel like in your classroom if your conferring is having an impact?
3. When students are disengaged, Cris asks herself three questions: Is our topic boring? Is what I'm asking them to do boring? Am I boring? Talk about a day where things weren't "clicking" in your classroom. What do you control as a teacher that can affect student engagement?
 4. Students need models to gain a vision of high-quality thinking and work. Discuss the models Cris uses with students and the impact of each on student learning:
 - Cris as a model reader, writer, and thinker
 - Cris's writing as a model
 - Students as models for each other (in small groups and in fishbowl sessions)
 - Mentor texts as models

CHAPTER 5: CRIS TALKS

Here, Cris responds to the questions and comments she receives most frequently from teachers as they begin to take risks in their practice and confer on a daily basis:

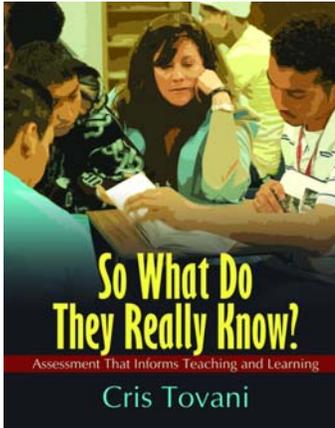
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- The Difference Between Monitoring and Conferring
- Helping Kids Stay Engaged While You Meet with Other Students
- What Matters Most in an English Class
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- The Difference Between Assessment and Grading
- What Goes in a Conferring Notebook
- Student Self-Assessment
- The Keys to Motivation and Engagement
- What Big Understandings Do I Want Students to Take Away at the End of the Year?

SYNTHESIS: BIG QUESTIONS TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT AFTER VIEWING

1. What effect does conferring have on student stamina and perseverance?
2. How can conferring help me engage more learners?
3. What sort of planning needs to be in place for conferring to work in my classroom?
4. What additional structures of assessment help me meet learners' needs over time?
5. How does conferring affect classroom management? What are the pros and cons? What needs to be in place to minimize the cons? Read Appendix C, "Hey, Those Kids in the Background Are Off Task!" to enrich your discussion.

APPENDIX A: PLANNING GUIDE FOR THE OTHER WES MOORE UNIT

(Note: This is a unit based on an anchor text.)



- For more information on Cris’s long-term and daily planning structures, see Chapters 3, 4, and 7 in *So What Do They Really Know?*

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How can reading a biography or autobiography make me smarter?
- How are fair and equal different?
- What ratio of nature to nurture do I need to create a meaningful life?
- What legacy will I leave?

FINAL PRODUCT/SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

“My Wake-Up Moment” Letter to Incoming Ninth Graders

<p>Long-Term Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily/Weekly Learning Targets 	<p>Summative Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Assessments (See Appendix D and <i>I Read It, but I Don’t Get It; Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?</i>; or <i>So What Do They Really Know?</i> for more information and examples of these formative assessments.)
<p><i>I can articulate why reading about the lives of others matters.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can identify qualities of biography, memoir, letters, and autobiography. ■ I can define point of view and discuss how it affects plot and interpretation. ■ I can identify the perspective of the narrator and consider different points of view. ■ I can recognize bias and use it to understand the text beyond the words on the page. ■ I can quote lines from my reading and explain why they matter in my life. ■ I can keep straight the different lives of the characters (Successful Wes and Incarcerated Wes) and also make connections between their lives and mine. ■ I can collect and reflect on data related to my reading stamina and perseverance. ■ I can reflect in my response journal on how my thinking is evolving. ■ I can use discussion groups as a way to deepen my understanding about the reading and improve my writing. 	<p><i>Letter to Incoming Ninth Graders</i> <i>Final Synthesis Journal Reflection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reading response journal with reflections on guiding questions over time and on daily reading ■ Journal reflections on evolution of thinking throughout the unit ■ Annotations on mentor texts ■ Annotations and reflections on a variety of nonfiction articles ■ Character sketches ■ Double-entry diaries ■ Quizzes on vocabulary words and basic concepts ■ Data collection on reading stamina and perseverance ■ Exit tickets: Here’s what I “get” and here’s what I wonder ■ Group observation form for reading/writing discussion groups

(continued)

I can consciously apply thinking strategies in order to stick with the reading when it gets confusing or boring and increase my comprehension.

- I can build my background knowledge by reading autobiographies, biographies, letters, and memoirs.
- I can determine importance in a biography.
- I can ask questions about parts in the text that are confusing.
- I can ask questions to propel me to keep reading.
- I can listen to my inner voice and recognize when it is wandering and when it is interacting with the text.
- I can reread parts in a different way to gain deeper understanding.

- Annotations on mentor texts
- Notes and reflections in reading response journal about increasing skills and sophistication as a reader of nonfiction
- Inner-voice sheets
- Double-entry diaries
- Quizzes on literary elements, plot, and vocabulary
- Entrance and exit tickets
- Group observation form for reading/writing discussion groups
- Final draft of letter

I can share a personal experience that might inform, influence, or inspire an incoming ninth grader.

- I can identify how authors craft a story and use their text as a model for my own writing.
- I can identify a “wake-up” moment in my life and describe it in a clear, interesting way.
- I can correctly cite lines from my reading and use them to support my thesis, claim, or purpose.
- I can use discussion groups as a way to deepen my understanding about the reading and improve my writing.
- I can correctly use conventions of print (capital letters, punctuation, and spelling) to clearly communicate meaning.

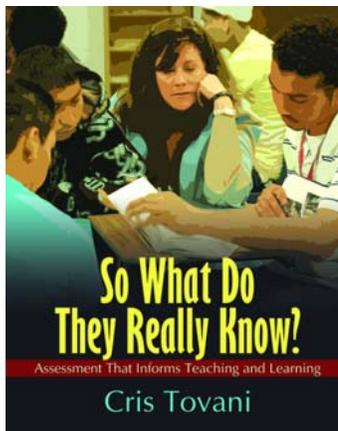
Letter to Incoming Ninth Graders

- Concept map of ideas that will influence my writing
- Exit tickets: Here’s what I “get” and here’s what I wonder
- Drafts of letters
- Group observation form

The calendar plan that follows is designed to help guide my students and me to the completion of a product. The plan is purposefully general, including only the long-term learning targets. I haven’t included all of the reading and writing mini-lessons because I won’t know the specifics of what each class needs until we begin the workshop cycle. When I write a plan, I start at the end of the three-to-four-week calendar. I mark the last box to indicate the day on which the product I am asking students to create is due. My classes meet every other day for 100 minutes. The plans that follow on the next page comprise the big ideas of the day. The mini-lessons on reading, writing, discussing, and grammar are not included in this plan.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Introduce book and the concept of legacy. View NBC interview and share information about the author.		Begin modeling thinking strategies and continue reading book.		Model how to write a reading response.
	Continue modeling thinking strategies and reading book.		Continue modeling thinking strategies and reading book. Read Maslow's Hierarchy.	
Read and annotate article about the life of author Wes Moore and continue reading book.		Continue reading and focus on writer's craft. Continue working on writing responses in journals.		Continue reading book and focusing on writer's craft. Continue writing responses in reading journals.
	Discuss components of a letter. Read and analyze mentor letters. Begin drafting. Continue reading book.		Share first drafts of letters with small group. Revise draft letter #1. Continue reading mentor letters and book.	
Finish reading <i>The Other Wes Moore</i> . Discuss epilogue and how it connects to the concept of legacy.		Consider how the concept of legacy will be included in letter. Work on draft #2 of letter.		Letter is read to another group, and small editing changes are made.
	Return to lab to make final edits to letters.		Addresses are located, and envelopes are addressed and mailed.	

APPENDIX B: PLANNING GUIDE FOR CHOICE-BASED READER'S WORKSHOP



- For more information on Cris's long-term and daily planning structures, see Chapters 3, 4, and 7 in *So What Do They Really Know?*

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What kind of reader am I? Which books entertain me? Which books do I want to read to make me smarter about the world?
- What strategies do I need to help me stick with a book?
- How do I remember and record information from my books that I don't want to forget?

FINAL PRODUCT/SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Published Class Bibliography and Book Recommendations (for future classes) and "My Life as a Reader" journal, which includes the following:

- Data on stamina as a reader over time
- Bibliography (personal and class)
- Reading recommendations
- Reading reflections (daily and synthesis)
- Annotations and thinking on self-selected books

<p>Long-Term Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily/Weekly Learning Targets 	<p>Summative Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Assessments (See Appendix D and <i>I Read It, but I Don't Get It; Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?</i>; or <i>So What Do They Really Know?</i> for more information and examples of these formative assessments.)
<p><i>I can consciously apply thinking strategies in order to stick with the reading when it gets confusing or boring and increase my reading comprehension.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can build my background knowledge by reading a variety of genres. ■ I can determine importance in a biography. ■ I can ask questions about parts in the text that are confusing. ■ I can ask questions to propel me to keep reading. ■ I can listen to my inner voice and recognize when it is wandering and when it is interacting with the text. ■ I can reread parts in a different way to gain deeper understanding. ■ I can identify the perspective of the narrator and consider different points of view. ■ I can identify new organizational features of text and how the author(s) uses those features to convey meaning. ■ I can reflect in my response journal about how my thinking is evolving. ■ I can use discussion groups as a way to deepen my understanding about the reading. 	<p><i>"My Life as a Reader" Journal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bibliography in reading journal ■ Annotations on texts ■ Notes and reflections in reading response journal about increasing skills and sophistication as a reader of fiction and nonfiction ■ Inner-voice sheets ■ Double-entry diaries ■ Entrance and exit tickets ■ Group observation form for reading/writing discussion groups ■ Final draft of book recommendation on class bibliography

(continued)

I can share my thinking about a book to inspire or influence another reader to pick it up.

- I can articulate why reading self-selected texts matters and articulate how it makes me smarter.
- I can vary my diet as a reader to get smarter and make informed recommendations to other readers.
- I can choose a book that is a new genre or about a topic that I haven't previously explored.
- I can describe what makes high-quality nonfiction.
- I can use mentor texts to inspire and influence my writing.
- I can correctly cite lines from my reading and use them to entice readers to choose my book.
- I can use discussion groups as a way to deepen my understanding about the reading and improve my writing.
- I can correctly use conventions of print (capitals, punctuation, and spelling) to clearly communicate meaning.

Class Bibliography and Book Recommendations

- Annotations on texts
- Inner-voice sheets
- Double-entry diaries
- Group observation form
- Annotations and reflections on a variety of nonfiction articles
- Reading response journal with reflections on guiding questions over time and on daily reading
- Exit tickets: Here's what I "get" and here's what I wonder
- Drafts of annotated bibliography entries over time

The calendar plan that follows is designed to help guide my students and me to the completion of a product. The plan is purposefully general, including only the long-term learning targets. I haven't included all of the reading and writing mini-lessons because I won't know the specifics of what each class needs until we begin the workshop cycle. When I write a plan, I start at the end of the three-to-four-week calendar. I mark the last box to indicate the day on which the product I am asking students to create is due. My classes meet every other day for 100 minutes. The plans that follow are the big ideas of the day. The mini-lessons on reading, writing, discussing, and grammar are not included in this plan.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Introduce books (both nonfiction and fiction) that students might not choose on their own.		Begin modeling how to annotate the beginning of a book in order to sustain interest.		Model how to record thinking so that, during group discussion time, other readers are interested in what I have to say.
	Continue modeling thinking strategies and reading self-selected book.		Continue modeling thinking strategies and reading self-selected book.	
Continue reading and finishing book. Write draft of the annotated bibliography.		Share annotated bibliography with group. Make revisions and edits.		Make final additions to the class bibliography on Google Docs.

APPENDIX C: “HEY, THOSE KIDS IN THE BACKGROUND ARE OFF TASK!”

Cris’s response:

I detest going to a workshop or viewing an instructional DVD that shows only the sanitized version of the finished product. Like my students, I learn from models both weak and strong that show me what the work can look like. During a few conferences in this DVD, you’ll notice some kids who are off task in the classroom. During the editing stage, it would have been very easy to cut these clips out and only show the students who are highly engaged. Instead, I have chosen to leave in the shots of students who aren’t reading and writing to demonstrate that I struggle with the same issues that all teachers struggle with when they let kids do their work.

Legendary basketball coach John Wooden said, “Don’t let what you cannot do get in the way of what you can do.” So it is with conferring. Sometimes there are kids off task when I am conferring with a student. If I stop listening to the student I am conferring with to handle the kids who are off task, I break the sanctity of the conference. The kids who are avoiding the work have figured out that the best way to get my attention is by not working. In my opinion, it is far more destructive to the learning environment to stop conferring with one student in order to berate or scold another who isn’t working. Once I finish my conference, I can turn my attention to the students who are not on task to see what they need in order to dig back in.

Starting from the premise that students would do what I want them to do if they could, I have to figure out what will enable them to focus on their work. In between conferences, I monitor where in the classroom I need to go next. Often, I will try to reengage a student who is off task. Sometimes I will simply ask him or her, “What do you need in order to get started?” I am often surprised by the direct and honest answers I receive. Sometimes all students need is a pencil or a book because they left theirs in their locker.

Some will argue that, by giving kids an extra book or pencil, I am making them less responsible. Nowhere in the state standards does it say that having one’s materials makes one proficient. For many students, it’s an avoidance strategy. I don’t want them disengaged; I want them reading, writing, and thinking. If giving them a pencil or an extra copy of the book will get them working, it’s well worth the trade-off.

Each situation is different. One student may be battling a cold and took a decongestant that made him sleepy. Another student may have been kicked out of her house as a result of a fight with a parent. Sometimes they just don’t know what I want them to do. One of the things I like best about the work time is figuring out what each kid needs.

I’m not making excuses for the off-task behavior that sometimes occurs in my class. As the grown-up in the room, though, it is my job to figure out who needs what. Flicking lights on and off or screeching at kids to get back to work only interrupts those who are working.

APPENDIX D: REPRODUCIBLE FORMS

Name _____

Period _____

Date _____

INNER-VOICE SHEET

Title of Book _____

Author of Book _____

Directions: Begin reading on page _____. Record the conversation you have in your head as you read. Be sure to have at least four (4) sentences per box. If you catch yourself using a reading strategy, add that at the bottom of the box. Also decide if the conversation inside your head distracts you from making meaning or if the voice helps you interact with the text.

Inner Voice on page	Inner Voice on page
Inner Voice on page	Inner Voice on page

GROUP OBSERVATION FORM

+	Quotes from Discussion	?

DOUBLE-ENTRY DIARY

Text from Reading

**Thinking (Questions, Connections, Synthesis,
This Is Important Because . . .)**

Learning Target: I can record and reflect on the reading I did today in order to build my stamina and comprehension over time.

What Goes into a Reading Response?

1. Title:
2. Pages Read:
3. Ground the reader in the book. Fiction: share the plot; nonfiction: share the facts or big idea from what you read.
4. Share what struck you today. This is a good place to record things that you want to remember and share with your group during discussion time. It is also a terrific place to record questions that you want to share with others or look out for as you continue reading and researching.

Example

March 15th

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

Pages: 173–180, Epilogue

This is nonfiction. In this portion of the book, the author fills readers in on what other people in the biography/autobiography are doing now. The incarcerated Wes has no control of his life. In prison, he is told how to spend every minute of his day. He earns fifty-three cents a day as a carpenter. Wes the writer took a tour of duty in Afghanistan. I am struck by his romanticizing of the war (177).

I am struck by the different legacy that each man leaves. Both start out in similar places. Pivotal moments in each man's life define who they will be as grown men. What have been pivotal moments in my life? How did the way I chose to act change the way I lived?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

WHY THE TRANSCRIPTS?

Following are transcripts of my conferences with students. During the editing phase of this project, I had many opportunities to watch myself confer. Having the chance to actually go back and read what was said during the conferences gave me a whole new appreciation for the art of conferring.

When I read the transcripts, a whole new layer of learning emerged. I noticed things I said in conferences that weren't useful. I also noticed questions I asked that made kids dig deeper into their learning. I found myself reflecting on what I saw and then caught myself trying new things the next day.

As I read, it dawned on me that the appendix of transcripts could be a useful training tool. I began to brainstorm ways that I might use transcripts not only to improve my own conferring skills but to also support others'. Here's what I came up with:

- Notice who is talking and who is listening. In some conferences, I talk too much. In others, there is a nice balance of student talk and teacher talk. Consider what I learn about a student when I'm not talking. Consider what a student learns from me when I'm doing the talking.
 - What do I say that encourages student talk?
 - What do I say that shuts down student talk?
 - What patterns do you notice? How do conferences start? How do they end?
 - Which conferences feel productive? What makes them productive?
 - How do I respond when kids are off task?
 - How do I keep track of conferences? What could you do to keep track of the students you've conferred with?
 - How might conferring records be used as a progress-monitoring tool?
 - How do I address the teaching of content versus the teaching of reading strategies?
 - How can I tell whether a student is really reading if I haven't read the book?
 - What kinds of questions do I ask?

After studying these transcripts, consider having a colleague script some of your own conferences. Remember, some conferences will go better than others. The only way to get good at conferring is to do it. If a colleague or instructional coach is able to script for you, you'll be amazed at how much you can learn from a second look.

CONFERENCE WITH HERMON

0:07:13.7

CRIS:

All right, did you look at this one too? This is another one I picked for you. This is the weirdest book. Um, so . . . all of these, everything in here are notes that this person found. And so they're kind of, it's just kind of interesting to see if you can figure out like how they're grouped, it's just really a cool, interesting book. So this might be one that's just a one-day read and you want to get into this one. Um, my kids over at Smokey really loved that book. That one kept disappearing off the shelves. That's always a great sign.

CONFERENCE WITH HEIDI

0:07:59.6

- CRIS:** Hi. How are you doing?
- HEIDI:** Good, how about you?
- CRIS:** Good. Um, I just want to ask you a quick question and then I'll get out of your way so you can write. Tell . . . so you're almost done with that much. You're blasting through this. So something that readers like you start to do is, when they start to get this close to the end . . . Caitlyn's doing this like crazy, she's thinking about, okay, what am I going to read next. Did you get a chance to think about that?
- HEIDI:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** What is it going to be, or what are you thinking?
- HEIDI:** I'm thinking like the first book, *Crank*, 'cause there are a lot of similarities in those two different stories.
- CRIS:** So I've, I've got *Crank* over there I think or, you know what? Danielle might be reading that. So I better pick that up so you've got it for over break.
- HEIDI:** All right.
- CRIS:** All right? So can you write me a note in here so I remember?
- HEIDI:** All right.
- CRIS:** Please pick up *Crank* for me. That would be great. Um, easy, hard, medium, just right? What would you say on the difficulty?
- HEIDI:** It's medium.
- CRIS:** Medium?
- HEIDI:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** Okay, perfect. Perfect, okay. Thanks, Heidi.

CONFERENCE WITH ANDREA

0:12:07.2

- CRIS:** Who is your target audience? Who is your letter going to be to?
- ANDREA:** Eighth graders.
- CRIS:** Okay, so let's see if we can narrow that down.
- ANDREA:** She's a little Hispanic chick. I don't want, like, the preppy ones with, like have you seen those with, like, the big hair and all conceited? I want a little shy . . .
- CRIS:** Okay, so you want a shy Hispanic girl . . . ?
- ANDREA:** Not shy but, like, normal. Kind of, not smart like me [laughs]. I don't mean not smart, but, like, not cool.
- CRIS:** Okay, so kind of a geek?
- ANDREA:** No, not geeky. But there's . . .
- CRIS:** Okay, so how can you describe it so you'll know who you're writing to? That's what matters.
- ANDREA:** Just an eighth grader.
- CRIS:** Okay, so put a girl. Right? You're going to do a girl for sure.
- ANDREA:** Yeah. I can't write backwards.
- CRIS:** Sorry. Is she going to be Latina? Is she going to be Mexican? From Mexico?
- ANDREA:** I want her to be Mexican.
- CRIS:** Okay, so put Mexican, great. Um, do you want her to have been born here or newly arrived, or parents were born here?
- ANDREA:** That didn't matter.

CRIS: Okay, do you want her to be rich, medium, not rich?

ANDREA: Not rich.

CRIS: Okay, put that down. All right. And so what do you think you're going to teach her? Or share with her?

ANDREA: Well, I want somebody kind of like me. I don't know, when I think . . . I was always by myself when I was a child. So when I went to school I was never, like, aware of what was going to happen, what was I going to do. I was never helped with my home because I never . . . nobody ever knew English in my house. I always found things out by myself.

CRIS: Okay, I'm smiling because, oh my goodness, there are so many girls that you could help. So um, oldest child, or first child, you said?

ANDREA: Mm-hmm.

CRIS: Okay, so put that on there. I just want to kind of keep track of this because we want to find the perfect person for your letter, right?

ANDREA: Yeah.

CRIS: Um, parents don't speak English.

ANDREA: I don't know, it's hard, like, when I want to write, and I want her to, like, like I want a person who understands, like, nobody's perfect. Like, I don't want her to be like, oh, she wants me to go to, like, she's trying to be, like, cool and say she got straight As and she always passed and she's the best and not even.

CRIS: Okay, so what could you share with her so she knows that about you?

ANDREA: Just, like, my experience I guess. Going through high school.

CRIS: Okay, so can you think of a moment in time where you were struggling?

ANDREA: Um, I think I struggle every day.

CRIS: Okay, can you narrow it down to, like, a time when . . . I can't imagine what it would feel like to sit in a classroom and not know what the teacher was saying.

ANDREA: Like, in math I sit there and he's talking and I'm like, "What is he talking about?" And sometimes I'm like, can you explain it? And he goes, "Just cause you're never here" and this . . . and he starts telling me this, like, whole dramatic story and I'm like, ah, forget it. I'm not even going to deal with this.

CRIS: Okay.

ANDREA: And I just give up.

CRIS: And have you learned anything from that experience?

ANDREA: That I'm not supposed to give up, but it's hard not to give up when they're pushing me down.

CRIS: All right. Are you, are you willing to try an experiment?

ANDREA: Sure.

CRIS: So for this next draft, here's what I want to challenge you to try. Capture, see if you can capture that math teacher. We won't use his name. We'll just—you can make up a name. See if you can capture the moment . . .

ANDREA: Can I use my chemistry teacher instead? She's worse.

CRIS: Sure, you can use whatever teacher you want—just don't use their name. And then think about like, what, like, think about your senses. What do you see, what do you hear? What do you feel? You know, what's—just try to describe that little moment. All right, just mess around with that right here and try to describe that moment in time.

ANDREA: Okay.

CONFERENCE WITH NATNAIL

0:18:34.5

- NATNAIL:** I don't know, like, how to share with the person 'cause I don't know.
- CRIS:** You know what I remember about one of the things you wrote, that every time it snows I think about it now? Is you throwing snowballs at the cops. And you almost getting shot. The day they chased you into your friend's house.
- NATNAIL:** Oh, yeah.
- CRIS:** Every time it snows, I think of that. And do you remember . . .
- NATNAIL:** I didn't throw it that day.
- CRIS:** But you were with kids who did?
- NATNAIL:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** So what did, what did you learn from that day?
- NATNAIL:** Mmm, don't throw things at cop cars? Try not to get myself . . .
- CRIS:** But you knew that, you knew you're not supposed to throw things at cop cars.
- NATNAIL:** Try not to get myself in trouble, like, to be in that situation, I guess.
- CRIS:** Yeah. Did . . . and I'm just wondering. I might be off base, so . . . that idea of, dang, I almost got killed. Messing around.
- NATNAIL:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** And it was sort of like this impulsive moment, funny . . . I mean it's funny, you've got to admit, when you throw rocks, snow, at a lot of cars. It's kind of funny. Right?
- NATNAIL:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** But there was that sort of . . . "Whoa, dude, this is serious."
- NATNAIL:** I still don't know, like, yeah, I guess so, it's a wake-up moment, but . . . I really don't know how to share with the person. I'm not sure.
- CRIS:** What do you care about writing?
- NATNAIL:** Huh?
- CRIS:** What do you care about writing?
- NATNAIL:** What do you mean?
- CRIS:** Like, if you, what's something that you want to write about?
- NATNAIL:** To the kid?
- CRIS:** Mm-hmm.
- NATNAIL:** I don't know. Maybe to not do it, like—explain why to not do it. I think I got that part down, but . . .
- CRIS:** Maybe, do you want to change this audience? Is there somebody else you'd rather write to? Do you have a younger brother or sister?
- NATNAIL:** No, I have older, but . . .
- CRIS:** Okay.
- NATNAIL:** But I don't know anyone younger. Cause I didn't go there.
- CRIS:** Yeah. Well, we're not really going to know . . . we're not going to know . . . we're not going to know our person personally either. That's why we're looking at, like, we're kind of making up a person that will fit the profile.
- NATNAIL:** Yeah. First, I have to know what kind of kids go there.
- CRIS:** Yeah, but you could decide. Who would be a fun kid to write to? Who would be a kid you could make smarter?
- NATNAIL:** Hmm . . . someone who doesn't go to class, I guess.
- CRIS:** Oh, great. Okay, so just kind of put that on there. Someone who doesn't go to class, a ditcher. Okay, now . . . 'cause the bell is going to ring in a minute, so here's your homework. For spring break.

NATNAIL: Okay.

CRIS: How can you use your wisdom, 'cause you're pretty darn wise, to help somebody else? I want you to think about who you might want to share . . . you're very street wise . . . what could you share and to who, when you come back from break.

NATNAIL: Okay.

CRIS: So write this on a sticky note, stick it in your pocket. 'Cause as soon as you walk out the door, you're going to forget about me.

NATNAIL: [Laughs.]

CRIS: You might remember if that's in your pocket, okay?

CONFERENCE WITH JOSE

0:22:45.1

CRIS: So I'm wondering if you could try to describe your math situation the best you can, and just kind of experiment and see if that would be a good place to start for an eighth grader.

JOSE: All right.

CRIS: So if we start here . . . so what, what do you think I would want, like, what do you think you're going to do right here?

JOSE: Hmm . . . uh, math, uh . . . sometimes I struggle in math. But there's other ways to accomplish your goal, I guess.

CRIS: So before you start giving them advice, could you just tell them about your struggle?

JOSE: Yeah.

CRIS: Okay, and what would you say?

JOSE: Uh, well, I never took my class serious. I guess.

CRIS: Oh, what a great first line: "I never took my math class serious." Or, well, you're taking it serious now?

JOSE: Yeah.

CRIS: So first semester, junior . . . was it junior or sophomore year?

JOSE: Junior year. First semester.

CRIS: Mm-hmm. "First semester of Algebra 2, I didn't take very seriously."

JOSE: Okay.

CRIS: And then describe what happened.

JOSE: All right.

CRIS: Fool around with that and just see what happens, what you come up with.

JOSE: Okay.

CRIS: The only way you can't get points is if you don't put what you're thinking down. Cause we're just drafting right now.

CONFERENCE WITH SHAQ

0:26:44.0

CRIS: So the way you figure out how old, when he was born, we're going to subtract thirteen years. He was born in 1946.

SHAQ: So, yeah, so he didn't see the war but his parents did.

CRIS: Yeah. Okay, great. So he was just a baby.

SHAQ: Right.

CRIS: All right, so now he doesn't remember, I mean he didn't experience . . .

SHAQ: Nothing. Like . . .

CRIS: The direct war, but what did he experience?

SHAQ: Like, poverty and then, like, having, not having somewhere to live or eat because a lot of places was bombed up and so they had to rebuild from the city and they had to ask their neighboring countries, which took a lot of time and money for them to get. So he probably, they probably struggled to make things right for them to find jobs because . . .

CRIS: Nice . . .

SHAQ: A lot of things were damaged in the war. So after that they kind of moved away from Germany, came to America, and they made their life new.

CRIS: The American dream, right?

SHAQ: Yeah. Well, their American dream is different from everybody else's. Because truthfully their American dream was for, like, to find a peaceful place, not be where they feel like they're not insecure. So I guess what you could say is that when they came to the United States, they were living their American dream, so they accomplished their goals.

CRIS: Yeah. So remember we talked about that last summer . . . the American dream kind of recalibrates, it changes?

SHAQ: Yeah.

CRIS: Okay, so what did he do here, as a writer? What did he do for us here?

SHAQ: He taught us what it was like for someone to pass down the experience of the war.

CRIS: Yeah.

SHAQ: So he didn't experience it himself, but his parents experienced it and they taught him about it.

CRIS: So he kind of gave us . . .

SHAQ: Foreshadowing?

CRIS: Background knowledge.

SHAQ: Hmm.

CRIS: Of his life, so we could kind of better see his point of view. So he said right from "I didn't live through the war, but I lived through the aftermath." All right, so here's . . . do you want to get in on this challenge? So here's what I want . . . pick any page you want. If you guys want to work together, you can. See if you could figure out what these authors are doing for readers. So right here, he's giving us some background knowledge. Like, down here, "Future generations should learn the following from the Holocaust: do not allow yourself to be passive. Speak out when injustices occur. Be involved in the community and never allow your support of Israel to waver." Okay, what's this writer doing here?

SHAQ: Saying, uh, well, I don't know. Like, I look at this in different . . . 'cause I think of the problem that's going on in Libya. And like how, like, now that people are saying we don't want this guy in power no more, we want, like, we're speaking for our injustice, we're saying what's wrong and what's right. So I don't know nothing about the Israel waiver. I have to, like, really think about that one.

CRIS: Okay, so you don't need to do that, though. I mean, you're so good at always making connections. For this challenge what I want you to try to figure out is, what did he do as a writer? Like I'm thinking what he does is this thing called "a call to action." Like he's telling us something to do. Like we probably want to do that to those eighth graders. Like go to class, don't blow off your freshman year. This guy's saying, learn from the Holocaust.

Don't allow yourself to just be passive and see injustices happen. Check the other three writers and see if that's a pattern.

SHAQ: Okay.
CRIS: Okay?
SHAQ: All right.

CONFERENCE WITH ISRAEL

0:31:45.3

CRIS: I wrote myself a little note here to see if you liked the book.
ISRAEL: Yeah.
CRIS: Yeah? And you are liking it? So tell me what you figured out so far.
ISRAEL: That he's the teacher.
CRIS: Okay, who's the teacher?
ISRAEL: Mark.
CRIS: Mark? Okay. And, 'cause you were all confused about the, uh, ages? Did you get that figured out? Okay, so what did you figure out?
ISRAEL: That there's three kids he's teaching, teenagers.
CRIS: Oh, there are? Okay, so who are the kids?
ISRAEL: I don't know their names.
CRIS: Okay, so that's one thing we gotta figure out. So you could help keep them straight. 'Cause I wonder if those kids are going to go throughout the whole piece, that we want to kind of track, okay? So that's one thing that we're going to kind of keep our eye open for today. Okay, so what else do you . . .
ISRAEL: They're in . . . juvie.
CRIS: Yeah, so do you know what juvie is?
ISRAEL: Jail for kids.
CRIS: Yeah. And this is a real place, I guess. This is nonfiction. So he's really writing about kids who actually existed. So go ahead and read it to me so I can see what part you're on.
ISRAEL: Um, [inaudible] . . . at the museum.
CRIS: I'm going to stop you. That's great. Where are you? Okay, I'll just put a little dot there so you'll know where you left off. Nice. So one of the things I wanted to check for was this thing called "fluency." Do you know what fluency is? [Israel shakes his head "no".] Just how you pronounce the words, and you were great at that. That's kind of nerve-wracking when you have all this going on. Um, okay, so the type looks a little different here than here. What have you figured out about that?
ISRAEL: This is what the kids wrote.
CRIS: Oh. Okay. So this is a kid talking? And then who's this?
ISRAEL: That's just the narrator.
CRIS: That's the narrator?
ISRAEL: The teacher.
CRIS: The teacher, okay. Um, the teacher's also the narrator, I think. Do you know what the narrator's job is? So the . . . so I think it's Mark, right? So far three people I've gone to today have a narrator who tells us the story through his eyes. So we're getting Mark's perspective. So we've got the kid talking, the kid writing, and is he in his journal here or is he talking to us?
ISRAEL: It's his journal.
CRIS: It's his journal? Okay, so the kid's writing and then you've got Mark telling us, sort of filling in some of the blanks. Great. So it doesn't seem like you're

stuck. So I'm going to give you a little challenge today. Okay? Are you up for it? Um, I want you to look for something today that would be interesting to your group. And maybe you want to read a part or you want to tell about a part just to get somebody else hooked with this book. Okay? Okay. And I want you to look for the kids. I want you to figure out who the kids are so you keep can keep it straight there.

CONFERENCE WITH IRVING

0:36:22.2

CRIS: So, anything juicy that you've read, or is there anything that you've read that you didn't know before?

IRVING: Well, I didn't know that, like, only Mexican migrants are able to choose to, like, go home, like, voluntarily. Like, instead of being, like, having to go to court and everything. So, like, people, like, more south or from other countries don't have that option.

CRIS: Um, do you know why, maybe, that is?

IRVING: No.

CRIS: I wonder, did they say anything about green cards . . . have you ever heard of that before?

IRVING: I've heard of it.

CRIS: We should do a little research on that. If I understand correctly, a green card is, um, like a work permit. So you can come to a different country and maybe help with the farm, with the crops, during growing season. And when the growing season's over you can go back to your country. So I'm going to give you a little job to kind of keep your eye open for this word, green card. See if we can find out what that is. I think these are hard to get. And that could be one of the reasons why people are trying to come over the border illegally. And I think, like, all the farms that are in California hire people illegally because they need those crops picked before the fruit and the vegetables rot. So they hire people illegally, and that's why they're coming over. Okay, so what else? What are you going to share with your group today?

IRVING: I guess I'm going to share that. The next one . . . I found something. Oh, yeah, I found the story about, like, a lady, she had a son and a daughter. And they were left behind by the group. So she told the daughter to stay with the group, right? And her fifteen-year-old son stayed with her until they could contact his grandfather, because he lived in the United States. He was legal, he was a citizen. But they were not. And I guess, like, they ran out of food and water. So the son had to, like, go ahead and look for help. And so he left her behind. And he found help, and he found the grandfather and everything, but the mother died. So they started getting a whole bunch of help from, like, the news and radio stations and everything. And it took them, like, two or three weeks to find her.

CRIS: Find her body?

IRVING: Yeah, and the only way they could identify her was because of the ring she had.

CRIS: Oh. Do you remember those newspaper articles we read from Arizona, from Tucson, about . . . and we saw, I showed you the video clip from NPR about the bodies and what happens to them in the desert?

IRVING: Yeah, they, they get all deformed and . . .

CRIS: Yeah, they dry out. Okay, so that’s a very compelling story. If you could find a little bit of text to read to your group, I think that would pull them in more.

IRVING: All right.

CRIS: Okay, so I’m going to put that down as kind of a challenge today. Find . . . it’s called an “excerpt” . . . excerpt to read to your group. You just mark it with a sticky note. And if you need more stickies, you know where there. They’re right over there.

IRVING: Okay.

CRIS: I’m so proud of you because you’re really stretching yourself. And you . . . it seems like you totally get it.

IRVING: I do.

CRIS: Okay.

IRVING: It’s kind of hard sometimes, but . . .

CRIS: But you’re getting the big part of it. So it’s so great. Nice job.

CONFERENCE WITH ASLAM

0:41:31.1

ASLAM: There’s, like, a question.

CRIS: Okay, so what part did you read that made you write this?

ASLAM: There’s only one sentence, I think.

CRIS: Okay, so: “We’ve moved to a completely dark area behind a collection of bushes to regroup. Dalio, not panicking, said ‘Bro, we have to go back to campus now.’” All right, so what’s the picture in your head?

ASLAM: I say, “Why people always move from a good part to a bad part?” So it’s like, I thought he mean the complete dark. He mean, like, the bad part.

CRIS: Okay, so I think, I think what he’s saying right here . . .

ASLAM: I just read this first, I just read, like, this.

CRIS: Oh, okay.

ASLAM: I didn’t finish the sentence, so . . .

CRIS: Oh, so now does it make more sense?

ASLAM: I don’t know . . . I just liked it, yeah.

CRIS: Okay, so what’s the, what’s the action? Like, you’re going, like, way up here, really smart. What’s the plain old action that’s happening right here?

ASLAM: Uh . . .

CRIS: Let’s try this chunk right here. Read a little bit of this to me.

ASLAM: “Going to the pizza shop was now . . . was now off the table.”

CRIS: Okay, so now this is American slang.

ASLAM: Yeah.

CRIS: Do you know what that means? “Going to the pizza shop is now off the table”?

ASLAM: So just . . . like . . . so what is it?

CRIS: Um, after this car tried to run him over, now they’re thinking, okay, we just gotta just get home where it’s safe. We can’t go get pizza. Someone’s out there trying to hurt us. So “off the table” means it’s not an option anymore. All right, let’s keep going.

ASLAM: We realized who the target was.

CRIS: Okay, so we realize who the target was. Who is the target?

ASLAM: They are, like, the people that's trying to get them, so that . . . they were like, they were shootin', so . . . 'cause they were running away . . . so they have to get . . . a lot of people are trying to get them . . . so they know what's going on.

CRIS: Yeah. So the guys in the red truck . . .

ASLAM: In the red truck, yeah.

CRIS: . . . are targeting Wes because he's black. Now here's the thing. This is college reading. So don't feel bad that you don't know everything on here. I want you just to take your time and see if you can just figure out the action for this little part. And then I'm going to . . . who at this table do you feel the most comfortable with? Who do you trust?

ASLAM: Anybody.

CRIS: Any of these guys? Okay, great. All right, so after you get down through here, I want you to share any questions you have about words or anything with one of these guys. 'Cause they can totally fill you in. And then after spring break I want you to bring a little piece in Arabic, and I'll have them read that for you. And you could be . . . okay? Do you see where I'm going with this?

ASLAM: Yeah.

CRIS: Okay, so don't worry about this yet. Let's just figure out the story. Like what he does instead of fighting.

ASLAM: Okay.

CRIS: Okie doke? Okay, you can go to the second page and do it.

CONFERENCE WITH SAMANTHA

0:47:11.7

CRIS: So, I could see why you were so confused. I can totally see why you're so confused. What do you think you've figured out so far? In this book?

SAMANTHA: That . . . I don't know. Like, just the reasons.

CRIS: Yeah. So have you figured out who Hannah is?

SAMANTHA: Mm-hmm.

CRIS: Okay, who's Hannah?

SAMANTHA: The cheerleader that committed suicide.

CRIS: Okay, she's the girl who committed suicide. Okay. Have you figured out who Clay Jensen is?

SAMANTHA: [Nods.]

CRIS: Who is Clay Jensen?

SAMANTHA: Um, the boy that, like, he liked Hannah.

CRIS: Yeah. He liked Hannah. He's also the narrator. Do you know what the narrator does?

SAMANTHA: Mm-hmm.

CRIS: What does the narrator do?

SAMANTHA: Like, tell the story?

CRIS: Yeah, the narrator tells the reader, us, what's happening. I'll make you a little cheat sheet here. Okay? So we're hearing Hannah's story through him. He's talking to us. All right, here's the thing you gotta pay attention to. The italics is Hannah on tape. Okay? So wherever you see the italics, that's Hannah. The regular print is Clay. I had to keep stopping last night and checking myself to make sure I knew who was talking. I think, as you keep going, it's going to get easier. All right, so let's go back to where you first got confused, and let's see if we can figure out this part you were stuck on.

SAMANTHA: 'Cause it's like Clay is telling one thing and then, like, in the tapes it's, like, still talking about this thing and then it's kind of confusing.

CRIS: Okay, so should we start on this page right here?

SAMANTHA: Yeah. On this one.

CRIS: Okay, so let's go . . . sometimes I have to get a running start from the page before. So let's start right here. Go ahead and read this part to me.

SAMANTHA: "I'm starting to understand, I'm starting to see what, and an excuse was all that. All this guy needed . . ."

CRIS: Okay, so who is doing this talking?

SAMANTHA: Hannah.

CRIS: Hannah on the tape. So do you know who Alex is?

SAMANTHA: [Nods.]

CRIS: Who is he?

SAMANTHA: Um, he's this boy that she used to hang out with?

CRIS: And did he make the list?

SAMANTHA: Mm-hmm.

CRIS: Okay. Does the title make sense to you? What have you figured out about the title?

SAMANTHA: That there's thirteen reasons why she committed suicide.

CRIS: Right. And does this correspond with the tapes?

SAMANTHA: Mm-hmm.

CRIS: How many people on the tapes?

SAMANTHA: Thirteen.

CRIS: Yeah. So you're going to have to also pay attention to who . . . who Hannah is talking to as she goes down her list. Okay, who is talking here?

SAMANTHA: Hannah.

CRIS: Okay. Who is going to be talking here?

SAMANTHA: Hannah.

CRIS: Yeah. Okay, what about here?

SAMANTHA: Clay.

CRIS: Yeah. So Clay is going to be putting his two cents' worth in after he hears what Hannah says on the tape. Then he's going to talk to us, the readers. All right, so can I give you a challenge today? I want you to see if you can go back to this part where you got stuck and you could slow your reading down. You don't have to race through it. Make sure you know who's talking. Make sure you . . . if you start to get confused, you look at how the type is.

SAMANTHA: Okay.

CRIS: Okay? And then in your response that you write today? Let me know how that went for you. Okie doke? I'm going to leave you this, just as a little heads-up, okay? Okay. Think you're okay?

SAMANTHA: Mm-hmm.

CRIS: Okay.

CONFERENCE WITH SAMARA

0:52:56.4

CRIS: In terms of difficulty, this one seems really easy for you.

SAMARA: Yeah.

CRIS: And what about this one?

SAMARA: This one is, like, it's kind of, it's interesting, but it's not easy. I think, like . . .

CRIS: Is it pushing you a little bit?

SAMARA: Yeah.

CRIS: Hold on one second. You guys? Shh . . . give me about six more minutes, okay? Push yourselves six more minutes, and then we'll start on our response. Okay, so here's the thing I was thinking about you last night. Um, if you are bored you don't work. Right? Um, you . . . and you need to be challenged.

SAMARA: Mm-hmm.

CRIS: So that was my concern. Because, like, *Anna's Story* was so easy for you. This seems really easy for you. So I'm glad you got this Fallujah book to keep going on. Now, the thing about *Sunrise Over Fallujah* is you might have questions about war. And the military.

SAMARA: And what year and all that.

CRIS: Yeah, so what are you going to do about that? What are you going to do about the background knowledge you don't have?

SAMARA: I can ask questions and write it in my journal and go back and reread and try to figure the words out by myself.

CRIS: Okay, um . . . I'm going to keep your journals, because you guys are going to write a response. But you may want to grab some stickies to put in the front. And record your stickies in the book so when we come back from break we can talk about it. And I may not have the answers, but we can figure them out together. We can ask around. 'Cause one of the security guards was in the Air Force, and he'll have some background knowledge for us.

SAMARA: Okay.

CRIS: Okay?

SAMARA: All right.

CRIS: I also want you . . . I want you to keep your eye open for another book that will push you. 'Cause you're going back in the Honors next year.

SAMARA: Okay, I think on the next book I want to read more about, like, the Holocaust. So there's, like, I want to read more of those. I already read *Alicia's Story*, I think.

CRIS: Did you read *Night*?

SAMARA: No.

CRIS: Okay. We're going to do a Holocaust book, but I'm wondering if a lot of kids have read *Night* so I'm going to find another one 'cause there's a ton.

SAMARA: Okay.

CRIS: Okay. Nice job today. Thank you for really buckling down.

CONFERENCE WITH ARIANNA

0:56:22.8

ARIANNA: I put them down like this, like "lady in red," and who equals the relationships so I can remember which one.

CRIS: Oh, that's a great idea. So you keep track of who's who?

ARIANNA: Yeah.

CRIS: So in your head are you picturing the movie and then who that person is that you're going to try to connect?

ARIANNA: Yeah.

CRIS: Oh, that's a really smart thing to do.

ARIANNA: Okay.

CRIS: Okay, so sometimes authors use things. Sometimes they use, like, color as, like, a metaphor.

ARIANNA: Yeah.

CRIS: So are you noticing anything . . . like when you think of red, um, what does that remind you of?

ARIANNA: I don't know. Red. I don't know, it's just a color. I don't know. It's not bright, like yellow and pink.

CRIS: Have you ever heard the expression the "Lady in Red"?

ARIANNA: It's the first time.

CRIS: Um, like when I hear the Lady in Red I sometimes think of, like, a floozy. Somebody kind of . . . a woman that's kind of um, loose. She's sort of sexually promiscuous. Does that fit for this character?

ARIANNA: I don't know. She's more in the movie, she was the lady who was always going back to the guy who hurt her.

CRIS: Oh, okay. So she's the sort of enabler.

ARIANNA: Yeah, she's always going back.

CRIS: Okay. So, if . . . I'm just noticing that color and I could be, you know . . . that's the cool thing about reading. You get to make meaning for yourself.

ARIANNA: Yeah.

CRIS: I think, now that you said this is . . . as I read this book, I'm going to see if there's a pattern with the colors. I think your idea of comparing the book to the movie . . . Cleo says the book is way better, so I'll be curious to see what you think.

ARIANNA: It makes you think.

CRIS: About what?

ARIANNA: Like, I would have to really think about, like, it makes you care, like, which one is which. Like the Lady in Purple . . . which one is she in the movie. And, like, it makes you think who's who. And then everything is, like, a different order. One moment it's Lady in Red. The next moment it's another lady. So then you gotta kind of keep the flow.

CRIS: Are you thinking about yourself? Like, who am I? Who do I relate . . .

ARIANNA: Who do I relate to in these girls? But . . . [laughs]. It's interesting. Oh, and also I was realizing how they typed everything. It's like text format. Like how we text. 'Cause everything is, like, abbreviated.

CRIS: Authors do everything for a reason.

ARIANNA: Yeah.

CRIS: So that would be maybe a cool thing to talk to your group about. To, like, show that to them and see if they can give you sort of their ideas that might help yours.

ARIANNA: Okay.

CRIS: Or you share with them. 'Cause a lot of people are reading these prose novels.

ARIANNA: Yeah.

CRIS: Great. Thanks, Arianna.

ARIANNA: Mm-hmm.

CONFERENCE WITH OMAR

1:00:30.3

- OMAR:** Sarah left Skeleton Creek.
- CRIS:** Where is she going?
- OMAR:** She went to, um, to New York City.
- CRIS:** Okay. All right. So it sounds to me . . . I'm writing down I understand the book, no problem. It sounds like this book is just, like, perfect for you. Not too hard, not too easy. All right. So when you finish this, which . . . you'll finish it before we come back . . . like, your bibliography, you may want to do, like, all three of them. You may want to talk about all three of them. 'Cause you're the only one that's read all three of them. Kind of together. Any plans for what you're going to read next?
- OMAR:** I think, like, in the middle of the book, Hannah's going to come back and start fighting with the dead. And Ryan is going to save the day again. And then Sarah is going to come back to the dredge because there's still mystery in the dredge.
- CRIS:** Okay, so you know what you're doing? You're doing something really good readers do. You're making these predictions based on the last two books you've read. You kind of know the characters now. And you've kind of figured out Ryan is the hero, and you've kind of figured out that Sarah is his assistant and that the ghost isn't going away yet. And I'm thinking, 'cause there's a fourth one coming, he's not going to go away in this book either. Right?
- OMAR:** Yeah. And then something else is that they both had a son. And it was Ranger Bonner.
- CRIS:** Oh, so that's how the ranger connects back in?
- OMAR:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** So do you think he's going to be in this?
- OMAR:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** Okay, so you're just doing a great job looking for connections to the other two books. Um, if you like this kind of series of mysteries, I can show you so many authors that, that have . . . that write for adults that I think you're ready for.
- OMAR:** Okay.
- CRIS:** They're going to be scarier.
- OMAR:** That's cool.
- CRIS:** It's going to be gorier.
- OMAR:** Okay.
- CRIS:** Okay?
- OMAR:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** So when we come back from break, I'll show you some of those series mysteries.
- OMAR:** Okay.
- CRIS:** Okay?
- OMAR:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** Okay, I'll start keeping my eye open over spring break.

CONFERENCE WITH JOSE

1:04:18.1

- CRIS:** Whenever I read these kind of science fiction books and the world's been destroyed, I'm always going to think, okay, how did it get destroyed? Was it through war, was it through nuclear . . .
- JOSE:** In this part it says there was a big quake, so basically there was a big earthquake that happened and destroyed everything. But one place left unharmed, that's Eden. Perfect place, you know, you get it.
- CRIS:** Yeah, so you know when we were talking about that in Anthem?
- JOSE:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** So what's the thread you're picking up?
- JOSE:** There's always some kind of perfect place. Utopia.
- CRIS:** Yeah, it's kind of this thing called, like when you're in Honors next year, or AP, they may call it an "archetype." Um, so you've got sort of the Christ figure, you've got the Garden of Eden. It's almost like a Biblical thread. Have you figured out anything else?
- JOSE:** Not really.
- CRIS:** You figured this out, right?
- JOSE:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** The guy's name is Ryder. It kind of sounds okay, so . . .
- JOSE:** It's with a "t," not a "d."
- CRIS:** Yeah, so with a "t"? Okay. So . . . and did you see this?
- JOSE:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** 'Cause he's written a ton of books that you might want to look for over break. Okay, so what's your plan? What's your plan for reading over break?
- JOSE:** Just to basically finish this first and then get to *Fahrenheit*.
- CRIS:** Okay. All right, so this one . . . this one is quite a bit harder.
- JOSE:** Yeah. But I love challenging books, so . . .
- CRIS:** Okay, great. So um, one of the things, like, as you're thinking . . . if you get stuck, just see if you can jot some questions down. 'Cause when we come back we could talk about it. Okay? 'Cause I'm going to be curious. I think you'll want to read this with freshmen next year instead of *Anthem*. So I'd love to know your opinion on what you think, okay?
- JOSE:** Okay.
- CRIS:** Okay, Jose. Thanks.

SMALL GROUPS: OFF-TASK GIRLS' GROUP

1:09:00.4

- CRIS:** So, how do we pep this up, then?
- Girl 1:** Well, I'm interested in the book. It's just, like, like when you read the book you kind of, like . . .
- Girl 2:** There's, like, boring parts sometimes.
- Girl 1:** Yeah, sometimes you just want to go to sleep.
- CRIS:** Okay. So what I'm writing down is you need ways to get through the boring parts.
- Girl 1:** Yeah. I like the book. It's just, like, sometimes I just want to go to sleep. My eyes get tired.
- CRIS:** Okay. Um, well, this piece right here, like . . . when you're reading a boring book right now, whose fault is it?
- Girl 1:** Yours, cause you're making it boring.

CRIS: Mine?

All: No, ours.

CRIS: Okay.

Girl 3: Ours.

CRIS: All right, so when we were reading Anthem and you guys were hating that, whose fault was that?

Girl 1: Yours.

CRIS: Yeah, because that's one of our anchor texts that we had to get through.

Girl 1: It was boring.

CRIS: But now . . .

Girl 4: My book's not boring. I just get bored. I don't want to read.

Girl 1: Yeah, I hate reading.

Girl 4: It's not the book. I don't want to read it. It's me. I don't want to read anything.

CRIS: All right, so . . .

Girl 2: We read too much in here.

CRIS: Because she hates . . . we read too much in here, I know.

Girl 2: Because she hates it, she makes it boring?

CRIS: Well, I'm just thinking . . . how was your read today? Were you bored?

Girl 3: Yeah.

CRIS: So, do you like this book or no?

Girl 3: I do, it's just boring.

CRIS: Yeah. So here's what I'm trying to think about. If you had a book you loved, you wouldn't be bored.

Girl 4: I do love this. I just don't want to read it.

Girl 2: I could read it at home.

Girl 1: Yeah, we could read it—it's just boring.

CRIS: So here's what I'd like you guys to do. Um, I just wrote down a couple notes. Like, I'm not sure you guys understand why talking about your books . . . why we're doing that.

Girl 4: Yeah, it doesn't make sense.

CRIS: Okay, so you need some more information.

Girl 4: Why do we do this . . .

Girl 1: Why do we read?

Girl 4: No, not why do we read. Why do we have to talk about what we're reading?

Girl 1: If we don't even have the same book, I'm lost on her . . . I'm like, whoa.

Girl 4: I don't get what you're talking about either, except that your book is haunted.

Girl 1: Yeah, yeah, it's haunted.

CRIS: Okay. Um, I'm going to pull people together and I'm going to show you, I'm going to . . . we're going to address this right now. But while I run to another group I want you guys to . . . I want you to share your responses.

Girl 1: We kind of already did.

CRIS: I want you to share what you wrote and then see . . . have the rest of the group see if it's a response or if it's a summary.

Girl 2: All right.

Girl 4: Isn't a summary what you read, and a response is what you think about it?

CRIS: Yeah, so have people read their responses and then see if they figure . . . see if they've done that, okay? Just go around and just give each other some feedback on that.

1:15:36:02

- CRIS:** So you guys have all these annotations. You're so good at annotating. You're so good at reading and thinking and recording your thinking. Now what I want you to do is, I want you to take it to the next step and see if you can label what these authors are doing. So, like, one of the things that Amy figured out is that this Hill Harper guy is sharing some of his mistakes. He's sharing where he messed up. He's kind of being humble. He's not being Mr. Perfect, Goody Two-Shoes. Another thing that Amy noticed is Hill Harper refers to experts. When he talks about Kanye West and . . . I'm thinking that that probably gets the reader's attention. Like when you see Kanye West's name in there, we're like, "Oh, what did Kanye do?" Right? You may not have famous celebrities to write about, but to little eighth graders, you are experts about ninth grade. You survived it. They're going to really kind of look at you as kind of knowing what you're talking about. So you might want to put on here, "Refer to . . . to me, to my life as a ninth grader." Um, you might want to put on here, "Share personal experiences." Okay, so let's do a little experiment. Tiana, read one of the places, read the text that made you want to annotate. And then read your annotation. Yeah, speak up a little bit so Amy and I can hear over here.
- TIANA:** Right here where it says, "You control school. Yes, I'm serious, you run school. Schools stay open because of your attendance. School is there to serve you, not for you to serve it. That being the case, you control it. I want you to start approaching your education from that place of power." And I put that I've never really thought of it that way. And, but now when I think about it, it's like totally true. 'Cause, like, if it wasn't for us the school wouldn't be here. Like, without what we have to say and, like, us wanting to learn. It's what's keeping it open.
- CRIS:** You're our client. I work for you. All right, so what . . . did you figure out what Hill Harper did?
- ANDREA:** Yes.
- CRIS:** What did he do?
- ANDREA:** Yes.
- CRIS:** What did he do? What do you think he did?
- ANDREA:** He . . . I don't know.
- CRIS:** I'm thinking that he shared something new that you'd never thought about before. So, like, do you think there's things you know about Overland? That these eighth graders have never thought about before?
- ? NAME:** Sure.
- CRIS:** Okay, so sometimes I call that "provocative thinking." So he shared something provocative, something new. Like to think of you guys as being the purpose for school makes you kind of stop and go, "Wow, I never thought about that." So sharing something that maybe those eighth graders don't know could be on here. Another thing he did is he used the word "you." We always told in English classes, don't use "you." How did that . . . did you notice that?
- ANDREA:** Yeah, it made you feel like they're talking to you, like . . . us, me.
- CRIS:** Yeah, it made you feel like he was talking right to you. All right? So maybe you want to put that down there too. Use the word and then in quotes, "you." "Made us feel like he was talking directly to me." All right. So I'm

going to go over and check these guys here. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to be detectives and see if you can label and name what they're doing as writers. Because we're . . . we're going to kind of pull the stuff that they did that we like and use it in our own letter. Does that help? I suggest you go re-annotate it. Because wherever you annotated is probably the place that the writer was effective. It made you stop and think. Okay? Okay, I'll see you in a minute.

BOYS' GROUP CONFERENCE

1:21:01.7

- CRIS:** Okay, so in about nine minutes . . . we're going to read for about nine more minutes. Um, what I'm going to ask us to start to do is to look at these pieces from a writer's perspective, like, what do we notice the writers doing? Um, so, Manuel, you highlighted some things. Tell me, tell us why you highlighted that.
- MANUEL:** How he, like, he doesn't make it sound all fancy. He relates it to our lives. To real life.
- CRIS:** Okay, so just read that example that you highlighted.
- MANUEL:** It was just talking about, like, how Harper is beginning to question of . . .
- CRIS:** The author?
- MANUEL:** Yeah, and how the MTV show *Real Life*, how they make it look like a superficial life. How really it's about buying food, maintaining a family, and getting a good job. And that's what real life is about, not those shows they got on TV.
- CRIS:** Okay, so what Manuel's picked up, you guys, is that this author, Hill Harper, has given you guys examples you can relate to. He's not using ones that maybe a grandma would get. He's kind of talking to his audience. So when you go to write your letters to Prairie, you're going to want to give them examples they can relate to. So, Manuel . . . Manuel, just go ahead and label that. "Uses examples that readers can relate to." Just put that right in the margin there. Want me to be quiet so you can keep reading? [Laughs.] All right, so do you know what to do? What . . . what are you going to do, Natnail?
- NATNAIL:** Find examples.
- CRIS:** You're going to look and see if you can name what the writers are doing for us as readers. Okay?

FISHBOWL DISCUSSION

1:24:10.8

- CRIS:** What we're going to do is, we're going to kind of eavesdrop in, we're going to spy on their thinking a little bit and we're going to try to figure out what we notice them doing really well. Things that they're not doing so hot, we're going to try to politely share that with them without hurting their feelings. For real. All right, so what you guys gotta do is, you gotta speak up so we can hear what you're saying.
- ARIANNA:** Okay, can I go first?
- CRIS:** Just a sec. Are you guys ready? All right. So, Carlos and Israel, you guys might want to turn a little bit so you could see and not hurt your neck. You can move that desk. Feel free to move that desk. All right? Okay. Arianna says she wants to go first. Have at it.

- ARIANNA:** Okay. My book, I chose it because, for one, I watched the movie. And the movie was pretty good, sad, kind of made me mad sometimes, during it. So I decided to read the book, you know, the book is supposed to be better. So what I like about the book already is that there are poems, and I like poems. Also it's . . . it makes you think because it's coded different. It's like, it's not what you would usually read, like normal words. It's like texting. It's, like, you know how you text and everything is abbreviated? It's like this. Well, this is how it is. Also, like, in the movie, there's, like, I don't know, there's girls with actual names, but in here I think they're all switching different colors because they actually got colors in here like *Lady in Purple*, *Lady in Red*, and all that. They actually got colors. But I think they're all switching colors. But have you guys seen the movie? *For Colored Girls*?
- RICARDO:** So how would you say the book connects with the movie?
- ARIANNA:** How would I say it connects? Because it's about girls, or colored girls with problems. And, like, how they deal with it, and it helps, like, connect to, like, actual colored girls', like, lives.
- OMAR:** Does it identify family problems or problems in overall?
- ARIANNA:** Problems overall . . . yes.
- HEIDI:** What makes you sad about the book?
- ARIANNA:** One girl gets raped. This girl's kids die. That was the most sad part.
- RODRIGO:** Were they, like, sick?
- ARIANNA:** No, the husband killed them. 'Cause he didn't believe it was his kids, in the movie.
- ? NAME:** What are they trying to do to solve their problems?
- CRIS:** A little louder, honey?
- ? NAME:** What are they trying to do to solve their problems?
- ARIANNA:** Well, throughout the end they all somehow, like, connect and find out, like, meet each other—cause they're all around the world, but somehow they all connect in, like, one place, and that kind of all started in the movie. Like, they all met in the hospital, kind of. Because everybody's seeing how her kids died. And then they all met, and then they all had this big party. And they all sat there and discussed. And there's this lady who helps out, like, with relationships. And most of them have relationship problems too. So they all sat there and talked, and told, like, their problems. You know? Somebody had to respond and help them get information.
- CRIS:** We're going to stop. Nice, nice job. All right, so here's what I noticed. Arianna started explaining why she chose the book, and then she gave some specifics. She went and told you about the words are abbreviated, their text messages, and she talked about the color. And then it got kind of quiet. She got kind of uncomfortable. When you share your thinking like that and nobody speaks, it's embarrassing. Then Ricardo saved the day and he jumped in and said, "Well, how does the book connect to the movie?" And so Arianna talked a little bit more and then Omar said, well, "Family problems?" and then Heidi said, "What did you figure out?" And then I couldn't hear what Rodrigo said. He said something else smart but I couldn't hear it. So I noticed all these good things that they were doing. Here's one suggestion: I like specifics. So, like, I'm really curious now. You did do that in the actual group? So if Arianna would have said, "The words are abbreviated in, like, text messaging. Let me show you." And she reads something out. So these guys know what you're talking about, it helps them.

All right. I'm not going to talk on the next one. I'm going to call on one of you guys to label what they did.

ARIANNA'S GROUP

1:30:09.4

- ? NAME:** So would you consider him, like, would you consider him changing?
- BRIDGET:** On the inside he's always been good. He's just been basically putting on a front. Like, he's just been doing it and then the more he does it, the more he wants to . . . yeah. He has a job, he's in school and everything.
- ? NAME:** So what do you think will be the outcome when he gets out of jail?
- BRIDGET:** He's going to win, 'cause . . . like, the first time after he got out, he got a job.
- ? NAME:** Where did he get a job?
- BRIDGET:** At his step-grandfather's hamburger place. His grandmother . . . his grandmother was the owner of Fat Burger. She created it.
- CRIS:** Oh, wow.
- ? NAME:** So where does Ice-T come into the picture?
- BRIDGET:** That's not a big deal.
- ARIANNA:** Well, he's a rapper.
- ? NAME:** So he doesn't talk to him?
- BRIDGET:** Not that much anymore.
- ? NAME:** He doesn't talk to him anymore?
- ARIANNA:** He's not really in the story. He's just the person who'll be rapping. Like, you'll find a couple of his verses in there.
- BRIDGET:** He's like the friend of the . . .
- ? NAME:** So you said they have, like, the girl he was talking to has brothers.
- BRIDGET:** That jumped him in . . .
- ? NAME:** Okay, so how many more people are there anyway? Do they do the robbery with him?
- ARIANNA:** No, there's one person that isn't, Smiley, that does it with him.
- BRIDGET:** Yeah, but he went to jail.
- ARIANNA:** And then Smiley got . . . went to jail.
- ? NAME:** For how long?
- BRIDGET:** They don't know.
- ARIANNA:** They don't know.
- BRIDGET:** He runs into him in prison.
- CRIS:** Can I stop you guys for a second?
- ? NAME:** Yeah.
- CRIS:** 'Cause I just noticed a couple things you were doing that were really good. Okay, so, you were asking questions but I got the sense that there were some questions you cared about more than others. So, that very first one, you asked . . . it was a clarifying question you asked about the baby. And you said it, like, with urgency, like it was really what you wanted to know. And then you kind of asked, like, a fake question to keep the conversation going. But what it did is it kept Bridget talking, and she talked about the grandma inventing Fat Burger, and your conversation started to become really authentic. You weren't just doing it 'cause I was sitting here taking notes.
- ARIANNA:** We weren't, maybe at first.

CRIS: Yeah, at first I think you were kind of like, okay, so what should we say so we look smart? But then it got really authentic. The thing that you made me so curious about is Ice-T's role.

ARIANNA: Ice-T?

CRIS: 'Cause he's the guy on *CSI*, right?

BRIDGET: Yeah.

CRIS: Like the detective, or not . . . is it *CSI*?

BRIDGET: Yeah . . . or *NCIS*.

? NAME: No, it was *Law and Order*, I think.

CRIS: *Law and Order*. Yeah, he's a detective, right? Sort of the tough guy. So now I'm so curious. If you guys find out more about what his role is, I would love to know.

BRIDGET: He's just, like, the friend, and he's the one that's an upcoming rapper.

? NAME: So you think he's going to pop up more in the book later on?

CRIS: 'Cause, see, in my day he was kind of a dork rapper. I mean, I would not have thought of him as this really . . . like, he wasn't like the Game or somebody that was kind of tough. So I'm just curious.

BRIDGET: Yeah, he still works with Colton right now.

? NAME: So you still think . . . is he in a gang too?

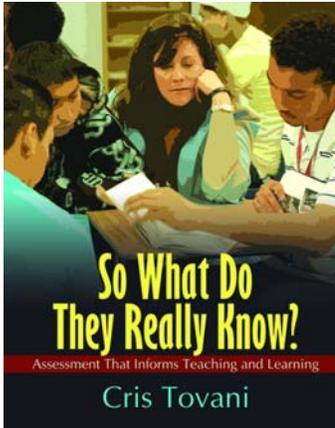
BRIDGET: In his verses he's talking about being a . . .

1:33:25.3

END

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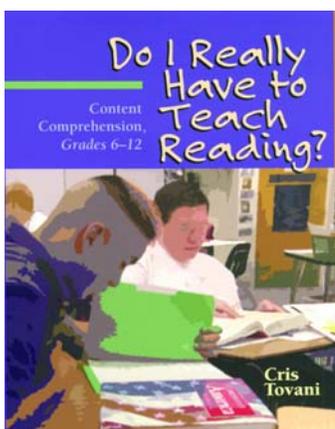
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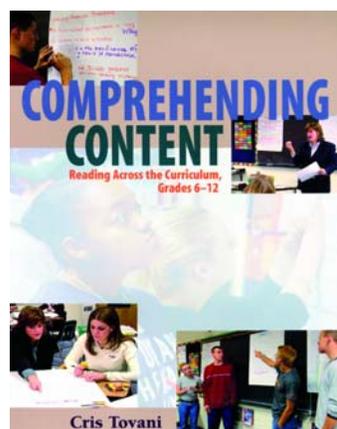
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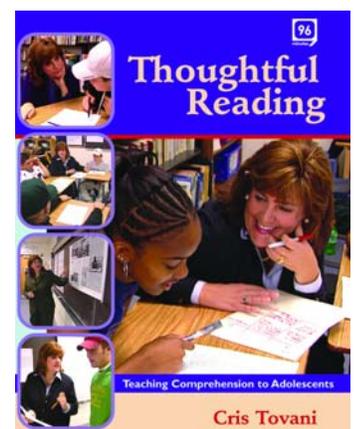
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