

READING ACTIVITY

Reading Activity: Social Media Posts – Getting Serious*

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Objective : Using social media posts (which fortunately keep the culture of reading alive today) to enable readers to become reflective thinkers and to bring about their behavioural transformation.

Participation : Individual

Material : Posts from social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook (sample text at the end)

Preparation : After reading a post of some relevance, deliberately pausing for some time to think about it and relating to one's personal life to explore its significance

Procedure

- Reading the post as one would normally do, not as the textbook material which might take away the charm of reading (sample text provided)
- After reading the complete post, pause for a while. (This may sound artificial as the mind does not operate in a linear way. While one is reading a text, thoughts crop up at all times even unrelated to the text and it is an unstoppable process. An experienced reader would pause whenever is required).
- While pausing, a concentrated focus has to be on one's personal experiences, which can happen essentially through questioning oneself. For instance, one could ask several self-awareness questions: What do I think of the newspaper vendor? Is he arrogant or foolish to miss such an opportunity? If I were him, how would I have responded to the situation? Do I think Bill Gates made a very generous offer? Do I remember those who have helped me? Have I returned their help in any form? Has anyone attempted to return in some form the help I have given them? How did I respond on those occasions? And many more.
- Another critical part of reflective thinking is self-improvement questions which underscore the areas for improvement: What are the possible ways in which I could help the needy? Should I expect anything in return? How should I conduct myself when something in return is offered? What are the different areas in which I could offer help? Do I remember any occasion when I could have helped but failed to? Do I need to seek opportunities to help others or help only when it is sought?
- The vital aspect of reflective thinking should lead to self-empowerment. The possible questions that could be asked: Should the help be only in monetary terms? Should my reach limit itself to my locality or extend to regional, national, and international levels? What measures do I need to take to reach multiple levels? Do I remember all those who have helped me? Is gratitude such an important quality?

The questions need not follow any logical and sequential order but these sorts of questions have to be raised to become a reflective thinker, which would make someone "fully human and fully alive".

Learning outcomes

- Learners realize that any text, including the ones from social media, should be tapped for its learning potential; otherwise, it may be quickly forgotten and its relevance lost.
- Learners perceive that reflective thinking is a transferrable skill which would enable them to become creative and critical thinkers in different walks of life.

Further Activity

Any social media post should be utilized for reflective learning, instead of being passed over as trivial, which seems to be the dominant attitude.

***Social Media posts – Getting Serious:**

Significance of the social media posts: They can be read in a few seconds/minutes, and they are brief, very relevant to life, interesting and intellectually engaging. But unfortunately, they don't seem to get the attention they deserve, as the users skim over them mechanically one after the other as there are so many posts. Instead, if they pause for a short while and think about what they have read as a conscious strategy, they will emerge as reflective thinkers (a vital critical thinking skill).

Reflective thinking encompasses three aspects:

- a) The act of thinking about what was read leads to self-awareness (one becomes aware of one's own experiences and views on them);
- b) Self-improvement (decides to bring about some desirable behavioural changes); and
- c) Self-empowerment (taking steps to effect changes and conducting oneself in a different way).

A lengthy post on one of my WhatsApp groups

Someone asked the richest man in the world, Bill Gates, "Is there anyone richer than you in the world?" Bill Gates replied, "Yes, there is a person who is richer than me."

He then narrated the story.

"It's during the time when I wasn't rich or famous."

I was at the New York Airport when I saw a newspaper vendor. I wanted to buy one newspaper but found that I didn't have enough change. So I left the idea of buying and, returning it to the vendor, I told him of not having the change. The vendor said, "I am giving you this for free." On his insistence, I took the newspaper.

Coincidentally, after 2-3 months, I landed at the same airport and again I was in short of change for a newspaper. The vendor offered me the newspaper again. I refused and said that I could not take it for I didn't have a change that day, too. He said, "You can take it, I am sharing this from my profit, I won't be at a loss." I took the newspaper.

After 19 years I became famous and known by people. Suddenly, I remembered that vendor. I began searching for him and after about one and a half month of searching, I found him. I asked him, "Do you know me?" He said, "Yes, you are Bill Gates." I asked him again, "Do you remember once you gave me a newspaper for free?"

The vendor said, "Yes, I remember. I gave you twice."

I said, "I want to repay the help you had offered me that time. Whatever you want in your life, tell me, I shall fulfil it."

The vendor said, "Sir, don't you think that by doing so you won't be able to match my help?"

I asked, "Why?"

He said, "I had helped you when I was a poor newspaper vendor and you are trying to help me now when you have become the richest man in the world. How can you help match mine?"

That day I realized that the newspaper vendor was richer than me because he didn't wait to become rich to help someone.

People need to understand that the truly rich are those who possess a rich heart rather than lots of money. It's really very important to have a rich heart to help others.