

Independent Reading Conference Script

Charlotte is a senior in my writing class. She is a student in AP Literature as well. You will hear a combination of her reading for both classes in this October conference.

Part I: Investigate... Listen to the reader and understand her thinking about a recent book she's read.

You're reading *Columbine*?

Yeah, it's actually pretty interesting. I'm only on about page 30, but of course, this happened on my birthday. Did you know that? No, and everything bad seems to happen on my birthday.

Do you know much about this story? *No, which is why I'm reading it. I want to learn about it.* And had you heard about this book before? *No.* So it was all about the book talk. *Yeah, it sounded cool. I write a lot of your books down. This one was really interesting.*

Part II: Investigate... I switch to a recent read since she isn't very far in *Columbine*. I want a deeper conversation about her understanding.

You just finished this: *Say You're One of Them*.

Yes, it was really difficult, but it was really enjoyable. Really bittersweet. I might have cried a little.

Bittersweet. The bitter is intense.

Yeah, it makes me sad to hear about it.

Yeah, I think I found I learned more about Rwanda in that series of short stories than I had in anything I saw on the news.

Because it gives you a real inside view of it. It does. Like how the daughter was a prostitute. They really explained that. I was like, that would suck. And the mom just like expected it all the time. She was like, 'when are you coming home? I need some money.' And I'm like, how could you do that to your daughter—you know?

Yeah, but when I was in Bangkok the teachers told me how the daughters have a choice between the opium fields or they can come into the city and be prostitutes. And that is actually an upgrade from what their lives would be like.

That's disgusting.

But I think those are just decisions that we don't have to think about.

Yeah, exactly, because you can't even imagine a mom acting that way. Being okay with that. Sniffing the glue to be not hungry. It was always happening. It was called something—and it just numbed your stomach? Yeah. That really works? Apparently. But it's survival because, I mean, they're starving all the time. How could they do that? An appetite suppressant. I don't know what kind of glue it is, but yes.

Part III: I want to see the variety of what Charlotte is reading, so I ask for a review of her reading so far this quarter.

Can you tell me what you've read so far?

I have read Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? Oh yes, Mindy Kaling. I am actually reading that for a second time. I just love it. I read Lover's Dictionary, which was really fast but really good. I loved that book. That was so good I could not stop. I was reading it like all of the time. Did you know—I don't know if you're on Twitter—I am. They have @loversdiction and they'll send you a word like every other day: a word that's not in the book. I've been writing them down all the time. You should definitely follow him. I will.

And Say You're One of Them and Columbine, and then in other classes I've just finished Pride & Prejudice, Beowulf, and argh, Sir Gwen and the Green Knight.

Since September. *Oh yeah.* That's a lot of reading. *And the other stuff is like quizzes and stuff and I'm like, oh my gosh, it's like so much reading.* Has this (indicating her reading list for my class) been enjoyable though? *Oh yeah, the other stuff is not enjoyable.* Even *Pride and Prejudice? I liked Pride and Prejudice; I will not lie. That's a good one. I liked Beowulf, surprisingly, but Sir Gwen and the Green Knight—it was not interesting. I'm enjoying these because I'm actually choosing them.*

Uh huh, so what's on your next list?

The Actually True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, Delirium, The Shallows, Before I Die, Rosebush—I want to read that—I kind of like a little bit of murder and stuff which is weird. That's going to be a total ride compared to these, but *The Shallows* will challenge you again—non-fiction—much more serious, research stuff. Ah, and *Lolita*. *Yeah, I've heard that's pretty good.* It's great. It's terrific, but it's really challenging. *And the Nanny Diaries, it would just be to like ease my brain from all this reading.* Uh-huh.

That's what I think of—like this—(I draw a rollercoaster on my notes.) *Yeah.* So you've been doing some real peaks, but you've got have some reading that is relaxing. *Yeah, Pride & Prejudice allowed me to read this (Say You're One of Them) because I wasn't so,*

like, you know, intense, so not like the books where I don't even understand half of the words.

Part IV: Understand her 'fix it' strategies when she doesn't get it.

What do you do when you don't get it? I look them up. You do? I do, but it's not as helpful as you think, because you just want to keep reading. Because you don't really get it when you slow down to always look at the words. Do you know what I mean? I do. Sometimes I keep reading, but if I really don't get something I'll look it up. Because like Sir Gwen had like words—it was translated, you know? from old English—and it was still just really confusing. Hmmm.

Okay, thank you.

Reading Comprehension Check Conference Script

Claire is a ninth grader who has recently scored far below proficient on a standardized reading measure used by a private school for admission. They have asked me to check her understanding in this conference since she is visiting the school for the day. (She knows I am guest teaching in the class today and speaking to lots of students about reading and writing, so she does not know this is an evaluation.)

Part I: Investigate... Listen to the reader and try to understand what she can recall from her recent independent reading.

What are you reading? *The Hunger Games: the second book.* You're already in *Catching Fire*. So tell me.. when did you finish *Hunger Games*? *Um, last week, on Saturday, last Saturday.* So you just started this one? How fast did you read *Hunger Games*? *Um, in about a week, two weeks—*

Why did you read it so fast? *'Cause I was really enjoying it. It was really like I couldn't stop reading it.* I couldn't either. I couldn't wait for *Catching Fire* to start.

The start of *Catching Fire*—where they select them—do you remember this? Did that surprise you?

I kind of saw it coming because my friends were always talking about it—but I didn't know who the characters were. I just had names--

Part II: I ask her more specific questions. The first few questions were to get a sense for how long ago she read the work we're going to discuss, but also to get a sense for how fast she read it. I expect that fast reading will still result in the comprehension of major plot points and an understanding of character and central ideas.

So tell me what you think of Katniss. (Notice how open-ended this question is. Why do you think I ask questions like this?)

I think she's like—really mature for her age.

What makes you think that? (I'm asking for evidence to support her position, and I often use that language in class as a follow up to the question.)

Because she's like having to go hunting and looking after her family. Oh yeah. How old is she? *I think 17—16?* Yeah, I don't remember. She seems that old. *Yeah.*

That's true; she's taking care of everybody. I also think—when I was—when I think of myself as a child—I wish I could have been as tough as her. That's why I like her—she's

tough. (Now I've made a claim and I could wait to see if she can support it with understandings from the story, but I move on.)

Have you seen the trailer for the movie? *Yeah, on Sunday I think.* What do you think of the girl in the film? *I think she does like represent the girl—Katniss—a bit.* Yeah, because lots of times movies ruin it for me. I had a picture in my head—this girl looks like what I was thinking of for Katniss.

Do you remember the scene with the bees and the girl—and they're on different trees in *The Hunger Games*? *Yeah.* Did you think about the girl and her (Katniss's) little sister? You know, the girl in the trees is about the same age as her little sister? *Yeah.* Only the girl in the trees is killed—do you remember that? *Yeah, and she got killed.*

I wondered—I felt like Katniss changed when that girl died. (Another claim. Can she support it?) And I can't remember her name—*Roe? I think it was.*

I felt like her character changed. Did you feel that? *She became like more caring, I think. I don't know.* I felt like—I want to say the stakes—the importance of the games—that people were really going to die, really hit me when that little girl died. *Yeah, like about the families.* Yeah.

Do you watch reality T.V.? *Not really.* I don't either, but the idea that people were watching this on the big screens in all the districts? *Yeah, that was weird—kind of scary—like watching everyone die.* Yeah, that people would gather and want to watch that?

What do you think of Peeta, Gale, Katniss--? *I don't really know Gale at the moment—they don't really talk about him yet—but Peeta I feel a bit sorry for.* That pretend game? And he seems to really love her—*yeah.* Yeah, I feel sorry for him, too, but have you decided who you want her to end up with? *I think Peeta.* Really? How come? *I don't know—he just—he really likes her. And when Katniss and Gale kiss, Gale just pretended like it never happened.* I know, but we don't know—what was he really thinking? *Yeah.* I like Gale. *Really?* Yes. I struggled with that all three books. I like that he's such a good friend. *Yeah, and he, like, looked after her family while she was away.* He did. He took care of her family, which is almost more important to me than taking care of her. I don't know and by the end of *Mockingjay*—are you going to read the third one? *Yeah.* They answer that question—*really?* (nodding) How it all works out. *I can't wait to read it.* I know. I couldn't stop reading. Thank you.

Part III: Teachers gathered to evaluate her comprehension as demonstrated in this videotaped conference. What do you think they decided about her admission?