Writing About Reading: In Your Own Words

Purpose

This routine allows learners to demonstrate their understanding of a text while also building their vocabulary and writing skills.

Goals

- Learners demonstrate their understanding of a text by rewriting portions in their own words.
- Learners work collaboratively to discuss the meaning of the text and language choices.
- Learners collaborate to create a version of a text in "everyday English."

Audience

- Intermediate to advanced English learners
- English learners transitioning to adult basic education classes
- Adult basic education learners

Supported Standards

- **CCRS Writing Anchor 4**: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **CCRS Language Anchor 3**: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
- **ELP Standard 2**: Participate in level-appropriate oral and written exchanges of information, ideas, and analyses, in various social and academic contexts, responding to peer, audience, or reader comments and questions.
- **ELP Standard 7**: Adapt language choices to purpose, task, and audience when speaking and writing.

Materials

- Teacher-created handout or digital document for learners to write and share their translations. (See Example section.)

Procedure

Note: This routine should come after the text has already been read and discussed using other appropriate activities.

1. Learners are divided into groups of two or three. Each group is assigned one or more sentences from the text.
2. Each group works collaboratively to rewrite their sentence assignments into everyday English. They may look up unknown words.
3. Groups post their translated sentences in a shared document or on the whiteboard.
4. After all translated sentences have been posted, representatives from each group read the translated sentences aloud in order.

Tips for Getting Started with This Routine

- If learners do not have a lot of experience summarizing or paraphrasing, the instructor should model how to rewrite sentences in their own words and how to use appropriate tools, such as a dictionary, to find unknown word meanings.
- Using a Google Doc is an easy way for learners to work collaboratively and to post their translated sentences. Make sure to adjust the "Share" settings to allow "Anyone with the link" to be an "editor."
- If you would like support with implementing this routine from an instructional coach, email jedwards@tiu11.org.

Example

Text: The Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln

Group 1

Original Sentences	Your Translation
1 – "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."	
5 - "The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract."	

Group 2

Original Sentences	Your Translation
2 - "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war."	
6 - "The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."	

Group 3

Original Sentences	Your Translation
3 - "We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this."	
7 - "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."	

Group 4

Original Sentences	Your Translation
4 - "But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground."	
8 - "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."	

Your Translated Sentences

Sentence #	Your Translated Sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	