Promoting Thematic & Text Analysis

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Overview:
Determining major themes and its impact on literature can be a challenging endeavor, especially when reading complex text. The problem is students may not have the time or space to figure out these connections! Packback can help develop students' interest, comprehension of key ideas, text analysis and utilizing evidence to better identify literary themes.

Learning Objective or Goal (Applicable Common Core Standard):
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3
- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Approximate Time:
- 1 - 5 days

**Prep, set up, and/or materials needed before class:**
- Educators need to clearly outline the expectations up front
    - "Packback allows us to practice thematic analysis and compare it to other parts of text. This is a low stakes environment where students can ask how particular elements play into literature. Don't be afraid to think outside the box on this!"
    - Focus on your initial question on providing context/evidence in the description. For responses, focus on making a clear thesis statement including reasoning for your stance. Sources encouraged!
    - Determine what portion of the final project this work will be worth. 10% is a good standard.
        - If you're using Packback independently to practice a skill, you can include this in your participation or formative assignment grade categories.

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Idea #1 (1 - 2 days): Packback Instruct to determine best evidence for themes, symbols, etc.
Students will respond to discussion poll, defend response, and add counter/support point (optional)

- **Day 1:** Create a "Homework Discussion Poll" as it will *require students to select a response and defend it in writing.* You can create up to 8 different responses where you could have students select a similar side, but choose the stronger piece of evidence. We recommend utilizing this activity as preparation for a strong class discussion or concluding activity.

- **Day 2 (Optional):** Feature a few replies that meet your academic expectations. You can share why these are strong posts or encourage students to identify what makes these posts strong.
  - If you have time, have students create a supporting point to another peer who selected the same answer OR create a counter point to a peer who selected a different option.
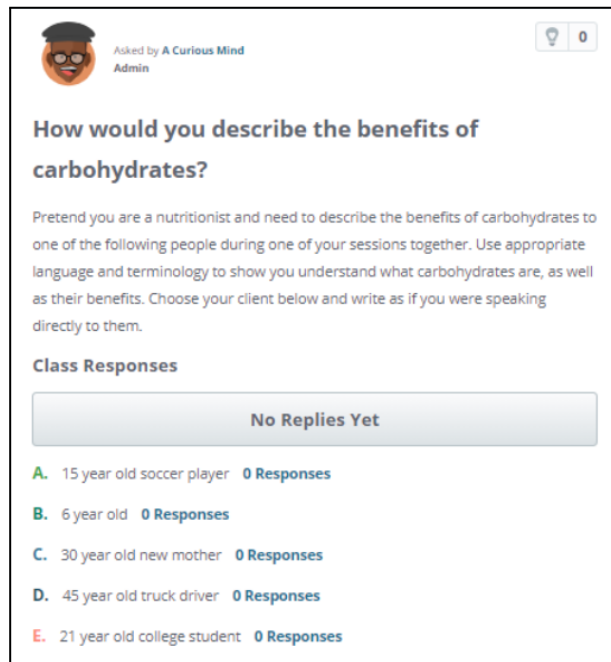
Idea #2 (1 - 3 days): Packback Questions
Ask 1 question, post 2 responses including counter/support point

- **Day 1:** Set expectations that students will ask questions focusing on a specific standard (theme, symbolism, word's choice, author's purpose). We also recommend you choose particular chapters to help students focus initially, then expand the amount of pages to analyze throughout the year.
- Review particular behaviors that you would like to see in students' arguments (ex. Claim, evidence, reasoning)
  - Provide students with class time as needed to either begin or complete this first question. Encourage students to post a question based on a particular controversy or topic. You can also select a few topics to narrow students' range.
    - Ex. How does Fitzgerald show class differences between Tom Buchanan and Gatsby? How does "greed" play into Chapters 1 & 2 in *The Great Gatsby?*
  - If students do not finish their question including a description, it will automatically be saved as a draft. They can access their drafts by going to "See My Posts" and click on Draft.
  - *Teacher:* Feature strong questions you'd encourage students to respond to!

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- **Day 2:** Review some top questions from yesterday. Then, classmates will respond to initial questions with their ideas. If questions are not finished, students should go back and work on drafts.
    - Students should be given time to begin or complete their responses to peer questions. Students should respond to questions that interest them or pertain to their topic to enhance their own understanding and their classmates. Educators may want to require students to add a source to back up their claim or response.
    - *Teacher:* Feature strong responses that model expectations of evidence and reasoning!

- **Day 3 (Optional):** *Counter/Supporting Evidence*
    - Now that we have initial responses, students can use counter and supporting points. Students should be given time to begin or complete their responses.
    - *Teacher:* Feature strong responses that model expectations of enhancing initial argument (support) OR posts providing effective rebuttals to the initial thread.

- **Day 3 (Optional):** *In-class discussion*
    - Students participate in a live discussion utilizing Packback content! We recommend students have access to their Packback work so they can reference it. Set expectations for class discussion as you typically do!

- **Day 3+ (Optional):** *Short response, long form writing*
    - Students can review Packback questions to find great content and evidence to support their writing assignments. They can build upon ideas of their classmates while referencing their previous work. Set expectations for writing assignments as you typically do!

Assessment & Evaluation:

Students should be evaluated on participation. Educators should be monitoring student work on Packback throughout the project. Use the engagement tools to highlight great student questions by featuring them. Provide specific praise for students who have done exemplary work. Use the coaching tool for the students who need direct feedback to improve their work.

Modification & Differentiation:

Utilize Instruct to support scaffolding. All timelines can be extended. Selecting a topic can also narrow focus.