English IV

Mrs. Sherry Brown

Four Corners Protocol for “Araby”

Before class begins put the following signs in each corner of the classroom:

Age 5-7

Age 8-11

Age 12-15

Age 16-19

Ask the students to think about the age of the narrator of the short story “Araby” by James Joyce.

The students should move to the corner which indicates what age they think the narrator is. Give the students a few minutes to talk amongst their group about the rationale for their choice. Using specific evidence from the story, a spokesman for each corner explains why his/her group chose that age. As the spokesmen explain their positions, the students are allowed to change corners if they are persuaded that their first choice of narrator’s age was incorrect.

As you debrief the protocol, discuss how the student’s assumptions about the narrator’s age are not only based upon evidence from the story but also upon the students’ own experiences regarding emotional maturity, the age at which they would have been allowed to go out alone at night, the fact that the narrator had to ask for money, and other details. So not only does the author make choices based on his own experiences and biases, readers interpret texts based upon the assumptions that they bring to their reading of that text. Then explain that this story was based upon Joyce’s own experience when he was 11 years old; the setting is Dublin in the early 1900’s.