The instructional focus in this lesson is on monitoring comprehension and responding to think-and-search questions (Raphael and Au 2006). I included a word bank because this was the students’ first time completing this type of activity. I used excerpts from the text to teach skills and strategies, in essence using the text to teach the text. This approach is effective because it uses repeated readings to nurture reading fluency, a strategy that can be used in all disciplines.

Name _________________________________

Complete the following cloze activity. Be sure you insert words that make sense in the place where you insert them.

Look at the example.

My ________ is John
Choice A: My nose is John. (Incorrect; nose does not make sense)
Choice B: My name is John. (Correct; name makes sense)
Choice C: My friend is John. (Correct; you can have a friend named John)
Choice D: My class is John. (Incorrect; class does not make sense)

I did not start off this way. I don’t know what happened to me. I am not writing this note for your __________. I think I deserve to die for what I did—I killed. I took a life. The only thing I can ________ in return, that is fair, is my own life. The penalty for taking someone’s life is ________ my own life.
All of my fourteen years have come to this point—wasted. I am telling my story because I want you to understand me. I would rather be riding a bike or learning a new language, something foreign. I would like to see different parts of the world like Central America or China. I would like to have a Chinese friend. For some reason, I think Chinese kids are cool. They write with those funny symbols and eat with chopsticks. I wish I could hear music from a piano roll off my fingertips.

Words to choose from:

offer, sympathy
understand, giving
write, language

Think-and-Search Question: This boy is writing because he wants
a) to die
b) to be understood
c) to have a Chinese friend
d) to see different parts of the world

Let’s read the following text to find out more about the young boy. Pay particular attention to his call for being understood.

Crossfire: A Note from a Drive-By Shooter

by Alfred W. Tatun

I wanted to reach out and grab the bullet the moment I heard the bang. Too late. I am doomed, I thought. I heard the screams. I am now running scared. I tried to convince myself that a killer is not supposed to have feelings. We are supposed to hate, hate everything. Right now, I hate myself. Nobody wants to hear this. I am a killer. I killed someone’s son, someone’s brother, and someone’s nephew. I killed somebody who looks like me. In a way, I killed myself twice.

I did not start off this way. I don’t know what happened to me. I am not writing this note for your sympathy. I think I deserve to die for what I did—I killed. I took a life. The only thing I can offer in return, that is fair, is my own life. The penalty for taking someone’s life is giving my own life. All of my fourteen years have come to this point—wasted. I am telling my story because I want you to understand me. I would rather be riding a bike or learning a new language, something foreign. I would
liketoseedifferentpartsoftheworldlikeCentralAmericorChina.I
wouldlike to have a Chinese friend. For some reason, I think Chinese
kids are cool. They write with those funny symbols and eat with chop-
sticks. I wish I could hear music from a piano roll off my fingertips.
Please no pity.
Do not start feeling sorry for me.
Too late for that.
Just read the letter and try to understand me.

Letter

April13,2006

Dear Reader,
i have two parents who love me. They always bought me new clothes
and my favorite gym shoes, New Balance. Although everyone else loved
Nikes, i loved New Balances. i had a pair on the day i pulled the trigger.
Clean. i always keep them cleaned. i am afraid to think about the blood-
soaked stain on the boy i shot. i always kept my stuff clean. And now
someone became blood-soaked because of me. i saw the picture on the
Internet the next day. He lay there slumped over in a pool of blood
because of me. A lady was screaming in the background. The boy’s name
was Justin. i found out he was younger than me, thirteen.

There is something about a young person being dead that is not right.
A kid will be placed in a coffin because of me. As the car i was in drove
away, i glanced back and saw his face slam into the concrete. He did not
try to catch himself or turn away. His body simply tilted forward and
picked up speed as it dropped. My body jerked as if i felt the thump of the
ground. Bam!

Just yesterday, i was in class looking at a periodic table of elements.
i could tell you about all of the earth’s precious metals. AU is the sym-
bol on the periodic table used for gold. It has an atomic number of 79.
Most of my friends only know that water is called H₂O, but they do not
know that it is made up of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxy-
gen, giving it an atomic number of 3. i started learning about the peri-
odic table at a science camp held over the summer at the University of
Illinois at Chicago. It was only fifteen minutes away from the west side
where i live—the same west side where i killed. i killed somebody over
the atomic number 79, a funky gold chain. Gold and iron clashed. The symbol for iron is FE and it has an atomic number of 26. It is called a transition metal. Iron has a silver color, the color of the barrel of the gun.

I know you may be wondering why I am writing with a small i. It is not a mistake. My dad always told me that I have to earn the right to write with a big i. He told me that there is power in a thing when a person earns the right to name himself. I am afraid that I will never be able to name myself. Others will name me. Murderer. Convict. Delinquent. Thug. Monster. None of these feel like they fit me. I used to be called the science boy last year because I love science. I won the science fair last year with a project on the human brain. My grandfather started calling me Brains after that. I remember being called the teacher’s pet and momma’s boy when I was younger. Murderer, convict, delinquent, thug, or monster does not seem to fit. But, the law of physics tells us that for every action there is a reaction.

1. Why did the killer’s body jerk?
   a. He was shot.
   b. He slammed into the ground.
   c. He felt bad because of what happened.

2. Why did the shooter start talking about the periodic table?
   a. To brag about being good in science.
   b. To explain why he murdered someone.
   c. To describe the science camp.

3. Why is the shooter writing with the small i? Do you agree with his decision? Why or why not?
Thank you for sampling this resource.

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