

# DOINGWHATWORKS



## SAMPLE MATERIAL

### Social Studies Pair-Sharing and Discussion Guidelines

Saline Middle School, Michigan

**Topic:** Adolescent Literacy

**Practice:** Engaging Text Discussion

This social studies lesson PowerPoint focuses on the use of text discussion strategies to develop student understanding of the experiences of Chernobyl survivors. Laurie Erby, a seventh-grade social studies teacher, starts the lesson by modeling the “Talk to the Text” strategy to help students organize, question, reflect, and summarize their reading. Students then are asked to individually read the Chernobyl Survivor Stories<sup>1</sup> and to use this strategy to jot down marginal notes, questions, observations, and other thoughts related to the text.

This individual activity is followed by partner sharing so students can hear and compare other perspectives, and the writing of a summary to share with their small groups during further discussions. Erby provides a group share-out protocol to guide students through the group text discussions.

The lesson concludes with individual class presentations and an opportunity for students to engage in a question-and-answer period to

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<sup>1</sup> The “Chernobyl Survivor Stories” are taken from a book entitled, *Voices of Chernobyl: Survivors’ Stories* by Svetlana Alexievich. The stories were aired on National Public Radio on April 21, 2006 for the 20th anniversary of the disaster. They can be viewed or listened to online at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5355810>.

ask questions, comment, and clarify their understanding. In addition, students write personal reflections on what they had read and heard previously about the Chernobyl accident and what they know now about this event as a result of their current reading and discussions about survivors' experiences.<sup>2</sup> Students are evaluated based on their note-taking examples, summaries, discussion group work ethic, and reflections that pull together facts from the stories and related classroom activities and reading.

The PowerPoint includes the text discussion and partner share guidelines, student assignments and responsibilities during small group discussion and whole-group share out, and evaluation rubric that provides the framework for this lesson.

The Reflections on Chernobyl student example shows one student's personal reflection, summary for small group discussion, and note-taking during the individual reading of the survivor story.



# Chernobyl

## Survivor Stories

What do you notice?



A month after the explosion, Chernobyl employees head off by bus to work in a highly contaminated environment.

## Survivor Stories

- Individually read your survivor's story
- Talk to the Text as you read (10 min.)
- Partner up with someone who read the same story - *same color handout*
- Share your thoughts about the story with each other (5 min)

## Color Group Responsibilities

- Gather together with everyone from your same color group
- Share thoughts on the story you read
- Discuss main ideas and selections from the text to share with your discussion group
- Everyone should complete a summary form to share with your discussion group

## Summary Form

Discuss the main ideas and selections from the text that you feel are most important to share with your discussion group. Use the following questions to help guide you – not all of these questions may pertain to your survivor's story. Use bullet points to help you organize your thoughts.

1. Describe the person you read about.
2. Describe his/her experiences.

## Discussion Group Share Out Protocol

- One member shares his/her summary of their victim's story while other members listen - 2 minutes
- Listeners ask clarifying questions and presenter answers them – 1 minute
- Repeat this process until every one has had a chance to share
- Use discussion questions to help lead your discussion of the experiences you have just heard



## Group Discussion Questions

- What led to the disaster?
- What might have been done to prevent this accident?
- What was done to protect the people living in the surrounding area?
- What was done to protect the people of Europe?
- What might have been done to protect people?
- What similarities did you notice in your victim's stories?
- What are your thoughts about all of this?

Pulling it all together...

## Individual Reflections

- Reflect on what you have read and heard about the Chernobyl accident
- Write a personal reflection on what you now know about this event

## Evaluation Form

- ☐ **Talking to the Text** – example exhibits a strong effort to connect with and make meaning of the survivor story.
- ☐ **Summary** – work exhibits key talking points to share with discussion group as well as 2 relevant quotations from the text.
- ☐ **Discussion Group Work Ethic** – group followed protocol when sharing survivor stories and discussion questions, stayed on task throughout work sessions
- ☐ **Reflection** – pulled together facts from story and related activities and reading in class to complete a quality reflection on the Chernobyl accident.

\_\_\_ Total Points/40



Name:

## Reflections on Chernobyl

This is a "Pulling it Together" type of assignment. Reflect on what you have read and heard about Chernobyl including thoughts shared in your group discussion. Pull it all together to help you write your personal thoughts on the Chernobyl accident.

Chernobyl exploding caused many problems. To start it all off, the accident at Chernobyl was a human error. That means that it was a human's fault that Chernobyl exploded, not a natural disaster. After that they didn't tell anyone else about the accident.

Wouldn't it feel really weird to be living in your community not knowing that there was really dangerous radiation all around you? You could die! That's probably what almost all of Europe felt like. It wasn't until 3 days later that they found out that Chernobyl had exploded and even then they didn't start fixing it.

Only when they started fixing it that they noticed all of the trouble that Chernobyl would cause. Many people died trying to get all of the radiation out of Europe like the people in this picture. Chernobyl caused a lot of grief and misery. Many women were widowed because their husbands died because of Chernobyl. Many people even died putting the cement tomb on that fatal reactor number 4.







Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2/3/09  
11th hr.

## Color Group Summary Form

Discuss the main ideas and selections from the text that you feel are most important to share with your discussion group. Use the following questions to help guide you - *not all of these questions may pertain to your survivor's story*. Use bullet points to help you organize your thoughts.

1. Describe the person you read about
  - What is his/her name? (*first names only are fine*)
  - What job do/did they have?
2. Describe his/her experiences
  - What memorable experiences did he/she have?
  - What was she/he doing at the time of the explosion?
  - How did the disaster affect him/her or their family members?
  - What was her/his life like at the time they were interviewed (10 years later)?
  - How has his/her life changed as a result of this disaster?

- His name is Sergei Sobolev
- He was the deputy head of the Executive Committee of the Shield of Chernobyl Association. (and a rocketeer)
- He divided money between 35 widows.
- Now he will always remember the cries of the woman who had lost her husband.
- He worked at a museum.
- He had a friend named Yuri Gagarin.

Highlight one or more selections from the text that you will read aloud to your discussion group. Write the first 3 words of the selection here and tell which page it is on:

1. They were young... (pg 4)
2. When he dies... (pg 3)

## 'Voices of Chernobyl': Survivors' Stories

Title of article



workers

A month after the explosion, Chernobyl employees head off by bus to work in a highly contaminated environment. Corbis Sygma

Kostin Igor

death? 3 years ago

*All Things Considered*, April 21, 2006 · Twenty years ago this month, a routine maintenance test at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in northern Ukraine veered wildly out of control.

night-dark

for computer

how many are there?

At 1:23 in the morning on April 26, 1986, there was a disastrous chain reaction in the core of reactor No. 4. A power surge ruptured the uranium fuel rods, while a steam explosion created a huge fireball that blew the roof off the reactor. The resulting radioactive plume blanketed the nearby city of Pripjat.

The cloud moved on to the north and west, contaminating land in neighboring Belarus, then moved across Eastern Europe and over Scandinavia.

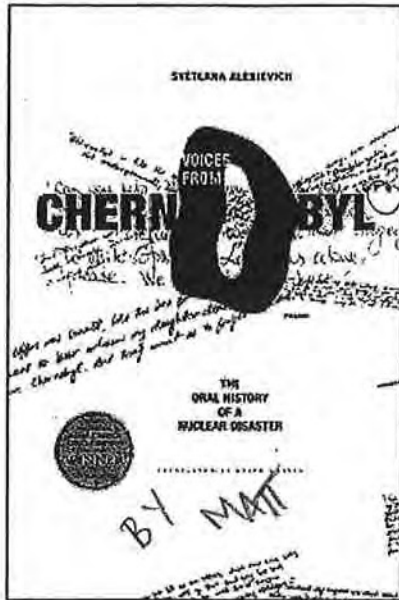
From the Soviets: utter silence. There was no word from the Kremlin that the worst nuclear accident in history was under way.

Then monitoring stations in Scandinavia began reporting abnormally high levels of radioactivity. Finally, nearly three days after the explosion, the Soviet news agency TASS issued a brief statement acknowledging that an accident had occurred.

The memories of survivors were collected for the 10th anniversary of the disaster in the book *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of the Nuclear Disaster* by Svetlana Alexievich. We hear some of their stories: those living with illness and fear, and those sent in to clean up the mess and monitor the damage.

Excerpts: 'Voices from Chernobyl'—title

by Svetlana Alexievich —author



cover of the book

### Monologue About Lies and Truths

*Sergei Sobolev, deputy head of the Executive Committee of the Shield of Chernobyl Association*

They've written dozens of books. Fat volumes, with commentaries. But the event is still beyond any philosophical description. Someone said to me, or maybe I read it, that the problem of Chernobyl presents itself first of all as a problem of self-understanding.

That seemed right. I keep waiting for someone intelligent to explain it to me. The way they enlighten me about Stalin, Lenin, Bolshevism. Or the way they keep hammering away at their "Market! Market! Free market!" But we -- we who were raised in a world without Chernobyl, now live with Chernobyl.

author telling story

I'm actually a professional rocketeer, I specialize in rocket fuel. I served at Baikonur [a space launch center]. The programs, Kosmos, Interkosmos, those took up a large part of my life. It was a miraculous time! You give people the sky, the Arctic, the whole thing! You give them space! Every person in the Soviet Union went into space with Yuri Gagarin, they tore away from the earth with him.

who is he?



*married?*  
We all did! I'm still in love with him -- he was a wonderful Russian man, with that wonderful smile. Even his death seemed well-rehearsed.

It was a miraculous time! For family reasons I moved to Belarus, finished my career here. When I came, I immersed myself into this Chernobylized space, it was a corrective to my sense of things. It was impossible to imagine anything like it, even though I'd always dealt with the most advanced technologies, with outer space technologies. It's hard even to explain -- it doesn't fit into the imagination - it's -- *[He thinks.]* You know, a second ago I thought I'd caught it, a second ago - it makes you want to philosophize. No matter who you talk to about Chernobyl, they all want to philosophize. But I'd rather tell you about my own work. What don't we do! We're building a church -- a Chernobyl church, in honor of the Icon of the Mother of God, we're dedicating it to "Punishment." *Why?* We collect donations, visit the sick and dying. We write chronicles. We're creating a museum. I used to think that I, with my heart in the condition it's in, wouldn't be able to work at such a job. My first instructions were: "Here is money, divide it between thirty-five families, that is, between thirty-five widows." All the men had been *wow* liquidators. So you need to be fair. But how? One widow has a little girl who's sick, another widow has two children, and a third is sick herself, and she's renting her apartment, and yet another has four children. At night I'd wake up thinking, "How do I not cheat anyone?" I thought and calculated, calculated and thought. And I couldn't do it. We ended up just giving out the money equally, according to the list.

*boy or girl that's what I would have done*  
But my real child is the museum: the Chernobyl Museum. *[He is silent.]* Sometimes I think that we'll have a funeral parlor here, not a museum. I serve on the funeral committee. This morning I haven't even taken off my coat when a woman comes in, she's crying, not even crying but yelling: "Take his medals and his certificates! Take all the benefits! Give me my husband!" She yelled a long time. And left his medals, his certificates. Well, they'll be in the museum, on display. People can look at them. But her cry, no one heard her cry but me, and when I put these certificates on display I'll remember it. *that's sad*

*?*  
Colonel Yaroshuk is dying now. He's a chemist-dosimetrist. He was healthy as a bull, now he's lying paralyzed. His wife turns him over like a pillow. She feeds him from a spoon. He has stones in his kidneys, they need to be shattered, but we don't have the money to pay for that kind of operation. We're paupers, we survive on what people give us. And the government behaves like a money lender, it's forgotten these people. When he dies, they'll name a street after him, or a school, or a military unit, but that's only after he dies. Colonel Yaroshuk. He walked through the Zone and marked the points of maximum radiation -- they exploited *why?*



him in the fullest sense of the term, like he was a robot. And he understood this, but he went, he walked from the reactor itself and then out through all the sectors around the radius of radioactivity. On foot. With a dosimeter in his hand. He'd feel a "spot" and then walk around its borders, so he could put it on his map accurately.

And what about the soldiers who worked on the roof of the reactor? Two hundred and ten military units were thrown at the liquidation of the fallout of the catastrophe, which equals about 340,000 military personnel. The ones cleaning the roof got it the worst. They had lead vests, but the radiation was coming from below, and they weren't protected there. They were wearing ordinary cheap imitation-leather boots. They spent about a minute and a half, two minutes on the roof each day, and then they were discharged, given a certificate and an award -- one hundred rubles. And then they disappeared to the vast peripheries of our motherland. On the roof they gathered fuel and graphite from the reactor, shards of concrete and metal. It took about twenty to thirty seconds to fill a wheelbarrow, and then another thirty seconds to throw the "garbage" off the roof. These special wheelbarrows weighed forty kilos just by themselves. So you can picture it: a lead vest, masks, the wheelbarrows, and insane speed.

In the museum in Kiev they have a mold of graphite the size of a soldier's cap, they say that if it were real, it would weigh 16 kilos, that's how dense and heavy graphite is. The radio-controlled machines they used often failed to carry out commands or did the opposite of what they were supposed to do, because their electronics were disrupted by the high radiation. The most reliable "robots" were the soldiers. They were christened the "green robots" (by the color of their uniforms). Three thousand six hundred soldiers worked on the roof of the ruined reactor. They slept on the ground, they all tell of how in the beginning they were throwing straw on the ground in the tents -- and the straw was coming from stacks near the reactor.

They were young guys. They're dying now too, but they understand that if it wasn't for them... These are people who came from a certain culture, the culture of the great achievement. They were a sacrifice. There was a moment when there existed the danger of a nuclear explosion, and they had to get the water out from under the reactor, so that a mixture of uranium and graphite wouldn't get into it - with the water they would have formed a critical mass. The explosion would have been between three and five megatons. This would have meant that not only Kiev and Minsk, but a large part of Europe would have been uninhabitable. Can you imagine it? A European catastrophe. So here was the task: who would dive in there and open the bolt on the safety valve? They promised them a car, an

apartment, a dacha, aid for their families until the end of time. They searched for volunteers. And they found them! The boys dove, many times, and they opened that bolt, and the unit was given 7000 rubles. They forgot about the cars and apartments they promised -- but that's not why they dove! Not for the material, least of all for the material promises. [*Becomes upset.*] Those people don't exist anymore, just the documents in our museum, with their names. But what if they hadn't done it? In terms of our readiness for self-sacrifice, we have no equals.

form  
of  
money?

<sup>yes</sup>  
Now do you understand how I see our museum? In that urn there is some land from Chernobyl. A handful. And there's a miner's helmet. Also from there. Some farmer's equipment from the Zone. We can't let the dosimeters in here -- we're glowing! But everything here needs to be real. No plaster casts. People need to believe us. And they'll only believe the real thing, because there are too many lies around Chernobyl. There were and there are still. They've even grown funds and commercial structures...

Since you're writing this book, you need to have a look at some unique video footage. We're gathering it little by little. It's not a chronicle of Chernobyl, no, they wouldn't let anyone film that, it was forbidden. If anyone did manage to record any of it, the authorities immediately took the film and returned it ruined. We don't have a chronicle of how they evacuated people, how they moved out the livestock. They didn't allow anyone to film the tragedy, only the heroics. There are some Chernobyl photo albums now, but how many video and photo cameras were broken! People were dragged through the bureaucracy. It required a lot of courage to tell the truth about Chernobyl. It still does. Believe me! But you need to see this footage: the blackened faces of the firemen, like graphite. And their eyes? These are the eyes of people who already know that they're leaving us. There's one fragment showing the legs of a woman who the morning after the catastrophe went to work on her plot of land next to the atomic station. She's walking on grass covered with dew. Her legs remind you of a grate, everything's with holes up to the knees. You need to see this if you're writing this book.

why?