The Alligator River Story

Level: Intermediate/Advanced Conversation

Materials: “The Alligator River Story” Handout, Character Evaluation Sheet, Discussion Questions

Objectives:
1. Students will be able to use their personal values to express their opinions about character traits.
2. Students will be able to use debating skills to present their ideas, and agree or disagree with the ideas of others.
3. Students will be able to listen to and summarize another person’s English speech.

Warm-Up: Write the following phrase on the board, “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.” Have students discuss with a partner what they think this means. Can they think of an example?

Transition: That quotation comes from a famous movie called “Love Story.” It’s a drama about a man and woman who love each other, even though their lives become difficult. Today, we’re going to read a short story, which is kind of like a drama or a love story. Then, we are going to discuss it together.

Lesson Activities:
1. Have students read “The Alligator River Story” on the handout paper. Have students circle any words they don’t know, or sections that they do not understand.
2. Once students are done reading, have them work on the Character Evaluation Sheet. They rank each character from worst (1) to best (5) in behavior. Then rank each character from least responsible (1) to most responsible (5) for the bad situation in the story. Advise students to be ready to defend their rankings with good reasons.
3. Go over the discussion questions as a class or in small groups.

Cool-Down: Have students talk to a partner to describe their favorite character from the story. Have partners report what they hear, and find out who the most popular character was among the whole class.
THE ALLIGATOR RIVER STORY

Once there was a girl named Abigail who was in love with a man named Gregory. Gregory lived on one side of a river, and Abigail lived on the other side. However, the river was filled with man-eating alligators, so it was dangerous to cross it. During a heavy storm, a flash flood washed away the bridge over the river. Abigail was desperate to get across the river to be with Gregory. While she was standing on the bank of the river wondering what to do, a man named Sinbad came by in a rowboat.

She asked Sinbad if he would take her across. He agreed to do it on the condition that she would have to sleep with him first. Abigail refused to do this and went to see a friend Ivan who had a boat.

When Abigail told Ivan her problem, he said he was too busy to help her out and didn’t want to get involved. Abigail, feeling she had no choice, returned to Sinbad and told him she would agree to spend the night with him. She did, and Sinbad took her across the river the next day.

When Abigail finally made it across the river to Gregory, she told him what she had to do. Gregory was very angry at what she had done and told her he never wanted to see her again, and that he would never love her again.

Abigail, upset, told her tale of woe to another man named Slug. Slug, feeling sorry for Abigail, promised her he would get even with Gregory. They went to Gregory’s house together, and Abigail watched and laughed happily while Slug beat Gregory brutally.

From Values Clarification by Simon and Harmon, who attribute their story to David Frost Snow.
THE ALLIGATOR RIVER STORY
Character Evaluation Sheet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Why you think so…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinbad</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slug</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion Questions:

1. Who had the worst/best behavior? Why? Who is the least/most responsible? Why?

2. Do you know any people or situations like that in the story?

3. What would you have done if you were Abigail?

4. Which character seems the most like you? Does that influence your decisions in the rankings?

5. Do you feel like your answer to #4 would be different if you were the opposite gender (man or woman)?

6. Do you think any characters have hidden motives, or special reasons for why they acted certain way?

7. Does a name influence our judgement, for example Slug? Can students think of names they would never call a new baby because once they knew someone by that name they did not like, or particular names have particular associations?

8. Do these characters exist in the real world? For example, is Sinbad just like another business man? He kept to his part of the contract so surely he is not all bad? Would we find these types of characters in organizations?

9. Can students think of any ‘dramas’ where we find similar characters to Abigail, Sinbad, etc? Television ‘dramas’ are not real but do they reflect human experience?

10. Can a good friend be someone who does not help you? What do we expect from friends? Slug uses violence to help Abigail, but is this because he is acting like a friend?