TEA PARTY LITERACY STRATEGY

How to Use the Strategy:

Tea party is a social activity mostly used as a pre-reading strategy, although it can be modified as an after reading activity as a way to celebrate the conclusion of a thematic unit or literature focused unit (Tompkins, 1998).

Steps to Tea Party (Beers, 2003)

Create Cards
Using index cards or small sheets of paper, write phrases, sentences, or words from the text that the students will be reading. Remember to not paraphrase the text; the students should have the exact material provided in the text. Choose phrases that offer insight into characters, plot, setting, and conflicts.

Example of Tea Party phrases, sentences, and words for *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.
I am Outcast.   THE FIRST TEN LIES THEY TELL YOU IN HIGH SCHOOL   Gym should be illegal. It is humiliating.   Rachel/Rachelle has lost her mind. She has flipped. She went to the movies with Andy Beast and her exchange friends and now she follows after him like a bichon frise.   Maya Angelou watches me, two fingers on the side of her face. It is an intelligent pose. Maya wants me to tell Rachel.   The Beast Prowls
Anderson, L.H. (1999). *Speak*. Penguin: New York.

Have Students "Socialize"
Pass out cards and have students roam around the room, talking and chatting individually about the information on the cards and what they think the text will be about. This should take between ten-to-twelve minutes. As students study the phrases on their cards they begin to develop an outline in their minds about the story and text elements. They gain insight into possible settings, characters, cause and effect relationships, the sequencing of the material, and gain insight into what the story will be about.

Example Tea Party Discussion
Student One: My card reads, "gym should be illegal. It is humiliating". This must be a story about someone in school who hates gym.   **Student Two:** Mine says, "I am Outcast".

Student Three: Like the band Outcast? Maybe she's in the band!

Student One: No, quit joking around. It goes back to school. This person's in school and they feel like an outcast.

Student Two: Right! This person really feels like an outcast though. They are using the word "outcast" with a capital letter so it's more like a name.

Student Four: They must not be very popular. Mine is "Maya Angelou watches me, two fingers on the side of her face. It is an intelligent pose. Maya wants me to tell Rachel". I think Rachel is a friend and Maya must be a teacher. This person must have a secret.

Student Three: Nope, Maya Angelou is a poet. Remember, we read one of her poems last semester. This person must like to read poems. That's cool.

Student Five: Mine says "Rachel/Rachelle has lost her mind. She has flipped. She went to the movies with Andy Beast and her exchange friends and now she follows after him like a bichon frise". What's a bichon frise?

Student One: My aunt has one of those. It's a white, fluffy dog. He's always following me around.

Student Two: No way! This person is calling Rachel a dog. She must be jealous! I'd be mad if someone called me something like that.

Student Three: Or envious, there is a difference between envy and jealousy.

Student Four: Beast is an odd last name. I think the person's making fun of him. He must have done something to make him a beast.

Return to Small Groups
Have students meet in small groups to discuss their predictions and what they think is happening in the story or text. Having four-to-five students per group is ideal.

Record Predictions
Students should write a collaborative "We Think" statement. The paragraph can begin with, "We think that this selection is about…". You may have them write this in their notebook or on large pieces of chart paper for easier viewing.

Sample "We Think" Statement
We think this selection is about a boy or girl who hates school and has a secret they think they should tell but might not know how. The secret is about a boy named Andy who is not very nice in someway but we're not sure what way yet.

Sharing "We Think" Statements
The groups of students can share their "We Think" students. Teachers should remember to ask them to explain how they reached their prediction.

Read the Selection
Have students read the text used for the Tea Party. You may want to use literature circles or allow for a specific time for students to read the text. If you students used large pieces of chart paper for their predictions you may consider posting them around the room for others to reflect on as they read and review the text.
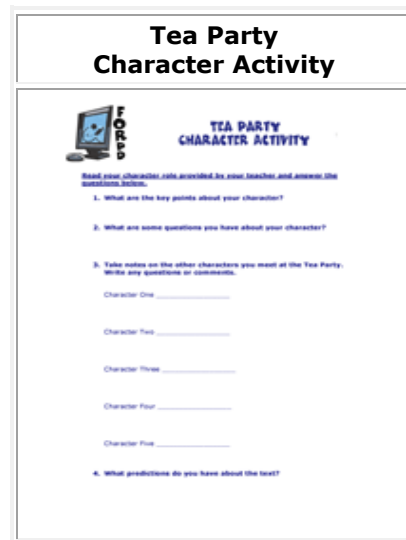
Reflection and Discussion
Students should take time during and after reading to reflect on their predictions and discuss how they differed from the actual text. Students can review the words and phrases chosen during the initial Tea Party and converse with how they created relationships in their mind during that activity and how the relationship changed during the actual reading of the text.

Modifications for Content Area Selections

Content area teachers can help their students gain insight into the texts they will be using for specific concepts and topics using the Tea Party strategy. Instead of just focusing on predictions, students can also discuss the cause and effect relationship among the given phrases and words, how the words would be grouped into categories, or what the specific vocabulary means to them.

Extensions

Teachers may want to design a Tea Party that focuses specifically on the characters provided in a given text. A group of five students can each be given character cards with specific phrases from the text or an overall idea about that characters feelings, thoughts, and actions (Christensen, 2000). The individual students would then complete an activity sheet about their own characters and fellow characters they meet at the Tea Party.

**Tea Party
Character Activity**

Assessment:

Teacher observation during the Tea Party activity is vital for the success of this activity. Circulating and taking detailed and general notes during the initial part of the Tea Party, when students are discussing the meaning of their cards, and later on when they get into groups will help ensure that students are staying focused and making thoughtful predictions. Later the teacher can revisit the notes taken and draw students into further discussions.

After students have shared their "We Think" statements, teachers may want to take anecdotal notes on students' statements and evaluate the explanation given for how they reached their prediction.

Resources:

Tea Party
http://teachers.santee.k12.ca.us/carl/Document/Literacy%20Lane/Tea%20Party.doc
Description of the Tea Party Strategy, including rational and step-by-step instructions for implementation.

Goals for Tea Party
http://www.ctap4.org/infolit/reading/tea_party.doc
Goals for the Tea Party strategy.

The Tea Party
http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/14_04/tea144.shtml
A high school English teacher uses a "tea party" - in which students give brief previews of good books - to entice reluctant readers to read.

Tea Party
http://coldfusion.mead.k12.wa.us/ls/subject2.cfm?callvar=teaparty
Description of the Tea Party Strategy, including directions and teacher tips.

Open House Before Reading Strategy
http://www.allamericareads.org/lessonplan/strategies/before/openhouse.htm
Description of the Open House Strategy (also known as the Tea Party Strategy), including an overview, directions for the activity, and how to assess student performance.

Tea Party Strategy
http://159.191.14.139/.docs/pg/.download/filename/teachers.pps.k12.or.us/literacy/hsliteracy/TeaPartyStrat04.pdf
Description of the Tea Party Strategy, including preparation, steps, suggestions, and variations.

References:

Anderson, L.H. (1999). *Speak*. Penguin: New York.