

"UNDERSTANDING THE OBJECTIVES OF LITERATURE"

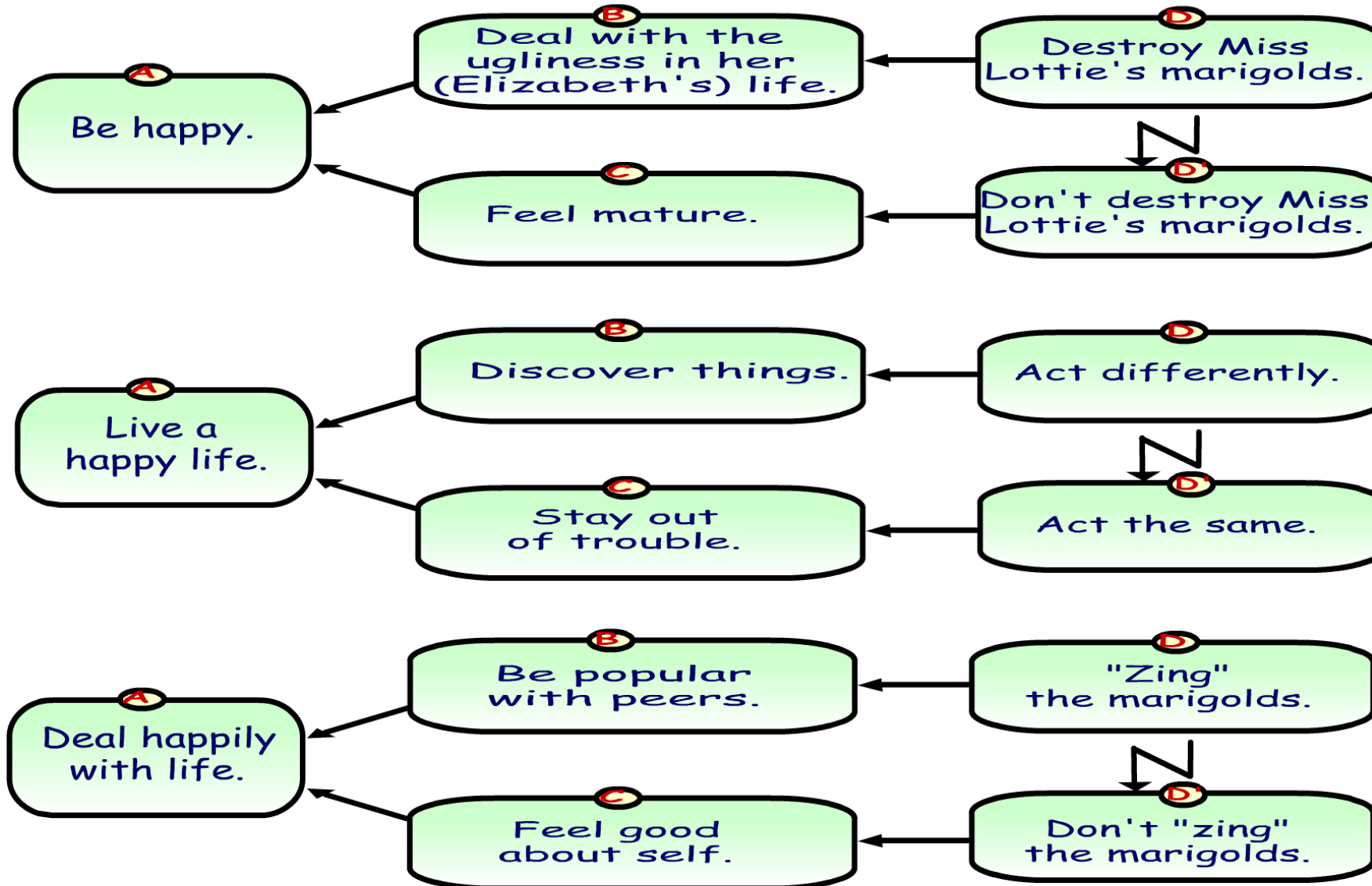
In my tenth grade literature class, the students read a story called "Marigolds" by Eugenia W. Collier. In part of the story, some young people are bored one summer day, so they decide to annoy Miss Lottie which they said "was always fun."

Miss Lottie is poor and lives in a shack, has a son who is mentally challenged, never has any visitors; in fact, the only thing of beauty in Miss Lottie's life is her garden of marigolds. The main character, a teenager named Elizabeth, must decide whether or not to join her brother Joey and the other children in getting some stones and "zinging" them at the marigolds.

Elizabeth and the others make the decision to damage the marigolds. Later, after some family problems, Elizabeth goes a second time to Miss Lottie's house and completely destroys Miss Lottie's marigolds. Miss Lottie never plants marigolds again.

One of my objectives for this lesson was for students to see how the choices we make affect other people. This story has several layers, and in the past I have found that a story with several "threads" or layers can be a challenge for students to dissect. Often it is difficult to get discussions started quickly because there are too many layers to focus on.

I decided to use the TOC "cloud" tool to help students focus quickly and to open the class discussion. The clouds included here took only a few minutes to create, yet they focused the students immediately on the conflicts in the story.



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The students were able to see quickly how the actions of Elizabeth and the others came from deeper needs. A lively discussion followed that brought out all the "threads" or layers; the students' empathy level for Miss Lottie increased drastically; and the students could visually see how Miss Lottie had needs as well.

The students not only focused quickly, but also had a much better understanding of the depth of the story than they did in the past-before the use of the "cloud."