

Pedagogical Philosophy of Poetry

ENG 861

Lisa Moore

“Poetry is what gets lost in translation.” –Robert Frost

DEDICATION

Introduction to Poetry

By Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

*from The Apple that Astonished Paris, 1996
University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, Ark.*

AND

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I have a Dream

I have a dream.

I have a dream that poetry will someday be seen as Audre Lorde says: "Poetry is not only a dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundation for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before." It is an error of education to neglect what it views as "the arts" in lieu of our modern education core standards and 21st century skills.

I have a dream.

I have a dream that as Mary Oliver says: "Modern poetry... "free" form...seems like something we can [all] do. Poetry is a river; many voices travel in it; poem after poem moves along in the exciting crests and falls of the river waves." As Muriel Rukeyser says, "Poetry [will] seize your imagination intellectually." The perception that poetry is used as pillars of important events in our lives but for nothing else is absurd. We tend to relive our often "negative" school "poetry unit" experience where this becomes a vicious cycle generation after generation.

I have a dream.

I have a dream that as Dean Young says: "POETRY CAN'T BE HARMED BY PEOPLE TRYING TO WRITE IT! Poetry is not a discipline. It is a hunger, a revolt, a drive, a mash note, a fright, a tantrum, a grief, a hoax, a debacle, an application, an affect. It is collaboration." Poetry is a thread of human existence and one that should not be left out of education at any level or in any discipline. Poetry is a perfect format for multicultural, multigenerational, and critical and creative education. Poetry is a perfect vehicle for building community, giving confidence to learning, studying diversity and social justice, helping student strengthen self-awareness and communication skills, and expanding both our critical and creative thinking ability. Using poetry strengthens attention and cognition.

I have a dream.

I have a dream that as Robert Frost says: "It must be more felt than seen ahead like prophecy. Like a piece of ice on a hot stove the poem must ride on its own melting."

I have a dream.

I have a dream that I can show that poetry is more than rhyme, meter and form. Students will see the beauty in the sound and the words and the meaning that they give and take from writing and reading poetry at all levels and in all subjects. We want our students to be better communicators and poetry outcomes are an excellent way for students at all levels and in all disciplines to use language to strengthen these skills and abilities.

I have a dream.

I have a dream that I can help students learn to think at the most basic levels and learn to think in new ways at more advanced levels in all subject areas. Creating poetry in any subject matter means fitting meaning into a new form. A type of synthesis by looking at issues in a new way using analytical abilities expands critical and creative thinking.

I have a dream.

I have a dream that everyone will know a day when the love of poetry is a lifelong passion and not just a school "unit."

And that on that day everyone will know a new meaning of the word poetry. If we want our students to become great, this must be true. They must find passion in learning.

And when this happens, when we can allow poetry into our lives we will all know the power of words and create future generations who will know the value of their own voice—in their personal lives, in

their careers, and throughout their life-long legacy. Then they can stand proudly, join hands and praise loudly:

“Poetry is an echo, asking a shadow to dance.” –Carl Sandburg

I have attached some examples of using poetry in different disciplines at the end of this paper.

Sources

"I Have a Dream" Speech—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

(Our books and articles for this course)

Bradburn, N., Parks, K., & Reynolds, M. (2006). Poetry in America: A Summary of the Study – for The Poetry Foundation. Retrieved from

<http://www.norc.org/PDFs/publications/PoetryinAmericaSummaryReport.pdf>

Callahan, M. & King, J.M. (2011). Classroom Remix: Patterns of Pedagogy in a Techno-Literacies Poetry Unit . *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(2), 134-144.

Fraizer, C. H. (2003). Building Community through Poetry: A Role for Imagination in the Classroom. *The English Journal* , 92(5), 65-70.

Gioia, D. (1994). Notes Toward a New Bohemia. Retrieved from <http://www.danagioia.net/essays/ebohemia.htm>

Gioia, D. (1991). Can Poetry Matter? *The Atlantic Monthly*, 267(5), 94-106.

Jocson, K.M. (2006). "There's a better word": Urban youth rewriting their social worlds through poetry. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(8), 700-707.

Knight Foundation. (2001). Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.knightarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Final-Report-PDF.pdf>

McCall, A.L. (2004). Using Poetry in Social Studies Classes to Teach About Cultural Diversity and Social Justice. *Social Studies*, 95(4), 172.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2007). Poetry: A Powerful Medium for Literacy and Technology Development. Retrieved from

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/hughes.pdf>

Posner, M. I. & Patoine, B. (2009). How Arts Training Improves Attention and Cognition. Retrieved from

<http://dana.org/news/cerebrum/detail.aspx?id=23206>

Stickling, S., Prasun, M., & Olsen, C. (2011). Poetry: What's the Sense in Teaching It? *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 39(3), 31.

Van Wyhe, T.L.C. (2006). Remembering What is Important: The Power of Poetry in My Classroom . *The English Journal*, 96(1), 15-16.

Lesson Plan That Integrates Various Disciplines

Mini-Lesson: Recycled Words

Standards

Reading 4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meaning, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Reading 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Writing 5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Speaking and Listening 2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Supplies

Glue/Tape

Scissors

Construction Paper

Headlines (newspapers/magazines)

Background

This activity is to help them think about words more creatively since they don't have to come up with the words themselves. It also integrates other topics such as art, theater and possibly music in the lesson.

Introduction

The Dada or Dadaism Art Movement began after WWI as protest of the horrors of the war. Dadaism affected the visual arts (e.g., graphic design), literature (mainly poetry), music and theater.

It was the complete opposite of what art stood for, often called anti-art. The basis is nonsense. It was also considered anti-bourgeois.

There were Dada festivals, cabarets, and performances—many set to music.

Some of the art techniques that came out of this movement was:

- Collage
- Photomontage
- Assemblage
- Readymades

Some of the literature that came out of the movement, in my humble opinion, was the ransom note. But I digress.

Process

1. Pair students and give each cut out headlines (preference is to give them newspapers and magazines allowing them to cut out headlines themselves).
2. Lay down the headlines on the table before you or on the floor facing the same direction.
3. Now, cut 20-30 words out. Don't think about it just do it.
4. Now, cut 20-30 more words out.
5. And now, cut another 20-30 words out.
6. Now, take the words and lay them out on your construction paper. **DO NOT GLUE YET!** Rearrange as you like.
7. Glue them down once you're happy with your work.
8. Now, present your poem in a strange or experimental style, with conviction.

Additions:

Since these headlines came from different sources, you could discuss the word choices used by different sources for their headlines to convey their meaning

NOTE:

This is a method of creative play that may spur ideas when you have none.

This is a common technique for writers, artists, etc.

Examples of Poems to use across the Curriculum (there are tons more on the Internet!)

For Science Class:

When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer

BY WALT WHITMAN

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

For Math Class:

Alphabet pyramids

These are cumulative poems that contain specific parts of speech that begin with the same letters.

Line 1: the letter

Line 2: a noun

Line 3: add an adjective

Line 4: add a verb

Line 5: add an adverb

The following example was written by middle school students:

R
Remainder
Reluctant remainder
Reluctant remainder remembers
Reluctant remainder remembers recess

For History Class:

I Hear America Singing by Walt Whitman

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of merchants, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong.
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on
the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands.
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon
intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or the young wife at work, or of the girl
sewing and washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day - - at night the party of young fellows, robust,
friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

For Sociology Class:

LONG, DARK PATHS

Black man, black man,
walking straight, walking tall
down the long, dark street
where white and black paths meet
-do you see me as your foe?

Am I "Whitey," a soulless face?

Do we share or contest

this dingy, dirty place?

Black man, black man,

footsteps echo

against the walls

where scrawls of hatred

lurch out, proclaiming

pain and fear and anger

before we ever meet,

as if we have met

and sized up one another

as brutal, foul,

beyond repair,

creator of despair

and pain and fear

and injustice.

Injustice, brother,

on black and white,

on all people

lost upon long, dark paths.