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EDUC 359

Round Reflection

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From the Page to the Stage: How do Poets Perform Spoken Word Poetry?

As we began to wrap up our poetry unit, I wanted to have my students get the chance to explore the way that poetry can be performed. This lesson was meant to help them begin to see the difference between just reading a poem on a page and actually performing a poem the way one might act in a play. I wanted to call on their experiences with *A Midsummer Nights' Dream* and get them to connect what they already know about performance. I was definitely nervous before my round, especially because I did the round with 8B, who had been having more side conversations and getting off task a lot easier recently.

During the lesson, I felt that the class went fairly well overall. The students paid attention to the videos of spoken-word poetry performances that I asked them to watch, and had some really great observations about the videos. For the second half of the class, I told them that I was going to perform my favorite poem for them, and purposefully did an exceptionally bad performance of the poem, as monotone and flat-affected as I possibly could. They were very enthusiastic to hear me perform the poem, and even more enthusiastic to tell me how bad the poem was. Danielle immediately commented that it sounded “as if your mom had asked you to read the poem and you really didn’t want to.” In my original LAP, I had planned that I would read the poem badly the first time, and then ask them to give me suggestions for how I could read it better, and then perform it again. However, because they were so enthusiastic, I decided

that I would have them volunteer to try and perform the poem better than I did. This contrast really helped them to understand performing versus reading, and being able to try it out themselves kept the class more engaged.

Looking back, there are certainly a few changes I would make to the lesson. The activity that I had done in the first half of the class asked the students to pay attention to what they noticed about the videos. Though each pair of students had been given a specific aspect of performance to focus on, such as repetition or eye contact, the notes that they wrote down were pretty broad and did not always reference back to evidence from the videos. Some students, such as Steven, had some very detailed, thoughtful answers; Steven mentioned that one of the poets in the videos used repetition and body movement together in a particular way, almost as if the poet was “rewinding” himself every time he repeated a phrase. While a few students had thoughtful responses like these, most responses were very general, such as “he made eye contact” or “he moved his head.” Thinking about this, I definitely should have given them some probing questions with a more narrow focus to get them to be more specific in their answers. Also, when they share their answers with the class, I should have structured in an activity such as a think-pair-share to get everyone involved instead of just hearing from a few voices.

Based on what I learned from this round, I am focusing a lot more on pushing my students to be more specific and get them to have more discussions with each other. I really want to help them be able to build off of each others’ ideas rather than just answering me directly when I ask the class a question. I also am focusing on making sure that when I ask the class questions that I scaffold the questions more, so that they can have a point of entry into the conversation. If my questions are specific and focused, their answers will be specific and

focused, rather than broad and general. Despite these changes that I need to make to my practice, I am very pleased with how the lesson went overall, and know that I need to continue to come up with creative and engaging lessons for my students to keep them “buying in.”