

Laura Matthew
EDUC 359
Round Reflection
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Reflection on Rita Jenness' Round

Rita teaches 11th grade History at University Park Campus School. Her first round focused on introducing a new unit, the Progressive era, and also on encouraging her students to begin understanding political platforms. The lesson started with some image analysis, transitioned into a homework review, and then ended with some group work where students had to summarize the political platforms of different candidates from the Progressive era elections.

Rita's lesson showed that she has taken careful consideration of the collective learning style of the students in her classroom. From my observation, these students are thoughtful, often have a lot to say, and respond well to class discussions. Rita paced the lesson very well, giving students plenty of time to discuss amongst themselves—which was something that they did naturally, without needing any additional structure. Beginning class with image analysis was a good hook, as the images she chose were provocative and got students to think about the different social issues that plagued the United States during the Progressive era. Nearly all students seemed thoroughly engaged during image analysis, and even the side conversations were all related to what they were supposed to be thinking about and responding to. When the class transitioned into group work later on, even though it took a few minutes to get everyone settled in their groups, the groups that I observed largely stayed on task and were interested in and engaged with the activity.

There are two ELL students in Rita's class whom she asked us to focus on as we were observing the lesson. I noticed that during the first part of class, both students were writing down notes about the images and seemed to be paying close attention to the discussion going on around them, though they did not necessarily participate. Later on, during the group work activity, Rita gave an adapted text to the ELL student who was in one of the groups I observed. This text had some of the vocabulary translated into the student's native language, as well as simpler sentences to make the content more comprehensible. This particular student did not participate as much in the group discussion, but I did notice him paying attention and following along on his own text. Overall, I feel that the strategies Rita used to help her ELL students were fairly effective, as the students were engaged at all times even though they were not speaking in front of the whole class.

One delta for Rita's lesson that we discussed during the post-round reflection was that she felt that the homework review was out of place in the flow of the rest of the lesson, and we all agreed. She had decided to add a homework review into her lesson because she had told her students that the homework assignment was due in class that day, and did not want her students to feel as if they had done the work for nothing. The homework review did seem somewhat out of place and a bit confusing to the class, but I definitely understood the need to keep her students accountable for their work. One suggestion that I have for this would be to do a quick homework check at the beginning of class (or at some other point during the class) in order to reinforce the idea that students were to have done the homework for that date, but ask the students to hold onto the work so that the class could go over it at a different time.

Overall, this was a great lesson to observe, and I really enjoyed being part of the class. The students had a lot of insightful comments, and it was great to see some image analysis in action because I plan on doing some image analysis with my eighth grade students. I definitely think that my students will need much more scaffolding and structure than the eleventh grade, but observing Rita's class gave me a lot of ideas for how I could modify an image analysis activity for my own students.