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Teaching & Learning III

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### Round #3: A Personal Reflection

When I learned that the space where I was planning to host my third and final round of the year was *taken*, I momentarily panicked. No Claremont teacher had mentioned in the weekly school memo about the 80-student assembly taking place during periods 2 and 3, exactly when I was hosting the round process. On top of this, I was nervous about my juniors. They tend to be quieter when visitors come to the room. All accounted for, I was very pleased with the work they did during this period 3 Friday round, on the final day of spirit week, nonetheless. With our increased emphasis on practice and prompt books, my juniors excelled at putting on a performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire* where the main focus was better learning about drama through performance.

The round began in the second floor kiva, which we commandeered after the third floor kiva assembly situation. Students took on roles of actor, director, critic, prop designer, among others. Some students really stepped up, particularly the actors who used more emotion and better tone. They also paid more attention to stage directions. Our student director, who had experience in a couple theatre classes, took the charge I had hoped to see from her in telling the actors where they needed to be physically on stage. On the other hand, the student in charge of costumes and the one in charge of props did not fulfil their end of the bargain. I will have to think about how to get all students to prepare their individual responsibilities in the future so that the classroom community can better execute their roles.

I was also very pleased with the post-performance, where students had a great balance of conversation about the performative aspects of the show in addition to time spent thinking about theme, character, and context. We even had the chance to talk about the “real life” applications of theme, such as thinking about how “Every man is a king” *is* true and/or *should be* true. I heard from more than half the class; all told, today I heard from more than two-thirds of the class between the performance and the after-conversation.

One area that I would like to improve on most is getting the designated audience members who need to be writing to actually write. Logistically, I can perhaps do more to sit these students together to make them a sort of cohort of critics. This could do more to give them some gentle pressure to finish their critique. I might also, in our next performance, give them a handout to write on. I am guessing that the free form nature of writing it in their bluebooks makes it hard for them to remember to do the writing. I could scaffold many of the parts more by perhaps providing a checklist of what each role requires each week. This is a lot of work, but would only need to be done once.

Overall, I am very proud of my juniors. They have really done well with this unit and are responding to the opportunity to vary lessons on a daily basis. Many of my rounds-goers commented that (based on my final round question where I asked for the goers to interview students) students found the weekly performances helpful, some because it helped them visualize it, others because it allowed us to do additional close readings. As Dee and Cindy commented in our debriefing later that day, to get the students motivated to perform in front of an audience successfully in two and half weeks is something to be proud of for my teaching.