

Overview

Last year I was lucky enough to become involved with a grant funded program called *City Voices/City Visions*. It is a program coordinated by Dr. Suzanne Miller, assisted by Suzanne Borowicz, that teams the University of Buffalo with the Buffalo Public School District. Their mission is to help teachers develop "innovative approaches to integrating digital video arts and communication technologies into the curriculum to better enable students to achieve challenging academic standards." This project is an offspring of that program.

Lesson Summary

Students will read a poem and transform it into a film, utilizing reader response methodology to interpret the film, and a storyboard as an organizational tool.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- use storyboards as a method of linear organization
- create a montage of images to interpret a poem
- analyze the central theme, or "big picture," of a piece of poetry
- explore and discuss varying levels of meaning in a poem
- assess the extent of their understanding of the poem
- use digital recording and editing technologies to
- make words come alive ☺

Research

- ✓ Payne, Ruby K. A Framework for Understanding Poverty. aha! Process, Inc., United States of America, 1996.

On the need for instruction in visual interpretation:

"Blurred and sweeping perceptions and the lack of a systematic method of exploration mean that these students have no consistent or predictable way of getting information. *They see only about 50% of what is on a page.*" (123) (emphasis added)

On schema theory & reader response:

"In order to learn, an individual must have certain cognitive skills and must have a structure inside his/her head to accept learning – a file cabinet or a piece of software." (119)

- ✓ Nagin, Carl. Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools. John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, 2003.

On reading to write (or compose with film)

"The reading and writing processes are similar. The first step in both processes, for example, involves activating prior knowledge and setting a purpose." (32)

- ✓ Atwell, Nancy. In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning. Boynton/Cook, Portsmouth, NH 1998.

On responding to literature

"At the center are the reader's responses, to the world of the book...to their own worlds, to the meanings they make..." (30)

- ✓ Joel Malley ☺

On the benefits of using film to make meaning

"Students, regardless of content area, must be taught to view words as much more than dark marks contrasting with a blank white page. They must be able to visualize the signs and symbols they represent. We must help them bring the words to life."

Rough Schedule for "Poetry in Motion" Project

Day One

Read "Deer Crossing," by Suzanne Borowicz, aloud, respond, and discuss both the poem and possible ways to capture it on video. Then, view the film version, and discuss the choices the director made and how it changed the audience's perception of the poem. Students will also fill out technology survey and hand in, for the purpose of group assignments.

Day Two-Three

Students will be presented with ten poems. Eventually, each group must choose one poem to turn into a film. Each poem will be read aloud, and students will be given 1-2 minutes to respond and discuss.

Day Four

Students are placed in groups of 4-5, based on their responses in their technology survey. I tried to make each group a heterogeneous mixture of gender, race, and most importantly, technological savvy.

Each group then received a camera, and I demonstrated a few basic techniques, such as inserting a cassette tape, removal of lens caps, and other safety concerns. I also demonstrated zoom features and taped a few things with my camera hooked up to a TV. Students were then given the rest of the class to play with the camera, making sure that each student was able to use it and practice the skills demonstrated.

Day Five

Groups were asked to choose their poem, report to me (so I could record each group's choice), and then begin the storyboarding process. Students then planned their film on a storyboard. Students asked to bring in any materials needed for film, props etc., for day six filming.

Day Six

Students begin to film their poem in the classroom, using whatever props they have brought in. Teacher controls the madness.

Day Seven

We changed venues, moving to the library to film. The thinking was that there would be more books with pictures and more room to film. Teacher controls the madness.

Day Eight

Students are given a brief introduction to iMovie. I went over such concepts as importing, shortening clips, transitions, and other basic functions. Students were then asked to import their rough footage and begin to edit their film.

Day Nine-Ten

Continued organizing and editing film, reshooting if necessary. I addressed individual needs when necessary.

Day Eleven

iMovie Film Festival...watch, respond, discuss.