



C.I. 295

Reflective Writing Assignment 1

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Classrooms & Curriculum Selection (Voices: Sections 1 & 2)

Case 13: Creative Writing that Doesn't Confirm

Creativity. The one thing that everyone has but is afraid to use it or doesn't know how to use. Sure, some people are more creative than others and are given a quality to their name as "creative", but I believe that everyone has creative ability; it's just up to the person to show it or hold it back and go with the norm. I believe that it is very important for a student especially to have creative control in a subject. Whether it's Health class or English 101, a student should be the only person to make a decision as to how creative he or she wants their project or assignment to be. They should be allowed to come up with as many ideas as possible because that means their minds are working and are concentrated on the assignment, correct? Teachers should have the creativeness in making the project or assignment their way, but then when it comes to the final product, they should allow the student to mold it into not only an acceptable piece of work for the teacher, but to them as well.

I am currently employed in a program through Penn State called PEPP. In this program, I have my own activity called PWL or "PEPP Writing League". In this activity, there are 10 weeks of different writing activities for the students to partake in. The overall idea of the activity is to improve their writing skills as a whole, but more particularly, their essay writing skills. When writing an essay, or any type of medium for that matter, a student should be able to answer a question in more than a page. In order to do this, the student must be creative enough to answer the question in more than one paragraph. By "being creative", what I mean is to answer the



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question with their own expressiveness or comparing past lessons that they learned to the essay question. By doing this, they not only learn and answer the question that is given to them fully, but also to reflect on past lessons that were taught.

In the case study of Ms. Gittinger vs. Miss Abbott if you will, we have a case of a feud between two teachers' writing styles. Old fashioned "Answer the question" vs. "Creative Writing". Now, I won't be bias and take the side of Creative Writing because that's what I'm into, but I do strongly believe that Creative Writing is the way to go, especially in this assignment concerning "The Wizard of Oz" (which is a *creative*, made up story to begin with). Ms. Gittinger's view is things in the classroom should be her way and that's it. You can contort her rules sometimes, but if it crosses her threshold, she puts a stop to it. Her rules are basically strict, stay in order and no silliness past her students' ages.

The problem arises when the student teacher, Miss Abbott, gives her students a project as to what would happen if Dorothy went back to the Land of Oz. Personally, I don't think you could write anything to this question if you were not creative. But, the students had fun during this lesson, were learning and developing their writing skills to the fullest degree, and listened to what the teacher told them to do. I believe that these three things should be in every lesson. But, after Ms. Gittinger read the papers of her students, she did not approve of them because of their "silliness", so she made them redo them. In a way, she allowed them to still be creative, but not to get too "out of hand" with it. But if you really do look at The Wizard of Oz, the whole story is silly. There is a scarecrow that talks and dances, a tin man that freezes without grease, a lion that's afraid of everything, flying monkeys (come on now), and a house that is picked up by a tornado. Now, if you were not creative with this assignment, the scarecrow would just be a



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nonhuman pile of straw shaped as a man on a stick, the tin man would just be a man covered in shiny tin, the lion would eat the monkeys (that don't fly) because he's a carnivore, and Dorothy would've died in the tornado because the tornado wouldn't just pick up the house, it would destroy it. Creativeness is absolutely necessary in this assignment, and silliness just well, comes with the territory.

But, in the shoes of Miss Abbott, a student teacher can not do much when a teacher has a different philosophy. When you go into a classroom under the wing of an experienced teacher, you are basically their student as well. You get more freedom obviously than the students, but still, you are under their wing and they are to help you develop as an educator and survive in the world of education. If the student teacher mouths off against the teacher about contradicting views, all the teacher has to do is write it down on the student teacher's observation form and his or her future might be a jeopardy. Also, you do not want to make a scene in front of the students, it is very unprofessional and not tolerated by the people above you. What are Miss Abbott's choices? Well, there are two I can think of, but that's about it.

First thing she can do is she can work within the system. Sure, let them be creative, but draw lines on certain things. They can be creative, but don't let them get too "silly" according to Ms. Gittinger. Don't run everything by Ms. Gittinger, but use your best judgment as to what is silly and what is appropriate. I mean, I'm sure people thought Picasso's paintings were silly at one time, but once they saw them over and over again, they labeled him as one of the most famous and creative painters ever to pick up a paintbrush.

Second thing she can do is to be more creative herself with the students. Not only write down what would happen, but allow groups to form amongst the students and actually put on a play



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about the story. That way, Ms. Gittinger might look past the silliness and realize that her kids are really creative and can have fun doing it. Sure, silliness would still occur, but when you act it out, a chuckle or laugh could come out of it in the process. Laughter is the best medicine if you ask me.

Ms. Gittinger, sadly, isn't the only road block to full creativeness in the classroom. Once the principal or parent steps in and throws out their two cents on the activity and/or silliness, then that's basically the end. The only thing you can do, the only thing that is evidence to that it's ok is the final product or in other words, grades. If the students' grades are to their highest potential and highest improvement, then why change what isn't broken? Grades are what matter the most in school. Like I mentioned before, creativeness is in everyone I believe, and a project like this can really show that from an individual standpoint. So for example if there's a little Billy in the back of the classroom that never talks and his participation grade suffers from it, a project like this can really help him. He doesn't have to talk, just write and be creative with whatever comes out of his pencil. And if it's creative enough, which I believe it would be, and good enough to read, his grade will show accordingly. This making his parents happy, the teacher happy, the principal happy and most of all, something that is absent in schools nowadays, himself happy.

In PEPP, I've doubted many of my teaching methods and I've changed accordingly, and most of them for the better. I used to be all into being their "friend" as well as their peer. But I noticed, especially this semester of PEPP, that that doesn't work 100 percent of the time. Once you give them an inch, they take a mile. But as long as the assignments and lesson plans get done, then I consider the day to be a good one, problems or no problems. Although with all the problems this semester, my philosophy has stayed in tact. My philosophy, as written in my philosophy paper last semester, is as follows:



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“Overall, my definition of learning in general involves two parts, one is choosing the information that you want to know individually and act upon it. This includes taking in everything for the sake of the grade, but only some things actually “stick” through time. Those things that “stick” in your brain are the things that really matter in life. The other part of learning that I believe is to add on to what you already know. I’ve learned over time that I actually “learn” things better when I can compare them to things I already know.”

I believe that a student wants to have to learn. If there is no willingness or no motivation from me, the teacher, then nothing will be accomplished. But if there is a connection over time, then something will be learned and hopefully “stick” with that student until the end of their days. Also, if they learn it, then it can help them with other things as well, making life just a little bit easier, just a little though of course.

In conclusion, I believe that Miss Abbott should stick with her gut and let them be creative as far as Ms. Gittinger allows her and them to be. Because like I said, the grades are what matter. If she has to change her lesson, that’s fine, but as long as the creativeness aspect is still intact because I believe that creativeness is the key to learning, and without it, then it would all sound the same. We’re all individuals with different personalities, so we should show it. Not only to other people, but to ourselves and in our learning as well. A teacher’s job is not only to teach, but to motivate, change, and make an impact on their students’ lives... something that will “stick” with them forever.