It's All a Matter of Perspective: Meaning in Text Situated in Context

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"[Open-mindedness] includes an active desire to listen to more sides than one; to give heed to facts from whatever source they come; to give full attention to alternative possibilities; to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us."
                                                                    –John Dewey, *How We Think*

If there is one thing I hope to foster within my students, it is the idea that before they can truly own an idea—a belief—they must first question it. As a teacher, I see my role as being the facilitator in this process of inquiry. I ask the difficult questions and encourage my students to wrestle with them and then ask their own.

Background

I teach at Providence High School in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) system. We have around 2100 students at our school, and I teach about 150 of them. I teach one section of Yearbook, one section of Standard English III, and four sections of Honors English III. The English III curriculum focuses on a survey of American literature, and we are also responsible for completing the research paper requirement for the CMS Graduation Project. My students come to me from a tenth grade curriculum that focuses on World Literature, but is also dictated by the new state end of course exam. All year long, students are inundated with test-prep activities in order to ensure success on the end of course exam. The test is very important for measuring growth and progress toward the school's goals, and as the "pay for performance" talk increases, I am sure we will see a more intense approach taken toward guaranteeing that students do well. The test covers what was previously tested in the 9th grade and will include new types of questions in the form of short answer and short essay. While these skills in reading and writing are important, the way in which success for the test is taught—or the purpose behind teaching these skills— is highly inauthentic. With the ever-increasing demands of teaching, everything that must be covered and tested, making time for developing writing beyond the test seems daunting or unnecessary for some teachers. Teaching writing is difficult as is, not to mention the time and energy it takes to give timely, sustaining feedback; however, the shift to the new national curriculum—the Common Core—is calling for an increase of reading and writing in every discipline.

I find that my junior honors students thirst for the "right" answer, but would rather be told what it is as opposed to discovering it on their own. They cannot afford to be wrong because they have too much at stake: getting into a good school and pressure from

themselves and parents. While there are a few "right" answers in my class, my pedagogy is predicated on inquiry and investigation. This freedom to think scares many of my students, almost to the point of paralysis. I find that it is rarely the students who take initiative and advocate for themselves but rather the parents, thus further enabling a lack of autonomy and problem-solving skills. When I ask students to free-write after reading a small excerpt, or give them a question to write freely about, I inevitably elicit the question, "what am I supposed to write about?" I blame this on many things, and education is no exception. Freire's "banking concept" of education says that we as educators are "projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression" and that in turn "negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry."[1] Oppression, ignorance, negating education and knowledge—none of these are words I want associated with my classroom or teaching strategies. The new North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process wants to ensure that teachers are preparing students for the 21st Century in our global economy. The handbook states that we should "encourage students to ask questions, think creatively, develop and test innovative ideas" because that is what will set them apart in society—a society that demands "creativity and innovation; critical thinking and problem solving; communication and collaboration."[2] I want to encourage innovation, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and engagement using theory as a vehicle. I want my students to know who they are, think independently, learn through inquiry, and then masterfully articulate what they have learned and think.

Introduction

I have three main objectives I hope to address and accomplish with this unit. First, I want my students to become healthy skeptics of media they examine. I want students to think critically about different texts—print and nonprint—and learn to question the text in order to "identify meanings that are socially shared, plausible, and defensible," and then articulate those meanings through discussion and writing.[3] Second, I want students to understand that different contexts inform our reading of a text—to understand that the text is situated in time, culture, and within itself. Texts are not created in a vacuum; we have to take into consideration that texts are created and interpreted from various perspectives. This is especially important as we study the various periods of American literature. Third, I want students to use theory as a way of reading and making sense of a text. I want theory and the corresponding academic vocabulary to act as tools for articulating intuitive thoughts behind a student's reading of a text. I want students to look for and identify patterns that cry out for examination. I want students to read closely, noticing how small details can greatly contribute to the overall meaning of a text.

Rationale

Unfinished Products—It's a Process

In the daily bustle of growing to-do lists, increasing paperwork, higher-stakes testing and other forms of accountability, it is easy to lose sight of what we really mean by education. Education, in the most authentic sense, is "a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating, process." The purpose of education should be to empower students with the skills they need to be highly functioning citizens of the 21st century, and in order for us to do that, we must adopt a student-centered approach to teaching and learning.

A typical American classroom is usually described as one that is "dominated by teacher talk" where "the construction of new knowledge is not as highly valued as the ability to demonstrate mastery of conventionally accepted understandings."[4] If this is true, and I would say that in many cases it is, then the acquisition of knowledge is synonymous with the memorization of "truth" the teacher provides. The problem with this model is that students believe "certainty is possible" and passively wait for feedback confirming whether or not they got it right, thus making them teacher-dependent; they are not required to take any ownership in the learning process, therefore the pursuit of knowledge becomes a game to play rather than a set of skills that will serve a purpose in their future endeavors.[5] Essentially, this form of education has nothing to do with the student and what is going on in their world, ultimately discouraging student-engagement and independent thinking. Opposing this model, the constructivist classroom seeks, as Brooks and Brooks argue, to be an:

> [E]nvironment in which…so much of their day is organized so that student-to-student interaction is encouraged, cooperation is valued, assignments and materials are interdisciplinary, and students' freedom to chase their own ideas is abundant, students are more likely to take risks and approach assignments with a willingness to accept challenges to their current understandings.[6]

Teachers of constructivist classrooms tend to share a set of values with those devoted to critical pedagogy. A premise of critical pedagogy is that "the school curriculum should in part be shaped by problems that face teachers and students in their effort to live just and ethical lives."[7] When making decisions about lessons, teachers should not ignore the pressing questions of the lives of their students and of their own. Just as with any other skill, modeling the act of posing relevant questions and seeking answers through critical thinking becomes an important part of the process. Consider what Brooks and Brooks write about leading by example:

> When students work with adults who continue to view themselves as learners, who ask questions with which they themselves still grapple, who are willing and able to alter both content and practice in the pursuit of meaning, and who treat students and their endeavors as works in progress, not finished products, students are more likely to demonstrate these characteristics themselves.[8]

A teacher's willingness to learn with his or her students does not strip authority, but rather validates the process they are asking their students to undertake. In his book *Critical Pedagogy*, Kincheloe recounts a discussion of teacher authority with Paulo Freire: "teachers must admit they are in a position of authority and then demonstrate that authority in their actions in support of students…as teachers relinquish the authority of truth providers, they assume the mature role of facilitators of student inquiry and problem posing."[9] By fostering autonomy and encouraging initiative, teachers allow students to own their education and discover the value of acknowledging and solving problems they face every day—problems that matter to them. In this type of classroom, questions posed by the teacher and students become the primary mode for constructing meaning: "complex, thoughtful questions challenge students to look beyond the apparent, to delve into issues deeply and broadly, and to form their own understandings of events and phenomena."[10] Questions illuminate contradictions causing the student to revisit and evaluate prior knowledge—to reformulate what they "know" in consideration of a different perspective.[11] Questions suggest that in our quest for knowledge, certainty is not a guarantee. The learning focus shifts from the delivery of knowledge to ways of knowing.

Power Play

Whether we are questioning the knowledge we have passively acquired or actively pursuing knowledge through questions, it is necessary to examine the cultural ideologies shaping our students' world view as well as our own. In a discussion of the paradox of education, James Baldwin maintains that as we become educated, we are more aware of the world around us and begin to think for ourselves; however, society does not always welcome members who see through the system and may choose not to comply. Baldwin goes on to say, "the obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change."[12] If we are asking students to take ownership of their education by asking questions and seeking answers, it is necessary for them to investigate the world around them. Kincheloe relays Freire's "lesson that no subject matter or knowledge in general was beyond examination. We need to ask questions of all knowledge…because all data are shaped by the context and the individuals that produced them."[13] As students explore different perspectives, they heighten their awareness of the forces that are shaping their actions and interpretations. In her article "Approaches to Reading with Multiple Lenses of Interpretation," Melissa Troise comments on the importance of acknowledging cultural influences:

> All of us, including high school students, have internalized ideologies that cause us to react intensely to ideas that challenge what we 'know.' But learning happens when we are uncomfortable, so it is important to push students to question their current understandings and assumptions.[14]

Challenging what you have always assumed to be true can be quite an undertaking, especially for students, because it requires that you abandon the safety of conventionally accepted ideas and, in most cases, also identify and question the power structures that are in place. Freire maintains "that all teachers need to engage in a constant dialogue with students that questions existing knowledge and problematizes the traditional power relations that have served to marginalize specific groups and individuals."[15] There are many systems that perpetuate opposition, inequality, and injustice. At the risk of sounding cliché, I support the claim that knowledge is power. By questioning the powers, good or bad, that inform and limit our understanding of the world, we empower ourselves to rewrite those narratives: "thus, empowered by our knowledge, we begin to understand and disengage ourselves from the power narratives that have laid the basis for the dominant way of seeing."[16] If education never examines and challenges the prevailing mindset guiding society, improvement and progress will be obsolete.

A Call for Media Literacy

If the underlying premise of education asks students to actively examine and question information they receive on a daily basis, we cannot ignore the fact that our students— even our friends and family—are constant consumers of digital media. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, the following findings were reported for students ages 12-17 in 2011: 95% are online; 80% use social media sites; 77% have cell phones; and 75% text.[17] Aside from my own observations and concerns as a teacher, I found these statistics to be eye opening as well:

- 88% of social media users ages12-17 have witnessed other people being mean or cruel to another student on social media sites[18]
- 81% of parents are concerned with how much information advertising companies can gather about their children online[19]
- 69% of parents are concerned about how their students are managing their reputations online and how their online usage will affect their future employment and academic opportunities.[20]

In a time of increasing digital media consumption and growing concerns, it is necessary for us as educators to fully embrace the tenets of media literacy as a way to equip our students with the skills necessary to navigate the 21st century society. As I continue to discuss media literacy throughout this unit, I am going to operate under the definition given in the report *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*:

> In this report, the term "digital and media literacy" is used to encompass the full range of cognitive, emotional and social competencies that includes the use of texts, tools and technologies; the skills of critical thinking and analysis; the practice of message composition and creativity; the ability to engage in reflection and ethical thinking; as well as active participation through teamwork and

collaboration.[21]

One way of reducing that definition into a smaller chunk is to think of it in terms of accessing, analyzing and evaluating, creating, reflecting, and acting. Digital and media literacy encompasses a broad spectrum of content and media, thus proving it is necessary for all areas of scholarship.

As we commit to teaching media literacy, a challenge we face is moving past the mindset that using and owning the technology automatically makes our students literate. In order "to develop digital and media literacy competencies it is necessary to teach *about* media and technology, making active use of the practices of dialogue and Socratic questioning to promote critical thinking about the choices people make when consuming, creating and sharing messages."[22] I cannot predict what technological tools will be available to my students in ten years, nor can I stay abreast all the technology available right now; however, I can foster critical thinking and problem solving—skills that will allow students to negotiate meaning and create texts responsibly in an ever-evolving society. In the report *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*, Rene Hobbs maintains, "When people have digital and media literacy competencies, they recognize personal, corporate and political agendas and are empowered to speak out on behalf of the missing voices and omitted perspectives in our communities."[23] Media literacy is so much more than knowing what buttons to push; it is a "way of knowing" that demands close examination and promotes informed citizenship.

Media Literacy in the English Language Arts Classroom

So, what does all of this look like in the English Language Arts (ELA) Classroom? I know that I want to cultivate a student-centered environment where students are willing to take risks with their thinking; where they are comfortable exploring different perspectives and interpretations; where they challenge commonly held assumptions; and where they find relevance in the content as they seek to confront problems they face in their own lives. This is a tall order, but as I grapple with the implementation of literary criticism and media literacy, I am arriving at a better way to make that type of classroom a reality.

Most English classrooms are text-driven, and in a broad sense, the word text refers to any cultural object that produces meaning. Most students, and sadly many teachers, focus primarily on comprehending the text rather than using it as a vehicle for practicing and developing skills. In light of this trend, I ask my students to answer this question at the beginning of the year: what is our goal when we read a text in an academic setting? One of the best answers to this question that I have heard is found in Barry Brummett's book *Techniques of Close Reading*: "A reader is a meaning detective, and…the meanings we detect are the plausible, defensible, socially shared meanings that are supported by a message".[24] Brummett continues, "that the close-reading critic reveals meanings that are

shared but not universally and also meanings that are known but not articulated. The benefit of revealing such meanings is to teach or enlighten those who read or hear the critique,"[25] thus giving us purpose for literary criticism and media literacy. Many students are aware of underlying messages and elements within a text on an intuitive level, and I believe students do care about making meaning of their worlds and sharing those insights; however, I do not think students see how this translates in the ELA classroom. To bridge this gap of relevancy and perspective, I want to offer my students a critical vocabulary with which to analyze the texts and to provide them opportunities to experience close-readings grounded in theory; I want students to understand that they must examine the text in context and acknowledge the various perspectives negotiating meaning within that experience. A well-known phrase coined by Kenneth Burke is "that 'literature is equipment for living,'" meaning "that through types components, or structures of literature people confront their lived situations, celebrate their triumphs and encompass their tragedies."[26] If we assent to this concept, then it easy to see how examination and criticism of a text "generates knowledge of the human condition."[27]

In the Classroom

Narrowing Your Focus

An important element of close reading that Barry Brummett discusses in his book is the ability to notice small details—the nuances of a text—that create meaning. A close reading begs us to acknowledge that small things matter and are perspectival in the way they are encoded and decoded. Therefore, before I introduce unfamiliar theoretical frameworks, I have found it helpful to model and review a close reading using language students are already familiar with in the ELA classroom. To do this, I conduct a read-aloud, think-aloud model annotation of the poem "Half-Hanged Mary" by Margaret Atwood. This poem corresponds with our reading of *The Crucible*, early Puritan texts, and *The Scarlet Letter* in our survey of American literature. I chose this poem because it is full of rich, nuanced language, it is engaging, it expresses similar messages in a new way, and it is a short text. As I model my annotations, students are able to see how much meaning is embedded in so few words. After reading the first two or three sections of the poem, I begin to ask my students what they notice, and soon they are paying attention to the small details and seeing how they are working together to create meaning in the text. As I read the text aloud, we talk about imagery, color, metaphors, similes, the organization of the stanzas and sections, punctuation, rhetorical devices—all the academic vocabulary students have reviewed year after year in an English class since elementary school; the academic vocabulary has remained fairly static, with only the texts changing from year to year.

To assess whether or not students are able to analyze the poem after our close reading of small details, I assign them an essay. I am not usually one for formulaic writing, but I have found that students generally give me plot summaries or lack depth in their analysis.

Therefore, for this assignment I give my students strict parameters for their thesis statements in an attempt to proactively weed out bad writing. Their task is to write an essay that addresses the following: how does Atwood's use of _____ contribute to the meaning of the poem? Their thesis statements must identify ONE element of the poem and they must articulate what meaning is created and how it is created through that element. For example, students could talk about bird imagery, not just imagery, or metaphors, not just figurative language. The meaning must also relay a specific message that is conveyed through the text—one that is both "plausible" and "defensible."[28] Up to this point, we have had many intentional conversations about what good writing does, and one mantra I ask them to adopt is "it is better to say a lot about a little, than a little about a lot." The length of the text and the parameters of the assignment force a student to narrow their focus for writing.

Once students have produced their first draft, I have them bring in three copies of their paper and let them choose a group of three. I ask students to hand out papers to each of their group members so everyone has a copy, and then decide who will be the discussion leader of each text. Students then follow a seminar style method of reading and annotating paper one independently, then bringing it to a whole group discussion where the leader reports on his or her observations and the other two students add their input. This opens the door for students to share and discuss their interpretations and analysis as well as evaluate the effectiveness of one another's attempt to "identify meanings that are socially shared, plausible, and defensible."[29] This activity primes them for new methods of examining a text that have not been introduced in previous English courses.

Tragedy, Comedy and Burke's Pentad

Each year as we sit down to plan the major texts we will study during our survey of American literature, I always ask myself why we study each text—what is the purpose of reading it? Beyond the obvious answer that each text is representative of a literary period, sometimes it is a difficult question to answer. If I have trouble answering that question, then I am sure my students are wondering how this is relevant to their own lives. One conclusion I have come to is that theory is a very clear way to make texts more relevant because it shifts the focus from the text itself to a new way of knowing. As Brummett states, "theory sets the parameters, or the basic assumptions, for how you will move about in a text, so to speak."[30] Establishing methods for examining texts that are grounded in theory provides students the language and "map"[31] needed to navigate texts beyond the ones being studied in class; however, this concept utilizes the texts in class as opportunities to practice the various techniques.

Thinking about messages that are present in the texts we study first semester, I realized that many texts have an element of scapegoating. Students are familiar with the term scapegoat, so it seems appropriate to build on this concept and introduce Kenneth Burke's framework of tragedy, comedy and dramatism.[32] To do this, I lecture about how

texts tend to depict the human condition in one of two ways: tragedy or comedy. I discuss tragedy first, sharing the cycle of order—pollution—guilt—purification (purgation by mortification or scapegoating)—redemption—order. We talk about how order does not last because it assumes that we live in a place with no discord or fault and must get rid of anything that compromises that state. In contrast, we talk about how comedy openly confronts issues by maintaining the "guilt" and acknowledging that we are all prone to making mistakes; comedy is hopeful and can serve as a corrective. After I discuss comedy and tragedy, I talk about Burke's theory of dramatism and the pentad. Dramatism posits that all communication can be read as narrative and a good summary of many of Burke's theories is as follows: "human thoughts and motivations are formed in language or other symbolic systems. What we say and how we say it generates our motives more than it reflects our motives."[33] Burke offers us a method of examining the motivations formed in communication called the pentad. There are five elements of the pentad:

- Act—what is being done
- Agent—the person or organization doing the action
- Agency—the means by which the act is done
- Scene—setting where it all takes place (context)
- Purpose—the reason the act was done[34]

I give a simple example to make these elements clear to students, such as a football player throwing a touchdown pass. I conclude the lecture with a discussion of ratios as they relate to the pentad. After the elements of the pentad are identified, we figure meaning by looking at different ratios—relationships between two or more of the elements. Depending on which elements are emphasized, different kinds of meaning will be present. Some questions I offer students to explore are: by emphasizing these elements, what meaning is being presented; if we shifted emphasis to another ratio, what meaning would come about; by emphasis, which ratio is being privileged here?

Once students have their notes, I send them home to complete an assignment using the pentad and other critical vocabulary from the lecture. I post a news article online and ask that students identify the elements of the pentad and write-up a 300-word discussion of ratios and meaning created through those ratios within the text. As the instructor, it is helpful to read scholarly pentadic analyses such as "Hunting and Heritage on Trial: A Dramatistic Debate Over Tragedy, Tradition and Territory" by Toon, Endress, and Diamond,[35] or "Scene, Act, and the Tragic Frame in the Duke Rape Case" by Turnage.[36] You can assign news articles that cover either of those events, or one that I have used recently is about a case involving a high school cheerleader from Silsbee, Texas. Students bring their write-ups to class and we discuss in small groups and then whole class. After our whole class discussion, I show them a comedic representation of the issue in the news article or one that is closely related. We talk about how the comedy addressed a similar issue in a different way. We go back to our lecture notes to see how each text follows the

framework. At this point, students are beginning to understand that texts are created, or encoded, from a certain perspective, and interpreted, or decoded, from a certain perspective. When we begin to talk about encoding and decoding media messages, we are referencing the model of communication described by Stuart Hall that replaces the traditional linear model of communication.[37] Media do not merely move from source to receiver; rather, the text is negotiated in a shared cultural space because it is both encoded and decoded within the context of each person's lived experience.

After we have discussed our first pentad analysis, we play "Burke Bingo," an idea I got from the article "Burke Bingo: Using Active Learning to Introduce Dramatism."[38] For Burke Bingo, you make different versions of cards—I only made two versions—that are four by four squares. Each square has a definition from the lecture in it. As the instructor, you call out the terms and students match the terms with the correct definitions. It seems like a simplistic activity for honors students, but mine claim that it is extremely challenging. I only allow them to use their notes from my lecture, so this is a good test to see how well they have taken notes. I include the following vocabulary in my cards: order, pollution, guilt, mortification, redemption, scapegoating, dramatism, pentad, act, agent, agency, scene, purpose, terministic screen, representative anecdote, and ratio. Students keep their cards as a notes page for critical vocabulary.

The culminating activity for this unit is a Socratic seminar. In preparation for the seminar, students will work in groups of four to identify elements of the pentad and the representative anecdotes in *The Crucible*, Act III, *The Scarlet Letter*, and "Young Goodman Brown." According to Brummett and Burke, "To identify an anecdote, one should ask, 'If this discourse were based upon a story, an anecdote, what would the form, outline, or bare bones of that story be?'"[39] I believe identifying the representative anecdote of each text will help students see patterns and give them another way to approach a detailed analysis of the texts in addition to using their other resources. Students will determine ratios and discuss the meaning created through those ratios within each text. Students will also utilize critical vocabulary from the Burke lecture to discuss the pentadic elements, ratios and meaning within each text. Once students have had a class period to prepare for the seminar with their groups, we will conduct a Socratic seminar where students will use what they have discovered in small groups to initiate and further discussion. Students will take notes and add to their annotations as we discuss the texts in seminar. Following the completion of the seminar, students will choose one text from the seminar for which they will write an analysis. The analysis should be informed by the seminar, their work in small groups, and the Burke lecture. They will be required to discuss at least one ratio and what meaning is figured through that ratio as well as utilize the critical vocabulary throughout their discussion.

Bringing It Full Circle

I do not want my focus on theory, perspective, and thinking to end here—this is merely a springboard for other activities throughout the year. My goal is to provide students with authentic ways of examining text, any text. By getting students to acknowledge that every text is perspectival and situated in a particular context, they are taking the first steps to developing media literacy. As I continue to introduce theoretical frameworks and help replace their intuitions with critical vocabulary and close reading techniques, I am equipping my students with the skills they need to be active and informed consumers of the information they receive through every medium.

Teacher Resources

Appleman, Deborah. "What We Teach and Why: Contemporary Literary Theory and
      Adolescents." *Minnesota English Journal* 43, no. 1 (2007): 1-13.

Appleman, a former high school English teacher, discusses the significance of teaching literary theory in the secondary classroom. She outlines her rationale, citing many well-known educators in the profession, while also including examples of activities she used her classroom. The article includes student samples.

Brooks, Jacqueline Grennon, and Martin G. Brooks. *In search of understanding: the case
      for constructivist classrooms*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and
      Curriculum Development, 1999.

This book argues the need for constructivist classrooms, discussing the guiding principles of constructivism and how a teacher might go about establishing a constructivist classroom. Constructivism focuses on cultivating a student-centered classroom that prioritizes student's needs, student-inquiry, collaboration, authentic assessment, and relevancy.

Brummett, Barry. "Burke's Representative Anecdote as a Method in Media Criticism."
      Critical Studies in Mass Communication June (1984): 161-176.

Brummett's article discusses the effectiveness of using Kenneth Burke's concept of "literature as equipment for living" for examining and critiquing media. The method behind the study is that of Burke's representative anecdote. In the article, this method is explained and applied to two texts—one fiction, one nonfiction. This article is helpful for understanding what a representative anecdote is, the purpose behind using this method to study a text, and how it may be applied. I found it particularly helpful in understanding the concept of "literature as equipment for living," and for its explanation of the representative anecdote as it applies to a text.

---. *Techniques of close reading*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010.

In his book, Brummett clearly explains what a close reading is and why it is a beneficial skill to master. He explains various theories, techniques and methods that help guide and

inform a close reading. The book is helpful for teacher or student who is interested in reading a text below the surface in a concrete, disciplined manner. Brummett also discusses Kenneth Burke's theories and concepts, including the pentad, in a few examples; teachers who are interested in reading more about the pentad mentioned in this unit would find those examples useful.

Hall, Stuart. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Culture, media, and language: working papers in cultural studies, 1972-79*. London: Hutchinson, 1980. 128-138.

This chapter describes a process of communication that is more widely accepted than the older, more linear model. Hall details the process as a series of moments and articulations, where meaning making stems from more than just the creator of the media message. This text is helpful for conceptualizing how media messages are both encoded and decoded—an important foundation for media literacy.

Hobbs, Rene. *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*. Washington D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2010.

The Aspen Institute partnered with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to answer a call for ways to improve meeting the needs of citizens living in the 21st century, and this report is one of the papers that offers recommendations for the why and how behind digital and media literacy. This report is well researched and stresses the idea that developing a digital and media literacy is the responsibility of everyone, not just educators. Among other topics, the report offers ideas for evaluating the credibility of information, and these ideas translate easily into any curriculum.

Kincheloe, Joe L.. *Critical pedagogy primer*. New York: P. Lang, 2004.

Kincheloe discusses the basis for critical pedagogy, what it looks like in the classroom, and how it supports a certain view of cognitive processes. This book echoes many issues brought up the Brooks book on constructivism listed above, but its primary focus is on how teachers and students need to seek social and educational justice by examining and questioning the power structures that have shaped our curriculum and society as well as marginalized certain groups.

Krueger, Ben. "Burke Bingo: Using Active Learning to Introduce Dramatism." *Communication Teacher* 25, no. 2 (2011): 81-85. http://ehis.ebscohost.com.librarylink.uncc (accessed November 1, 2012).

Krueger's article describes a few active learning activities he uses to help his undergraduate students learn the vocabulary of Burke's dramatistic process. It does not go into much detail as to what the terms mean; however, he talks about he introduces the theory and method and gives an example of three activities, his bingo cards, and sources instructors and students can access to read about Burke's concepts.

Overington, Michael A.. "Kenneth Burke and the Method of Dramatism." *Theory and Society* 4, no. 1 (1977): 131-156. http://www.jstor.org (accessed October 26, 2012).

In this article, Overington explores Burke's works and translates his theories as they relate to sociologists. I found this article to be particularly helpful for its explanation of Burke's theories, methods and rationale, particularly dramatism and the pentad. For me, it served as a "Burkean primer" of sorts.

Tonn, Mari Boor, Valerie A. Endress, and John N. Diamond. "Hunting and Heritage on Trial: A Dramatistic Debate Over Tragedy, Tradition, and Territory." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79, no. 2 (1993): 165-181. http://ehis.ebscohost.com.librarylink.uncc.edu (accessed September 28, 2012).

This is a great example of a pentadic analysis. This is more detailed than I would give my high school students, but it was helpful for in that is showed me a scholarly example of what this type of analysis might look like. It deals with an interesting event that occurred in Maine in the 1980's. I gave my students an article about this event for one of their earlier attempts of practicing the pentad, and they found it to be very engaging.

Troise, Melissa. "Approaches to Reading with Multiple Lenses of Interpretation." *English Journal* 96, no. 5 (2007): 85-90.

Melissa Troise, a high school English teacher, warns teachers about the risks of only asking students to examine literature from one perspective, that of New Criticism, year after year in the English classroom. Her article discusses the value of introducing literary criticism, offering students different "lenses" for analyzing a text. This article is very practical in that it offers detailed examples of how she uses literary theory in her classroom, giving the reader specific ideas for a variety of texts and student writing samples.

Turnage, Anna Kimberly. "Scene, Act, and the Tragic Frame in the Duke Rape Case." *Southern Communication Journal* 74, no. 2 (2009): 141-156. http://ehis.ebscohost.com.librarylink.uncc.edu (accessed September 28, 2012).

This is another example of a scholarly pentadic analysis. This article would be helpful to an instructor who is seeking more examples of what this type of analysis may look like. I did not share this example with my students.

Student Resources

Most of the student texts are described throughout the unit, and the list of major and minor works at the end of the unit are generally recognized to be part of the canon by those who study American literature. Here I have elaborated on just a few of the other texts mentioned in the narrative.

Atwood, Margaret. "Half-Hanged Mary." In *Morning in the burned house*. Boston:
        Houghton Mifflin, 1995. 58-69.

This poem is about a woman who survives a hanging during the 1690's. It aligns nicely
with the teaching of The Crucible or any other puritan literature. It explores similar
themes that found in The Scarlet Letter, The Crucible, and many of the other canonical
texts studied in conjunction with early American literature. This is the text I use to review
and model annotations.

Classroom Materials

Daybooks—composition notebooks for responding to questions in class, organizing
ideas, and any general writing or note taking I would like students to complete.

Schoology—the free online program used for the online discussion. This can also be used
to post announcements to class, post assignments, post important class documents,
administer online quizzes or tests, or give feedback on electronic copies of papers. You
can set up your account by accessing www.schoology.com.

Burke Bingo Cards—I made two versions of the cards to use during Burke Bingo[40].
Burke Bingo reviews the critical vocabulary presented during the Burke lecture of this
unit. The card consists of a 4X4 square, where, using Microsoft Office, I draw a line
above the definition of the term. Students are asked to write in the vocabulary word on
the line as I call out definitions. This in turn becomes their formal vocabulary notes to
supplement my lecture.

Notes

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[31] Ibid.

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