

Universal Design for Instruction Project Proposal

Ken Klucznik, Ph. D.

Semester long development and use of student responses to literature.

One of the most constant challenges to teaching literature through interactive discussion is ensuring that the content of the conversation meets the needs of all students in the class. Often, those students who speak or write well determine the directions a class discussion takes. My goal for this project was to develop a strategy that gave all students the opportunity to offer their views, so that I as a teacher might better focus on the whole class, rather than being driven by the responses of those whose strengths match up well with one or two types of response. I used the following method for developing students' responses, and for more broadly ensuring that a larger number of students would participate in the initial stages of determining the direction classroom activities would follow.

Weeks 1 and 2:

Students respond to early, short assignments in three stages. The first response asks them to read a short text and then write a response describing their thoughts. The second response takes place after a class discussion in which I field and record on the board what students say in an open discussion. The third response takes place after a further discussion in which I actively participate, mainly through questions that address ideas they have raised in the first two stages.

The purpose of this activity is to give students a sense of the kinds of responses I will ask of them, and of the role of those responses in the future direction of our discussions.

For the remaining weeks of the semester, all students are required to write a first response to the texts we read. They may either e-mail these responses (due 1 hour before class begins) or bring them to class on the day a text is due. This requirement holds for the rest of the texts for the semester.

Weeks 3 and 4:

I organize a number of group activities that allow me to move from group to group to hear what students are saying. These activities give me an opportunity to hear from students who are not strong at communicating in the larger class setting or with informal writing.

Weeks 5 through the end of the semester:

For each text, I combine the four activities. First, I receive e-mails before class and I use them to develop the group activities for that day in class. When I arrive in class for the first day of a discussion of a text, I collect the remaining written responses from those students who have not e-mailed them to me. I hand out and initiate the group activities that I have prepared, and for the first part of those activities I read through the responses I have received in class. Then, I open the discussion to the whole class. I expect to devote 30-45 minutes on these activities, at the end of which I have a broad sense of the directions I can follow in class to take advantage of the understandings students have reached. I find that I can direct my questions in such a way so that each student has an opportunity to take part in the ideas we generate in class. Since I almost always hold two class meetings on any given text, I can plan my next class according to the discussion generated in the first meeting.

Along the way I've found several advantages to this method. I no longer have to wait for the first formal assignment to get a fuller sense of each student's work. Students develop their abilities to respond to texts, and to respond to each other, so that their work on the formal assignments is stronger. The greatest disadvantage is built into the nature of the course. Students do not always complete the reading assignment on time, so their responses are limited. It seems to me it would be ideal to have all students submit written work the class meeting *before* we begin the discussion of a given text. That option proved entirely impractical: I had little success getting students to read ahead.

UDI Principles:

I think this proposal meets principles 1-3, 5, 8 and 9. It allows students with different strengths to be able to present the information that I need to successfully direct classroom activities. It emphasizes the validity of students' ideas, and thus, does not exclude any student's response as in error. Finally, I would say the proposal focuses on developing a community of learners by encouraging all students to take responsibility for their learning, and because it actively solicits student response, it leads to an instructional climate in which students expect that responsibility.

Attachments:

I have attached examples of classroom activities, the first for the first day of class, and the remaining ones for the kinds of group work I have the students do for particular texts.

English 120 Introduction to Literature
Group work on passages from *Silas Marner*

Each group should choose one passage and work toward answering the following questions:

1. How do the characters behave?
2. Why do the characters behave as they do?
3. What do we learn about the characters?
4. What can we learn about how people interact?
5. What other ideas does the passage suggest to you?
6. What role does the narrator play?

1: Pages 20 – 27

2: 27 – 30

3: Chapter IV

4: Pages 47-52

5: Chapter IX

6: Chapter XVIII

7. Chapter XX

English 120 Introduction to Literature
Group work for Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*
Gregor as Christ figure

Peruse the pages you have been assigned and locate any possible material related to the motif of Gregor as a Christ figure. Explain as fully as possible how the material you have chosen relates to that motif, and how it might contribute to our understanding of the text.

Group 1: From the beginning until the paragraph on page 19 beginning "But Gregor. . ."

Group 2: From the paragraph on page 19 beginning "But Gregor. . ." until the paragraph on page 27 beginning "In this manner. . ."

Group 3: From the paragraph on page 27 beginning "In this manner. . ." until the paragraph on page 35 beginning "Although Gregor. . ."

Group 4: From the paragraph on page 35 beginning "Although Gregor. . ." until the paragraph on page 44 beginning "On that very evening. . ."

Group 5: From the paragraph on page 44 beginning "On that very evening. . ." until the end.

English 120 Introduction to Literature

In class writing and group work for Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*

First, answer the following questions. After you have done so, discuss your answers with the members of your group.

1. Who is telling the story?

2. Through whose point(s) of view is the story told?

3. How can that be?

4. Offer an idea of the questions, issues and complications created by the narrative point of view in this novel.

English 120 Introduction to Literature
Group work for Willa Cather's *My Antonia*

In your group, choose the theme of death or of marriage. After you have chosen, find and record as many details from the novel as you can find that relate to your theme. After you have come up with a list, start working your way through each item in depth (you needn't take them in the order they appear in the novel). Make as many suggestions as you can about the specific instances where death or marriage is the subject.