

Lesson 7: Performing Narratives

What's on for today and why:

For the next few days we're going to be doing some performing. This will help the students get into the minds of the characters as well as take control of the narratives. They will get to decide how the scenes will be performed and how the characters will be acting so all of the power will be within them. This also forces the students into doing close readings of the novel without feeling the onus of being told to do a close reading.

What to do:

1) First have a chat with the class about what is required in the performance (this normally wouldn't be their first performance of the year, but it never hurts to refresh memories). They have to have someone acting out the part of each character and/or someone reading the narration, depending on the scene and their own personal feelings about it all. Do they need any props? It is up to them exactly how the performance will go, but remind them that narratives are somewhat different than plays or actual scenes in novels and that they don't want to lose the narrative aspects of the scenes.

2) Now divide the class into groups, preferably groups of four or five, depending on class size. Each group will be asked to perform all or some part of the same section that begins on page 79 with the paragraph "Serena and I visited Aisha..." and ends of page 82 with "I'm thinking about me." They will have whatever is left of day 7, all of day 8 and they will be performing it on days 9 and 10. Each group should get about ten minutes to perform it.

3) For homework on 7 ask the students to write a paragraph supporting the choices the group made for their performances. The paragraph will be collected when they give their performances so remind them to bring them in to class.

4) For the last few minutes of day 10 just have a quick closing discussion about the decisions each group made when deciding how to perform the scene. Having five or six different perspectives should provide a great deal to talk about and it is important that each group who worked

hard feels validated for their work. Make it clear that you expected them to all have very different performances and that all of them are valid just so long they complete the assignment.

5) Homework for day 10: distribute the story “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Ask the students to read the story for homework and then go to the class web page and go to the supplemental materials under the *A Woman’s Place* unit:

www.geocities.com/msbrenner2004/supplemental

There, they will find a recording for “The Yellow Wallpaper” and they can listen to the story and take notes on how they expect the characters and setting to look.

How did it go?

-This project is all about empowering the students and giving them input on what they are reading. They get to interpret the text in any way that they would like and they get to portray the characters in any way they want to as well. They should get very involved with designing the scene and the students who really like to get up in front of the class will get to do so without excluding the students who do not. Also, any project that emphasizes the idea that there is no right answer will make the students feel more comfortable with the novel and less intimidated by doing the “wrong thing.” They will get to observe their peers doing the same scene and may just learn a few things about themselves and their classmates as well as the novel.

-Day 7’s homework will give the students a little more power over their grades as well as help out the students who hate group work and disagreed with everything the group decided to do.

-Day 10’s homework gives the students a chance to use technology to experience a performance of another play, but it also sets them up for the next lesson about unreliable narrators.