

Context for Exhibit Materials with Lesson Plan Ideas for Teachers

In this exhibit, you will see pictures of students sharing thoughts about shared texts while beginning to review one another's writing from our opening work in narrative nonfiction memoir writing with a focus on creating our own climate stories. I used *Tales of Two Planets* edited by John Freeman as a source for model texts for the students to emulate. For our opening and generative writing exercises, we considered Freeman's "Introduction"; Andri Snær Magnason's "N64 35.378, W16 44.691"; Anuradha Roy's "Drowning in Reverse"; Margaret Atwood's poem "Tracking The Rain"; and, Mariana Enriquez's "Riachuelo," which is translated by Megan McDowell. Of note, we read Atwood's poem in tandem to the prose selections to stand in relief: What does poetry do that prose does not? How could Atwood's poem become a narrative nonfiction piece? Furthermore, we will be using various poems in another iteration of climate story writing, and we will be able to reference back to Atwood's poem with a new attention to form.

How the Model Texts Were Used

Using familiar workshop strategies that I employ within my writing community, students were able to note patterns, authorial choices, and moves that authors they admire make. Here are some common prompts for reflection that students used:

- 1) Note a section that struck you and why;
- 2) Note a moment you were taken aback or jarred by the reading. Why might an author do that to his/her/their reader?
- 3) Consider elements of structure: Was the piece written using flashbacks? Were their vignettes chunked off by page breaks? Was dialogue used? What structural choices are you considering making in your piece?
- 4) Note when you can see the written word come alive. What senses were engaged? Pull direct quotes that engage the reader's senses. Now, revisit your writing and edit one to two points to actively engage your readers' senses.
- 5) Draw a meaningful passage. Now return to your work. Can someone draw a passage from what you have written? If not, what do you need to edit?
- 6) What is at stake in each piece of writing? How does the author invest the reader in the narrative? Why and how are we made to care? What is at stake in your written piece? Will your readers care?

Also of importance in creating quality narrative nonfiction is quantity of content: students need time to enter the topic from different angles. After students read each piece, they were tasked with writing a response. Students wrote:

- 1) A "From Philly to Iceland" response to Magnason's piece.
- 2) Students responded to Roy's narration with the task of finding out where their drinking water comes from and tracing that water route from the river to their taps.
- 3) Students used Atwood's poem to create their own poems about rain and water, matching her line for line, stanza for stanza.

- 4) Finally, students used Enriquez's piece to write about a meaningful memory tied to the Delaware and/or Schuylkill Rivers (or a river they grew up near).
- 5) Next, we are going to read Lauren Groff's "Dusk" and students will track how she engages the five senses to create images that resonate with the reader. Students will then write a climate and/or nature piece they recall using sensory language to engage their readers.

Once this portfolio of writing is created, students begin to pull from the bank they have created. It helps students really grasp that writing is a process. They begin to see that the final iteration of a written piece is often an amalgamation of previous drafts that are cobbled together to make a cohesive and engaging whole. This work also teaches students that they do not have to treat their writing as precious, which is something it took me a while to learn! When we realize our drafts are sometimes brain dumps, or that our drafts are not that great because the prompt or idea was not as inspiring to us as other ideas and prompts might be, we learn to generate written drafts that inform, inspire, and shape our final work.

Common Teaching Strategies and Student Activities Employed

- 1) Journal writing
- 2) Partner share and discussion
- 3) Small group discussion
- 4) Whole class discussion
- 5) Four corner debate (Strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree)
- 6) Timed writing
- 7) Wrap-around share outs
- 8) Mini-lectures and lessons
- 9) Analysis of model texts related to students' writing purposes