

Charged Emotion, Conflict, and Pain: An Impulse to Create

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INTRODUCTION

What incites creativity? What are its origins? Is the creative mind born from the need to answer questions that help human beings make sense of their world? Is it an innate force within the mind that struggles to find an outlet for intense emotion, conflict, and pain through the creative expression, specifically, art literature, philosophy and music? Researchers in the area of behavioral science have posed various theories. In their book, *Teaching Creativity through Metaphor*, for example, Donald and Judith Sanders explain creativity as “both the conscious thinking of the left brain and the spontaneous patterning and imaging of the right brain...the product of their merger, ...” (25). Images formed in the right brain produce the substance for the left brain to construct into viable products. In addition, Abraham Maslow renders his definition of creativity in the following way: “Primary creativity comes out of the unconscious...of *ideas which depart from what exists at this point*” (quoted in Sanders, 26). That unconscious forces are at play during the creative process has been noted by many others. For example, in her essay “The Process of Making Poetry,” Amy Lowell states that external stimuli can trigger the creation of a poem by bringing to surface contents from the unconscious:

Sometimes the external stimulus which has produced a poem is known or can be traced. It may be a sight, a sound, a thought, or an emotion. Sometimes the consciousness has not record of the initial impulse, which has either been forgotten or sprang from a deep, unrealized memory. (111)

Sometimes ideas will apparently surge from nowhere. Lowell describes, for instance, this phenomenon: “An idea will come into my head for no apparent reason; ‘The Bronze Horses,’ for instance. I registered the horses as a good subject for a poem; and having so registered them, I consciously thought no more about the matter...Six months later, ...the poem--to use my private vocabulary—was ‘there’” (111). That the creative process is influenced greatly by works of the unconscious may be true, but powerful human passion is also an important factor in many creative works.

That ecstasy, pain, frustration, or pent-up emotional energy plays an important role in the lives of many creative masters is evident. Throughout history geniuses such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Mozart, Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, to mention only a few, have captured the heart and soul of aesthetic expression and have been able to produce pieces of art and writing that transcend time, place, and cultures. What was common among these creative minds? Perhaps they all felt the urgency, the impulse, or the compulsion to unleash unfulfilled wishes, dreams, and pent up psychic energy. Perhaps creating art was a means of dealing with their pain and frustration. Or perhaps they just found a way of expressing old ideas in new ways.

One commonality is that in their creations, they provided aesthetic beauty in art for the pleasure of the human soul. Whatever the case, our students, too, can create art and writing by exploring their hearts and minds for that experience that touches humankind at the core of the soul. They, too, can acquire a sense of pride and ownership through the creative process. They can truly believe that they are capable of producing a piece that is not only a part of them, but one that they can share with pleasure with their peers. Tudor Powell Jones expresses this clearly:

Creativity is a combination of flexibility, originality, and sensitivity to ideas which enables the thinker to break away from usual sequences of thought into different and productive sequences, the result of which gives satisfaction to himself and possibly to others (7).

One may ask: How does one achieve this combination of flexibility, originality, and sensitivity? How can we, as teachers, inspire these attributes in our students? This is a difficult enterprise. It helps, however, to understand that every student is able to experience the creative process to a greater or lesser degree, and that the resulting product is rewarding to the student herself as it can be to others. Jones states: “Creativeness is not a single factor, but rather a collection of different abilities, every single one of which can be possessed in different degrees by every individual” (7). If we are to be successful in encouraging creativity, we must believe that each and every student in our classroom has the ability to create.

METHODS TO STIMULATE CREATIVITY

Creativity and Metaphor

One way our students can be motivated to create short prose or poetry is through metaphoric teaching. Sanders and Sanders state that “Metaphoric teaching is exciting, stimulating, insight generating, and a powerful tool for learning” (49). They provide an example of a metaphor of life choices in a refrain from the song “El Condor Pasa” (“If I Could”):

*I'd rather be a sparrow than a snail,
I'd rather be a hammer than a nail,
--I'd rather sail away
Like a swan, that's here and gone... (52)*

The students can be prompted to use this refrain in relationship with their own lives. Sanders and Sanders state that it “causes us to examine our own motives for how we live our lives. Some of us want to fly like the sparrow, or to be the prime power like the hammer, or to wander the world like the swan. Others recognize the beauty in the snail’s secure home or in the nail’s strength and crucial function—for them, the song suggests

only the yearning of someone who sees the world differently, who is restless, who is not at peace with the world as it is” (53). This refrain can be an excellent lesson opener for reflective writing. It can set the tone for even more metaphoric learning. When students understand the metaphor behind the words, the beauty of language and how it relates to their lives, then they can begin to form connections and images. With their own experience in mind, they can begin to create their own poetry or prose.

Furthermore, Sanders and Sanders pose that with metaphoric teaching, students can be led through a guided journey of imagery, an imaginative experience that will enhance their creativity. It is important to note that each student will bring his or her personal background to the “guided journey” which involves a voyage through their imagination. Their eyes closed and seated quietly, students imagine themselves in a journey described by the teacher. The students are guided by the teacher who reads out loud the “journey” (63-69). With the teacher. This “journey” can be tailored by the teacher to suit a particular lesson, theme, or concept. One lesson that can help with the creative process is the metaphoric lesson called “The Butterfly Guided Fantasy.” This lesson is thoroughly described in Sanders and Sanders’ *Teaching Creativity Through Metaphor*. With metaphoric lessons, students may become acutely aware of past personal experiences as a part of their creative process.

Creativity and Inner Conflict

Other theories on creativity pose that the creative process is a result of a healthy solution to an inner conflict. In his book *Creative Learning in Perspective*, for example, Jones describes Freud’s, Deutsch’s, and Barron’s theories on creativity:

Freud and his followers stressed the important part of which mental conflict plays in the birth of creativeness, and claimed that it was the creative person who solved his conflicts rewardingly. Deutsch (1960), a neo-Freudian, believed that creativity was an unconscious defence [sic] against mental illness. He held that fantasies which occur in the preliminary stage of mental illness were similar to the fantasies of the creative person, but that the neurotic merely imagines that desired changes have occurred, whereas the creative worker brings about those desired changes. Barron (1958) claimed that healthy persons with well-adjusted personalities need a temporary upset as a pre-requisite for creative experience. (5)

Most, if not all of our students have at some time or another experienced conflict, fantasies, or temporary upset of their normal adjustment to life, and these life experiences can be the source and substance of their poems or stories. Furthermore, if conflict, fantasy, or a deviation from the routine of life is not the case for all students, then perhaps for some an indelible impression or highly pleasurable emotion may be. In this respect, there are yet other theories: “J. S. Bruner (1962) talked of the importance of ‘effective surprise’ and a ‘shock of recognition’ as an effect art often had on the observer, and Liam Hudson

(1966) affirms this general view that creativity, ‘if not born of unhappiness is born certainly of unease’” (Jones, 6). With this in mind, although highly intense emotions may be in place during adolescence, one may maintain that adolescence is a time of conflict, assertion of identity, and often pain. This is where viewing art by Frida Khalo and Van Gogh or drawings by adolescents found in the book *Clinical Art Therapy* by Helen B. Landgarten can be helpful. These visual stimuli can arouse “unease” and/or perhaps “shock of recognition” in some students. And any of these “upsetting circumstances” can provide a groundwork for the creative process in the classroom. Viewing the art can also prompt curiosity about the biographies of the artists mentioned as well as the study of the creative process in other great writers and thinkers.

Research: Creativity and the Unconscious: Freud’s Psychoanalytical Theory

Before guiding students through research, it is important to help them understand first the connection between creative writing and the unconscious; therefore, explaining Freud’s theory can be helpful. Freud’s response with respect to the connection between fantasy dreams and literature is explained by Charles Brenner, M.D.:

The relationship between fantasy and literary production is obvious. It was well known and often remarked on long before the beginnings of psychoanalysis. When psychoanalysis did emerge, one of its early objects of scrutiny was fantasy life, since it appeared that neurotic symptoms are related to fantasy. The attention of psychoanalysis was therefore drawn both to nocturnal fantasies, i.e., to dreams, and to daytime ones, i.e., daydreams. It is the latter which are of particular interest to us at the moment, for it is they which are so obviously related to literary productions. (229)

Freud believed that the same unconscious, unfulfilled wishes and conflicts which influence “the production of dreams and daydreams, are equally responsible for literary production” (Brenner, 230). This idea provides a point of departure from which students can analyze writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, Robert Frost, and Stephen King, among others, who somehow reveal in their works much of their personal conflicts. Furthermore, Brenner explains Freud’s theory of the connection between the unconscious and the creative process in writing.

For one thing, we can be sure that writers are no different from other people with respect to the relationship between their daydreams and their unconscious wishes. Their daydreams, too, must be motivated at least in part by childhood instinctual wishes which are still active in their minds, though they themselves are unaware of them. Because their daydreams are the raw material, so to speak, of what they write, it should be possible, at least in many cases, to infer something of the content of a particular author’s childhood wishes, and of his conflicts about them, by reviewing his writings. If one can see not only his published works, but his

sketches, notebooks, and preliminary drafts, all the better, for they are even closer to the raw material, to his daydreams themselves. (234)

Perhaps the translation of these unconscious, unfulfilled wishes and conflicts into works of art and literature appeal to audiences precisely because they do satisfy vicariously, human unconscious, unfulfilled wishes. Although among other attributes, an attractive writing style, a well-constructed plot, believable characters, or descriptive writing charged with imagery all play an important part in the survival of a literary work (Brenner, 236), it also needs to strike a chord within our unconscious. The piece of literature should “be accompanied by a plot that unconsciously gratifies the violent and passionate wishes of childhood if enduring greatness is to be attained” (Brenner, 236). Students need to thoroughly understand this concept and discuss it in class with different works, preferably poetry. Finding a clear connection between the work of literature or art and the creator’s unconscious childhood wishes or psychic conflict is an ambitious task, but it can be nevertheless fascinating and at the same time challenging for the students to research and analyze the author and his/her works and to seek this connection. The students can then delve into their own minds and experience and perhaps discover truths they never deemed possible only to find that they, too, are capable of setting their imaginations free.

The Creative Process Through Modeling

Modeling can effectively inspire the creative process. Before modeling, however, students should first become familiar with the works of poetry or prose we want them to comprehend. Jones states: “The need for partial familiarity is essential in the creative process” (11). Becoming familiar with the authors’ writing style and subject matter or themes helps the students comprehend literary and poetical devices and the author’s purpose for using these devices. It can also help strengthen student writing; moreover, students can connect the literary pieces with their own life experiences. And if these works have endured the test of time, then they should be able to strike some chord within the students’ psyches. Students can begin by writing their own pieces by imitating the writing which they find most appealing. Jones states that “The early stages of the [creative] process involve both direct and indirect imitation. But imitation is not incompatible with originality. We begin by imitation, then diverge into creative originality” (11). Many great works have been inspired by other great works of literature. Imitation can be the groundwork for our students’ own creative process.

As imitators of great works, however, students may find it difficult to begin the writing process immediately. As a pre-writing activity they can be exposed to slides, transparencies, or videotapes of works by artists such as Frida Kahlo, Picasso, or Van Gogh, whose biographical data has been provided. Then as an exercise of imitation, the students can attempt to produce their own “works of art” where they express their own images, ideas, emotions or personal experience. They can then produce a narrative, short fantasy fiction, or poem to express these feelings in writing. Through the years, I have

discovered that many of my reluctant readers and writers are wonderful artists. This can be a skill we can capitalize on to encourage these students to write.

Art therapy, used by clinical psychologists and therapists, is also a good idea for inspiring the creative process. Students can view samples of art therapy where adolescents have drawn or painted pictures of their conflicts and feelings. Samples of this type of art usually contain captions of narrative writing by anonymous patients and can be made into transparencies for students to view in the classroom. Students can draw their own pictures or create their own collages to express their feelings, and then write a personal narrative about their drawing or collage.

Note: Because some students may be too shy to reveal anything personal, or of a nature that is upsetting to them, they may draw or make collages about any highly pleasurable moments or experiences in their lives. In addition, the exercises in metaphorical teaching explained by Sanders & Sanders can be of help in encouraging reluctant students. These students may be encouraged to draw and write about their “guided journey” of mental images, and to reflect on the reasons for these images.

Goals and Rationale

These activities are meant to aid students in acquiring a more personal insight and understanding their world that can ultimately enrich their lives. By encouraging students to express their feelings, “. . . their natural urge to create will have been satisfied and the quality of their work and indeed of their lives will be improved” (Jones,18). Moreover, Jones states that there are three stages to the creative process: incubation, illumination, and reinforcement (18-19). In the first of these stages, incubation, Jones states that “a person begins to think creatively in very much the same way he learns to read or write—by *doing* it...At this early stage the creative work is to read, to discover, and to explore (18). And as students read and discover the authors’ lives and conflicts, they can begin to explore their own lives and conflicts. The second stage, is “. . .the illumination stage . . . following a period of what can best be described as ‘muddled suspense,’ there will be sudden and unexpected flashes of insight . . . [but the] flashes of insight will not bear fruit as creative work without persistence. . . the ability to create grows with practice and depends upon both the motivation and the intensity of the encounter with subconscious” (Jones,19). For the students to begin to produce their own creative works, they must be aware of their own conflicts and persevere in expressing these on paper in some artistic way. Moreover, Jones states: “Spontaneous and involuntary productions should foster a heightened degree of awareness which will enable the persevering individual to produce creative work” (19). As teachers, it is essential to encourage the student’ persistence which can end with success and a special regard for their own creative work.

CONCLUSION

It is of extreme importance for teachers to understand the creative process in their students if they are to engage them in the creative process. Students should first become familiar with the idea of creativity born from intense emotion, conflict, or simply from some external stimulus that causes memories from the unconscious to resurface. They should comprehend how these factors generate material for a poem or story. Through guided activities for students described in Sanders & Sanders' book *Teaching Creativity through Metaphor*, through activities in art therapy and writing described in *Clinical Art Therapy*, through modeling various masters' works for their own writing, and by exposing them to biographical data and visual stimuli so that they can conceptualize the connection between authors' lives and works, students can begin their own creative process. In addition, by drawing images relevant to them personally, they can then translate their own work of art into a poem, a song, a short skit, or short fantasy fiction. Furthermore, by following the three stages of incubation, illumination, and reinforcement, the students can ultimately be successful in the creative process.

RELEVANT AUTHORS

Researching Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe is wonderful example of creativity born of intense emotion, conflict, and pain. Orphaned of both parents at the early age of two, Poe was adopted by a rich plantation owner, John Allan, and his wife. His childhood lacked love, included a privileged education away from his foster parents, and propelled in Poe a vivid and extraordinary imagination. Lorine Pruette writes:

The life of Edgar Allan Poe might be considered an unhappy record of that "disaster" which "followed fast and followed faster" this man of brilliant capacities till it drove him into opposition with most of the world, deprived him of the love he so inordinately craved, ...seduced him to seek a vague nepenthe in the use of drugs and stimulants, and, its relentless purpose achieved, cast him aside, a helpless wreck, to die from the darkened tragedy of a Baltimore saloon (391).

Poe's life was a tragic one. Poe's father died of tuberculosis, and his mother died in destitution soon after. Poe's brother died at twenty-six in a brawl at sea. Poe's only sister, mentally challenged from birth died at the age of sixty four. Poe's uncle, Samuel Poe, is said to have been eccentric. After the death of Poe's mother, the Broad Street theater where Elizabeth Arnold had once acted burned down, killing many people caught in the fire These early impressions upon the mind of the young Poe may have affected his later writing through themes that surface again and again in his works: death, love and beauty (Pruette, 392-393). Poe's early female affections were also snatched from him at a

young age. All the women he ever loved as a child and in his young adulthood had died. His own mother died when he was merely two, and while in Richmond, at the age of fourteen, he became enamored of Mrs. Helen Stannard, the mother of one of his classmates (Pruette, 402). Pruette writes: "...[she] became the confidante of all his boyish sorrows and the redeeming influence of his turbulent and passionate youth. On her death he felt himself intensely bereaved and could not endure the thought of her lying lonely in her tomb in the neighboring cemetery" (402). So Poe would console himself by visiting Mrs. Stannard's tomb every night to seek comfort. Pruette states:

His feeling regarding his friend's [Mrs. Stannard] loneliness was but one example of the idea by which he was haunted through life: that the dead are not wholly dead to consciousness. This theme is repeated many times in his writings; for instance, in the revival of his dead wife in the tale "Ligeia," . . . Lady Madeleine in "The Fall of the House of Usher,"...The melodious poem "To Helen," was inspired by the memory of this lady, whom he called "the one idolatrous and purely ideal love" of his boyhood (402).

Poe's failed love experiences impelled him to write about the death of beautiful women. The early death of his beautiful child-wife, Virginia, had an enduring impact on his life. Always searching for love in the ideal woman, Poe later fell in love with several women: S. Elmira Royster, Elizabeth Herring, and Mary Devereaux, all of whom left him by age twenty-three (Pruette 403). Continuously rejected by the women he fell in love with or losing them to death had a powerful impact on Poe's writing. Pruette states: "The happenings of his early life undoubtedly must have conditioned his emotional reactions, but the close connection between love and death seems to have been the particular obsession on which his neurotic temperament fastened itself" (403). In his poems, Poe seems to seek refuge in a dream world. Many of his poems relate to dreams. In "Tamerlane" he writes:

. . . the ideal,
Dim, vanities of dreams by night
And dimmer nothings which were real

It seems that Poe's comfort and joy existed only in his dream world, a dream world he needed to produce to find an outlet to his emotional pain. Although most of his life Poe lived in destitution, he chose to write about melancholic beauty. Baudelaire quotes Poe: "And I shall not place the hero of my poem in poor surroundings because poverty is commonplace and contrary to the idea of Beauty. His melancholy will be sheltered by a magnificently and poetically furnished room" (Baudelaire, 142). One may see even more allusion to the beautiful and ideal dream-state in other poems such as "Dream Within a Dream," "Dreams," "A Dream," "Fairy-Land," and "City in the Sea." Pruette states: "The poems of Poe are songs of sorrow: beauty is in them, most often dead beauty, love is there, most often the love of those who are dead to him, and madness is there, as if the

expression of the prophetic powers of his unconscious” (409). With Poe’s works, the students can easily see the influence his early life and experience had on his writing.

Poe’s characters or heroes are rarely normal, healthy individuals. They express Poe’s own emotional pain. Pruette writes: “Poe’s heroes are largely autobiographical; they are melancholy men, pursued by unrelenting fate; they are neurotic, hypochondriac, monomaniac, victims of vain delusions; they are the prey of melancholia, insane from sorrow or from the thirst for revenge” (410). Some examples that are brought to mind are “The Raven,” “The Black Cat,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” and others. We can provide these poems and short stories for the students to analyze. In addition, Art and Entertainment’s video on the “Biography of Edgar Allan Poe” (1997) will aid the students in understanding how his life affected his works.

Researching Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath is another interesting poet/author for the students to research. An example of how her personal life influenced her work is the poem “Electra on Azalea Path”. In her book on Women Writers: Sylvia Plath, Susan Bassnett writes:

The poem that is perhaps most explicitly concerned with Sylvia Plath’s working out of her relationship with her father is ‘Electra on Azalea Path’, written in March 1959. The inspirational source of the poem--a visit to her father’s grave in Winthrop--is noted in her Journal, dated 9 March in the following terms:

Went to visit my father’s grave, a very depressing sight. Three graveyards, separated by streets, all made within the last fifty years or so, crude, ugly block-stones, headstones together, as if the dead were sleeping head to head in a poorhouse...I found the flat stone, “Otto E. Plath: 1885-1940”, right beside the path, where it would be walked over. Felt cheated. My temptation to dig him up. To prove he existed and really was dead. How far gone would he be? No trees, no peace, his headstone jammed up against the body on the other side. Left shortly. It is good to have the place in mind... (82).

Plath most likely conserved this journal memory to use in the poem “Electra on Azalea Path” The poem illustrates in four lines Sylvia Plath’s autobiography:

The day I woke, I woke on Churchyard Hill
I found your name, I found your bones and all
Enlisted in a cramped necropolis,
Your speckled stone askew by an iron fence (Plath in Bassnett, 85).

The experience of encountering her father’s grave and the graphic images that this encounter produced in Plath’s mind were reflected in her poem.

Another autobiographical poem about her father is “Daddy”. Bassnett writes: In a reading for BBC radio of ‘Daddy’ Sylvia Plath explains:

Here is a poem spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. Her father died while she thought he was God. Her case is complicated by the fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two strains marry and paralyse each other--she has to act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it. (88)

It is clear that Plath struggled with inner conflicts about her parents, and that she created her works to somehow deal with these conflicts. Bassnett further explains the poem “Daddy”:

‘Daddy’ is written in a powerful nursery rhyme rhythm...effect of this is to create an impression of great speed and furious energy, accentuated by the use of other devices--broken sentences, incomplete sentences, sentences without main verbs, repetition of certain words, use of German words.(88)

Bassnett explains that Plath introduces the struggle at the beginning of the poem in the fourth and fifth verses (88):

I never could talk to you
The tongue stuck in my jaw...

I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene

This is only an example that can be used to present to students how an author’s personal life can influence the creation of his/her works. If the material is too intense, then other samples of Plath’s work can be used. The students themselves can produce the autobiographical information with a project on researching Plath and make their own connections.

Researching Stephen King, Emily Dickinson [challenging], William Wordsworth, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, Nikki Giovanni, and Others.

Research on several authors which can be relevant to this unit and engaging for the students can be at the discretion of each teacher. This unit has been written with tenth grade students in a regular English classroom in mind, but the authors and poets can be carefully selected to fit any other grade level. A list of authors (poets) can be provided to

students for research. They are to select a writer/poet and use the school's computer lab [ZapMe lab] to do their research. This research activity will complement their own creative process.

SAMPLE LESSON PLANS: CREATIVITY THROUGH METAPHOR

LESSON PLAN ONE

“Teaching Creativity through Metaphor:” The Change/Butterfly Exercise

This is only a sample exercise on “Metaphoric Teaching” taken from (Sanders & Sanders, 60-69).

Objective: Students will associate the concept -Growth and Expanded Potential- with a metaphoric image (butterfly) to gain personal insight and produce visual images and reflective writing.

Activity:

Level I: Focus

The teacher will expose the class to various images of the butterfly. First, try to have as many pictures drawings and paintings of the butterfly as you can. Greeting cards, posters, and magazines are good sources for finding these pictures. The images are patterns for students’ “right hemisphere.” Next, write the word “BUTTERFLY” on the board; point out what this word conjures up in our minds—the images all around the classroom. Provide other representations of butterflies and have students recognize them as butterflies, asking, “*What makes an image a butterfly? Can the image stand for anything else? For several things at the same time? What characteristics are essential?*”

Level II: The Personal Comparison

In this level of the metaphoric method, students compare themselves to a butterfly. Tell students they will begin a “new way of thinking.” Next, pose the following questions:
How are you like the butterfly?
If you were to think of one way that you and the butterfly are alike, what would it be?

Possible response: “We have both changed and we have learned to adapt to new homes and new opportunities,” or “We’re both vulnerable and must learn to fly alone.” Sanders & Sanders comment that “In a manner similar to Gestalt psychology, students will indirectly reveal personal values that motivate and influence their lives. Remember to respect these values. For the student, discovering a personal attitude or value can be a fragile process...” (63).

Level III: The Metaphoric Interaction

You can find the complete dialogue and post-questions (debriefing) for “The Butterfly

Guided Fantasy’ in Sanders and Sanders’ *Teaching Creativity Through Metaphor*, pages 63-69.

LESSON PLAN TWO

A Metaphor for Emotions: Feelings of Love

Objective: Students will comprehend and use metaphors for “feelings of love” both to help them gain insight into their own emotions and with this produce poetry or short prose and also to help them perceive the world more openly.

Activity # 1 “Love”: First, students should read several metaphorical statements about love and discuss as a class the meaning of each one as applied to real life:

There is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love.
Thorton Wilder, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*

Man has here two and a half minutes—one to smile, one to sight, and a half to love; for in the midst of this minute, he dies. John Paul Richter

Love rules without a sword, love binds without a cord. Anonymous

Love is the doorway through which the human soul passes from selfishness to service and from solitude to kinship with all mankind. Anonymous
(Sanders and Sanders, 96)

Secondly, ask students what other representations of love can they think of. Have them make a list. Using their list, have students use these metaphors to create a poem about what love is to them. If students need structure, set a model. For example, The poem should contain ten metaphors, or four stanzas, etc. Their poem can begin with “Love is...”

Products: A list of metaphors for love and a poem].

Time: One to two class periods of 45-50 minutes or one block-schedule period of 90 min.

LESSON PLAN THREE

A Metaphor for Emotions: Feelings of Love

Objective: Students will comprehend and use metaphors for “feelings of love” both to help them gain insight into their own emotions and with this produce poetry or short prose and also to help them perceive the world more openly.

Activity: Read to students the following statement by Sanders & Sanders: “Each metaphor speaks of the human condition we all experience—the passage through joy and sorrow—the transforming power of the human emotion called “love” . . . it makes us fragile and incredibly strong. Love is a basic paradox of the human condition” (96). Discuss this quote with the students and have them write their own metaphor of love and a one-page personal response about their metaphor—an example from their lives.

Product: Two-three page personal narrative.

Time: One class period of 45-50 minutes.

LESSON PLAN FOUR

Emotions: Feelings of Love

Objective: Students will comprehend and use similes for “feelings of love” both to help them gain insight into their own emotions and with this produce poetry or short prose and also to help them perceive the world more openly.

Activity: Have students read Robert Burns’s (1759-1796) “A Red, Red, Rose” and “Song” by Thomas Carew (1595-1639) and then discuss both poems. Have students reflect on the immortality of these poems, on why they still appeal to readers today, and on their feelings toward the poems. Then have students model their own poem from any of these two.

“A Red, Red Rose”

O, my luvie is like a red, red rose,
That’s newly sprung in June,
O my luvie is like the melodie
That’s sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luvie am I,
And I will luvie thee still, my dear,
Till a’ the seas gang dry.

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun!
And I will luvie thee still, my dear,
While the sands o’ life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luvie,
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my luvie,

Though it were ten thousand mile!

Ask the students the following questions:

What is the speaker comparing his love to? [A red rose, a sweet melody]

What is characteristic about the rose? [A rose is beautiful but can be painful to touch]

What poetical device (figurative language) does the speaker use to express his intense emotion of love? [The speaker uses similes and hyperbole to show his intense love].

How realistic is the speaker's promise of love?

Do you think anyone can really love this way? Whom does it bring to your mind?

Have students read "Song" by Thomas Carew (1595-1639). Explain to students that Carew lived in the seventeenth century and that with his poem he praises his love.

"Song"

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauty's orient deep
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love, heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more where those stars light
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more if east or west
The Phoenix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

Ask the students the following questions:

Who is Jove? [the chief divinity (god) of the Romans]

How does the speaker praise his love? [The speaker praises his love by claiming that

beautiful objects of nature live in his love's person]

Cite some specific examples from the poem. [the roses sleep in her beauty, the golden atoms in her hair, the nightingale's song in her throat, the falling stars find a place in her eyes, and the Phoenix flies to die in her bosom (breast).]

Have the students answer the following questions on a sheet of paper:

- 1) *Where does the speaker claim the "golden atoms" go?*
- 2) *Where does the nightingale fly to when "May is past"?*
- 3) *Where do the falling "stars" end up according to the speaker?*
- 4) *According to Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary, the phoenix is "a beautiful bird of ancient Egyptian legend said to be the only one of its kind and to live 500 or 600 years, then burning itself on a funeral pyre and rising youthful from its ashes: an emblem of immortality; a paragon of distinction or beauty. Why do you think the speaker mentions the phoenix at the end of the poem?"*

After you have discussed both poems with the class, the students will gain insight regarding their own feelings about love.

Have the students reflect and respond quietly to the following questions: (Make sure they respond to ALL the questions.)

- 1) *If you were to write a modern day version of either of these two poems, what modern-day examples would you use?*
- 2) *Do you (boys) think these poems foolish or corny? Why? What personal experience do you think leads you to think this way? How would **you** praise your significant other?*
- 2) *Would you (girls) appreciate a poem like Burns' or Carew's written to you? Why? What specific details in the poem would make you feel loved or appreciated? Why? Whom does the poem bring to mind when you read it?*

Once students have responded, have them choose one of the two poems to write their own. If their feelings about love are other than positive, then they can write a parody of any of the two poems.

LESSON PLAN FIVE

Objective: Students will comprehend the concept of filial/neighborly love, of parable, and strengthen their writing and critical thinking skills by creating a modern day parable.

Activity:

Have students reflect upon hypothetical situations of emergency. You may ask the following questions:

Suppose you were walking hurriedly down the street through a rough neighborhood, first because you knew people who had gotten jumped there, and secondly because you were running late for an engagement. Suddenly you encountered a man lying on the ground bleeding, what would you do? Walk away? Help him? Allow time for responses. You can

also have the students write their responses on paper and then volunteer to read them to the class.

Then have students read out loud the parable of Luke about the “Good Samaritan” Explain to students that a parable is a story told in a simple way to illustrate a value or concept, in this case, neighborly love. Ask the students to give modern-day examples of the “Good Samaritan” and to offer their personal feelings about this subject. Have students pair up and write a “modern day” parable about neighborly love set in their own city. For example, they may title theirs “The Cool Houstonian” or “Good Guy from The Heights”.

Product: A “modern day” parable of “The Good Samaritan”

Time: One class period of 45-50 minutes.

Extended Activity: If you want to extend this concept to more than one class period, you can introduce the class to “Kohlberg’s Six Stages of Moral Development”. You can find it in any text on psychology. I use *Psychology* by John P. Dvoretzky. It offers examples of situations where the stages may be applied. You can first read them the “Presentation of a Moral Dilemma” and then have them write down their choices. You can then have a class discussion on what would have been the “right” or neighborly thing to do.

LESSON PLAN SIX

“Art Therapy” as an Impulse for Creativity”: Delving into the Self

Objective: The students will explore and understand visual images related to the creative process.

Activity: Students will view transparencies/samples of art published in *Clinical Art Therapy* and analyze the writing of a teenager going through this process. They will then produce their own drawing/painting/collage and write about what it means to them personally. They will analyze why they created the particular picture/collage and then attempt to write a poem following a given structure if so desired.

Example (taken from *Clinical Art Therapy: A Comprehensive Guide*:

A teenager in therapy selected and pasted an image of a head of a blindfolded female, then she superimposed an open eye on one side of the blindfold. Beneath it, she rapidly wrote the following poem (Landgarten, 183) [an excerpt]:

There stands one child alone and blind,
She has no lack of sight,
but yet she cannot see.
Then in her life there appears a light,

It is the inner glow which grows within her...

Teacher should explain to students that this teenager "...created art forms and used them as a means for gaining insight and integration...records revealed her emergence as a creative and growing individual, in touch with herself and the world around her" (Landgarten 184).

LESSON PLAN SEVEN

"Creativity Born of Pain" Research Project/Viewing and Representing

Objective: The students will analyze visual representations of visual stimuli to connect with real-life experiences. Students will also enhance research and writing skills.

Activity: Students will view (slides, videos, etc.) of works by Frida Kahlo, Van Gogh, and Picasso* with a short autobiographical synopsis to be read/delivered by teacher. They will then use the internet library to research the lives of these artists in addition to Edgar Allan Poe, Sylvia Plath, and Emily Dickinson, Anne Rice, and others. They will then produce a written report on how the artists' lives influenced their works. A graphic organizer is helpful in putting the information together: (See Appendix No. 1). Students may work in pairs, and a schedule should be organized for them to attend the ZapMe lab. The duration of this lesson should be approximately three days, one for research, one for writing, and one for students' oral presentation to the class.

*Slides or transparencies may be made from picture postcards or from pieces photographed from a book.

LESSON PLAN EIGHT

Self Identity Poem

Objective: Students will explore the creative process to write a poem using images relevant to their personal lives using a model and develop ownership of their poem.

Activity: Students will write on a sheet of paper or on a graphic organizer objects they remember from childhood, words or phrases they remember people saying to them, favorite foods or beverages they drank/drink, specific names of toys they played with, specific names of music groups they listen/ed to, specific names of movies they watched that had an impact on them, things that frightened them as children, personal experiences that have remained in their minds, facts or stories they learned in church/synagogue/school/from a relative or parent, etc., places they "hung out," dreams, hopes for the future, the specific names of their neighborhood/apartment complexes/style of house, home addresses of different places lived in, any other childhood memories, frightening experiences, shocking experiences, painful experiences, religious beliefs, quotes from the

bible, favorite places, hobbies, clothing— in sum, everything and anything related to them personally. You may tailor the organizer as you wish. Then have students read the poem “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon*. They will then create their own personal “Where I’m From” poem from the model, giving their poem their own title. For example: “I Am From _____.”

Optional: Students may illustrate their poem with a collage, painting, or drawing.

* This poem can be found in the anthology *Claiming the Spirit Within* edited by Marilyn Sewell. It can be checked out from the public library.

LESSON PLAN NINE

“The Most Embarrassing Moment in My Life”

Objective: Students will gain insight on their feelings of embarrassment, use critical skills to read a short story, and then use writing skills and personal experience to develop a short personal narrative.

Activity:

As a warm-up activity, have students write a one-page minimum narrative of the most embarrassing moment in their lives.

Then have students read Amy Tan’s “Fish Cheeks.” Discuss why these situations and experiences cause embarrassment. Have students determine the psychological factors involved in being embarrassed. Ask students the following questions:

What can be considered extremely embarrassing? Why?

How does being embarrassed make most of us feel? How does it make you feel?

Does age, self-confidence, gender, or any other factors influence the degree to which people become ashamed and embarrassed?

Does upbringing have anything to do with the degree to which we are embarrassed?

Do society’s rules dictate the degree to which we can be embarrassed?

Then have students write their own short, short story about the most embarrassing moment in their lives. NOTE: Give students guidelines to use ten metaphors and ten similes in this story. They will then illustrate it as they wish.

Extended Activity: Students may bring clips from teenage magazines such as *Teen People*, *Teen* to clip out articles published on “embarrassing moments.” They can then use these examples from real teens as a springboard to develop poems or short stories.

LESSON PLAN TEN

“Letter to My Father/Mother”

Objective: Students will explore their personal parental relationship in the creative process.

Activity 1: As a prewriting activity, students will read about Poe’s relationship with his step-father, Sylvia Plath’s with her father, and Emily Dickinson with Edward Dickinson. (See **Researching Poe, Plath, and Dickinson** and **Bibliography for Teachers**). Teacher should provide biographical information and related works for students to seek the connection. They will then explore their own feelings toward their parents/guardians and write a letter-POEM to their parent(s) illustrating these feelings.

*Several ideas may be taken from Dunning and Stafford’s *Getting the Knack: 20 Poetry Writing Exercises*.

Activity 2: Have students read the parable of “The Prodigal Son.” Have them discuss the father’s rationale for accepting his repentant son into his house again. Ask the students the following questions:

Does this story bring to mind any feelings of jealousy that you might have had in your life toward your sibling(s) or relative? Of resentment toward siblings, toward parents?

Have students write reactions with a one-page response and then have them write a memoir piece or a “Letter to My Parent” poem.

LESSON PLAN ELEVEN

“Difficult Decisions”

Objective: Students will gain insight into difficult decisions or choices they have had to made in life; they will then organize a piece of writing (poem) to portray this choice/decision.

Activity 1: Students will read Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” analyze, and discuss as a class. They then will think about any difficult decisions or choices they have encountered in their lives, freewrite about them, and finally, produce a poem or short narrative.

Sample questions:

- 1) *What two choices does the speaker mention in the poem? What choice does the speaker make? Does he regret this choice?*
- 2) *What is the tone in the poem? How does the speaker feel about the future with the decision he has made?*
- 3) *Have you ever found yourself torn between making a difficult choice and not knowing*

what to do? Describe this experience. Write a list of single words that describe this experience.

4) After your choice was made, were you happy and satisfied with your decision? Were you regretful, sorry you made that choice? Describe your feelings at this point. Write a poem following the model of Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken."

Activity 2: Students will read Robert Frost's "Stopping By the Woods on a Snowy Evening" analyze, and discuss the poems metaphoric and symbolic value. They will then connect the experience of difficult decisions, choices, difficulties encountered in their own lives and write a response or a poem from Frost's model.

Sample Questions:

The teacher should explain to the students that this poem is metaphorical. It contains an underlying meaning beyond its literal sense. The following questions may be helpful in prompting comprehension:

- 1) *What do you think is the purpose for the setting of the poem? Whose woods are they? What may the setting and the owner of the woods symbolize?*
- 2) *What may the speaker's stopping "to see the woods fill up with snow" symbolize?*
- 3) *What enters the speaker's mind while observing the beauty of the "dark" woods?*
- 4) *What may the harness bells symbolize with regard to the speaker's decision to move on?*
- 5) *What kind of "sleep" is the speaker referring to?*
- 6) *The poem is a metaphor for what things in life that people value most? What is the speaker's final decision at the end of the poem? What quality or closure do the two last lines give the poem? [The repetition may reinforce that the speaker's decision to continue with his life, forfeiting death, is certain and final—that he is sure of his decision.]*

LESSON PLAN TWELVE

"The Problem with Love/Hate: Frustration. Disillusion, Domination"

Objective: Students will comprehend unhappy feelings related to relationships both to help them gain insight into their own emotions and also to help them understand others' feelings. Students will then use creative process to formulate their own poetry or prose.

Activity # 1: Have students read the following poems to illustrate different feelings:

To illustrate the feeling of hatred/wrath/frustration/deceit/vengeance in an extended metaphor:

"The Poison Tree"
I was angry with my friend,
I told my wrath, my wrath did end;

I was angry with my foe,
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole;
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

Ask the students the following questions:

- 1) *How is the speaker's handling of his "wrath" with his friend different from his handling it with his foe?*
- 2) *What caused the "wrath to grow"? [not telling the foe about his/her feelings makes the speaker build resentment, anger, and hatred]*
- 3) *After the speaker feels afraid of what he is scheming to do, and then weeps about it, what does he/she decide to do? [be a hypocrite; be deceitful]*
- 4) *In the third stanza, what metaphor for deceit does the speaker use? [a bright apple]*
- 5) *Does the foe fall in the trap? Why does the foe "steal" into the garden? What might the foe have been looking for?*
- 6) *What happens to the foe at the end of the poem?*
- 7) *What is the speaker's reaction to what happens to his/her foe?*

Have the students respond to the following questions:

1. *Have you ever harbored feelings of anger, resentment, hate toward a friend or enemy?*
2. *How did these emotions make you feel?*
3. *Did you ever talk about them to someone?*
4. *Did you ever seek revenge? How did you feel afterward?*
5. *Why might Blake have written this poem?*

Have students write about an incident in their lives where they felt any of these feelings. Then have them make a list of adjectives/describing phrases to illustrate these feelings. Finally, have students write a poem beginning with
When you _____, I felt _____.

Activity # 2:

To illustrate feelings of failed love, frustration, unhappiness, etc, the following list of poems is helpful:

“Simile” by N. Scott Momaday

“Woman” by Nikki Giovanni

“Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day” by Nikki Giovanni

“Winter Away”, “Staying Behind”, “First Love—Later On”, “Depression”, and “Suicide” by Betsy Hearne

Give students copies of these, have them choose one and write a personal response to it. Then have them write their own letter-poem about some unhappy incident in their lives concerning a relationship with a significant other or their family. Refer to Sylvia Plath’s poem “Daddy” to illustrate a poem influenced by ill-harbored feelings.

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Reading for Teachers

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An analysis of several poems by Sylvia Plath related to various themes such as nature, family, love, and the ability to survive through writing are presented in this 160 page book.

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This book is a relation of Stephen King's life and a description of his works, title by title with some comments from King regarding the inspiration for these works.

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This textbook on psychology is a wonderful resource for teachers to read before introducing the lesson on "The Good Samaritan" and "The Prodigal Son." It also

has information/research studies on emotional and social behavior that can be of interest to students.

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Summary from cover: "This book introduces different kinds of poems including headline, letter, recipe, list, and monologue, and provides exercises in writing poems based on memory and imagination." These exercises have encouraged even the most reluctant writers to create poems. It is an effective tool for getting students engaged in the creative process of writing poetry.

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This book is a compilation of Robert Frost's great poems.

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This anthology contains classic works of British and American masters and also of our own day.