TEACHING POETRY TO NON-POETIC STUDENTS

by:
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Poetry is an art; but not everyone appreciates it. How would a teacher make students appreciate poetry?

In dealing with Shakespeare and classical, American, and Filipino poets, most of the time, students were bored. Sometimes even irritated. The rules of poetry has been formal, creative, and metaphorical in the past that modern students are intimidated to fathom its deep waters. In analyzing several poetry written at several Official Newspaper at various campuses, I can see how the GenX-ers transformed poetry into another dimension by using a language that is unbroken with how we speak. They call it spoken poetry.

Now comes the traditional poets in the textbooks; students cannot answer questions. This will be a problem to the teacher. Although there are some students who are inclined in literature, as in, with literature written above, but they are just fewer compared to those students who are more inclined with contemporary poetry.

In this kind of situation, the teacher might fail in the objective of the lesson. For, how would a teacher reconcile the fact that, though the lesson is good as planned, the students are not motivated enough in it?

In a K-12 classroom, the first thing to set is the readiness of the class with a particular lesson. The teacher is taught to be aware of the students’ limitations as well as their capacities. Though some of them may grasp the idea of what has been discussed; at the end majority of the students would fail to acknowledge the competencies and the
objectives of the lesson. So if dealing with Shakespeare is a problem, the teacher must employ readiness by motivating their students. So when the students are ready, and happy, they would be able to enjoy the lesson.

The second thing to check is whether, in the middle of the discussion, the students are still with you. The teacher must not speak, speak, speak; but let that be the job of the students. It does not mean that the students know everything, but as the principle goes, teachers must facilitate. Remember, it is K-12 and it is should be student-centered. For instance, a poet from Whitman or Frost is read, and these were foreign authors, would they understand what these poets wanted to imply? That is the job of the teachers. Thus, the teacher should ask questions, one question deeper than the first one. And if the students answered those, obviously they understand. Well, the students have different interpretations, so the teacher must do the job of a regulator as well.

The last thing to do is to know whether the student understand the meaning, the context, and the metaphors of the poems presented in the class. This can be done by asking questions that would identify its value, moral, context and its meaning in terms of the students’ personal experience and belief. This will encourage students to delve in the meaning of the poem.

Some poems and works of fiction are long like epic and novels, others were short like a haiku or a flash fiction; but in both, the same critical thinking should be applied. The value in which these creative writings were included in the curriculum should be pinpointed so the students would be able to relate in its drama. If these values are not grasped, there will be a tendency of misrepresentation. Culture is varied and therefore its meanings are myriad. In this ground, the interpretation of any literary piece cannot be obtained in just one reading or discussion, but a position paper written for the purpose of exposition of the students’ understanding and belief should be noted in that way.
The moral should also be learned. If values are understood in the general perspectives. Moral are the specification within an individual. What is learned morally by an individual in the story? This affective skill motivates an individual to have a meaningful understanding of reality. If values intends to enlighten a group of individual, moral is inclined individually. That is why, the teacher should ask the student about the moral lesson of the story. The answer could be diverse. The teacher must respond to the moral where majority of the students believed.

In terms of context and its meaning in terms of the students' personal experience and belief can be understood by sharing collaboratively or through a written activity. There are various activities where this one can be held. However, the teacher’s main purpose is reflection: the student should be able to reflect the lines of the poems in their lives. If poems are not allowed to intersect one’s heart, then the poem cannot be called a living one. But a poem, to be considered a classic, does not mean it is either made in that period or by a distinguished author but more so, it should live in the hearts of the people.

If these three are followed, one must say, it is just: ‘Ah, poetry is a good art, indeed.’ The students shall say: “Aye!”

References:

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