

Learning to Judge: Field Trip/DVD Theatre Review (Grades K-5 Lesson Plan)

Overview:

Students will examine Ruth Dorcas Gates' digital scrapbook, taking note of her interest in the theatre and her tendency to review shows, in preparation for a visit to a theatre where a live action play or musical is featured (which will probably not be one Ruth watched, but will nonetheless suffice - students in schools with limited funds will watch a DVD of a play or musical). In class, students will learn from lectures what it means to review something, or, to speak to elementary students, to discuss how something makes you feel after the fact. Students will first read reviews within their favorite genre, then write summaries about them. In class, the teacher will help students examine whether there is a common format present in the reviews the students read. Then comes the field trip, after which the students will be assigned to write a review of what they saw.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn what it means to think critically about the arts.
- Students will learn about the theatre, and gain capacity to empathize with someone from Ruth's time period.
- Students will learn how to present opinions in a more cogent manner than that to which they are accustomed.

Resources:

- The Ruth D. Gates Digital Scrapbook
- Modern theatre reviews
- School funds to afford field tickets to see play/musical, otherwise potential pushing of the cost onto the parent or guardian.
 - Schools without funds could watch a DVD of a live theatre production.

Procedure:

1. Organize students into groups of 4, with their desks interlocked like squares (3 min).
2. Have students look at the online digital library and theatre reviews. (30 min.-50 minutes).
3. Discuss with students what it means to review something that they have seen or heard, like a movie, play, or even a song. Write examples on the board of specific items with which they are familiar (songs, movies, and so on) that can be reviewed. One could have the class vote on these items (e.g. with a thumbs up or down). This would demonstrate what it means for something to be reviewed in aggregate and would remind students that there are other people in the world who like or dislike things, because people have different tastes (30 minutes)
4. For homework, assign each student to read three reviews of specific items in any medium (TV shows, reading Roger Ebert for movies, plays, musicals, albums, songs, etc.), so that they will know what a review looks like. Assign to them a one-to-two page summary that includes at least one paragraph touching on each review they read..(20

min).

5. Instruct students on what constitutes a review by asking them to speak out on commonalities they came across in their reading. Review with the students how much review-writing is formula and how much is idiosyncrasy (25 min).
6. Arrange a field trip to a local theatre to see a play or musical (or watch a DVD of a play or musical if cost prohibits a field trip).
7. When students return, instruct them to write a two-three page review of what they saw, with an extra page of discussion added at the end to explain how what they're doing, what the reviewers they read were doing, and how Ruth scribbles in the margins, are all related.. Assign this as homework.
8. Discuss the reviews with the students, using one or another of the following method:
 - a. Have each student stand and either read their review or otherwise explain what they thought of it. After all the students have done this, a discussion will ensure so that students can speak out and voice disagreement or criticism of expressed views. (40-50 minutes, could vary and go on much longer depending on the students and the teacher's control of the classroom).