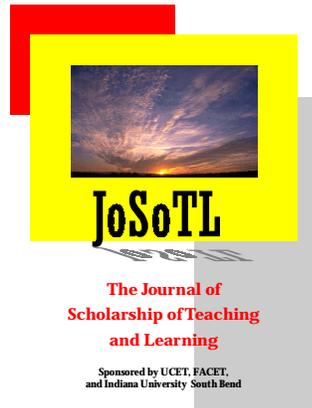


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Three-Part Journaling in Introductory Writing and Literature Classes: More Work with More Rewards

[Alisa Clapp-Itnyre](#), Indiana University East

Abstract

All teachers are challenged to reinforce and connecting the learning that takes place in various “spaces” of a student’s life: home-school, internal-external, and written-oral contexts. In the following article, I suggest a three-part journal assignment I have developed to capture and integrate these various moments of edification, using Pre-Class, In-Class, and Post-Class entries. I pay particular attention to audience, to issues of “private” and “public” writing. Recounting the scholarship on journal-writing, I then examine the work and responses of students in different kinds of classes (writing and literature) and different kinds of institutions (private and state) to suggest the versatility of this assignment.

Introduction

A problem all teachers face when assigning reading material--whether stories, essays, or textbook chapters--is having a motivational tool to keep students reading on schedule and with comprehension. Daily quizzes may serve such a purpose but they are poor substitutes for notes which students can claim and use afterwards. Yet insisting on note-taking is hard to enforce, even hard to teach. I would like to explain the three-part journals I have used in various introductory English classes to stimulate both comprehension and motivation to read. Though I have used these journals only in literature and writing courses, I would suggest that they could be applied to any kind of curriculum, humanities or science, which involves reading and is attempting--thanks to writing across the curriculum objectives--to integrate writing more thoroughly into the class.¹ Journal writing is not new and I will begin by contextualizing my assignment in the larger social and theoretical arena before explaining its pedagogical and practical values and complexities.

Journals have long been integral to western society's discursive activities, from the spiritual memoirs of Puritans and travelogues of eighteenth-century Europeans, to the famous diaries of Samuel Pepys and Anne Frank. To journal is to record one's inner ideas and transformation of those ideas as one interacts with the outer world, a record that is for both oneself and potentially for posterity. In fact, a debate central to today's scholars as they consider the value of journals is whether journals are written simply for oneself, as audience, as ends to themselves or whether there isn't always a sense of, or hope for, an outer audience which prompts revisions of journals into "more important" works. In other words, are journals private diaries or autobiographies-in-progress? Depending on how we as teachers view journals, we will use them differently in the classroom. Essays from the exhaustive *The Journal Book* edited by Toby Fulwiler (1987) reflect this typical dichotomy of views held by teachers of writing: Christopher C. Burnham, following on the heels of Ira Progoff and others, describes his Personal Development Journal centered on the students' self-analysis of their past, present, and future life experiences (150ff), while Geoffrey Summerfield in examining journals of famous writers like Wordsworth suggests that writing is always a social act and that these writers were "acutely aware of the fact of audience" (33) and thus so should our students. Similarly, Peter Elbow and Jennifer Clarke "celebrate *ignoring* your audience" in journal writing as a way of deflecting writer's block (19), while Jana Staton describes "dialogue journals" to make a concerted effort to create an audience (the teacher) for, in this case, elementary-age writers (49ff). Ann E. Berthoff's "dialectical notebooks" might be considered dialoguing with oneself using two sides of notebook pages, one side for a

¹ *The Journal Book*, edited by Toby Fulwiler, to which I will be referring later, prints NCTE Commission on Composition guidelines to journals (1996), stating: "teachers in all subject areas, from history and literature to psychology and biology, have found that when students write about course readings, lectures, discussions, and research materials they understand better what they know, don't know, want to know--and how it all relates to them" (6) and includes nine articles in a section on "Journals and the Quantitative Disciplines."

student's initial thoughts, the other side for adding reflections on these comments as he/she continues to ruminate and interact with others (12ff).

Cynthia Gannett, in *Gender and the Journal* (1992), exposes the various other dichotomies associated with journal-writing, from "academic/nonacademic, literacy/literature, public/private, intellectual/personal, and...male/female" which cause tensions and "continue to render the journal a problematic panacea" (34). Given this, she argues, the journal must stop being seen either as a benign prewriting heuristic or a simple personal memoir, and be recognized as the powerful shaper of language and culture which it is.

Aware, then, of the powerful tensions residing in journals, I come to a description of my own. Like Gannett, I resist seeing journals either as psychological freewriting or as only a step toward the more important critical paper. Like Burnham, Elbow, and Clarke, I believe that journals should become a space where students can share and develop their own thoughts on a text without fear of an overbearing audience; however, like Summerfield and Staton, I believe that writing in a vacuum is impossible and that creating the idea of social context from the start is vital. In a way, my three-part assignment allows for both private ("diaries") and public writing ("autobiographies") to occur because different parts allow for different concepts of "audience" and "purpose." Let me explain.

In these journals, students must write a Pre-Class entry to help them put their own unique ideas down on paper; an In-Class entry to ensure that they are following and capturing the essence of class discussion; and a Post-Class entry to ask them to assimilate class opinions with their own. One initial purpose is simply to get students to write on a daily basis in an uninhibited, exploratory way; "a tool to help me stay in my 'writing mood'" as one student perceptively notes.² I grade only on content, not writing, so students can see the value in their individual ideas even if the expression of these ideas is often "non-conventional." I ask somewhat directed questions but find that some of the better students will usually use these as a spring-board only to larger, essay-type responses.

In the Appendix, you will see the questions that I typically ask. The Pre-Class entry begins by asking for a few biographical questions to ensure that students do not jump into the work without knowing something about its author. I ask students to then choose favorite quotes and give initial impressions to invite interaction directly with the text, its language, and its content. I begin the process of making initial judgments by asking what they liked and didn't like. The last part of the Pre-class journals asks them to jot down material that is just "confusing" to them at the moment. This solicitation for questions and interest-points leads directly to class discussion where I often open by

² All comments are taken from anonymous student evaluations during or after a class while I was teaching in an adjunct capacity at DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana (1997-8) and Purdue University, W. Lafayette, Indiana (1998-9). Journal entries are used with the students' permission.

asking them to share the questions they wrote down: hence, the move from private speculation to public sharing of ideas. I have seen a dramatic difference in the quality of discussion, particularly in my first-year composition courses, since using this assignment because students are not only “forced” to read the assigned articles in a course that does not use exams, but they now have notes from which to speak the minute they enter class: “they definitely help prepare me for class. I plan on doing a journal for every class possible this semester” writes a composition student.

The In-Class entry, then, becomes a transcription of that hopefully elevated level of class discussion. Its inclusion in the journal assignment was actually suggested by students who, on student evaluation forms, asked to get journal credit for taking notes in class. But I insist that notes not only be taken on information put up on the board and my verbal explanations, but also note-taking on other students’ comments and discussion points. This is an aspect of the journal that is harder to obtain, though, often attesting to weaker note-taking skills of many first-year students. But by commenting directly in the journals as to where notes get oblique and sketchy during the day’s discussion, I am able to begin this learning process for them. By weaving these into the journal entry, I encourage students to record the challenges to their initial impressions that come from peers and the instructor. Similarly, as students share their impressions in class, these private ideas become available and even more vulnerable to a public audience.

The Post-Class entry is often the most time-consuming and thus the most resented aspect of the journal assignment...but also the most pedagogically essential. This is, after all, the place where the student assimilates his/her initial impressions with the material gained in class, whether that be corrections to his/her misperceptions or just a larger awareness of the multiple interpretations of a text to complicate students’ typical “there’s only one way to interpret this text” attitude. Like Pat Belanoff, I fight the concept that so many students bring to class that “‘somewhere out there’ is a ‘right’ response to every piece of literature and that their task as students is to discover what that ‘right’ response is” (*The Journal Book* 100); like me, she has come to “place journals at the heart of my literature classes. Journals belong to students; in them, they can record *their* thoughts about literature...[and] learn to sharpen their own natural way of responding to a text” (102-3). My pre-writing section allows for these personal responses; however, I also agree with Burnham who uses journals to move students from dualism (“I’m right; they’re wrong”) to a multiplicity mindframe (“others may see and read things differently and that is all right”). The ability to entertain multiple readings while still being able to justify one’s own is a complex task all teachers attempt to achieve; the Post-Class entry begins this process by providing a space for a validation of both a student’s opinions and the many ideas that are generated in class. As one student recognized, journals “[capture] my first thoughts and my thoughts after class with so many ideas presented in class. They are helpful in working on understanding the story.” Thus, without journals ever being “invaded” by peers in the class, they are influenced by that “audience” as students begin the process of exposing

private thoughts to the public world and then allowing that interaction to reshape or only solidify their private views.

A writing student's journal entry on a chapter from Jonathon Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* shows this move from personal to public awareness, through both her reading experience and her interaction with the class:

For today's class, we read two articles (long articles, at that). The first article, Savage Inequalities, by Jonathan Kozol was about public schools and its issues...I realize how lucky I am to have went to a decent high school. I learned a lot of statistics in this article about the education factor in St. Louis...one in four kids will go to college from their high school. In my graduating class of 84, 73 kids went onto college. I also thought it was interesting when they were talking about Morris H.S. in New York City that about the chalkboards...teacher are afraid to let students write on them for fear they may cut themselves. I can't even imagine a school being that poverty stricken. In class, I hope we can discuss the issues of these poverty stricken schools and if anyone in class has ever seen one?

This student's engagement with the text and its "stories" is authentic and impassioned. Although there are writing mistakes, I do not comment on them; instead I responded with "wow" when she uses statistics to show the poverty of East St. Louis schools--for indeed, this is an impressive application of "dry facts" to a personal understanding of the world around her. And her solicitation for more people's high-school experiences was realized the next day in an animated class discussion which she carefully recorded. Her journal shows the privatizing of ideas yet also the anticipation of audience, even that she will be audience to others' private experiences. Her Post-class entry shows her assimilation of these In-class notes:

I thought class today was interesting. I learned a lot about personal experiences with schools and what the class thinks of their schools. Good viewpoints and opinions on life were spoken today. I though[t] what Tom had to say about 'doing your best with what is given to you' was great. Many people want more than what they can have, but sometimes you just have to deal with what you have.

At first frustrated that her attitude was a reflecting a middle-class "excuse" not to engage in social changes in inner-city schools, I then began to realize that in fact she was extrapolating that one sentence ('doing your best with what is given to you') to comment on her own life experience. Public commentary becomes personal commentary, and the public classroom audience has reverted back to a personal one again.

I end the journal entry by asking students to apply their new-found ideas by making connections with previous works, suggesting topics for papers, etc. Without diminishing the value of immediate textual reflections, this assignment can also be seen in the

context of the rest of the class, as freewriting for papers, for example. Indeed, one reason I ask students to record favorite quotes and statistical facts is so they can use these journals again as sources for their papers. And obviously in those classes with exams, in particular introductory literature courses, these journals are an invaluable study guide; as one student writes, "The journals are an excellent way to review the works studied and better prepare oneself for the test."

Thus, the initial value of these journals is to give students daily writing opportunities to free up the writing act, to behave as a record of transmitted ideas and facts throughout the course, and to generate better in-class discussion by enforcing daily reading of the assignments. I should note, however, that I normally do not collect these on a daily basis so that students with a busy day can occasionally fall behind on the assignment and not be penalized. But frequent skipping makes it nearly impossible to catch up. I collect the journals three times a semester and grade the students on completeness of entries and on the insightful content within each entry. I try to read every word and comment here and there to assure students that I am reading and taking their comments seriously. These are not as conversational as the responses described by Jana Staton; nevertheless, I assure students that I am "listening" even if I am not always "responding" in a dialogic fashion (I am using Staton's terms, p. 47 in *The Journal Book*). As one student wrote, "the comments...let you know that the instructor is reading them and they aren't just wasted time and paper." As "listening audience" who reacts to intriguing ideas without penalizing mechanical errors, I hope to encourage and not stifle the writing act for students. If true misconception of material is occurring, though, I can intervene without the kind of grade-penalty that occurs with exams, pointing out individual misunderstandings in their journals and discussing larger class miscomprehensions in class. So, when an entire poetry class had misunderstood Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," I caught it right away and was able to work through their confusion in class.

Another advantage concerns the shy student, the person for whom bridging the private and public arena is intensely difficult. For this person, the Post-Class entry enables them to reflect on "Where you stand on any of the debates or interpretations that came up in class" and in detailing their responses, they become dialoguers within the class debate and I become the sole, and hopefully less daunting, audience. In fact, I have recently begun giving extra credit toward the participation grade for each entry completed above and beyond the required number due. One student last semester, a very smart but incredibly shy girl intimidated by the aggressive males in the class, made use of this option by turning in "extra credit" entries--and incredibly thoughtful entries at that--thus raising a raw participation grade of D to a B. One student wrote that "I love the journals because I think it gives us time to express our feelings even if we don't feel like sharing in class." Likewise, a literature student wrote that "I like journals...because although I may not say a lot in class, my ideas are still explained"--i.e., there is an audience to hear one's ideas, thus validating these ideas. Many of the students who enjoy journals are in fact female; Cinthia Gannett, in *Gender and the Journal*, argues

that because journals have tended to be marginalized in academic discourse, and journals/diaries have traditionally been the domain of women, we are marginalizing women in the process. The means of reversing this trend is to privilege journals and the reflections of our sometimes more silent female students.

But I need to admit that many students may not like this assignment at first because it IS a lot of work, as I point out in my paper's title. Journals have tended to have a bad name among students ever since they were integrated into academic curricula. As Gannett writes, "for many students, keeping a journal can be a miserable experience. Some students are bewildered by the assignment; others are downright bored" (20). Student comments from my mid-semester evaluations always make this painfully clear to me: comments range from "busy work" to a "nagging task." Interestingly, though, students often complain and unintentionally point to the worth of the assignment in the same breath: "Journals suck. But they make you do the reading and think which is their purpose." Or, "I don't think they help. [But] The [teacher's] comments help clear up anything that I don't understand." Often the student's area of expertise determines the resistance or pleasure they show with journals; though not true in every instance, humanities majors tend to enjoy the assignment while engineering students tend to resist it. I discovered this when carrying the assignment from one institution to another. In a first-year writing course at DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, in 1998, where I held a visiting professorship and where most students were pre-humanities, many students responded positively. Of the fourteen students, half had some "pain but..." comments while the other half thoroughly enjoyed the journals: "The journals have provided me with an excellent opportunity to reflect on the material. I like to use them as a way to express my feelings on certain subjects." Or "The journals are great for brainstorming, free thoughts, responses, and ideas. I think we benefit from these a great deal more than just writing another paper." Or "They are very helpful in really remembering and learning the material! They give me a chance to vent my feelings if I don't want to or don't have the opportunity to do [so] in class." In contrast, in the same type of first-year composition class at Purdue University the next semester where I had many pre-engineering and other applied science majors, the assignment engendered many "hostile" and vague complaints, such as those quoted earlier. And this was despite the fact that I had limited the number of entries from ten now to five for each journal for Purdue students. This last point may also suggest, though, that daily repetition can in fact help students become more comfortable with the assignment faster.

Literature students tend to be more of a mixed bag, some loving journals, others "loathing" them. Like writing classes, however, their mid-semester comments usually show both a resentment for the journals and a recognition of their academic worth: "Personally, I do not prefer journals. I would rather take my own notes...[but] I think the class notes section of the journal helps me to take better notes...[and] the instructor comments are very helpful." Or, "I [am] not too crazy about writing journals (and I'm behind in writing them right now), but I think that they do end up being beneficial to

remembering my impressions of the work;" or finally, "I think they are a pain while I am doing them but when I go to write a paper or study for a test they are definitely [sic] helpful." A tally of this introductory fiction class at DePauw University, Spring 1998, showed that seven of the twenty-four students did express vehement opposition. Five had some version of the "pain but gain" comment, while the rest--twelve of the twenty-four--commented only on how helpful the journals were.

Nevertheless discouraged that not all twenty-four of my students absolutely loved this assignment, I decided to do a test with them. Realizing that students will be most enamored only with assignments that have immediate positive results, I decided to see how they felt about the journals immediately after their final exam. Results might have been skewed by the fact that mid-semester evaluations were anonymous while I offered a couple extra-credit points toward their exam grade if they answered my question and thus they had to include names on these second responses. My question was, "Tell me what has been most helpful about writing journals this semester. Have they helped in studying for the midterm and final? Have they helped you to record your ideas as you read? Have they helped you to "speak" about the texts even if you don't speak in class? How has the pre-, in-, and post-class structure helped?" I begged the question a bit, and a few chose not to take the extra credit by not responding which probably meant that they just could not see any good coming from the journals. This notwithstanding, I was pleasantly surprised that now twenty-one out of the twenty-six students--over 80%--all had very positive things to say about the journals...and they did not appear to be vague, fabricated reasons to appease me. Fourteen of the students commented on the very practical use of the journals for studying purposes: "By reviewing the class notes after each class, I do not feel that I have to cram for exams." Or, "Although the journals were a lot of work they helped me remember and understand the work very clearly weeks after [I] read so that when test time came I was ready with extremely good notes."

Students differed, though, in which part of the journal they liked and which could be omitted: some felt that the post-class entry basically repeated the in-class notes (suggesting to me that they weren't assimilating the material well) but others did see that the "post-class function was very helpful in sorting through class debates." Others resented having to do an in-class section when they took their own notes while others found the in-class notes "the most helpful" in studying for exams. A few at midterm time had said that they had had trouble finding original things to say for the pre-class entry but by the final exam students appeared to improve at this task because they only praised the pre-class entry now: "The thing that I liked about the journals the most was the pre-journals. They helped me organize my thoughts before class--something I may not have done."

Indeed, I was surprised that, given that students had just finished an exam, many students (12) still saw the value of these journals for less pragmatic reasons--such as preparing for class discussion. Some saw the journals as an alternative means of

discussing--“If I don’t always share my feelings in class, I have done it in my journals”-- while others even recognized their value to better discussions: “They have helped me to record my ideas as I read. Slowly, but surely, I think I am speaking more in class” in part due to journals. Various others spoke of the journals helping them to better understand what they were reading: “Instead of reading the stories and putting it back, I am forced to work and analyze what I read,” or, “Through my understanding I have developed more confidence in my ability to analyze literature.” One student spoke of the journals’ cumulative value: “They also made me realize some parallels between several stories.” An international student admitted that “For me, it is hard to understand the stories by reading just once. As I write my favorite quote, or other things I usually begin to understand more than before.”

Did students arrive at this understanding because I began to elaborate more consistently in class after their mid-semester comments about the academic value of journals, or only after the class was finally over were students able to look back objectively and see the value of writing to their understanding of the class? I like to think the latter. I am tempted to say that even if students never quite “get it,” I will continue to use journals because I appreciate the improvement in students’ discussion skills, verbal skills, and understanding of the texts we study. A sample journal entry from an introductory fiction student exemplifies the potential of these journals. Initially writing very sketchy commentary about what he was reading, by the end, he was writing entries on Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* sometimes as long as nine pages, engaging with the characters on an incredibly rich and personal level:

...I like the fact that Sue comes into the picture. In a way I have developed an attraction to Sue. I like how she is somewhat rebellious and very energetic. For someone like Jude who is reserved, his opposite is the perfect sole mate for him. I also like Jude because he reminds me of me. I think that we have a lot of similarities. We are both reserved at times and we are focused on what we want. We both have the potential to become very successful as long as we work at it. The difference between us is that I know that girls will distract me from other tasks, like school, and I will not let myself get attached to them. Anyhow, I like the way these two are developing...

As I told him in the margin of his notebook, “This is so neat! I can think of no better compliment to a book than to be able to relate to the protagonist so well. (I can relate to Jude’s educational goals myself).” The student was using the journal’s space for a very interesting personal-academic play; in some respects, his personal account shed light on the character of Jude, helping him to understand the book better for future academic work. On an even more powerful level, his exploration of Jude was helping him to understand himself. Because I was witness to this revelation, I could act as supportive audience but also share some of the private thoughts I have had, too. We teach literature because we believe that it has relevancy to our personal lives but sometimes it takes a forum such as a journal to put such powerful recognition into words.

Thus, these three-part journals are able to bridge the various dichotomous tensions often associated with journal-writing: “academic” and “personal,” “immediate” and “cumulative” and “public” and “private.” In part, this is due precisely to the multiple parts where the Pre-Class entry can act as the completely private, immediate, and personal space (as the above literature student’s entry attests) while the In-Class entry embraces the academic and public spheres. The Post-class then asks students to assimilate the personal views with public re-visions, and immediate thoughts with cumulative learning. All types of journaling are valued because all have their space.

So, ultimately, though I know that students will always comment on the “amount of work,” I will know the multiple-values of these journals: that they record the growth of writers and thinkers, and reveal that knowledge never stems from one source, but is the accumulation of the students’ own vital thoughts and their interaction with the outer world of peers and instructors/readers. And for these reasons alone, if journals are more work for me, too, I gladly accept that burden.

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APPENDIX:
**Sample Journal Assignment for an Introductory Literature Class
with Variations for Writing Classes**

English 158 (Intro. to Fiction)
DePauw U.--Spring 1998
Dr. Alisa Clapp-Itnyre
JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

Overview: Journals in this class are a way for you to record those ideas you have after reading a work of literature and after participating in a class discussion about it. These ideas are precious, not just for the sake of future papers and exams, but because they are YOUR ideas after encountering a “great” work of literature. The following entry-description, then, is not meant to be busy-work in the least but a way of getting you to THINK about what you are reading. They are also intended to have practical value in giving you a good set of notes for getting paper topics and for studying for exams. If you are having trouble with them (doing too much, getting “bored”), come see me because you are not using them correctly. Note that I will also use them in various ways during class discussion; for that reason you’ll want to keep up with them.

Grades: In order to see what kind of work you are doing--and to catch any major confusion going on in the class--I will collect and read these three times this semester (see syllabus). They will be graded based on thoroughness and thoughtfulness, not necessarily length: a “+” for exception work (not necessarily longer, but full of thought; an “A”); a “check-plus” for good work (=A-/B+); a “check” for adequate work (=B-); and a “-” for inadequate work (=C). The only way you can fail the assignment, then, is to not turn it in.

Form: Because these are meant to be YOUR journal, you can write them in whatever shape you want: hand-written in a journal-book, typed & printed up on your computer, etc. One possibility might be to write them on loose-leaf paper that can be added to your 3-ring class binder with the stories themselves; then, just turn in the appropriate entries, stapled, when due. Note: Because I read each journal carefully, I can’t always guarantee that I’ll get these journals back to you right away so find a way to only turn in what you need without handing me your entire notebook.

Format For EVERY story or article read, you should have a 1-2 page entry that includes the following. Novels should either include one entry/ day OR a longer, single entry. PLEASE label your responses (A #1, etc.) so I can follow more easily.

A. Pre-Class: After you have read the story but before class, record the following in 1/2 page, numbered, in this order, please:

1. 1-2 important biographical facts about the author
2. 1-2 favorite quotes and why, those that seem ironic, interesting, or could be used in a paper (cite a page #)
3. Your initial impressions of the story: its theme, what worked, what didn’t, etc.
4. One question or issue you hope gets answered or discussed in class.

B. In-Class: During class, take good notes (these can be in place of or in addition to your own set of notes), in any order:

1. Any notes that go on the board, along with my oral comments explaining them.
2. Any facts or terms that are important
3. The essence of any debates or disagreements that go on
4. The various interpretations of a work, of a scene, character, etc., that come up.

C. Post-Class: After class, in 1/2 page, think about and write the following:

1. The response to your pre-writing questions and thoughts
2. Where you stand on any of the debates or interpretations that came up in class
3. Any applications of your new-found ideas: seeing trends with previous works; getting ideas for paper topics, etc.

Variation of Parts A-C for writing-class journals based on composition-textbook chapters, Purdue University, Fall 1999:

Format --For your first journal, based on chapters in Jean Wyrick's *Steps to Writing Well*:

(Do one per class day; due with your 1st paper)

A. Pre-Class: After you have read the chapter but before class, record the following in 1/2 page, numbered, in this order, please:

1. Which of the ideas about writing you currently use when writing a paper, or have at least heard of (distinguish between these, though)
2. Which of Wyrick's ideas were new to you? Which will you try and which won't you? Why not?
3. One question or issue you hope gets answered or discussed in class (that you'll ask if it doesn't come up!)

B. In-Class: During class, take good notes (these can be in place of or in addition to your own set of notes), in any order:

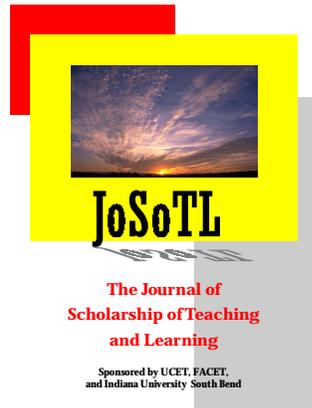
1. Any notes that go on the board, along with my oral comments explaining them.
2. Any facts or terms that are important
3. The essence of any student comments or class discussions that go on

C. Post-Class: After class, in 1/2 page, think about and write the following:

1. The response to your pre-writing questions and thoughts
2. Where you stand on any of the discussions or concepts that came up in class
3. Applications of your new-found ideas: which you'll try on the current paper you're working on and how you'll apply. (example: a particular lead-in idea you hadn't thought of before that you'll try on this paper) -->
Give a brief example

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Monitoring the Benefits of Active Learning Exercises in Introductory Survey Courses in Science: An Attempt to Improve the Education of Prospective Public School Teachers

[Pascal de Caprariis](#),

Charles Barman,

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Abstract

Introduction of collaborative, active-learning exercises in a traditional lecture-based Environmental Geology course produced measurable changes in student learning. Oral surveys used as part of an assessment strategy suggest that students in the class use material from the exercises in responding to questions long after the subjects were covered in class. In addition, the variance of the grade distribution of the final examination suggests that learning is more uniform across the class than in previous semesters. Implementation of this approach is not limited to small classes; a single instructor can monitor a class of approximately 60 students as they work through the exercise.

Introduction

Graduation requirements in most colleges and universities include courses in the physical and/or biological sciences. Many of these courses are offered as service courses for non-science majors, and involve only a lecture, because recitation and laboratory sessions usually are confined to courses provided for students majoring in science. The service courses are typically taught in large-enrollment sections, with as many as several hundred students listening to one lecturer, once or twice a week. This approach to teaching science to non-science majors is used at many schools because it is cost-effective. For a variety of reasons, these courses do not really teach students how science is done; at any rate, they do not seem to have affected the scientific literacy of the general public. There may be many reasons for the failure of service courses to teach science to non-majors, but de Caprariis (1997) contended that a major part of the explanation lies in structural differences between courses intended for science majors and the survey courses for non-majors. These differences prevent most students from learning how science is actually done because the courses hardly ever require the students to do anything other than listen to lecture material; rarely are students required to solve problems, express opinions, or explain the reasoning behind their opinions. In short, students taking service courses are passive recipients of the lecture material, and this kind of experience is not conducive to understanding.

Science requirements for education majors are often satisfied by enrollment in service courses. For example, elementary education majors at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) take 15 credit hours of science, but none of the courses that they are required to take has a laboratory component, and these courses are taught in large-enrollment lecture sections of service courses taken by students from all of the schools in the university. This approach to introducing future elementary teachers to scientific disciplines prevents many of them from having a positive experience in their science courses (Robinson and Yager, 1998).

In an attempt to address the needs of non-science majors in general, and elementary education majors in particular, faculty in the School of Science and School of Education at IUPUI organized and implemented a pilot project designed to integrate small-group activities in an introductory Environmental Geology course that traditionally has been a "lecture course." The goal was to stimulate collaboration between students by having them learn the science by working through active learning exercises in class. Potential benefits from this change of format were expected to include better understanding of the material, because active learning experiences are considerably more likely to illustrate the logic behind the subject studied than passive reception of information in a lecture. A second benefit involves peer instruction, which has been recognized as important to learning by several learning theorists (Vygotsky, 1962; Piaget, 1977; Gallager and Reid, 1981).

During the Spring, 1999 semester, students in the course described here were involved in close interactions with their peers. Data were collected that related to students' understanding of major science concepts of the class and their perceptions of the value of the small group activities. One observation made is that assessment of the success of the collaborative activities can be obtained without a great deal of difficulty. Another observation is that interactions between faculty in science and education benefit both groups. In this particular case, the scientist, who was used to teaching mainly by delivering lectures, learned how to manage discussions within and between a dozen or so small groups. The education faculty learned more about the level of science their students are exposed to, and how they respond to active learning exercises done in the context of a science discipline.

Structure of the Course

The traditional lecture format for the Environmental Geology course was altered by using one of the two class meetings each week to introduce collaborative exercises. This was done for 10 weeks of the 15 week semester. The course met on Monday and Wednesday mornings; traditional lectures were delivered on Mondays and the exercises were used on Wednesdays. When feasible, the lectures were used to introduce the material covered in the exercises, but depending on the schedule, sometimes the topics were introduced by the exercises. Two examples that illustrate the kinds of things done involve earthquakes and coastlines.

At the end of a lecture on earthquakes, the students were asked to examine a Web site prior to the next class that deals with the New Madrid, MO earthquakes of 1811-1812. Based on eye-witness accounts of damage in Kentucky, students estimated the Mercalli Intensity (a measure of the damage done locally) at Evansville, IN, which was at the same distance from New Madrid. In the next class, they compared their estimates with those of the others in their group. Then they used a map of predicted Intensities that showed the worst case scenario for future events in the area to estimate the kinds of damage that would likely occur in Central and Southern Indiana from such an event. The exercise is displayed in Table 1.

The material on coastlines was scheduled to begin on a Wednesday, so the exercise was the students' introduction to the subject. Earlier in the semester, they heard a lecture about closed systems, and later in the semester, they applied the material to watersheds. For the lesson on coastlines, they were asked to learn some terminology by reading the section in the textbook on barrier islands prior to class. Then, in class, they constructed a model of a beach and discussed the validity of the assumption that beaches are closed systems.

All of the work for these two exercises, and the other eight they did during the semester, was done in groups of four to eight students. A few students refused to work in groups and were allowed to do the work on their own. The rest quickly got used to working with

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their neighbors. No effort was made to determine who was actually doing the work; we were satisfied as long as the entire group seemed to understand the concepts, and as long as no one complained about "carrying" those who did nothing.

Assessment

Oral interviews were conducted at the beginning and the end of the semester with education majors in the class. Twelve students were identified at the beginning of the semester, but due to attrition, only 8 students participated both the pre- and post-course interviews. The interview questions pertained to major class topics, and students were asked to discuss them in as much detail as possible. The questions used are shown in Table 2. The student-responses are shown in Table 3, along with the scoring rubric that was used to assess student understanding. In addition to the interviews, students were asked to use the end-of-semester course evaluation forms to make written comments about the value of the group exercises. A few of the comments were negative, but the overwhelming majority of them were positive. Most students liked the change from the standard lecture format and felt that they were able to learn more from the exercises than from listening to lectures. Note that we do not know what students mean when they say the "learned more" from the exercises; but we attribute higher student satisfaction to this perception of theirs.

The last measure of assessment addressed the efficacy of the exercises more directly. The final examination in the course has always been a 100-question multiple-choice test. This format was also used in the spring 1999 semester. No new topics were introduced, so the majority of the questions were similar or identical to ones that had been used in the last few semesters. A few of the questions were modified a bit so that they clearly pertained to the work done in the exercises. This was done to reassure students that the work they did in the exercises was considered important enough for them to be tested on it. Because the bulk of the questions were similar to ones that had been used in previous semesters, performance on this examination can be used to determine the effect of the exercises. If the performance in the spring 1999 semester differed from that in previous semesters, we could infer that the exercises were at least partly responsible.

Interpretation of the data

It is not possible to conclude from the interviews (Tables 2 and 3) that the collaborative activities were successful or unsuccessful because the sample size was small and the interviews were not used in prior semesters, when the format was strictly lecture. In addition, for a variety of reasons, we should not expect a small number of students to "score well" on all four categories used in the interviews (e.g., student absences.)

Ordinarily, the small sample size would not constrain interpretations greatly. But the group interviewed was not chosen randomly; only education majors were chosen because we were mainly interested in knowing how they perceive the subjects covered in the course. In retrospect, we should have interviewed some students majoring in other areas to see if any differences between disciplines could be observed. Yet, scheduling the interviews twice in the semester proved to be a formidable task. Interviewing a larger number would have been much more difficult. However, the interviews do provide information about some students' thought processes during the semester discussed here.

The Interviews

Comparison of the scores in Table 3 obtained at the beginning of the course with those obtained at the end of the course suggests that the interviews provide useful information. The mean scores at the beginning differ significantly from those obtained at the end for three of the four questions. For example, the value of Students' t-score was significant ($p < 0.05$) for all except the question on earthquakes. A qualitative comparison of the differences is also useful. It reveals that:

- No one scored lower at the end than at the beginning, though the responses in 8 of the 32 "boxes" in the table were the same before and after.
- Based on the last statement, three-fourths of the responses were higher at the end than at the beginning.
- Only 1 student scored 3 at the beginning, but all 8 scored 3 at least once and as many as three times at the end of the semester.

The responses to the interview questions display no pattern with respect to time. Four of the eight students scored 3 at the end of the semester for Earthquakes and Flooding, topics which were covered early in the semester. And six of the 8 students scored 3 at the end for the question on pollution, a topic that was covered midway through the semester. But it is interesting to note that no one scored 3 for Global Warming, which was covered late in the semester. Clearly, the Global Warming exercise needs to be revised.

These results are gratifying because they show that by the end of the semester, some of the students were using class information (i.e. scoring 3) in some, if not all, of their responses, even if the material was covered in the first half of the semester.

The Final Examination

Comparison of the Spring 1999 group's performance on the final examination with that of previous groups is shown in Table 4. In that table, the beginning and final enrollments are given, as is the dropout rate (% attrition). The mean and variance of the grade distributions are also given. The mean is a stable statistic, and should not be expected to change much over time. On the other hand, the variance is sensitive to outliers, such as very low grades, so we should expect its value to vary more than that of the mean grade. If the majority of students in a class learn the material equally well, then whatever the mean score on a test, the variance of the grades should be low. Whether they learn the material equally poorly, or equally well, their grades should form a tight cluster on a frequency diagram, indicating a small variance. So we use the variance of the grades on the final examination to examine the hypothesis that small group learning made a difference in student learning in this course.

For the five semesters shown in Table 4, enrollments were fairly stable, as was the mean grade on the final examination. But the variances show differences. The variances for Spring 1998 and Spring 1999 are considerably lower than the others. If the group exercises facilitated students' learning of the basic materials, we should expect a smaller variance for the Spring 1999 semester, but the low value for the Spring 1998 semester must be accounted for if the hypothesis about group work is correct.

We use the attrition rate to explain the figures for the Spring 1998 and Spring 1999 semesters. The attrition rate for the Spring 1998 section was the highest for the time period shown. That certainly could explain the low variance of the grade distribution. If students who are doing poorly in the course decided to withdraw, the grades of those remaining in the course are likely to display a smaller variance than in a course with a low attrition rate.

In addition, examination of the lowest grades on the final examination is informative. The lowest grade on the Spring 1999 examination (when the group exercises were introduced) 33%, considerably lower than the next lowest grade (which was 58%). That student also failed the two "mid-term" examinations and received failing grades on the four writing exercises assigned during the semester. Class records show that over the last six semesters, most students in that condition withdraw from the course, so ordinarily, this student would have not taken the final examination. But for some reason, this student chose to remain in the course. If we neglect this student's grade on the final examination, the attrition rate for that semester changes marginally, but the variance of the grade distribution decreases from 99.2 to 70.8. That the value is lower than all of the other variances, and an F test shows that it is significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) than all except the Spring 1998 value (the one with the other low variance and the high attrition rate). It seems that one student's performance can affect the variance significantly.

Conclusions

Two measures of assessment used in the course suggest that the small group exercises were beneficial. Responses to the interviews indicate that some students are able to use course material to express ideas about the course material. Verbal expression of ideas represents a level of understanding that is difficult to identify on a multiple-choice examination. In addition, the low value of the (adjusted) variance for the final examination in Spring 1999 is consistent with the hypothesis that the introduction of collaborative exercises during that semester had a notable effect on student learning of the basics of the course. This conclusion would be strengthened by more data, so group exercises will continue to be given in subsequent semesters, and a multiple-choice final examination will continue to be used as a control instrument. Of course, variation of the variances will occur, so several years of data will be needed to verify the hypothesis.

Lastly, it is important to recognize the value of science and education faculty working together to develop a science course that is part of the general education requirements of elementary education majors. As part of this interaction, the education faculty develop a good understanding of the types of topics presented in the course and the science faculty are introduced to current pedagogical trends that facilitate modification of the typical lecture course. In addition, changes made to benefit the education of future teachers were not restricted to education majors; they affected all of the students in the course.

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Table 1: Exercise on Earthquakes

You were asked to estimate the probable damage in Evansville, IN from a magnitude 6.5 earthquake in the New Madrid, MO region before coming to class.

Compare your estimates with those of the students in your group. If you do not agree with them, justify your decisions. Try to convince them that you are correct.

There is a 50% chance that a magnitude 6 earthquake will occur in New Madrid in the next few years, and a 90% chance that it will occur in the next 40 years. With your group, estimate the kinds of damage that would occur in Indianapolis from such an earthquake

Now think about your home. Make a list of the things that could happen in your kitchen from a magnitude 6 event in New Madrid.

Now consider the effects of a magnitude 8 event in New Madrid. Make another list of what would probably happen in your kitchen.

Are there things you could do now to reduce the amount of damage in your home from an earthquake in New Madrid, or anywhere else in the Midwest? What might they be?

Table 2: G107 Interview Questions

Please complete the following statement: The chances of having an earthquake in Indianapolis in the next 20 years is A. unlikely B. somewhat possible C. very likely. Please explain your answer to this question.

How can only 3 to 6 inches of rain within a 24-hour period cause a river to rise several feet?

Do you think the Earth is experiencing global warming? Please explain your answer.

A common belief is that: "The solution to pollution is dilution." Do you agree with this statement? Why, or why not?

Table 3: Student-Responses to the Questions

Student	Earthquakes	Flooding	Global Warming	Pollution
1	1/3	0/3	1/2	1/1
2	1/3	0/1	1/2	1/1
3	2/2	2/3	0/2	1/3
4	1/1	0/0	0/2	2/3
5	1/1	0/1	0/1	2/3
6	3/3	0/0	1/2	2/3
7	2/3	2/3	1/2	0/3
8	0/1	2/3	0/1	0/3

The first number for each topic is the value obtained at the beginning of the semester and the second number is that obtained at the end of the semester.

Scoring Rubric:

0 - Student says he/she does not know how to answer the question.

1 - Student tries to answer the question but does not have any previous knowledge to assist in answering it. Student does not use any information from class to answer the question.

2 - Student may have some previous knowledge of the topic and may use some terminology related to the topic. But, student does not use any information from class to answer the question.

3 - Student answers the question correctly. The student incorporates information from class into the answer.

Note: the statements in rubrics 1, 2 and 3 that refer to using class information to answer the question pertain to questions asked at the end of the semester.

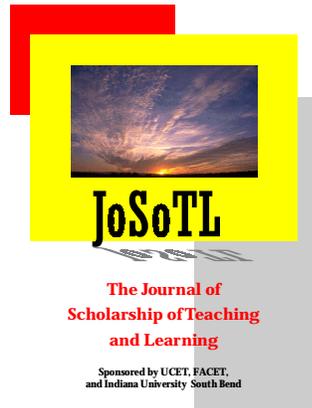
Table 4:

Data on Student Performance on the Final Examination for Five semesters

	Spring '97	Fall '97	Spring '98	Fall '98	Spring '99
Beginning enrollment	60	53	69	60	65
Final enrollment	52	46	56	50	56
% attrition	13	13	19	17	14
Mean grade	66	68	67	68	68
Variance of the grades	155.2	135.3	84.6	163.8	99.2

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Preparing Teachers and Students for Narrative Learning

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Abstract

Despite recent emphasis on active, participatory learning in nursing programs, few articles help teachers and students to learn *how* to teach or *how* to learn in non-traditional pedagogical situations. This essay shares our experience in developing a narrative-centered Family Nurse Practitioner program, and offers suggestions to help teachers and learners adapt to narrative learning.

Introduction

Despite recent emphasis on active, participatory learning in Nurse Practitioner programs, few articles help teachers and students to learn *how* to teach or *how* to learn in non-traditional pedagogical situations. Many programs are turning to case-based, problem-based, or *Practice-Based Learning* (PBL) to enhance student classroom experiences. However, most teachers and students have little experience with non-traditional classroom activities; as a result they are skeptical or even hostile when confronted with these innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Curricula are not easily modified, and graduates must still pass traditional certification examinations, so many schools are reluctant to undertake the major changes required to move to new pedagogies. These barriers have been used as a rationale for continuing outmoded and “toxic” methods of teaching, despite a growing body of literature promoting a more caring curriculum and more active learning techniques.^{1,2}

We developed a successful new Narrative-Centered Curriculum for Family Nurse Practitioners at our large university school of nursing. This essay shares our achievements and failures as we integrated Practice-Based Learning, clinical narratives, and focused self-evaluation into our innovative curriculum. We base our ideas on data from ongoing student evaluations, and on our own reflective self-evaluations. We suggest specific ways to help teachers learn how to interact with students in non-traditional ways as coaches and as guiding partners in classroom activities. We suggest strategies for overcoming hostility and frustration as students struggle to undertake more proactive and personally accountable roles in their own learning. We describe creative ways to integrate non-traditional, narratively-based activities into standard curricula, and ways to expand and change current teaching and learning approaches to improve quality in nurse practitioner education.

Modifying Practice-Based Learning

PBL: these familiar initials usually refer to “Problem-Based Learning.” PBL is any learning environment in which the problem or the issue or the story drives the learning. That is, **before** students gain some knowledge, they receive an identified problem to solve, they address learning issues, and then attempt to find the answers and apply them to the problem-at-hand. The problem provides the framework for students to determine what they do not know, and what they need to know. Using PBL, students discover that they need to learn something new before they can take on the learning issue and subsequently solve the problem.

The traditional and well-known “case study approach”, popular with business and other professional schools, may or may not be PBL. Often the case is used to integrate previously-learned knowledge and hence would not be, according to the prior definition, problem-based learning. Furthermore, the case study approach presents the learners with the story already constructed, with the major elements already given. Another form

of these strategies has been called “project-based learning” and is used in elementary and secondary schools to integrate learning experiences across academic subjects such as math, science, history, language, and social studies.

Practice Based Learning is the expanded term we prefer to use.³ This technique is aimed at professionals who already have an experience platform from which to launch their learning. Within the context of an innovative Narrative Centered Curriculum, we enable students to access a complex clinical story without telling them what they are “supposed” to learn from it. The story, told by a simulated or real client, speaks to the students’ own experience, giving them “hooks” to connect this situation to their individual previous knowledge as professional nurses. Each story contains critically important content they need to know, and students are motivated by their awareness of its relevance to practice. Collaborative learning, in the context of the need-to-solve-a-problem, stores knowledge in memory patterns that facilitate later recall for working with and thinking about related problems and concerns. Basing the story in experience, even as a virtual experience, facilitates learning by doing — and experience is one of the best ways humans learn well.

Ours is far from a purist approach to Practice Based Learning. The class is larger (about 20) than the traditional 6-8 students in a PBL tutorial group. Multiple faculty members participate in every class session as consultants, rather than as tutors. The student learning team is a “committee of the whole.” The students are professional nurses engaged in graduate education; they come to our program already focused on practice. They have well-developed clinical skills; this situation is precisely why Practice-Based Learning works so well with them.

Practice Based Learning In The Narrative Classroom

PBL really is a paradigm shift in education. It is not a fad. It is no longer a fringe innovation. It is a well-tested strategy used successfully in health professions education for many years. If small group, self-directed, self-assessed, life-situation learning is so great for learning, why isn't everyone doing it?

One reason may be fear of the unknown, both for students and for teachers. Using this approach requires that teachers change the way they teach so that learners can change the way they learn. Of course, change is difficult and risky. This pedagogical change, in particular, expects teachers to alter their traditional role as the center of attention and the source of all knowledge to become learning coach and enabler for the acquisition of that knowledge. The learning becomes student-centered, not teacher-centered. The teacher no longer controls what is learned; rather, the learners direct the learning. Clearly, the teachers must change first, and must assess and recognize elements within their teaching that are “toxic.” Toxic in this sense means actions that make teaching and learning harder and less satisfying, and that fail to let learning happen.

How We Began

We started from a position of being dissatisfied, discontented, and uneasy with traditional teaching applied to graduate education of experienced students with professional backgrounds as nurses. Our graduate students were diverse and came from varying levels of expertise. Attempts to “teach to the middle” meant losing everybody at the edges. Students and teachers were both frustrated and bored.

In 1992, the authors started teaching a course in pharmacology. We wanted to scale down our lecturing and emphasize case studies in an effort to make the course more attractive to practice-based students and more fun and challenging for us. We had planned to offer a number of written clinical cases every week, with study questions to help focus students attention on “What is the problem here? What is going on and what can you do about it?” We focused mainly on cases written by the teachers and chosen to illustrate specific critical concepts and content. We used cases based on real patients, so cases were sometimes messy and fuzzy and not just what the textbook described. We planned to present “mini-lectures” before the case discussions, as an advance organizer. However, we soon found that our lectures always ran too long. Perhaps we just found lecturing too easy! As a result, class time with the cases suffered.

We decided to give up lectures entirely. Instead of our usual “stand and deliver” approach, we started each class with the clinical cases, without advance organizers. Students worked through the cases using teachers more as consultants and validators than as givers of content. Cases took on unexpected new dimensions as students uncovered the content for themselves. Because we had less control over the content, we had to be prepared for a broader range of content possibilities. Even though we were not lecturing, we worked harder than we had in past courses where we just prepared an up-to-date presentation every week. Teachers had more fun, the students had more fun, and achieved the expected outcomes of the course with more depth, more retention, and more ability to apply their knowledge to the clinical situation.

In 1993, we had an opportunity to develop a completely new major within the framework of our master’s program. We knew we wanted to change the way we taught and we began to think of ways we could modify both classroom experiences and written work to promote more active learning. Teaching in a field that changes nearly daily where facts change and research continually contradicts what teachers, students, and preceptors thought we knew for sure forced us to be flexible. We found there was no way to “cover” the material, so we would have to work to uncover it instead. We had to give up notions of letting the content drive the learning because it was impossible to get a permanent handle on the rapidly changing content. We again vowed to stop lecturing as much as possible. We resolved to make the learning situations as relevant as possible, and as compelling as possible.

Using Stories

One of the best ways to make learning relevant is to connect teachers, learners, clinicians, and patients through telling and listening to stories. Ursula LeGuin (1981) points out the importance of stories as connection when she says “...by remembering it he had made the story his; and insofar as I have remembered it, it is mine; and now, if you like it, it’s yours. In the tale, in the telling, we are all one blood” (p.195).⁴ Recalling the narratives of practice in our lives became the central focus of this new curriculum. The five new courses designed for the FNP Major, used principles of Practice-Based Learning. This method was modified by emphasizing storytelling and narrative as the main source of clinical practice problems. Storytelling is a natural human experience and it is one of the foremost ways we learn in any situation. Stories tell it all. Stories come the closest to the way real life really is. This is public storytelling, in which teachers and students share clinical stories as a community of learners. Such stories must always be interpreted because it is interpretation that calls us to thinking and to action in learning. Teachers model ways to interpret stories so that students and others can learn reflective practices as they attempt to make meaning from experience.

At the same time we both were conducting research projects using interpretive and phenomenological approaches. We wanted to eliminate the philosophical and methodological separation between our research paradigm and our teaching paradigm. Focusing on interpreted stories and experiences helped us bridge what was formerly an uncomfortable gap between research and teaching. PBL is consistent with current philosophical views of human learning, particularly constructivism and interpretive hermeneutical phenomenology. These philosophies assume knowledge is not absolute, but is constructed and interpreted by teachers and learners based on previous knowledge and overall world views. Narratives, as constructions, fit well into this paradigm.

In trying to reconcile our research and teaching paradigms, we sought to teach in ways that supported human connectedness and in ways that reconstructed the relationships between teachers and students, among teachers, and between students and clinicians. We wanted a teaching method that supported open and collegial discourse, mutual investment in learning, trust, and human caring. This is not the way either of us were taught during our undergraduate or graduate educations. This is not the way we taught when we were new teachers. We had to work hard to break up the scar tissue caused by the old ways of teaching.

Assessing Ourselves And Our Teaching

Before any of us can “detoxify” ourselves, we must know something about the lenses through which we view teaching and learning. There are numerous methods by which to do such a self-assessment, including data-based survey tools developed specifically for this purpose.⁵ No matter whether one chooses a formal method, or a more personal

form of introspection, there are common elements to such a self assessment. This set of questions that might guide such an assessment:

1. What models of teaching and learning drive your work?
2. What do you think teaching is? What do you think teachers do?
3. What do you think learning is? What do you think learners do?
4. How do you see students as learners?
5. How important is control of content to you as a teacher?
6. What goals do you have for students in your classroom and clinical settings?
7. How do you evaluate new ways of doing things? How do you decide if a teaching innovation will work (or not) for you?

These questions are difficult to unpack and answer because they demand examination of basic assumptions and values that we are not usually aware of. Assumptions are, by their very nature, unquestioned or taken-for-granted truths. Heidegger's notions of things being "ready to hand" helps explain this. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger makes the argument that we use our everyday tools without having to think about their purposes.⁶ To examine the purpose of a tool, we must make it "unready to hand"--that is, we have to see it in a different light, or make it unfamiliar in order to question it. So it is with values and assumptions about teaching and learning.

In unpacking teaching and learning, we might ask, "Where and how did I learn to learn? Where and how did I learn to teach? Have both changed over time and experience?" As Glasgow points out,

. . . we know what we know because we either have been told or have personally experienced the acquiring of the knowledge. Educators know school because they have experienced it and, in their professional training, been told about it and had it interpreted for them. The educational institution, supported by the consistency of institutional beliefs and practices shared by educators, creates a working model for what schools are and how teachers will play out their roles. (p. xviii)⁷

Glasgow also notes that these unexamined models create inertia or "drag" that can impede a teacher's ability to see and respond to changes in the world of the classroom.

Perhaps nurse educators teach nursing the way we do because inertia is too hard to overcome. Maybe we think what there is to know about being a nurse has already been codified in our texts and teaching practices, and therefore needs no re-vision. How is it possible that we can always already know, from our long experience as teachers, what is important for students to learn?

The answers that each of us constructs about these (and other) questions give us direction and insight into what it is practically possible for teachers to do. If a teacher believes in the power of delivering knowledge-as-presentation, that students learn better with more structure, that the content is primary to teaching, and that the teacher's role is

to impart knowledge and to control the classroom environment--then traditional pedagogy is an excellent fit, at least for the teacher. Such a person would likely be lost and unhappy in a narrative centered classroom. If, however, the teacher is restless with the "stand and deliver" model of education and dissatisfied with having to be the final arbiter of knowledge and the omnipotent manager of classroom time--then self assessment leads to less teacher-centered models.

It is at this point we all confront our upbringing as teachers. Desire to change is only the beginning. We are toxic at this point, if only in the sense that it is hard to give up the tools that are most comfortable for us, even as they imprison us in old ideas. In truth, once having identified our basic assumptions and values about teaching and learning, we need to find ways to bring them into reflexive action. De-toxifying is an ongoing process, because beliefs about teaching and learning always show up in how and what we teach. McComb and Whisler state that "what teachers believe and assume about learners, learning, and teaching affects what they do, their behaviors and practices at the school and classroom levels" (p. 27).⁵

Keeping The Ideal In View

We had to keep our ideal of teaching in view at all times, reminding ourselves constantly that this is really the way we wanted to teach, no matter how difficult. It was hard to free ourselves from old habits of teaching. We had to make familiar teaching "unready to hand" so that we could examine it more closely. We tried to create an opening for changes to occur. We always asked ourselves: what can we do to take ourselves closer to our preferred way of teaching and connecting with students?

Attending To Evaluations

We paid careful attention to course evaluations and each time we taught a course we tried to determine where we were as teachers in the course. Course design evolved though we did not change the approved course objectives. Teaching strategies changed through many iterations. Gradually we learned to give up control in the short term to get a new and different kind of control in the long run. We had to uncover our assumptions, questioning whether they were true or worth keeping. When assumptions were no longer useful we abandoned them (not without some grieving, by the way, for the good old days when lecture was the Gold Standard). This process required constant self-critique and re-commitment to changing teaching. It also demanded preservation of what was good in our teaching, what promoted learning and supported efforts of learners to organize and understand new concepts and skills. Examples of traditional teaching strategies abandoned included lectures that attempt to cover everything students need to know; traditional seminar discussions; multiple choice tests or any "quick" assessment of learning; study questions and reading guidelines, required textbooks and required readings.

Inviting Teachers To Learn With Us

Faculty peers attended class as teachers, consultants, and “patients.” Once they saw how Practice Based Learning and the emphasis on narrative works in the classroom, and when they saw how this approach fosters successful learning, they began to trust the new methods. We believe seeing narrative centered teaching and learning in the classroom is a necessity. Showing this kind of teaching and learning in three dimensions, with all the to and fro of classroom interactions, takes it beyond the theoretical into the practical--which is after all, where most of us live as educators.

Teaching Partnerships

We are teaching partners, and this long-term partnership has revitalized our teaching and helped us make constructive changes. The arrangement is not “tag-team teaching.” We both attend all classes and participate equally. We talk with each other about how things are going, the good days and the not so good. We talk about our teaching to any interested colleague. In our experience, such conversations are rare, since most teaching is invisible both to students and to other teachers. We share our narratives, our curriculum materials, and our media resources. We want to make teaching and learning visible and available for comment and critique. We suggest that anyone trying to teach narratively have a partner. Partnerships may be within a course, a curriculum, or even across disciplines. This is someone to talk to, whine with, cry with, and debrief each class with. Continuous peer review is essential from someone who understands what the teacher is trying to do. Teachers cannot do this kind of teaching in a vacuum, and cannot do it alone.

We encourage all clinical teachers to attend each class. They see how the students are learn, and know what to expect when they see the students in the clinical setting. They participate in class as practice consultants, sharing their extensive clinical knowledge with students. We try to de-emphasize the hierarchical relationships between teachers and learners by letting students see clinicians and teachers as they learn and grow along with the class.

Aiming High

The teacher must surrender authority without creating chaos. The ideal teacher must be attentive to the learning experience of every student, must keep discussion centered on the interpretation of the meaning of the story/problem/issue, must give students time to think before answering, and must do what we say we are going to do, or have a good reason for changes. We try to be activators, more than simply facilitators. Striving to be trustworthy, we demonstrate follow-through and follow-up early in the curriculum. We promise students there will be no surprises on the test. We do the same assignments they do, and we show them our work as we critique theirs. When we are wrong or don't know, we admit it. We demonstrate our practice as they watch. As good academics, we may disagree in public, but always show respect for differing opinions.

**Sharon L. Sims,
Melinda M. Swenson**

***Preparing Teachers and Students
for Narrative Learning***

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We try to be imaginative and make creative use of our personal experiences. We don't pretend to know everything, but we do demonstrate how to make connections between things we do know and things we don't. We teach from the very edge of our knowledge all the time, rather than from the comfortable middle. We try to be sensitive to students' needs, try to read the room, try to hear what is said in the silences. We try to allow time for "wondering aloud."

What is important to us is fostering the clinical reasoning process in students. We must model the process of artful inquiry, emphasizing the method of thinking as much as the content. Teachers assist students in defining a problem, defining what they don't know, and figuring out how to solve the problem or find the answers. If we let them, students think independently and creatively. In our classroom, we rely on the open-ended question, usually a question to which there is no single correct answer. Sometimes the hardest thing we do is ask the right questions to stimulate thinking while keeping students focused and alert to all the possibilities. We try to model living with ambiguity and uncertainty, and we believe the hard work of detoxifying ourselves has made us better teachers.

Nel Noddings proposed some features of interpersonal reasoning that we like to apply to our relationships with our students. These are important aspects of the connection between teachers and learners:

- An attitude of solicitude or care
- Attention
- Flexibility
- Effort aimed at cultivating the relationship⁸

Guiding Students To New Ways Of Learning

The connection between teaching and learning is that good teaching lets good learning occur. We think this is a better way of learning. But if students are not ready for this change in approach, they may experience confusion, frustration, anger, and hostility. Getting students ready to learn is as important as preparing teachers to teach. We attend to student preparation specifically and persistently. The following suggestions are exemplars of good teaching, and being diligent in applying these principles helps students reduce their resistance to and suspicion about new ways of learning.

Our students are professional nurses and graduate students, and these methods are specific to this group. These approaches may not work for everyone and might not be acceptable or adaptable to all teaching situations. In traditional pedagogies, teachers want students to learn, to remember, to apply, to think, and to continue to learn after graduation. In contrast, students want to memorize, tend to forget, may fail to apply, and may resist continued learning.

Traditional assumptions of students include: 1) the teacher is the main source and disseminator of knowledge. After teachers, the book is always right; 2) learning equals memorizing the content; 3) wondering, and following your curious nature just wastes time; 4) all good work is fiercely individual. We try to change all these assumptions, for both teachers and students. The methods we suggest use some traditional aspects of preparing students to learn, but we have developed some new takes on some old approaches.

Making And Keeping Connections

Two first principles are prime: trust and listening. We build trust by including students in decisions that affect them, by doing what we said we would do, by not changing the rules in the middle of the course, by being responsive to the needs of individuals and the group, and by revealing our own thinking, our worries, our joys, our concerns. We privilege listening by modeling active and attentive hearing, by preserving class time for telling and listening, by responding to every student statement with some comment or idea that supports or enlarges it. We try never to make an assignment we would not do ourselves, and we usually do the assignments and share our versions with students as examples open for critique. We trust students with our work as we ask them to trust us with theirs.

Recruiting And Preparing Students

When prospective students ask about the major, we tell them not only about the goals of the program, but also about the somewhat unusual techniques of teaching and learning they will encounter in this endeavor. During interview conversations with applicants, we describe in greater detail what the educational experience might be like for them. Concrete, structure-driven learners may find they prefer a more traditional curriculum. We often say that the prime requirements for success in this major are flexibility and a sense of humor.

Before the first class, students receive a letter outlining our narrative approaches. We remind them that we use unusual practices of teaching and that we have unfamiliar expectations for classroom comportment. In each course syllabus, we go beyond the usual course objectives, topical outlines, reading lists, and assignments. We include expanded descriptions of what the classroom atmosphere will be like, what the experience of learning in new ways will be. We describe a typical class session and typical work at home. The syllabus includes our philosophy of teaching, briefly, and the story of why we changed our approach to learning and how we want to teach now. There are no secret agendas; students are “in on” the reasons for why we do what we do.

In the first class, it is critically important to make time for introductions. Teachers introduce themselves in detail, including descriptions of what interests them in and out

of academia. We talk about our own educational preparation, our research, our faculty responsibilities. Sometimes we tell what we are worried about and what we are eager to do in a class session. Each student also introduces themselves in detail, with information about their professional lives, their families, their hobbies and interests, and their expectations about the course. These introductions may seem to take up precious time, but we have found that it is just here that the cohort begins to coalesce, and the culture of the curriculum is established. We are making an opening in the circle of teaching and learning to welcome students and to gather them inside.

Releasing Students For Active Learning

At first, we use simple case studies with study questions to guide thinking. Gradually, we remove the questions, then remove the “received case,” encouraging learners to become more inductive and creative. No longer guided by a pre-arranged order of content, students confront learning issues that may seem to lack focus or direction. The faculty, however, do have a plan and a goal in sight. In general, the plan progresses from more structure to less, and from less complexity to more, course by course.

Faculty members demonstrate how to participate actively, especially during the first class of each semester. Teachers show how to be an active learner by always offering a response to statements, by asking specific students for comments, by encouraging debate and questioning.

Frequent communication, by email, telephone, and in person facilitates student comfort and trust. Students connect with teachers before a small crisis gets out of hand or whenever something seems not to make sense.

In Narrative Centered courses, everyone tells stories. These are written and improvised and read-out-loud. By showing how to interpret across stories, we teach how to look for similarities and absences, how to listen for silences, and how to look for thematic understanding of one story in view of another.

Non-academic social occasions, such as lunch or informal hallway discussions promote connections between learners and teachers. Teachers show how to embody listening by sitting down with students and other faculty members and focusing full and undivided attention on whatever issue is being discussed.

Gaps in the learning issues can worry both students and teachers. We prepare mini-presentations to fill in these gaps to alleviate fears of “missing” something critical. But these “consultations” always come after the clinical story has been explored, not before, and learners must identify that they need more information on a particular topic before a consultation can occur.

Teachers can show learners how to study. A student explained that she had to learn a whole new way to study, which involved taking every word or concept that was

unfamiliar in the clinical case, and looking it up until she was sure she understood it. As she was reading, she followed logical links, just as one does on the Internet, “clicking” on links bridging one concept to another. She learned that everything is connected, but not in a straight line. We focus on helping students connect content across the five clinical courses in the curriculum, to see that issues raised in one context appear again and again in other contexts.

Students connect to one another through learning teams, electronic mailing lists, study groups, and by exchanging consultations. Classmate cohorts become the nexus of a support system and consultation network in later professional life, and this skill is learned by helping fellow students through sharing notes, resources, expertise, information, and materials.

We track group and individual progress by being consistent in reminding students of content they have had before, though in a different context. The topic outline/table of contents appears at the end of each course, rather than at the beginning. The content emerges from the interaction of a particular class with particular Practice-Based stories in the form of learning issues unique to each class cohort.

Promoting Self-Understanding, Interpretive Practices, And Reflexive Compartment

Learners track their own progress by frequent self evaluation and reflection. Their progress becomes visible to them in ways they believe and trust. Formal written self-evaluation and reflection occurs at midterm and final in each course. Students grade themselves, providing justification for the grade within the expectations of the course and taking into account not how hard they worked, but how far they have progressed. Teachers have a “conversation” with the student, on paper, responding to the student’s self-critique. We return the midterm evaluations, and students resubmit them with their final evaluations, so that movement toward their individual goals becomes visible. Guidelines for these critical self-evaluations help learners know what to look for and what to consider in their justification of their own grade. Self evaluation allows learners to think more carefully about what they do know, and what else they need to know in their journey toward clinical excellence.

Teachers and students track the progress of every class session, with about 5 minutes at the end to talk about how the class is going, whether students are learning what they need to learn, whether they have enough time for questions, what they worry about. Teachers also reveal what they worry about. This is a space for students to reflect on what they learned that day (or what they wanted to learn, but didn’t). Changes in the next class are based on issues raised.

Teachers help learners practice working their way through “I don’t get it” to “what did I get?” Starting with what they do know reminds them of what they have already learned, and helps make the links back and forward in the curriculum, across courses.

The Ideal Classroom

We try to maintain conditions necessary for effective learning. Faculty must ensure a learning environment characterized by mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and accepting and welcoming differences. We envision a classroom where the goals of the learning experience coincide with the goals of the learners; where learners share responsibility for planning and conducting learning, and therefore have a commitment to it; where learners participate actively. This classroom, with narratives at the center, is our goal.

Not all students like this non-traditional, relatively unstructured, open way of teaching. Some (a distinct minority) would prefer lectures, assigned readings, and multiple-choice tests. This tradition is what they are used to, and have come to expect. However, students do respect our efforts to make learning real, relevant, and useful. The Narrative Centered Curriculum, using Practice Based Learning, works. Most students, even the resistant ones, develop positive attitudes toward learning as a result of their experiences in a narrative classroom. After graduation, they pass the requisite certification examinations, they are successfully employed as nurse practitioners, and they make outstanding preceptors for students who follow.

Summary

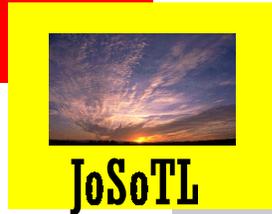
In this essay, we have told the story of our own evolution as teachers, and have presented ideas and techniques that other teachers may find useful in their own classrooms. We understand that teaching undergraduates differs from teaching graduate students. There are different challenges for teaching and learning in each and every class, and no single set of techniques will work for all. However, what we suggest is not so much that our techniques will work for every teacher and learner, but that teachers owe it to themselves to engage in this kind of self assessment and reflexive action. In this way, we can enliven teaching and learning, for ourselves and for our students.

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A Special Gift: Archetypes in Ancient Literature as a Reflection of Readers' "Languaged Understandings"

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Context

Arguably, all college instructors have an interest in a learner's reading skills even if we do not teach arts and letters. Logically, this interest extends to those products of student reading that Egan (1997) called *languaged understandings*: individual *recognitions* served by oral and written language activities. Many of us may similarly concur that learning is enhanced by if not dependent upon the learner's ability to connect something new to something known. Defabio (1993) claimed the ability to connect as critical to evaluating a learner's competence in language. In most classrooms, these connections likely involve a reader's linking parts of a text, text/s to texts, and sometimes texts to personal experience.

However, as nature and nurture vary, to make these connections, students are situated and motivated variously. While it seems incumbent upon an instructor to find ways to assist, only the student decides whether to take advantage of it. If decision-making is to some degree shaped by both feeling and thinking, as Myers Briggs theory has long supposed, then meaningful interactions with texts is more likely to occur more often for more students when assignments prompt both kinds of considerations.

A subject like literature naturally lends itself to affective considerations because its characters engage in behaviors and reveal attitudes which speak variously to readers' values. Although many of us were raised to see literature as providing *vicarious* experience, Rosenblatt (1938) was among the first to claim that reading literature creates *direct* experience with a text. Decades later, Rosenblatt (1978) distinguished the *text* from the *poem*, the latter being a construct of a reader's interaction with a text. Subsequently, reader response theory has won many proponents, who see *meaning* as a product of understandings generated as readers bridge gaps between language, text, and/or the writer and readers' worlds.

Purpose and Method

As we seek effective ways to help learners connect subject matter to prior knowledge or personal experience, we should not overlook tools that serve collective as well as individual *languaged understandings*. Thus, I use Rasmussen's (2000) redefinition of Egan's, *languaged understandings* as conceptual and physical methods "whereby people-in-relation come to understand, communicate, and negotiate meaning together." In this context, I present a case study from a literature course in which *archetypes*--concepts Carl Jung proclaimed to be part of the human collective unconscious--promoted reflective thinking, close reading, and links to personal experience within and across individual learners.

Although specializing in composition and rhetoric, I occasionally teach Western World Masterpieces I, from ancient to renaissance literature. My students are mostly freshmen, some having read Homer or a Greek tragedy or two in high school, but most arriving with relatively little prior knowledge of the material. At the outset, the potential to connect texts to one another is minimal. Moreover, many students bring along an attitude that equates *ancient* with *difficult*, *irrelevant*, and *boring*. Those who have come to college to get good or better jobs are daunted to look at the table of contents of a text that begins with *Gilgamesh*, an epic of the year 2000 B.C.E. What motivation can prompt them to mine *Gilgamesh* for intellectual nuggets, let alone personal ones? When the English Department recently elected to aim courses like L101 at recruiting prospective majors by combining critical goals with that of literary appreciation, I knew that I had to find something other than my own enthusiasm for the classics as an incentive to negotiate meaning, unlike years prior when I had relied less on cumulative reader responses and more on individual examinations. Subsequently, I found that archetypal study, combined with reader response, is a more effective and worthwhile technology for systematic and meaningful study of ancient texts.

What *are* archetypes? and how can they inject interest and relevance into ancient literature for new undergraduates? For the purposes of L101, *archetypes* name sets of character qualities observed in human beings that can be associated with a quest to live meaningful lives. This article will use a qualitative method to show how archetypal analysis engaged students to negotiate meaning in response papers that demonstrated both an ability and willingness to connect texts to one another and to their own lives. After laying out my rationale and the nature and scope of archetypal analysis, I will use excerpts of reader response papers from the first two weeks of last semester to show how students read closely and related well to these texts. The papers (half page or more) were word processed daily to address the assigned materials. Although readers could discuss the text either objectively or subjectively, they were expected to back up what they found significant with textual evidence. Response papers were awarded points on a 4.5 scale and comprised 40% of the course grade.

Process

On opening day, to start warming cold hearts toward ancient literature, I asked students, “Why study literature—especially ancient literature-- in a high-tech world?” Looking out on generally blank faces or raised shoulders, I invited them to talk about the authors, texts, characters, or themes they associated with the ancients. The name *Odysseus* came up, along with the notion of *heroism*. Except for a suggestion that heroes give us someone to model, the class showed little interest in the topic. Nonetheless, I knew from previous classes that Homer was alive and well. Few can read his work even in translation without experiencing its vitality. But to have this experience, one must be willing to read Homer, not merely *Cliff Notes*. I also knew I would give students a

reason to read closely by counting the response papers so heavily and by using them as an exam study guides.

While I did not have to worry about enrollment—L101 is required of English education and nursing majors—I had to worry about any negative expectations they brought if I wanted them to read Homer. To return to the first day's volley of conversation, more students joined the discussion as we focused on the benefits of reading recent literature. What they suggested was encouraging: literature lets us gain experience by walking in a character's shoes; it brings us adventure, insight, mystery, dreams, and possibilities; it helps us to test what we think is worthwhile. Asked if these benefits would be any different for ancient texts, although several agreed they would NOT be, they could give few examples. Their exposure to the classics had proved to be largely forgettable.

Continuing day one, I suggested that the course materials could achieve those goals but that they could also provide a kind of self-study, for—apart from academic arguments over its nature and identity--the *self* often interests students. I conceded that although Western literature might be a *family* study for some readers, for everyone, it would be a *cultural* study of diversity across several lands and eras. Similarly, I assured them that for those who wanted to relate more personally, the selections we read would also invite universal interpretations of characters, to show their striving against themselves, others, nature, and the gods.

Naturally, raising student expectations created my next problem: how to meet them. In structuring the course around reader responses, I knew it would not be enough to aim only for the mind, which wanders, tires, and changes. So I decided to anchor the mental to the emotional, and perhaps try to touch even those higher aspirations that we sometimes call *spiritual*, though not necessarily *religious*. Before dismissal, I advised readers that they would do well to relax and try to bring an open, beginner's mind to each reading. Also, I began to speak the language of arch- types: I suggested that leaving behind familiar expectations to enter the unknown world of the ancients would itself be a hero's journey. From it they could return with a treasure, a new sense of connection to the past and a deeper awareness of the human condition. The treasure would have a cost: the need to fight off the dragons of diversion. This language helped students take a first step toward identification because in some sense they would be enacting the same journey as the characters being studied.

Likewise, in closing the first day's class, I advised that, like Odysseus, whom the gods assisted, students would not travel alone. Class discussion and reader responses would help everyone to learn. Yet I cautioned that, unlike the ancients-- who shared a common faith in myth--we moderns are more at odds over spiritual matters. I cautioned that if we were to speak freely of personal and social values touching upon the spiritual—as the ancients surely did—we would need a common language that does not intrude on

religious belief or non-belief. At this point, I introduced the term *archetypes* as a tool through which we would interpret and discuss our materials. In using words like *soul* and *spirit*, we would be speaking of psychology, not of religion. Subsequently, the semester unfolded without negative incident.

In orienting L101'ers, I did not characterize archetypal analysis as the only or best way to read literature. Instead, I predicted that in other courses they would explore a variety of interpretive strategies. Meanwhile, I explained, archetypes would stimulate class discussion by inviting not just *conversation*—taking turns talking—but *dialogue*—constructing knowledge together. Thus it would promote collective *languaged understandings*.

Archetypes

Serving affective as well as cognitive considerations, archetypes encourage us to relate personally to what we read in the safety of metaphor. We do not have to put our deepest values at public risk where we can speak in the third person, offer hypothetical examples, role play, and imagine, while deciding privately whether and how something touches us. The word *archetype* was popularized by Jung (1964) who believed that human beings are psychologically driven by a collective force toward growth and higher aspirations. As dream images help make us conscious of our “unconscious reactions or spontaneous impulses” (p. 67), so archetypes are “symbolic images” as “instinctive as the ability of geese to migrate (in formation)” (p. 68). Like dream images, archetypes arise from within and when brought to consciousness, they tell us about our personal development.

This developmental process is addressed and simplified by Carol Pearson’s *Awakening the Heroes Within* (1991), a paperback supplement to our anthology. Pearson has grouped twelve archetypes in three sets of four, the qualities of each set relating to what she calls concerns of the *ego*, the *soul*, and the (*higher*) *self*, respectively. Yet she has described these concepts so clearly that one student reported reading the book’s 300 pages overnight. To summarize Pearson in my own words, *ego* names the human drive to create discrete boundaries that help us to differentiate “self” from “other.” *Soul* (from the Greek *psyche*) designates the human capacity to discover and to know meaning and purpose in life and to experience dissatisfaction without it.

Accordingly, during the second session of the term, I talked to students about these terms. Positive signs of *soul* arise when we experience a deep sense of meaning, purpose or self-knowledge, while negative signs manifest when we feel empty. Much of the time, we dwell between the poles, feeling both a connection with life and a separation. *Soul* is that mythical quality which calls the *self* to be fully alive and effective—to use its many archetypal resources for a cause beyond the *ego*. Thus, it is

soul-searching that puts us in touch with a mature sense of our *personhood*. Every individual's task, like that of every hero, is to birth, nurture, and communicate genuine "self expression" in this higher sense.

Gradually incorporating archetypal language to relate ancient literary characters to others and to their own lives, L101 readers accessed a new and ready vocabulary. Its concepts helped them describe how they and others viewed the world and to identify with or question certain associative qualities. Archetypal patterns also signaled the maturity levels at which a character may be said to operate in a particular situation, as well as revealing a number of smaller journeys along the *heroic path*.

Psychological patterns into which we organize our beliefs, feelings, and actions, archetypes live and die by their practical value. To interpret a character's experiences in a literature class, they provide entry into multiple features for analysis. To illustrate, in *The Odyssey*, where a father and son took separate journeys, students noted that in book 2, Telemachus felt abandoned by Odysseus. Reading Pearson, students saw that *abandonment* is a central concept of a drama of *fallen innocence*. Having located the archetype of *innocence*, they could examine a whole set of issues faced by Telemachus, including his struggles to remain safe, to seek rescue, to discern duty, and to trust authority.

Pearson pairs archetypes by their tendency to compete for our attention when we face a particular issue. Therefore, to discover one archetypal pattern is to discover a second. For example, *security* is a key focus for an innocent. In approaching *security*, Telemachus is caught in the tension of *the innocent* and *the orphan*. In fearing exploitation, an orphan plays a kind of "victim" role, whose pain suggests the need for others' help. Therefore, an orphan's task includes working to replace dependence on authority with mutual cooperation and interdependence. This archetype is reflected in Telemachus' goal to regain safety by casting out the suitors, his fear of their exploitation, his feeling victimized both by them and by his father's absence, his ability to experience the pain of these conflicts, and his willingness to look at a situation realistically. For instance, he accepted Athena's help in agreeing to his mission to leave Ithaca in search of news of his father.

When Telemachus journeyed away from home, a primary concern for him is no longer *security* but *identity*. To face its *dragons*, he is served by the competing archetypes of *seeker* and *lover*, whose patterns offer complementary, balancing resources. On the one hand, he risks security in leaving home. On the other hand, he risks disconnection from his family and homeland. In reconciling this tension, he finds greater autonomy, which prepares him to help his father defeat the suitors when they later joined forces. In turn, this act bonds him more directly to Odysseus.

In relating six paired archetypes to an individual's maturation journey, students did not choose the same issues to analyze the behaviors of Telemachus' father. Odysseus' concerns pointed to *responsibility* and *power*. For the one, he worked to balance the resources of his *caregiver* and *warrior* sides, for he had left his kingdom and family to serve the Greek cause in the Trojan War. Subsequently, during a ten-year battle to return home, Odysseus developed both skill in caring for his men and in competition and survival. Similarly, with respect to the issue of *power*, competing for Odysseus' attention are *magician* and *ruler* characteristics. While the one set led him through a series of synchronistic experiences that inspired him to mastery, the other set moved him homeward to heal the wounds caused by and in his absence.

Reader Responses

In interpreting *The Odyssey*, L101 students were free to decide which archetypal patterns applied to particular characters and events. Using archetypal patterns seemed to give them a confidence in choosing which manifested itself as strong verb selection. For instance, the following collage of brief commentary on books 9 and 10 from several students hints at a depth of ownership of the material:

"It is very hard NOT to find an archetype anywhere in the story. . . . [Although] we do see Odysseus as a great warrior archetype, we also see another side of him which is the orphan and caregiver" (Chris H.). A special instance of caregiving occurs "when three of his men ate the plant and lost their memory of home and duty. He had the choice of leaving them there [but] he . . . used the gifts of compassion and generosity by taking them" (Laura M.). Likewise, when Odysseus boasted to the Cyclops, "My Name is Nobody," he showed a magician's goal, "to cast off his old identity," which filled him with "courage and inner confidence [But] he was so caught up in his personal pleasure that he didn't stop to think of the consequences." He acted the "fool" in pursuing self enjoyment "in being clever. His pride led him not to think "of home, his men, or even his life. He was simply succumbing to being a human with frailties (and need I say shadow archetypes?)" (Kristy W.).

"The fool archetype" worked negatively here for Odysseus. Though it gave him "inner strength and motivation," it put him in "danger" when the Cyclops asked his father "to punish Odysseus severely" (Susan M.).

Another sign that archetypes enriched ancient literature study surfaced in accounts like that of Lisa D., affirming Rosenblatt's faith that readers gain more than vicarious experience. In reflecting on the *Odyssey*, she linked Athena's support of Telemachus in book 2 to an event in her own life, expressed safely in the third-person:

Once there was a young girl who had a baby boy when she was only 15. Her parents thought she should get herself through high school and then get a job to support her child. They never encouraged her to further her education, because it never occurred to them that education was important. She married at 19 and had two daughters immediately. With her husband's encouragement, she then went to college part time. [But] working full time . . . and caring for her family . . . turned out to be too difficult so she quit school . . . [until] the youngest was in 1st grade. . . . Although the world is frightening to her and she is constantly battling demons within herself, every time she crosses a hurdle she feels empowered, so every day she feels a little better about herself.

Of course, to allow personal revelation means that an instructor could potentially be called upon to intervene. This problem did not occur, but had it, I would have talked briefly with the student and made a professional referral. As a precaution, in the guidelines to response work, I cautioned readers to write only what they were comfortable to share with classmates in small groups.

Some students connected their personal lives to the material more overtly than Lisa. For instance, in thinking about how the Sirens lured Odysseus with their songs, one reader recalled that in her first year of high school, just as Odysseus relied on his sage instincts to resist betrayal,

Jody R. avoided the consequences of an unnamed temptation by wisely recognizing deception.

Likewise, Sheila F. saw in her current love life strains of Odysseus' dilemma between the rock of Scylla and the hard place of Charybdis, which led her to speculate, "I can either remain in love with this utter fool that has a girlfriend on the side, or I can attempt to force myself out of love with him and pretend to find someone else to fill the void!"

Another important personal link came from Mimi C., who identified with Telemachus' unquestioning obedience to Athena when she asked that he drop his travels and return home. One spring day her senior year of high school, Mimi received an urgent message to go home. Despite having two tests that day and a track meet that she would miss if she left, she obeyed. As a result, Mimi was gratified to know, "I rescued my mother from a bleeding problem which the doctors were able to repair before it could become a major health threat."

Not only were L101 readers sometimes able to see the heroic in their own behaviors because of archetypal study, but they could let go of the self-consciousness not atypical of a freshman response. This ability was evidenced in the following cultural reflection provoked by Odysseus' rationale for getting involved with Kirke: "Now, being a man, I could not help consenting." To this, Kristy W. retorted,

Oh Please! Men have been claiming that excuse since the Classical Greek era . . .

. . . Archetypical characteristics are running wild! Odysseus finds a feeling of safety after so long, that “innocence” convinces him to stay. He stays for a long time, however, because of obvious passion from the “lover” archetype. He seems to have abandoned his gifts of control and responsibility given by the “ruler.” I could write a book about how men simply need to get their Archetypes straight in order to remain faithful to their wives.

But with fair-minded balance, Kristy was kinder to Odysseus when he exclaims, “I sought out Kirke, my heart high with excitement, beating hard”:

Whoa! Slow down Odysseus! He is so complex in this passage. He’s the lover who follows his bliss, the fool who has the gift of joy and freedom, the warrior confronting the problem for his men, and the magician who wants to transform his problems into something less stressful and freeing. After being so weighted with such a journey, it is almost expected that he will be enticed by the goddess. Although here he does not act with his men in mind, who can blame him at this point?

Kristy linked Odysseus’ rationalization to four different archetypes, none assigned thus far. Obviously, she had enjoyed reading and writing about Odysseus as if he were a real human being whom she found worthy of her feelings.

This level of engagement was not evident until week two. We spent the first week on Genesis, in which students applied Pearson’s chapters on the *innocent* and *orphan* archetypes to stories of the “Fall,” “Cain and Abel,” “Noah,” and “Jacob” to describe what happened and what it meant. During this time, they learned to discuss archetypal maturity in terms of five possibilities: the *call* or initial driving force, the *shadow*, or unconscious manifestations, as well as three operative levels of behavior which reflected increasing growth.

Interpreting literature through archetypes similarly matured L101 students’ understanding of the symbolic nature of language and the developmental role of myth in everyday life. For instance, readers could see the *innocent* and *orphan* archetypes as myths for understanding that life can be better. While the innocent tries to rejoin the tribe, the orphan moves toward exile or rebellion. The difference is in the details.

Samples from early response papers showed students bonding with ancient characters and collapsing the boundaries of time, space and culture that can make ancient literature so remote. Also, they suggested how readers picked up “nuances” in a text surprising for freshmen. Even though the new terminology was initially a stretch, clearly students could employ archetypal concepts with insight. To illustrate, Lisa C. interpreted the story of Jacob through the orphan response: he exploits others to avoid exploitation:

Jacob is disillusioned when his mother instructs him to deceive his father, Isaac. He does so by tricking him to believe he is his brother, Essau, who is to receive the blessing which Jacob wrongfully obtains. Jacob's situation is similar to the example given by Pearson that the Orphan Archetype may be activated by different occasions such as when employers expect us to be complicit in unprofessional practices. (Lisa C.)

Noting his exile to Haran, where Jacob has sought to build a family by working seven years for Laban's daughter Rachel, only to be given her elder sister Leah, another student characterized Jacob's response to Laban's trickery as "giving up on failed authorities."

Yet another classmate caught a more mature Jacob later in the tale:

This story takes a turn for the best when Jacob is confronted with God (thigh out of joint). He battles with God and . . . [accepts] that he was in need of God's help . . . to be rescued. . . . When Jacob and Essau greeted each other [again], they were able to work civilly with one another. (Alicia B.)

Connecting with Jacob through personal experience, some students identified with the parental favoritism of his father Isaac for Essau and of his mother for Jacob. For example, Mariann B. observed,

"I can see when issues arise around my household which parent takes which children's side. . . . My mother didn't always agree [with my actions], so she would let me know what she thought. . . . [but my father's] silence . . . [seemed like] betrayal, leaving me to feel like the Orphan.

Still another reader connected Jacob to her own personal goals:

What really made me respond to this story was that even though Jacob got what he wanted in life, not without being tricked himself a few times by Laban, he still realized that without your family and feeling good about yourself none of it really matters. When Essau and Jacob are reunited there is no hard feelings left between them. . . . The magician is also an apparent archetype in this story because of the way Jacob transformed himself to be a worthier man. The wrestling scene between Jacob and God is in part to show the inner struggle Jacob is having with the fool in him to make up for his colorful past. . . . [Like Jacob], my personal struggle is to find out who I am and to be the best person I can be. (Laurie T.)

In addition to the cognitive and affective benefits of archetypal study, I have noticed its prompting links of new texts with prior ones, generating *intertextuality*. Drawing on the

Latin word *intertexto*, which describes a woven kind of intermingling, Julia Kristeva coined this term to suggest that texts are more broadly constituted than by their authors because, sharing the structures and language of other texts, they absorb and transform one another. For instance, after the first two classes on Genesis stories, in responding next to the early part of the *Odyssey*, one student linked Athena's cue that Telemachus return home to Ithaca with Jacob's wrestling with the angel. A second reader noticed the parallel between Odysseus' men eating the forbidden heifers of the sun god to Adam and Eve's disobedience. He observed, "Wrong choices cost us: a thunderbolt destroyed their ship. Yet Odysseus is able to escape, floating back towards Skylla." Despite such setbacks, Homer used the way Odysseus deals with them to "define what kind of a person he is" (Jeff S.).

Literary Appreciation

Without the use of archetypes, students in previous classes characteristically had conceptualized *myth* as *falsehood*. Those who used archetypes found myth less threatening. For example, gradually, they could discuss the ways in which an archetype like the *warrior* may vary in content from culture to culture, while remaining in form. In accepting myth as an expression of culture, they could also find myth in "films, music, education, religion, politics, art, literature, ..., advertising, fashion, child-rearing practices, [and] sexual behaviors" (Feinstein & Krippner, 1988, p. 5). Moreover, readers could appreciate how myth lives or dies as a function of both cultural and personal belief and why a culture or person may outgrow and abandon or modify myth. In turn, they could find instances in which myth expressed a character's images, hopes, ideals, and values and motivated action. To understand myth on this level, we talked about how personal crises mark transitions when one archetypal approach or pattern no longer serves and another has yet to be developed.

Although I could offer more examples of the engaging remarks that archetypal study has elicited from L101 readers, those presented illustrate the power of archetypes to anchor the mental with the emotional and the spiritual. I know from my own experience how motivating this can be. Consequently, I would like to close with a few final excerpts, the first four taken from anonymous course evaluations. Their effect on me has sealed the likelihood that I will continue to use archetypes to recruit student hearts for the humanities.

1. "I don't normally like literature, but [this course] showed me a new side of it and how to see it in my own relations."
2. "I like how this course made [clear] the relation to my own life. I have a deeper understanding of myself because of it."
3. "I learned much more in an era of literature that usually interests me little. The emphasis on the mythical hero was extremely enriching."

4. "This course was unbelievably meaningful to me. It was exactly what I needed at this point in my life."

Accordingly, archetypal study gifted L101 students, and they, in turn, gifted me. Their *languaged understandings* reflected their own developmental path in the course. They moved past a fear for their security in studying ancient literature, through an ability to identify with its themes and characters, to take responsibility for their reading, to find power in their writing. From an *ego* perspective, they examined how the ancients made their way in the world as *warriors* and *caregivers*, trying to balance the obligations to *others* with needs of *self* (innocent, orphan) to be loved and protected. In *soul* terms, they dramatized life's greatest mysteries: death (*destroyer*), passion (*lover, seeker*), and rebirth (*creator*). In *self* terms, they experienced myth on a personal level, their *ruler, magician, fool, and sage* bringing them safely home. One reader response on Odysseus' homecoming captured what *home* meant to her:

I have always wanted to come home. When I was young I never seemed to be content at summer camp. Even if I found a hundred new friends to write, and even more mosquito bites to scratch, I wanted home. [Later], I had the time of my life on vacation in Texas, but somehow the comfort of a clothes covered floor and rumpled sheets kept calling me back. [Even now at the end of a work day] when the clock ticks midnight, I am already on my way to the car with keys in hand. My bed, my dog, my Mom, my Dad, the full refrigerator, and the empty dirty clothes hamper in my room all speak of home. *They warm my soul.*

Part of homecoming is not only coming back to what you left, but to realize where you have been [-to look at the-] gut-wrenching, sometimes heart-breaking decisions we make that shape our future paths. Mine is made of memories, my hopes and my dreams . . . that have molded me into the path I now take.

Speaking then of Odysseus, the writer also speculated on the drive that kept alive his dream of returning to Ithaca and his Penelope:

Maybe Odysseus did not know what he was to find at home, but . . . he knew what he left behind. In never forgetting where he has been, Odysseus has shaped his character into what he will become after his journey is over. The calm that is home is a sanctuary to the hero. (Kristy W.)

Sanctuary seems a desirable place to end a journey: a room of one's own that replenishes for the next leaving. Archetypal study made L101 a kind of sanctuary. It was a place to take comfort in the privacy of one's own thoughts about the good life and to catch the *heroic vision* for a time. As the following response perhaps says best, it was a place to set aside the *ego's* concern with life's insignificance to answer the *soul's* call to live life *large*.

I am beginning to learn the value of the human spirit. It takes awhile to get over the childishness of needing to possess material things to realize that a life filled with passion, empathy, and heart is better. As I get further along in life, the holes in my soul that were never filled by clothes or cars are made whole again by the experience of sharing my life with others. . . . The secret of [the human condition] is not only to live, but to have something to live for.” (Allison L.)

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