Large Lecture Class Activity for Multi-Ethnic American Literature (English 1200)

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Q2S Large Lecture Class Activity for English 1200

Abstract:

This Q2S Enhanced Pedagogy submission provides a sample activity to engage students in Large Lecture English 1200: Multi-Ethnic American Literature by analyzing Robert Frost’s “A Leaf-Treader” with metaphoric substitutions for vulnerable and empowered groups in American culture.

GLOs (General Education Learning Outcomes) associated with this course require that the students enhance their skills in the following categories:

Diverse Perspectives
Critical Literacies
Thinking Critically
Ethical Responsibility
Integrative Learning

In-class Assignment:

1. As a class, determine a specific group for each of the following categories:
   
   A. A specific culture
   B. A specific disability
   C. A specific social class
   D. A specific sex
   E. A specific sexual orientation
   F. A specific religion
   G. Veteran
   H. A specific age group

   (Of course, the instructor can expand, modify, or limit these categories)

2. After the specific group for each of the categories has been established, assign each student a letter from this list. The student now belongs to the group in that category.
3. Arrange the students into groups based on their assigned letter category.
4. Read Robert Frost’s “A Leaf-Treader” to the class.
5. Ask the groups to consider “leaves” as the specific group in their assigned letter. For, example, group A represents a specific culture, such as Mexican American. So, “leaves” would represent Mexican Americans in the poem.

In groups, address the following questions:

1. Who is the metaphoric speaker in the poem discussing leaves? For example, if a group representing letter “C” determines those in the “lower social class” as the “leaves,” then the speaker in the poem would probably be someone from the “upper social class.” The goal is to juxtapose a metaphoric vulnerable group and a metaphoric empowered group, both directly connected to American culture.

2. Given your group’s designation and the speaker in the poem your group has established, how exactly does the speaker “tread” on leaves in American culture?

3. How does the speaker feel about the actions the speaker takes or does not take in relation to the leaves?

4. What does the term “autumn-tired” mean in terms of the speaker’s metaphoric representation?

5. Does the speaker have any regrets in the first stanza?

6. Why were the leaves “more lifted up” than the speaker “all summer long”? Were they lifted by a moral or ethical imperative, for example?

7. What eventually happens to the leaves?

8. What does the speaker hear as the leaves fall?

9. What does the speaker think the leaves want to do?

10. How did the leaves speak “to the fugitive” in the speaker’s heart? What does the speaker try to escape in his heart?

11. What danger do the leaves pose to the speaker? Why is the speaker afraid?

12. How does the speaker handle the falling of the leaves?

After this group project, each student will use the information from the discussion to create a written evaluation of the discussion.

Writing Assignment:

Create a 2-page Evaluation in which you respond to the following questions:

1. Recall and indicate who was designated as the “leaves” in your group. Who was designated as the “speaker”?

2. Demonstrate how you understand the role-playing in this activity by giving specific examples drawn from American culture to defend the rationale for the assignations your group made in question #1.

3. Apply your interpretation of how the “speaker” – or the Empowered Group – explains the response to the “leaves” – or the Vulnerable Group – in American culture?

4. Analyze the ramifications of the “speaker’s” action in American culture.
5. Evaluate the moral or ethical issues that the Vulnerable and the Empowered group present?
6. Create an analysis of hypothetical scenario in which the Empowered group – the speaker – switched places with the Vulnerable group – the leaves.

A Leaf Treader

I have been treading on leaves all day until I am autumn-tired.
God knows all the color and forms of leaves I have trodden on and mired.
Perhaps I have put forth too much strength and been too fierce from fear.
I have safely trodden under foot the leaves of another year.

All summer long they were overhead more lifted up than I;
To come to their final place in earth they had to pass me by.
All summer long I thought I heard them threatening under their breath,
And when they came it seemed with a will to carry me with them to death.

They spoke to the fugitive in my heart as if it were leaves to leaf;
They tapped at my eyelids and touched my lips with an invitation to grief.
But it was no reason I had to go because they had to go.
Now up, my knee, to keep on top of another year of snow.

By Robert Frost