

Lesson Plan

November 2, 2017

Are you paying attention now? Do I have your attention? I am not playing. If you intend to get a passing grade in this course, go back and read the previous slide.

There are two rules in Block Club

We read

We write

Don't mess with a Blockhead!

Also,

I want each of you to feel confident with how you use our language. How you use the English language will in many ways direct the course of your life. To create a vibrant life, you must first create vibrant thoughts. Reading does this best because reading best matches what goes on inside of our heads: we think in words.

The stream of consciousness, thought patterns, our own thoughts, they direct everything we do. "I'm hungry," then I eat. "I'm tired," then I sleep. "I love you," then we kiss. No, she says we marry first. Now we have a problem. We will resolve our problem using our words.

Which words you choose will determine who you marry! Because words always come before actions.

And that's one reason I love reading fiction. It plays out situations that might be similar to my own, and give me new ideas on how to resolve them.

Plus I find beauty in the language,

HEY!

Would you like to look at poetry?

Listen to poetry?

Write

and

Speak

poetry?

When I was in high school, (yes, there were high schools even before the dinosaurs), I thought poetry was for girls. *Song writing* was for guys, and wasn't musical either, (Labeling myself into oblivion), so I felt left out of both. I couldn't be having feminine interests like poetry in high school, it might look *weak*. That's another beautiful thing about working here at Morton. I find the students beautifully tolerant of one another, very accepting of many shades of life. You guys are also a very nice crowd, just a little or sometimes a lot off base most days, always nice, though. And respectful. I thank you.

And of course I had gotten lost in semantics. Song writing IS poetry, of course. Easy to see that now, but not when my primary concern was fending for myself, I wasn't going to take that chance of looking weak.

So now that I finally figured out that poetry IS song writing....

I ask you to look at your favorite songs, read the lyrics,

why do you relate to this particular song?

Remember: you do not have to do these prompts in order. Most of you have more than enough still to do; but rush jobs will be seen for just that:

So maybe a little lyricism will slowly settle our souls

As we wander about searching ourselves for that song to share,

And looking more closely at the words.¹

And for some of you speed writers, "Slow down." You are spitting these papers off in minutes like you're a short order diner cook and your proud of your speed. I, though, see your writing from a different angle.

I see it as a proprietor. In this instance, however, it is not as the proprietor of the Cabrary, but rather the owner of a window cleaning company in Chicago for thirty years. After running around the country in the five years learning the trade from every old-timer and frantic boss, (send a bunch of booze hounds out all over the city to reach the roofs and scale downward, a long board at their feet or a small seat under the butt, the faster they worked the more money they made, and I made a lot.

Blew it all. Don't ask.

Then I became the boss. I did not have to get frantic. If a worker did poor work, I would fire him and then do the work myself until I found a replacement. Most bosses did not have that back-up. What to do?

And so because my clients could depend on me, I made a lot of money cleaning all those windows in Chicago.

¹ I imagine there are minds a fluttering with project ideas.

Blew it all. Don't ask.

And what the customer cared most about was quality. You cannot half clean a window. You cannot just wash the middle of the glass; and don't cut the corners, you think it's no big deal, but you are not the lady inside who takes great joy in her lakeshore thirty-second floor view of both the lake and the city. She and her husband maybe paid 1.5 million for the condo and the assessments are through the roof! "So the least I should get for all that money is a decently cleaned window!"

And that, my friend, is what the property manager will hear when he picks up his phone the next morning. And then he calls me and I gotta go back to the building and hang my rope and slide down your thirty-seven story building² and stop at thirty-two and clean it again, then shoot down three hundred feet, my feet bouncing off that wall of glass... Fast is fun, but fast heats the metal holding me alive, so it's a slow ride, lots of swirling, nothing to do but slide down the wall at an even pace, ever so often stopping to take a breath and enjoy the view. Then slide down the rest of the way until I tap the sidewalk. I unhook my seat from the D-ring holding the cylinder and let the seat fall to the ground.

Thy cylinder spins and whips about as the rope unwinds. As it slows, I stick my hand up under my T-shirt to grab the cylinder because I know it's going to be too hot to touch. So I quickly grab the cylinder from the rope and drop it into my bucket of water. There is quickly a sizzle. It was a fun descent, but from that sizzle, I know my cylinder is that much more worn, that much weaker.

I can't afford to buy a new one because I blew my money.

And I needed that property manager to be happy because he makes the decision which windows he will pay me to clean and from day one I have never had to look for work because I know how to use both my body and my brains. I show people how I use my body with clean windows. I show people how I use my brain with my language.

That property manager is happy now. That lady on the thirty-second floor is happy now. I am happy now. You are fired.

You see? Consider window cleaning as an analogy. What does a window represent, a clean window as opposed to a dirty window? What does it symbolize? That is not only a school question; that is a life question.

And now where do you go? Wherever you seek, whether it be another job, back to school, back home, it will be through your language that your journey proceeds.

And so as a teacher, as a workingman, and as a businessman, I cannot say to you, "That is good enough," when it is not good enough. And it would not be fair to those who love you. They are providing for your education.

Let's see what ya got

² On a lot of buildings, a lot of the outside glass cannot be accessed from the inside. That created good side money, e.g. mostly caulking and window repair and glazing, Try to be creative when envisioning a life for yourself. This is not about choosing a career or anything. It is only about, "What do I want to look at next, read next, learn next because I am interested.

Can I be interested in something that I know nothing about? Maybe, if I'm curious. Stay curious.

Anybody want to read a poem?³

Poetry is a fun way to fall in love with language

I will say no more

And let you explore

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/browse#page=1&sort_by=recently_added

Now go to the above link

And tell us what you think

³ This writing is a first draft. As I began to read through it after having written it, I noticed many errors. Most of those errors are still there. I wonder if you can find them, edit the story, enhance it and even make it your own. The possibilities are endless.