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Selective Methods of Teaching Secondary English: The Scarlet Letter: A Study and Application of the Collaborative and Mastery Learning Methods

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SELECTIVE METHODS OF TEACHING SECONDARY
ENGLISH - - THE SCARLET LETTER: A STUDY
AND APPLICATION OF THE COLLABORATIVE
AND MASTERY LEARNING METHODS

KARDAS

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Selective Methods of Teaching Secondary
English--The Scarlet Letter: A Study and
(TITLE)
Application of the Collaborative and Mastery
Learning Methods

BY

Janine M. Kardas

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in English

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1990

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

August 17, 1990
DATE

Spk for Don Dalton
ADVISER

August 17, 1990
DATE

Michael Jordon
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ABSTRACT

This study is about the relationship of content in teaching to the process in teaching for the purpose of helping students to become better readers of literature. This study investigates two selected teaching strategies supported by research to be effective, and applies them to the teaching of a canonical piece of literature, The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne. This study employs literary theory in the development of the objectives and applies both cooperative learning and mastery learning methods to the teaching of this novel. Two sets of lesson plans are developed from the objectives and subsequently analyzed for their effectiveness against a set of criteria established by experts. The study then hypothetically compares and contrasts each method and examines their appropriateness in relationship to achieving the stated objectives.

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INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship of content in teaching to the process in teaching for the purpose of aiding students in becoming better readers of literature.

Literary scholars believed for centuries that being a serious student of literature was all that was necessary for a person to teach it. This notion is still believed by many today. The assumption that this study makes is that effective teachers of literature must be firmly rooted in their knowledge base. If the effective teacher incorporates teaching strategies that are supported by research in his or her classroom repertoire he or she will be able to teach literature in ways which allow the students to be ultimately better readers.

Analysis of the fundamental characteristics of dramatic literature enables students to become effective readers. Therefore it follows then that these essential elements must be included in the objectives for teaching dramatic literature. The "what is to be taught," comes from literary theory, and the "how it is to be taught," comes from those teaching strategies that are supported by research to be effective methods of teaching literature by educational theorists.

This thesis will utilize literary theory in developing the objectives for teaching a novel, The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It will apply two different methods [cooperative and mastery learning] to two sets of lesson plans for classroom instruction. One set of plans will be based on mastery learning, and the other set of plans on cooperative learning. To my knowledge no one has ever applied these two methods to this novel. This thesis will also compare and contrast these methodologies and examine the appropriateness of each method in relationship to achieving the stated objectives.

It is hoped that this study will provide the background material for the teacher of literature, and to explore alternate avenues for the effective teaching of literature. Also, it is hoped that this pursuit will help and encourage students to reach their potential as readers of literature. In addition, it is hoped that the teacher who is also a serious student of literature understands the interrelatedness of the knowledge presented in this paper and uses its ideas to interest more high school students in the fascinating world of literature. Too many high school youngsters do not acquire sufficient tools to study the classics; perhaps if this study enables some high school teachers to look at and test more effective teaching strategies, and to succeed with their students then the time

I've spent trying to bring it to their attention will have
been worthwhile.

CHAPTER ONE

WHY STUDY THE SCARLET LETTER?

A RATIONALE FOR TEACHING

THE SCARLET LETTER

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne was selected for study because it is a complex novel, and considered by many literary critics Hawthorne's masterpiece. It is also a canonical piece of American literature, commonly found in high school English curriculums. For a literary work to be called a masterpiece in our own culture it depends, "on a cultural consensus usually elaborated by those who are trained, about what it means for literature to be 'great'" (Baym, xviii). Nevertheless, the first question that lies ahead is why teach The Scarlet Letter? Hawthorne's novel The Scarlet Letter was immediately recognized by the literary critics of his time as having all the essential elements of a literary masterwork. According to Baym,

"every critic who has written about The Scarlet Letter has acknowledged that its plot is concisely elaborated in a structure that is virtually perfect in its pacing and symmetry; and that its style—more stately, and less colloquial than is now the norm—displays a rich command of linguistic resources, including an extensive and precise vocabulary, diverse sentence structure, modulations in tone, and a striking variety of rhetorical devices ranging from attention to the sound of words on through the complicated

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development of figures of speech, images and symbols" (xix).

Due to its complexity and perfection as a literary work, one who sets out to teach it needs not only to develop solid teaching objectives, but also needs to examine why he or she selects to teach those objectives in the first place. The objectives selected are derived from current literary theory, giving us the answer to "what is to be taught." Moreover, it is essential that a road map, if you will, be developed by the teacher to guide the student through the novel. The objectives chosen must be utilized in such a way as to ultimately make the student a better reader of literature.

The following objectives were carefully developed for the purpose of teaching this literary work to high school students. They are a way of breaking down the subject matter (The Scarlet Letter) in order to teach the student to become a better reader of literature.

1. to describe the Puritan Age in which the novel takes place, and Hawthorne's heritage
2. to analyze conflict, resolution, and structure, leading to a recognition of theme
3. to identify, analyze, compare and contrast the four main characters in the novel and how they relate to each other
4. to define symbolism and identify Hawthorne's use of symbolism to fully understand The Scarlet Letter

5. to develop a comprehensive understanding of The Scarlet Letter so that the students may extrapolate their own meaning in this novel as well as that of Hawthorne's

The first objective is to develop an understanding of the historical setting of the novel, and to contrast it to Hawthorne's own times. The student who grasps the historical setting will perceive why the characters in the novel think and behave in the manner that Hawthorne describes. It is clear then that in order to initiate modern adolescents into Nathaniel Hawthorne's fictional world of Salem Massachusetts in 1645, the student would need an understanding of the novel's historical setting and Hawthorne's heritage. As times change, the culture changes so that the reader may be trying to understand thoughts and attitudes quite foreign to the social milieu in which he or she is living. One example of how perceptions change would include the psychologists of Hawthorne's day that thought the three faculties: heart, mind and soul "constituted the nature of man" (Gross,18). "Thus Hester is a woman where the heart predominates; Chillingworth a man in whom the mind predominates, and Dimmesdale a man in whom the soul, or spirit, predominates" (19). Pearl is the human embodiment of the scarlet letter. She is representative of the "A" which adorns Hester's chest. "Pearl seems to have a special, original relation to the letter. She is not only the letter

as Hester might conceive it, but its agent in a scheme that is quite independent of her" (Baym, 57). As the students develop a contemporary understanding of Hawthorne's book they will also be able to ingest various perceptions of the characters. Moreover, it is not only interesting to know about the author's life and his ancestors, in the case of Nathaniel Hawthorne, it is enlightening, as rooted in Hawthorne's Puritan heritage, is the historical setting for his book The Scarlet Letter. Also, having the historical setting clearly understood by the student will in turn only enhance their ability to analyze the conflict, resolution, structure, and eventually recognize a theme.

The second objective deals with analyzing conflict, resolution, and structure in hopes of leading to a recognition of theme.

Conflict within a novel is a "struggle which grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot" (Holman, 118). The "opposing forces" can be man, nature, an object, an animal, fate or destiny, society and a conflict within (inner conflict). It is the conflict within The Scarlet Letter "which provides the elements of interest and suspense" (118). What makes dramatic literature dramatic is the fact that conflict is at its center. "Conflict is the raw material out of which plot is constructed" (119). One way in which resolution occurs is when the forces are no longer in opposition, and one force is essentially

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eliminated.

Teaching resolution to high school literature students helps them come to terms with the difference between literature and real life. In literature conflict comes to an end when forces are no longer opposed; in real life conflict generates more conflict. When reading significant literature many conflicts never seem to resolve themselves, resolutions are not easy to come by, and are often impossible. One option could be that one of the opposing forces must leave. For example, when man opposes society man must leave as society cannot. Moreover, man and society have equally compelling and valid claims, as man is entitled to his individuality, and society expects him to be a part of mankind. Nevertheless, conflicts produce an epiphany, and a fresh way of seeing things and thus produce a theme. Conflicts produce moments of choice; the turns in plot come because of minor recognitions. Finally, a recognition occurs because a character has made a major decision which in turn affects the plot.

The third objective is to identify, analyze, compare, and contrast the four main characters in the novel and how they relate to each other. It was selected because it will hopefully enable students to readily discern the individual traits possessed by each character, and the way these traits interact with each other to produce conflict, plot, etc.. Hawthorne's cast of characters is not very large, and "none

of them are wholly realistic characters" (Baym,52). His characters would be out of place in a "detailed and particularized world of conventional realistic fiction" (52). When studying a character many theoretical approaches can be taken; however, when teaching high school students a holistic approach is perhaps the most valuable one. Isolating the character, as well as seeing the character in a social context is important. Isolating the character for analysis helps the student see a pattern of behavior within the character; nevertheless, seeing a character in his or her social context can help the student see how the character interacts with others. By examining the words and actions of the characters, the student will be able to come to an understanding of the inner workings of the characters. With this understanding at hand, the student can then see the important role the character plays in producing conflict and plot.

The fourth objective is concerned with teaching symbolism in The Scarlet Letter. When teaching high school literature students the fundamental elements of symbolism, a recognition of the entities in their lives which exist for them as symbols is essential because it provides surplus value. This, in a sense, shows the student that whatever object might have symbolic meaning for them, might not have meaning for another person who perhaps has that same exact object. Also when we invest objects with symbolic value we

do it on a unconscious psychological level. Perhaps we are unaware until something or someone forces us into close scrutiny or analysis of what kind of value we are investing in things. Therefore, symbols force the student into a recognition that there is more meaning there than meets the eye. One must recover and uncover the values, meaning, and significance these things have as symbols. Doing this in The Scarlet Letter will help the student look at the associational context, and hopefully help them determine a dominant symbol within the novel, as well as the other symbols which are present.

According to Charles Fidelson Jr., "with respect to symbolism, as in every other way, The Scarlet Letter, is a special case among Hawthorne's works. Here since the very focus of the book is a written sign, he has no difficulty in securing a symbolistic status for his material. The symbolistic method is inherent in the subject, just as the subject of symbolism is inherent in the method" (10).

This novel is perhaps one of the very best examples of an author's use of symbolism to tell his story. It allows students to develop an understanding of how symbols make meanings and how meanings make symbols. Bartel supports this notion when he writes:

Learning to recognize symbols is largely a matter of using our intuition and our background in literature. We should remember first of all that anything may be a symbol, that a symbol is any sign that has acquired extra meaning. It

may be an object, a gesture, an incident, a person, a plot, a color, a sound, a pattern or sequence of action-- anything that reminds us of something else that in turn seems applicable to the text before us. The word may is crucial. Although we must develop a sensitivity to the possibility that anything unusual may be symbolic, we must refrain from concluding that everything unusual is symbolic. A balance between sensitivity to the possibility of symbols and a common sense approach to the basic meaning of the text is the best guide (62).

The fifth objective deals with the students formulating their own meaning of The Scarlet Letter, and also learning what Hawthorne meant. It is at this point that the students become aware of the over-arching purpose for reading this novel. It is important that the teacher allow the students to make their own judgments about the novel rather than simply reflecting the teacher's judgement of the actions of the novel's main characters. It is here that the students, after having read the novel and gotten a taste of several critics' work on the novel, get the opportunity to distill what they have learned in order to determine what their feelings are about The Scarlet Letter; thus making them better readers. Baym writes,

Readers usually expect masterworks to tell them something about the country, or at least to reflect about the meaning of being an American. Typically, Hawthorne does not so much 'tell' us about America as provide the framework within which certain questions may be raised and their answers attempted. His examination of Puritanism, of community

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authority, and of individualism in The Scarlet Letter touches of themes at the center of American history and American thought. (xx)

The Scarlet Letter raises two major issues or questions. They are, "where should the boundaries between individual and society be set? and how should the answer to this question be arrived at--that is, what are the proper ways to think about and argue for one position or the other?" (Baym, 97). In the novel The Scarlet Letter no clear answers to this argument are presented and Hawthorne's position "is only the general one that neither side can be allowed unlimited power" (97). The student armed with the ultimate outcome will be able to raise questions about society, the individual's role in society, and his or her own values and beliefs; thus The Scarlet Letter will hopefully become a meaningful experience for the student.

Therefore, it is only after teachers becomes thoroughly rooted in the theory behind the objectives they teach, that they can go on to choosing an appropriate method of instruction. In the next chapter two methodologies are briefly described, and for my purposes lesson plans for objectives one and four, which were stated earlier in this chapter, will be illustrated. The methodologies being used for my study are discussed in Chapter III.

CHAPTER TWO
MASTERY LEARNING AND
COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Mastery learning is, in broad terms, "the attainment of adequate levels of performance on tests that measure specific learning tasks" (Horton, 9). Mastery learning is becoming a trend in our educational systems, as workshops, presentations, and conferences focusing on this method are flourishing. Its popularity is largely due to the vast amounts of research done by Benjamin Bloom, and students of his whose research support mastery learning's effectiveness. Moreover, mastery learning is extremely popular because it can be easily incorporated into the traditional classroom setting.

Mastery learning had its beginnings at least three centuries ago. "Although not called mastery learning, some of its important theoretical components are found in the works of Comenius in the 17th century, Pestalozzi in the 18th century, and Herbart in the 19th century" (Horton, 12). While many of the ideas that make up mastery learning went out of use during the 1930's, they reappeared in the 1950's and 1960's as part of programmed learning.

John B. Carroll developed a model of student learning centering around aptitude, which he defined "as the amount

of time it takes someone to learn any given material, rather than his or her capability to master it" (Joyce and Weil, 318). This view made it possible for almost every student "to master any given set of objectives, if sufficient time (the opportunity to learn) is provided, along with the appropriate materials and instruction" (318). The student's aptitude then predetermines how to teach, "because learners of different aptitudes will learn more effectively if the style of instruction is suited to their configurations" (318). The length of time the learner needs to master the task at hand helps the teacher select the most appropriate model of instruction for the student. Bloom took Carroll's "conceptual model of school learning, and developed it into a working model for mastery learning," (Block, Efthim, and Burns, 5) thereby developing the mastery learning system and providing the necessary theoretical base for its implementation. As Bloom defines it, mastery learning displays the following characteristics:

1. Mastery of any subject is defined in terms of sets of major objectives which represent the purposes of the course or unit.

2. The substance is then divided into a larger set of relatively small learning units, each one accompanied by its own objectives, which are parts of the larger ones or thought essential to their mastery.

3. Each unit is accompanied by brief diagnostic tests to measure the student's developing progress (the formative evaluation) and identify any particular problems each student is having.

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4. Each unit is accompanied by brief diagnostic tests to measure the student's developing progress (the formative evaluation) and identify the particular problems each student is having.

5. The data obtained from administering the tests is used to provide supplementary instruction to the student to help him overcome his problems (Bloom, 47-63).

When instruction is managed this way Bloom maintains that the time can also be, "adjusted to fit aptitude" (318). The students with more aptitude will need less time and less feedback than students with lower aptitudes. The instruction then would become individualized for each student based on the student's aptitude.

According to Horton, a student of Bloom, "the mastery learning model requires concise, testable objectives that clearly describe the criterion for mastery and an accurate preassessment of the learner's knowledge of the task to be undertaken" (Horton, 10).

Large, small, and, peer group instruction can take place when the mastery learning method is being employed. The teacher's role is a predominant one in mastery learning, as he or she is actively leading the learning process. The teacher utilizes programmed instruction, computer assisted instruction, games, worksheets, etc. as part of every mastery learning model. After the students are tested, tasks are designed for them to build on what they already know, to develop new learning, or to assist in skills which are needed to master before students can progress

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successfully (Horton, 10). Those students who initially succeed are provided with enrichment materials. "A post assessment that measures individual outcome, previously identified in the objectives is the final stage of the mastery learning process" (11).

The cooperative learning model finds its beginnings in the theoretical framework of mastery learning. Cooperative learning, or collaborative learning is rooted in the notion that "cooperative behavior is stimulating not only socially, but also intellectually , and hence that tasks requiring social interaction will stimulate learning" (Joyce and Weil, 25). It allows the student to learn in the context of his or her own experiences, as well as integrate the knowledge to be learned into his or her own language.

Understanding and incorporating the group process in America is vital to our students who live in a democratic society, and who will face the dilemma of how to get along with the next person. Unlike mastery learning, cooperative learning is concerned with more than just the attainment of specific knowledge: "In teaching our students how to work effectively in a group setting, we are teaching them far more than that day's material; we are teaching them about democracy and about life, and also how to live more successfully" (Golub, 6).

Cooperative learning dates as far back as the first century, as Quintilian argued that students could benefit

from instructing each other. Comenius (1592-1679) "believed that students would benefit both by teaching and being taught by other students" (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, 6). In the late 1800's cooperative learning was magnified, where it became a part of the Common School Movement of the United States. Cooperative learning like mastery learning, is not a new methodology of the nineties; it has had strong forerunners, who had an enormous influence on those advocates of cooperative learning today.

The leading advocates of this teaching method are David and Roger Johnson (University of Minnesota), Robert Slavin (John Hopkins University), and Shlomo Sharan of Isreal. Their studies basically revolve around the idea that collaborative learning affects the learning outcome in a positive manner. Unlike mastery learning which is centered around clearly defined objectives and pre and post testing, collaborative learning is not limited to a small set of objectives, or only open to certain subject areas. "Cooperative learning is appropriate for a broad range of learning objectives" (217). There are many models that can be incorporated to enhance group study and make it more effective for a particular set of objectives the teacher wishes to use.

The teacher's role in cooperative learning is "one of counselor, consultant, and friendly critic" (234). There are three questions the teacher must answer himself or

herself in order for the collaborative learning method to be effective. They are as follows:

- (1) What is the nature of the problem? What are the factors involved?
- (2) What information do we need now? How can we organize ourselves to get it?
- (3) How do you feel about these conclusions? What would you do differently as a result of knowing about?....(Thelen, 52-53).

However, the teacher also must (1) facilitate the group process, (2) intervene in the group to channel its energy into potentially educative activities, (3) supervise these educational activities so that personal meaning comes from the experience (136). Also the instructor should intervene if the groups at hand "bog down seriously" (Joyce and Weil, 234). The goal of such instruction is ultimately to allow students to work in pairs or groups, share their rewards and responsibilities, and interact in an uninhibited atmosphere; to create a schoolroom where "greater mastery of material takes place, rather than the common individual study- cum recitation pattern" (216).

Thus, while both methods seek to impart a body of knowledge to the students, mastery learning does it with a formal approach through a regimented and error free process. The "Teacher" is in charge. Collaborative learning on the other hand, allows students to find their own way, with the teacher acting as guide and companion.

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CHAPTER THREE
PRESENTATIONS OF THE LESSONS
ACCORDING TO THE TWO DIFFERENT METHODS

The methodology utilized in this study will be the presentation of two sample lessons [lesson # 1 and # 4] in each of the two styles discussed in Chapter II for the purposes of inspection and evaluation. It is important to note that the major emphasis in each of the methodologies shifts from the learner [cooperative] to the teacher [mastery]. For the purpose of my study I am using these two lesson plans to hypothetically illustrate and evaluate the concepts discussed.

In cooperative learning, the teacher develops an objective and activities to meet that objective, and presents the activities to the students. It is the responsibility of the students to complete the activities and to meet the promise of the objective.

In mastery learning, the teacher develops objectives against which the level of learning can be measured. The teacher then presents a series of activities designed to assist the students in learning the skills and meeting the criteria established in the behavioral objectives. It is the responsibility of the teacher to guide the activities in

such a way to ensure that the students master the skills,
and thus complete the goal.

For the purpose of this study it is my assumption
that practicing teachers are acquainted with pedagogical
practices in education, and will be able to identify with
the following four lesson plans.

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LESSON PLAN # 1 A
COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Objective # 1

To describe the Puritan Age in which the novel takes place, and Hawthorne's heritage.

ACTIVITY--GROUP INVESTIGATION [The class is to be broken down into heterogeneous groups of four and five.]

[This lesson perhaps should be done before the students read The Scarlet Letter.]

DURATION--Six days should be allowed. Two days should be set aside for investigation, and two days for the organization of group projects, and two days for the presentation of the group findings.

EXPECTATIONS--Each group will be responsible for a one page typed handout with the answers to their investigations on the problem presented for the purpose of reference use by the class during the reading of The Scarlet Letter. Proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation will be expected.

Each group will be responsible for a creative presentation [skits, oral presentations, audio-visual presentations, etc.] in order to answer the question assigned to the group. The following questions are taken from Michael Benedict's resource unit on The Scarlet Letter.

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QUESTIONS--GROUP ONE:

The Scarlet Letter takes place in the year 1645.

Investigate the Puritan Age to discover how the Puritans viewed the world. How did the Puritans see guilt, crime, sin, and adultery? What characterized Puritan religion and government? The following terms need to be understood in order to comprehend certain concepts of The Scarlet Letter: remorse, contrition, penance, atonement, sorrow, penitence, revenge, and sin. Dictionary definitions are not completely adequate.

GROUP TWO:

Hawthorne published The Scarlet Letter in 1850. What was happening in the world at that time? What did the people of Hawthorne's time feel about guilt, sin, crime, and adultery? How was religion viewed at this time?

GROUP THREE:

Ideas and connotations change over time. The action of The Scarlet Letter takes place in the 17th century. Hawthorne wrote it in the 19th century and we are reading it in the 20th century. Attitudes change with time. How does today's society react to sin, guilt, crime, and adultery? Think about television programs--soap operas, religious circles, etc. Try contacting local ministers, rabbis, or priests to get a substantial definition in a religious

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context since the novel is intricately involved with the religious teachings of the Puritans.

GROUP FOUR:

Research Hawthorne's life and times. What other things did he write? Who were some of his biographers? Who were some of his critics? You will have to do some research in the library to find some of these answers.

MATERIALS:

A brief bibliography of books is listed below for the students to use when they are doing research in the library.

Chase, Richard. The American Novel and Tradition. New York: Doubleday, 1957.

Colacurico, Michael J., ed. New Essays on The Scarlet Letter. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985.

Male, Roy R. Hawthorne's Tragic Vision. Austin: University Texas Press, 1957.

Martin, Terence. Nathaniel Hawthorne. Revised edition. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983.

Waggoner, Hyatt H. Hawthorne: A Critical Study. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955.

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LESSON PLAN # 1 B

MASTERY LEARNING

Objective # 1

To describe the Puritan Age in which the novel takes place, and Hawthorne's heritage to prepare the students for the reading of the novel The Scarlet Letter.

Objective # 1.1

At the end of this lesson students will, given a list of terms which describe Puritan life, define the terms in light of their meaning to the Puritans with 80 percent accuracy.

Objective # 1.2

At the end of this lesson students will be able to write a five paragraph essay comparing the concepts of guilt, sin, crime, and adultery held in the time that the events in The Scarlet Letter took place, the period in which Hawthorne lived, and in current times. This essay will accurately contain descriptions of concepts with 80% accuracy.

Objective # 1.3

At the end of this lesson students will be able to describe the meanings of the terms remorse, contrition, penance, atonement, sorrow, penitence, revenge, and sin with 80% accuracy.

DURATION--This lesson is estimated to take four days.

The teacher will need four days to present the materials, the activities, and to evaluate student progress in mastering the skills.

ACTIVITIES-A TEACHER WILL DIRECT A LECTURE and discussion on the life and times of the Puritans, and Hawthorne, with a comparison and contrast of these with relevant points in life today.

A TEACHER WILL SELECT A SEGMENT OF VARIOUS VIDEOS which demonstrate life in the Puritan era and when Hawthorne lived to be viewed by the class.

A TEACHER WILL DIRECT A DISCUSSION on the religious concepts listed in objective # 1.3, and the teacher will assist the students in comparing and contrasting their meaning in the three periods: Puritan, Hawthorne, and today.

DICTIONARY AND LIBRARY WORK will be assigned for homework to assist the students to clarify the meanings of the terms contained in objectives # 1.1 and # 1.2.

THE STUDENTS WILL WRITE AN ESSAY for homework the last night of this lesson analyzing the differences between the religious and moral concepts between the Puritan Age, Hawthorne's Age, and today.

MATERIALS:-Dictionaries

History Books

Reference book listings

EVALUATIONS

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HOMEWORK--The students will receive a grade on their vocabulary work to measure progress in obtaining the objective.

ESSAY--The quality of the essay written for homework will give an indication of the students grasp of the terminology and the fact that there is a shift in the importance of various concepts with time.

TEST ON TERMINOLOGY--This test will indicate that the students have received a sufficient grasp of the terminology to be able to understand the utilization of terms in The Scarlet Letter sufficiently to be able to gain meaning while reading.

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LESSON PLAN # 2 A
COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Objective # 4

To identify Hawthorne's use of symbolism for the purpose of enhancing reading comprehension.

ACTIVITY--GROUP INVESTIGATION [The class will be broken into heterogeneous groups of four and five.]

A TEACHER WILL DIRECT DISCUSSION on what a symbol is to assist the students in developing a consensus on a definition of the term 'symbol'.

A TEACHER DIRECTED INQUIRY as to whether or not the symbols indicated below are symbols in concert with the definition derived as the result of the discussion will be utilized for this lesson.

This is an intra-reading activity which perhaps can be done at the end of week one or two of the reading of The Scarlet Letter.

DURATION--Three days--The teacher must allow one day for the discussion and inquiry, one day for the investigation, and one day for the presentation by the groups.

EXPECTATIONS---Each group will be given two symbols and will explain the use and meaning of each using the provided (by teacher) worksheet.

Each group will give a presentation on their assigned symbols.

DISCUSSION, # 4

Each group will be responsible for selecting a symbol currently in use today and explaining it on the bottom of the same handout assigned. This will hopefully help the student gain an understanding of the use that symbols play in the communication of ideas.

SYMBOLS:---GROUP ONE:

Colors in the novel

Dark and light images

GROUP TWO:

The rosebush

The letter 'A'

GROUP THREE:

Night/day

The forest

GROUP FOUR:

Vegetation

Scaffolding

S Y M B O L W O R K S H E E T

Name of

Symbol: _____

Chapter: _____

Page: _____

DESCRIPTION OF SYMBOL:

SIGNIFICANCE [MEANING] OF SYMBOL:

CURRENT SIGNIFICANCE [IF ANY]:

ADDITIONAL #

LESSON PLAN # 2 B

MASTERY LEARNING

Objective # 4

To identify Hawthorne's use of symbolism for the purpose of enhancing reading comprehension.

Objective # 4.1

At the end of this lesson students will, given a list of symbols which are utilized in The Scarlet Letter, be able to correctly define their meaning with 80 percent accuracy.

Objective # 4.2

At the end of this lesson students will be able to write an essay describing the modern utilization of symbols with 80% accuracy in defining the meaning of the symbol and conceptualizing it as a shorthand communicator.

Objective # 4.3

At the end of this lesson students will be able to describe the meanings of a list of modern symbols provided by the teacher with 80% accuracy.

DURATION--Three Days.

ACTIVITIES--A TEACHER WILL DIRECT A LECTURE/ DISCUSSION on what are symbols and how they are utilized today to indicate concepts.

-A TEACHER WILL SELECT VARIOUS AUDIO-VISUAL presentations in which the utilization of symbols in literary works which the students have read will be addressed.

-A TEACHER SELECTED PRESENTATION of symbols commonly used in today's society.

-STUDENT DISCUSSION ON MAGAZINE advertisements which contain symbols.

-STUDENT HOMEWORK will consist of a five paragraph essay on symbols and their meaning.

EVALUATIONS

ESSAYS--Student performance on the essay written at home on the last night of the lesson will give an indication of the level of mastery of the concept of symbols and their meaning.

TEST ON TERMINOLOGY--Will indicate mastery of the concept of symbols and their meaning both today and in The Scarlet Letter.

SYMBOLS:---GROUP ONE:

Colors in the novel

Dark and light images

GROUP TWO:

The rosebush

The letter 'A'

GROUP THREE:

Night/day

The forest

GROUP FOUR:

Vegetation

Scaffolding

WILKINSON

CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is interesting to note while studying these models proposed by educational theorists and supported by research, the level of viability of each in teaching a canonical piece of literature. The overwhelming ingredient for the teaching of The Scarlet Letter is a credible teacher of literature. Without having a strong knowledge base and essential decision-making capabilities (Shavelson, 147), the teacher is lacking the tools with which to teach a lesson and to plan the lesson for effective instruction.

The development of lesson plans which are used as the framework for the presentation of the materials and for the guiding of the student activities, gives the teacher an advantage in the interactive phase of instruction (Kindsvatter, 8). Additional decisions are made, after the presentation of the lesson, to determine the extent to which students have completed the lesson according to some standard.

Kindsvatter stated further that "a teacher whose evaluation decisions are largely after-the-fact, fails initially to provide students with a clear idea of expectations, and is likely to engage in arbitrary, expedient means of assessing achievement" (14). Thus the teacher makes two important decisions when developing the

lesson: how to teach and what to teach. The level of control which the teacher will have over the learning process will derive much meaning from the teacher's philosophy of instruction and knowledge base.

In the analysis of the two philosophies of instruction, mastery learning and cooperative learning, it appears that both have possibilities for enhancing the students' skills in becoming a better reader of literature. For the purpose of this study I will compare and contrast the philosophies using the following five criteria taken from Kindsvatter's book Dynamics of Effective Teaching (10):

CRITERION #1 Instruction - the meaningful use of instructional strategies such as time on task, direct teaching, instructional cues and imaginative use of a variety of methods.

CRITERION #2 Individualization - the ability of the method utilized to be modified according to individual students' needs and learning styles.

CRITERION #3 Higher level thinking - the utilization of the information gained as a means to an end, not the end itself.

CRITERION #4 Discipline practices - the level of control over the educational process and environment exhibited by the teacher.

CRITERION #5 Evaluation - the determination of the extent to which students have performed according to some standard, and the establishment of the standard in the development of the lesson.

Mastery Learning

Criterion #1 - Instruction. Each lesson to be taught must be carefully analyzed by the teacher. The teacher has

the responsibility for the sequential presentation of the materials in order to maximize the students' skills in the subject matter. There is a strict control over the amount of time which is allocated for each individual activity, as the teacher presents each activity and directs the student's level of participation. Mastery learning has as its base the establishment of strict criteria which are developed through direct instruction by the teacher. Utilization of instructional cues is to enhance the instructional presentation of the teacher, as education is obtained primarily through direct instruction.

Criterion #2 - Individualization. Due to the fact that the teacher is the focal point in the presentation of the material in mastery learning, individualization of instruction suffers as a direct result of utilizing this philosophy. Due to the fact that the instructor is pacing the material, not the students, students often have their instructional needs met during reinforcement activities rather than during the presentation of the material. Presentation and learning modes are controlled by the teacher and are usually the same for all in the classroom.

Criterion #3 - Higher level thinking - In mastery learning, the attainment of skills is the goal of the lesson. Usually lesson goals are basic skill and fact oriented. Often teachers feel that once the basic goals of the lesson are met, and the skills obtained, the lesson is

complete, and the next lesson begins. The synthesis of the information gained is left out of the lesson plan.

Criterion #4 - Discipline practices - Mastery learning is dependent upon teacher control over the classroom environment and the educational process. Thus there is a strong level of discipline in the presentation of the lesson. However, due to the fact that the classroom is teacher-centered, there is little ownership of the classroom by the students, and thus there is a stronger need for teacher control over the environment. The result is that teachers need to have increased skills in classroom management to provide for increased time on task.

Criterion #5 - Evaluation - The requirement that evaluative criteria be established prior to the presentation of the lesson is satisfied by the fact that the mastery learning lesson plan provides for the establishment of behavioral objectives which contain discrete criteria for mastery PRIOR to the development of the teaching activities which are designed to meet these criteria. Thus, the initial design of the lesson, if properly performed will fit the needs for the establishment of criteria, and the development of evaluative methods.

Cooperative Learning

Criterion #1 - Instruction. Concepts must be thoroughly developed as students are the focal point in the class.

Only through the strong definition of the concepts to the students will the material be developed in the direction intended by the teacher. Due to the nature of the philosophy of the student as the locus in this method of instruction, the teacher must be able to develop instructional cues to keep the students on task without the students feeling that the teacher is intruding rather than assisting. Due to the fact that there is little direct teaching utilized within this framework, the teacher must constantly be on guard to ensure that the student does not lose sight of the intended goal with a result of lost time on task. In this method students must seek answers to questions developed by the teacher through processes presented by the teacher which form a logical framework for student investigations. This results in the teacher having to provide a multiplicity of investigative formulations for the students' development of skills.

Criterion #2 - Individualization. Cooperative learning has at its core the ideology that students are free to function in their primary learning style and level of development within the parameters prescribed by the assignment given by the teacher. As long as the students are working constructively within these bounds towards the expected outcomes, the students are free to individualize their style of learning to fit their own particular needs.

Criterion #3 - Higher level learning. Due to the fact that students are seeking answers to questions (solutions to problems) in cooperative learning, this method stresses the promotion of higher order learning skills. Students are placed in the position of having to critically deduce what is important in the material assigned. The method emphasizes the gaining of facts as the means to the end of the utilization of the facts in the solution of the problem presented by the teacher.

Criterion #4 - Discipline. In this philosophy of educational planning, the students have the freedom to control their behavior in the classroom. The teacher has the role to serve as a facilitator to keep the students on task. As the students become increasingly goal oriented, they will have an increased level of ownership in the educational outcomes, which will allow the teacher to have a more relaxed level of control over the educational process.

Criterion #5 - Evaluation. In any method where the outcomes are not clearly predictable in advance of the presentation of the method of instruction, it is difficult to predetermine what the evaluative criteria are to be. While evaluations of the level of education progress can be made, determination of the exact nature of these evaluations prior to the learning experience is tenuous. This will result in a low level of predictability of results. In many cases the students will achieve the outcomes expected by the

instructor; however, the evaluation of these outcomes may be contrived.

Conclusions

In order to discuss which of the two teaching methods presented should be preferred to the other in the teaching of The Scarlet Letter, we need to discuss the above concepts in relation to the instructional needs that rise from the literary construction of the book.

The Scarlet Letter is complicated, as it combines the elements of a historical setting within a highly structured literary masterpiece. Without the understanding of both the Puritan Era, and the associative aspects of Hawthorne's utilization of the symbols, the students will not be able to truly understand this novel. Having students imagine living in an era not their own would promote lively dialogue about descriptions of life in old New England. The beginning of the novel contains a description of a prison which would provide a topic for group discussion, leading to a greater understanding of Puritan times. The treatment of women versus men in The Scarlet Letter would also evoke a spirited discussion with a heterogeneous group of high school students. All of this hopefully would lead students to a better understanding of the novel.

Both methods have strengths in the development of instruction in this area. However, the strengths of mastery learning in the rapid development of information regarding

the historical background behind the writing of the novel for understanding cannot be underestimated. Economy of time demands that the development of pre-reading skills be incorporated in lesson planning in as short a time span as possible.

When referring back to the first lesson plan, it can be said that individualization of instruction may be important during the reading and interpretation of the novel and its content, but as for the pre-reading activities, it does not hold as important a place. Thus, it can be said that certain elements of instruction call for different educational presentations than others. This raises an important question in terms of whether one method is truly superior to another in all facets of instruction. Cooperative learning, with its concomitant individualization of instruction, has great strength when dealing with the assimilation of facts and conceptualization of ideas. Thus when dealing with Hawthorne's symbolism, cooperative learning holds great promise in the development of contextual assimilation of knowledge for understanding of the material in an internalized manner. Cooperative learning parallels reader-response theory, in that both methods utilize a community of readers to assimilate learning.

When dealing with a complex issue, it is important to ensure that there be as few interruptions in the learning

process as possible. When dealing with factual material, there is little need for debate or discussion. Thus a high level of teacher control in areas such as historical background is imperative. When dealing with concepts such as the utilization of symbolism, where interpretation can be developed through divergent thinking, the control over the thought process must be relaxed to allow for student spontaneity, while the teacher remains responsible for the guiding of the development of the concepts. Cooperative learning allows for this guided spontaneity.

While mastery learning has in its design the establishment of evaluative criteria, evaluation is important in cooperative learning. The major difference in the two methods is the fact that the instructional design in mastery learning is to teach the very skill that is described in the objective. In cooperative learning, the activity serves as boundaries for the students to explore a concept. Therefore the evaluation must measure the students level of mastery of the concept rather than the skills utilized in development of the conceptual knowledge. Moreover, the selection of the method is inherent in the expectations of the teacher in terms of content or skill. Where the expectation is based upon skill development as learning to derive meaning from contextual clues (which are derived from a knowledge of the historical milieu) we need to measure the attainment of the skill.

Where the expectation is the development of a conceptualization or an abstraction (such as the utilization of symbols to give meaning), it is important to observe and measure the process of divergent thinking as the means of evaluating student progress. Thus the evaluative method flows from both the method of instruction and the goals of the instruction.

The development of instruction in the field of literature is not as cut and dried as it might be in other fields of education. The complexity of literary works like The Scarlet Letter make it impossible to depend on solely one method of instruction and one method of planning for effective instruction. Different elements within the work each call for a different emphasis - skill versus utilization - and each emphasis calls for a different pedagogical approach. Mastery learning and cooperative learning each have their strong points and their weaknesses. Their strength lies in the teacher's "intuitive grasp of what their role demands, and their talent for responding to students" (Kindsvatter, 8). It would seem then, that teachers who plan using multiple teaching strategies to maximize student learning over time develop an experiential base that subsequently guides them in teaching their students. For example, when teaching The Scarlet Letter it may be difficult for some students to understand Hawthorne's extensive use of symbolism. The teacher plans lessons using

both cooperative and mastery learning, as illustrated in Chapter III, which when implemented succeed with holding student's interest and help them to grasp the novel's meaning. It is therefore logical to assume that the teacher may use similar strategies modified by experience in subsequent lesson plans. It is my observation that teacher effectiveness grows as teachers broaden their knowledge of their subject and develop methods for teaching for subjects that succeed with students.

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