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About ten years ago, the high school in which I taught instituted a speech program. Every sophomore in the school would devote one semester to an untracked course that involved the students in public speaking, oral interpretation, improvisation, role playing, and other activities involving oral communication. At that time I taught juniors and wanted to be able to follow up the speech program with students in their subsequent learning. With release time provided by my supervision of a student teacher, I was able to observe a number of speech classes, discuss their purpose with the teachers, find out what the students were learning, and build on the speech program activities with my juniors.

My incorporation of the speech activities into the junior curriculum profoundly affected my approach to teaching. My classes had always been activity-oriented, but my exposure to the dynamic activities in the speech classes opened up new possibilities to me. When bringing their knowledge of oral communication into my junior English classes, the students were both tremendously imaginative and thoroughly acclimated to an environment that valued the generation of non-written "texts" as a means of meaning-construction. Students performing oral interpretations of poems or dramatizing literature would bring a wide range of resources to the projects, often providing musical accompaniment, elaborate sets, costumes, and even special effects: one group of students performing a nocturnal scene from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" not only fogged the room with a cauldron of dry ice but added pyrotechnics by darkening the room and striking a lighter beneath the jet from an aerosol can, providing a memorable (if perilous) rendition of the literary moment.

In the following years, in addition to the core of writing I required, I increasingly encouraged students to represent their understanding of literature through unconventional types of compositions, even when I changed jobs and taught in a school that did not have the preparatory speech program. My rationale for emphasizing multiple forms of compositions was that the students were, almost without exception, highly engaged in the projects they would undertake, often far more so than they were when being evaluated through conventional writing. In particular, students who were low achievers were often among the most enthusiastic and productive workers on these projects. Students who were loath to turn in simple homework assignments would spend all weekend producing elaborate video productions dramatizing their interpretations of literary relationships. Above all, the students, besides being engaged, were clearly demonstrating an understanding of literature in ways not accessible through their writing. Not only were they active, they were learning in the process.

The author reviews the theory of multiple intelligences and offers suggestions for classroom instruction.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

In 1989 I came across an article by Howard Gardner that provided my introduction to his theory of multiple intelligences. After reading this article I wrote Project Zero at Harvard, where Gardner is co-director, and ordered a number of related publications, which I read with great interest. Finally I read *Frames of Mind* (1983) Gardner's most complete articulation of his theory. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences provided a powerful psychological foundation to support the pedagogical approach I had developed, giving it greater authority than I had simply from my observations of enthusiastic student involvement.

While I had always been confident that what I had been doing all along was worthwhile, Gardner's work enabled me to justify non-linguistic activities with a powerful, comprehensive theory of psychology, one that allowed me to overcome the skepticism of some of my colleagues who claimed that

my students were "only playing games" rather than using and developing their intelligence when they would act, dance, draw, soundtrack, and otherwise express their conception of the English curriculum.

Howard Gardner developed his theory of multiple intelligences through his work as a neurologist and through his extensive reading of cultural history. According to Gardner, people of Western culture are very limited in how they view the idea of "intelligence." In particular, Westerners have been seduced by the notion that intelligence can be measured quantitatively through standardized tests; Gardner has facetiously referred to this approach as being "Westist, Testist, and Bestist." The sovereignty of testing has been encouraged by the testing industry, which has insinuated itself into school assessment to the extent that standardized tests are widely believed to have the capacity to identify the "true" achievement levels of students and, presumably, teachers. These tests are questionable on many grounds, as countless critics have maintained; this article is far too limited in scope to review all of the problems attendant to standardized testing, many of which are already familiar to *EJ* readers.

The introduction of multiple intelligence activities must be accompanied by large changes in the values of the classroom.

From Gardner's perspective standardized tests are thoroughly misguided in the *breadth* of thinking they test. Gardner has argued extensively that standardized tests—and schools in general—tend to focus on two types of thinking, one's *linguistic* intelligence and one's *mathematical/logical* intelligence. This emphasis is quite evident in the accepted division of standardized tests into "verbal" and "mathematical" categories (even though it is questionable whether the "verbal" sections of tests provide a true measure of one's verbal ability, given that they present students with reactive rather than generative problems).

Schools not only allow standardized tests to assess them according to these limited dimensions, they also follow suit with curriculum development. The standard curriculum includes in its academic core subjects that are amenable to a logical/analytic approach, including English classes which, as Arthur Applebee (1993) has amply documented, focus on analytic approaches to thinking about literature.

A LOOK AT THE SEVEN INTELLIGENCES

Gardner maintains that in taking this narrow approach schools ignore reality, both historical and contemporary. Historically, the linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligences so exclusively valued by modern American schools have figured peripherally in the essential work of other cultures.

Among Gardner's favorite examples is the ancient sailor who spent much of life at sea, navigating ships according to an understanding of the positioning of the sun (and at night, of the stars), recognizing weather patterns, sizing up waves, repairing and maintaining the ship facility, getting sustenance from knowing how to fish and preserve foods attained through trade, and having the savvy to barter effectively once on land. The operation of the ship required sailors to employ *spatial* intelligence, which Gardner identifies as the ability to configure space in order to pose and solve problems. Spatial intelligence was fundamental to the survival of sailors and was their most important means of problem-solving.

Spatial intelligence is not simply an artifact of an ancient culture, however, but vital to life for many in the modern world. Many people, for instance, still fish for a living, requiring the same skills as the ancient navigators described by Gardner. Tailors, landscape architects, football coaches, engineers, artists, and others whose work requires the order of space all rely primarily on spatial intelligence in order to make their way successfully in the world. With the explosion of the telecommunications and computer industry and the resultant emphasis on producing and comprehending images, spatial intelligence will undoubtedly become increasingly important in economic development in our society, linking the future to its ancient roots in navigation, architecture, agriculture (in terms of the design of tools and facilities), and other fundamental human endeavors.

Spatial intelligence is one of seven types of intelligence identified by Gardner as being fundamental to human performance over the centuries and across cultures. As noted, *linguistic* and *logical/mathematical* intelligence are two of the others and the ones that receive the most attention in

American schools. Additionally, Gardner identifies other intelligences.

Musical intelligence is the ability to produce or appreciate music. Musicians, music critics, dancers, figure skaters, and others who must understand the use of rhythm, tone, melody, and other aspects of musical expression are blessed with musical intelligence.

Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to use the body effectively in order to solve problems. Gardner distinguishes between having athletic skills and having bodily/kinesthetic intelligence; a strong and fast athlete does not necessarily use that physical giftedness in intelligent ways. Rather, a player who can "see" a playing field well and make the appropriate moves; a thespian who can suggest pathos with the arch of an eyebrow; a massage therapist who has an understanding of the body's needs and an ability to apply appropriate pressure; these and others who use their bodies to solve problems possess bodily/kinesthetic intelligence.

The ability to read and respond to the needs of others is *interpersonal* intelligence. Good teachers, therapists, salespeople, politicians, and others who deal effectively with the public often demonstrate interpersonal intelligence in their communion with people.

Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to look within oneself for self-knowledge and understanding. People who are highly reflective have intrapersonal intelligence, including those who seek and benefit from therapy, those who learn from their mistakes, those who practice yoga, and others who have the ability to come to a greater understanding of themselves.

COMBINING THE INTELLIGENCES

Most activities in life require some combination of these intelligences. A quarterback throwing a football needs to have bodily/kinesthetic intelligence to develop proper passing technique and also the spatial intelligence to know how to "lead" a receiver so that ball and player arrive in the same place at the same time. A building remodeler must have spatial intelligence to know how to reconfigure the space of a household and also the interpersonal intelligence to deal effectively with customers, the mathematical intelligence to operate a budget, and the bodily/kinesthetic intelligence to manipulate tools properly.

Although everyone probably has each of these intelligences to some degree, most people have strengths in a few areas but not all. We see this imbalance all of the time, probably most of all in ourselves. A friend of mine is widely known as a good writer, for instance, but has recently confessed that she cannot wrap a birthday present to save her life. I too am capable of writing, but am a menace on the dance floor, have no idea of how to decorate a room (my preferred scheme is to line the furniture up along the walls), can't understand physics (I'm always amazed that airplanes can actually *fly*), and when I draw pictures with my children, it's hard to tell my horses from my dogs (or my trees for that matter).

And so, to return to our previous examples, the football quarterback who has little endowment in interpersonal intelligence may be able to deliver footballs in a timely fashion but may alienate players on his team to the extent that they neglect to block effectively for him, thus reducing his overall effectiveness. The building remodeler who cannot manage a budget or relate to customers may go out of business. And if I ever have to sing for my supper, I'll surely starve.

WRITING AND THINKING

Having used Gardner's theory to face my personal shortcomings, I turned my attention to my teaching. My understanding of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences led me not only to incorporate more unconventional means of response and expression in my high school English classes, it enabled me to do so with greater confidence that my students were experiencing all of the good thinking that I (and most others) had once considered the sole province of *writing*. Janet Emig's characterization (1977) of "writing as a unique mode of learning" has influenced English teachers since the 1970s, justifying the idea that "writing across the curriculum" is the solution to the problem that students are not thinking sufficiently in their academic coursework, even in courses (say, architectural drawing or mathematics) in which writing is not the primary vehicle for communication and representation. My reading of Gardner suggested to me that students

who would *draw* or *dance* an interpretation of literature were engaging in many of the same developmental processes they would experience when writing, and perhaps engage in other important processes as well that were *not* available through writing.

I had no solid evidence to support this possibility, however, and so in the last few years have undertaken a study of what students think about when they compose artistic texts to interpret literature.

A CLASSROOM STUDY

With John Coppock (1994), I conducted research in an alternative school to study the composing processes of students engaged in non-written literary interpretations. In order to study their composing processes, we filmed students as they read a story, chose collaborators (or decided to work alone), discussed potential mediums for interpretation, imputed meaning to the story, and worked out an interpretive "text" such as a dance, a painting, a song, or other type of composition.

The story they responded to was William Carlos Williams' "The Use of Force," in which a doctor narrates an account of a house call he makes during a diphtheria epidemic. The doctor must extract a throat culture from a young girl who has displayed symptoms of the illness. The girl battles him savagely and hysterically to prevent him from examining her throat, and her parents try to help the doctor by holding her down and shaming her into complying. During the course of the struggle the doctor develops contempt for the parents and passion towards the girl. Against his rational judgment, the doctor becomes lost in "a blind fury" to attack and subdue her. In "a final unreasoning assault," he overpowers the girl and discovers her "secret" of "tonsils covered with membrane." The story ends with a final act of fury in which the girl attacks the doctor "while tears of defeat blinded her eyes."

The teacher had stocked the room with an abundance of artistic supplies such as paper, pencils, chalk, and markers; musical instruments including both a sophisticated keyboard synthesizer and a simpler keyboard instrument; a computer with a graphics program; tinker toys; and paper and instruments for writing or drawing. In addition, students could go to their on-site dormitory rooms to get other supplies, and this opportunity enabled students to supplement the provisions with guitars, musical tapes from their private collections, props for plays, and other materials.

After filming the entire episode, we took four sets of students and, in separate sessions, played back the videotape and asked them to recall and discuss what they had been thinking about during their reading and response. Through this procedure we learned much about how these students developed their interpretive texts. The students we interviewed included one boy who drew a picture representing the relationship between the two central characters in the story; two girls who choreographed a dance representing this same relationship; four boys who worked on a sophisticated keyboard synthesizer to create a soundtrack that represented the changing moods and rhythms of the story; and a group of three boys and one girl who scripted and dramatized the story.

The interviews revealed that in composing their texts the students engaged in a variety of processes that teachers value in writing. Students drew on a wealth of personal experiences to inform their reading of the story and to compose their texts; they empathized with the characters by relating parallel experiences; they imbued their texts with personal meaning; and they represented their understanding symbolically. Further, students drew on previously-read texts both to inform their reading and to create their own texts; they drew on historical knowledge to interpret the story and create their own texts; they produced compositions that were sensitive to the mood and tempo of the story; they generated alternative endings to the story through their interpretations. Finally, students viewed their work on this text as part of a larger composing process; they recognized the ambiguity of the story, their own texts, and human experience; and they strove to communicate their understanding of the story to others. Additionally, the process of creating these interpretive texts appeared to serve a dual purpose: the students' thoughts both *shaped and were shaped by* the texts they composed. In other words, two simultaneous processes took place. On the one hand, as you would expect, students' thoughts

about the story served as the material from which they developed their interpretations. On the other hand—and more significantly—*the process of composing their interpretive texts served to change the way they thought about the story.* That is, the process of artistic composing served an instrumental purpose in students' thinking about the story, enabling them to think through their interpretations in such a way that their ideas developed in complexity through the act of composing.

ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Students from each case study reported drawing on personal experiences to compose their texts. Martha, who participated in the choreographed interpretation, played the role of the girl in the story. ("Martha," like all student names reported, is a pseudonym.) She said in her interview that she empathized strongly with the girl; that she, too, hated to have people look inside her and get to know her. She said that she hated going to the dentist and have him open her mouth to look inside; and just like the girl in the story, often fought the dentist's efforts to look within her.

Martha's portrayal of the girl through her role in the dance, then, was informed by tremendous fears similar to those experienced by her character. The experience of kinesthetically playing out those fears through her participation in the dance enabled her to create a personally meaningful spatial text, one that allowed her to infuse personal meaning into the written signs of the story. Her process of composition revealed the process that Rosenblatt calls "interinanimation" (1978) which readers experience when participating in an aesthetic response to literature.

Martha and her collaborator, Jane, created spatial relationships in order to depict their understanding of the story. Jane reported that they represented the adversarial relationship between the doctor and girl through their positioning relative to one another: "When the doctor is trying to get her around to his way of thinking, we figuratively did it by going around in circles opposite each other." Jane and Martha also created spatial relationships to depict the characters' emotional states during the story. In order to do so, they needed to reconstruct the story line.

In Williams' text the story ends with the girl attacking the doctor in a blind fury following his forcible extraction of the throat culture. Jane and Martha decided to focus on the doctor's feelings, rather than to follow the story line strictly:

> **Jane:** We did another dance at the very end and we were practicing on it and like she's sheltered like the little girl is hidden. She won't let anybody find out what her secret is and that's what she's doing. She is hiding and the doctor is trying to follow in her footsteps to try to figure out what is going on. And at the very end when it says that she did have [diphtheria], in the dance we made her die. She just fell and the doctor picked her up and carried her. Because like we were going to have the doctor die with her because it was like the third patient he had died and he was dying inside, but [our teacher] didn't really like that. And after we started thinking you know how he gets underneath the skin real hard, it is like we started thinking about it too and he doesn't really die. He tries to help her and stuff. We went further than the story went.

Here Jane and Martha attempted to represent the figurative death of the character by physically having her die. After their teacher's intervention they constructed another figurative representation of the story's ending, as described by Jane:

> That is when they finally figured it out. It is like at the very end they walked together. It's like they walk two steps and when you do a little pause, the doctor shelters her and just looks at her because he's died with her. His whole life has just gone down the drain because it's another kid, he feels it's all his fault this time. And that is how I really felt when I was doing the dance.

In composing their own interpretive text they focused on the characters' emotions rather than on the literal story line provided by Williams. Their focus on the doctor's emotions required them to rewrite the ending and represent it through spatial relations. Their composition of their choreographed text, then, enabled them to play out the emotions of the characters in ways not available through writing.

Westerners have been seduced by the notion that intelligence can be measured quantitatively through standardized tests.

How does one assess creativity, particularly in domains in which one has little formal knowledge?

A group of four boys approached their interpretation quite differently. They used a sophisticated keyboard instrument to compose a soundtrack that depicted the changing moods and rhythms of the story. None of the four was a trained musician; the keyboard instrument, however, provided such a great range of potential sounds and dubbing capabilities that even a person with rudimentary knowledge could program it for a soundtrack. The boys reported that their musical accompaniment was intended to represent the story line:

> **Cory:** They had this funky like *Star Trek* sound going on and I said, "This has nothing to do with the little girl not wanting to show her parents how she had the disease that could kill her, and they were like "r-r-r-r-r-r," and they had this funky sound on, and I was like, you know, at first, you know, you need to have like a fight going, and then at the end where she was so enraged over—so enraged from defeat, that kind of mellowed out some because it, it would show the feelings and the end of defeat that the little girl was going through.
>
> **Q:** So did you say that the loud part showed the rage?
>
> **Cory:** Yeah, and her struggling, you know, how, having a kind of an intense sound because of her struggling, not wanting to open her mouth, not wanting to let that, that doctor do a throat culture.
>
> **Q:** Uh huh. And then the mellow sound was her.
>
> **Jake:** Defeat.

As noted, the interpretive texts revealed the students' thinking about the story, and the process of composing the texts changed their thinking about the story. Jane, one of the dancers, reported that her feelings about the doctor changed through her portrayal of him:

> I finally figured out what it is like to be in the position of the doctor. That is why I didn't hate the doctor so much because I knew how he felt. . . . [I learned about] how the doctor felt. I knew his feelings, but knowing it and feeling it is totally different things. [I learned] about myself, that I can feel their feelings. I see how they feel.

The process of composing nonverbal texts also changed students' understanding of the story. Dexter, who drew a picture of the relationship between the doctor and the girl, related that the meaning of the drawing changed as his picture developed. For instance, Dexter's depiction of the doctor was quite threatening; yet he revealed that when he started his drawing he was not certain what the threatening figure would stand for:

> **Dexter:** I wasn't really sure if it was him going to be the doctor or not until the end of the story, I mean, until the end of the drawing, because I was thinking, well, it could be this person that she, that she has imaged in her mind and uh—or this could be an analogy of diphtheria, but then I said it doesn't matter. It's just a doctor. It was going through her mind, [inaudible] but I liked to read. The first time I'd read the doctor; the second, the analogy. It's just through that one story.
>
> **Q:** So you mean, even after you drew the face and everything, it wasn't the doctor yet?
>
> **Dexter:** Uh huh. I mean it could have been a lot of things. It depends on your view point of the picture, but what I was thinking is—it was the doctor and then it was an analogy of the whole attitude of the story, and then it was the, her parents' attitude, or the parents, especially her parents.

Dexter's attribution of multiple meanings to the dominant figure in the drawing suggests that when he created his own text he ascribed meanings for that figure that he had not considered prior to having drawn it, meanings (such as the mother or a disease) which the graphic image itself does not readily suggest. Not only did the picture represent his view of the characters, the process of drawing the picture enabled him to develop new ideas about the story. The process Dexter experienced through drawing is similar to the one that Applebee (1981) attributes to writing. Applebee argues that educators should consider:

> writing as a tool for exploring a subject. . . . [W]riting can be a powerful process for discovering meaning rather than just transcribing an idea that is in some sense waiting fully developed in the writer's mind. Our language provides a whole panoply of devices that not only convey our meaning to others, but help us develop the meaning for ourselves. . . . [W]e tend to overlook the extent to

which these devices help us generate new ideas "at the point of utterance." (100)

TRANSMEDIATION

Also overlooked is the potential that other tools have for enabling similar processes. As the experiences of these students illustrate, non-written texts are capable of providing the same potential for enabling the construction of meaning as written texts. Yet their production is rarely sanctioned in English/language arts classes.

Throughout history artists have engaged in "transmediation" (Suhor 1984); that is, they have interpreted one type of text through another. Biblical scenes and stories have been interpreted through paintings, sculptures, masses, dances, and other mediums. Poets have written odes on Grecian urns and other works of art. Animators have interpreted classical music through stories, as illustrated in the film "Fantasia." Architects have represented values through building designs. The point is that all of these forms of transmediation have been culturally valued as means of constructing meaning and have been respected and revered by the public as well as by the artists themselves. The appreciation of non-written interpretations of life and literature has not, however, broken through the barriers of the English/language arts classroom, where writing has established exclusive rights "as a unique mode of learning." The research I have reported on students' artistic response to literature suggests that such a view is not simply wrong, but potentially disabling to students as well when, as Gardner has argued, students' most potent means of thinking may come through areas other than the logical and linguistic realms.

RECONCEPTUALIZING TEACHING AND LEARNING

One point I need to stress is that any effort to change instruction cannot be done piecemeal, but must be part of a larger effort to reconceptualize teaching and learning. John Ackerman has criticized the "writing to learn" movement for insisting that by including "writing to learn" activities in a classroom, teaching and learning will change. Ackerman (1993) argues that "the technology of writing will not, on its own, bring about the intellectual and social changes that our field has traditionally valued" (351); rather than being an agent of change, it is part of a greater change in how we view teaching and learning.

In other words, if a teacher who lectures incessantly suddenly starts assigning journals, the introduction of journals into students' meaning-making repertoire will likely change very little else about the class unless the teacher makes an effort to make wholesale changes in the overriding conceptions of classroom process that govern life for teacher and students.

Similarly, through research conducted with Pamela Fly (Smagorinsky and Fly 1993, 1994; cf. Marshall, Smagorinsky, and Smith 1994), I have found that using small groups does not necessarily guarantee that students will engage in lively, interactive discussions; rather, the type of discussion that takes place in a small group is in part a function of the type of discussion that takes place during the continuum of discussions that take place in the class as a whole. "Small groups" are not a panacea for involving students, as is often believed, but rather are highly dependant on the patterns of discourse that surround them in the overall instruction.

My point in making these references is that a teacher simply cannot begin, out of the blue, to allow students to dance interpretations of literature and expect immediate growth-producing results. The introduction of multiple intelligence activities must be accompanied by large changes in the values of the classroom, and concomitant changes in what students believe to be appropriate and acceptable ways of thinking and communicating in an English class.

A teacher, for instance, needs to reconsider the whole issue of assessment when pondering the introduction of multiple intelligence activities into the core curriculum. How does one assess creativity, particularly in domains in which one has little formal knowledge? Are student interpretations to be valued according to the apparent quality of the finished product, or according to what they appear to have learned through the process of creating it? How central are multiple intelligence activities to be in terms of overall assessment; in other words, should they displace conventional evaluations such as writing, or supplement them

as extra credit opportunities? Must all students participate in multiple intelligence activities, or should students who are primarily strong in logical analysis be permitted to choose not to engage in them? Should students only operate in their areas of strength, or should they distribute their responses amidst the areas in which they are weak as well?

Of course, there are no definitive answers to these questions; teachers must sort out the answers according to their personal situations, including the overall values of the schools and communities in which they teach. My point is that multiple intelligence activities, like "writing to learn" opportunities, small groups, portfolios, and other pedagogical methods, are not in and of themselves educational panaceas, but activities that may present excellent learning opportunities when used thoughtfully in the midst of a comprehensive reconceptualization of teaching and learning.

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Note

In addition to these sources, Project Zero at Harvard University will provide a catalogue from which to order copies of additional publications related to the theory of multiple intelligences. For information, write: Project Zero, Harvard University, Longfellow Hall, Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Peter Smagorinsky has taught high school English for 13 years. He is currently at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Smagorinsky is the author of numerous works on multiple intelligences including ***Expressions: Multiple Intelligences in the English Class*** *(1991, Urbana, IL: NCTE).*

EJ SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

What is English?

"Upon the answer to the question 'What is English?' depends the status of the subject. Unless a good and proper answer is found and that right speedily, the place of eminence which it so justly occupies will be taken by what their proponents call the 'social studies.' Obviously mere drill on correctness—or 'accuracy' if you please—cannot justly occupy one-fifth, more or less, of the school course. Competence in the use of the vernacular for practical purposes is better, because more inclusive. It suggests speaking and reading, as well as writing.

"Next comes useful information—who's who and what he wrote—the modicum of knowledge of things literary which enables intelligence in ordinary conversation and which guides in the choice of one's reading. To these add reasonable emphasis on capacity for enjoyment, not of skilful technique nor of criticism, but of the vicarious experience itself, the phase of life and feeling embodied. This means of course ability to interpret the literary language, the language of imagination and suggestion instead of the language of fact and abstract analysis."

James Fleming Hosic. 1920. "Editorial." *EJ* 9.10 (Dec.): 600.