

March 5th, 2014

Dear Reader,

On March 1, 2014, I observed a microteaching lesson by AshLeigh Brown designed to introduce freshman composition students to invention strategies for comparing and contrasting texts. AshLeigh performed this lesson as part of her assigned work for our graduate Seminar in Composition Theory at Mount Mary University.

AshLeigh opened class by introducing the class theme and explaining how the methods of comparison and contrast fit into the context of the course semester goals for writing. She defined the terms in relation to critically reading and writing about texts and then introduced the texts she planned to use as examples for her lesson. Students were given a worksheet, titled Comparison & Contrast Worksheet, to guide them in interpreting and taking notes on the texts. AshLeigh showed two film clips for comparison, from *It Happened One Night* and *American Beauty*. After giving students time to think about the clips, AshLeigh followed her worksheet and also used the board to write down the collective notes from class. Once points of comparison and contrast were made, AshLeigh worked from the board, helping class narrow and refined their responses, until class had a manageable, focused topic and outline. From this, AshLeigh helped class follow their worksheet to develop a thesis statement for a proposed argument.

AshLeigh delivered a clear, confident, and organized lesson that transitioned smoothly from activity to activity. While leading class discussion, AshLeigh moved around the room, engaging individuals as she circulated. The texts that she chose to compare, clips from Oscar-winning films, were timely as her lesson was held during Oscar week, but they also presented a challenge, as the films represented two very different Hollywood eras. Class responded to the challenge of finding points of comparison by providing insightful responses that were not superficial. AshLeigh was patient as she gave students time to think and respond, and she rewarded individual responses with positive reinforcement, at times redirecting or prompting students to clarify their responses. When writing ideas on the board, AshLeigh modeled for students how to refine their answers into critical assertions or more defined insights. In her conduct of class, AshLeigh often bridged one response to another or to the developing thesis by modeling for students how to articulate such connections.

The worksheet that AshLeigh designed to accompany her lesson gave students a blueprint for structuring a comparison essay and walked students through the process of shaping their insights into a thesis statement. In class discussion, students referred to their worksheet notes as they participated in class. Class was fully engaged through to the end of the lesson and their level of insight reflected what they derived from AshLeigh's lesson.

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