

Week 5 [Weds Oct 4] Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Popular Culture

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Within teachers college introducing urban hip hop culture into our classrooms seems to keep popping up within many my courses. To me this is a wonderful tool to engage students by developing a ‘pedagogy of listening’ and ‘student voice’ to have a better understanding to what our students interests and needs are. What will inspire and engage them? “...hip hop music is the representative voice of urban youth since the genre was created by and for them.” (Morelle, 2002, pg. 1) Viewing hip hop through a critical lens has the potential to get our students to draw upon traditional literacy practices and examine/critique the language used within popular culture and relate it to their very own lives.

By introducing hip hop culture, and facilitating discussions critically, and analytically we have the potential to help youth engage in social humanity issues and perhaps become agents of change. Morell stated “Curricula are designed upon a common set of philosophical and pedagogical principles but must be tailored to the everyday experiences, the needs and desires of the students in particular classrooms, at particular moments, and within particular geographical, cultural, and economic contexts.” (Morell 2007, pg. 238) To understand our students unique needs and interests we must take the time to investigate who is populating our classrooms in order for a hip hop curriculum to be optimal.

Within my placement last year we had a guest come in and compare and contrast poetry and rap, which to him translated into rhythm and poetry. The guest took lyrics from hip hop artists and performed them as spoken word poetry, and asked the students if they recognized the artist and what they were trying to get across to the audience. Critically analyzing the text in a new and exciting way truly sparked the students interest in a way that I had never seen before. In Morelle’s article he stated that “...Hip-hop texts are literary texts and can be used to scaffold literary terms and concepts and ultimately foster literary interpretations. Hip-hop texts are rich in imagery and metaphor and can be used to teach irony, tone, diction, and point of view.” (Morell, 2002 pg. 2)

To me, introducing hip hop culture within the classroom has the potential to provide awareness, involvement and confidence within youth. By making powerful connections, students will engage in themes of racism, sexism, power struggles, politics, and humanity by connecting to text a meaningful way. I look forward to further examining these themes within my future classroom as a progressive curricula in hopes to truly relate to my students and engage them in a deeper level.

Morell. E. (2007). Critical Literacy and Popular Culture in Urban Education: Toward a Pedagogy of Access and Dissent.

Morrell, E., & Duncan-Andrade, J. (2002). Toward a critical classroom discourse: Promoting academic literacy through engaging hip-hop culture with urban youth. *English Journal*, 91(6), 88-94.