Literary devices and have traditionally been taught in the English classroom through memorization and regurgitation. On its own, knowing how to provide dictionary definitions for “pathetic fallacy” or “comedic relief” holds little value for learners in the 21st century, where the definitions for these devices are easily accessible with an internet connection. This, however, can be understood as a positive for students in a high school Enlgish classroom. By establishing a more concrete or applied understanding of these terms, students will be able to reflect on the effects that these literary devices have on the reader more easily.

Our multiliteracy project and lesson plan aim to allow students to do just that. The New London Group’s (1996) “Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures” advocates for the teaching of linguistic abilities that go beyond simple grammatical rules and relationships; instead, educators should communicate a notion that “emphasizes the productive and innovative potential of language as a meaning-making system” (p. 79). This shift in focus from traditional linguistic concept learning to one of metalinguistic development becomes even more important as new technologies and techniques are employed. Indeed, our multiliteracies project and lesson will allow for the initiation of a discussion of the intended effects of different literary devices, rather than simply memorizing these devices. This enriched, metalinguistic conception of literary devices will allow students to more thoughtfully analyze and discuss the intended effects of literary devices in mediums ranging from classical novels, to commercials, to 280-character tweets.

Two other components of The New London Group’s (1996) work are also echoed in our own. The acknowledgement of the textual relationship to “the visual, the audio, the spatial” (p. 64) is not only apparent in our video created for the project, but in the use of Flipgrid during our lesson, a video-based application for rich class discussions. This tenet could be dissected further in the classroom by further allowing students to develop similar projects to the current multiliteracies project using a variety of mediums. Allowing these students to hone their creative and collaborative abilities through a continued exploration of the concept (whether through video, painting, music or otherwise) not only encourages students to develop crucial skills identified in multiliteracies pedagogy but also helps students to develop key skills for 21st century workplaces (New London Group, 1996)

The second component that this project and lesson allows for is the discussion of social justice issues, especially ones of diversity and voice. The New London Group’s article argues that “students must see themselves as active participants in social change” (64). Of course, social change cannot be accomplished without first identifying social evils in need of repair; this is especially true for young students. This multiliteracies project, then, also allows for a preliminary discussion on women’s voice and the suppression of this voice in various societal institutions.

We feel as if this project and lesson plan is an excellent tool for introducing a discussion on literary devices and their effect on the reader. The combined project is also versatile, allowing for future lessons and discussions where there will be ample opportunity for building on previous learning.

References

New London Group. 1996. A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard*

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