

# Sample Lesson for the Integration of Ways of Knowing and Areas of Knowledge

The following chart illustrates one way in which one might conceive an integrated lesson focused on how the Ways of Knowing function within an Area of Knowledge, in this case, the Arts. This sample encompasses only one activity, but can be extrapolated as an entire unit on an Area of Knowledge. In this particular activity, students are asked to read a Shakespearean sonnet with which they are not yet familiar. (These students are studying Shakespeare's sonnets in their English A1 class, so they have experience with some sonnets.) The students are asked to read the poem and begin developing an interpretation, but at the same time to notice what Ways of Knowing they are using in their effort to understand the poem. The model does not work all the way through the poem, but should provide an idea of the complexity of the knowledge-making process. The process here is the attempt by the reader of the poem (the receiver of the art) to understand its nuances and to derive some meaning from it.

## AREA OF KNOWLEDGE: THE ARTS

### SONNET 29

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries  
4 And look upon myself and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
8 With what I most enjoy contented least;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising  
12 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

From: <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/29.html>

### PERINENT WAYS OF KNOWING

Language plays an obvious role in the interpretation of any poem. As with any Shakespearean text, students (and other readers) will have to work at the language--they will not already possess the vocabulary needed to understand the text in a nuanced way. In this case, the use of the word "fortune" in the first line and "bewep" in the second is likely to cause many students difficulty.

### SHARED KNOWLEDGE & PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

The student's vocabulary is a matter of his or her personal knowledge; however, it has been learned from the shared knowledge of his parents, peers, and society. Most students will likely have to do research into the language of this text ("Fortune," for example, may cause problems). For this research, the student will turn to shared knowledge with an appeal to the authority of recognized sources--the Oxford English Dictionary, for example.

#### Memory:

- In order to interpret this particular poem, students will need to call on their memory of various features of sonnets: the normal structure of a Shakespearean sonnet, their knowledge of iambic pentameter and its normal role in a Shakespearean sonnet, the term "volta," (Because these students have been studying sonnets, these aspects of poetry are a matter of memory. Here it is possible, of course, that memory will fail, and students will have to return to their notes or other sources to develop the concepts that they need in order to do this task.)
- In addition to remembering various technical aspects of poetry, students will need to remember the meaning of the vocabulary used in the poem (where the words are those the student has encountered before), along with remembering rules of grammar and syntax. Much of this kind of memory, of course, occurs at the automatic level--we do not have to sit and think about what we remember about the words "When" or "then" or "disgrace," "and," "men," and many of the other words of the poem. Some individuals might have to stop and consciously try to remember the meaning of some words--"lark" or "haply," for example, which they have encountered before but do not use often enough to internalize at the level of automatic recall.
- Finally, students will have to remember the kinds of emotional experiences described in the "emotion" section below.

One's own memory is a highly personal matter, as it consists of the particular combination of ideas, experiences, facts, images, and so on that have been amassed in the individual brain. Our memory experience, furthermore, is a purely personal experience, as it happens inside our own individual mind. Much of what we remember, however, is stuff that has been gleaned from our exposure to and interaction with shared knowledge, and our means of verifying the accuracy of what we remember (a very necessary process, given the reconstructive nature of memory) very often involves the checking of our personal knowledge against the personal knowledge of others and the shared knowledge of our various communities.

### PERINENT WAYS(S) OF KNOWING

Reason: a reader of this poem will use reason over and over again.  
Some examples:

- To analyze the use of the sonnet structure. This particular sonnet is a typical Shakespearean sonnet, but there is a volta after the second quatrain and at the couplet rather than just at the couplet. Interpretation of the poem would necessarily require a rational consideration of what that extra turn contributes to the meaning.
- Metrical analysis: students will need to be able to determine where there are meaningful variations in the iambic pentameter and to develop a rational justification for their claims.
- The use of interpretive strategies such as Color-Marking or Dramatic Analysis requires rational processing.
- Reason is required even for the basic deconstruction of the poetic syntax.

Imagination: the imagination of possibilities is perhaps the heart of literary interpretation. The act of reading a rich text such as this sonnet requires students to identify puzzling bits and then to figure out how to explain them in such a way as to develop a coherent reading which leaves no feature--vocabulary, syntax, punctuation, imagery, metaphor, or other authorial strategy--unexplained. Imagination does not operate in isolation here; it operates simultaneously with reason--imagination generates possibilities (drawing on memory, language, emotion, and possibly even intuition) and reason immediately tests the idea for validity.

### SHARED KNOWLEDGE & PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

In this case, the facts that will be used to form the basis for reasoning will be shared knowledge (the words of the text itself, the technical features of sonnets, and so on), but the actual process of reasoning will be personal. This is always the case with reasoning; if we are simply following along someone else's line of reasoning, we are not actually reasoning--other than sufficient to verify the logic. In literary interpretation, as with the interpretation of any work of art, the point is for the individual receiver of the art to engage with it in a personal way, rather than simply to accept someone else's judgment passively.

Like reasoning, imagining is necessarily a personal process. What one is capable of imagining is predicated on what knowledge one has with which to create. A student who knows a good deal about larks and has an ear for the lyrical possibilities of rhythm will be able to combine that knowledge into an imaginative reading of lines 11-12 much more easily than the student who doesn't know that the song of the lark is particularly beautiful. The various individual imaginings can be shared, however, and if students are working with partners or in groups, they can imagine together. In the arts, we can also access the imaginings of others and while the considering of those ideas is not itself an act of imagination, we can evaluate the ideas of others (through reason and language, primarily) and decide whether those ideas help us to know the work of art better or not. In the case of this sonnet, for instance, students can consider the criticism of Helen Vendler, who asserts (without any particular justification), that the "you" of the sonnet is the young man who has been hypothesized as a lover of the real-life Shakespeare. Students can consider that particular product of imagination, a commonly held (shared) belief, and decide for themselves what merit it has.

**PERCEPTIVE WAYS OF KNOWING**

**Emotion:** The ability to empathize is at the heart of literary interpretation--perhaps especially so when the literature we are reading is love poetry. Students will appreciate the nuances of this sonnet much more richly if they are able to connect it to their own understanding of what it is like to feel sorry for oneself to the kind of extreme degree that this narrator describes. (Most teenagers can certainly relate to this!) They will understand even more if they can access any past experience in which someone they love can make them feel better just by showing up--even just in thought. If one can further appreciate, in a visceral, emotional way, the narrator's own awareness of how extremely overly dramatic he is "when" he gets into that self-pitying state, then one can understand the poem from the perspective of the narrator in the narrative situation, as well as from when he is in the dramatic situation. This is quite sophisticated appreciation, and it relies heavily on emotion for its conveyance.

**Sense Perception:** Sense perception is used in the obvious way that the students need to see in order to read the words. It is also used, however, in order to scan the meter, as an ability to hear the rhythms is required.

**Intuition:** in some cases, students may find that they make an intuitive leap about the significance or implications of something in the sonnet. They may appreciate intuitively, for example, the way that the rhythm of lines 11 and 12 speeds up and rises, like the lark taking off and flying. Intuition will be a matter of individual happenstance, however, rather than a way of knowing that can be deliberately employed.

**SHARED KNOWLEDGE VS. PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE**

When we ask students to find an emotional connection to a work of art, that connection is necessarily personal. One might argue, however, that the greatest joy of literature (and, I would suggest, all other art) is the fact that having investigated a text through one's own personal emotional experience, one finds that someone else--the artist--understands the world from the same emotional perspective, and one's emotional experience is, after all, shared with others.

The knowledge of metrical analysis and its formal terminology (iambic pentameter, trochee, trochaic, spondee, spondaic, and so on) is the result of the student's acquiring shared knowledge. The ability to scan the meter of a poem oneself, however, is a matter of personal knowledge. A student could, conceivably, take someone else's scansion of the meter and memorize it, thus making the matter of metrical analysis a matter of shared knowledge entirely; however, such an approach would certainly undermine the point, which is for each reader to experience the rhythm of the poetry for him or herself. This is a visceral experience, much as listening to music is.

Students capable of such a moment of intuition--particularly an intuition which is effective--will likely have significant experience with aspects of culture that can contribute. These might include music, other poetry, even birds. Whether that experience is predominantly a matter of having absorbed shared knowledge or of having direct personal experience as a musician or birder will depend entirely upon the individual student.

### PERTINENT WAY(S) OF KNOWING

Faith: In undertaking the interpretation of this sonnet, students are exhibiting a certain amount of faith in Shakespeare's talent--that it will be worth their time to delve into the poem and that there will be something valuable to find. They are also evincing a certain amount of faith in their own ability to complete the task successfully; this may be a sign of faith in their teacher's judgment both of them and of the text.

### SHARED KNOWLEDGE(S) & PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

In the early stages of the study of Shakespeare's writing, students are asked to accept the judgment of those in positions of authority (teachers, for example) or the more general judgment of a larger society in which Shakespeare is often held up as the greatest writer in the English language. Students who are willing to engage their attention and energy in a serious way to work on a difficult Shakespearean text may be doing so almost exclusively on the strength of those authorities. As a student's experience with Shakespeare's works grows, however, a student may find that was once a matter of faith in shared knowledge becomes something different, as they find out for themselves that the judgments of the various authorities is borne out by the works themselves. Eventually, faith may no longer be required to any degree, as direct experience will take its place.

### Some Additional Considerations

- ✓ It is important for students to recognize that much of the activity that they undertake in their schooling is not the same activity that is undertaken by professional knowledge-makers. Students learning mathematics by practicing solving problems the solutions to which are already known by others are not breaking new mathematical ground. They are acquiring shared knowledge of mathematics. They may or may not be (often are not) using the same methods of knowledge-acquisition/construction that are used by professional mathematicians. If they go on one day to university mathematics--graduate work and mathematical research as a profession, they will be undertaking to solve problems the solutions to which are not already known. In that instance, they will be contributing new knowledge to the body of shared knowledge. One of the common problems in TOK essays is the use of personal examples in which students assume, apparently without understanding, that all knowledge-making in any particular area of knowledge consists of nothing more than the kind of activity that students undertake in their personal practice in school. In the example here, although the students are studying an artwork which is already thoroughly known by many people, they are approaching the task using the same methodologies employed by the academics and professionals who work in the field of literature. In the arts, furthermore, unlike in some other Areas of Knowledge, it would be perfectly possible for a contemporary scholar to publish a new work on this, or others of Shakespeare's sonnets, provided that that publication offered some fresh perspective. Students need to understand clearly the relationship, the differences, and the similarities between their means of study and the making of knowledge in the world outside of secondary school.
- ✓ In this particular example, we see that it was possible to discover ways in which all eight of the WOK identified in the new guide either will be used or, in the case of Intuition and Faith, might be used. While it might be worthwhile to consider all eight of the WOK at some point during the scope of the whole course, the curriculum recommends choosing four to focus on in-depth. One way in which teachers might choose which four to emphasize would be for them to undertake a sample investigation such as this one in order to consider which of the ways of knowing are the most consistently significant for the Areas of Knowledge they want to incorporate in the course. This particular example might, for example, suggest that for poetry, imagination and memory are two extremely important contributing mechanisms, along with reason and emotion. If I were trying to design my course, I could then consider whether the set of those four WOK seem to provide equally rich possibilities for other types of art, and then for the other AOK that I am thinking of including in my curriculum. The choosing process would be dynamic; if I find that these four are indeed quite useful for the arts, but then I can't really find a way to get equal value from them for some one or more of my preferred AOKs, then I can choose either to replace the WOK or the AOK. In this way, I could mix and match and consider possibilities until I was happy. I might even make a bunch of flash cards that I could manipulate into visual patterns on the table in front of me to help me decide what possibilities would work the best.

- ✓ An activity like this works well as an introduction to a unit. Once the students have had this kind of direct experience experiencing to whatever degree possible what it is like to engage with knowledge-making as people do in the real world outside of school, they need to expand their understanding of how the Ways of Knowing are managed in the given Area of Knowledge by professionals and academics--of knowledge construction/discovery in the realm of shared knowledge, in other words. It is not sufficient that the students understand how they personally use the WOK for a given kind of activity. Following a lesson like this, then, I would build a unit which investigated the formal procedures and standards for knowledge construction in the particular AOK, and I would require students to consider, throughout the unit, the potential problems that might arise from the use of the various relevant WOK as well as the ways in which the technologies and the formal procedures used by practitioners of that WOK are consciously designed to offset those potential problems. The new guide and TSM make it clear that the intention is for the bulk of inquiry into the nature of the WOK is to be done in the context of investigating the nature of the AOK; this model suggests one possible way to manage that kind of integration.
- ✓ Knowledge Framework: this activity addresses several aspects of the Knowledge Framework: Links to Personal Knowledge, links to the WOK, methodology in terms of how a receiver of a work of art makes sense of that work of art, and Scope (allows for the consideration of the role of art in conveying human experience) and Applications (in one sense, at least, in that it allows us to connect to other people--even those who lived long before us--and appreciate our common humanity)