



THE COURAGE TO TRANSGRESS

Teaching & Writing with bell hooks



BY CHRISTINE DESTEFANO

Dear Reader,

Welcome to my multigenre research project! Within these pages, you will explore the teaching and writing philosophies of bell hooks, a Black feminist scholar, writer, and educator. *The Courage to Transgress* is a non-linear journey through my reading and thinking around bell hooks's ideas of engaged pedagogy, teaching as the practice of freedom, and how writing and teaching combine to create the opportunity for liberation.

Before I started this project, I had encountered bell hooks's feminist thought in my undergraduate degree, but had never connected her feminist theory with pedagogical theory. While I thought of bell hooks as a writer, I never thought of her as a teacher, despite that being the basis of her career. My initial research questions centered around the possible connection between writing, something that has long been a passion of mine, and teaching, the passion I'm growing into. How does one's identity as a writer and teacher connect in the classroom? In what ways can writing and teaching both be transgressive? How can I balance my identity as a writer and a teacher? Most importantly, how do I challenge oppressive practices and create a classroom that values students' voices?

During the research stage of this project, I did background searches on bell hooks's life and discovered that she has written about the experience of transitioning from an all-Black school to an integrated school as a child. I learned that she saw teaching as her practical career, similar to the conclusion I came to before starting my graduate program at OSU. I also discovered video interviews with bell hooks where she talks about the dangers of censorship and the value in engaging students of any age in a respectful open dialogue about controversial issues. By far my favorite part of research was listening to the audiobook of bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994).

Conducting research and reading more of bell hooks's work provided me with an incredible opportunity to grow and expand my understanding of liberatory pedagogy, and I know I will take these ideas into my future classroom. I hope that my multigenre project gives you a small taste of the joyful, contemplative experience of reading bell hooks.



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bell hooks on “Education as the Practice of Freedom”



My first introduction to bell hooks was my junior year of college, when I decided to add a Women’s & Gender Studies major to my English literature degree. I asked a friend in the WGS program to recommend a couple feminist authors I should check out, and she recommended bell hooks. I picked up a copy of *Feminism Is For Everybody* (2000) and I’m so glad I did.

bell hooks grew up in a working class family in Kentucky and attended first segregated and then integrated schools. Beginning her writing and teaching life in the 1980s, hooks purposefully centralizes race and class in her discussion of feminism. Although she writes on feminist issues in a down-to-earth way, hooks is also a powerful scholar and educator. She has written more than 30 books in which she uses her platform to advocate for social justice. Today, I will be speaking with bell

hooks about the connection between writing and teaching, and how English Language Arts teachers, in particular, can effectively build classroom communities that challenge the status quo.

Christine DeStefano: First of all, thank you so much for having this conversation with me.

bell hooks: Thank you for having me.

CD: I recently discovered another of your books, *Teaching to Transgress* (1994). In this book, you write about how you saw teaching as your practical career choice and writing as your ultimate passion. I relate to this a lot, and have only recently decided to pursue teaching as a career and keep writing as my personal passion. In what ways do you see teaching and writing intersecting in your life?

bh: Well, I came to my love of writing through performing. In my all-black school as a child, there was this emphasis on the ability to speak, on oration. We were taught performance first, and writing came second. So I was well aware of the transformative power of language before I became a writer. And I started with poetry, first, before I became an academic. Once I started to realize that writing was not just a personal pursuit, but a political one, that’s where the connection between writing and teaching came in for me. Teaching was always political in my understanding. Teaching students to write effectively, but also to write from the heart and about their passions--that’s truly revolutionary.

CD: Exactly! I completely agree. In that same book about teaching, you mention the influence of Paulo Friere on your teaching philosophy. You discuss the need to challenge the “banking system of education” in which students are vessels into which teachers make deposits of knowledge that students can then withdraw as necessary. Why do you think this viewpoint of education’s purpose is still so prevalent within our current education system, even 50 years after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) was released?

bh: Well, I think the answer to that question is twofold. On the one hand, if we view teaching as an act of depositing knowledge, that’s quite a bit easier to accomplish. Anyone who knows enough about a particular subject, say, the Civil War, can get up in front of a room full of minds and perform said knowledge. It then becomes the students’ responsibility to properly deposit said knowledge and put it to use. Engaged pedagogy, like the kind I describe in my book, the kind that Paulo Friere espoused as well, that’s very much so more demanding. In order to move beyond the banking system of education, teachers must relinquish some of that control and authority in the classroom and they have to do quite a bit more thinking and relating to and with their students. And secondly, the banking system prevails in our current educational system in part because it would simply take too much work to completely rid ourselves of it. It’s ingrained in the fabric of our system, and it helps keep other oppressive systems in place.

CD: I think you’re onto something. There are those in contemporary American society who would try to discredit higher education, particularly in the liberal arts, as being a place of indoctrination into liberal ideology. How would you counter that narrative? In what ways do you see teaching as an inherently political act?

bh: It’s funny you ask that, because that’s exactly the kind of thinking I am working against in my classroom. I teach my students the importance of speaking freely, even when we disagree, even if it means they might be challenged. American culture feels more polarized than ever before, and there is this tendency to withdraw into our own ideological spaces. Now, more than ever, we need to teach our young people to ask tough questions and how to recognize the difference between simply trashing someone’s idea and having a critical discussion. I think there is nothing more important than teaching our students to listen to someone they disagree with and know how to think critically about it. We cannot simply shove our fingers in our ears and refuse to hear the other side.

Teaching will always be a political act, of course. If we buy into the banking system of education, then it makes sense that we would see teachers, particularly at the specialized level of higher education, as being indoctrinators. If teachers are the sage on the stage, so to speak, then they are depositing their views into their students. The best way to counter that narrative, of course, is actively work against teaching in that way, to teach from a place of engaging students’ hearts and minds fully.

CD: See, I think it's so interesting that you do speak out so strongly against any kind of censorship. There is this idea that progressives want to censor speech in order to protect people, but that's not what you're advocating for at all, and I think your message is so important. You have written that "writers from marginalized groups are usually faced with two options: overidentification with an identity or disidentification" (hooks, 2015, p.9). In the last several years, how do you see these options playing out in publishing and in the books chosen for classroom use?

bh: I see this playing out in two different ways. On the one hand, you have more authors of color publishing books that are explicitly about the experience of being marginalized. Which is fantastic, particularly in the field of Young Adult literature. Young people need to be able to see themselves in the stories they're reading, and white students also need that element of having, for example, the Black experience, humanized for them. They need an entry point to empathy.

On the other hand, there's this secondary emphasis on writers "playing the race card" with this idea that antiracism is just some social media trend, and that's why all these books are getting so much traction. There has absolutely been a resurgence of Black art in the past ten, fifteen years. But there's still this sense that Black writers either need to write only about the Black experience, and then they're writing for a subset audience, or that their identity shouldn't play into their work at all.

To me, it cannot ever just be one or the other. I cannot separate my identity as a writer from my identity as a Black woman, nor should I be expected to. But I also don't see myself as a Black woman writer. The two intersect, but they are not one and the same. When we put these expectations on writers, it limits what they're able to create. I believe we have to find a balance.

CD: Let's go back to *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) for a moment. You write in the chapter on language about the need to recognize and preserve different Englishes, particularly vernacular language. How would you advocate for the usage of the Black vernacular in the ELA classroom?



bh: The contemporary Black vernacular evolved out of the counter-language that African slaves created as they took on the oppressor's language. There is power embedded in Black vernacular language that must be preserved. Which is why I encourage my students to use their first language and then translate their writing; I don't want my students to feel that becoming educated will force them to give up their native tongue. That starts, of course, by recognizing Black English as a language in its own right, which we are finally coming to recognize within the education community. One thing that supports that usage is

the realization of where the Black vernacular comes from. When we look at its roots, analyze its grammar structure and how it's both similar to and different from Standardized English, we can start to see it as on a level with any other language. I think there's something to be said for engaging in that dialogue with students, because shifting how we see language ultimately shifts what and how we know. It's important that young students recognize that language isn't static, that it's ever-changing.

CD: Wow, Dr. hooks, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us. One last question: What action can ELA teachers take *today* to move toward liberatory pedagogy?

bh: The first step in a liberatory pedagogy is recognizing that each student's voice is a resource in your classroom. Students need to be active participants in their own education in order to be fully engaged, to reach that higher level of learning. Ask your students about their lives, what interests them. Ask them to write about things they care about. Choose to engage their voices in your classroom, and then go from there.



Advice from bell hooks

Dear Pre-Service Teachers,

My name is bell hooks, a writer, teacher, and feminist. I'm writing this letter in the hopes that you will take some of my advice to heart as you enter into the profession of teaching, but know that you will always continue to keep learning, no matter how long you stay in teaching.

The first thing I want to tell you is to let go of your preconceived notion of what it means to be a teacher. I realize this is easier said than done. In our culture, the image of a smiling (usually white female) teacher at the front of a classroom, her gaze somehow catching every student's eyes right before they misbehave, is a powerful one. When you enter your classroom, your body is entering into a space that's designed to deny its very existence. You must let go of your existing ideas of what teaching looks like. In any case, a teacher isn't just a stagnant image we hold in our minds; a teacher is someone we are constantly becoming as we move within our career.

The most important skill you as a teacher need is the skill of self-reflection. Regardless of your training, the true learning of teaching is never done. In order to be a transgressive teacher, you will need to constantly reflect on your own pedagogical practices. A teacher who is unwilling to keep reflecting and keep growing toward their fullest self is one who will never be a truly great and transgressive teacher. We cannot simply seek to empower our students, from whatever vantage point, without also acknowledging the ways that transgressive teaching also empowers the teacher.

In order to truly engage in *education as the practice of freedom*, we must start by unpacking and undoing the existing paradigm that sees teachers as knowledge bankers whose job is to deposit knowledge in the waiting receptacles of students. Transgressive teachers see themselves not as the arbiters of all knowledge, but as co-learners with their students. As you make this journey toward transgressive teaching, your focus must be first and foremost on creating a classroom community where each student's presence is seen as the valuable resource that it is.

We must believe that each of our students is capable of having a respectful intellectual dialogue on even tough topics such as prejudice and privilege. It is your responsibility as the teacher to model what this behavior looks like in the way that you listen to your students carefully and value what they have to say. In order to move forward, we must embrace even dissenting voices, rather than silencing those who make us uncomfortable. We have to model what it looks like to have this kind of open dialogue because that skill is the single most powerful way that we can repair some of the rifts in our society.

In order to break these barriers, teachers and students must be honest and situate themselves within the varying points of identity. Rather than attempting to position yourself, the teacher, as a neutral force, which you cannot be, you must acknowledge to your students who you are, where you come from, and work to counter your own internalized bias in the classroom. Particularly if you are, as is statistically likely, a middle class white woman, you have to acknowledge how these aspects of your identity intersect in different ways in your classroom. The school system itself is designed to reinforce middle class norms, which may be quite different from the norms of your students, and it is your responsibility to interrogate these norms alongside your students.

Teaching in this way asks a lot of you. I know this can all seem overwhelming, and I don't want you to think that I began my teaching career understanding all of these things. Try not to fall into the trap of assigning yourself an identity along the good-bad binary of teaching. We all have lessons that flop, days that don't go according to plan, moments when things fall apart in the classroom and we're not sure what to do. In fact, this is part of being human. Self-reflecting teachers know that no one is perfect. We are all doing our best to grow toward transgressive teaching, and it does no good to berate yourself for the ways you haven't quite measured up yet. Ultimately, you have to model the most important behavior for your students, the one that creates what I call *engaged pedagogy*: you show up fully each day, with your whole heart, and encourage students to bring that same level of excitement to the process of learning together.

I hope these words will encourage you to keep striving and learning about the practices that work best in your personality and in your classroom. I wish you the best of luck in teaching for freedom.

Sincerely,

bell hooks



A Day in an Engaged Classroom

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. MRS. DESTEFANO'S 7TH GRADE CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Various STUDENTS huddle at their desks in groups of four, sharing contents of their laptop screens, while MRS. DESTEFANO walks among them, smiling.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT

Mrs. D walks to her car as the sun sets over the parking lot. She's smiling, yet exhausted.

INT. MRS. DESTEFANO'S CLASSROOM - MID-MORNING

Various STUDENTS lean over their desks, writing, as the camera pans past the daily Quick Write prompt.

INT. MRS. DESTEFANO'S HOME - NIGHT

Mrs. D slumps at her desk, a stack of papers next to her, reading student drafts.

INT. MRS. DESTEFANO'S CLASSROOM - MID DAY

Students move about the classroom viewing each other's infographics in a gallery walk. They chat animatedly, asking each other questions and giving feedback. Mrs. DeStefano moves about the classroom among them, admiring her students' work.

INT. MRS. DESTEFANO'S HOME - NIGHT

Mrs. D, in pajamas, slumps at her desk, and we see her deleting entire sections of her lesson plans to rewrite them. She rests her head in her hands.

MRS. DESTEFANO (V.O.)

Nobody said this teaching thing was going to be easy.

END MONTAGE.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS. DESTEFANO'S CLASSROOM - MID DAY

The desks have been rearranged into a circle shape for a whole class discussion. Students take their seats. All seem more animated than usual, some anxious and others already chatty.

Mrs. D comes out from behind her desk and takes an empty seat in the circle next to EMILY S., a quiet student with long brown hair that often covers most of her pale face.

MRS. DESTEFANO

(speaking over the continued whispers)

Before we get our discussion started, let's make sure we're all on the same page about expectations.

(She pauses, waiting for chatter to die down, which it mostly does.)

MRS. DESTEFANO (CONT.)

We're here to have an open dialogue about some complicated issues that may require us to become uncomfortable.

As Mrs. D speaks, some students squirm in their chairs, while others look like they want to fall through the floor. Mrs. D notices, but this is part of the process.

MRS. DESTEFANO (CONT.)

In order to keep having discussions like these, we have to always start from a place of..

STUDENTS

(talking over each other, but saying a variation on the same thing)

Respect and dignity.

MRS. DESTEFANO

(repeats) Respect and dignity. Which means that even if Brandon disagrees with something that Derryl says, Brandon is going to consider Derryl's point of view and respond respectfully. Because we're all here to learn with and from each other.

BRANDON F. and DERRYL R. share sheepish grins. The two boys are close friends whose only disagreement comes in the form of which sports teams the two support. Mrs. D knows this, which is why she used them as her example.

MRS. DESTEFANO (CONT.)

Respect and dignity means that only one person has the floor at a time, and that we're all conscious of creating space for all voices to be heard. Some of you might have a lot to say, and that's great, but try to make sure you're including your classmates and not hogging the spotlight. Our student leaders today are Emily and Jamila, so let's give them a warm welcome.

EMILY S. jolts out of her chair as her classmates give a round of snaps. She heads for the computer that projects onto the whiteboard and begins setting up their mini-presentation. On Mrs. D's other side, JAMILA P. flips her braids to one side and begins to speak.

JAMILA

(forcefully)

So to start off we wanted to share this video with y'all.

Jamila nods at Emily, who hits play on the video. The class watches. In the video, a young woman with brown skin and dark hair sings into her phone's camera. The song begins to the tune of the American classic "This Land Is Your Land" but the words are shifted to be from the singer's perspective as a marginalized person.

JAMILA

So, what did y'all think of that video? Do you buy the argument?

Various students nod their heads, but no one wants to be the first to speak up.

SAMIRA K.

(quietly)

It seemed pretty realistic to me.

JAMILA

Which parts?

SAMIRA

(hesitantly) Well, um... just the way that she's singing is kinda... sad, I guess.

ANNA S.

I didn't really buy it. I mean, where's the evidence?

BRANDON

Do TikToks have a Works Cited?

Some members of the class laugh nervously.

EMILY

Regardless, the question is really whether or not we believe her. The girl in the video I mean.

JAMILA

(nods) That's what I mean. Do we believe her, and what makes us believe her?

ANNA

(crosses her arms over her chest) That's what I'm saying: I don't believe her. I don't see how this random girl on TikTok is supposed to be a credible source of information.

DERRYL

Why not?

BRANDON

Psh, I totally buy it!

JULIA R.

(softly - no one hears her)

MRS. D

Hey everyone, can we quiet down for a second? Julia has something to share.

JULIA

(flushing) Um, well, I believe her. But I don't think she's trying to give us, like, information.

ANNA

(rolling her eyes) Well, duh! She's trying to convince us to see how *awful* America is, or whatever.

EMILY

(speaking up from the front of the room and tucking her hair behind her ear) I don't think that's what she's saying.

BRANDON

I agree with Emily. I don't think she's hating on America, per say.

DERRYL

Yeah, I think she's trying to point out that America is different for some people.

JAMILA

Can you say more about that, Derryl? Because I think that's a really important point.

DERRYL

Yeah, I think she's trying to point out how America wasn't really set up to benefit marginalized people. Which is why we're constantly in danger in our own neighborhoods and stuff.

ANNA

I still don't get why we should buy her position or whatever.

JULIA

I think it's because you can just tell she's speaking, or like, singing, from lived experience, you know?

BRANDON

Yo, discrimination is real. You don't have to believe her if you don't want to. But that's her truth, you feel?

Anna opens her mouth like she wants to argue, then closes it again.

JAMILA

OK, so going back to *Ghost Boys*, what makes us believe the main character?

BRANDON

Uh, 'cause why would he lie about being a ghost?

JULIA

(so quiet she's almost inaudible) Because it's his lived experience, and he's the one telling the story.

A silence descends as the students digest the comments that have been made.

MRS D (V.O.)

At this point, I'm reminded to wait. Sometimes, when I want students to speak, I have to be patient.

The silence continues. Students shift in their chairs, uncomfortable.

MRS D

(addressing the class) Let me ask you all something: how would it have changed the story if it had been written from the police officer's point of view?

More silence as students consider the question.

JULIA

(softly, but this time she's completely audible over the rest of the class's silence) It would've been a completely different story.

DERRYL

Yeah, I agree with Julia. It would've been, like, a news story or whatever. It would've been a story about him defending himself.

BRANDON

(scoffs) Prolly would've been a lot shorter since he ain't got much to say for himself.

JAMILA

What about if it had been written from the lil white girl's perspective. Sarah? (she looks at Mrs. D for confirmation)

MRS. D (V.O.)

I can't lie: these are the moments that remind me why I started teaching.

ANNA

Sarah's book would've shown both sides.

JULIA

(holds up her battered copy of *Ghost Boys*) It *does* show both sides though. 'Cause that's why Sarah's in the book. We get to see her questioning her own daddy's motives.

BRANDON

(aside, to Derryl) I don't think this book was written for lil white girls though.

MRS. D

(to Brandon) Can you say that for the rest of the class? You make an interesting observation.

BRANDON

(shamelessly) I said I don't think this book is for white folks.

EMILY

What makes you say so?

BRANDON

Well, it's got a Black kid on the cover. And it's written by a Black woman. And it tells about the experience of being Black in America.

DERRYL

No offense, not a lot of white folks care to read books like this.

EMILY

(assertively) I do. (Flushing) Not that I should be, like, congratulated or anything.

MRS. D

I hear you, Brandon, Derryl, Emily. But let's think about this another way. Why might this book have been written with white people in mind?

Another silence descends. Mrs. D waits.

ANNA



(staring at her lap) Is it because it helps us walk in someone else's shoes for a while?

MRS. D

(smiling at Anna and the class as a whole) It can. If we choose to let it.

Building Linguistic Justice into the Classroom



BUILDING LINGUISTIC JUSTICE INTO THE CLASSROOM

a conversation with bell hooks & April Baker-Bell

what is Linguistic Justice?

Linguistic Justice asks us to critically examine the emphasis placed on White Mainstream English (WME) and acknowledge the ways that Black Language (BL) has been systematically devalued and punished in our schools and society at large. As English educators, we must encourage our students to speak in their own languages rather than prioritizing WME.

what is transgressive pedagogy?

ONE THAT RECOGNIZES THE VALUE OF EACH STUDENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO COLLECTIVE LEARNING

history of Black Language



Black Language evolved out of slavery as a language of resistance to oppression and a way of sustaining Black culture. In order to enact linguistic justice in our classrooms, we must start by acknowledging and teaching the power of Black Language as a cultural construct and as a complex language in its own right.

(1) Eradicationist Pedagogies seek to replace the perceived deficit of Black Language with White Mainstream English.
(2) Respectability Pedagogies (e.g. Code-Switching) fail to celebrate Black Language & imply that racism can be countered by using the oppressor's language.



current language pedagogies

detriments to current pedagogies



Anti-Black Linguistic Racism, as imbedded in the above pedagogies, results in students who internalize hatred of their own language, or feel conflicted between Black Language and White Mainstream English. This causes emotional harm that should not be discounted.

- teach the powerful history of Black Language & teach it as a language in its own right
- involve students in a critical interrogation of linguistic hegemony & racism
- ask students to speak & write in their native language before translating it into WME
- use consciousness-raising to help Black students heal from internalized linguistic racism

transgressive language pedagogies



Sources:

- Baker-Bell, A. (2020). Linguistic justice: Black language, literacy, identity, and pedagogy. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. (1994). Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom. New York: Routledge.

About Mrs. DeStefano's Classroom

My Teaching Philosophy: Education & the Courage to Transgress

I believe, first and foremost, that the purpose of education is to create opportunity and promote greater freedom for students.

In order for education to be liberatory, the teacher's role shifts from being the controller to the facilitator of knowledge generation. Because of this, my class might look a little different from what students might expect. Rather than emphasizing my content knowledge and lecturing on grammar or classic works of literature, my course will require a high level of student engagement in the production of greater knowledge for everyone, myself included.

I believe that students are their own sources of knowledge and experience, and we benefit from each person's contribution to the conversation. Because students spend so much of their school career learning to be compliant, it may take time to create a space for them to open up and share what they think, but I believe the time investment is worth the potential outcome.

Beyond creating a more intellectually and emotionally fulfilling learning experience, prioritizing student voices encourages them to develop independence, to trust their own thinking, and to become critical thinkers. Regardless of where they go after high school, I want my students to be prepared to ask tough questions and seek out answers, and the English Language Arts classroom is a great place to practice having that kind of dialogue.

In addition to developing critical thinking, a conversation-based classroom, in conjunction with a diverse range of readings, encourages students to develop greater understanding and empathy for other human beings, regardless of our differences. Diversity is no longer something we can just ignore or pay lip service to, but something we have to actively celebrate. In my course, we will read texts by authors with a wide range of perspectives, and students will learn to parse out their own thinking after reading multiple sides of an issue.

This style of engaged learning benefits students' intellectual growth because it encourages them to be more actively involved in their own learning process. Rather than passively receiving information given to them, my students will co-construct knowledge together. Similarly, having access to books that reflect both their own experiences and those of people different from them will give students more entry points into the conversation about literature. I believe that when students can connect to what they're reading, they're more likely to show up fully in exploring it and learning from it.

My ultimate goal as a teacher is to empower my students beyond my classroom. I know that not every student will enter my classroom as a lover of literature, but I do believe I can help them see its benefits beyond school. By giving them a voice in the conversation, holding them to high expectations, and prioritizing practical applications, I hope to give my students a new perspective on English Language Arts and education in general.



Multigenre Notes Page

Artifact 1: Interview | bell hooks on “Education as the Practice of Freedom”

For this piece, I imagined that I was interviewing bell hooks about her teaching and writing ideas. I then used my research to think about how she might respond. This was a really interesting way of examining and synthesizing hooks’s thoughts, and I learned a lot about the interview genre from reading mentor texts. I placed this genre first because it enabled me to give the reader a bit of background information about bell hooks and a way to compile some important ideas that I expand on in later genres. I framed each of my questions around what I believed educators most need to know about bell hooks’s teaching ideas, and this connects to my next genre where I share my imagined advice from bell hooks for beginning teachers.

[Image 1 Source](#) | [Image 2 Source](#)

Artifact 2: Letter | Advice from bell hooks

For my next genre, I wanted to imagine advice bell hooks might give to future teachers, particularly based on my readings in *Teaching to Transgress* (1994). Despite the decades that have passed since the book’s publication, teachers face many of the same challenges when it comes to engaging students and resisting the banking model of education. I also wanted this to be a piece of hopeful writing that teachers could read and take with them on their journey toward becoming a transgressive teacher. For this piece, I tried to capture some of bell hooks’s language and style, particularly her specific turns of phrase such as *transgressive teaching*, because these phrases really capture what bell hooks is about.

Artifact 3: Screenplay Scene | A Day in an Engaged Classroom

I wanted to show what bell hook’s engaged pedagogy might look like in the classroom, particularly in K-12 schools, since her writing mostly discusses higher education. In order to show what this might look like, I chose to write a scene from a screenplay where I imagined my future classroom. While I could have chosen a short story format for this piece, I wanted to emphasize the students’ dialogue. bell hooks places a lot of importance on student voices as a resource in our classroom, which is what my hypothetical teacher self does in this scene. The key points here are that the teacher fully engages students in sharing their thoughts on a topic, and directs students to respectfully engage in a dialogue even when they disagree. This scene also shows how pretty much any text can be a site of inquiry and critical thinking, even a TikTok video! When it comes to engaged pedagogy, it’s not really about *what* you’re teaching, but *how* you teach it.

Artifact 4: Infographic | Building Linguistic Justice into the Classroom

For this piece, I wanted to synthesize my learning from April Baker-Bell’s book and from bell hooks’s discussion of linguistic racism in *Teaching to Transgress*. I found it fascinating how similar their approaches were despite the decades between the writing, so I wanted to put them in conversation with each other. I chose to do an infographic because I wanted to have something extremely accessible for teachers who want to learn more about linguistic justice in ELA. This piece differs most from my other pieces in form, but I think it looks at a specific issue from bell hooks’s work rather than at her teaching philosophy as a whole. I learned a lot from looking at the infographics my classmates made, and it inspired me to keep playing around with this genre of writing since it’s something I’m still learning. What I learned from creating this: the importance of really narrowing down the key points that must be included -- it was actually really hard for me to be concise, but this is good practice! I also used a problem-solution organization for simplicity, detailing what’s currently taking place in our language classrooms and what Baker-Bell and hooks would suggest.

Artifact 5: Blog Post | My Teaching Philosophy: Education & the Courage to Transgress

I chose this piece as the culminating artifact for my multigenre project because it encompasses what I have taken away from my research and writing about bell hooks. I wanted a piece that captured the shifts in my teaching philosophy, such as the focus on student voices and the rejection of the banking model of education. I wrote this in the style of a blog post so that I can post it on my teacher website for students and parents to be informed about where I’m coming from and the kind of space I’m building in my classroom. This piece gave me the most hope while writing it, because it reminded me of how much I will be able to empower my future students from what I’ve learned in this project and this class as a whole.



A Note on the Repetend: I wanted to create an image or icon that would represent my project as a whole. I chose the title, *The Courage to Transgress*, because researching bell hooks has given me the courage to put some of these transgressive teaching practices into place. I chose the image of trees for this icon because of the way hooks emphasizes how teaching is something we grow into, we become, and not something that we’re born as. I love this image of growing into a more transgressive, courageous teacher the longer I practice; I also love the image of the smaller trees underneath as my students, and how I will empower them to grow alongside me.

A Note on the Text: For each piece of this project, I chose a font that best represents the genre. Each font family contains the word *libre*, which means *free*. I would like to thank Google Fonts for providing me endless entertainment in this manner.

Self-Reflection

The part of the project that I'm particularly proud of is the screenplay scene (Genre 3) because this took me really out of my comfort zone. I'm very comfortable with writing more formally as well as writing short fiction, so this genre really challenged my idea of what kind of writing I can do. It also forced me to imagine myself as a teacher, a point in time that's getting closer every day. In order to write this genre, I had to dream but also confront my own anxiety about teaching. However, I found the writing of my final piece challenging. I am constantly collecting thoughts about my teaching philosophy, so it was hard for me to sit down and write this culminating piece that contains all my ideas thus far about who I want to be as a teacher. I think I used my time well for the most part, but I wish I had more time to go back and revise more; revision is something I tend to resist and avoid. I don't feel that I spent too much time on any one genre, but I wish I had spent more time working on the screenplay scene to make sure that it flows really authentically and has the right amount of detail.

I loved getting to know more about bell hooks as a teacher as well as a feminist thinker. In particular, I loved her visions for a more inclusive classroom that sees students as resources and prioritizes their voices. My best source of information was *Teaching to Transgress* (1994); I listened to it in the car on the way to and from work. This was a great way for me to learn a lot about how hooks writes to incorporate in the pieces where I took on her voice. I really enjoyed this project because it allowed me to bring a creative, playful spirit to learning about a topic. Instead of just compiling sources and chunking them into body paragraphs of a paper, I got to imagine what bell hooks would say, and how I could put her ideas into practice in my own classroom. While I love researching topics that matter, this helped me synthesize my learning in a deeper way than writing a traditional paper.

Research Notes

Notes	Source
<p>background/biography:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - b. 1952 to a working class family in Kentucky - “attended racially-segregated public schools” (para.2) - took her great-grandmother’s name as her pen name; lack of capitalization “to place focus on her work rather than her name, on her ideas rather than her personality” (para. 2) - Stanford, University of Wisconsin, UC-Santa Cruz (dissertation on Toni Morrison 🙄) <p>foundational beliefs - Black feminist scholarship origins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism</i> (1981): “she centralized the intersection of race, sex, and class at the core of Black women’s life” (para.4) - <i>Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black</i> (1989): “focused on the impact of white imperialist, patriarchal domination in daily life) 	<p>Website/Journal: BlackPast.org Authors/organization: Maria Quintana, Ph.D Date published/updated: Jan 11, 2010 Date accessed: Feb 21, 2021 URL/link: Quintana Ph. D., M. (2010, January 11) bell hooks/ Gloria Jean Watkins (1952-). Retrieved from https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/hooks-bell-gloria-jean-watkins-1952/</p>
<p>bell hooks on Speaking Freely in 2002</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - she doesn’t just write about one topic (love) but she connects theory about race/gender/class into a discussion of the topic - fears that (higher) ed teaches students to focus solely on finding a job, rather than on deeper learning - society as conflict-avoidant: she teaches her students to recognize the difference between trashing something & “critical commentary that can illuminate” - teaching the courage to speak freely: censorship in America takes very subtle forms; “dissident speech is not valued in our nation” — “we are in danger as a nation of silence any form of speech that goes against what is perceived as the status quo” - when asked what should would say to students worried about a Nazi speaking on campus: “people need to know how to hear information and think critically about it” 	<p>Website/Journal: Interview with bell hooks for Speaking Freely Authors/organization: Date published/updated: Date accessed: URL/link: https://youtu.be/g2bmnwehlpA Or paste the APA citation</p>
<p>from the introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hooks saw teaching as the practical option but writing is her true love—> how do these two things intersect in our lives? how is writing “the practice of freedom” - pushing back against the typical classroom setup & drawing on Friere: banking system of education is making students not care to learn & it’s keeping marginalized students oppressed rather than setting them free - “any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone’s presence is acknowledged” “there must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources” (p.8) <p>from Ch II - Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adrienne Rich: standard English is “the oppressor’s language, but I need it to talk to you” —> idea that everyone has to learn standard English in order to make it in society, yet we also need to keep the vernacular because it’s the truest expression of ourselves - Black people have taken standard English & done something different with it—> AAVE/the Black vernacular - hooks encourages students to write in their native language (e.g. Black vernacular) & then translate it into standard English 	<p>Website/Journal: Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom Authors/organization: bell hooks Date published/updated: 1994 Date accessed: URL/link: Or paste the APA citation hooks, bell. (1994). Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom. New York: Routelage.</p>
<p>bell hooks - “writing without labels”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personal essay about developing a writer identity & how it connects with race/class/gender - “writers from marginalized groups are usually faced with two options: overidentification with an identity or disidentification”—when it comes to analyzing writers, we want to claim that we just look at the text only, but it’s impossible to separate even great writers like Fualkner from their sociohistorical context - “I am not a writer who happens to be black. I am a writer who is black and female. These aspects of my identity strengthen my creative gifts. They are neither burdens nor limitations” 	<p>Website/Journal: Appalchian Heritage (Vol 43, Issue 4) Authors/organization: bell hooks Date published/updated: Fall 2015 Date accessed: 2/23/21 URL/link: Or paste the APA citation hooks, bell. (2015). Writing without labels. <i>Appalachian Heritage</i>, 43(4), p9</p>
<p>Lessons in Transgression: #BlackGirlsMatter and the Feminist Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teaching Black feminist activism in high school & undergraduate classes, especially with Black girls—> “hooks’s work has galvanized and transformed young people” (p.8) - high school students in a class on feminism use class blog to record their feminist awakening <3 	<p>Website/Journal: <i>Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism</i> 15.1 (2016) Authors/organization: Stephanie Troutman & Ileana Jimenez Date published/updated: 2016 Date accessed: 2/23/21 URL/link: Or paste the APA citation</p> <p>Troutman, S. & Jimenez, I. (2016). Lessons in transgression: #BlackGirlsMatter and the feminist classroom. <i>Meridians: Feminism, race, transnationalism</i>, 15(1), p7-39. doi: 10.2979/meridians.15.1.03</p>
<p>“Remembered Rapture: Dancing with Words”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - connection between writing & performance: “experiencing language as a transformative force” happened for her through reciting poetry (p.1) 	<p>Website/Journal: JAC 20.1 Authors/organization: bell hooks Date published/updated: 2000 Date accessed: 2/23/21 URL/link: Or paste the APA citation hooks, bell. (2000). Remembered rapture: Dancing with words. <i>JAC</i>, 20:1, p.1-8, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20866297</p>

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