From the Classroom: Second Draft Reading

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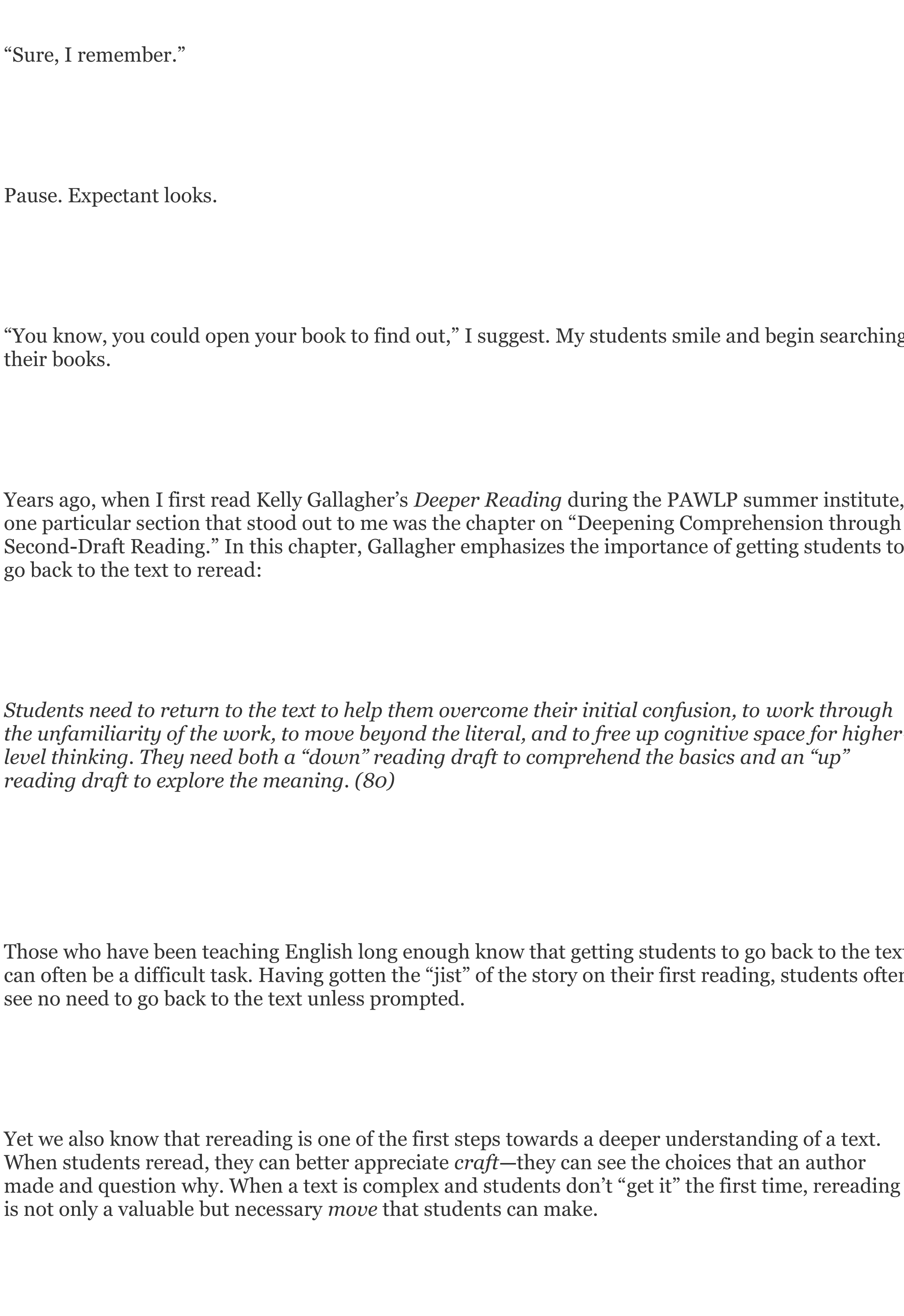
by Tricia Ebarvia

As I walk around the room, I notice students talking—generally enthusiastically—about the book we are reading. They have a few discussion questions on a handout to take notes, which they dutifully fill out. What I don't notice are any books open on their desks. In fact, I see many students with no books out at all, and what books are out are closed on their desks.

"Mrs. Ebarvia, do you know remember what Piggy said to Jack when they went to Castle Rock?"



"Sure, I remember."

Pause. Expectant looks.

"You know, you could open your book to find out," I suggest. My students smile and begin searching their books.

Years ago, when I first read Kelly Gallagher's *Deeper Reading* during the PAWLP summer institute, one particular section that stood out to me was the chapter on "Deepening Comprehension through Second-Draft Reading." In this chapter, Gallagher emphasizes the importance of getting students to go back to the text to reread:

Students need to return to the text to help them overcome their initial confusion, to work through the unfamiliarity of the work, to move beyond the literal, and to free up cognitive space for higher-level thinking. They need both a "down" reading draft to comprehend the basics and an "up" reading draft to explore the meaning. (80)

Those who have been teaching English long enough know that getting students to go back to the text can often be a difficult task. Having gotten the "jist" of the story on their first reading, students often see no need to go back to the text unless prompted.

Yet we also know that rereading is one of the first steps towards a deeper understanding of a text. When students reread, they can better appreciate *craft*—they can see the choices that an author made and question why. When a text is complex and students don't "get it" the first time, rereading is not only a valuable but necessary *move* that students can make.

So how do we encourage students to go back to the text—to explore the text a second, or even third time?

Of course, Gallagher's *Deeper Reading* offers many suggestions. One of my favorites is asking three simple questions—What does it say? What does it mean? What does it matter? On any given day, during any point in a lesson, I can ask my students these three questions to encourage them to think more deeply about the text. Sometimes I use the three questions "on the spot" and ask students to go back to their reading from the night before and, taking turns in their groups (my students sit in "quads"), students each share a passage that speaks to them, telling their peers *what it says, what it means,* and *why it matters.*

In addition, here are three tried-and-true methods that I've found to be particularly powerful in my classroom.

Text Rendering

Text rendering is one of the first methods I learned when I was in graduate school, and I've found that it's still one of the most effective ways to get students to review a text a second or third time. After reading a selection of text, students choose a word or phrase that stands out to them. Usually I ask students to choose the word that best represents the main idea of the passage and then we go around the room so each student shares.

Why this works: In order to choose a word, students need to reread and understand main idea. When we go around the room and students share, some students choose the same word. When that happens, it can be affirming for students who can see their choices validated by their peers. Other times, a student will choose a word that no one else has, and that choice can be quite insightful. Sometimes I have students share a word that is in the text; other times, they can choose a word that isn't in the text. After all students have shared, we debrief on why students chose the words they did, sometimes as a class, sometimes in pairs.

Other variations: If the passage focuses on a character, then I ask students to come up with a single word to capture that character, his motives or his personality. Other times, I ask students to first think of a word that best captures the *tone* of the passage, and then in a follow-up round, I ask

students to choose the word from the passage that best conveys that tone. If we're working with a longer selection, I ask students to choose the best sentence, where "best" can mean the sentence that best captures the main idea or simply the best *crafted* sentence (and thus a mini-lesson on writing can emerge, too).

Quote Rankings

I use Quote Rankings in order to get students to think what makes a selection of text *significant*. This activity works well when we're in the middle of reading a shared text or after we've finished (I've used it both ways).

Recently, my students and I finished reading Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. I had been experimenting with a flipped reading approach in which students read during class (while I walk around to answer questions and confer as needed) and then go home to post their responses in our online discussion board on Schoology. I built in "break days" after every 2-3 days of reading so that students have a chance to also talk and catch up in person. On one of these days, students came to class after reading a substantial portion of the text (about 60 pages or so). I knew I didn't want to use traditional study guide questions to get students talking about the text, but I also knew that leaving students to have open conversation might be too unfocused.

When students arrived in the classroom, I had them turn their desks around so they could work in groups. I then handed each group a set of quotations from their reading, each numbered on separate slips of paper. On this particular day, I gave students fifteen different quotes from the text. I asked students to read through the quotes and decide on which five quotes stood out to them as being the "most significant" to the reading. Then, after they decided on five quotes, they then had to rank those quotes from most to least significant.

When all the groups finish, I ask each group post their rankings on the whiteboard to share with the class. As the rankings go up (this is why it's important for each quote to be numbered!), we start to see patterns and similarities. After all the rankings are shared, we then have a whole class discussion about what similarities exist and why certain quotes may have appeared multiple times.

Why this works: Whenever I listen in on students' conversations, they are animated and engaged. If students don't remember the passage, they have to go back into the text to find it so that they can make an honest judgment as to its significance (I include the page numbers on each slip of paper using MLA format; I also point out this format to students so that they can see these quotations as models for proper citation). In order to decide if a quotation should go in the "keep" or "discard" pile in their initial review, students need to be able to explain *why* the quotation is important. When students disagree, their conversation becomes an opportunity for them to defend their opinion and offer the necessary support.

The first time I do this activity with students and walk around the room, I often have students ask me, "Well, what makes a quote significant?" I like to keep the initial directions vague so that students *have to ask* this question. My response? "Well, that's for your group to decide." In this way, students need to have conversation about the criteria for significance. As we review the rankings as a whole class, I then ask students the "takeaway" for this lesson, which is *what* **does** *make a quotation significant?* Now, I could have started the lesson by asking students to brainstorm these criteria before they started ranking the quotes, but by withholding this discussion until *after* the activity, students could reflect on their conversations and defend their criteria using the choices they made during this activity.

Other variations: I've also done Quote Rankings *after*students have finished an entire book. For example, at the right are *fifty* quotes from *Lord of the Flies*. And yes, I ask students to try to narrow down and rank these quotes to a top five. As you can imagine, it can be very difficult. I usually start

by asking students to consider general significance, but if students are having trouble, I ask them to set criteria as a group to help them narrow down. I have also asked student re-rank based on more specific directions. For example, after giving students a selection of possible essay topics, I ask them to rank based on the relevance to a particular topic.

This activity can take a lot of preparation, especially the first time. The first time I did this activity with *Lord of the Flies*, I asked students to keep track of significant passages as they read and submit them via a Google form. When students submit their passages, I instruct them to make sure they use the correct citation format. I then compiled the quotes into a Word document, numbered them, made enough copies for multiple groups, and then had the copies laminated. After they were laminated, I went through the painful process of cutting all those slips of paper and making piles of fifty quotes. I keep each pile in a large gallon size Ziploc bag. That was four years ago. Now I am able to pull out those baggies every year.

Another advantage of Quote Ranking is that it works wonderfully when students are going to write an essay. I have found that the evidence they select (often from this activity) are not only more relevant but better explained in the body of their essays.

One Word Assignment

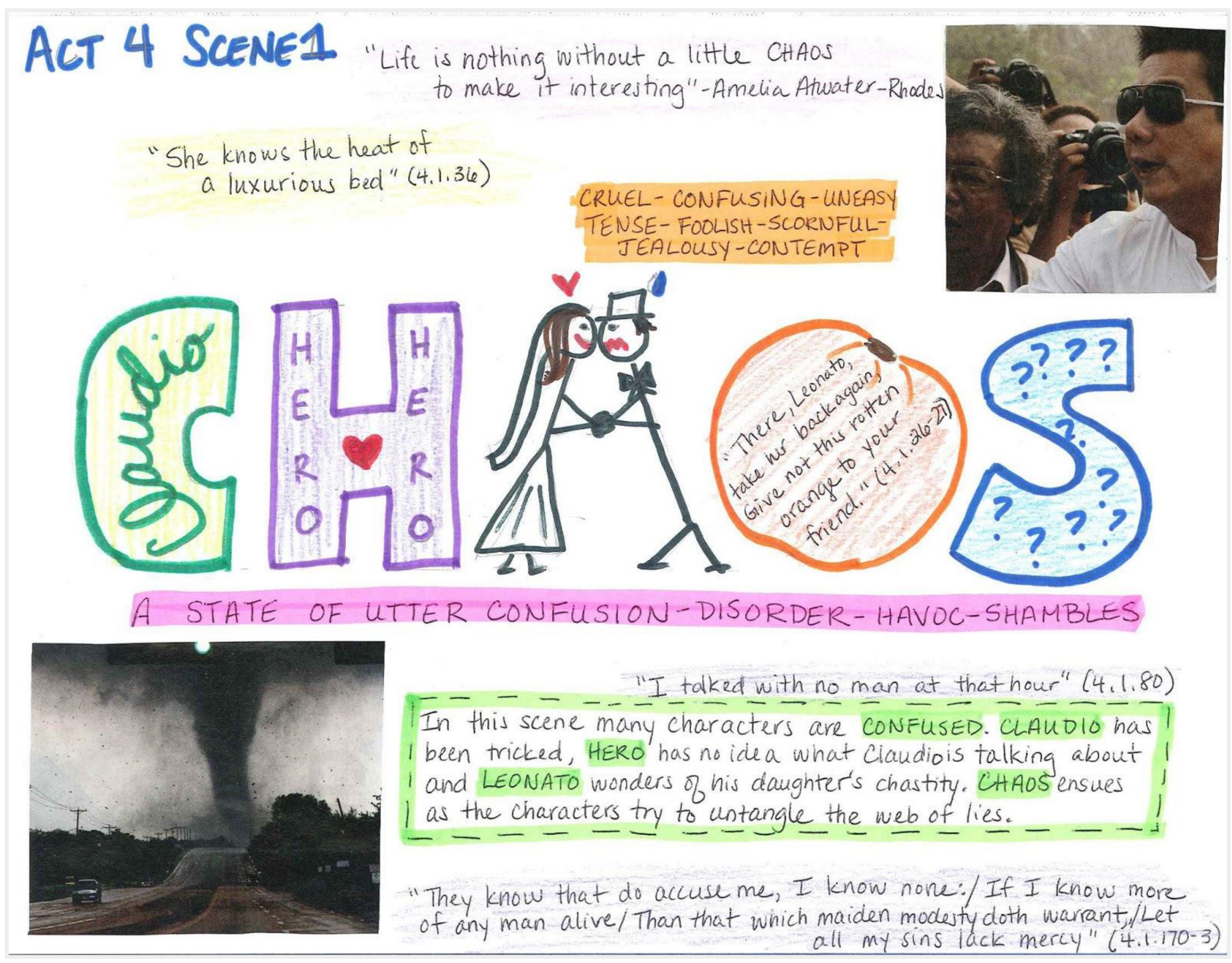
This activity—which I consider a more sophisticated version of a text rendering—can work with any text. I have found that it works especially well with whole class novels in which there are distinct chapters (I've had a lot of success using this activity with *Lord of the Flies*). For this activity, I assign each student a chapter; depending on the number of chapters, more than one student is assigned to each chapter. On the day that the reading is due, students assigned that chapter come to class with their "One Word" assignment.

What is the assignment? I ask students to choose a word that best captures a main idea or theme in the chapter. The word does not need to come from the chapter. On an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper, students create a visual that includes the word they've chosen, plus the following:

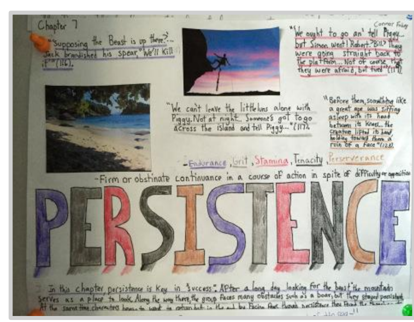
- the denotation and connotation of the word
- a paragraph that explains why that word is appropriate

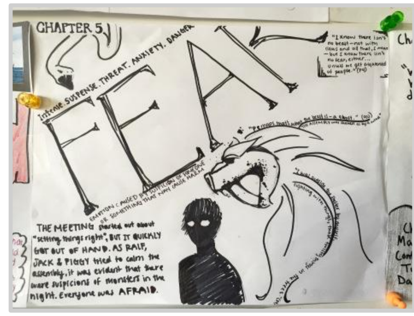
- at least two passages from the text that support the choice of that word
- at least two visuals that also represent that word or how that word is used in the text

For example, here is a sample for *Much Ado About Nothing:*



And here are some samples from *Lord of the Flies*:





Why this works: Again, students really can't do this activity successfully without going back to the text, both to choose their word as well as to support it. This activity works well as we are reading; I start each class period by asking students to present their One Word assignment to the class via the

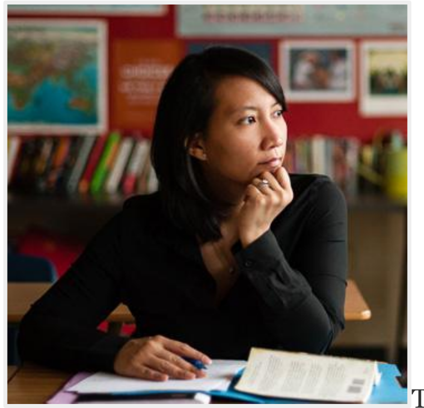
document camera. Their presentations not only serve as an effective review of the material, but I can also tell pretty quickly what students took away from the reading (and thus, address any misconceptions). I also grade these assignments as they present.

As students present their words, I collect and post them in the room. By the time we are finished reading the novel, students have essentially constructed a timeline of the novel. Having this timeline visible in the room comes in handy when students are then writing their essays (I encourage students to walk around and use the One Word assignments to generate ideas and gather evidence). When students choose different words for the same chapter, students can see how multiple interpretations can be valid if there is sufficient supporting evidence.

Other variations: I have also used this activity when we have *finished* reading an entire book. For example, sometimes I do not have daily, structured reading assignments and instead, I have students first read the whole book on their own. In this way, the activity serves as a review for the entire novel. Another variation—which I have not tried yet—is to for students to create an infographic of the chapter. An infographic assignment could introduce other visual literacy lessons, like how to present both narrative and informational text in the form of data such as pie charts, bar graphs, etc. An app like Canva could be a great tool for students if your wanted to integrate some technology into the lesson.

As you can see, each of the "Second-Draft" reading strategies I've outlined asks students to go back to the text to support their choices and then *talk* about those choices with each other and the class. Which brings me to another point—*choice*. I think one reason that each activity is successful is because they include an element of student choice and thus develops student agency.

How do you encourage students to re-read the text? If you have any strategies you'd like share, please do so in the comments. Or if you have any comments/questions about the strategies above, please post below.


Tricia Ebarvia currently teaches 9th grade world literature and AP English Language & Composition at Conestoga High School in Berwyn, PA. This year, she continues her quest to inspire a love for reading in her students by integrating more independent reading and free choice. She admits that her heart skips a beat whenever she sees a student with a book in his hand she's recommended. She can also be found on Twitter @triciaebarvia or on her website at triciaebarvia.org.