

**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
IN THE CLASSROOM:
CREATING DYNAMIC
EXERCISES AND PROJECTS
USING LITERATURE**

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Presentation Overview

- Overarching argument of presentation
 - “scaffolding pedagogical methods”
- Five steps towards the engaged classroom
 - elements of my engaged classroom
- Specific examples: exercises and projects
 - “one off” exercise
 - linked exercises
 - sequenced project
- Specific tips: personal practices

The “Engaged” Student

- Interested, invested
- Dynamic presence (taking notes, asking questions)
- Learning by doing
- Thinking in real time
- Taking ownership over learning
- Better results on assigned work

Overarching Argument

- Scaffolding: define end goal and work backwards
- We think carefully about scaffolding our content
 - ex: 1) “easy” sonnet; 2) imitate sonnet; 3) Shakespeare
- We think carefully about scaffolding our “skills”
 - ex: 1) thesis discussion; 2) peer workshop; 3) revised thesis
- We don’t think of scaffolding pedagogical methods of student engagement in the same way, but should
 - ex: 1) pairs of two students analyze of scene
 - 2) pairs “group up” to four students: explain ideas; take notes
 - 3) return to original pair; find evidence for other pair’s ideas
 - 4) pairs “group up” again to synthesize ideas

Scaffolding Pedagogical Methods

- Scaffolding forms of student engagement
 - Scaffolding student interactions, not just content, skills
- Scaffolding the forms of thinking enabled by engaged classroom interactions
 - Ex: preliminary analysis; listen to other group; find more evidence; synthesis (they are learning how to deepen an interpretation)
- “Match” engaged interactions to content
 - Ex: sonnet “read aloud” session to hear rhyme
- Classroom as a space of “real” interaction, social learning: interactions can be sequenced in a scaffolding way

Scaffolding Example

□ Step #1: Close reading of quotation I selected

4. To look “outward” to the text’s larger meaning and context, questioning how the its details change your understanding of its larger ideas

The Process:

1. **Read slowly**; re-read; ask questions; “notice what you notice”
2. **Mark up text** in a way that makes sense to you:
 - underline or bracket key passages
 - circle key concept words
 - notice artistic language that seems to be calling attention to itself
 - connect repeating words, images, etc—notice any patterns
3. **Take marginal notes** in a way that makes sense to you
 - note key information
 - ask key questions
4. **Jot down largest conceptual insights/ideas** at end of passage BEFORE you leave the passage.

M.T. Anderson, *FEED*

So, she messaged me the next day, I'm not messaging you to say I'm sorry, because I'm not, not for everything.

But I am messaging you to say that I love you, and that you're completely wrong about me thinking you're stupid. I always thought you could teach me things. I was always waiting. You're not like the others. You say things that no one expects you to. You think you're stupid. You want to be stupid. But you're someone people could learn

Scaffolding Example, cont.

- Step #2: Close reading of self-selected quotation; share with partner

way that the novel creates a unique sense of the future.)

1. Find one interesting passage from p. 50 onwards.
2. Write down a full sentence or two from that passage below.
3. Circle any interesting, rich, or compelling words.
4. Jot down a few sentences that explain how this passage makes us believe we are reading about a "real" reality of the future.

"I would just fly through the tubes in the Suburbs in my parents' upcar, looking at all the house and the lawns, each on in its own pod,..." pg. 77

- explores the new "world" as a futuristic time period. Thus flying cars, everything is in capsule ext.
- why is it all in tubes/pods?
- Earth not livable?

"Bettina's mother has us come over and weave ponchos. ... ~~breachload~~ their antiaircraft gun ... Clouds™." pg. 79

- Interesting, brings us back to our current day things that are done w/o technology. Hands on things people have forgot to do.

Can they think on their own?
"Keep thinking. You can hear our brains rattling inside us, like the little Russian dolls." pg. 91

Scaffolding Example, cont.

- Step #3: Work with group to develop concepts, arguments through close reading of evidence

M.T. Anderson, *FEED*
Close Reading and Conceptual Thinking
connecting a concept to evidence; developing a concept

GROUP GOAL: take your concept, locate an interesting quote that supports it from today's reading, and work on developing that concept

Person #1: Speaker (Concept): _____

This is the person handed the card. You must explain the group's work to the class.

Person #2: Book Annotator (Evidence): _____

As your group finds an interesting quote, you must write comments in the margins (or use sticky notes) to capture the group's ideas. Be ready to explain the most interesting word or phrase in the quotation and how it develops your group's key concept.

Person #3: Blackboard Writer (Argument): _____

As you discuss your key concept, you must be ready to synthesize those ideas into a clear conceptual statement and write this on the board: "When M.T. Anderson reimagines the concept of [your concept], he wants us to think about how ____X____ and ____Y____."

Person #4: Note Taker (Connection of "macro" & "micro"): _____

You must fill out this sheet. You must add people's names to sheet and keep track of the group's work by taking the notes listed at the bottom.

Person #5: Questioner (Development): _____

You must end your group's presentation by explaining what ideas your group is still wondering about: what questions do you have about how the concept will be developed by the novel or what plot elements the novel still needs to develop/resolve.

Research on engagement shows engagement results when we...

- Trigger student interest, curiosity
- Connect to student's sense of material being important
- Help students feel they are improving at task
- Have process of creation take place in classroom (“flipped classroom”)

My own thinking:

- Students crave real interaction, break from screen time

Brookfield, S. *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom*. Jossey-Bass, 2015

Howard, J. *Discussion in the College Classroom*. Wiley, 2015.

Marzano, R, and D. Pickering, *The highly Engaged Classroom*. Marzano Research Laboratory, 2010.

Pope, D.C. “Doing school” How we are creating a generation of stressed out, materialistic, and mis-educated students. Yale, 2001.

Five Steps towards the Engaged Classroom

- 1. Define what “engagement” looks like to you
- 2. Have a bag of tricks that works well for you; be comfortable mixing and matching them into a sequence
- 3. “Match” student engagement goals to content goals, skills goals—to the “end” scaffold goals
- 4. Work to name the student interaction (be overt):
 - “Today, we are going to work on brainstorming, but need to think about how listening/note-taking is part of that process”
- 5. Enjoy the unexpected, chaotic
 - Allow discovery: allow first encounters with material in class; allow for group decisions to emerge in real time

My Engaged Classroom

- Physical activity, noise and silence
- Variations on group work
- Student surprise, unexpected tasks: discovery
- Low tech as high impact
 - Classroom forces face-to-face interaction
- Overt directions
 - The more open-ended the ideas, the more prescribed the process (more specific the directions)
 - Keep students involved; they know I'll ask them for work
- Goal: “push” thinking (open-ended thinking)

My “Bag of Tricks”

Materials

- Sticky notes
- Index cards
- Poster paper
- Highlighters
- Xeroxed page from text

Methods

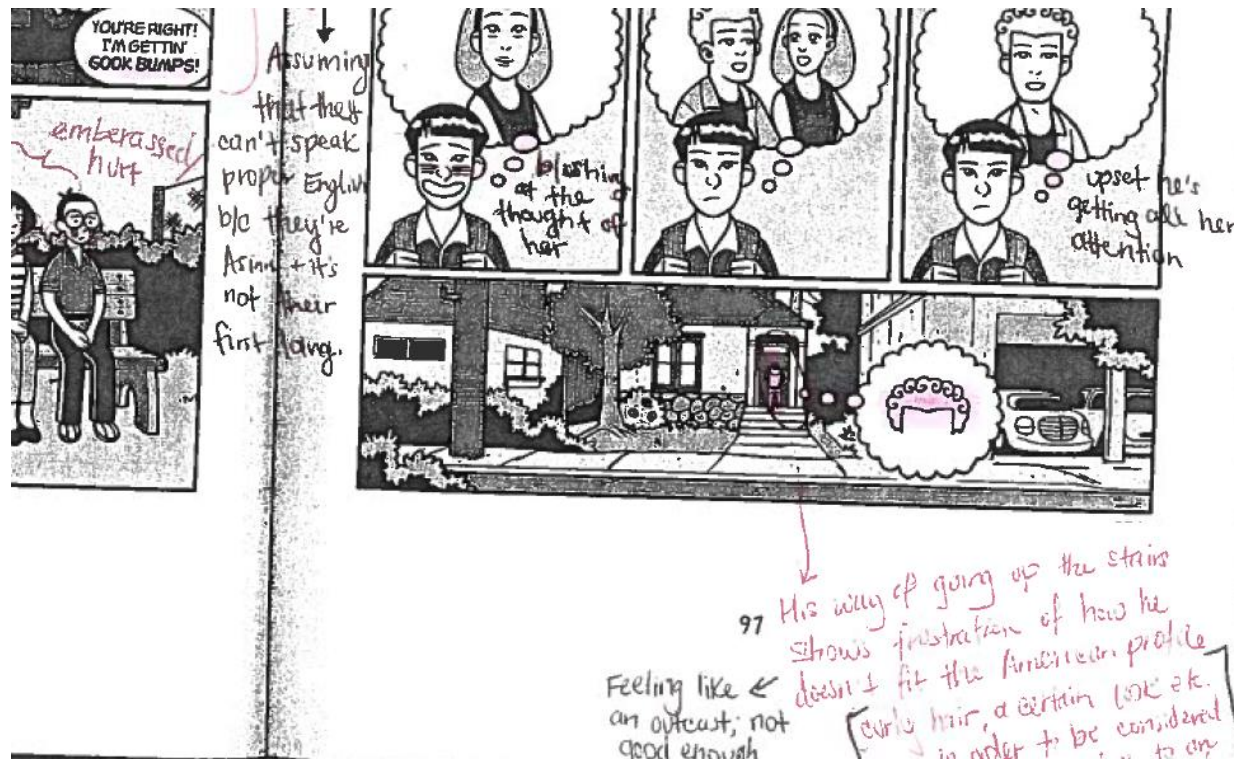
- Pairs
- Small groups
- Read aloud
- Free write
- Pass work to another for feedback
- Regulated explain/listen (“interview”)
- Take notes to hand in or on board/poster

Sample One-off In-class Exercises

- Goal: Developing ideas, pushing for more interpretive depth
- Sticky Notes:
 - Students are given a theme from a text
 - Individual student brainstorms all possible scenes that support theme
 - Individual student brainstorms all possible concepts that develop theme
 - 3-4 students come together as a group and sort sticky notes into categories, sticking them to poster paper and labeling categories
- Index Card:
 - Students come into class with a sample thesis statement
 - Student writes thesis on back and front of large index card
 - Student passes index card to left: reader #1 writes: “Does your concept of X relate to...”, “Could you add the idea of X...”
 - Student passes index card to left: reader #2 writes: “Have you thought about these scenes ... to support your ideas?”
 - Student passes index card to left; final reader *s the best ideas he/she sees.

Sample One-off In-class Exercise

- Goal: Engaged close reading of graphic novel
- Each student marks up page, passes to partner to build on comments



Sample One-off In-class Exercise

- Goal: Connecting literary form and content
- Students work in small groups to fill out “Interactive” Grid, then build towards larger ideas.

Gulliver's Travels: Theme and Form “On the Page”

ISSUE of EMPHASIS Select one	PLUS	FORMAL ELEMENTS Select one-two	EQUALS	NOVEL'S LARGER CRITIQUE Select one
The body is strange		Repetition of words or phrases		Critique of monarchy/government
Language is strange		Use of made up words that can be “seen” /recognized (on the page) as made up		Critique of social hierarchy (class, wealth)
The family is strange		Use of capitalization		Critique of “show all” culture
Social customs are strange		Use of italicization		Critique of social/court culture
Political activities are strange		Use of white space on page		Critique of complacency
Interpersonal struggles are strange (ie: competition, jealousy)		Use of chapter headings		Critique of human morality
War is strange		Size of type on page		Critique of false goals and systems put in place by powerful
Legal systems are strange		Graphic elements: printer’s special type		
Money is strange		Graphic elements: map		
Anything else!		Anything else!		Anything else!

1. Select passage/page and issue of emphasis (#1 above); discuss this issue as the thematic focus of your workshop activity.
2. Select one theme/formal element that connects with the issue of emphasis that you’ll be the best “formal element” to...

Sample One-off In-class Exercise

- Goal: Learning to ask good questions, lead class discussion
- Students complete Socratic Dialogue Grid

For next class, be prepared to use your interpretations/questions to guide class discussion—I'll act as moderator, not the main question-asker! Bring concept-based interpretations/questions that will lead to more conversation.

Main starting question: How does *House on Mango Street* capture the voice of the city?

TODAY—create the trigger question → **MONDAY—bring notes developing ideas**
Trigger for conceptual ideas/questions → Continue to create interpretation/question

I think one key thematic concept “Mango Street” explores is:	
I think Esperanza, the main character, helps us to think about issues of:	
How does “Mango Street’s” language work? It seems to work by:	
One of the most interesting uses of language occurs on page _____. What do you think this phrase means?	
What do people make of the key symbol of ... does it represent ...?	

Sample Linked Exercise

- Goal: Develop ideas through primary and secondary sources
- Step #1: In group, define key ideas (referencing novels)
- Step #2: Each student, for homework: Find scenes to support ideas; in next class, return to group to compare selected scenes.

TODAY: To explore how the gothic “expresses the inexpressible,” with group:

A. In each novel, locate ONE

--inexpressible fear/anxiety

--or desire

--or hope/dream

that cannot be expressed overtly within culture (but can within gothic).

Define: that inexpressible issue.

Ask: Why can it not be expressed overtly? Push your ideas here.

FOR NEXT CLASS: Search for evidence to support your ideas about the gothic:

B. Locate TWO scenes in each novel that “shows” that fear, desire, of hope through a gothic “prop” (motif: symbol, event, character, expression, etc). You will have a total of FOUR scenes.

Ask: What is the goal of the gothic in portraying that fear, desire, hope?
Is the goal to reveal in order to critique? or to reveal in order to resolve?

Sample Linked Exercise, cont.

- Step #3: In class, group selects best Gothic scenes (or most commonly selected scenes) and writes them on index cards.
- Step #4: Random index card swap. Take home index card. Must apply assigned critic to that scene, using earlier notes taken on critic. (What in scene would critic define as “gothic”?)

NATHAN MITCHELL
Notes and Quotes

Jerrold Hogle, “Introduction,” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*
(Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002)

Features of the gothic (p. 2)

- 1. Antiquated space
- 2. Hidden secrets from past
- 3. Haunted characters
- 4. Monsters, ghosts (mix life and death)
- 5. Reality and/or supernatural

Terror/horror forms of Gothic (p. 3)

- a. Terror Gothic: suspenseful, anxious about threats to safety; kept out of sight
- b. Horror Gothic: violence, shatters assumed norms

Sample Portfolio/Project

- Goal: Engaged interest in literature and its historical contexts
- Step #1: With group, review the novel: Understanding and selecting key scenes

Rise of the Novel
Prof. Nixon
Moll Flanders Workshop

“CHEAP PRINT” SOURCES OF THE NOVEL WORKSHOP *Moll Flanders--and--Old Bailey Sessions Papers*

Overarching goal: You are interested in comparing the crimes in *Moll Flanders* to “real” crime. How does the early novel connect “fact” and “fiction”? How “realistic” are Moll’s crime?

STEP ONE with GROUP: Understand Moll’s Criminal Acts

Moll’s crime: Locate a specific example of Moll’s crimes—find a specific crime scene in the novel now. Jot down some notes based on that scene and class conversation.

1. What are the types of crimes being committed by Moll?
2. What are the types of objects being stolen by Moll?
3. What are the amounts of money involved—how much are those objects worth that Moll steals?

Sample Portfolio/Project, cont.

- Step #2: With partner, investigate “Mystery Text” historical source: Understanding form and content

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STEP TWO with PARTNER: Understand the Old Bailey Session’s Papers

You are looking for sources of *Moll Flanders* and have stumbled upon the *Old Bailey Sessions Paper*. You have never seen a criminal report before—but you want to figure out how it “works” before you compare it to *Moll Flanders*.

1. Note the basics of how the *Old Bailey Sessions Paper* works:

1. Date given:
2. Overarching set-up of report:
What is at beginning and end of the report?

How does a typical entry work?

3. Return to the end of the report.

What legal information listed at the end of the report? Note the breakdown of punishments (how many people per punishment).

What advertisements appear at the end of the report?

Sample Portfolio/Project, cont.

- Step #3: As individual, engage in brainstorming: Synthesizing sources, developing ideas, moving towards paper topic

ROUGH PAPER BRAINSTORMING: Homework

3. Connect the fictional novel to its factual source through close reading. Return to a specific crime scene in *Moll Flanders* and compare it to your selected factual crime.

1. **Theme:** Do a thematic comparison between *Moll Flanders* and the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*. How does the legal record serve as a thematic source? For example, consider the events taking place in both texts.

2. **Form:** Do a formal comparison between *Moll Flanders* and the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*. How does the legal record serve as a formal source? For example, consider sentence structure or dialogue or grammar in both works.

Sample Portfolio/Project, cont.

- Step #4: As individual engage in creativity, then share with class: Creative Writing → Class Dramatic Reading

LEGAL RECORDS CREATIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1

Due Date: Monday, Sept 30

Length: 2-3 pages, ungraded, part of participation grade

Format: Double spaced, normal margins, page numbers, 12 point Times font
Put name and date at top

Big Idea: In class, we will be examining how 18th-century legal records, specifically the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*, provide a model for the 18th-century novel. Criminal records are a source of the novel in two ways:

Thematic Source: Many specific crimes, actions, and objects appearing in the legal records reappear in *Moll Flanders*. Larger novelistic themes, such as violence or repentance, also appear in (or can be read into) the legal records.

Formal Source: The narrative forms—such as object-listing, money-accounting, event-driven paragraphs, and run-on sentences—that appear in the legal records also appear in *Moll Flanders*. The formal structure of the legal record can be seen as structuring the telling of Moll's story.

Assignment: You must experiment with the connections between the 18th-century legal record and the developing novel. Explore how legal records can be transformed into fiction! Explore how fiction can be transformed into a factual record!

Part 1: Rewrite a real criminal record as Defoe-like fiction.

1. Select a real crime from the *Old Bailey Sessions Paper*.
2. Using Defoe's writing style, rewrite that crime as a paragraph or scene in *Moll Flanders*.
3. Incorporate as many micro-issues of form as possible, including word choice, sentence length, capitalization, punctuation, etc.
4. Consider adding Defoe's fictional techniques, such as Moll's self-reflection or a pronounced theme.

Part 2: Rewrite a scene from *Moll Flanders* as an entry in the criminal record.

1. Select a scene from *Moll Flanders*.

Sample Portfolio/Project, cont.

□ Step #5: Traditional Analytical Paper

RISE OF THE NOVEL
Prof Cheryl Nixon

PAPER #2: **Placing *Moll Flanders* in its “Print Culture” Context**

Paper length: 8-10 pages

Paper due date:

Paper goals: This paper will place *Moll Flanders* in its early “print culture” context. Your paper will select one theme from *Moll Flanders* and a selected set of early print materials that help you to explore that theme. You will be arguing that your selected theme is “in circulation” in the print culture and that Defoe is working with (expanding, dramatizing, simplifying, fictionalizing, sensationalizing!?) that theme by using it in the new novel. Sample themes include: adultery, pickpocketing, orphaning, incest, misbehaving women, murder, transportation to America, the devil...

Paper sources: Your paper must include a selection of at least four-five early print sources:

1. Two-three early print sources from ECCO.
2. One-two sources from *Novel Definitions*.
3. You must also add a source from the Old Bailey Sessions Papers database.

Other Portfolios/Projects

- “Read aloud” session (share favorite passages)
- Poster session displaying in-progress paper outlines
 - Viewers write comments on posters
- Poster session displaying contextual/historical material
 - Students put research on display
- Exhibition of poems and paintings (ie: Pre-Raphaelite poetry and painting, modernist poetry and painting)
- Book display of different editions of one text

Transferability of Engaged Thinking

- “Design Thinking” used by tech start-ups (Stanford Design School)

THE PROCESS



My “Engaged” Practices

- Sequence engagement activities
- Match engagement activity to content, skills
- Engaged thinking can be triggered by “props” such as sticky notes, index cards
- Open-ended thinking can be triggered by very directive framework
- Keep ‘em guessing! Mix up different engagement activities
- Help students to see the value of face-to-face sharing of ideas