Curriculum Design

9th Grade Poetry

Jennifer Ghesquire

Statement of Purpose

In a nation focused on standardized testing, teaching in context can be more difficult than ever. The need for teachers to make lessons relevant has become even more crucial in a world that is quickly becoming consumed with technological distractions. While focusing on testing and the economy, many programs and many pieces of the curriculum have been cut. One of the first units to be pared down in a Language Arts classroom is poetry. While poetry has been regarded as a worthwhile endeavor over the years, teachers might choose to focus elsewhere in order to improve test scores. Ironically, poetry is one of the best ways to bring context and improved literacy into the classroom.

In a recent article about context and the value of culture in the classroom, several countries found that poetry was actually the best way to develop higher end thinking skills in literature and beyond. As Hughes (2007) stated, “Canadian schools have found that poetry — which is often among the first casualties of test prep — is a documented best practice not only for teaching literacy but also for helping students develop critical thinking and analytical perspectives (as cited in Reeves, 2009).

There is further research into the idea that poetry is a powerful resource for students and teachers and the most regrettable idea is that teachers would avoid the study of poetry in its entirety or pass on a common thought that poetry is not enjoyable. In an article about the link between poetry and improved metacognition and, thus higher test scores, Holbrook (2005) wrote, “Literature—and poetry in particular—can package language in forms that are both “concise and precise” with the potential or sharpening oral communication, building vocabulary, facilitating closer readings of texts, and improving writing skills. A good poem also has the power to engage readers on a more personal level” (as cited in Eva-Wodd, 2008). The implications of this idea prove poetry’s important existence on its own, but also as a connection to other elements in a successful Language Arts curriculum, including standardized testing.

This curriculum design focuses on a poetry unit with the underlying idea that poetry should be used to its full potential as part of a complete Language Arts curriculum. Poetry can bridge the gap between the disconnect of the classroom and the student. It can be the link between context and standardized testing.

References

Eva-Wood, A. (2008, April). Does feeling come first? How poetry can help readers broaden their

understanding of metacognition. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *51*(7), 564-576.

Ohio Department of Education. (2001). *Academic content standards k-12 english*

*language arts.* Columbus, OH: Author.

Reeves, D. (2009, April). The value of culture. *Educational Leadership*, *66*(7), 87-89.