

Assignment 7: Learning How to Help Others Become Authors and Poets

(due by Friday, Feb. 4)

This assignment provides the opportunity for students in our class to learn how to teach others to enable them to become authors and poets. Specifically, this assignment focuses on the process of teaching others how to create simple children's books and to write poems. Through this process, people who normally do not think of themselves as authors or poets discover that they are capable of dealing with complex ideas and creating books and poems to both explain these ideas and express their feelings as well. As a way to understand this process, for this assignment, we will deal with the complex ideas contained in the long essay by Warren Furumoto.

This assignment is adapted from a workshop on understanding children's books by Tony Osumi and a workshop on poetry-writing by Irene Suico Soriano.

This assignment should be done in small groups of two to four students. This assignment may be done individually, although it is not recommended.

For this assignment, it is important to do all of the following steps:

1. Re-read the essay by Warren Furumoto, "Reconnecting Education: Replacing the Pedagogy of Racism with a New Pedagogy of Humanity."
2. Based on your reading of this essay, write a list of at least 50 keywords.
3. Based on your reading of this essay and your list of 50 keywords, decide on a theme for your poem or your children's book.
4. Decide on one dominant feeling or mood that you want to convey in your poem or your children's book.
5. Use the keywords, theme, and mood to write a poem or create a small children's book (2 to 3 pages long).

Student groups will turn in their work for steps 2, 3, 4, and 5.

This assignment enables students in our class to understand the process of teaching others to write poems or to create their own children's books by using seemingly complex ideas. Since this assignment is about process, it is very important to turn in all five steps of this assignment. Those who turn in only parts of this assignment will get the equivalent of a partial grade for this assignment.

Note: To teach others, this assignment can be adapted to different populations. For example, for work with very young children, it's best to help them identify only two or three keywords and then to help them create a theme and feeling for their poem or book.

For college freshmen, a list of 25 keywords from an assigned reading would help them understand a theme from an essay. For college seniors dealing with more complex reading materials (such as Warren Furumoto's essay), 50 keywords should be easy. CSUN Professor Rosa Furumoto uses a similar exercise to help immigrant mothers from Mexico write poems as part of her Family Literacy program. The mothers that she works with have less than six years of formal education and are still learning basic English. For a description of her work, see the article by Rosa Furumoto, "The Roots of Resistance: Cultivating Critical Parental Involvement."