

AGENCY, RIGOR, AND CREATIVITY IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

“WHAT POETRY MEANS”

INTRODUCTIONS

Before we introduce ourselves, take the next two minutes to write down 1-2 lines from a favorite poem.

You can search online to find the lines if you don't have them committed to memory!

Introduce your name, institution/organization, and then read the lines you wrote down.

FRAMING

FRAMING - WHAT THIS CAME OUT OF

- ▶ TechBoston Academy, 12th Grade English
- ▶ Doing a collaborative poetry project with Hampshire College students (3 years)
- ▶ Integrating poetry into consecutive units so that students had more agency over their writing
- ▶ Recognizing the positive results of longer term poetry reading and writing

FRAMING – AIMS OF THE CLASSROOM

▶ Agency

- ▶ Becoming a “responsible owner” to confidently direct one’s own learning (Education Reimagined Pioneer Lab)

▶ Rigor

- ▶ Appropriate level of challenge & effort

▶ Creativity

- ▶ Being able to innovate, problem-solve, and develop original ideas (21st Century Learning Skills)

FRAMING – AIMS OF THE CLASSROOM

▶ Agency:

- ▶ “Poetry has change[d] my life b/c I can really express myself”
- ▶ “I tried a different approach with poems that will expand my thinking”
- ▶ “A few of my challenges were just trying to find out what words to remove to have a stronger impact”

▶ Rigor:

- ▶ “This [project] has motivated me to write more poems”
- ▶ “The work would be for nothing if I didn’t learn anything from it”

▶ Creativity:

- ▶ “Poetry is a way for me to escape”
- ▶ “[A poem] could just be something simple that means something to me”
- ▶ “I look at the world differently”

FRAMING – BUT WHY POETRY?

▶ Agency

- ▶ Poetry offers a vehicle for self-expression and unique, specific creative choices

▶ Rigor

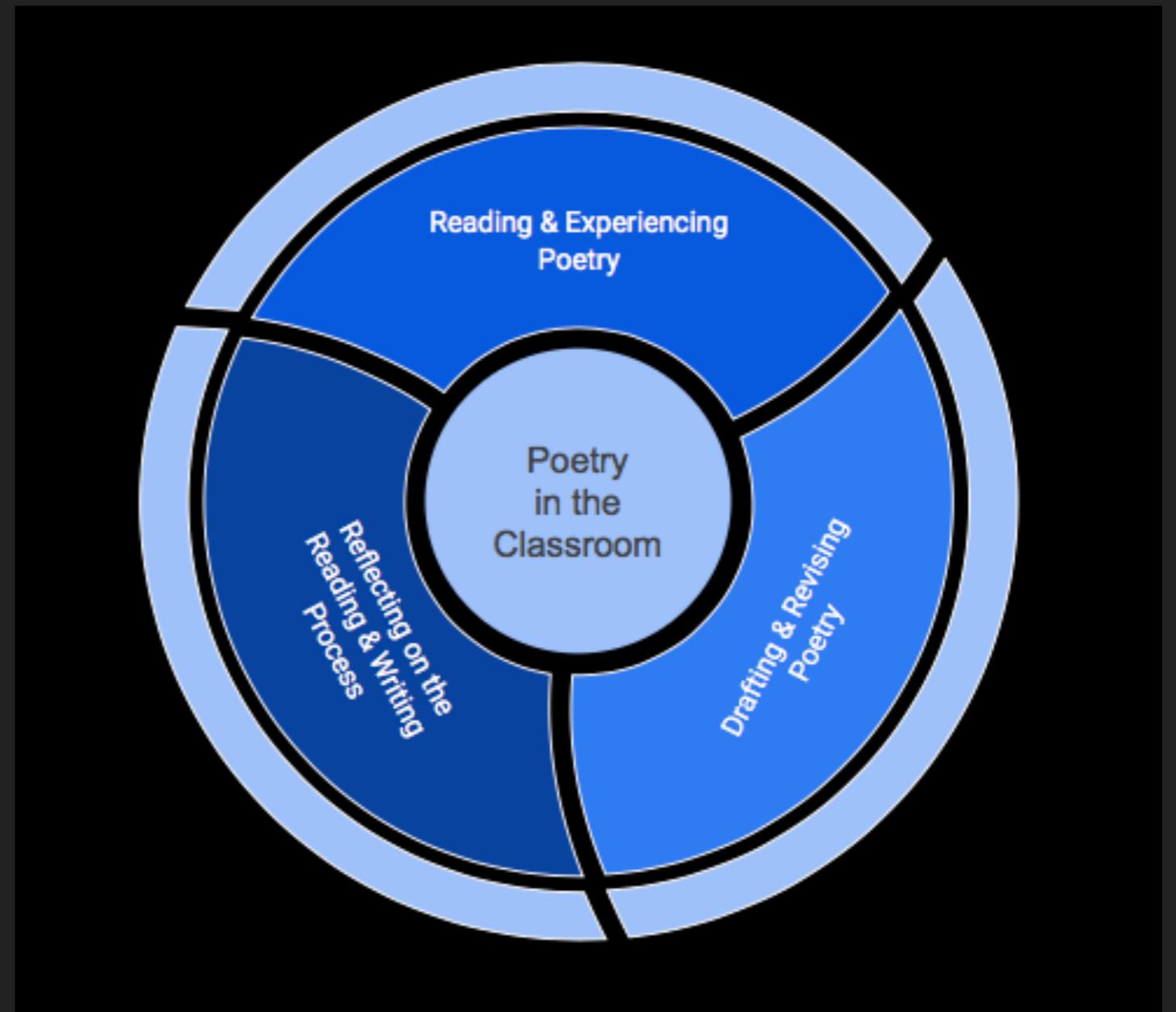
- ▶ Poetry is complex both to read, analyze, and to create
- ▶ Variety of modes/structures and content

▶ Creativity

- ▶ Being able to identify a problem (internal or external) and respond using a specific structure and diction

AGENDA

- ▶ Introductions & Framing
- ▶ Reading Poetry
- ▶ Writing Poetry
 - ▶ Overview
 - ▶ Experiencing
- ▶ Reflecting on Ownership
- ▶ Take-Aways



READING POETRY

READING POETRY: SAMPLING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

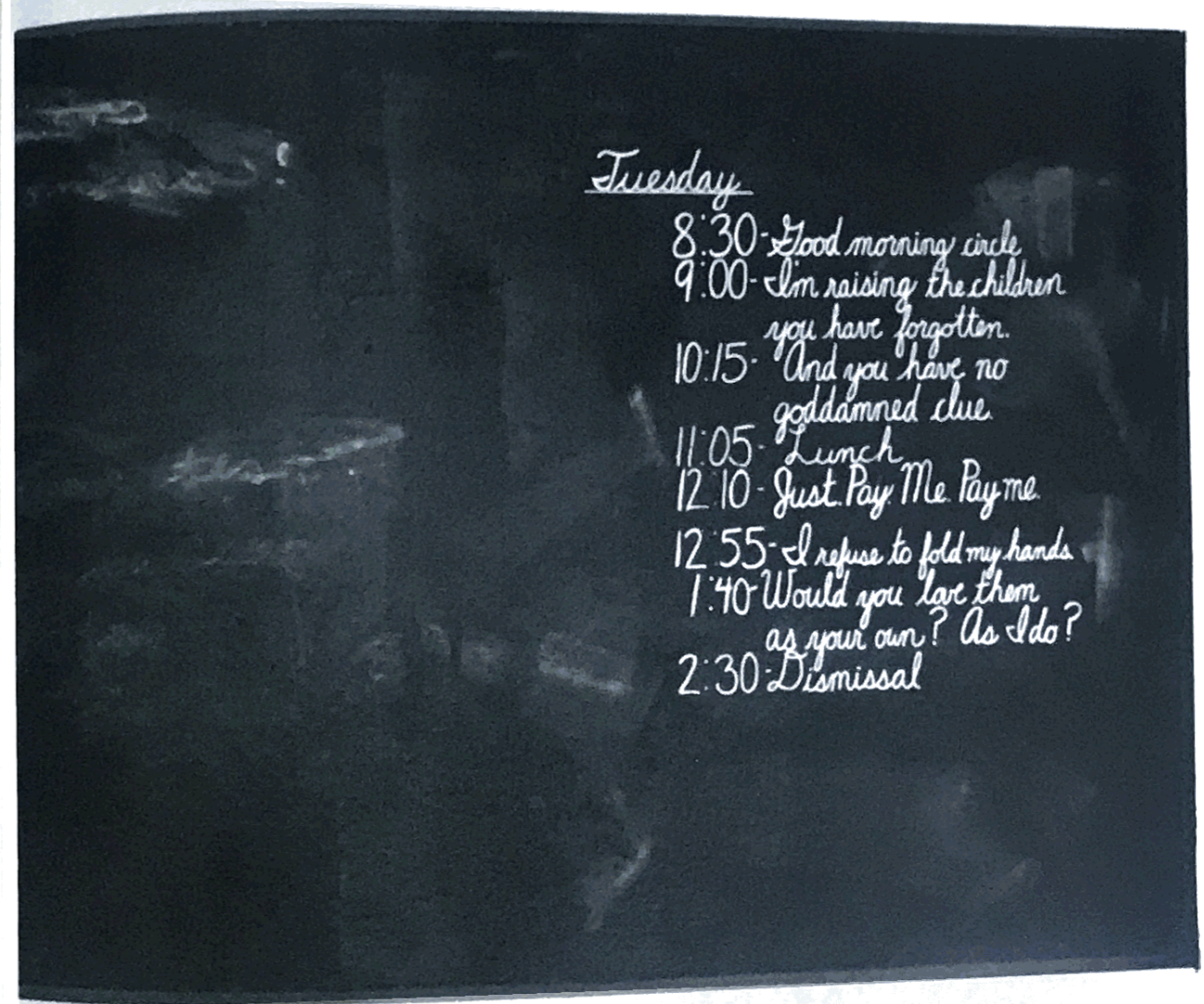
- ▶ Strategy #1: Reading for Form + Content
- ▶ Strategy #2: Engaging in Multiple/
Alternate Readings
- ▶ Strategy #3: Student Choice for Reading

Strategy #1: Reading for Form + Content

it can be accomplished



only piecemeal consciousness intent upon the world



- EVE EWING

Strategy #2: Engaging in Multiple/Alternate Readings

FOR DWAYNE 'GULLY QUEEN' JONES & ISLAN NETTLES

& ON THE EIGHTH DAY, GOD SAID 'LET THERE BE FIERCE' & THAT'S THE STORY ABOUT THE FIRST SNAP, THE HAND'S HUMBLE ATTEMPT AT THUNDER, A SMALL SKY TROUBLED BY ATTITUDE

& ON THE NINTH DAY GOD SAID 'BITCH, WERK' & ADAM LEARNED TO DUCK WALK, DIP, POSE, DEATH DROP. EVE BECAME THE FRUIT HERSELF, STARED LION'S IN THE EYE & DARED TO BITE

& ON THE TENTH DAY GOD DRESSED HIMSELF IN A BLOOD RED SEQUIN BODY SUIT, DROPPED IT LOW, NAMED IT SUNSET

& ON THE ELEVENTH DAY GOD SAID 'GUUUURRRRL' & TREES LEANED IN FOR GOSSIP, WATER WENT WILD FOR THE TEA, & THE AIR TIGHT WITH SHADE

& ON THE TWELFTH DAY, JESUS WEPT AT THE MIRROR, MOURNING THE DAY HIS SONS WOULD SHAME HIS SONS FOR WALKING A DAUGHTER'S STRIDE, FOR THE WAY HIS CHILDREN WOULD LEARN TO HATE THE KIDS

& ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY, GOD BARELY MOVED. HE LAID AROUND DREAMING OF GLITTER; PLEASED WITH THE SHINE, SAD SO MANY OF HIS CHILDREN WOULD COME HOME COVERED IN IT, PARADES CANCELED DUE TO RAIN OF FIST & INSULTS & ROPE & BULLETS

& ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY GOD JUST DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HIMSELF.

By Danez Smith

READING STRATEGY #3 - STUDENT CHOICE FOR READING

- ▶ Choose one of the poems to read by yourself or with a partner:
 - "Jubilate South Philly City 14," Daisy Fried
 - "For Estefani Lora, 3rd Grade," Aracelis Girmay
 - "Angel in Harlem," Willie Perdomo
 - "Alternate Names for Black Boys," Danez Smith
 - "Another White Christmas in Virginia," Safiya Sinclair

WRITING POETRY

WRITING POETRY – OVERVIEW

- ▶ Framing: Constraints // Freedom
 - ▶ Constraints as Openings for Freedom
 - ▶ Space >
 - ▶ flexibly designed / student-designed
 - ▶ Content >
 - ▶ student choice (with scaffolding) / can eventually become student-designed
 - ▶ Time >
 - ▶ flexibly designed / well-organized (nothing wasted)

In order to achieve freedom from these constraints, the designer (in this case, teacher) must make intentional, user-focused choices (students), and view the gradual release of control as ideal for maximum creativity.

WRITING POETRY: SAMPLING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Strategy #1:
 - ▶ Creating an independent prompt for form & content
- ▶ Strategy #2:
 - ▶ Collaborative writing using a teacher- or self-made prompt
- ▶ Strategy #3:
 - ▶ Free-writing based on idea, prompt, or poem
- ▶ Strategy #4:
 - ▶ Visually responding to a poem / drafting a visual poetic piece

CLOSING

REFLECTING ON OWNERSHIP & CHOOSING A TAKE-AWAY

- ▶ What did it feel like to draft your own poem? How do you feel about your poem?
- ▶ What is one take-away you might bring to your own context/life?
- ▶ We'll go around and each person can share 1-2 sentences, either about your ownership or about your take-away.