

READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Revising with Teacher and Peer Feedback Video Transcript

Ben Berman:

You might think about multiple meanings in there. But the goal in that one is to really try to emulate the contemplative stance where you sort of have a 3D approach towards the single name, right, in really thinking about the wandering of it. So that's one way, if you would like to try to write a poem where you're thinking about your relationship to your own name through, like, a race and identity perspective.

Different kids need different pieces of advice. And kids who sort of rush through things or have a harder time sitting with complexity, you just sort of refocus them and redirect them towards that as much as you can.

The biggest switch between sort of explaining the history of things and then writing a poem about it is your stance into the poem. So you've got to go in with wonder and contemplation and questions. You'll even notice, this ends on a question mark, right? So if you go in with a sense of wonder, you're going to write a much more interesting poem than if you go in with a sense of explanation.

Other times it's really hard to figure out where a poem begins. You know, you sort of have information, you have experience, but when all of that actually turns into a poem, it's tricky.

I would start with that... you know that moment of awkwardness where you've got to admit your middle name?

Student:

Yeah.

Berman:

Start there. That's, like, a moment into a poem – that vulnerability, that tiny thing of shame that says, "This is something I wasn't in control of." That thing with sharing with your best friend what your middle name is that's, like, somehow humiliating. That's, like, the access point into a poem, right? That's your first couple of lines.

A lot of times it starts with an experience or a feeling of discomfort or vulnerability or uncertainty. You know, a lot of times you want to hide those as a person. But as a writer you want to use those as an entry point. So just getting kids comfortable with that, and recognizing, what is my foot into the door of this piece of writing?

You wrote two poems – one yesterday thinking about the advice, one that you're starting today. Tomorrow you're going to get a chance to share one of them.

Jacob:

When kids have to share their stuff in classes, it's on a basis where everyone has to share. You can't really opt out of it. Even the most nervous kid is going to share their work. And then after they share their work, we give about three comments, maybe more. And the day before we were doing very bad at commenting. So instead of moving on after someone read their poem, he just made us sit and wait until, like, four people commented.

Berman:

I think that a lot of the times the students shy away from actually really giving each other hard feedback. They're very validating and supportive. Sometimes you get inattention. I think sometimes kids give it a periphery glance, but they don't give the other students the harder feedback that they need. So sometimes you model that-- how do you give each other critical feedback in a kind way?

Is this your mom?

Student:

Mm-hmm.

Berman:

"My mama." So these are the only letters in your new alphabet, but you can create as many words as you want with these letters. Keep going until all of a sudden you find some words that suddenly seem to speak to something about your relationship. With some of these sort of, like, strange imagery that he gives us that's, like, totally evocative, like, "Smoke above the burning bush," right?

Student:

Yeah.

Berman:

Is this very, like, weird image in that the burning bush wasn't consuming itself. That's what gave us the sense of, you know, holiness to it. I don't know if that meant there was no smoke or not. But I'm guessing it wasn't smoking. So if you

come from it from a place of, like, what is it truly about, being a journalist, and you find that image that is, like, evocative, but not descriptive...

Student:

Yeah.

Berman:

...you'll come up with some interesting ones.

Student:

Something more metaphorical.

Berman:

Metaphorical, imagistic, strange, non-straightforward. Everything that a journalist doesn't do in their own writing.

Student:

Sounds good.

Berman:

Your job for tomorrow is to revise one of the poems from either yesterday or today. And we're going to have a party/poetry reading.

Fletcher:

My process will probably be looking at the flow, because the poem that we read had wonderful, wonderful build, and build is very important to me. So I would want to read each line out to myself and find where build can improve.

Jacob:

First I'll probably stare at it for five to ten minutes. And then I think I'll go back and kind of put it into ideas. And then once the ideas are in sections, then I go back and make sure the language is how I like it.

Fletcher:

You feel really good about yourself revising something in this class. You already got so much positive feedback on it, and then you come in with, like, a better version.

Berman:

As a writer, you're not necessarily thinking craft and technique. So just showing them the messiness of the process and the different moves that people use to get out of being stuck, to find materials, to transform materials, to think about revision, to me it's much more interesting as a creative writing teacher.