

Praxis Paper

In *Bridging English*, Joseph Milner et al. (2016) pose the question, “could traditional approaches to poetry in school explain the shift in middle and high school students toward poetry insecurity and even aversion?” (p. 176). To make poetry more accessible to students, we have decided to use multiliteracies and alternative methods of creating poetry that go against the rigid norms of traditional poetry lessons. Through the use of multimodal poetry stations, we hope that many of the stipulations that come with dry archaic poetry lessons will be replaced with curiosity and the desire to create. By participating in these stations, students will learn about poetry as a true, free form of expression rather than the challenging task it is considered to be. This freedom is demonstrated through all the stations we have constructed. For example, students will be able to express their creativity through the use of tactile magnetic poetry without needing to brainstorm words as they are already provided. This liberty is also displayed in our spatial station where students create a poem about their environment, describing their five senses. Students are not constrained by poetic conventions such as meter or rhyme scheme, making the possibilities truly endless.

The pioneers of multiliteracies, The New London Group (1996), write in “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures” that a pedagogy of literacy focuses uniquely on language, while “a pedagogy of multiliteracies [...] focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone” (p. 64). It is for this reason that for our project, we have developed six different ways to create poetry that support six different modalities. We want students to experience unconventional ways of creating poetry through linguistic, visual, gestural, aural, tactile, and spatial modes that encourage them to be innovative makers of meaning. We believe

each student learns in their own way and should therefore be provided with the opportunity to choose the method of learning that allows them to excel.

Poetry stations with a focus on social justice allow students to use their social and cultural knowledge to design and create their own meaning in a variety of modes. As Amir Michalovich (2021) writes in “‘You’re the boss, yo!’”: Role-Play in Digital Multimodal Composition of Newcomer Youth”, “a multiliteracies approach to literacy highlights that 21st century learners should be able to harness [...] their own diverse social and cultural knowledge, in order to become agentive, creative, and critical designers (p. 27). Students are required to think critically about social topics with which they are familiar while also using their agency to express themselves through writing. This leads them to become creators of meaning in different modes and better equipped to understand, interact with, and influence the world around them.