**Praxis**

Connecting Role-playing to Teaching Plot and Characterization

Teaching plot and characterization is a significant part of reading and writing and knowing the mechanics behind story helps students better understand the literature they are reading. Understanding plot and characterization goes beyond the novels students are required to read for school and extends to the movies, tv shows, and even video games they are watching or playing. Because of this, teaching plot and characterization should be fun and interactive for students. This is why our group has chosen to teach plot and characterization through creating a simplified version of the role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons.* The various aspects of this game include conflict, character choices, the actual identity of the characters, and the parts of plot. All of these aspects are used to help students understand plot and characterization in an immersive way through actually participating in a story. Our version of *Dungeons and Dragons* shows the various character types and stereotypes stories may have and we tried to push back against norms of a story to help students recognize that the stereotypes are there but are not the best way to write a story and a character.

Our version of *Dungeons and Dragons* is a useful tool as a multiliteracies activity because it uses games as well as drama to cater to different learning styles. Simply sitting at a desk and getting right into writing may not be useful for students who are more hands on and learn by doing. This activity involves group collaboration, acting, and critical thinking. Students are participating in these skills while hopefully having fun. Students are more likely to process and learn plot and characterization if they are actively participating in an unfolding plot and taking the role of a certain character type. The New London Group proposes that the most significant mode of design is multimodal because it connects other modes to each other (The New London Group, 1996). Our game connects different modes together to create meaning. The comprehension of what is going on in the plot through the linguistic mode is connected to the decisions the students will make in the game. The decisions the characters make can vastly change the plot of the ongoing story of our game and may shape the character outside the typical stereotypes.

Another aspect of this variation of *Dungeons and Dragons* is the exploration of gender and demographic stereotypes as a social justice issue. Many characters in literature and popular stories in other mediums represent a particular group; sometimes in a positive way and other times a negative way. The story of our game attempts to shape the stereotypes of the character types, but we have challenged the typical roles of these characters by making them do something uncharacteristic of their stereotype. For example, we have included a damsel in distress archetype of a character. She is introduced in this way but further along in the story she shows bravery and ends up being the one defeating the antagonist. The reasoning behind this was to push back against negative stereotypes of women in adventure stories by creating a strong female character. In doing this we acknowledge the stereotypes while also trying to create alternative to these stale type of characters.

References

Cazden, Courtney; Cope, Bill; Fairclough, Norman; Gee, Jim; et al Harvard Educational Review;

Spring 1996; 66, 1; ProQuest Psychology Journals pg. 60.