

Teaching ideas

AS/A Level English Language and Literature 7706/7707
Remembered places: *Re-creative writing*: Commentaries

Introduction

These teaching ideas can be used with students when developing their skills in re-creative writing and drafting commentaries. They offer students a method of systematically analysing their own work, and encourage considered choices in selecting and arranging analytical points in planning and drafting a commentary.

The suggested activities are intended to span one lesson lasting one hour.

Learning objectives

Students will:

- identify features of language use
- engage with relationships between stylistic choices and interpretative effects
- practise selecting and arranging key points
- structure an analysis into a coherent commentary
- critique their own drafting of commentaries.

Prior knowledge needed

Students should have some knowledge of the following

- narrative structure
- genre
- foregrounding
- perspective
- register
- language levels.

Lesson preparation

Teachers will need the following resources

- an A3 piece of paper for each student
- different coloured pens
- glue
- students should bring to class a re-cast text they have previously written for this unit.

Activities

The commentary tree

- Working with their own re-cast version of a base text from a previous class, students should stick it to the centre of an A3 piece of paper. This is the 'trunk' of the tree.
- Underneath the re-cast text, in a different colour, students should write a brief summary of what the text is about, the perspective it is conveying, its focus, etc. This constitutes the 'roots' of the tree.
- In a different colour, students should then underline as many interpretatively significant language features of their recasting as they can identify, and annotate them with linguistic descriptions of these features (creating the 'branches'), using technical terminology.
- Branching out from these descriptions, in another different colour, students should make analytical notes on what effects are achieved by these features (the 'leaves').
- In the colour of the original summary, students should draw connections between these effects and related parts of the summary of what the text conveys.
- Students should then select three or four features and effects they want to discuss in detail in a written commentary, and should be able to justify their decisions.
- Students should then plan the commentary, arranging the points in a logical order, and should be able to justify their structure.
- Students should then draft the commentary.

Further work

- Students plan two or three different versions of a commentary, selecting different features to discuss, and organising the commentary in different ways. Students can write out each, and rank the variations in order of strength. They then stick these commentaries to the bottom of their commentary tree in order of strength, and annotate the commentaries with critical comments on observed strengths and weaknesses.

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