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How Cinema Excerpts Enhance A Culturally Relevant Responsive-Value Driven Pedagogy

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HOW CINEMA EXCERPTS ENHANCE A CULTURALLY RELEVANT RESPONSIVE-VALUE DRIVEN PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

Most certainly “good styles of teaching” match the needs of students. As technology distractions within society grow more and more tearing students away from a classroom’s pedagogy, it becomes even more important today for teachers to find effective ways to engage students. Cinema clips is one-way educators can apply a cultural value driven pedagogy to connect students to lessons. For one, the use of cinema clips allows teachers to use multi-media resources to translate or deconstruct a lesson through video and auditory mechanism. Furthermore, it offers a differentiated style of teaching for students. What makes the use of Cinema clips noteworthy is its ability to provide students with multi-faceted information and different perspectives about an instructional topic.

Quite honestly, there is nothing new about teachers applying cinema clips to connect students to learning content. What is different is how such a method adds cultural value and instructional meaning for students and teachers in a classroom. When appropriately and strategically aligned, cinema clips promote powerful discussion webs and project-based learning assignments while at the same time creating a different set of menu options for students to choose. Simply just showing a movie to show a movie is “bad teaching practice.” However, when used strategically, cinema clips provide teachers with the effective means to combat boredom aligning modern tech devices into a classroom experience.

Introduction

A good movie or film usually draws with it a series of rave reviews and public recognition. The most recent films of *Star Wars (2015)* and *Creed (2015)* exemplify how a movie can mesmerize audiences while at the same time contribute to popular culture milieu. Great quotes such as “Give him an offer he can’t refuse,” from Francis Ford Coppola’s *Godfather (1972)* or how about Mel Gibson’s famous phrase from *Brave Heart (1995)*, “They may take our lives, but they’ll never take our freedom!” Quite often what makes a film “good” is it relates to something lots of people identify and connect with. The use of cinema excerpts in a classroom can have the same powerful affect on students because it enhances societal values while at the same time evoking meaning to a lesson. Although it is easier for History and English subject areas to exhibit cinema within their classes, the application of cinema excerpts are noteworthy in any subject area. The idea or objective here is not to have a teacher sit back and show a whole movie as a lesson mismanaging classroom time, but rather skillfully and methodically applying film clips to lessons that equip students with visual application, general discovery, insight, and formative comprehension. Students experiencing film as a pedagogical lens not only feel connected to what is happening in class, but also learn a different instructional viewpoint.

Why a Cultural Relevant Responsive Value Driven Pedagogy?

A cultural relevant value driven (CVD) pedagogy encourages the use of an art-integrated curriculum to engage students (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ali and Barden, 2015). What this ultimately does is provide visual and auditory sensory to lessons that, at times, teachers struggle to connect or relate to students. In addition, film excerpts are very useful tools because they add meaning and value to lessons that appear mundane or non- noteworthy for students (Gelineau, 2011). The goal of critical pedagogy is to challenge students to question, reason, and analyze concepts or challenging information distinctly important for them to learn (Freire & Ramos, 2000).

Take the example of students learning the Pythagorean Theorem in a geometry class. There are times when students get bored with the idea of learning how to apply or see its relevancy. For example, the *Wizard of Oz* scene when the scarecrow discovers his new brain translated the Pythagorean Theorem in front of his peers and the “Great Wizard” saying, “The sum of the square roots of any two sides of an isosceles triangle is equal to the square root of the remaining side” (Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer & Harold Rosson, 1939). The use of the clip creatively highlights the theory’s popularity while describing its function. For teachers, such a clip is an effective way to introduce the theory as a warm up or bell ringer exercise. Pythagoras’ theory also possesses a considerable historic connection regarding its origins. The theory relevancy and application existed for centuries beyond the Greeks in Egypt and throughout Latin America. Egypt’s great mathematical mind Imhotep, known as the father of this theory by the Greeks and Egyptians, is given credit with applying this formula to design the pyramids (Browder, 1989). Hence, showing students the great pyramids of Giza from either the film, *Prince of Egypt* (1998) or the Oscar Award winning movie, *The Ten Commandments* (1956) provide students with visual insights and historical connections that engage and advance their learning comprehension. It might also be possible for students to conduct further research of how this theory not only used in Africa, but also throughout Latin America as the Aztecs, Incas, and Mayans built great pyramids to honor their leaders and gods (Schoch, 2004).

Ultimately, a film’s excerpt serves as a cultural relevant responsive value-driven pedagogy because it serves as an instructional resource. As a result, teachers are able to strengthen their lessons by using cinema clips to visually connect and entice learners to want to learn more about a subject. Teachers can further apply cinema clips, as relevant currency, to connect students to difficult conversations often deemed restricted or too challenging. Conversations related to race and history using cinema clips offer meaningful constructive applications for teachers to develop project based learning assignments that radicalize students’ awareness, engagement, and concept development.

Cultural Connections

What better way to discuss the American constitution or pre-revolutionary history using cinema excerpts from Mel Gibson’s *The Patriot* (2000)? Gibson’s film captures a series of questions dealing with pre-colonial frustrations against the British tax system, loyalist versus patriot sentiments toward the British crown, or the choice of slaves to either fight alongside their slave master or with England. In fact, what makes these excerpts intriguing and fascinating for an educator primarily deals with the “instructional hooks” and discussion items generated from such cinematography. An instructor can use any one of these film clips to have students write a persuasive exposition, apply a Venn diagram, or produce a discussion web. Major quotes from film can also be extracted for students to dialogue the pros and cons of an instructional theme.

What also strikingly makes a movie like the *Patriot (2000)*, *Glory (1989)*, or *Roots (1977)* terrific classroom commodities are the multifaceted ways they inform students of important historical matters. Again, the controversial subject of race emerges within all of these films as it does continuously throughout many facets of society. As a result, films such as these allow students to discover and learn the significant roles African Americans have had developing American society. Students could review the role of Occam, Gibson’s Black sidekick in the *Patriot* film, to articulate and discover the way African Americans contributed to the White colonist freedom. More important, a film documentary such as the PBS’ *Slavery: The Making of America (2005)* offers an enrichment resource for students to learn more about African Americans contribution laying the foundation of the colonies’ war against England.

Other films that culturally discuss the role and importance of race and history include *Do the Right Thing (1989)*, *Amistad (1997)*, *China Girl (1987)*, *Dark Matter (2007)*, *Stand and Deliver (1988)*, *Infancia Clandestina (2011)*, and many more. In other words, a classroom should not only have a library of books, but also a small library of films to use as excerpts to enhance students’ visual comprehension of a subject’s concept. Especially today, the more options students are provided or offered greatly increase their chance to complete learning tasks. As a result, teachers within their rooms are applying menu options, which provide a list of opportunities for learners to readily complete assignments such as students studying the *Civil Rights Movement*, *The Big Bang Theory*, or Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. (Refer to Figure 1). Especially with the amount of visual distractions and stimuli young people are exposed to today, there is a greater chance of them becoming more bored from instructional topics once popularized and celebrated as edutainment. Postman (1986) famous text, *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, highlighted the significance of literacy skills and critical inquiry declining as more Americans got hooked to “T.V. land.” The text was written at a time when television dominated media consumption. However, today’s teens have more distractions at their disposal and television is probably way down on their list, i.e. twitter, face time, Instagram, snap chat. Social media consumption is so enigmatic within U.S. society statistics show that 60% of people use social media and smart phone apps almost 30% of their daily time, which accounts for a 1/3 of a person’s day (Perez, 2015).

Movie/Video	Printed/Electronic Media	Activism	Art Creation
Documentary: (A) Watch 2 documentaries about the subject of race journaling reflective questions, solutions, and thoughts about this “deep” problem; (B) Discuss the film’s intent and purpose within a small community forum	Select a series of printed newspapers, journals, or electronic media platforms to research a controversial civil rights case to discover the major issues and perspectives shaping the story’s narrative	Research the various youth activist groups that have been marching and protesting Civil Rights like the <i>Black Lives Matter Movement</i> . Find out the strategies they have used thus far to get their message across while also discovering when and where their next protest. Journal your reaction to what the youth protestors are doing and saying about this incident.	Develop a creative art symbol, movement, or performance that discusses the topic of race as it relates to/with a civil rights issue or any other current controversial racial or discriminatory issue.
Movie: Select a series of films such as <i>Do the Right Thing</i> , <i>Dear White People</i> , or <i>Jungle Fever</i> that deals with the conversation of race while also identifying one of the movies to watch with your peers critiquing and discussing the film’s message.	Facebook, Snapshot, or Instant gram a discussion with members of the social media community dealing with a controversial discriminatory case and people’s sentiments and perspectives about the case. Report your finding to your school peers.	Identify and research a youth activist in Chicago presently protesting a civil rights incident. Develop (5) questions to interview them while also sharing their responses with your peers. Also, arrange an opportunity to have them speak to the school community.	Make a school documentary using a tablet, iPod, iPhone or smart phone about students at your school reaction to a civil rights issue or discriminatory practice. In asking students how they feel while providing information about the incident, develop information and facts listing the way the case are impacting their school community.

Figure 1: Civil Rights Movement 1954-1965

So to say the traditional modicums or instructional approaches should remain current only denies how much young people are inundated with technology trends. To counter or balance the use of distractions students daily receive, it is important teachers introduce media stimuli into a classroom environment to engage learners. Cinema clips are one way of culturally introducing relevant lessons into a teachers’ pedagogy.

Best Practice

Take for instance the chance of students having a classroom curriculum entitled *History through Film* or *American English through film*. How exciting is this for students to experience? Many colleges or universities, most notably *Harvard University*, already offer classes similar to this notion. The same should exist for students attending public schools. Most notably, Howard Gardner (2011) focused on the similar use of educators applying sensory lessons in his text, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Gardner suggests that students learn and examine information differently; consequently, each person has a unique way of intellectually comprehending, evaluating, and synthesizing information. Gardner categorized intelligence into five categories: visual-spatial, bodily kinetics, auditory, musical, and interpersonal/intrapersonal. Gardner acknowledged students’ intelligence and comprehension are measurable at these different levels. In addition, intelligence is unique and not confined to one distinct category. From Gardner’s research, an educator understands there are multiple ways to engage students.

Gardner’s work has resulted in educators creating differentiated lessons to individualize learning within their classrooms. Direct instruction is seen as too restrictive and rote for students to adequately comprehend a lesson. Freire and Ramos (2000) refers to this as the banking concept where teachers pour their knowledge into the heads or minds of students expecting them to master what was said to them. Classrooms that engage their students with this type of pedagogy surely “bore their students to death.” In addition, Ladson-Billings (2009) discusses the unique difference of what she refers to as assimilation versus responsive teaching. Assimilation teaching refers to how students respond to a teacher’s instructional pedigree and system imposed onto a classroom setting; whereas, within a responsive setting teachers structure a classroom environment that addresses and accommodates students’ needs based on their academic skills (refer to figure 2).

Assimilation	Responsive
Organization: Student consistently has missing work and has difficulty engaging in class.	Create a homework folder in the classroom where students can submit completed work and receive new assignments. Students can turn in work to this folder during or after class for feedback.
Communication: Verbal redirection or check-ins frustrates students causing them to shut down.	Whenever possible, provide student with written feedback (i.e. write on her homework or on a post-it placing onto his or her desk during class.) Use more praise in this fashion one-on-one to establish rapport.
Triggered: Student is triggered when teachers consistently reminds him or her of missing work to stay on tasks.	Inform student when a check-in will take place regarding his or her work. (i.e. We are starting this writing assignment at 10:20 at 10:40, and I will walk by to see if you have any questions.)
Rapport: Student tests the boundaries of adult support and generally feels abandoned by adults in their life.	Unconditional support. Remain consistent and watch your emotional reaction to his or her behaviors. Respond calm and firm in situations of defiance. Set up each class as an opportunity for student to start over. Try to engage student in conversation prior to class to set a positive tone.

Figure 2: Assimilation versus Responsive

There is a unique statement that argues, good teachers are also effective coaches (Wong & Wong, 2009). To understand this philosophy, think of an excellent coach that skillfully manages their players. Each coach is given the task of developing a system to make his or her players more effective. In the scheme of things, players are charged with the responsibility of learning the system to achieve more playing time to not only meet the expectations of their coach, but also improve the team concept. Coaches using this model of approach are what Ladson-Billings would refer to as assimilation teachers. They assert if their system is applied effectively, players will achieve. Rather than build a system based on the types of players they possess, the coaches measure performance based on how well players master their system. On the other hand, a responsive coach/teacher creates a system based on the skill set of their players. They start with where their players are at and accommodate them accordingly, modifying where they see fit, to improve their talents and skills, i.e. Buddy Ryan's 46 Bears Defense, UNLV's Jerry Tarkanian, Steve Kerr's Golden State Warriors, Bill Belichick's New England Patriots. When Jerry Tarkanian built the UNLV Running Rebels system in the mid-80s through the early 90s, he based it upon the talent pool and depth level of his players. In other words, Tarkanian built a system that best responded and supported his players' needs and skill set (Tarkanian and Wetzel, 2013). Some suggests the use of Steve Kerr's responsive coaching style is similar with the way Tarkanian framed his system, which has catapulted the Golden State Warriors to another level and literally changing the way the National Basketball Association (NBA) plays professional basketball (Davis, 2015).

For Ladson-Billings (2009), responsive education is the ability of an educator to learn the students' individual cultures and adapting a style of teaching that fits the needs of their learning population. As a result, students are better able to connect with lessons while also achieving high results from the instructional pedagogy. Such a teaching system further allows the instructors to teach the way students can understand them, and not the other way around. As a result, language surfaces in this discussion because it stresses teachers apply connective, personable, and colloquial expressions with relatable examples to best communicate with their students. Such lessons build on the student's lives and establish interactive relationships between teachers and students because they are working together to achieve the lesson. Hence, students see the curriculum through the eyes of the teacher, and the teacher learns how to better teach and accommodate students by seeing through the lens of their students.

Why Not Cinema Clips?

Ultimately, the use of a cinema clips in a classroom connects students to a curriculum while at the same time adding relevancy to an instructional pedagogy. It also allows the educator and students to share experiences and novelty in a setting deemed important to understand. Furthermore, the use of cinema allows the teacher to apply another resource in the classroom to influence, enhance, and adapt instruction to the needs of their learners. With the power of multi-media resources constantly streaming from smart phones or devices at almost every student's fingertips, it is just as easier for an instructor to forward cinema clips of pre-warm ups or "hook" activities for students to complete prior to class. More than anything else, educators must continue to remain current and relevant in today's classroom to engage students' attentiveness and focus to a curriculum. When students value what they learn, they are more willing to engage a curriculum. The use of cinema clips is one of the ways educators can make use of a curriculum lesson to strengthen students' connections.

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