

Lost in Translation:

Using Poetry to Find Cultural Representation

KNOWLEDGE GAINED

The value...

I believe in the power of community conversation and arts education. The arts welcome us to the idea of unrestrained expression. To educate a community using the arts to build upon a conversation much larger than us will welcome unrestrained possibilities and catalyze the thoughts necessary to finally activate the revolution. It begins with us. If that means using poetry to help others reflect on identity--their own as well as those who have been unimagined from the larger community--then, I accept this mission. I appreciate the consequences of the actions I've taken to incite change. I've seen my work impact others, specifically participants who encountered my workshop and used the inspiration in ways I never imagined but am forever grateful for. This is my work and the desired outcome. My next steps are to ensure I do everything within my power to cultivate individual experiences that continue to impact the collective.

NEXT STEPS

The vision...

The majority of constructive criticism I received revolved around the component of time; participants wanted more time to reflect on Gloria Anzaldua's poem, more time to look over the packet of foreign-language words, and more time to draft, develop and finalize their poem. Interestingly enough, I preemptively attempted to combat this criticism about time. During my facilitation, I decided to give participants more time than I had initially allotted, but I did so without them realizing. I made this crucial decision once I acknowledged that, as my timer neared the end of the session, most participants' creative processes were still unfolding (i.e. their pens and pencils were still going, they were asking questions, and shuffling through the packet of foreign-language words). In this respect, I admire that I recognized a potential limitation, but I did not do my best to prevent it. With that being said, in order to ensure my participants' success, the respective amount of time must be allotted to them.

In addition to concerns about time, there was a suggestion to include an additional writing warm up that would further ease participants into the writing process. I agree that this added installment will be beneficial to the overall success of my workshop because it also combats another potential weakness: some participants are especially intimidated by poetry, both the act of reading and writing it. A "free-write" warm up exercise will not only get participants in the writing mindset, but will further promote the open-endedness of the focal writing exercise. When I give participants a packet of words, I emphasize that there is no right or wrong way to construct this poem so long as participants use the foreign-language words as a channel for inspiration.

A majority of comments regarding the overall strengths and successes of my workshop were centered around my ability to coherently unpack vocabulary and explicate my research into major ideas in a "light & unstructured" way that kept

participants engaged. At the same time, however, this open-endedness or the illusionary “lack of” structure can simultaneously add another challenge for those most intimidated by the poetic art form. In the instance that a writing warm up were to inhibit rather than promote participants' insecurities with poetry, I will additionally improve my workshop to include sharing more examples of completed poems. This particular feedback came up in the closing conversation where participants noted that having physical examples of completed poems, as well as Gloria Anzaldua's book as an example of hybrid poetics, provided a visual indicator that alleviated the process.