

Planning Framework for Middle/Secondary School Teachers: Employing the Cognitive Tools of Romantic Understanding

1. Identifying “heroic” qualities

What heroic human qualities are central to the topic? What emotional images do they evoke? What within the topic can best evoke wonder?

2. Shaping the lesson or unit

Teaching shares some features with news reporting. Just as the reporter’s aim is to select and shape events to bring out clearly their meaning and emotional importance for readers or listeners, so your aim as a teacher is to present your topic in a way that engages the emotions and imaginations of your students. To do so, consider which of the following dimensions of your students’ emotional and imaginative lives can be used to shape your lesson or unit—all related to the skills the good reporter works with:

2.1. Finding the story or narrative:

What’s “the story” on the topic? How can the narrative illustrate the heroic qualities of the topic?

2.2. Finding extremes and limits:

What aspects of the topic expose extremes of experience or limits of reality? What is most exotic, bizarre or strange about the topic?

2.3. Finding connections to human hopes, fears, and passions:

To what human hopes, fears, and passions does the topic connect? What ideals and/or challenges to conventions are evident in the content? Through what human emotions can students access the topic?

2.4. Employing additional cognitive tools of Romantic understanding:

What kinds of activities might you design to deploy other tools in your students’ cognitive toolkits? Consider the following:

- **Collections and hobbies:** *What parts of the topic can students explore in exhaustive detail? What activity might engage students in learning everything they can about some aspect of the topic?*
- **Change of context:** *What kinds of activities could change the context in the classroom? How might drama or role-play be employed or how might students engage the body’s senses in learning?*
- **The literate eye:** *How could graphs, lists, flowcharts or other visual formats be employed in learning about the topic?*
- **The sense of wonder:** *What kind of activity might evoke students’ sense of wonder? How could you use that sense of wonder to draw students forward in thinking about further dimensions of the topic?*
- **Embryonic tools of philosophic understanding:** *Consider how to frame the topic in terms of a general idea or theory. How can students begin to move from the particular aspects of what they have been learning to a more general explanation? How can students’ sense of agency be engaged?*

2.5. Drawing on tools of previous kinds of understanding:

Somatic understanding - *How might students use some of the toolkit of Somatic Understanding in learning the topic? How might their senses, emotions, humor, musicality, and so on, be deployed?*

Mythic understanding – *How might students use some of the toolkit of Mythic Understanding in learning the topic? How might abstract and affective binary oppositions, metaphor, vivid mental imagery, puzzles and sense of mystery, and so on, be deployed?*

3. Resources

What resources can you use to learn more about the topic and to shape your story? What resources are useful in creating activities?

4. Conclusion

How does the narrative end? How can one best bring the topic to a satisfactory closure and how can students feel this satisfaction? Alternatively, what new questions can draw students to think more deeply about the topic? How can you extend students' sense of wonder?

5. Evaluation

How can one know that the content has been learned and understood and has engaged and stimulated students' imaginations?