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Applying Paulo Freire's philosophy to The Great Gatsby" "

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APPLYING PAULO FREIRE'S PHILOSOPHY TO THE GREAT GATSBY

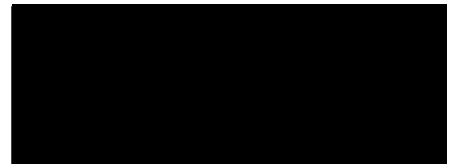
MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this study stems from Paulo Freire's idea of becoming a "true Subject," one responsible for and in control of his life, a "do-er," a catalyst, a creator. The concept and title seem derived from the grammatical notion of a subject, and, as an English teacher, the idea of applying a grammatical concept that guides one's language usage, communication skills, and perhaps attitude toward the world to a method of education and way of life seems exciting, appropriate, and worth exploring. Furthermore, nine years of classroom experience has illustrated all too vividly the inability or undesirability of students to take control of their learning or their lives. Traditional education has left many students passive and accepting, and while all want to receive desired grades, not all want to achieve them. In addition, curriculum and paperwork requirements often leave teachers playing "oppressor" roles, when they truly desire to promote self-sufficiency within their students. Thus, Freire's attitudes toward critical thinking, becoming Subjects, and changing one's world seem refreshing and exciting, and that enthusiasm is the motivation for this study.

The difference between this study and others is that this one attempts to utilize Freire's philosophy not only in the method of teaching but in the teaching of a prescribed text. One of the difficulties when studying Freire is that curriculum seems to be non-existent, other than that which springs from the students' experience. It does not allow for material deemed necessary for

study by some curriculum committee, and as a result, everyday high school teachers whose lesson plans revolve around prescribed curriculum are left assuming that Freire's approach is not a workable one in their schools. This paper proposes otherwise by offering a plan that utilizes problem-posing education to study a "classic" of most American high school literature classes: The Great Gatsby. This book was chosen because of its common use in high schools and the similar views between Freire and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Since both authors describe an inability to accurately or critically perceive reality as a human flaw, The Great Gatsby offers an "acting out" of Freire's philosophy, and Freire's philosophy provides an explanation for character behavior in The Great Gatsby. As a result, it is proposed that studying these texts together will enhance the understanding of both.

The method for this study is to summarize the relative concepts of Freire, review applications of other educators, and provide a model using Freire's philosophy as a guide for exploring The Great Gatsby.

Overall, this study offers educators insight into using problem-posing education within a prescribed curriculum and as a valuable way to explore fiction. By studying Freire's methods first and applying them to their own lives, students can better see the relationship of literature to real life when applying Freire's ideas to fiction. Therefore, problem-posing education becomes an exciting, workable, and empowering impetus for growth in many American classrooms.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Freire's educational philosophy is based on the premise that education is not neutral, that it does not occur of and for itself, but that it leads in a specific direction toward a specific goal. And, because Freire believes that domination is the fundamental condition of modern society and that man's ontological vocation is to become fully human (Pedagogy 52), the goal of education should be the humanization of man, his society, and his world. This requires that each person become a Subject -- one who acts upon and transforms his world to move toward ever new possibilities of a fuller and richer life for himself and his society (Pedagogy 12-13). To become a Subject, however, and not an object acted upon by others to serve their purpose, one must learn to integrate with -- not adapt to -- the world. Man must integrate, says Freire, because he is a creature of reflection and action who can change the world through critical thinking from a world of oppression to one in which others are treated as people, not objects, and one which allows men "to emerge from the world, objectify it, understand it, and transform it" (Pedagogy 119). Therefore, students must be viewed as subjects of their own learning, not empty buckets waiting to be filled with insights from someone else.

This latter method, or often traditional approach, Freire calls banking education because it reduces teaching to merely depositing bits of information and skills into presumably empty and passive student minds (Pedagogy 58). Banking education illustrates the oppressive nature of society because "the

teacher teaches and the students are taught; . . . the teacher talks and the students listen; . . . and the teachers select the program content and students adapt to it" (Pedagogy 59) so that students become objects who merely receive, file, and store the deposits (Pedagogy 58). In this method, teaching and learning are separated, with the teacher perceived as the only one possessing knowledge, and the students as ones in need of it (Pedagogy 59). As a result, the creative powers and critical thinking abilities of students are stifled, preventing them from unveiling and revealing the world as it is (Critical Consciousness 52). Instead of subjects who act upon their world to transform it, in banking education students become a-critical and naive in the face of reality (Critical Consciousness 52). The emphasis of this method on transfer of information instead of communication results in teaching being dichotomized from the student, and man from his world (Pedagogy 62). As a result, students see only a partial view of reality, since only the teacher's perceptions are presented. Freire labels this type of education "violence" because by imposing ideas, values, and curricula, it manipulates people to adapt to a given situation and thus robs them of their right to transform the world (Critical Consciousness 148).

Freire's philosophy of education on the other hand, calls for liberation from these oppressive conditions by replacing the educational goal of "deposit-making" with "the posing of problems of men in their relations with the world" (Pedagogy 66). Freire calls this type of education "problem-posing" because it requires critical thinking -- or posing problems that constantly unveil reality (Pedagogy 68). To do this, there must be no separation between teaching and learning. Instead, men must teach each other, "mediated by the

world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are 'owned' by the teacher" (Pedagogy 67). Furthermore, since men do not exist apart from the world or reality, problem-posing education "must begin with the men-world relationship" (Pedagogy 72) of the "here and now" or the concrete situation people face (Pedagogy 85).

This approach differs from "problem-solving" education by focusing on the thinking process rather than the outcome. Since few problems have single solutions but instead require attempts, followed by evaluation, followed by more attempts, problem-posing education allows students to formulate, attempt, and revise their actions rather than asking them to solve a given problem in a single attempt. Problem-posing education requires more than solving problems; it insists that "men subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation" (Pedagogy 74) through praxis, so teachers and students can become true Subjects of the educational process who denounce oppression and promote man's vocation of becoming fully human.

To illustrate his concept of fully human, Freire distinguishes man from animals in his ability to communicate and think critically about himself (Pedagogy 88-89), to relate with the world, to reflect and discover the contradictions of reality, and to act upon his world in order to transform it (Pedagogy 119). Furthermore, men are the only beings which develop (Pedagogy 160), the only beings who can create, and therefore the only beings capable of praxis -- the basis for problem-posing education, defined as "reflection and action of men upon their world in order to transform it" (Pedagogy 66). Praxis is achieved, according to Freire, by arousing one's critical thinking capacities through dialogue aimed at transforming reality (Pedagogy 29). For,

problem-posing education as the practice of freedom is not the transfer or transmission of knowledge or culture (Critical Consciousness 149) but must provide man with the skills necessary for making and remaking culture. Thus, true education must lead to revolutionary activity (Pedagogy 72) that increases the degree of individual freedom (Pedagogy 133).

Problem-posing education further distinguishes itself from other methods because its goal is not just knowledge, but liberation through knowledge. Freire calls this a gnosiological situation (Critical Consciousness 149) where educator and educatee are both cognitive subjects, where class is a meeting place where knowledge is sought -- not transmitted -- (Critical Consciousness 150), and where studying is a task for subjects who re-invent, re-create, and rewrite, not merely listen, memorize, and recite as objects would. Knowledge therefore, is a form of praxis since it reflects upon an action to create a new action to reflect upon (Critical Consciousness 154). Thus problem-posing education is an ongoing activity and in a constant state of being (Critical Consciousness 155).

Since the goal of problem-posing education is liberation by affirming people in the process of becoming (Pedagogy 72), students and teachers must be capable of dialogue and critical thinking. Dialogue, defined as the relation of empathy between two poles who are engaged in a joint search (Critical Consciousness 45) requires a horizontal and equal relationship between participants, attitudes of trust, humility, faith in mankind, critical thinking by all parties (Pedagogy 81), and a love of the world, life, and man (Pedagogy 78). Furthermore, Freire states words spoken in dialogue must be consistent with one's actions (Pedagogy 80), and to promote dialogue teachers must not engage

in antialogical behaviors like conquest, division, manipulation, or cultural invasion (Pedagogy 133-150). Instead teachers must practice cooperation and trust, promote unity, organize themselves with the people, and encourage cultural synthesis (Pedagogy 167-180), for men only communicate when they relate with other men as subjects (Pedagogy 168), and only by virtue of faith "does dialogue have power and meaning: by faith in man and his possibilities, by the faith that I can only become truly myself when other men also become themselves" (Critical Consciousness 45).

The second component of problem-posing education and the goal of all dialogue is critical thinking, which can only be achieved with others who share a mutual trust (Pedagogy 81) and can only take place between people who understand their society and are trying to reform it (Pedagogy 81). Since the aim of critical thinking is freedom, it starts with perceiving "reality as a process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity" (Pedagogy 81), and its fundamental task is the "continuing transformation of reality, in behalf of the continuing humanization of men" (Pedagogy 81).

Overall then, problem-posing education affirms people in the process of becoming (Pedagogy 72), and adopting this methodology into a classroom is done by dividing it into three stages: investigation, thematization, and problematization.

Developing an awareness of reality is the first step because Freire sees man as submerged in a false perception of reality and views education as a way for men to emerge from oppression to "conscientizacao," an attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence (Pedagogy 101). For example, Freire believes reality is experienced by man as a process (Pedagogy 72) and represents the

problem or contradictory conditions of the times (Critical Consciousness 7). Unfortunately, the ordinary person is maneuvered by myths created by social forces (Critical Consciousness 6), "confuses freedom with maintaining the status quo and uses critical thinking not to liberate but to accept social conditions of the times" (Pedagogy 32). Freire calls this problematic aspect of reality that does not allow people to see clearly what reality is a "limit situation," and only when men intervene in the historic process to overcome these situations by taking possession of reality and acting upon it, can they achieve liberation (Pedagogy 89). Therefore, an awareness of these contradictions is essential in man's quest to become a Subject and thus achieve "conscientizacao."

To develop this awareness, Freire suggests an examination and discovery of human consciousness as naive, superstitious, and critical by having teachers and students observe daily happenings, record what they see, and discuss the commonalities or themes of these recordings or codes. (Pedagogy 102-104). He believes these codes, if they are situations familiar to the students and whose themes are neither obvious or vague and which open the direction toward other themes (Pedagogy 106-107), will make the participants more conscious of their world so they will learn to distinguish reality and their perceptions of it (Pedagogy 108). By students observing and discussing their findings, the teacher becomes familiar with the aspirations, levels of perception, and views of the world the students already have (Critical Consciousness 158), and can discern their naive, superstitious, and critical states of consciousness, as well as find the generative themes that often indicate the problems to address or the tasks to carry out. One approach Freire suggests for beginning dialogue is

to have students distinguish the world of nature and the world of culture, culture as the result of men's labor, of their efforts to create and re-create (Critical Consciousness 46). Freire calls this the "archeology of consciousness" (Critical Consciousness 46) because it allows men to discover that history and culture are the work of man, the addition made by man to a world they did not make..., "the systematic acquisition of human experience" and ultimately "the role of man as subject in the world and with the world" (Critical Consciousness 46), so that by the conclusion of this discussion, one discovers his value as a person (Critical Consciousness 47). This dialogue often determines the epoch to which this society belongs, an epoch defined as the aspirations, concerns, and values in search of fulfillment of a given society in a given period of history. The individual representations of many of these aspirations and values are then the themes upon which students reflect in the second phase, or thematization.

Thematization involves students discussing the themes in thematic investigation circles in search of why the problem is happening (Pedagogy 110). From this reflection, teachers and students select generative words, or words that carry the most meaning for the group and create a representation of it, or code. A code is a photograph, dialogue, slide, or piece of artwork that represents a problem situation lived by students, and this process of encoding enables students to view their perception of reality in a concrete way so they can visually reflect upon it. Students and teachers can then compare this representation of reality to their perceptions of it in order to determine any inconsistencies between the two. This process is called decoding, and the result of this process should be a problem or contradictory condition of the

time.

This decoding to determine problems is called "problematization" or making problems of "the world of work, products, ideas, convictions, aspirations, myths, and science "(Critical Consciousness 154) in order to act upon them. To do this, teachers present these findings of the thematic circles to students as problems to be addressed with teachers and students continually reconsidering ideas (Pedagogy 68). This process requires learners to enter into their world, to become aware of how one acquires knowledge and as a result, realize the need for knowing even more (Critical Consciousness 155). And this, says Freire, is the impetus of education because it allows men to take control of their lives by using these critical thinking abilities to reflect upon their world and then transform it.

Following the determining of problems, problem-posing education requires students to act upon them, and action, according to Freire, is the second component of praxis and is liberating only if it is the result of reflection (Pedagogy 38). Furthermore, Freire considers the unveiling of the oppressive world and committing oneself to transforming it as action, as well as expelling the myths created by the old order (Pedagogy 40). Thus, achieving and practicing critical thinking and dialogue are revolutionary actions because they allow men to accurately perceive reality and become true Subjects. Freire also describes necessary actions as those achieved through dialogue, namely cooperation, unity, organization, and cultural synthesis. Cooperation, as a dialogical action can only occur among Subjects, can only be achieved through communication, and allows Subjects to critically analyze reality together (Pedagogy 168). To create unity, leaders must dedicate themselves to create

among the oppressed and with the oppressed so they may together transform an unjust order (Pedagogy 172-173). Organization witnesses "the fact that the struggle for liberation is a common task" (Pedagogy 176), and its essential elements include consistency between words and actions, boldness, radicalization, a courage to love, and faith in the people. True organization recognizes that "there is no freedom without authority" (Pedagogy 179), but leaders must realize they may not make decisions about the world alone, but must name the world through the people (Pedagogy 179). Cultural synthesis allows the upper classes to learn with the lower classes so that both affirm the support each gives to the other in achieving their common goal: liberation (Pedagogy 183). Thus, humanizing actions may be intellectual or physical, but must always be the result of reflection or critical thinking, carried out in dialogue, and aimed at liberation.

Freire clarifies his philosophy of education by outlining the requirements of a good teacher. Since Freire believes education to be a dialogue in which everyone seeks together to know more, educators must "believe in people, be able to commune with them, to proclaim the world with them. If they can't do these things, they will never be educators who will carry out radical transformations" (Critical Consciousness 164). Furthermore, a good teacher must be able to dialogue "in a mode of reciprocity" (Critical Consciousness xiii) which means teachers must also be students, "subjects seeking to know other subjects" (Colins 84) who present material for consideration but reconsider the material in light of student contributions. This is why and how educators continue to learn and requires teachers and learners to discover reality together so they can transform the world.

CHAPTER III

APPLICATIONS

This chapter explores seven articles addressing adaptability of Freire to the American classroom. Topics include teacher training techniques, a basic format for using Freire in any classroom, the feasibility of utilizing it in high school and college, and the difficulty teachers experience when introducing problem-posing education in a formerly traditional classroom. Summaries of these articles are followed by critiques which strive to illustrate the values and concerns of each application.

Ira Shor: Equipping Teachers to Utilize Problem-Posing Education

To utilize Freire's liberation pedagogy, North American teachers must be trained in the skills and techniques required of this method. In his article "Educating the Educators: A Freirean Approach to the Crisis in Teacher Education," Ira Shor suggests that teachers must see their purpose not as conveying knowledge, but as offering "an illumination of reality that helps us and the students examine the social limits constraining us"(26). To do this, Shor suggests seven areas or themes "to help define a desocializing model for teacher education" (23).

The first theme is dialogue teaching, teaching that begins with problem posing discussions that show students the value of their participation and that

reduce student withdrawal and teacher talk (23). Thus teachers must learn when to intervene in discussion and when to restrain their intervention so that their talking does not inhibit or silence the speaking of the students. Practice for this "will require making the teacher-education curriculum itself dialogic" (23).

The second theme, critical literacy, should promote critical awareness and desocialization as well as inquiry into self, society, and the subject being studied (24). Critical literacy allows teachers across the curriculum to develop thinking and language skills by helping students understand that all existing knowledge is a product of history and the values of the people who developed this knowledge (24). Shor calls this method "problematization" and believes it establishes teaching and learning as forms of research and experimentation (24) rather than a process of sending and receiving, and thus students learn to become true Subjects in their pursuit of education and liberation.

The third theme for teacher education is situated pedagogy, or situating learning in the student's culture. Shor believes subjectivity is a synonym for motivation, as it alone will connect a student's experience with critical thought and "demonstrate that intellectual work has a tangible purpose" (24). Thus, only through situated pedagogy can a student see how critical reflection can affect the immediate conditions of his own life.

To discover the students' culture so one may utilize it in his teaching, Shor suggests the next three themes. Fourth, a teacher must study ethnography and cross cultural communications, for only by studying the students' situation can a teacher use it as a basis for learning. Fifth, to be agents of social change in

that culture, teachers must study the methods of change in the community, and determine how classroom instruction can model itself on the key issues of that community (25). This will involve understanding school and community organization and the political methods of change involved in both. And sixth, to truly understand a student's situation, a teacher must study how inequalities of race, sex, and social class influence school outcomes and expenditures (25). This study should include sociology, economics, history, and psychology courses to reveal the inequalities in the school system and society so a teacher can better understand the cultural situations of his students.

Finally, the seventh theme for teacher education is training in the performing arts to "enhance their skills of presentation and discussion leading" (25). Since dialogic teaching requires an effective communicator who can engage others in insightful discussion, Shor believes drama and voice skills to be essential.

Overall, Shor believes courses in social sciences, political structures, and communication skills must be the starting point for teacher training in liberatory education, for only through an understanding of another's situation and with an outstanding ability to communicate can teachers promote dialogue and critical thinking. Furthermore, while dialogue, critical thinking, and situated pedagogy are the tools for teaching future educators, they are also the goals sought. Therefore, teacher training must not only equip teachers for utilizing "liberatory education," but its methods must be liberatory as well.

CRITICISM

Certainly educators need to be trained in the Freirean method before they can incorporate it in their classroom, and Shor's ideas do cover areas necessary for understanding and utilizing "problem-posing" methods. Since this approach strives to enhance critical thinking so students may learn to control their destinies, communication skills, knowledge of their backgrounds, and familiarity with political action are essential. One must question, however, Shor's distinction of "presentation and discussion leading" for in truly dialogic education, the two should not differ. By his definition, "presentation" seems to be something unnatural, untrue, and such "performing skills" may result in a lack of sincerity on the part of the teacher and a false perception of reality on the part of the student.

Furthermore, Shor bases his themes on skills he considers fundamental in carrying out Freire's methodology, but in composing this list, he seems to commit the very crime of "banking education" Freire warns against. For Shor decides what others need to learn, prescribes his deductions on others, and outlines his guidelines for all teacher education. By doing so he concedes that some prescribed methods must be learned and some prescribed topics must be explored. Such an approach seems authoritarian, but he could justify his conclusions by saying he is simply aiming education in a "liberatory" direction, a direction Freire insists education must take to "humanize" mankind. Thus, the justification for his assertions as well as anyone's, is found in Freire's premise that "education is not neutral" but must encourage man to become "fully human." So, while Freire seems opposed to any act that might prescribe

and impose ideas on students, he is actually opposed only to those methods of teaching, not to the idea of leading students in a prescribed direction. Thus, to establish the spirit of "problem-posing" education instead of "banking," one must approach Shor's prescribed themes as studies for research rather than as indisputable facts, and in a dialogical format rather than an authoritarian one. Then Shor's themes may truly result in teachers being better equipped to utilize the "problem-posing" method and less likely to teach what Freire says in a way directly opposed to how he says to do it.

Ira Shor: Utilizing Freire's Method to Teach Writing in College

Beyond prescribing areas of teacher training, in his article "Monday Morning Fever: Critical Literacy and the Generative Theme of 'Work,'" Ira Shor demonstrates his use of Freire's philosophy to develop critical thinking and writing skills through the generative theme of work. He bases the applicability of Freire's Third World philosophy to a United States classroom on his belief that the domination by mass culture has left the population marginally literate or "uncritically literate" (105). So, to arouse critical consciousness among supposedly literate students, he utilizes this "liberatory approach -- experiential, sequential, and integral -- [that] does not impose grammar on culture, but rather shapes literacy from resources in student reality" (106).

To prepare students for this new method, Shor asks them to write their names on the board and introduce themselves the first day of class as a

way of decentralizing the teacher and creating common bonds between students as they discover similarities among themselves. He then has them free-write, write spontaneously for a given time without stopping to correct or revise. Since the paper is not read, corrected, or graded, students are able to compose without feeling threatened. Therefore, by the end of the first class, "with student and composing skills being the predominant action so far" (107), Shor establishes a non-authoritarian tone.

During the next class meeting Shor tries to elicit student ideas regarding their perceptions of reality and finds autobiography and memory to be initial resources for deepening literacy. He asks them to write a good-sized paragraph on "The Worst Teacher I Ever Had" or "The Most Dangerous Moment in my Life," two themes about which he has found students write willingly. But first, he prepares them for the assignment through two prewriting activities. The first activity, the purpose of which makes students aware of their own resources, is "think-itemize-write" which asks students to close their eyes and visualize what they are going to write about, to then list all the things they see, and then write a composition, checking to see that they have included all the ideas from the list. The second exercise, dictation, requires pairs of students to take turns recording exactly what the other is saying and serves to encourage peer relations, promote good speaking abilities, and illustrate that written language is merely encoded speech (109). Both these prewriting activities develop self confidence and awareness and are literacy exercises students can do on their own without

a teacher or text. Furthermore, they encourage the "withering away of the teacher and the subjective emergence of the student" (109). Shor has also found these "Worst Teacher" essays bring antischool feelings to light, show reality won't be hidden in the classroom, and through them students see that open confrontation with teacher dislike is a way to work through what often interferes with critical thought. To complete this topic, Shor has students answer "What is a bad teacher?" and records their responses on the board so they can conceptualize this element of their lives (110), and thus gain a critical perspective of their reality.

At this point Shor introduces his work theme by asking students to write a composition that answers "What is the worst job you ever had?" or if they have not yet been employed, an account of what they consider the worst job. He asks them to think-itemize-write and then introduces "voicing," a self-editing method requiring students to read aloud what they have written, allowing their speaking voices to correct errors. Weaknesses are revealed by pauses, and after each person "voices" his own composition, Shor suggests voicing in pairs, so another person may notice any written errors the reader corrected with his voice but did not see with her eyes. From this exercise students realize they have good grammar in their speech; they just need to use the same grammar when they write. Shor utilizes this method because "it is a simple way to begin literacy study from student resources" (111) as students use their own experience to study speech and writing, and this "integrates skill development with consciousness raising" (117).

To initiate his class into critical reflection on this theme of work,

Shor asks what the worst jobs have in common or not in common with each other, and compiles the list on the board. This abstract task of structuring "a mass of details into categories of meaning" (113) allows the mind to re-perceive reality by giving it meaningful shapes and allowing them to make "a reasoned judgement on a body of material" (113). Shor follows this with a discussion on "What are all the aspects of a job?" which allows students to abstract general categories from specific examples. Next, he asks which of these aspects the worst jobs have in common and finds the thinking at this point to be the most thorough as students use their experience, their reality, to determine the features of awful labor: low pay, no power to make decisions, little responsibility, no creativity or independence (114). Using this, they easily create a characterization of best jobs, and then they must determine the difference between the two. Their responses indicate their ability to observe and describe but do not show an ability to transform what they have discovered (115).

To encourage this "transcendent thought," Shor asks students to analyze unions, to compose a speech about the value of unions from the point of view of a corporate management member and a worker. By becoming these personas, students clarify what each has to gain or lose by unionization. These papers usually lead to dialogue regarding power and then hierarchy. To demonstrate this concept, Shor draws pyramid structures for various institutions like schools, hospitals, and banks, and invariably students discover themselves at the bottom of the pyramids.

Here Shor introduces reading material about labor, but stimulates

interest through two prereading activities. First he mentions the topic and has students pose hypothetical questions they think the text will answer, ensuring student ideas as the starting point so that the "text will be absorbed into the field of their language rather than they being ruled by it" (117). This is followed by dictation where students copy verbatim a few passages he reads from the material. He then allows "voicing" individually and in pairs and has students refer to the text wherever deviations occur. This technique develops careful reading habits while utilizing careful listening and transcribing, provides eye exercise in comparing two written forms, and "extends the conscious connection between spoken and written language" (118). Students then read the piece, write a summary of it, and read aloud as a means to critique the content of the reading (118).

When selecting reading material Shor searches the media for articles written in colloquial language that will not alienate the students. Articles must suggest a problem, a critique, or an idea of transition so discussion can focus on "transcendent ideas" (118).

Finally, Shor suggests reading profiles of workers and asking students to write profiles of two working people, one twenty-five, the other over fifty, using interviews as sources and ultimately composing comparative profiles of two generations of workers.

Overall, Shor believes the problematic study of work allows students to re-perceive a very ordinary part of their reality, develops literacy skills and consciousness, and "validates students psychologically because . . . [it] is based in their experience and their language resources" (119).

Critical thinking skills became evident, first in their speech, and later and to a lesser degree in their writing because they have less command of their writing skills. Shor concludes that in the end, "work is not made less alienating, but critical thinking is less remote " (121).

CRITICISM

Shor follows Freire's steps of "investigation:" discovering students' perceptions of reality, "thematization:" finding ideas important to these students that generate ideas, discussion, and critical thinking, and "problematization:" turning inaccurate, naive, or superstitious notions of reality into problems to be solved. However, Shor does not give students freedom in choosing the topics important to them, but instead imposes the topics of "Bad Teachers," "Worst Moments," and "Work" upon them because he has found them to be effective in the past. Initially, this seems legitimate by allowing a teacher to learn from experience and prevent the "rediscovering of the wheel" with each class, but theoretically it seems in direct opposition to Freire's "liberatory" approach. Freire did use the same codes when teaching his literacy classes, but the people he taught tended to have similar backgrounds and similar problems, and Freire consistently advises that each group of students must be investigated for their own "generative themes." Thus, while Shor investigates, he seems to impose his theme of "work" no matter what the findings.

Furthermore, Shor's techniques for prewriting, editing, and stimulating interest in the reading material seem effective methods for accomplishing

his goals of teaching writing and enhancing critical thinking, but again, because they are imposed on the students, his method seems authoritarian instead of "liberatory." Perhaps this is necessary in American classrooms, however, because Shor must assign grades and work within the framework of American education. He is not teaching peasants to read; he is teaching students from various social backgrounds to read critically with hope that they may become true Subjects.

Overall then, despite questions that encourage critical thinking and methods that promote writing skills, by Freire's standards, Shor may very well remain an oppressor by prescribing content and methodology. As a result, his students may remain "oppressed" because they have not learned to go beyond critical thinking to act upon their world. Therefore, Shor's application may serve as a starting point for teaching literacy and utilizing liberatory education, but true application of Freire's theories must include students acting upon their newfound understanding of their world and their role in it in a way that transforms their situation. True Subjects do not just think, they act, and Shor must devise a way to promote this for his generative theme of "work" to be truly liberating.

Nina Wallerstein: Providing a Step-by-Step Application of Freire's Method

In her article "Problem-Posing Education: Freire's Method for Transformation," Nina Wallerstein shares her method for applying Freire's

problem-posing approach in an American classroom. She describes Freire's phases of investigation, thematization, and problematization as listening, dialogue, and action.

In the first phase, the teacher must listen to discover students' generative themes and "start with a learner's stance" (35). During breaks and in discussions one should listen for topics that have a high emotional impact. "What are they worried about? What makes them happy, sad, or angry?" (36) What are their future plans? In addition, to discover a student's current situation outside of class, Wallerstein suggests three tools: observation, interviews, and document analysis.

Since observing suggests viewing a situation with new perspectives, noticing things that may have gone unnoticed before, students should record their observations through photographs, drawings, and taking notes of conversations and descriptions of places (36). Teachers should also visit the neighborhoods and workplaces of their students and observe. In addition, Wallerstein suggests asking students to bring to class something they are proud of or concerned about, a cultural artifact they have found to further stimulate an understanding of one's environment and encourage dialogue. The second tool, interviewing, allows students to ask questions of each other and of people in their neighborhood or workplace regarding a topic they wish to know more about. These responses are then shared with the class to promote discussion. The third tool for discovering a student's reality are documents such as company policies and union contracts "to provide an historical context or give supporting evidence for a problem students are discussing" (37). Together, these techniques allow students

to utilize critical thinking skills about their environment and to feel equal to the teacher in the learning process (37).

After identifying the issues of their worlds, Wallerstein uses codes to promote positive group dialogue and to re-present the students' reality back to the class and allow them "to project their emotional and social responses in a focused fashion"(38). Wallerstein defines codes as a "physical representation of a critical issue that has evolved from the listening phase" (38). Codes can be written dialogue, stories, photographs, skits, collages, or songs, but should represent a familiar problem immediately recognized by the group, be presented as a problem with many sides, focus on one concern at a time that suggests the historical, cultural, and social connections in students' lives, should not provide solutions, and should address a problem that is not too overwhelming but offers possibilities for small actions toward change (38). Overall, a code should "codify" a problem that carries social or emotional impact in people's lives into one depersonalized representation, so that participants can discuss the issue without it becoming too personal.

The code itself, however, is only a basis for critical thinking, as problem-posing dialogue "moves the discussion from the concrete to the analytic level" (39). Wallerstein suggests a five step questioning sequence to guide students from observation to critical thinking. First, teachers should ask students to define what they see, name and describe it, and ensure they understand the vocabulary. Next, they should have students define the problem by asking what is really happening, and then ask students to share similar experiences by asking if they have

experienced this problem before and how this situation is similar to or different from their experience. The next phase requires asking students to "generalize and project their opinions"(39) to ask why there is a problem by discussing who benefits and who loses from this situation. Finally, teachers should strategize with them regarding what they can do about the problem by asking what people in the code could do and then what they would do. Wallerstein provides the acronym "SHOWeD" for this five step problem-posing method, meaning See, Happening, Our (lives), Why, and Do (40) and believes that by starting with description and drawing in experience, students will be more likely and willing to answer the probing questions of "why" and "do" later. This final step should lead students into positive action toward solutions , but this problem-posing as opposed to problem-solving process recognizes the need for continuous reflection and action in working toward effective change.

Wallerstein next suggests teacher strategies in enhancing dialogue and promoting student action. To encourage dialogue, she suggests seating students in a circle, practicing group listening and trust exercises, and initially providing structure and asking questions until students become comfortable sharing their experiences (41). Wallerstein discusses action by defining action for students as learning to see themselves as social and political beings with rights of access to the political systems in their workplaces or cities (42). Thus, recognizing themselves as "Subjects" is an action in itself. Actions for them may also involve developing support in class through dialogue, writing letters to the editor, filing a complaint at work, or joining a political action group in their neighborhood (42).

Regardless of the action taken, however, students learn through the action that people can interact in the political system to transform their reality, and historical and current events allow students to gain a larger vision of possibilities. One method for devising possible actions is to brainstorm the problem by placing ideas on the board under the headings of Problem, Barriers to Change, Larger Visions, and Immediate Plans. As students try out their small actions, the columns will change, but teachers should continue to reinforce their visions and possibilities.

Lastly, Wallerstein mentions the difficulty of evaluation in problem-posing education. She suggests that to evaluate student progress, one must view the expected and unexpected changes in student perception and thinking, and use evaluation as an empowering tool that allows students to evaluate their own learning. To do this, one should look at the effects of codes on student learning, what students learned about themselves and their work as a group, and the results of their actions.

CRITICISM

Overall, Wallerstein presents a practical and understandable plan for applying Freire's philosophy. The explanation of codes and series of questioning will prove very helpful in utilizing this methodology in a classroom to promote critical thinking and social consciousness.

To utilize her ideas of cultural artifacts and interviewing, Wallerstein points out that the teacher must create a conducive atmosphere for discussion and dialogue through listening and trust exercises. This is

essential because most students do not share personal details willingly; first they must feel safe that their ideas and information will be heard with interest and respect. In addition, discussions should initially be guided by the teacher, as it would be in a traditional classroom, and then gradually entrusted to the students. This enables students to adjust to this new Freirean approach and learn the dialogic method gradually and through their own experiences and growth instead of through a well-meaning liberatory educator who casts this method upon them as the new "cure-all" for education. The idea of beginning with impersonal questions and then leading to personal ones is a good one, but there is no guarantee that discussion will move from other people's problems to ones own. Again, rapport and trust with classmates are essential.

In addition, Wallerstein's definition of action seems to differ with Freire's in that he expects action to eventually be political in nature while she seems satisfied with students recognizing themselves as social and political beings. Freire himself labels critical thinking as action, so Wallerstein's interpretation is not inaccurate, but it does seem to be an end result instead of a step toward more direct action. Perhaps this is her adaptation of Freire's philosophy in an American classroom and is justifiable if her goal is merely to develop critical thinking. However, Freire might say a change of attitude is not enough if education is to be truly liberating.

Finally, despite her step by step instructions, the author leaves the evaluation question unresolved by giving no insight into assigning grades once her suggested areas of review have been evaluated. As a result, she

encourages teachers to undertake a task with an inherent dilemma still unresolved.

Linda Finlay and Valerie Faith: Combining Freire's Philosophy of Education with Vygotsky's Understanding of Language.

In "Illiteracy and Alienation in American Colleges: Is Paulo Freire's Pedagogy Relevant?", Linda Finlay and Valerie Faith combine Freire's principles of liberatory education with the developmental psychology principles of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian cognitive psychologist, "to improve the language skills of upper-middle class American college students" (63). Freire's idea that critical thinking and use of language depend upon one's understanding of reality is similar to Vygotsky's belief that a social and linguistic analysis is necessary to understand someone else's perspective and communicate effectively in a written form. Vygotsky also points out that the difference between written and oral communication is that oral communication has the benefit of external clues like facial expression and gestures to add to its meaning, while written communication has no clues other than those in the text and is often received by an unfamiliar audience with whom the writer shares little common ground. Thus, to write well and be understood clearly by one's audience, Vygotsky believes one must understand the relationship of one's perspective to someone else's and must know "what is shared with the intended audience and what must be explained" (64). Finlay and Faith then incorporated Vygotsky's ideas with Freire's methods and approached

language teaching through the "students' understanding of the relationship between language and society" (64).

To begin, Finlay and Faith needed to determine the current attitude of their students to the world. Freire calls this the "archeology of consciousness" because its goal is to "uncover the relationship of people to ideas upon which they act. Are these ideas held naively, superstitiously, or critically?" (65). To determine this, one must ask if people recognize how human action and language create their world, or in Freire's terms, do they know the difference between nature and culture? (65). If not, students cannot use language critically because only by seeing themselves as makers of culture can they see themselves as changing reality.

Finlay and Faith found that a student's level of consciousness is determined not only by what he says, but how he says it. A naive thinker expresses no control over his world, views events as inevitable, cannot conceive of a perspective other than his own, and expresses ideas and values in unqualified generalizations (66). A superstitious thinker, on the other hand, sees culture as ready made and does not understand how to participate in it; he sees options but doesn't know how to achieve them. Furthermore, effects seem independent of known causes, so social institutions achieve a magical status because a superstitious thinker has no concept of how they were created and modified by human action. This type of thinker expresses himself in vague phrases, passive voice, refers to social structures as "they," and can recite formulas but cannot explain them (66). Contrarily, critical thinkers recognize cultural institutions as

designed and "sustained by human purpose and actions"(66) and see the world as capable of reform. These thinkers see that language shapes and reflects peoples' perceptions of social institutions, so their language "reflects an understanding that the naming of cultural elements" (66) is very important. They also understand that reflecting on language is a vital method for transforming everyday thought into critical consciousness.

To determine the levels of consciousness of their students, Finlay and Faith asked them to "bring a list of words that seem to you to be keys to areas of knowledge or life that you want to open up; then group these words in any way they seem to fit together to you" (67-68). The lists were gathered, randomly compiled, and returned to the students who were then asked to arrange all the words in whatever groups seemed appropriate to them. Since both Freire and Vygotsky believe "a word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (68), these lists provided "a focus for language as the object of study" (67), as well as codes from which student generated generative themes developed.

Before discussing these words and to provide a common ground for discussion, Faith and Finlay presented a definition of language as "an arbitrary culturally-historically inherited symbol system of a group"(69). Students responded angrily to this, but when asked for their own definition could only define it in terms of its purpose rather than its structure. From this discussion, the authors noted that students perceived language as somehow magical rather than controllable, saw its power as unreliable, and held a deep mistrust of words. The authors surmised these

beliefs were the result of the students' poor verbal skills, but nonetheless, all indicated they did not use language critically.

After this discussion, when all the words were grouped, students noted that the words on the left like injustice, power, systems, government, education, and oppression were areas of life they did not have power over, while words on the right like belief, art, happiness, freedom and love contained personal meanings controlled by them. After many discussions comparing these lists and expressing attitudes toward the words and their connotations, the theme that emerged was their deep distrust and alienation from major cultural institutions combined with their passive acceptance to eventually participate in them (71). Thus, what appeared on the surface to be laziness or apathy was really a depression resulting from silent passive resistance in an "educational system serving purposes that are not theirs and even seem antithetical to their own real needs" (71).

The authors also discovered that the students' views of language mirrored this view of institutions. Their attitude toward language lacked a critical response as they neither acknowledged or denied its powers, a characteristic described by Freire as typical of "a culture of silence." Finlay and Faith then decided a teacher's job is to allow students to see their relationship "to both society and language as dynamic" (71).

The authors continued their pursuit for critical thinking by asking students to read excerpts of Freire's definitions of naive, superstitious, and critical states of consciousness, to define each level, and to describe the thought process of each person at that level. From this grew a discussion

on objectivity and subjectivity, as students viewed writing a definition as objective, as someone else imposing guidelines on them, and writing a description as subjective because it would be their perceptions. These discussions revealed that students believed teachers and schools to hold an "objectivist" view of knowledge, one that "denied that meaning comes into the human world through human agency and consciousness (73), and in rejecting such a view, students adopted the "subjectivist" view that "denies there are limits on the activity of consciousness in constituting meaning" (73). Eventually, through discussions and Freire's writings, students realized that "knowledge requires something that is given and something that is constructed" (74) and that all knowledge is partial "since the perspective of the knower defines and limits the view of the object" (73). Furthermore students saw how good description is objective because it involves careful observation, not free association, and how definition is subjective because language reflects a personal and cultural perspective (74). As a result, critical consciousness emerged as students realized that using language unreflectively is to accept cultural definitions and perspectives unreflectively, but using language critically is to analyze cultural definitions and perspectives (74-75). As a result, as students realized that cultural alienation could take a linguistic form, they began to gain control of language (75).

Finlay and Faith also found Freire's emphasis on distinguishing nature from culture essential in developing critical consciousness. They found that without this understanding, students viewed the spoken word as a natural fact rather than a human construction and thereby viewed history

as nature. As a result, they failed to see man's involvement in social institutions.

To address this problem, Faith and Finlay had students read excerpts from Berger and Luckman who point out that while institutions have a reality and structure separate from the purposes of individuals, "these structures are cultural, not natural" (76). Furthermore, these institutions reflect human perception and needs and originate in "subjective relations between people" and therefore "the institutional world is an objectivated human activity, and so is every single institution" (75-76). From this, students saw how social roles sustain institutions, and the realization that institutions were made by human acts opened their eyes to the possibility that they could act to reform them.(76).

Unfortunately, when the students tried to act upon their insights they found they did not have the writing skills to do so, and writing became their "limit task." In writing they "sensed the gulf between their own thought and the language taught them by their culture" (77), and as a result "tied gaining control of their language to assuming responsible control of their lives" (76).

With this much realized, the teachers set two main objectives. The first was for students to understand word meaning as Vygotsky describes it: the "place where thoughts and speech unite" so that as they valued their thoughts they might also begin to value their words (78). The second objective was to analyze the structures students used most often without critical understanding, namely passive voice constructions like "It was discovered " instead of "I discovered" and noun constructions like "by

reflection upon" instead of "reflecting on." Both structures view the subject as acted upon, and such forms visually illustrate the passive attitudes held by students. Because they did not perceive themselves as subjects in the grammatical or thus Freirean sense, their writing reflected their attitude (79). The authors further noted that run-on sentences and fragments also indicate students relieving themselves of responsibility by withholding judgements, as they present ideas without ever saying anything specific about them. They could not write a simple declarative sentence because they lacked the confidence to do so, as they did not see themselves as active subjects, people "responsible for taking action in creating their world" (80). As students became aware of this, they tried to eliminate the rhetorical jargon they unconsciously used because it fostered hypocrisy and "made you one of them" (80). As a result, their writing improved dramatically.

As an overall summary of this experience, these authors discovered that deep alienation from cultural institutions causes its own form of illiteracy, as students who can perform the physical acts of reading and writing often do not distinguish how language is usually used in their culture and how it could be used for analysis and communication. Furthermore, while the major concern for these students was to determine how they fit into the world (81), they could not discuss the problem until they felt safe in class, experienced a sense of community so they could set aside defenses, and joined with the teacher instead of siding against her. As the authors point out, "It was not the discussion of community that our students needed, but the experience of a way of relating that makes

learning possible" (81). These teachers found this way of relating through dialogue as "it unites the epistemological and political dimensions" and allows meaning and direction to emerge. (83)

Finally, these authors recommend Freire's philosophy in examining particular cultures, one's own human purpose, and how the two are related (83). They suggest teachers and students do this by embodying these concerns and developing curricula that studies the "nature of cultural institutions, . . . the epistemological dimensions of language, and the ethical dimensions of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and rhetoric" (83). The authors further note that not just their students, but students throughout the country at all levels of intellectual skill development demonstrate a seemingly inadequate grasp of the mechanics of reading and writing and believe these problems can be traced to questions of values, meaning, and human purpose (83).

Thus, Finlay and Faith highly recommend a Freirean approach to education so students may realize the "dynamic quality of their relation to both language and society " (83) and become better writers and true Subjects at the same time.

CRITICISM

Finlay and Faith add insight to Freire's approach by introducing the idea that how one uses language or how one structures his sentences, indicates his level of consciousness and perception of his role in the world. Most people seem to speak and write without thinking about it critically. They

may follow rules of mechanics and pay attention to word choice, but do any consider that a passive or active sentence pattern may indicate a passive or active approach to life? Therefore, teachers should not only listen to what students say to determine their levels of consciousness, but should pay attention to how they express themselves by analyzing the structures and patterns of their language because these structures not only help teachers and students label levels of consciousness, but also provide a method for changing them.

This application of Freire's method in studying language is also important because it enabled students to recognize their ability to take control of something, to act upon it, and to see the outcome. As a result, students had a better understanding of the language, did not rely on jargon or generalizations to express themselves, and now view language as a tool for societal change.

Unfortunately, Finlay and Faith did not apply their own findings when writing this article. Instead of clear word choices, they utilize jargon frequently, and thus cloud the meaning of their message. Before discussing the "epistemological and political dimensions" of language, they should define them in understandable terms.

Finally, Finlay and Faith seem somewhat authoritarian in not only directing student thinking toward that "worthy of Subjects," but in also directing student speech and writing patterns. By telling students the structures to use to express their ideas in ways that illustrate themselves as makers of culture, Finlay and Faith are promoting a prescribed method. This differs from merely pointing education in a

"humanizing" direction, because Finlay and Faith point out the outcomes they expect, namely clear, declarative sentences. Thus, while they promote critical thinking and encourage acting as "Subjects," they must be careful to do so in a problem-posing manner rather than an authoritarian one. If they do so, it seems appropriate to transform one's world by transforming one's use of language, since Freire himself takes the title for his role for man from the grammatical task he wishes man to fulfill. Thus, Finlay and Faith's application of Freire's philosophy seems true to his intent, and though their method seems somewhat prescribed, it is important to note that it is a workable approach for an American classroom.

Nancy Zimmet: Applying Freire in High School to Reduce Fear of Failure by
Using Literature as Codes

In "More Than the Basics: Teaching Critical Reading in High School" Nancy Zimmet describes her attempt to teach her technical-vocational training students to read critically. Because these students' "insecurities about school were at the heart of their learning difficulties" (124), Zimmet tried to build self-confidence so her students would "take an active, positive role in school" (123). To do this, she made school itself the object of study and tried to "problematize" the school situation with her students.

To begin, she asked small groups of students to write as many words as possible associated with the word "Education." These groups shared

their answers and found that while most words related to school, others indicated that education can take place elsewhere. Students discussed how their parents, grandparents, and even themselves have learned new things, and students became aware of the knowledge they already possess. Zimmet then led students in discussions and through writing assignments regarding experiences in school: What do they remember about their first day of school, about each year of school, and about what a day at school is truly like? Students photographed all aspects of school life, audio taped their recollections, and as a result realized that though they tell themselves they are unconcerned about school, they really look forward to it and want to do well. The "problem" they found is that their lack of motivation stems from their fears of poor grades, of not being able to understand or complete the assignments or thus succeed: fears that each student felt no one else shared. "And at the core of many of their fears were reading problems" (124).

To address these problems, Zimmet supplied readings about others' experiences in school to "objectify situations in students' lives" (124) so students might be more willing to discuss them. For these readings, she created exercises she knew her students could successfully complete for the literal, interpretive, and applied levels of reading. By the end of the exercises, students talked more easily about their fears of school and discovered their own defense mechanisms in dealing with their fears. Zimmet focused discussion on aspects of their lives that students perceived as preventing them from accomplishing what they wanted to accomplish or becoming the thoughtful and capable people they knew

themselves to be (127).

Zimmet realized her students' attitude toward school was "what Freire would call naive" (127), as they believed their school situation was imposed and thus impossible to change, so she posed this attitude as a set of problems. What alternatives are there? What could they do if they didn't understand a reading passage? What actions could they take in changing their school situation? Students formulated some answers, and by the end of the unit students had at least begun to talk about those "silent themes:" their eagerness to learn but fears of not being able to (122), that mask themselves behind the "I don't care" attitude.

In addition, as a result of the "problematization approach," students realized that they already possess important knowledge and skills that they use in their work at school, and that reading is a way to learn more about themselves and life. Their new reading skills gave them more confidence in approaching an assignment and by sharing experiences with classmates, students felt more assured as individuals, became truly active in the classroom, and sought each other for help.

Overall, Zimmet's students benefited from this Freirean approach, but they still have far to go, as their thinking may no longer be naive, but it is not yet critical. These students must devise answers to their questions and give action to their voice to become true Subjects and "take control of their lives" (127). As the author points out, they will "have to bring these new ways of behaving and thinking to their lives outside the classroom" (128).

CRITICISM

Zimmet's article provides a good example of using Freire's philosophy to make students aware of their real problems as opposed to their perceived problems. Zimmet utilizes the "archeology of consciousness" so students become aware of what they already know and realize that education occurs in many ways. Zimmet also uses readings as "codes" so students can recognize their own fears through those of others. By using literature as a code, Zimmet depersonalizes the subject for students so they can view it more objectively and thus express their attitudes toward it more freely. Furthermore, using fiction as codes illustrates to students the value of literature by making it applicable to their own lives. As a result, problem-posing education seems to be an excellent method for studying literature because it achieves an important objective of all English teachers.

The only negative aspect of Zimmet's experience is that little action took place. Students did become aware of their naivety toward reality, but they did not act upon it. Zimmet, like Wallerstein, seemed content to end the "unit" at this point, but should have continued if she hoped her students to become "true Subjects." By not coupling critical thinking with action, she reinforces the idea that students cannot "transform their world."

Joseph Janangelo: Beware the Negative Reactions of Students to
Problem-Posing Education

Joseph Janangelo describes in his article "Fighting Baptism with a Hose: Understanding Student Resistance to Liberation Pedagogy" the frustration teachers and students experience when adopting problem-posing education in formerly traditional classrooms, frustration stemming from basic philosophical differences.

First of all, traditional education often leads students to believe a right answer or solution exists to everything. They know that correct answers count on placement tests, on college entrance exams, and determine their eligibility for college admission and scholarships. In addition, as products of traditional classrooms, these students see knowledge as something the teacher gives them, education as something to be done to or for them, and a teacher as someone who entertains them (222). They have learned education is passive: to succeed in writing one needs only to adopt a teacher's prescribed revisions, and that teachers are authority figures who design student assignments and assign students grades (224). So when teachers of problem-posing education sometimes zealously ask students to question, problematize, and formulate solutions, students may feel their teachers are withholding information that may be helpful to them. Furthermore, these students are uncomfortable with "open-ended" writing assignments, as they understand writing as a way of presenting knowledge, not as a way of achieving it (220).

Perhaps the biggest difficulty for students in adopting these new

problem-posing roles of sitting in circles and liberating themselves is the irony of teachers who claim to be their allies being the same people who assign their grades. Liberatory educators try to practice democratic methods in the "oppressive framework of institutionalized teaching " (224) by asking students to express themselves, but within the confines of school rules (224), and to take risks in their work but to pay attention to suggested revisions. Janangelo summarizes the dilemma by saying that being teachers and credit-givers puts educators in opposition to students. "As credit-giver we [teachers] are the hurdle the student has to get over; as teacher we are the person who helps the student get over the hurdle" (226). Thus, "the worst thing we [teachers] can do is pretend we don't have power" (227).

As a result of this dilemma, problem-posing educators must reassess their role and application of this methodology because confines of the system and requirements placed on the teacher send conflicting messages. Furthermore, teachers forcing students to liberate themselves results in the very oppression these teachers seek to overcome. Instead, Janangelo suggests utilizing peer work to decenter authority, providing students with samples of well written papers, and discussing the differences between each grade. That way, students understand what is expected and are more likely to accept the new "coaching" role of the teacher.

Overall, Janangelo warns of the negative student attitude toward problem-posing education and implies teachers are naive in assuming they can walk into formally traditional classrooms, apply this philosophy, and meet with the same success Freire did with Brazilian peasants.

CRITICISM

Janangelo's article serves to make "newly-converted problem-posing educators" aware of the difficulty they may face in the classroom.

Teachers cannot walk in, throw away all sense of traditional methods, and replace them immediately with Freirean pedagogy. While this may seem like common sense, it's amazing how little of this some people demonstrate when "sold" on a new idea.

Thus, Janangelo's warnings are appropriate and helpful, as teachers must deal with the basic contradictions between liberatory education and institutionalized schooling. Teachers cannot tell students how to write and expect them to write freely, assign them grades and expect them to be their peers, or tell them grades do not matter and then ask where they are going to college. Unfortunately, Janangelo does little to reconcile these contradictions and leaves the reader leary of even attempting the problem-posing method. His criticisms serve to increase awareness among teachers regarding problems they may encounter, but do little to help them avoid those problems.

SUMMARY OF APPLICATIONS

While the previous authors have pointed out the benefits of utilizing Freire's philosophy to develop critical thinking, critical reading, and more effective language skills, none have applied his work to enhance student

understanding of literature. So, to continue to explore the adaptability of Freire to the classroom, specifically to the teaching of literature, the next chapter attempts to apply Freire's philosophy to the teaching of one of the standard readings for any student studying American literature, The Great Gatsby. Because the title character does not have a critical perception of reality, the content of Freire's philosophy, namely his levels of consciousness, as well as his methodology, will be used to explore the meaning of the novel.

This method differs from those of the previous authors because it incorporates the use of fiction and hopes to point out that Freire's philosophy can be illustrated through fictional characters. Furthermore and as a result, students will better understand the philosophy, the novel, its characters, and themselves.

CHAPTER IV

MODEL USING THE GREAT GATSBY

Since literature is a valuable source for growth and knowledge, and since teachers are often handed prescribed titles deemed "classics" from American or English literature, it would be useful to discover a method for increasing understanding of a given novel, like The Great Gatsby without telling students what it means. Teachers of English strive to "bring literature to life" by making it applicable to student lives. Unfortunately, this is often accomplished by pointing out the similarities between characters' lives and personalities to those of the students, and because students often fail to discover these similarities themselves, they also fail to see the relationship between fiction and their lives or apply the insight a novel might yield. Because it is fiction, or "not real," students often overlook it as a valuable resource for growth.

Such is the case when teaching The Great Gatsby to eleventh grade, college-bound students. Because they are focused on SAT scores and admissions to respectable universities, a debonaire veteran searching for a former love seems a fantasy not worthy of their attention. And, while after weeks of study they may conclude they liked the book, they demonstrate little understanding or appreciation for the cause of Gatsby's demise or the warning against materialism that Fitzgerald describes. As a result, students perceive the time spent as a challenging mental exercise, but do not seem to grow or become more perceptive, critical, or sensitive

to their world because of the experience.

To resolve this dilemma, when teachers are handed The Great Gatsby as a prescribed text, they might utilize Paulo Freire's philosophy regarding man's perception of reality and levels of consciousness, for both Freire and Fitzgerald discuss the "unreality of reality" (Fitzgerald 100). Freire describes reality as "the problem or contradictory conditions of the times" (Critical Consciousness 7), and Fitzgerald's narrator hints at this idea when he says "It is invariably saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which you have expended your own powers of adjustment " (105). Therefore, because of the similar ideas found in Freire's philosophy and Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, exploring these books together seems a worthy method for better understanding the ideas of both.

For example, throughout The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald points out Gatsby's inability to accept reality by wanting to repeat the past, by demanding Daisy say she never loved Tom, by creating a new name and persona for himself, by expecting everything to be the same as it was five years ago, and by assuming his methods for obtaining his wealth would have no effect on his credibility or Daisy's security. Fitzgerald further utilizes the "unreality of reality" (Fitzgerald 100) premise by having Daisy describe Gatsby as an advertisement and by having George Wilson believe God to be a faded figure on a billboard. Therefore, The Great Gatsby seems to be an "acting out" of Freire's philosophy regarding man's lack of critical thinking skills and his inability to truly understand, evaluate, and work effectively to change his world. To use Freire's philosophy as a basis for studying The Great Gatsby , students might better determine, understand,

and empathize with Gatsby's downfall, as well as be able to analyze the characters and their actions from a different perspective. As a result, their final evaluations of the book might be the result of critical thinking rather than attitudes of like or dislike.

To apply Freire's philosophy and to avoid contradicting its intent by presenting it in a "banking" fashion, one must utilize it in a way that is liberating and promotes critical thinking. To do so, Freire first suggests investigating: determining the students' current attitude toward their world. Finlay and Faith did this by asking students to list key words regarding knowledge or areas of life they wished to expand (Finlay 67-68). To allow this discussion to lead into The Great Gatsby, one might ask students to consider their greatest dream and then list key words "regarding knowledge or areas of life" that seem to be essential in achieving that dream. Like those of Finlay and Faith, these lists could then be compiled and returned to the students to arrange in whatever groups they felt appropriate. Once grouped, teacher and students should explore the meaning and connotations of each word, perhaps by saying a word, writing a quick response to it, and then discussing the reasons for each response. After discussing the words and meanings, students should describe their strategy for grouping in hopes of generating a "theme," or common concern or outlook that exists among the group. Perhaps this might be the positive or negative aspects of their dreams, the areas they have control over, or the idea that one cannot always get what he wants.

These ideas could then be supplemented with Freire's descriptions of levels of consciousness which could be introduced using Shor's method of

questioning: mentioning the topic of the reading material and asking students to pose questions they think the text will answer ("Monday Morning Fever" 117). This promotes interest in the reading material and ensures student-generated ideas as the starting point. Once students have read the descriptions by Freire, they should summarize and define each one and describe the thought process of someone at that level. The class would then discuss these definitions and descriptions as a way to clarify understanding and illustrate the degree of variance in perceptions. These discussions might lead to ones regarding language usage, accuracy of word choices, and reasons for differing perceptions, which could then be focused back to Freire's levels of consciousness. As students grow to distinguish the levels, they may want to re-evaluate their "dream lists" in these terms and see if a new theme arises, or if other students' perspectives opened their eyes to new ones. Once the class agrees on the structure or the grouping of ideas and discusses the theme or main idea the list produces, students should attempt to name a problem that this list indicates.

This process will likely lead to a discussion of factors students can control in their quest for their dream and will require an "archeology of consciousness" or discovery of the difference between nature and culture. Teachers can promote this discussion by asking, "What do men think and what is their vision of the world? What role does thinking play in making and remaking the world? How are history and culture conditioned by ideas, beliefs, myths, art, politics, tastes? (Colins 82) Furthermore, focusing specifically on aspects of their dream that are "natural or cultural" will

aid in the distinction of these terms as well as allow students to clarify their own perceptions of their goal.

At this point, the teacher and students should work together to provide a code for the class to analyze. This idea differs from Shor's because he suggests the teacher alone choose the code, but allowing only the teacher to determine an appropriate code results in a single perception of the outcome of previous discussion. Therefore, perhaps each student could bring in a picture, photograph, song, or section of dialogue that illustrates the problem generated by the key word list in a way to stimulate discussion and allow students to view their perception of reality in a concrete way so they can reflect upon it. This reflection or decoding as Freire calls it, should illustrate the inconsistencies between the code's representation of reality and one's own perception of it. An obvious suggestion for codes with dreams as the topic is advertisements, for they would illustrate the difference between what appears real and what is real, and would later be helpful in understanding Fitzgerald's description of Gatsby as an advertisement and George Wilson's perception of a billboard as God. However, one must decide the true purpose of this endeavor: Is it to use Freire to teach critical thinking or is it to "teach" The Great Gatsby? If the teacher is intent on students understanding her perception of Fitzgerald's purpose, then she may tend to suggest or promote using advertisements as codes, but as tempting as it is to do so, it prohibits students from discovering their level of consciousness on their own. Chances are, if their dreams are materialistic in nature, they are the results of advertisements, and an ad illustrating their dream will

likely be suggested as a code. If one is, it will tie in nicely with Gatsby later, but if not, students are likely to discover this ability of advertisements to distort one's perception of reality while reading The Great Gatsby. Thus, the teacher should refrain from suggesting codes merely because they tie in with Fitzgerald's theme. Finally, when the codes are brought in, the class should analyze all suggested codes according to Freirean criterion and choose one that best meets those standards. This again differs from other applications, but this method ensures all students provide a code illustrating their perception of reality, understand the requirements for a code, and analyze each in terms of those requirements. Because of this experience, students may be more willing to participate when analyzing the code and perhaps more likely to determine its contradictions.

Once the code has been chosen and for the code to result in "problematization," or making problems of the world in order to act upon them (Critical Consciousness 154), Wallerstein's "SHOWeD" questioning process may prove helpful (Wallerstein 40). By having students define what they "see" in a code, describe what is "happening," share similar experiences in their "[our]" lives, ask "why" there is a problem, and then discuss what they can "do" about it, students can perceive their problems as workable rather than insurmountable. This perception is necessary if students truly wish to change their situation, to make their dream come true. To help students achieve their goals, Wallerstein also suggests brainstorming possible actions by listing ideas on the board as Problem, Barriers to Change, Larger Visions, and Immediate Plans. For the dream

topic, larger visions may be described as Future Goals, meaning later steps necessary to fulfill the dream, so that by the conclusion of this process, students should not only have a better understanding of their dream, but an outline for achieving it as well.

Lastly, teachers and students should not be content with merely "completing this exercise." All should strive to complete the actions formulated and work toward their dreams as a way to change the world, for true "praxis," or Freire's true definition of education, consists not only of reflection, of looking at codes or discussing solutions, but of reflection and action aimed at transforming the world (Pedagogy 66). Therefore, only when students truly work to change their world does education actually take place.

After completing this activity, the teacher should introduce The Great Gatsby, by describing it simply as "a book about a man with a dream" and by reading the first three to four pages of Chapter VI that describe how "the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man" (Fitzgerald 102). Following this, one might discuss what is real in that passage and what is not: what does Fitzgerald mean by "a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing" (Fitzgerald 100). These ideas should spark interest in the character, and once students begin asking questions, one should direct their interest to the novel, mentioning that some critics describe this book as a criticism of America and believe its theme to be "the withering of the American Dream" (Bewley 223). Since Freire might even describe it as a code for the American Dream, one

might suggest students read it to see if they agree.

While they read, teachers should ask students to label Gatsby's level of consciousness or attitude toward reality according to Freire's descriptions, to read the book looking for parallels between Gatsby's dream and theirs, and to note similarities between Fitzgerald's ideas and Freire's philosophy regarding reality. For example, which components of his dream are the result of nature and which did he create himself? Each student should underline or jot down references to what is real and not real, so that after they've read the story, they will have a basis for analysis. Furthermore, they should try to determine Gatsby's fatal flaw, considering what caused his downfall and if there is a passage or several that might serve as codes for Gatsby's "problem."

Taking this approach when reading this novel utilizes the main concepts of problem-posing education, but the teacher must tie them to the dream idea so that students feel that the ideas of this book will be helpful to them. Teachers must also maintain the dialogic method, by encouraging any and all questioning of Fitzgerald's portrayals and perceptions and by not leading students to believe this approach is the only way to explore this novel. In addition, while teachers should lead discussion in a liberating direction, they should not predetermine or limit the topics addressed. Students must also realize that this is a search, a method, that intends to prompt questioning as well as yield insight. They will find no "right answers" when exploring literature but should seek to compare the author's perceptions to their own, to synthesize the ideas of Fitzgerald and Freire so to create their own, and to draw their own

conclusions based on critical thinking.

Introducing The Great Gatsby by discussing dreams or specifically "The American Dream" is nothing new, as teachers often try to tie the American Dream as defined by their students to the one sought by Gatsby.

Unfortunately, "The American Dream" is too vague a concept for students to define and seems unrelated to them as they struggle with the demands of adolescence. Furthermore, the abstract American Dream does not deal with the "here and now" or the concrete situation people face (Pedagogy 85). On the other hand, by having students outline their own dreams and steps necessary to fulfill them, the lesson has begun with "the man-world relationship" (Pedagogy 72), and as a result, students have a better understanding of the process of achieving dreams and the frustration they may meet in doing so. This should promote a more empathetic attitude toward Gatsby and keep students' minds open to a critical interpretation of his character.

Furthermore, reading a passage from the book about the already discussed topic of dreams stimulates interest and encourages students to "seek to know more," as opposed to playing "seek and find" in search of right answers to teachers' literal questions. This coincides with Freire's idea that class is a meeting place where knowledge is sought -- not transmitted (Critical Consciousness 150), and this idea must be constantly demonstrated by the teacher's willingness to present material for consideration but reconsider the material in light of student contributions (Colins 84). Reading a passage also provides an alternative to the tedious, assumed-necessary-but-really-boring introduction of a

novel by a summary of the author's life. That transmission of information serves only to make students less interested in the novel by pointing out differences between this author's life and the students' in terms of time period, age, and perhaps lifestyle, and reinforces the idea that literature is not applicable to student lives or the present.

What is new about approaching this book through Freirean philosophy is that it focuses on Gatsby's inaccurate perception of reality, a concept difficult for students to grasp. By having them jot down references to reality, students are likely to discover Fitzgerald's portrayal of gestures, advertisements, and euphemisms as distortions of reality. Passages like the narrator's first description of Gatsby:

If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the "creative temperament" -- it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again (2),

the aforementioned description of his transformation (98-102), Daisy's impression of Gatsby's party:

Almost the last thing I remember was standing beside Daisy and watching the moving-picture director and his Star. They were still under the white-plum tree and their faces were touching

except for a pale, thin ray of moonlight between. It occurred to me that he had been very slowly bending toward her all evening to attain this proximity, and even while I watched I saw him stoop one ultimate degree and kiss at her cheek.

"I like her, " said Daisy, "I think she's lovely."

But the rest offended her -- and inarguably; because it wasn't a gesture but an emotion. She was appalled by West Egg . . . by its raw vigor that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand (108),

the use of advertisements to describe Gatsby (119) and portray God (160), Gatsby's insistence that Daisy never loved anyone but him (131) and that one can repeat the past (111), all point to Gatsby's inability to accept reality. As individual passages they often go unnoticed, but by compiling such passages and viewing them in light of Freire's philosophy, students might be better equipped to draw conclusions regarding a "theme" or meaning for the novel. In this way, educational philosophy is not merely used as a framework for lesson plans, but as the lesson plan itself.

Another activity that might be helpful to assign at the outset is to divide the class into groups and ask them to record the actions and dialogue of Daisy, Tom, Nick, Jordan, George, and Myrtle that indicate their levels of consciousness and perceptions of reality. Then at the conclusion of the novel and prior to a discussion of Gatsby himself, groups could present their findings and conclusions for discussion. Since several minor

characters are flat, predictable character-types, students should be able to apply their understanding of Freire's labels more easily, and the process will better enable them to analyze Gatsby's complex character later.

After discussing the minor characters, students should individually or in groups try to define Gatsby's dream and then utilize the "SHOWeD" method of questioning to analyze it. By asking what they see his dream to be, what is happening in pursuit of it, if they have ever experienced anything similar, why there is a problem with Gatsby's dream, what parts are accurate and inaccurate perceptions of reality, and what could he do about it, students gain insight into Gatsby's fatal flaw which in turn can be discussed in light of Freirean philosophy. Was Gatsby a true Subject? Did he act to transform his world? Why were his actions unsuccessful? Furthermore, by distinguishing Gatsby's action from the type Freire recommends, students will likely lead to a discussion of "humanizing" and "liberating" action versus "dehumanizing" and "oppressive." One also might ask students to examine Nick's reaction to the summer's events, exploring why he felt that

. . .after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever. . . (2),

and why Gatsby was "worth the whole damn bunch put together?" (154). Teachers could also ask students to consider what the other characters

could have done to prevent Gatsby's downfall or at least his death, and to evaluate their actions in critical thinking and "humanizing" terms.

Furthermore, to reinforce critical thinking one might use the "SHOWeD" process to discuss what a critical thinker might have done given Gatsby's situation, but it may be difficult to generate energy for a hypothetical situation. If students have exhibited difficulty proposing actions, this exercise will provide another opportunity for doing so, but the teacher must be sure its purpose is to seek knowledge, not merely to learn a procedure.

Lastly, to make The Great Gatsby applicable to student lives and for it to be remembered as a source for growth, teachers should ask students to brainstorm ideas or problems Gatsby faced that might be similar to their own, as a way to lead students toward effective liberatory change. Such questions might include the following: What role do advertisements play in our lives? What role does money play? How does money influence career selection? Does money buy happiness? How could one avoid Gatsby's problems? Even though Gatsby began with a respectable goal and respectable values, what went wrong? What was the "foul dust that floated in the wake of his dream?" (Fitzgerald 2) Is there foul dust on your own dreams? Does social class influence relationships? Are relationships merely gestures? Is dating a gesture? Does a critical perception of the world better equip one to change it? What has Gatsby taught you about your own lives, your pursuit of goals, your desire to change your situation?

The answers to these questions might tell the degree to which a

teacher succeeded in developing critical thinking skills and illuminating the virtues of Fitzgerald's work, but the asking of them is far more crucial to the fulfillment of her purpose and to the impact of problem-posing education. For only if teachers continue to ask questions and allow students to devise their own answers and ask their own questions, will literature become a valuable tool for understanding the world in order to transform it.

Therefore, teachers of literature should explore the methods and philosophy of Paulo Freire when discussing any book. The parallels between content and teaching methodology may not be as obvious as those of The Great Gatsby, but problem-posing education is conducive to any environment in which students seek knowledge. In this case, Freire and Fitzgerald serve to support one another's perceptions of reality, and as a result, a fictitious character comes to life for students, Gatsby's flaw and Fitzgerald's attitude toward life are clarified, and the differences between naive, superstitious, and critical thinking are demonstrated. Thus, by combining Fitzgerald's masterpiece with Freire's philosophy, students better understand both of them.

And yet, a better understanding of reading material is not the goal of problem-posing education. Students must now apply the insights gained from the readings to their own lives. While their new critical perceptions classify as part of the "action" Freire requires of education, students should now actually "do something" to transform their world. Teachers can encourage these actions by requiring individuals or groups to study problems indicated by The Great Gatsby but found in their own lives.

Students would then have to identify these problems and work toward change, sharing their attempts in class and charting progress by keeping track of what they have done. These follow-up activities are essential because without action, The Great Gatsby becomes just another book and Freire's philosophy just another theory. Only when both are applied to one's situation and one chooses to transform his world because of them do they become effective educational tools.

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