

Mroccka

Script Analysis – Reworking an Assignment to Make it Choice-friendly

Traditionally, Script Analysis has focused on preparing learners to analyze a full-length play, which is done through a very lengthy final project. Learners prep by reading chapters of *Script Analysis* by James Thomas. The methodology and information from a specific chapter is then applied to a play they have been assigned to read. Assignments related to this activity range from a short quiz at the beginning of class, to 400 to 600-word essays about a specific topic being covered, to an instructor-led discussion focused on meshing textbook with script. All of these assignments are used to facilitate questions and discussion.

In fall 2019, after receiving some suggestions from our seniors during their Exit Interviews, I decided to change the format of a class. I started to transform it from a class where students were taught various analytical techniques and tools and sent off to do their midterm analysis and final project (the complete analysis of a full-length play) to one where we workshopped each element that would comprise their final analysis. Overall, it proved to be more active, very collaborative, and anxiety-relieving.

The development of actual modules as well as the inclusion of choice-friendly assignments are some of the next steps I'm taking to reenvision the course.

I am transforming the assignment below:

WEEK 5

Sep 24 READING – Discussion

1. Chapter 9- Tempo, Rhythm, Mood
2. Chapter 10 The Style of the Play
3. *The Piano Lesson*

Note: at this point in time for this exercise I am not creating an entire module nor am I offering this in three different modes of delivery. Ultimately, however, I will.

1. Assignment:
 - a. Read *The Piano Lesson* and the short biography of August Wilson.
 - b. Read Chapter 10: The Style of the Play in *Script Analysis*.
 - c. List three aspects of this play that you think are not a part of what we may perceive as common, everyday occurrences. In other words, has the playwright chosen to include some actions, characters, props, etc. that make his vision of life or these people unique?

2. In-class –
 - a. Break students into groups where they can discuss their lists. Discussion focuses on the what, how, why of Wilson’s choices.
 - b. Collect the assignments and share them with the class without sharing the author’s name. (Students may claim their listed items if they’d like to)
 - c. Discuss their observations and start making connections to the chapter on Style from the textbook.

3. Choice-Friendly Assignment – Illustrating Wilson’s Style in *The Piano Lesson*

Some of the assignments below involve more creativity than others, while some are more research-based. Each assignment does ask you to write about your choices with some requesting short explanations (about 100 words) and others requesting short essays (300-500 words). Estimated time to complete assignment – About 2 hours.

- a. Interpret Wilson’s style through a graphic representation that you create. Write a short explanation as to why and how it represents the style of his play. (About 100 words)
 - b. Find a piece of music that represents the style of the play. Include a recording of the music with a 300-500-word discussion of why you chose it and how it illustrates the style.
 - c. Find a work of art that represents the style of the play. Include a picture of it with a 300-500-word discussion of why you chose it and how it illustrates the style.
 - d. Research any stylistic element connecting it to our history or culture. Create a 300-500-word essay explaining this connection and how it enriches our understanding of the play.
 - e. Create a poem that describes and/or captures the style of the play. Write a short explanation as to why and how it represents the style of his play. (About 100 words)
 - f. Create and tape a dance that illustrates the style of the play. Write a short explanation as to why and how it represents the style of his play. (About 100 words)
 - g. Create and record a musical composition that illustrates the style of the play. Write a short explanation as to why and how it represents the style of his play. (About 100 words)
 - h. Wildcard! Do you have an interesting idea about how to illustrate the style of *The Piano Lesson*? Great, run it by me and we’ll see if it can happen.
4. Post your assignments on our blog and respond to at least two others.