



## *Humanitas* Teacher Training with Nate Antiel

### Lecture 6: Potential Pitfalls

#### Outline:

Engaging primary sources effectively requires students to focus on the text itself, avoiding distractions like external influences, personal connections, or premature critiques. Encouraging humility, logical examination, and syntopical connections fosters deeper understanding and meaningful discussions.

#### Challenges in Focusing on the Text

- **Avoiding External Influences**
  - Students often rely on preconceived notions or external knowledge like "isms" to avoid engaging directly with the text.
  - Teachers should discourage shortcuts that bypass wrestling with the text's language and ideas.
- **Avoiding Author-Centric Discussions**
  - Students may shift focus to the author's life or cultural context rather than the text itself.
  - Such context is valuable only if supported by and relevant to the text.

#### Maintaining a Text-Centered Discussion

- **Encouraging Text-Based Conversations**
  - Prevent students from talking about unrelated personal experiences or tangents.
  - Ensure discussions are grounded in the text, allowing all participants to engage equally.
- **Facilitating Syntopical Reading**
  - Introduce connections across texts (e.g., Eliot referencing Shakespeare) only when these deepen the understanding of the text at hand.



- Emphasize analyzing how references are transformed and serve the current text's purpose.

## Pitfalls in Reading Primary Texts

- **Skeptical Reading**
  - Modern biases can lead students to dismiss texts they disagree with.
  - Reading old texts reveals assumptions unique to modern perspectives.
- **Encouraging Intellectual Charity**
  - Students should attempt to understand texts on their terms, inhabiting their worldview.
  - Teach students to fairly evaluate texts' internal logic and coherence before critiquing.

## Best Practices for Engaging Primary Sources

- **Adopting a Humble Posture**
  - Approach texts with humility, ready to learn from the author's argument and perspective.
- **Promoting Logical Examination**
  - Focus on whether the text satisfies its premises, follows logical progression, and concludes convincingly.
- **Delaying Critique**
  - Critique should come after engaging deeply with the text and understanding its internal framework.

