



Humanitas Teacher Training with Nate Antiel

Lecture 8: Anecdotes About Students and Primary Sources

Outline:

Primary texts hold the transformative power to shape the intellectual and moral development of students. By stepping back, teachers allow the texts to speak directly to the students, fostering insights that can surprise and teach even the instructor. The process reinforces the importance of trusting the material and the student's capacity for deep engagement and growth.

The Power of Primary Texts in Teaching

- **The Value of Primary Texts**
 - Great texts introduce and explain themselves better than a teacher can.
 - The teacher's role is to set up the context and step aside for student exploration.
- **Teaching Aristotle's *Poetics***
 - **Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy**
 - Six elements of tragedy: plot (most important) to spectacle (least important).
 - Plot is central to achieving the tragic effect.
 - **Student Insight: Deus Ex Machina**
 - A student argued that using *Deus Ex Machina* reflects a weak playwright.
 - Highlighted Aristotle's preference for plot over spectacle.
 - The insight transformed the teacher's understanding, showing how students can teach through their interpretations.
- **Experiences in Teaching American Humane Letters**
 - **Teaching Without Full Expertise**
 - Transition from Irish to American literature brought initial challenges.



- The power of primary texts helped bridge gaps in teacher knowledge.
- **Student-Led Learning**
 - End-of-year oral exams required students to narrate American history using 15-25 key events.
 - A freshman highlighted the Alien and Sedition Acts as pivotal moments undermining founding principles.
 - The student's detailed analysis provided a fresh perspective, demonstrating independent learning.
- **The Transformative Power of Primary Texts**
 - Texts impact students in unseen ways, fostering intellectual and moral growth.
 - Teachers may not immediately notice these effects but should trust in the enduring value of the texts.

