



Teaching the Great Books with Josh Gibbs

Lesson 12: The Unusual, Unpredictable Day

Outline:

- There are two types of lectures: practical, which focus on progressing through material, and inspirational, which motivate and encourage deeper engagement.
- Both types of lectures are necessary for teachers and students, with practical lectures being more common, but inspirational lectures adding essential depth.
- An "unpredictable" day in the classroom, breaking the routine, can make the usual days more engaging and meaningful.
- Here are two examples of "unpredictable" days which teachers can use or adapt in their classrooms:
 - The first example involves testing Blaise Pascal's idea that all human problems stem from an inability to sit quietly in a room alone.
 - Students participate in an experiment where they sit quietly for an hour to reflect on their thoughts, leading to a productive discussion afterward.
 - The second example involves interpreting instrumental music by matching it with descriptions, emphasizing the importance of intuition and stillness in understanding great literature.
- Another way to make a classroom experience memorable and unexpected is by giving students the test option:
 - An "Easy A" test where they will learn nothing.
 - A "Not Easy A" test which will be difficult but teaches them something.
 - In both cases, students will be asked to justify their choice.
- Strive for projects that break from routine and do not necessarily result in grades as they can enrich students' intellectual and spiritual lives.
- Avoid traditional, predictable tests that focus on rote memorization. Instead, create assessments that encourage deep thinking and intellectual growth.



- Balance predictable and unpredictable classroom experiences. Use "fifth day" projects to make the routine days of reading and discussion more meaningful.