

Writing to Baroque Music

Teaching artist Lisa Annelouise Rentz's introduction:

Talking about creativity & imagination with the students is very important: description, details, imagination, intuition— that's what baroque composers needed, and that's what the students themselves should use.

Brainstorming can be brief and informal. Diving into the writing process with no hesitation usually leads to more ideas. Those hand-shaped graphic organizers and the templates memorized by many students ("Today I have been asked to write an essay about...") are counterproductive to good writing.

When a student takes information that isn't overtly connected to his own life (such as tackling Domenico Scarlatti in 2011 South Carolina while in 6th grade) to inform and inspire an original story, the student is building writing muscles, critical thinking and confidence.

Teacher reflection:

Cindy McCain at Whale Branch Middle School noted that we did not change the assignment— "now is quiet writing time"-- when the students got rowdy. The discipline was appreciated.

Writing to Baroque Music

Re-imagining composer's lives helps students absorb the beauty of their music and the realities of life. In their original stories students write *about* and *to* the music, after studying the baroque era composers.

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Learning Objectives:

"Go beyond the study sheet" was Cindy McCain's stated goal at Whale Branch Middle School where this lesson was formulated— get rambunctious 5th & 6th graders to write responsively to Baroque music, take the time to listen, think, create and critique, using what they've learned in music class in their creative writing.

Preparation:

- **preface with:** Information from text and/or classroom activities about the Baroque era and composers.
- **student prior knowledge:** basic writing skills
- **physical space:** desks and chairs
- **materials & supplies needed:** music text book, paper and pencils, selection of Baroque music and a device to play it.
- **staging:** cue the music.

Key Skills:

- **art-making:** ekphrastic- being inspired by other art; critiquing artwork
- **academic:** connecting music class to life and skills.

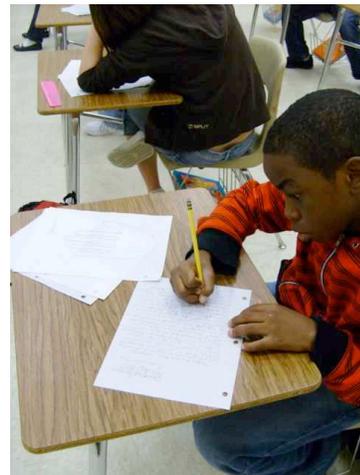
Vocabulary: creative writing, concertos, Baroque, critique, the colorful names of baroque composers.

Handouts & Informative Resources:

1. rubric handout or display-

Write a story

- a. be creative & imaginative
 - b. include baroque era music
 - c. complete the story with a strong conclusion
2. peer critique handout/worksheet- see attached



Instruction:

Engage & Build Knowledge

Step 1- Introduce the creative writing assignment to write stories about baroque music and composers to the students in a classroom discussion of what they've learned about baroque music and what creative writing is.

Play baroque era music that the students have studied all days.

Introduce the elements of stories: characters, setting, description, plot (action.)

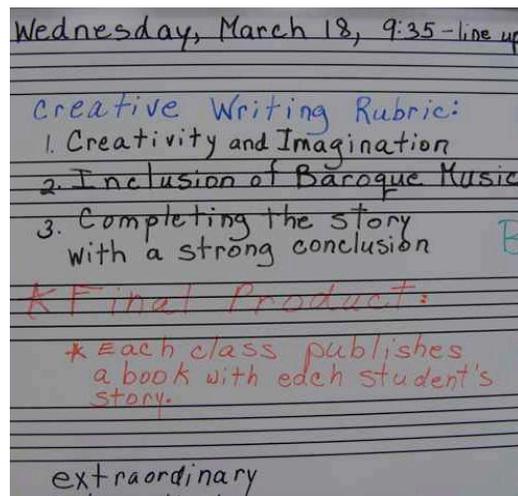
The assigned length is each story must have a beginning, middle and an end.

Apply

Step 2- Ask students to brainstorm on paper and outloud about their ideas for a creative story— Make It Up!

Step 3- Ask students to choose the setting, character, and era for their story. Discuss these terms, ask students to write on their own, and then share.

Discuss why a story about baroque era music can have a contemporary or futurist setting (because we still listen, because people still perform.)



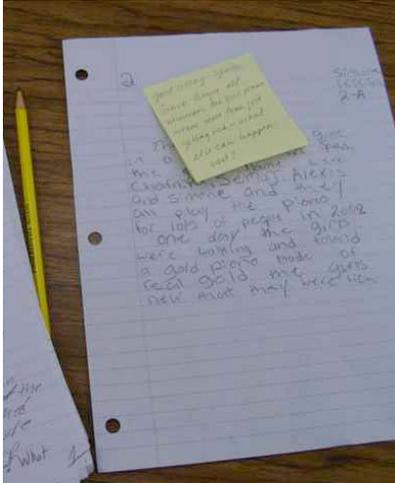
Encourage students to write about something that they enjoy, within the parameters of the prompt.

Step 4. Baroque music is still playing! Devote 2-3 entire class sessions to writing time.

The rubric should still be visible, posted or on the handouts.

note: students, as a group and individually, need to be reminded that they should be creative, that they can write about what interests them, that yes, you can write about Money Mayweather boxing with Bach.

Step 5. As students are writing quietly, work with students individually to edit & encourage, verbally and by notes. Some students will re-write, or even start a new story. Post-it notes are great for leaving commentary on a filled page.



Reflect

Step 6. Alert the students to where they are in the creative writing process & rubric, so the students step back to see what they already accomplished (creating characters, drafting, adding details, using facts.)

Step 7. Stories are not done until the teacher says they are— “strong conclusions” are in the rubric for a reason. See the attached student story for an example—the post script added by the student is necessary and wonderful, and was prompted by the teacher because he had not quite fulfilled the

assignment—now the story is done.

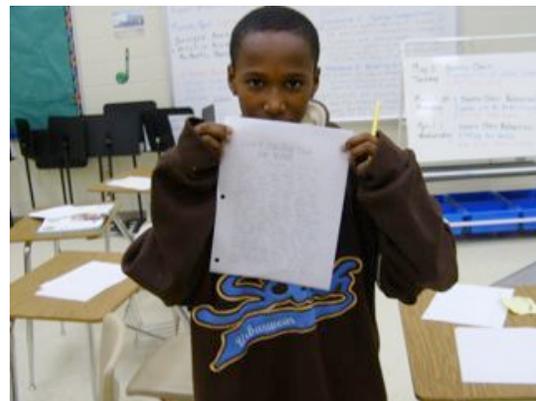
Step 7. The Student Critique Session is introduced- students pair off to read, respond & edit others' stories. (see attached worksheet)

Step 9. As students finish their stories at different times throughout the class, offer markers and colorful paper to create a decorative & personal final draft.

Step 8. Ask a few students to read their finished stories to out loud, to be enjoyed by all.

Assessment: these points can be used for student self-assessment, peer assessment, and for grading.

- After being invited and encouraged, did the student venture into creativity and imagination?
- included Baroque music
- completed the story with a strong conclusion
- performed helpful peer critiques



2011 Curriculum standards: Music

ANALYZING. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

MAKING CONNECTIONS. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Explain the role of music in life experiences, celebrations, community functions, and special events.

Art Standards: creative writing

Understanding the creative writing process- pre-writing strategies (brainstorming); group critique session; taking the time to focus, think, write; filling out the story with details and description; the importance of a strong conclusion.



Community connection: Music is the universal language.

critique

students providing positive feedback and helpful suggestions to each other, about their creative writing about Baroque music.

name of reader:

date & class:

name of story & writer:

1. What is good about the story as it is now? What do you the reader like about it?

2. What should the writer work on now? In sentence form, list three specific details. (Hint: point out spots in the story where more description is needed.)

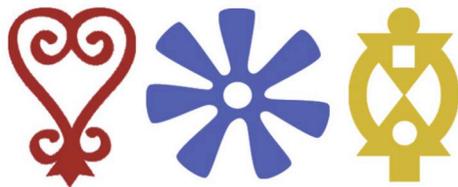
3. How can the conclusion be improved? Explain at least one specific, important detail.

PS.

After we had all the excitement went down, they came over. Then we was playing basketball while my Grandpa was humming some Baroque and one of the other boys loved it and asked for a CD of it. And we just looked at him like he was stupid.

~ end of Writing to Baroque Music

The Lowcountry Arts Integration Project
A US Department of Education Arts Education
Model & Dissemination Grant
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