

Review Theater: A Problem of Redirection?

The Situation: You are running a peer review session in which you ask that students read their paper aloud, answer a set of preassigned questions (in writing) and then address the writer's concerns about his or her piece (in writing).

What follows is a series of exchanges between a teacher and the members of a peer response group. The exchange starts with students talking to each other first.

Mary: So what are we like supposed to do?

Robert: Read our papers aloud I guess.

Maxine: Do we have to? I hate the sound of my voice.

Robert: Me too.

Mary: Maybe we can just exchange papers or something—and read them silently?

--Stop Reading--

Questions

- What would you do as a teacher here? Would you intervene and enforce reading aloud?
- What is your reaction to the students' reluctance to read their work aloud? Why might they not want to read their work aloud?
- **Key Question:** What is the value in intervening in students' peer response work? What is problematic about this sort of intervention?

Robert: Right, so I guess we can read silently.

Maxine: Speaking of reading, did you hear what Max wrote on Jose's door?

Mary: No, what?

Maxine: I don't know if I can say it. It's kind of gross.

Robert: Oh c'mon. Don't like tease us. Was it funny?

Maxine: Kind of funny, but more gross.

Robert: Dude, I gotta know!

--Stop Reading--

Questions

- Would you intervene at this moment? Why or why not?
- If you did intervene, what might you say?
- Play the believing game for a moment, what might be some reasons to let the group continue its conversation for a bit?
- **Key Question:** At what point, for you, does a discussion, like the one above, become **off task behavior** and why does it?

Teacher: How are things going over here?

Mary: Great.

Robert: Yeah, great.

Maxine: We were just getting to know each other—sort of.

Teacher: Okay. Have you folks started reading your papers aloud?

Maxine: We were wondering if we could read our papers silently. Can we do that?

Teacher: I kinda wanted you to read your papers aloud, so you could hear your developing voice and catch some errors.

Robert: But we all hate our voices—or at least I do. I know Mary's got a killer voice. She can like sing Mariah Carey songs and stuff.

Teacher: What about if you read each other's papers aloud would that work?

Mary: Maybe that would be better.

Maxine: Yeah, maybe.

Robert: I still don't want to hear my voice.

--Stop Reading--

Questions

- What do you think of how the teacher approached and talked with this group? Would you have done similar things or reacted differently?
- What do you think is behind the students' desires to not read aloud?
- **Key Question:** What is, in your mind, the best way to “redirect” a group that has strayed from the work at hand in a class—be it peer review or other group work?