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?

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!

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?