

The adage "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink" captures the pedagogical dilemma of some humanities lesson plans. Melissa Leigh Gibson and Catherine Burwell suggest that delivering informative lessons alone is not effective because it treats students as passive receptacles. They argue that to ensure students actually internalize the lessons for critical thinking and world interaction, educators must shift the cognitive load from teacher-delivery to student-inquiry (Burwell, 2023; Gibson, 2018).

Gibson (2018) explicitly identifies the "leading to water" methodology as the "banking approach," where information is transferred rather than constructed. She notes that even when the content is pushed at the student, the student will show signs of resistance. The solution is not the information itself but how it is digested. The goal shouldn't be the mastery of the facts and details but developing an inquisitive mind (Gibson, 2018, p. 2).

Burwell (2023) supports a shift from students playing passive roles to creative ones, leading to an authentic thirst for knowledge. In her study on photography, students found that taking pictures of their community was superior to looking up the image online (Burwell, 2023, p. 2). I feel like the ability to grab information online to satisfy the inquiry of the moment is relatively unsatisfying. You might ask yourself, "What's my heritage?" and instead of doing the research yourself, connecting to your roots, your history, your family... You might decide to just have a report to you that you're 5% Scandinavian. And the response? "Who cares?"

On my third field experience, I was faced with the abrupt challenge of trying to get a student interested in grade 7 humanities. Was I successful? No. I came into the classroom the first day, and all he wanted to talk about was dirt bikes. I left the classroom 6 weeks later... dirt bikes. Though I had all kinds of slide shows, videos of historical battles, gamified lessons where he could work with friends... dirt bikes. However, if I could relate that to the lesson, like "how does geography change dirt bike culture?" Maybe if I had asked him what changes in cultural identity from Canadian dirt bike clubs in Manitoba vs Southern California, I might've gotten to him.

References

Burwell, C. (2023). See it for Yourself: Photography in Student-Led inquiry. *English Journal*, 113(2), 58-65.

Gibson, M. L. (2018). Scaffolding critical questions: Learning to read the world in a middle school civics class in Mexico. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(1), 25-34.