

READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Designing the Classroom to Support Understanding Video Transcript

Kristin Ferrales:

So Taj and Ashley both bring up this question of Haiti owing money to France. If everyone can look at the, "Why is Haiti So Poor?" article.

On typical seminar days in our class, the desks will always be set up so that we can all see each other, we can all hear each other easily.

Student:

Kinesa and Ashley both made the point that the Marines was giving Haiti aid packages and stuff to help them with the economy.

Ferrales:

I think one thing that's really important to me when we have our full class discussions is that they feel like they can really take ownership over the discussion. So I always sit. I don't really stand.

There's a section called "The French Debt of 1838."

I put a lot of thought into the way I put my classroom together. I have a few things that stay up all year. So, our "Accountable Talk" signs stay up all year. Some quotes from different philosophers and thinkers and activists stay up all year that kind of follow the thread of all of our units. And then I have a wall that is dependent on each unit, so every six weeks or so, that wall comes down and goes back up. When our topics are really research based, I tend to make the decor much more about the process that students are engaging in.

So, I want to think about question two. Who does Corbett think Haiti is to blame for Haiti's poverty?

Student:

He's trying to make the argument through this article that the real fault of Haiti's government failure or the economy failure is the Marines.

Ferrales:

For the current unit, which is a more historically based unit, I felt like it was really important for students to have a lot of visual cues up around the room, to really get them to understand what it felt like, what it looked like, what it sounded like to be in that time period. There are a set of historical content understandings that students should be able to meet by the end of the unit.

Student:

I think that another Haitian revolution could be successful, maybe, if they get allies from, like, Spain and the British like they did before. And then they could overthrow the government that they have and create a new, strong government.

Ferrales:

And then I also have just some cause and effect words. And some reminders of sentence starters. Those were really nice to be able to point to without having to create additional handouts for students, or have them write them down in their notebooks when they can just be there and be visible as reminders and supports for students.

Student:

I disagreed with Jamila when she said that Haiti was poor, because when France had control of Haiti, it seemed as if they were actually getting a lot of money because of products such as sugar cane, and they were making a lot of money off of that. So I don't think Haiti was poor.

Ferrales:

Another support that exists is the word wall. There's a lot of new vocabulary we use in our class, both around citations and formatting, and annotated bibliographies, but also around the historical content that we cover. I think it's helpful for students to just see those words over and over again. They have a vocab glossary that stays in their binders with them and they have the definitions there, but the words stay up for the whole duration of the unit. We do a lot of practicing with the vocabulary.

Student:

To add on to Dawn's idea about the indemnities being paid off as, like, a waste of time, I agree. I feel like it didn't benefit them, not even a little bit, and they could have focused on themselves and repaired their land that was damaged during the revolution.

Ferrales:

And I think that familiarizes students with some of the words that can be barriers in reading texts and talking about texts.