

ORAL TEXT RENDERING

TEXT RENDERING: [according to Walker Ong in Orality and Literacy, language—even written language is sound]

Text rendering is a way of making sense out of a text while it doesn't make sense; to read it aloud to hear it; to hear voices in it; to ask ourselves whether we can hear the sound/voice of the author? When text rendering read for sound rather than for meaning, and work towards meaning using what is learned from the sound. Text rendering can be a form of active listening to the text: working towards meaning by asking questions [John Dewey], listening, asking again.

Some cues that help:

- hold a discussion about the text without saying anything about it using only the language of the text
- read the text in as many different voices as you can—try out different voices, parody the text with a voice, etc
- have a dialogue with the text using the text itself
- let the text enter you; let the sound of the text enter you
- get inside the text, and let the text get inside of you
- put analysis aside and climb inside the language itself

PURPOSE: For students to gain the first level of access to a difficult text by hearing the sense of the language and pooling the knowledge and resources of the group.

ULTERIOR MOTIVE: To enable students to enjoy the detective work of a "community of inquiry" in puzzling out a text which might produce anxiety and resistance if tackled in solitude.

PROCEDURE: In small groups, students successfully read a brief text by rendering each paragraph aloud, attempting to make the sense of it clear through the rhythms of the reading, repeating passages until the group agrees the "sound right." At the end of each paragraph, the group raises questions about puzzling or obscure words or ideas, using resources in the classroom (reference books, the teacher, etc.) to clarify points beyond the range of the group's collective knowledge. The point is to acknowledge ignorance and confusion, while pooling the knowledge and reasoning abilities of the group.

NOTE: This procedure can be a preliminary one to the Dialectical Response Notebooks.

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