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Memes as Means: Using Popular Culture to Enhance the Study of Literature

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ESSAYS

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Abstract: *Artistic response is the process by which readers create concrete representations of their transactions with a text through artistic means, including visual arts (e.g. drawing, sculpture, and painting), drama, and music. Research has shown that artistic response helps students form meaningful relationships with texts, as it is a tool that encourages students to enter, explore, make connections, and enjoy stories and characters. In this article we describe an artistic response strategy that we developed and implemented. Recognizing that today's students often know and interact with the world through social media and memes, we draw on this cultural tool to leverage the power of this platform and its familiarity and appeal to our students.*

As current and former secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, we have found that students often make meaning of texts by connecting them to other texts from the popular culture they know and value. For instance, our students frequently referred to current memes in order to draw parallels with what we were studying. This often was followed by half of the class laughing or gasping while the other half glanced around in confusion. The benefit of students making these types of connections to popular culture, in this case memes, was that students who made the connections had to explain the contexts and purposes of the memes, as well as how the memes' creators conveyed the messages. This explanation required the students to reveal their thought processes and how they made their interpretations, including how they connected the memes to the texts. In doing so, the students provided models of thinking that included levels of response ranging from visualizing the story world to making explicit connections between texts. These varying modes of response were the same ones that we want all our students to be able to use in order to become more confident and successful lifelong readers.

Transacting with Texts

According to literacy researcher and theorist Louise Rosenblatt, "the benefits of literature can emerge only from creative activity on the part of the reader himself." Through this "creative activity," the reader "transacts" with the text in order to create greater meaning. In other words, in order for this transaction to occur, the reader must actively engage with the text rather than consume it passively. Rosenblatt goes on to explain, "the text brings into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him" (30). Thus, the reader must actively engage with the reading process, bringing to bear their feelings, experiences,

and what they "see" in order to interact meaningfully with the text and to grow from the experience both as a person and as a reader.

Other researchers have built on Rosenblatt's framework by expanding on the ways readers interact with texts and the sorts of creative activity they might use to facilitate this process. In *You Gotta BE the Book,* Jeffrey Wilhelm argues that there are ten vital and interdependent levels of response that readers use to experience, respond to, and make meaning of texts. These dimensions fall into three categories: evocative, connective, and reflective. The evocative dimension, as the name implies, involves the reader's ability to bring the story world into being—to enter and explore it, to relate to the characters, and to enjoy the story (87). Through this process, readers lay the foundation for the two higher dimensions of response in which they build upon the evocative dimension to further their literary understandings. In the connective dimension, students elaborate on the narrative and make connections to their lives. While responding in the reflective dimension, readers consider the significance of the text, look at literary conventions, examine their role as makers of meaning as they interact with both the author and the text, and evaluate the author and themselves as readers. Wilhelm emphasizes that responding at all levels is important to the development of response and literary understanding. Thus, readers must learn to engage at all levels of response to reach higher levels of thinking and literacy. We propose that artistic response strategies can facilitate meaning-making at the evocative dimension of response and lead to deeper responses in the cognitive and reflective dimensions as well.

Artistic Response

Artistic response is the process by which readers create concrete representations of their transactions with a text through artistic means, including visual arts (e.g. drawing, sculpture, and painting), drama, and music (Hartman et al. 121). Educators and scholars have found artistic response can be an effective way to teach literacy (Chicola and Smith; Grant; Holdren; Macro and Zoss; Miller and Hopper; Sidelnick and Svoboda; Sousanis; Wilhelm, *You Gotta Be*). These strategies provide opportunities for students to engage with texts and use aesthetic and narrative thinking to organize and express their learning. In doing so, students acquire new understandings and ways of thinking. For instance, drawing can help students visualize to stimulate thinking. Nick Sousanis explains, "We draw not to transcribe ideas in our heads... but to generate them in search of greater understanding" (79). According to Wilhelm, visualization is a key element of reading instruction because it "heighten[s] motivation, engagement, and enjoyment of reading… and increase[s] a reader's ability to share, critique, and revise what has been learned with others" (*Reading is Seeing* 15).

Artistic response requires an environment in which an individual student's background is acknowledged and built upon, including their knowledge, experiences, and how they know and value the world. Artistic response only works if both the students and the classroom teacher value it as a medium for constructing meaning. We must consider the background knowledge, interests, and experiences of everyone in our classrooms. Therefore, the tools that we select must be developed in our particular classroom settings so that their uses are authentic and so that students engage with and buy into their learning.

Popular Culture and Memes

For this study, we chose to draw upon popular culture, specifically memes, as an instructional tool because of the power of this medium and because of their cultural familiarity and appeal to our students. While memes have been around longer than the digital age, we recognize them now for the way they are commonly used in various online social media cultures. According to Limor Shifman, author of the book *Memes in Digital Culture*, memes are "content units that generate user-created derivatives in the form of remakes, parodies, or imitations" (73). In other words, a meme is a text that inspires the creation of other texts that follow, build upon, or parody the form of the original. Memes abound on the Internet and can last in popularity anywhere from a week to years (e.g. the distracted boyfriend meme or the grumpy cat meme), and teachers who follow the trends can use the hype and popularity of memes to their advantage in the classroom.

While scholarship abounds concerning the use of images and drawing to teach literacy, only a handful of literacy educators and researchers have advocated for the use of memes in the classroom. These reports generally describe pedagogical approaches and classroom activities rather than present research findings. For example, Lauren Harvey and Emily Palese provide a framework for teaching "critical memetic literacy," while Elena Dominguez Romero and Jelena Bobkina describe using memes to teach visual literacy to English language learners. In contrast, our approach focuses on creating juxtaposed images within the memetic structure as a tool that students can apply to better analyze and think deeply about other texts. When students make visual comparisons, and especially when they produce side-by-side images, they can become more critical in their thinking about complex concepts and texts. In order to create these juxtaposed images, students must consider the differences between their ideas to be able to represent those differences in a deliberative manner. According to Patricia Dunn, "Two juxtaposed sketches shift the focus from a simple definition of a concept to a more discerning representation of that concept in relation to another, forcing more nuanced thinking" (7). Our project uses the perspective meme, explained below, to encourage students to make these visual comparisons and to promote more complex thinking.

Perspective Meme Project

Inspired by one such meme, popularly known as "What People Think I Do/What I Really Do" from the pop culture database *Know Your Meme*, we created the Perspective Meme activity as a way for students to explore character development through artistic response. *Know Your Meme* defines the original "What People Think I Do/What I Really Do" meme as "a series of visual charts depicting a range of preconceptions associated with a particular field of occupation or expertise." This meme usually takes the form of two lines with three images in each line, for a total of six images or perspectives (see fig. 1). Each image then depicts the subject of the meme through different perspectives, such as the perspective of the subject's friends or parents. These images are accompanied by a label, stating "What [insert person] thinks I do." The final image of the meme is almost always a representation of the "reality" of the situation, accompanied by the text, "What I really do." For example, the first panel in the figure below depicts how a

teacher's friend views their work; they're wearing a comfortable outfit with comfortable shoes while reading a picture book to a small group of highly engaged and seemingly culturally similar students. The next panel depicts the mother's perspective, likening their ability and knowledge to Einstein. The panels go on to depict the differing views, including those of the general society, students, and the teacher. The final panel depicts what the teacher sees as the reality of their situation. The teacher exists in a bleak world, represented by the black and white color-scheme. They are overworked and overstressed, holding their face in their hands, daunted by a stack of ungraded papers.

Figure 1.

Borrowing from both the concept and general form of this meme, our "perspective meme" activity helps students connect with a text, build on their literary knowledge, and use aesthetic and narrative thinking to organize and express their learning. We implemented this strategy with ninth-grade ELA students at a small urban school. These students were studying character development and irony while reading "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin. "The Story of an Hour" follows Louise Mallard as she deals with the news, inaccurate as it turns out, that her husband has died. Louise is immediately overcome with grief and locks herself in her room. However, she gradually realizes that the death of her husband presents her with a previously unhoped for freedom, and she finds joy in this possibility. Louise leaves her room, descends the stairs, and sees her husband, alive, at the door. Her newfound joy and freedom turn to shock and perhaps despair, resulting in her death.

We chose to use the Perspective Meme because it is uniquely suited to help students address complex comprehension challenges that they may encounter when reading this story. These challenges relate to character development, underlying themes, and use of irony. Mrs. Mallard's character development is key for understanding the implications of the story, and students often miss the subtleties of the text's message when they do not fully understand Mrs. Mallard's reaction or explore her situation. The character development of Mrs. Mallard is also critical for understanding the irony of the story, which hinges on the other characters misunderstanding Mrs. Mallard and her reaction to her husband's death. Students who do not fully appreciate both Mrs. Mallard's inter-

nal struggle and the perspectives of other characters towards Mrs. Mallard will be sure to miss this irony, which also means they miss the main theme of the story relating to the historical struggles of women in the time period. Our goal, then, was to use the Perspective Meme activity to focus students' attention on these key elements of the story and their significance.

We required students' representations of their characters in their panels to be symbolic in nature rather than literal because we wanted them to think more deeply about their interpretations and in more varied ways. According to educational researchers, Ruth Crick and Kath Grushka:

> a sign or symbol can evoke complex and often culturally mediated understandings which can be both presentational and discursive. . . . Thus the association between the sign [symbol], the signified and the signifier generates endless ways of representing events, objects or concepts, or ways of creating meaning potential. (450)

Therefore, when students practice symbolic thinking, they learn to apply their personal experiences and cultural knowledge to better express their complex and growing understanding of a text. In this case, we wanted students to express their understanding of the significance of Mrs. Mallard's actions, the use of irony in the story, and the thematic elements that make the story historically significant.

During our study, we chose to have students draw their interpretations because we had limited access to photo-editing software. We concluded that the medium used to create the memes was not critical to this activity. While we understand that for many researchers, the dissemination of memes and their rhetorical power in digital contexts such as the Internet are important elements of their research on the genre (Harvey and Palese), in this case the important components of the activity are each meme's intent, structure, and form rather than the medium by which the students compose. For our purposes, we are focusing more on the power of the meme's format to support modes of thinking and to create meaning within a specific community, which in this case is the community of learners in our classroom.

We began by creating a handout with blank panels that mimicked the form of the "What People Think I Do/ What I Really Do" meme (see figure 2). Next, we asked students to use the Perspective Meme template to consider Louise, the main character, from multiple perspectives. These perspectives included what they imagined Louise's own view to be, the other story characters' view, the author's, and the student's perspective as the reader. For this report, we focused on two students, whom we will call Claire and Sara, because they were outspoken about their thought processes throughout the activity and, while each student's project was unique, Claire's and Sarah's drawings seemed to best represent the thinking of the class as whole. We also selected them because they were willing to participate and because we believed they would provide the most insight into our project (see Stake).

Perspective Meme Template

Character Name _____

Figure 2.

Claire and Sara began the activity by first individually creating symbolic representations of Louise from her own perspective. They produced similar responses to each other for this particular panel in that they both used symbols commonly associated with femininity: a flower and a heart. In addition, they both saw Louise in connection to a man, specifically her husband. Claire illustrated a wilting flower attached to a broken chain. During the class discussion, Claire explained, "In the story, it says that [Louise] is beautiful, but she is sickly, so I drew a wilting flower. And then when her husband died, it said she felt free, so the chain is breaking" (see fig. 3).
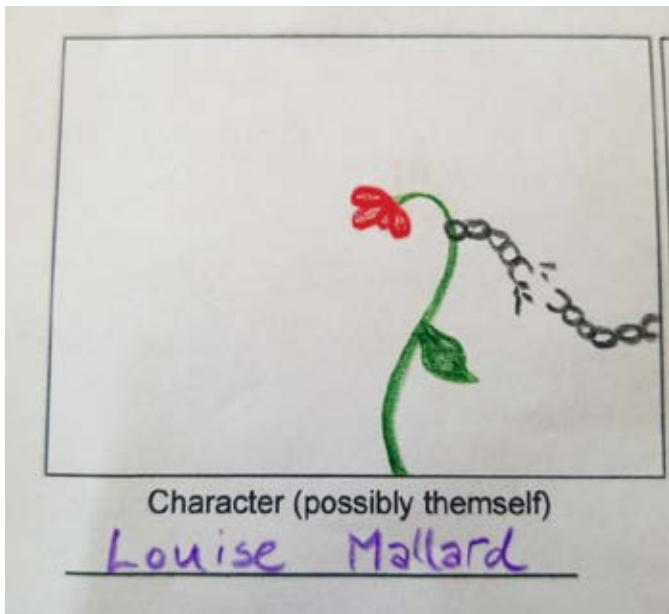

Figure 3.

Likewise, Sara used a broken chain in her drawing, explaining, "[Louise] kind of felt like she was chained down, but then when her husband died, she felt kind of free as well. And she also had heart diseases, which made me think to draw the heart" (see fig. 4). As revealed by the students' drawings and comments, they both recognized the fragility of Louise and the power dynamics at play in her marriage. However, they did not yet challenge or complicate these ideas in their comments or drawing.

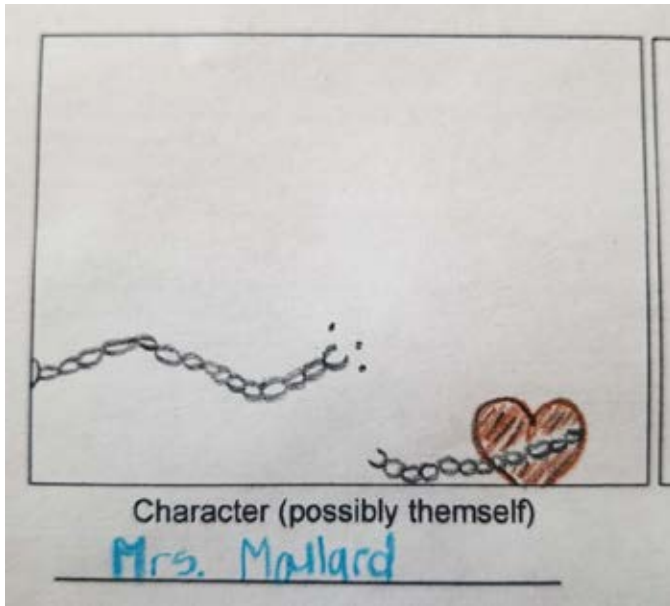
Character (possibly themself)

Mrs. Mallard

Figure 4.

Continuing with the perspective meme format, the students chose other characters by which to further analyze varying perceptions of Louise in two additional panels. For instance, Claire chose to show Louise symbolically from the viewpoint of her husband's friend, Richard (see fig. 5). During the class discussion, she explained her meme panel and provided her reasoning, saying, "I drew a person overlooking a map, like a strategy map, with people on it...because [Richard] was trying to figure out a way to tell Louise [that her husband died] without hurting her too much, and so he needs to be very strategic." She explained that Richard was dealing with a lot of pieces on the strategy map and that those pieces represented people. Claire said that the numerous pieces "added more of a challenge to his position." She also said that she felt that her connection to a less central and more obscure character, like Richard, was strengthened by using figurative imagery to depict his situation and that it helped solidify him as a meaningful part of the story. From Claire's comments, it became clear that, by performing the artistic response activity, her sense of empathy was being exercised and grew throughout this process. She was transacting more deeply with the text and engaging with characters whom she had previously not considered as pertinent. By focusing on characters that

she previously might have overlooked, she was able to gain a richer understanding of the complexity of the situation and Louise's response to it.
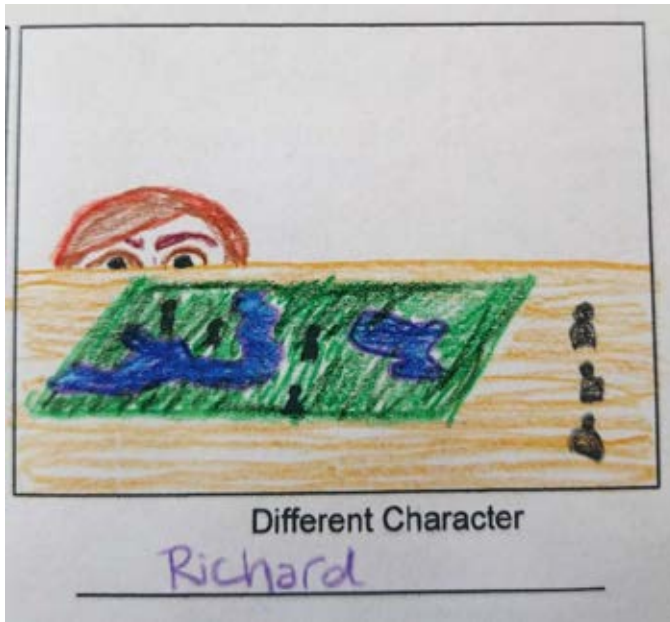

Figure 5.

After examining other characters' viewpoints about Louise, the students were asked to consider and illustrate their own perspective of this character by drawing a symbolic representation of their thoughts, feelings, and lasting impressions in a panel. In performing this step, they focused on not only *how* they viewed the character, but also *why* they viewed her this way. When Claire worked on the Reader panel, her sole focus was on the trauma within the story and its effects on the characters. She drew "the black hole of sadness" to symbolize her personal reaction to Louise's situation (see fig. 6). She explained, "When I read the story, it feels like there's mostly nothing happy in it because she dies and the husband 'dies,' and so you're being sucked into the black hole of sadness where there's pretty much no hope." She saw the situation of the characters, including Louise, as devoid of possibility.
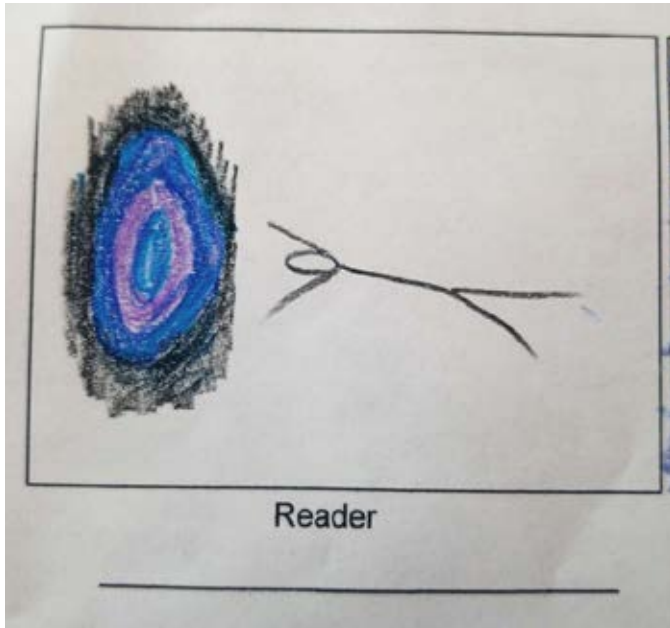
Figure 6.

In contrast to Claire's conclusion that Louise and her situation are only dark, Sara saw the character and situation as more complex and less fixed; thus, her representation of her reading was more dynamic. She explained, "I drew a face that was sad and happy, and it was split into two" (see fig. 7). She continued, "Well, it was sad, but [the situation] was kind of happy when her husband died because she wasn't tied down anymore. So, it is kind of half and half there." By creating this panel, Sara was able to recognize that there were more complex factors affecting Louise's situation, her actions, and the story's development. Therefore, the process required her to review the details of the story and her initial reaction to it. She also placed it in its historical context when she acknowledged that Louise would be free of her husband, which the character might not have been able to do unless he died. Using the meme format to guide her thinking, Sarah was able to communicate the growing depth of her understanding.
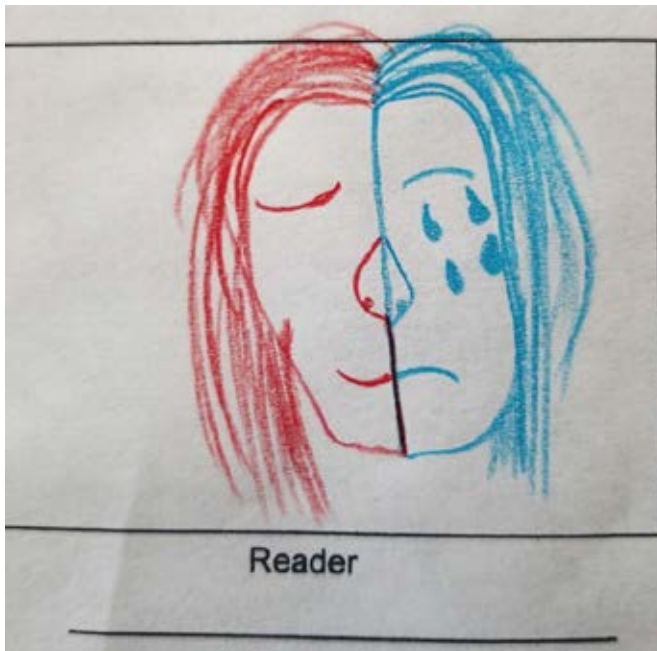
Figure 7.

For the fifth panel of the perspective meme, we required students to consider the author's purpose and perspective and to depict it. This step required a higher level of abstract thinking because it asks the students to think about and make inferences concerning authorial intent (Rabinowitz & Smith). As part of this process, students needed to consider the background knowledge that the author expected her envisioned readers to bring to the text. This knowledge included information about genre and about content, such as historical and cultural context. In this way, students were better able to consider their relationship to the author, what meaning she expected her readers to get from the text, and, ultimately, to either accept or resist this meaning.

In order to perform this activity, we provided students with information about the story's setting and historical context. Considering that the author was a woman who lived in an era when middle class women had limited autonomy, Sara was moved to depict the author's viewpoint dramatically. She symbolically represented the author panel by drawing Louise as a boat being violently tossed by a raging storm (see fig. 8). Sara said that the author depicts Louise as strong, even if it was not always obvious. However, she also argued the author sees Louise as a woman who has no control over life, consistent with the time period in which the story is set. For instance, women couldn't vote, and she didn't have the same job opportunities as her husband. "This makes her more vulnerable." She represented this vulnerability with the image of a boat, which is tossed by violent waves and is threatened by lightning that strikes nearby. The picture and explanations illustrated the student's growing understanding that, in the world depicted by

the author, women were at risk regardless if they stayed with their husbands or divorced them. If women were divorced, they would be financially and socially disadvantaged. If they stayed, they risked their psychological and emotional wellbeing. This vulnerability could lead to their demise, as it did with Mrs. Mallard, since she dies at the end of the story. Sara said about the story and about her drawing, "Louise was having a hard time, just with life, and that's how I imagined the author viewing it." Besides being provided with historical background, the meme activity pushed students to deliberately consider the subtle differences among the perspectives. Thus, she was better able to understand how the author was critiquing society and women's place within that society.
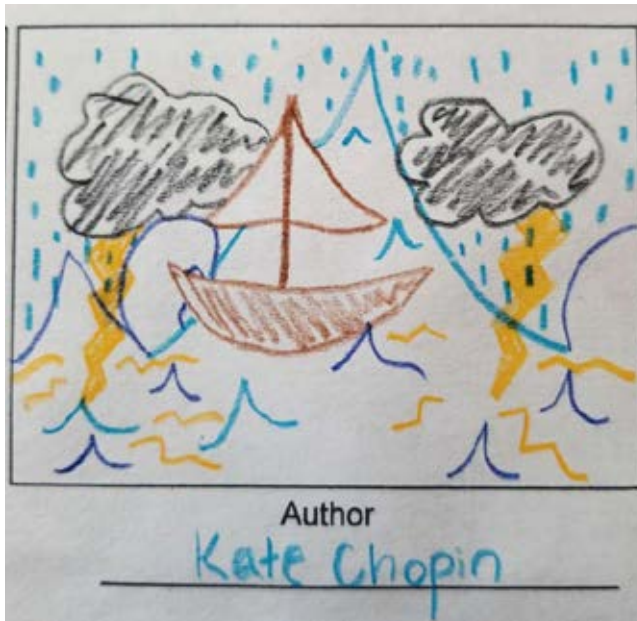

Figure 8.

In the final step of the strategy, we asked students to create a panel that might symbolically represent "reality." We encouraged them to consider all the differing perspective panels at once, including those of the characters, author, and reader. Therefore, students were forced to actively engage with their reading, transacting with the story's elements and their perceptions of authorial intent. This step provided students with the possibility to "see" a new perspective where they could confront different views and choose to accept, modify, or reject them. In addition, we asked students to think about how they portrayed perspectives differently, what details they drew from, and why that might be the case. In reviewing their panels, students considered their representations and how their own thinking changed throughout the activity. In other words, they had to consider their own roles as meaning-makers in the reading process.

Claire struggled a bit with this final panel, which is understandable, as this portion of the meme requires a level of metacognition and analysis about her own thinking processes that we are still building with students. She drew a face of a woman, surrounded by question marks (see fig. 9). When asked why she represented reality this way, she said, "I drew a girl with question marks… because Louise is very conflicted. She's questioning her feelings and her emotions." Claire was unable to elaborate further. Analyzing her drawing may, however, indicate some changes in Claire's thinking. Instead of drawing a dark image, like the previous image of the black hole, she drew something completely different. While Claire struggled to orally express her thinking, she seemed to recognize that there might be more to the story, the character, and the character's motivations than she previously believed.
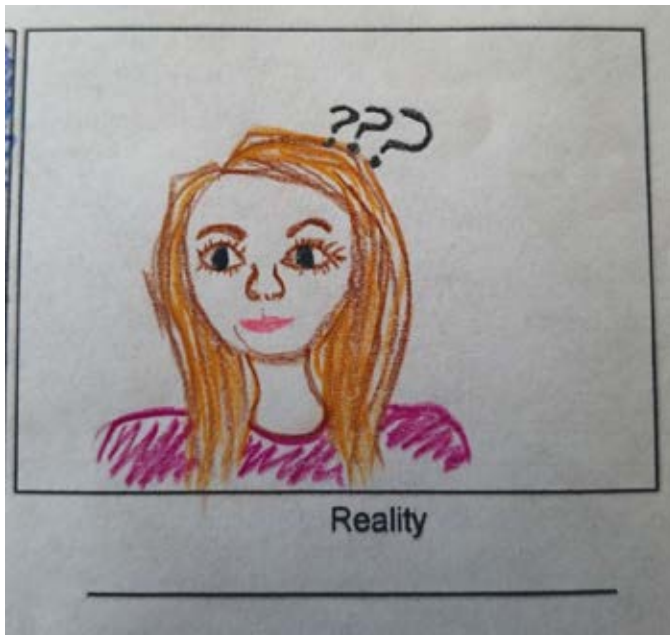

Figure 9.

Initially, Claire said that there was "no hope" in Louise's situation. After completing the last panel, her picture changed. It no longer focused on darkness or dark imagery. Instead, she acknowledged through her drawing her newfound uncertainty about the story's meaning and implications for the character. Claire's change in thinking may have been due to the class conversations and deeper exploration of the story's complexity, including its social and historical contexts.

While Claire seemed to demonstrate a shift in thinking with her depiction in the final panel, Sara's was more consistent with her previous interpretation of the author panel. Sara symbolically depicted reality by drawing a shade being pulled down over a sunny window (see fig. 10). The student explained, "The story is mostly sad, but there's

a tiny bit of good coming through the window. Like, there's a little bit of hope shining through, but it's mostly dark." Where it would have been easy for students to recognize Chopin's story as solely tragic, Sara seemed to see it as more complex. Sara's drawings were notably influenced by more than just the events of the story. She frequently framed her comments by saying things like, "Well, in that time. . ." or by noting how things have changed. In this way, she seemed to be recognizing the historical and cultural contexts of the story and the impact that it and other events had on women's situation in society. She said the changes "gave her hope." She expressed hope by adding the light in her drawing, which seeps into the room under the room-darkening blind. In doing so, Sara challenged the acceptance of any single, simple perspective or interpretation.
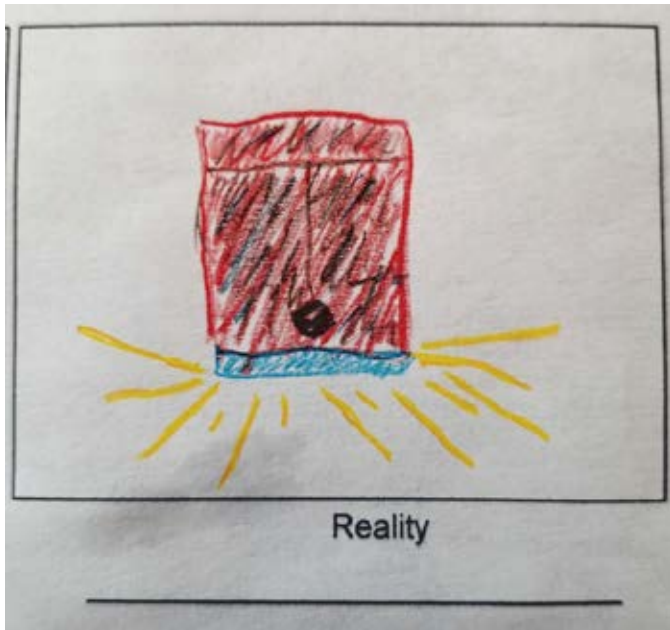

Figure 10.

After completing the activity, students used the meme they created as a whole to reflect on their own thinking, since they had concrete representations of their thoughts and how those thoughts changed as they looked at the story from different perspectives. Reflecting and discussing helped students understand how looking through different viewpoints adds complexity to their interpretations of a story. In addition, students began to better understand that it is the readers' job to attempt to construct their own informed meaning. While some students' panels contained similar images, they applied them differently and were able to demonstrate and construct a more complex understanding of the characters, the themes, and the text as a whole. Sharing their thought processes aided them in reflecting on and challenging their views. As such, this perspective meme strategy helped push students' thinking in multiple ways, not just as a visu-

alization of their thinking, but also as a discussion tool. We, as teachers, also benefited because we saw how students progressed in their thinking while implementing this artistic response strategy. We used this knowledge to assess our students' learning and inform our instruction and to push students to think more critically using the procedural knowledge they gained through this activity. In this way, this strategy is an effective teaching tool.

Further Discussion

The perspective meme strategy can benefit students by giving them an entry point into the text and enabling them to look more closely at how different perspectives might add to, contradict, or challenge each other. The strategy also pushes students to consider their own perspective and how they experience the text. By allowing students to express their individual perspectives in figurative ways that might otherwise be difficult for them to describe through more traditional assignments, such as compositions or worksheets, we not only validate students' opinions and experiences but also help students to exert control over the strategy and the meaning-making process. In addition, the strategy teaches students the value of activating and utilizing their prior knowledge to help them transact with and comprehend the text, and it can help them retain what they have read.

Of course, there are many different types of memes that can be adapted to the ELA classroom. We chose the "What People Think I Do/What I Really Do" meme as one example of how memes can be adapted and used, and we chose this meme specifically after considering our goals for our lesson and the text we were teaching, as stated above. Adaptations of the perspective meme or other artistic responses that borrow from internet culture can share many of these benefits. In general, memes can be useful tools in the classroom when used strategically. They can help students organize complex information about literature, writing, or other aspects of language arts in a relatively low-risk and familiar way.

Another benefit to memes is that they tend to be simple and easy to reproduce. In fact, in his studies, Shifman found that simplicity is almost always a key element of memes because it allows people with different skills and interests to reproduce them quickly and easily. This simplicity refers to the construction of the meme, not the thought process behind it. For our purposes, this element of simplicity helps students move beyond any anxiety or misgivings they may have about their creative or artistic aptitudes. A meme's simplicity in form can make it more accessible for students than a traditional essay or composition, which often require students to consider elements such as organization, mechanics, grammar, flow, and style. Adding these considerations on top of the thinking we would like them to accomplish in terms of textual interpretation and analysis can distract students from the specific skills we want them to build, in our case analyzing character development and irony. The simplicity of memes can provide students a more comfortable way to think critically and to build new understandings. Furthermore, because most students are familiar with memes, the perspective meme strategy can help activate background knowledge by allowing students to apply a familiar means of interacting with information to a text. This background knowledge may

include the procedural knowledge of how to read memes. However, we do not mean to imply that internet culture is synonymous with student culture. Of course, students who are not familiar with the specific aspects of internet culture that use memes may need extra support. As with all types of learning and instruction for all students, providing multiple examples of the memes being implemented and modeling the thinking behind them is an important step.

While some students are not as familiar with memes, others may have even more expertise in making memes than their teachers. This can lead to opportunities for students to show their knowledge and to take more ownership of their learning. Teachers might invite students who are familiar with memes to act as mentors or to explain how a particular meme works. Students can work together in groups to analyze the meme and how it could be applied to a particular text. Providing students with this opportunity can introduce another set of higher-order thinking skills and help students consider how to apply thinking from outside the classroom to texts inside the classroom. In this way, we can encourage students to think about the various texts they encounter in their day-to-day lives and to use these informal texts to build academic literacy, approach more complex texts in academic settings, and communicate their understanding to others.

Through the process of implementing our perspective meme strategy, we identified a few areas that warrant consideration regarding the use of memes in the classroom. These considerations can help teachers decide how to best use memes in their own classrooms, how to choose memes to fit their purposes, and how to build lessons with memes as a means of scaffolding understanding. First, adapting memes for classroom use removes them from their original context, which may decrease the interest of some students who could bristle at them being used in an inauthentic way. However, encouraging active student participation in discussing their use and deciding how they will be adapted for the lesson may help engage them with the activity. Second, it is important to follow the specific pattern and purpose of the meme so that it feels authentic. Beyond authenticity, the enjoyable factor in using memes in the classroom is that they often function as parody of the original meme. These considerations are important for teachers as they choose memes, as oftentimes understanding the context of the original meme is part of its power as a meaning-making tool. In these cases, presenting the original meme as part of the lesson and briefly describing its context is useful, as it can help students understand the structure of the meme and the point of parodying it as part of the thinking process. Third, memes are frequently funny, even if the humor is dark, and humor can increase student buy-in. Humor can be a low-risk way to encourage students to approach difficult concepts, and using humorous memes may open doors for hesitant students. Fourth, creators of memes often shed light on or make serious commentary on society and popular culture. According to Shifman, memes also make note of the integration of humor and social and political commentary. Therefore, we have the added benefit of an opportunity to bring in cross-curricular connections. For example, memes derived from current socio-political events can help students connect themes in literature to the real world.

In order to successfully implement artistic response activities, teachers need to provide an environment that fosters artistic thought. This environment includes teachers offering multiple opportunities for students to express themselves in authentic and cre-

ative ways that allow for self-expression, choice, and divergent thinking. These opportunities should be presented to students in a way that is supportive, promotes exploration, and is not high-stakes. For example, when exploring a text, teachers can provide students with a choice board, including activities such as tableaus, skits, collages, and music playlists, that meet the same objectives but give space for students to explore their ideas and further their thinking about the text in authentic ways. Teachers can use such activities for formative assessments, allowing the teacher to monitor students' progress and to adjust their instruction accordingly.

Finally, as educators, we are concerned with how this strategy meets the larger testing and curriculum goals. Our strategy allows students to apply their background knowledge and experiences to texts. In this way, they can better learn complex skills, such as seeing implied relationships, making inferences, identifying themes, recognizing a relationship between the author and reader, and supporting their arguments. Thus, artistic response strategies like our perspective meme strategy can assist students in developing the very same skills and thinking that they will be tested on *and* make literature an engaging and meaningful experience. Students can not only learn to better comprehend texts, but also to apply them to their own lives, and, as in the perspective meme strategy, they can learn skills such as empathy when they consider people and situations from multiple points of view. The perspective meme strategy is a powerful tool in the classroom, not only because it aids comprehension, but also because it encourages students to become active learners, critical thinkers, and insightful observers.

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