

Peer reviewing a seminar: Oliver Twist - resource overview

Collection: Small group teaching

Learning outcomes

To develop skills in articulating and learning from someone else's seminar - skills which could be applied in the process of peer review with a colleague, and feed into your own reflection.

Overview

The object of the forms of reflection offered within this resource is to apply the principle of estrangement. We can all become so accustomed to the seminar form - or so desperate just to survive our own seminars - that we fail to see what is happening. Watching other seminars (even on video) with some questions and prompts in mind can sharpen our perception of this complex process. For one thing, the fact that we are to some degree detached from the process - nothing we do or say will change things one way or another - enables us to notice things, or become aware of patterns (of language, of gesture, of exchange) that we probably wouldn't notice or might even misinterpret when feeling the success of the seminar resting on our shoulders.

As with all the resources in the Pool, we invite you to put your own subject-based expertise to work in the pedagogic mode. The teaching imagination can - like any creative force - be dulled by familiarity, or stimulated by return to its own sources. For those whose profession concerns language, writing, or literary and cultural texts those sources include our own attunement to dialogue, discourse, style, quotation, or genre. Read as texts, seminars exhibit heteroglossic features, intertext, polysemy. This observation is not purely descriptive: it is the basis of the exercises in this resource - an invitation to awareness and on that basis to pedagogic intervention.



1 | *This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.*

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Let us say here, as in the resources on lecturing, that the colleagues whose seminars have been selectively recorded generously agreed to allow the Subject Centre to video them. We are not offering these videos either as examples of what to aim for or what to avoid. We do think, though, that these materials may function in some ways as texts: as providing a wealth of detailed and locally-grounded material with which to engage in a critical but we hope constructive spirit. Knowing how vulnerable teachers can feel about others observing their teaching, we are truly grateful to our colleagues for allowing us to create these materials.

This video on Dickens' *Oliver Twist* was recorded during the second week of a compulsory level 2 module on 'Constructing the self: Victorian to modern literature'. This is a 15 week module at the University of Surrey, where the seminar follows the weekly lecture. The seminar leader is Dr Greg Tate.



We are very grateful to our colleagues for allowing us into their classrooms and lecture halls to observe their teaching. As you work with these examples of teaching please keep your commentary focused on pedagogy and refrain from criticisms that would be unhelpful or unkind in a face-to-face peer review or similar situation.



Activities within this resource

- Peer reviewing a seminar: individual activity
 - Adjusting the level
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Resources in the Small group teaching collection

- Small group teaching: introduction to the collection
- Seminar design: resource overview
 - Seminar design: individual activity
 - Seminar design: group activity
- **Peer reviewing a seminar: Oliver Twist : resource overview (*you are here)**
 - Peer review: individual activity
 - Adjusting the level
- Peer reviewing a seminar: The Bonesetter's Daughter : resource overview
 - A complex dialogue
 - Negotiated authority
- Thinking about seminars: resource overview
 - Relevance and red herrings
 - Weighing up the elements
- Nightmare scenarios: resource overview
 - Facing up to nightmares: group activity
 - Comparing notes
- Transformative writing: resource overview
 - Transformations: individual activity
 - Transformations: group activity

