**Establishing Connections: Practicing Every-Day, Guided Synthesis**

It’s important that students make connections between what they read and what they know and/or can find themselves. Allowing students to practice making connections in their own ways is an extremely important and effective way that students can build and express their “cultural capital.” The assignment steps below allow students not only establish argumentative relationships, but also force them to identify and correlate evidence to support their claims. They do not, however, require explanations, making this the perfect quick, multimodal AP assignment. (I also do this with my underclassmen.)

Consider what you have been reading in class for the week and choose one or two texts to have students use when completing the following:

1. Tell students that they must find an outside source that in some way meaningfully relates to the ideas presented in the reading(s) you want them to focus on. When you have them find other sources, you may want to pigeonhole their options as to make sure that students are consistently interacting with varied media. For example, one week I may have students find a song or poem that relates to a work, and the following week I may require them to search out an article or political cartoon. Some weeks, I may also have them do a multi-source, multi-modal exercise where they have to establish connections between the class readings I want them to focus on and more than one other source. One more note: I give students the sovereign choice when identifying other sources; if students want to utilize *SpongeBob*, I’ll let them. You will be amazed at the insightful connections students can make even with the most non-insightful sources.

e.g.

*Find a song or poem that in some way* **insightfully** *relates to the ideas presented in the excerpt from The Horizontal World. Record the title and the author.*

*Find a visual (Picture, Chart, Graph) and a news article that in some way* **insightfully** *relates to the ideas*

*presented in the intro of Fast Food Nation. Record the title(s) and the author(s).*

*Find a movie and/or TV clip that in some way* ***insightfully*** *relates to the ideas presented in “A Modest*

*Proposal”. Record the title and the author.*

1. Have students then produce one sentence that insightfully and argumentatively relates the content of the pieces of discussion. Typically, they can produce this statement by using the following template (or a slight variation):

*(Title of Choice) relates to (Title of Focused In-Class Reading) in that they (explain relationships of ideas).*

e.g.

*“Poem/Song Title” relates to the excerpt from the The Horizontal World in that they (explain the relationship of ideas).*

*“Visual Title” and “Article Title” relate to the intro of Fast Food Nation in that they (explain the relationship of ideas).*

1. Have students, by using bullet points, cite DIRECT TEXTUAL EVIDENCE from the class-focused reading and the text of their choice that proves the relationship they claim exists between the works. I require that students have at least two, but no more than four, textual connections. When I have students do visuals/movies, instead of providing direct quotes from the movies, they may substitute scene descriptions. I also tell the students, the relationship between the text provided must be so evident that I don’t have to say to myself, “I wish s/he was here to explain this to me.” I should intrinsically know. If I don’t, they will not receive full credit. Here is a look at the full set up:
2. “Poem/Song Title” by Author’s Name (Copy the text or provide an access link)
3. “Poem/Song Title” relates to the excerpt from the *The Horizontal World* in that they (explain the relationship of ideas).
4. The relationship as revealed in number 2 is evidenced by:
   1. (Poem/Song Text that conveys relationship)/(Related Text from *The Horizontal World)*
   2. (Poem/Song Text that conveys relationship)/(Related Text from *The Horizontal World)*
   3. (Poem/Song Text that conveys relationship)/(Related Text from *The Horizontal World)*
   4. (Poem/Song Text that conveys relationship)/(Related Text from *The Horizontal World)*
5. “Visual Title” (Copy the text or provide an access link)/ “Article Title” by Author’s Name (Copy the text or provide an access link)
6. “Visual Title” and “Article Title” relate to the intro of *Fast Food Nation* in that they (explain the relationship of ideas).
7. The relationship as revealed in number 2 is evidenced by:
   1. (Visual elements that convey relationship)/(Related Text from “Article*”)/ (*Related text from *FFN)*
   2. (Visual elements that convey relationship)/(Related Text from “Article*”)/ (*Related text from *FFN)*
   3. (Visual elements that convey relationship)/(Related Text from “Article*”)/ (*Related text from *FFN)*
   4. (Visual elements that convey relationship)/(Related Text from “Article*”)/ (*Related text from *FFN)*