



Meet Me in the Middle: Creative Writing Classrooms as Spaces of Diversity

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ABSTRACT

My paper covers the use of liminal spaces as means of overlapping discourse communities, to approach student work without the bias of Standard Language Ideology, and to helpfully critique student work without devaluing different semiotic spaces. The problem is that many teachers are not willing to familiarize themselves with other discourse communities, thereby unintentionally (or intentionally) upholding the current, outdated standard English, which can also be referred to as Standard White English. While many have written about the need for overlapping discourse communities in composition courses—like Bizzell, Freire, Burke, Haswell and Mura—very few have applied this idea to creative writing classes, and even fewer have explained how to practically apply this at a workshop level—teacher to student, or student to student. I have approached this discussion by exploring the ways in which discourse communities can be bridged, brought together to mingle in a space where students and teacher can meet and where all languages and dialects are valued equally; starting with challenging teachers to read outside their comfort zones and to check their biases, and ending with practical applications in workshop and assessment. I did this by researching what has already been accomplished through composition studies and applying it to creative writing classrooms, as well as concepts of empathy, intersectionality, and queer theory. My hope is to encourage teachers and students to meet each other in the middle, to enter a liminal space without biases and work together to establish a new discourse community in the classroom, thereby creating a safe space for diverse writers to critique and have their work critiqued.