TEACHING, NOT TELLING:
THE WORKSHOP METHOD OF TEACHING LITERATURE
Led by Susan Solomon (Comparative Literature)
Wednesday, November 16, 2011

Workshop Objective
At the end of this workshop, participants will have learned ways to help students develop the analytic and interpretive skills they need to produce their own readings of texts.

Agenda
1. Introduction
2. An Experiment in Reading a Poem
3. Reflections and Observations
4. Collecting Data
5. Concluding Reflections

Reference & Suggested Reading


Reading Directions

1. Read the poem three times. Each time, make observations about your experience of reading. For instance: reflect on what you find interesting, what you have difficulty understanding, what you like, what troubles you, and especially what questions you have. After each reading,
   a. Rate your understanding of the poem on a scale from 0-10, with zero meaning no understanding and 10 meaning perfect understanding.
   b. Then write down some notes about what you observed during the process of reading

2. After the third time, write a few sentences in which you describe what happened during this process to you as a reader and to your understanding of the poem.
   a. Then write out any remaining questions you have regarding the poem.
   b. Rate your understanding a fourth time

3. Group Work: form groups of three and share your experiences of reading the poem with one another. Share and respond to one another’s remaining questions as well.
   a. Rate your understanding a final time

Poem

Sonrisas

I live in a doorway
between two rooms, I hear
quiet clicks, cups of black
coffee, click, click like facts
budgets, tenure, curriculum,
from careful women in crisp beige
suits, quick beige smiles
that seldom sneak into their eyes

I peek
in the other room señoritas
in faded dresses stir sweet
milk coffee, laughter whirls
with steam from fresh tamales
sh, sh, mucho ruido,
they scold one another,
press their lips, trap smiles
in their dark, Mexican eyes.

—Pat Mora