

Making a Case for Emotion in the Common Core Understanding of Close Reading

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Among the highest priorities of the Common Core State Standards is that students be able to read closely and gain knowledge from texts.

– Coleman & Pimentel, 2012
Revised Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards
in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3–12

Mr. Z, you don't now what your saying about diegos dad because he still gets his life in tact and you don't got nothing but a picture of your child with your wife and a stinking firework stand you never try to go further in life . . .

– Rodrigo, in response to Oscar Casares's (2003) short story, "Mr. Z"

RODRIGO, A HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE, opened the above reading response with a cutting reproach to a fictional character, Mr. Z.¹ These beginning sentences capture a confident speaker: he believed in these emotions and the effects they might have. When we view this response through the Common Core State Standards' (CCSS) definition of close reading, primarily developed in the "Revised Publishers' Criteria" (quoted above), it is difficult to see immediate value in Rodrigo's impassioned rebuke. Defining close reading as the "careful examination of the text itself" in efforts to "gain knowledge," the CCSS make little room for readers' emotional responses and those responses that fall outside their defined goals—i.e., increasing knowledge (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 1).

Scholars and teachers have critiqued the CCSS's approach to reading, including its reduced appreciation for the reader and its lack of attention to sociocultural understandings of literacy (see Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Casey, 2016; Beers & Probst, 2013; Newkirk, 2012).

The CCSS's governing objective of reading—"to draw evidence and knowledge from texts" (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 1)—runs counter to sociocultural models of response, which questions an objectively, agreed-upon meaning by recognizing that who we are matters to how we read (see Rosenblatt, 1978; Beach & Myers, 2001; Brooks, 2006; Hicks, 2004; Blau, 2003). Furthermore, in contrast to the messiness of reading's "allatonce-ness" (Berthoff, 1990, p. 88), the CCSS Publishers' Criteria explicitly advise publishers that readers need to "demonstrate a careful understanding of what they read before engaging their opinions, appraisals, or interpretations" (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 10). These sequenced instructions capture the result of overly-cognitizing reading practice (see Grumet, 1988): a cleaned-up and simplified process that stifles literary experience while obscuring the complicated mess of co-engagements. Ultimately, reading is made spare, clean, and disconnected from a self and from context(s). These efforts to simplify close reading ultimately narrow what it can do. Coleman and Pimentel (2012) defined close reading by limiting its relevance, stating, for example, that, "Such reading focuses on what lies within the four corners of the text" (p. 4); thus betraying what seems to be a foundational anxiety over the standards: the disregard for students' experiences, languages, cultural touchstones, and emotions. Therefore, although emotion is not mentioned in the CCSS, the issue is present, simply in Coleman and Pimentel's efforts to circumscribe it from the reading process.

Although my focus here builds from this critique of the CCSS's understanding of close reading, I would like to position this paper as working with the flip side of the CCSS—namely, emotion—in order to create pedagogical opportunity for English teachers invested in close reading. Citing Langer and Applebee's (2016) call to deepen an "overly simplistic interpretation" of the CCSS (p. 341), Cushman, Juzwik, McKenzie, and Smith (2016) argued that "rationales for classroom-based research and scholarship need to go deeper than the curriculum standards of the day" (p. 261). At a fundamental level, I support the CCSS's focus on close reading: its explicit attention to the term has reignited efforts to grapple with what close reading can do and can mean, has made close reading in middle- and high-school English a more explicit disciplinary practice, and has paved the way for productive conversations that might connect reading in high school with reading in college.

Yet, in the spirit of "going deeper" than the standards, my purpose here is to think through what the consideration of emotion could provide the teaching of close reading, by doing a close reading of my own. In this case, I contextualize, analyze, and discuss the implications of a piece written by a sophomore in an English class of an urban, public high school in the Southern United States. Rodrigo participated in a study that allowed me to explore, throughout a semester, the role of emotion in reading literature. This paper seeks to theorize emotion's power in models of close reading, by considering emotion to be a valuable category of self, textual, and cultural analysis embedded within social contexts (see Gross, 2006; Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1999; Micciche, 2007). Ahmed's theory of subjects and objects most heavily informs my treatment of emotion, but I use the word "rhetorical" throughout this paper because it continually redirects us to language, positioning emotion as post-symbolic, always a "reading" of our senses and a fundamental component of any kind of language study, including the reading of literature (Ahmed, 2004; see also Boldt, Lewis, & Leander, 2015).

Rosenblatt's transactional theory also informs my analysis, as Rosenblatt considered a reader's emotions to be one indicator of her "stance toward the process of symbolization" (1985, p. 102). In her efforts to push reading and living closer together, Rosenblatt also recognized the serious implications of literary experience. As "an event in time," any literary transaction

becomes one part of our embodied experiences in a complex world, capable of showing us what we value, what we dismiss, and what stirs us (1978, p. 126). Ultimately, in my close reading of Rodrigo's response, I make the case that, by engaging students more explicitly with the emotions they experience while reading, teachers give them the possibility to notice, value, and inquire about their transactions with texts.

Different curricular discussions have theorized emotion's role in the classroom, both before and after the publication of the "Publishers' Criteria" and its revision (see Boldt, Lewis, & Leander, 2015; Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2015; Boler, 1999; Lewis, 2000; Wilner, 2002); yet the instructional resources to which English Education publishers have directed teachers do little to substantively address the CCSS's dismissal of emotion from close reading (see Beers & Probst, 2013; Lehman & Roberts, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2014). Here, I hope to offer one response to this disconnect between scholarship and pedagogical materials on close reading. How might teachers, as shapers of curriculum, develop students as close readers by attending to emotion's rhetorical suggestiveness, both within literary texts and as expressed by readers? Ultimately, this paper argues that emotion, when considered through a rhetorical lens, is a fundamental component of close reading, helping readers notice, articulate, and explore relationships—within texts, between readers and texts, and among readers, texts, and societies (see Boler, 1999; Ahmed, 2004). To that end, this paper is a first step towards integrating scholarship on emotion with the CCSS.

Emotion as Between

As a notion that has been propagated by the spread of modern psychology, emotion is typically considered to be contained within the body, part of our chemical makeup, driven by physiology, and formed by evolution (see Gross, 2006; Ahmed, 2004). In this popularized view, emotions exist within us, a product of shared mind/body processes—we make them, and we contain them. The CCSS's mistake is similar to the mistake of overemphasizing psychobiological understandings of emotion: that emotion can only be individual, bound to get in the way of thinking and meaning-making. In the teaching of reading, there is value in our recognition of emotion as bodily; it pushes us to appreciate material conditions of reading and to value the simultaneous mix of both "sensing" and "sense-making" (Littau, 2006). Yet, in the dominance of the psychobiological, we dismiss the very real social dimensions of emotion, a Cartesian legacy that reduces our ability to conceptualize what emotion does in the world (see Gross, 2006; Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1999).

In recent decades, the affective turn and the social turn (see Clough & Halley, 2007) have countered the dominance of the psychobiological, with the argument that a psychosocial view of emotion highlights what emotions *do* in the world and, thus, why they matter (see Gross, 2006; Micciche, 2007; Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1999; Massumi, 2010). Ahmed (2004) conceded that we experience emotion by sensing, but it is that sense that immediately places us in relation to others, allowing us to recognize our objects, or the things and people that touch us in some way (p. 10).² Ahmed's formulation shifts the focus on experience to the boundaries that we perceive through those experiences, boundaries created by layers of references. Deposited over time, like layers of rock, these references point to "histories of colonialism, slavery, and violence," revealing "how histories stay alive," "exceed[ing] the time of an individual life" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 202). In this way, emotions "reflect our complex identities situated within social hierarchies;" they always "'embody' and 'act out' relations of power" (Boler, 1999, pp. 4–5). In other words,

we cannot feel an emotion without sensing our place in relation to something else—above, below, near, far—and that sensing has been shaped by our own expectation of what the relationship ought to be.

When we apply a relational view of emotion to the act of reading literature, a multitude of possible objects emerges. We might realize that we feel something about specific characters, about uses of language, about representations of a group of people. And, in turn, we can recognize the many meeting places within the text and the relationships that they reveal between speakers and their own objects of feeling. As readers, we relate to textual worlds, the making of those worlds, and what they reveal about our own realities. Ultimately, these views imply that, when we explore the meeting places suggested by an emotion, we have an opportunity to see not only our reading of those contacts, but also the broader implications of that reading. What do we cling to? What do we resist? What histories, of which we might not have been conscious, are referenced by these emotions?

The Student Writer in the School Context

Rodrigo, a sophomore student, participated in my study to explore emotion's role in reading. The school was part of a large, urban district in the South, with 62% of students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch; 75% of school's students were Hispanic, 12% White, and 8% African American. Rodrigo is bilingual and Hispanic; both his teacher and I are white. I include references to both race and class because they are critical to a psychosocial view of emotion, which recognizes how emotion references the past, the histories that have marked bodies and "shape lives and worlds in the present" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 202). As language "transfers affect" onto bodies, certain emotions become associated with entire groups of people—e.g. hate, disgust, fear, etc. (Ahmed, 2004, p. 97). It is impossible to discuss students' readings—or my role as a teacher—without acknowledging both differences in power and the ways we are read in the world.

During this study, I was a visiting teacher to one sophomore English class, designing and teaching lessons during four different mini units. At a district-wide training, I initially met the classroom teacher, Ms. R., a veteran teacher of over twenty years who had spent the majority of her career in urban high schools. At the time, I was also teaching sophomore English at a nearby high school where 99% of students received free or reduced-priced lunch. Although the demographics of our schools were different, the goals and concerns that Ms. R shared in an initial interview were similar to mine as a sophomore English teacher: responding to students' literacy levels while managing district and testing demands, finding ways to foster metacognition during reading and writing, and designing curriculum relevant to students' lives.

As a researcher participant, I became acquainted with Rodrigo within the context of his English class. Ms. R shared that Rodrigo's reading and writing were both below grade-level. During this study, I saw evidence of Rodrigo's struggle with Standard Written English, unknown words, and words with multiple meanings. However, during my visits, Rodrigo often shared creative answers to questions that I posed during whole class discussion, read texts actively, and volunteered first for small group discussions. He was an engaged student who paid close attention to language, made significant inferences, and used the social opportunities of the classroom to begin developing interpretations. Ms. R confided, however, that this level of participation was out of character for Rodrigo. He had failed English in the first semester, saying

and doing very little. The class confirmed this alternate perception of Rodrigo on two distinct occasions; in both instances, two different peers expressed surprise about Rodrigo's involvement in the lessons. Rodrigo offered no verbal reply to his peers' comments in either case.

I do not know why Rodrigo's behavior during this study was so opposite of his typical behavior in English class; although it is beyond the scope of this article to make claims about this shift in engagement, I describe it here because it helps form the context for this particular piece of writing. A few possible reasons for this change include: (a) the "Hawthorne Effect," when simply by virtue of participating in a study, participants alter their behavior ("The Hawthorne Effect," n.d.); (b) our first story's cultural relevance to Rodrigo, which featured a Mexican-American community and protagonist (see Gay, 2010; Brooks, 2006; Cai, 2002); (c) the way in which this story affirmed Rodrigo's stances on the world (see Ahmed, 2004; Thein, 2009); (d) the opportunity to reread and discuss in small groups with increased teacher support (simply because two teachers were in the room); or (e) Rodrigo perceived that his perspective became more valuable when we, the teachers, privileged reader emotion.

Methods of Close Reading

In his response, a letter to the character Mr. Z, Rodrigo does not analyze emotion in the text or in himself, but rather articulates how he feels towards Mr. Z. I chose Rodrigo's in-class writing for this particular analysis because it allows me to discuss his own emotions as a reader—what I characterize here as an "emotional reading"—but also what those emotions are doing. I make the distinction between an "emotional reading" and "close reading rhetorical emotion" (in a simplified form: reaction and analysis) with some hesitation: both can exist in a single response and can inform and inspire the other. The distinction is important to the instructional context, however, particularly given our need for more ways to theorize emotion for curricular use. Thus, I also value what an emotional reading, such as Rodrigo's, provides to readers. Emotional readings are a necessary component of close reading not only because of what they begin to make available (articulated feeling as literary experience, the "lived through current of ideas, sensations, images, tensions"), but also because of how they change a reading experience (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 103). It is in the articulation of feeling, after all, that affect becomes conscious, giving readers reasons to "reflec[t] on the evocation and reactions," to talk with others, to reread a text, to inquire about the world, to critique (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 103). In other words, it is the time when we sense (or feel) that we have something to say, something to make sense of. In fact, Gross's reading of Heidegger's Marburg lectures identifies emotion as the catalyst for communication: emotions are our "grounds for concern," our "time and place for judging," our "motivation to discourse" (Gross, 2005, p. 4). Without them, we have no reason to talk or write about our reading.

In her own methodology—close readings of public and publicly emotional documents, such as the Aryan Nation's Website—Ahmed (2004) highlights how emotion is made and trafficked through language. Anthropologists Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) define emotion as discursive practice, drawing on Foucault's use of discourse: "Created by rather than shaped in speech," emotion and views of emotion are embedded in language, which they argue is fundamentally social (p. 12). In thinking about reading, this discursive definition is enriched by Bakhtin's understanding of speech genres (1986). And though Bakhtin's theory of the utterance is not explicitly a psychosocial theory, both approaches contribute to an understanding of

emotion that recognizes context and linguistic embeddedness. As users of language, we implicitly understand that speech is tonal, always enacting relationships, and always in a context (even when a voice is trying to maintain neutrality). We recognize apologies, accusations, invitations, and threats as types of communication, appropriate in certain contexts and with certain participants, indicative of relationships and the emotions that typically define them (Bakhtin, 1986). As Bialostosky (2017) explains, “Utterances in everyday life enact and constitute our relations to others” (p. 22). In other words, when we read language, we are reading emotions—and we are coming into relation with multiple objects by virtue of our own emotions.

It is this commitment to emotion's linguistic home that leads me to the term “rhetorical.” For the purpose of the article, I was interested not in what instructional occasion might have inspired a student's writing, but rather what we learn about close reading when we read emotion as rhetorical. To direct my analysis, I began with three questions: (a) Who and what do Rodrigo's emotions put into relation? (b) How can we describe these relationships, particularly in terms of power and familiarity? (c) What stances on the world undergird the relationships that his emotions create? To answer these questions, I began by isolating the objects of feeling in his reading response. Who or what matters to Rodrigo here, and how does he characterize these objects? Specific nouns, pronouns, or names; descriptors and qualifications (adjectives, adverbs, and precise verbs); and repetition (repeating “don't,” for example) all function as signifiers of Rodrigo's relationships with his objects—his emotions.

Thus, guided by Ahmed's (2004) definition of emotion as “performative,” I approached Rodrigo's text by attending to what emotions *do* (p. 194). In their performativity, emotions “both generate their objects, and repeat past associations” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 194). I also frame my close reading herein as performative; it illustrates and argues that if we see emotion as rhetorical, then we have ways to value and unravel how emotions are captured in texts and sensed by readers. I treat both literature and students' responses as worthy of close reading—indeed, part of my argument is that both, despite the relevant difference in value they receive in the world. I treated Rodrigo's response in these ways: it tells us something about one student; it is a representative of emotion's potential role in our responses to literature; it is also fiction, a piece that calls on the writer's and the reader's imagination. Ultimately, I offer this close reading as a model not only of what scholars and teachers can do, but also, and perhaps most importantly, of what a rhetorical view of emotion could enable students to do.

Choosing the Literary Text

Culturally responsive pedagogy and sociocultural response theories provide a framework for my interest in emotion as a social element. Culturally responsive pedagogy identifies cultural identity as critical to students' academic development; in doing so, it affirms cultural knowledge of both self and others (see Gay, 2010; Herrera, 2016). A reader or teacher cannot recognize emotion as both performing and creating our relationships in the world, through language, without valuing students' lives, including their “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performative styles” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Therefore, I chose Casares's “Mr. Z,” the opening short story for *Brownsville: Stories* (2003), a collection that captures the complexity of life in the Texas border town. The story has one of the few child protagonists of the collection, eleven-year-old Diego, a boy thrilled to work his first job, selling fireworks for two weeks at Mr. Z's stand. When Mr. Z hires Diego, he confirms that he is still “willing to work hard,”

reinforcing the values of hard work and tough love that Diego recognizes in his home (Casares, 2003, p. 6). Although it is easy to trust Mr. Z's paternal approach (Diego and his father do, after all), we soon find him to be a verbally-abusive bully, who hires young boys and proceeds to undermine their family ties (insulting Diego's father behind his back, for example, or making sexual remarks about another boy's mother).

Knowing that many of the students worked, I hoped that they could capitalize on their experiences starting a job and navigating their interactions with an employer. Furthermore, given that over 50% of the students were of Mexican heritage, I also anticipated that the story's characters, setting, use of language, and reflection of one Mexican American family's values might resonate and affirm some students' use of language, their cultural knowledge, and their stances on the world. Finally, knowing that Diego's employer typically thwarts readers' expectations as much as he thwarts Diego's, I also assumed that the story would elicit a rich change in emotion for readers, while representing a complex emotional journey for the protagonist.

The Assignment and the Writing

After tracking their emotions while they read and discussing in small groups with a teacher, students engaged in a "perspective-taking" writing exercise (see Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007): composing a brief letter from Diego to either his father or Mr. Z. The in-class assignment follows:

There was nothing he wanted more than to be older and to be able to talk back to the old man. He didn't know what he would say, but he wanted to hurt him.

You are Diego, and you are finally writing a letter to either your father or Mr. Z. It is up to you.

Whomever you address, you decide what to say. Though we have suggestions if you're stuck, we'd like you to try to determine what, given some time, Diego could say to the authority figures in his life.

Though you don't need to pull in full quotations from the story, you'll want the story close by to help you with thinking about what has happened to Diego.

In your letter, be sure to include what you have learned about being a man. Remember, this might not match what Mr. Z or Diego's father want you to have learned.

This assignment is harder than it may first appear. If students understood the story, they recognized that it was impossible for Diego, given his understanding of his position, to speak to the two possible interlocutors in this assignment: Mr. Z and his father. The assignment asks students to imagine that the impossibility has changed for Diego, a reality that would require a shift in circumstances. What would need to have happened for Diego to communicate to these interlocutors? What is Diego's reading of his contact with them? And what kind of relationship

might he want to create in addressing them? At the same time, though our narrator is focalized through Diego, we rarely hear Diego speak beyond “Yes, Sir,” so his voice must be created.

Written during several minutes of response time in class, by no means is Rodrigo's piece composed and polished. He neither revised it and developed his ideas, nor recognized that he did not technically follow the assignment (which I discuss later). With distracting errors and a truncated ending, it is not (to borrow the CCSS's language by Coleman & Pimentel, 2012) an “exemplar” of what students can achieve, even in classroom quickwrites. However, Ms. R and I still found this text remarkable. First, it was produced, in a few frenzied minutes, with what appeared to be focus and feeling. Second, Ms. R shared that she had never “heard this much voice” in Rodrigo's writing. As his teacher, Ms. R saw this quickwrite as an exemplar text for him.

For the purpose of this analysis, I wanted a short, strongly-voiced text to use in thinking through close reading from a rhetorical perspective. Rodrigo's was ideal because it emerged from a classroom context and included reader emotion, thus directly lending itself to pedagogical considerations.

Mr. Z, you don't now what your saying about diegos dad because he still gets his life in tact and you doun't got nothing but a picture of your child with your wife and a stinking firework stand you never try to go further in life Deigo's Father had a family with a home your wife left you because you probably just Drank got Drunk and beat her and she didn't want nothing to do with you Some times you talk about people behind their back but that's not going to change the fact that people who go buy fire works from yo got better lifes than you and didn't mess up their lifes like you. I mean you doun't know or have any Idea about where you family is at. your treating one of your employers mother without respect and talking bad about Diego's father and saying the oposit about his father.

A First Read of Rodrigo's Response

I did not need to have watched Rodrigo write this piece to know that this reading experience was an “event” (to borrow Rosenblatt's term) that made him livid. Instead of imagining the shift in Diego's worldview that might have occasioned this letter, Rodrigo writes as himself, reaching into the text to yell at the fictional Mr. Z. Although it is very possible that he simply misread the assignment, it is also possible that Rodrigo chose to ignore the full assignment deliberately (it is worth noting that no other student made this mistake). Apostrophizing Mr. Z shows how close this character and his actions felt to Rodrigo, so much so that, upon her first reading, Ms. R wondered out loud who Mr. Z represented in Rodrigo's own life. Rodrigo launches an argument packed with evidence and attacks on “you.” Comparing and contrasting Mr. Z with others—including Diego's dad and his customers—he shows how other people care for their families, while Mr. Z's behavior led him to lose his own. As if forcing Mr. Z to look in the mirror, he goes on to remind him of the harmful and pathetic ways he has treated others. It is Rodrigo's words of evaluation, though, that show how genuinely upset he is: Mr Z's “stinking” fireworks stand, the way he “messed” up his life, the fact that others have “better” lives,” and the fact that Mr. Z has “nothing.”

Emotion as Stance

Emotion is characterized by “aboutness;” it always “involve(s) a stance on the world” (p. Ahmed, 2004, p. 7). Rodrigo’s rage, in this case, indicated his stance on several aspects of the world—on family, fatherhood, adulthood, and childhood, for example. Analyzing the word frequency of his piece reveals these objects. Beyond “you” and “your,” “life” appeared four times, “father” appears three times, same for “don’t” and “got.” The words that appeared twice were “people,” “family,” “wife,” and “nothing.” With a story so focused on masculinity, we see Rodrigo’s evaluation of fatherhood and perhaps manhood: Diego’s father has his life “in tact” because he has a family, a wife, and a “home.” Rodrigo even indicates that Diego’s father is an example of someone who has gone “further in life” because he has a family and provides a home for them. In this sense, Rodrigo’s writing seems to affirm the stances that the textual world offers us—men work hard, provide for their families, and push their sons to grow up—beliefs that Rodrigo may have held prior to reading the story.

As Rodrigo’s word choice suggests, this story is about ways of being a father, ways of being a child and of being acculturated to manhood, and what happens when adults reject the social mores that they appear to accept. It is also about the very real anger of children, pushing readers to consider the ways in which children feel, manage, and use anger to develop their perceptions of the world. I use the word “anger” because it is the most vividly describes the emotion of the protagonist and Rodrigo’s voice. Rodrigo does not spend much time articulating why he is angry, however. Instead, he focuses on putting Mr. Z in relation with others. Rodrigo recognizes that Mr. Z, having severed his own family ties, is jealous that his young employees have their families, so he attacks others’ familial ties from the bottom up, taking advantage of the cultural rules that he knows the kids will follow. The others are “better” than Mr. Z, Rodrigo stresses—they did not lose their families due to alcohol abuse, they do not harass children, and they are not alone: everyone “*got better lives than you and didn’t mess up their lives like you.*” Mr. Z might have power over these eleven-year-old kids temporarily, but he does not have what they have. Thus, Rodrigo uses this opportunity to invert Mr. Z’s established hierarchy. According to him, Mr. Z has “nothing,” just a “picture” and a “stinking firework stand.” To correct Mr. Z’s inflated sense of himself, then, Rodrigo emphasizes how much he does not know, does not get, and does not have, despite the control he wields as an adult and an employer.

“Negative” Emotion as an Opening

Rodrigo’s response to this text is part of his experience reading it in a certain place, with a certain people, at a certain time; it is worth considering how meeting this text within the confines of school might have shaped his emotions, which are always “a site of power and resistance” (Boler, 1999, p. 6). Response theorists have drawn attention to the context of reading experience—where, when, and with whom we are reading changes our experiences with texts (see Sumara, 1996; Beach and Myers, 2001). Sumara (1996) describes our desire to ignore context when we design reading experiences for school: “Although we act as though there are disparate parts to reading and curriculum that can be separated out, examined, and then put back in place, this is an illusion created in order to help us to believe that we can actually subtract ourselves from our own lives” (p. 5). It is useful to be reminded that there is always more to our

students' reading—more to their lives than what we see in a classroom, more to the literary experience that we imagine they might be going through.

Thus, what can we say about reading this story within the culture of school, a place where adult authority is in so many ways institutionalized? Given the limits of this research and my knowledge of Rodrigo, I can only speculate about Rodrigo's feelings within school, but his writing helps us think about anger as a potential opening to response. Worsham (1998) describes the value of our students' rage, particularly within the context of school, where "violence" done to the individual—forced compliance and erasure through capitalism and colonialism—is a "pedagogy of emotion" (p. 216). It is possible that Rodrigo very much understands Diego's predicament because he, too, feels rage in school or society and cannot or does not speak back to the authorities in his life. Rodrigo is essentially like Diego in the story, mute but angry and aware of injustices. I do not know what injustices Rodrigo feels in his life, but I can name three, broad injustices that affected him whether they caused him concern or not: (a) the great emphasis that this district placed on testing; (b) the contrast between his city's significant Latino population and the predominantly white leaders of the city; and (c) the ways in which Mexican-Americans and the Spanish language are portrayed in society and/or mainstream media. Although I offer these few possibilities, they obviously represent my own subjective reading, a reading infused by differences in power and situation. I mention them, however, because they expose questions for research: how teachers can allow, take seriously, and enable students to make meaning from the negative emotions that arise in the teaching of literature.

Writing directly to a character, as Rodrigo did, can lend itself to anger: it pauses a reading experience and allows a reader to pretend that he or she can face a fictional character and tell him what he needs to realize. This type of prompt can elicit advice, asides, confessions, lectures, or rants. The fictional listener cannot hear the student, and having read the full story, the student typically knows more than the character at a given moment. In this case, this quickwrite is a safe expression of rage for Rodrigo. It is easily acceptable to a teacher or other authority. It is not addressed towards school or society, and it follows the expected arc of the narrative. Yet addressing the character through anger also allows Rodrigo to intellectually invert typical power structures; if we identify Bakhtinian speech genres in this text, Rodrigo (a high school sophomore) lectures Mr. Z (a fictional adult and employer) as if Mr. Z is someone below him who deserves to be criticized. "You don't know," he states, "you don't have," and "that's not going to change the fact." Mr. Z is in trouble, and in this writing Rodrigo can imagine himself in a position powerful enough to tell him so.

Ahmed (2004) would explain this increase in authority by pointing to how negative emotions "can also be enabling or creative, often in their very refusal of the promise of the social bond" (p. 201). In this case, Rodrigo's anger allows him to remake a relationship with a fictional character, but it also allows him to lecture a representation of authority. Rodrigo has the power to speak and theoretically be listened to. With vision clearer than Mr. Z's, he identifies both Mr. Z's lack of success and his unjust treatment of others, especially vulnerable others. As Ahmed (2004) articulates, "Anger against injustice can move subjects into a different relation to the world, including a different relation to the object of one's critique" (p. 201). Although this quickwrite is far removed from writing or speaking against injustice in the world, Ahmed's understanding of anger helps us recognize the potential in articulating it, even in a low-stakes classroom context. And though I cannot make claims about how this quickwrite fits into Rodrigo's biography, we can see the opportunity he took to envision new relationships to authority as one way he has deepened his response to this text.

Ultimately, Rodrigo believed in the values of Diego's and his own emotions. In fact, if there is any part of this story that Rodrigo questions, according to this piece, it is the enforced silence of Diego. His direct voicing to Mr. Z suggests some frustration with the story as it stands, specifically Diego's muteness. Rodrigo's writing, though it does not critique the father or his beliefs, passively resists the idea that this story highlights—how children and adolescents, in various contexts, often cannot speak back to authority figures. Perhaps some of Rodrigo's rage indicates a stance on Diego's willingness to follow cultural rules, rules that Rodrigo might understand yet also want to break.

Emotion in Readers: What Rodrigo Could Do Next

Rodrigo's writing provides one possible inroad to response, but capitalizing on what emerges in his writing also requires valuing that messy, low-stakes writing makes literary experience available to readers. When this writing is positioned as part of literary experience, it serves as a bridge to readers' perceptions, a term Dewey considers to be critical to analysis. "Reconstruct[ing] mere reactions into complex, purposeful responses" (Faust, 2000, p. 23), perception allows readers themselves to respond to their experience, a distressingly ignored component of close reading. Indeed, Faust recognizes that one of the most significant struggles for teachers of literature is in determining how to recognize, talk about, and value literary experience in the classroom. In his own effort to counter the profession's reliance on "evidence-based reasoning" (one we see articulated again and again in the CCSS), he reminds us that "for Dewey and Rosenblatt, gathering evidence has nothing at all to do with separating or even balancing subjective and objective realities, and everything to do with realizing the aesthetic potential of one's experiences with literature" (Faust, 2000, p. 25).

In Rodrigo's case, this writing is a piece of his transaction; if the teacher valued and used it in the classroom, it could help him form a "more purposeful response," one that relies on evidence in the text and his world so that he "realize[s] the aesthetic potential" of this transaction, potential that clearly has critical possibilities (see Lewis, 2000). What are those possibilities? To begin, readers' emotions can lead to an interpretive focus; in requiring both judgment and selection, they push readers to identify a potential reason to return to the text and a center around which to further develop a response. For example, having identified his interest in the juxtaposition of what others have and what Mr. Z lacks, Rodrigo isolates important objects of feeling in this character: Mr. Z's way of being a father, way of being a man, and his use of power. One way to deepen his reading would be to consider what these emotions are both doing and revealing. He might generalize from these objects of feeling to the level of textual themes and societal issues—to fatherhood, manhood, and success, for example.

Through the emotional work of this response, Rodrigo now has reason to return to the text to explore the themes in this story as a whole. He also has reason to return to himself, to pursue the "genealogy" of his own emotional response to Mr. Z (see Boler, 1999, p. 186). Ahmed (2004) would explain this potential step by reminding us that students' emotions are simply their readings of contacts in the world, contacts imbued by a broader history of power and culture, contacts that also point to their own intimate relationships in the world, such as Rodrigo's relationships to authority figures. If Mr. Z reminds Rodrigo of someone he knows, for example, who is that person? What similarities can he identify, and how might the story's portrayal of Mr. Z and Diego shape Rodrigo's real-life responses to a similar kind of conflict?

Our emotional responses can also lead us to beliefs that go beyond personal relationships. If Rodrigo were to trace these articulated emotions to stances, he would begin to identify beliefs, perhaps heretofore unconscious ones; but he would also be on a generative path for close reading. For example, does this story share his view of fatherhood or manhood or challenge it? Does it lend itself to a broader critique of how Rodrigo might see masculinity in his community or in society at large?

As Casey (2016) and others have critiqued (see Miller, 2006; Brass, 2014), the CCSS's explicit focus on the text alone diminishes students' potential to be "social change agents;" emotions are one way to develop an awareness that "social spaces are ripe for 'close reading' and critique" (p. 67). Each of these interpretive possibilities posit a reader who can turn from text to self, self to personal context, personal context to society, etc. To read closely, then, is to navigate where and how you face.

Ultimately, we as teachers would do well to consider having students read their own responses to literature closely, particularly when they highlight emotion. Reacting to the CCSS, this means taking seriously the idea that readers might "[gain] the maximum insight" from their own emotions, that they indeed are worth close and careful reading (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p.1). This is work for teachers; recognizing emotions at work when students respond to literature is key to furthering response. But it would also be productive work for students. Could Rodrigo be taught to read his own emotions for the objects and relationships they suggest? He could, and I think it would give those emotions and his literary experiences more personal value. At the same time, we need to give students opportunities to produce emotioned readings at various points in a response to a text. It is important to not lose sight of the mess of co-engagements: the intertwining of sensing and making sense, the blur between comprehension and interpretation, and the many objects of feeling and mixes of emotion that color in our experiences of reading. Thus, these potential directions for instruction are neither procedures nor a preferred sequence for response (as suggested by Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, in the CCSS), but rather avenues made possible by valuing emotion.

Conclusion

Admittedly, even within research on response to literature, readers' emotions in the classroom have been cited as limiting readers' ability to engage in texts that counter their worldviews or experiences (see Schneider, 2005; Wilner, 2002; Lewis, 2000). As Worsham's (1992) language highlighted, emotion—as a "tight braid of affect and judgment . . . [that] takes hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the social order and its structure of meanings"—reveals our complicated placements in the world, including the biases that construct and obstruct our vision (p. 121). Wilner (2002) illustrated this problem when she described how one class of undergraduate students refused to engage a short story because the protagonist was gay. She characterizes this refusal as "affective," an example of her students' "unreflective reactions" (p. 172), markers of "hateful ways of knowing the world that have their own internalized systems, self-sustaining logics, and justifications" (Miller, quoted in Wilner, p. 174). In a generous reading of the Common Core State Standards, we can assume that the authors are imagining this very situation: emotion stunting thought, leading to a rejection of difference; or simply lingering as reductive responses, such as like or dislike (Wilner, 2002) or

“text to self connections” that do not deepen a reading (Lewis, 2000; see also Jones & Clarke, 2007).

Yet, it is easier to claim that readers' emotions are irrelevant to textual analysis when emotions are considered solely private. In that view, giving them attention is a purely individual matter, at best, and, at worst, solipsistic. However, an expansion of “limits” is sometimes a necessary step in effective textual analysis (e.g., for Wilner's students to first read their assigned text), and such expansion of limits requires recognizing and allowing for the relationships that emotions reveal (Britzman, 1995, p. 156). When emotion's social production is acknowledged, those relationships become part of the reader's learning transaction, and thus a reader's perception and response. Certainly, Wilner's students needed “more room to maneuver in thinking the unthought of education,” including thinking “against the thought of one's conceptual foundations” (Britzman, 1995, p. 155), but such readers will not find that room without a pedagogy of close reading that is informed by a thoughtful account of emotion.

This paper has been an initial analysis of how the current shift in perspectives of close reading and emotion might affect students learning to be readers. To extend this critique of the CCSS into pedagogical opportunity, future research should focus more on the classroom. We need more studies that explore what happens when students and teachers value emotion in texts and in themselves. We need more pedagogical materials that emphasize effective engagement with readers' emotions—including negative ones—and that imagine possibilities for their role in the practice of close reading. We need more ways for teachers to empower students to develop close readings of texts, themselves, and society. The close reading exercise presented in this paper offered just one possibility of what we, as readers, can do when we understand emotions rhetorically—that is, when we recognize that emotions are our readings of objects; are indicative of beliefs, histories, and placements; and are able to create and sustain specific kinds of relationships between the reader and others. Ultimately, if one of the goals of education is, as Boler (1999) claims, “to self-reflectively evaluate the complex relations of power and emotion,” then both close reading and emotion ought to be at the center of English language arts instruction (p. 157).

Notes

¹ Rodrigo is a pseudonym for the research participant.

² “Sensing” is a term that helps me distinguish between emotion—“the meaning we attribute to affect”—and affect—“the registration on the body of being affected by something, whether consciously or unconsciously” (Boldt, Lewis, & Leander, 2015, pp. 431-432). My primary goal is to articulate instructional practices that could make consideration of emotion a viable and explicit component of the teaching of close reading. Therefore, I view emotion—conscious articulation of affect and that is rooted in language—as part of the pedagogical context that can be mobilized. However, it is important that educators recognize how affect is at work in powerful and often pernicious ways (see Ahmed, 2004; Massumi, 2010), shaping emotion's role in the classroom and thus also deserving of curricular and pedagogical attention.

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