Stories Teachers Live by

Exploring Narrative and Rhetorical Concepts in Teacher Education

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How do we (re-)describe education, our lives as teachers, & our lives as learners?
“Narrative is the very stuff of teaching. Teachers love to tell and hear stories about teaching. In the telling, they set the stage, construct a plot, and provide characters and a real-life problem … Indeed, many English/Language Arts teachers chose their career because it involved narrative”

Mary Kooy, “The Telling Stories of Novice Teachers”

"Classrooms are places where stories are told"

"if the powerful stories we tell each other really matter to us—and even the most skeptical theorists imply by their practice that stories do matter—then a criticism that takes their "mattering" seriously cannot be ignored"

Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: an Ethics of Fiction*, p. 4
“If we want children to learn to read the most important step is to give them reasons for bothering. . . . Endless skills and sub-skills to be mastered for some vague utilitarian end are hardly an adequate incentive or justification for the effort required”

- Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling*, p. 88
“the homo narrans metaphor is an incorporation and extension of Burke's definition of "man" as the "symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal" … The idea of human beings as storytellers indicates the generic form of all symbol composition; it holds that symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common, in communities in which there is sanction for the story that constitutes one's life. And one's life is, as suggested by Burke, a story that participates in the stories of those who have lived, who live now, and who will live in the future.”

- Walter R. Fisher, “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm”, p. 6
"they name typical, recurrent situations . . . a book like *Madame Bovary* . . . is the strategic naming of a situation. It singles out a pattern of experience . . . for people to ‘need a word for it’ and to adopt an attitude towards it."
I wish I could say that what I resolved to do next – to utterly smash the romance between Gemma and Hervé – I wish I could say I did it out of male solidarity with Charlie. But he had nothing to do with it. If he’d looked distraught that afternoon, then I was a thousand times worse. His wife was driving me mad! She was in my head, in my belly, not for one moment could I stop thinking about her.

I remember standing in the orchard in a blur of pink and white and at my feet the lusty new grass, acid green, the green of bile, the green of Jealousy. I knew what I had to do. I went immediately to my study and seized the weapon, a new copy of Madame Bovary.
Far from it. Her well-being was of the utmost importance. I hadn't been so much spying on her as watching over her. The strange coincidences between her life and Madame Bovary's were, I hoped, just that—coincidences. When she had finished reading the book, she would surely come to understand my concern, my keeping a tender vigilance.
"So strong is our confidence in the design of a well-made novel that we believe we have detected a flaw when a loose end is not tied up. But in life we have no such expectations. ... It would be pathological, paranoid, to believe that every event of our lives must be significant or else it wouldn't have happened; which is another way of saying that, in reading literature, we properly engage in forms of interpretation characteristic in real life of madmen"

“many readers in the United States today treat novels less as a source of aesthetic satisfaction than as a practical dispenser of advice or a form of therapy. They choose books that will offer strategies for confronting, understanding, and managing their personal problems”

Timothy Aubry, Reading as Therapy. What contemporary Fiction Does for Middle-Class Americans, p. 1

About Kenneth Burke’s equipment for living “books that help them escape but also understand and manage what they see as an increasingly, bewildering and fragmented world.” (p. 15)
“Can we say any more than that we find our new selves in multiple encounters, hoping that this powerful narrative will supplement or correct that one? Can we hope now to say more than that Don Quixote might have been rescued by reading Don Quixote and that Emma Bovary’s best hope would have been to read Madame Bovary, rather than all those romantic novels and histories?”

Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, p. 260
"A wish-I-d-thought-of-it premise, highly recommended."
— BRIAN K. VAUGHAN
(Y: THE LAST MAN)
The Metaphor is in the Air

“A tool wielded well becomes almost as much a part of you as your hands and feet, and this is especially true of tools for thinking. Equipped with these simple all-purpose thinking tools, you can approach the difficult explorations ahead with sharper senses: … You also have some maxims to bear in mind … that can whisper advice in your ear like Jiminy Cricket, reminding you to control your aggression as you plunge boldly into the thicket swinging your weapons. Yes, thinking tools are also weapons, and the imagery of combat is appropriate.”
“People incorporate stories into a wide array of practices, using narrative as a problem-solving strategy in many contexts. In this sense, narrative functions as a powerful and basic tool for thinking”

David Herman, ”Stories as Tools for Thinking”, p. 163
“Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are strategic answers, stylized answers”

Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, p. 1
1) Chunking & parsing experience into workable segments
2) imputing causal relations between events
3) problems with the 'typification' of phenomena: “balance expectations against outcomes, general patterns against particular instances … the typical against the actual”
4) Behaviour: “What exactly should one do, where, when, and in what order?”
5) “the supra-individual nature of intelligence”
"narrative provides templates for behavior in physical as well as moral-cultural worlds"

“storytellers can be likened to guides who invite readers, listeners, and viewers to create, inhabit, familiarize themselves with, and hence better appreciate exemplary as well as exceptional varieties and modes of action”

- David Herman

Narrative representations (i.e. of teaching practice) as examples for reflection and templates for behaviour
Teacher education entails becoming a teacher, acquiring the role of teacher.

"person's own narrativization of what consists of his or her (never fully formed or always potentially changing) core identity as a teacher" (Gee 2000)

“stories to live by” (Connolly and Clandinin 1999; Clandinin & Huber 2005)
Narrative identity

“a self instructed by cultural symbols, the first among which are the narratives handed down in our literary tradition”
‘Life’ might then learn something vital from different narratives, from their story-level structures and possibilities of action and configurations of plots; it might also learn from characters and their different plights and decisions. On the level of discourse, individual ‘life’ might possibly learn even from different genres, for example, by giving up visualizing one's further action in terms of romance, and assuming instead the attitude of comedy or irony.”

Matti Hyvärinnen, ‘Life as Narrative’ Revisited, p. 264
School movies

“a popular movie that is in some way (even incidentally) about an educator or a student”

James Trier, 2000, p. 3

... as equipment for living

... as tools for thinking
The English Teacher – Craig Zisk

Title: The English Teacher
Director: Craig Zisk
Year: 2013
Country: United States
Genre: Teacher Movie

Description: An English teacher’s life is disrupted when a former student returns to her small town after failing as a playwright in New York.
We want to investigate the various ways in which popular fiction matters to educators and students, thus following Wayne Booth's advice … (critically) engage with the narrative patterns of popular film and television … how popular films and television can be used in education and, in turn, what these fictions can teach us about education. … how is education imagined in film and television; and how can popular movies and television be used in the classroom to study and question the cultural patterns and stereotypes in society and education?
Contextual Anchoring
"the process by which clues in narrative discourse trigger [readers] to establish a more or less direct or oblique relationship between the stories they are interpreting and the contexts in which they are interpreting them"

David Herman, *Story Logic*, p. 8
Anchoring & Recognition

A story prompts its reader to search for **ANALOGUES** between fiction and his/her own context (reality)

**The idea that learn something about ourselves while reading**

the relation between fiction and reality can prompt him/her to REVISE his view on reality

A 'review' of who we are
“As young aspiring teachers, this movie has shown us, that ....”

“When I saw Dead Poets Society years ago … I wondered if poetry could mean as much in the life of young people or if literature has such saving power. It was only when I myself got classes from an inspiring teacher, that I realized that literature could become such an indispensible part of one’s life.’
"a pattern found to be ordering significant particulars of different and disparate experiences" / "formal resemblance" (p. 1)

Rhetorical homology: "to create attitudes and motivations, to address problems and frame situations in particulars ways" (p. 12)

Speaking/seeing "in terms of" (p. 22) another discourse
I'M SORRY. I JUST GOT CARRIED AWAY. THAT'S ALL.

BIEN SÛR. A GOOD STORY CAN DO THAT TO YOU.
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