

#### 4D: Classroom Demonstration

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD, Donnelly Professor of English, Department of English, Kansas State University** [00:00:00]

Any good teacher can come up with some good questions to ask students, and maybe there are a variety of answers and then you're done. But what's really exciting is to take the students' ideas, their insights, their original thinking, and build on it.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:00:19] Who would like to read the poem? Colin?

**Colin, Student, Kansas State University** [00:00:23] After great pain, a formal feeling comes, the Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs. The stiff Heart questions 'was it He, that bore' . . .

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:00:30] I find planning the questions to be an extremely important part of class preparation, particularly with lower level college students. They're content to give brief, short answers, get in, get out, and not advance the discussion. I usually know where I want my students to go, or at least the issues I want them to think about and consider, and so I plan my questions accordingly.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:00:53] Just roughly, what does the poem seem to be about?

**Student** [00:00:57] Just like heartbreak . . .

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:01:02] Scaffolding questions means that you start with basic understanding, description, what is this that we're doing, what is this about . . .

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, Florida A&M University** [00:01:08] In terms of Bloom's Taxonomy and looking at understanding and remembering and walking your way up . . .

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:01:15] Can anybody identify what the various phases are within mitosis? Yes?

**Student** [00:01:21] There's prophase, metaphase, anaphase, and telophase.

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:01:27] Correct.

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:01:28] So if they answer one question, they're comfortable maybe answering the second question.

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:01:32] Now, can anybody describe any one of those phases for me? Yes.

**Student** [00:01:37] Telophase is when they completely separate from one another and they become the two totally different cells.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:01:42] And then after those levels, you get to places where you can start to analyze.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:01:48] What is, what does the line mean? How, how would you translate it? What's a formal feeling?

**Student** [00:01:53] Like after something that, like, really hurts you, you're kind of just more in shock, and all your other emotions kind of just fade away.

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:01:59] We're then walking that student up to looking at applying that information.

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:02:04] Can anybody now apply that to what we're seeing when we see cancer cells?

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:02:09] And then eventually move to kind of higher orders, for instance, evaluation, appreciation. Why is this important?

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:02:15] Why do you think she matters so much as a poet?

**Student** [00:02:20] She's asking us to question, right, question norms, question conventions, question structure. I mean, this poem alone, the only ending punctuation is a question mark.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:02:31] Why else might Dickinson matter?

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:02:32] Close-ended questions are, of course, killers in terms of class discussion. Yes, no, 46, and the discussion's over. Open-ended questions have to be at the heart of any good classroom conversation or dialogue.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:02:52] Good follow-up questions are clarification questions that ask students to repeat or summarize or present more clearly. What's the main thing you're trying to say? Or, could you clarify for me . . .

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:03:06] What do you mean by clever?

**Student** [00:03:07] Just the fact that, like he was . . .

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:03:09] Gives them a second chance to articulate their ideas.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:03:11] Last time we talked about ballad stanza and how Dickinson uses it. In what ways does this poem follow that form?

**Sarah, Student, Kansas State University** [00:03:20] Whenever he links what we say to an assignment that we had, that we needed to read, it helps us feel like we're learning something.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD, Professor & Department Head, School of Business, University of Connecticut** [00:03:28] Many of my classes are 40 students. Forty different views, 40 different ways that they have seen a case, a reading. And my role is to link those things together.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:03:37] What is the problem in this case? What did you see happening here and why is it happening? Yes.

**Student** [00:03:44] Well, I think Chris Robinson's, like, aggressive behavior, despite the fact that it's really successful for his sales record, it's not really good for the morale of the company.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:03:53] Okay. So, potentially the problem is Chris, right. Chris is aggressive. Where do you think you found that?

**Student** [00:03:59] Well, it said that "Chris is the sort of person who has absolutely no respect for rules and procedure."

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:04:04] Putting together then some of what you said. There are some issues with Chris, right. Is Chris aggressive, is Chris a rule follower, not following the rules.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:04:13] Every now and then we have to, you know, where do we stand? Let's pull it all back together.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:04:22] I want to talk about the Socratic method. The question is, how does Socrates teach? He teaches by posing questions and then getting answers. For, for instance, when Jeremy says something, what Jeremy says is available for all of us to consider and use. And he goes back and forth and one thought leads to another and it advances the learning or the argument or the idea.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:04:43] The Socratic method starts with the posing of good questions. And, and, with that I think you have to ask questions not only to get at the heart of the main issues in a text. You also have to think about your students. Like, what kinds of questions are going to be interesting to them?

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:04:59] How about that next two lines. And I need somebody to be brave here, because these two lines baffle the greatest literary scholars. But what, what's being said here, Colin?

**Colin, Student** [00:05:11] I think the fact that "he" is capitalized does seem to suggest that it could be a reference to Christ.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:05:19] Yeah, that's, that's one way people start to, to do it.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:05:22] You have to listen to all of the responses. Whatever it is that they're saying, I try to listen carefully and pull out for the rest of the class that Robert made a really great point about this. What do the rest of you think?

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:05:35] You all of a sudden hit the capital "h" he and you go, oh, I know what that is. That's a reference to God or to Christ or . . . And that's what Colin did immediately. Is this like what happened to Christ?

**Student** [00:05:47] It seems like each specific word that was capitalized is almost telling, like, the ending story of Christ--tombs and then his, like, their hearts being heavy.

**Colin, Student** [00:05:55] I'm thinking about my own answer to that and then I'm hearing other people's answers and I'm adding that and now, okay, my answer might be changing.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:06:03] If you're a teacher of the Socratic method, your favorite comment from students is, "Oh, my gosh, I know so much more about that text or that issue now that we had that discussion about it than I did coming in." That what you want is, are people transformed by the end of the class session through this kind of question and answer.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:06:27] AI has now hired you as a consultant. What are some of the questions you want to ask the company? In your groups, I'd like one of you to take notes so that then when we come back as a class and discuss this, you can share your group's opinion.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:06:41] It's much safer to say, "We have a question," rather than "I have a question." So I want them, you know, often in small groups, to come up with some questions, and then the questions that they have, we can maybe answer as a class.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:06:53] So what would you ask?

**Student** [00:06:55] So we were talking about asking multiple people in the company, what's the company's goal? Because if they're working towards different goals, then obviously there's some strife there.

**Lucy Gilson, PhD** [00:07:03] Good. Sometimes by asking questions, right, we start to frame the situation slightly differently.

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:07:09] Your ability to know how to ask questions is very important in those careers that you are planning on undertaking in the future. So here is your scenario. A baby girl has been diagnosed with Down syndrome. The parents feel like the hospital has done something to now make that baby have Down syndrome, okay? What's going on here? If you could ask one question, what would it be?

**Student** [00:07:34] I think the most important question would be to ask the family about their family history and ask if they have a history of Down syndrome in their family.

**Paulette S. Reneau, PhD** [00:07:42] And that kind of lends itself towards what kind of thinking? That this is something that may be . . . familial traits, genetics, right.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:07:51] I want you to develop one really good open-ended discussion question about Emily Dickinson. In the back.

**Student** [00:08:00] So one question we came up with was how many interpretations of this poem can you come up with and could you explain it with, like, examples from the text.

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:08:09] That could fall flat. Because somebody might say four, three, one. But by following it up with, you know, how would you support each of those interpretations, that would get the students into finding evidence . . .

**Gregory Eiselein, PhD** [00:08:23] Learning how to ask good questions is at the very heart of critical thinking, which is the thing that college professors most expect and want from their students.