Subjectivity

An Assignment Submitted by

Name of Student

Name of Establishment

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Subjectivity

Any notion expressed by a person is by default subjective. Whenever a writer, an artist or a scientist states something, the statement unfailingly reflects this person’s thoughts and personal reflections. Subjectivity can be seen in any work of art, fiction and non-fiction. The following paper presents a magazine article on Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein”, which is supposed to sound objective. Nevertheless, certain opinions and beliefs of the writers are still evidently present in the text. Since Frankenstein is an obligatory reading for many majors in humanities, the choice of the article has a good reason. Teaching is another example of process, where subjectivity of both teachers and students affects the final result of the studies. Thus, studying to be a teacher, it is very important to understand the possible outcomes of teacher’s subjectivity in the classroom and develop the habit of avoiding dubious subjects that can affect students’ evaluation of the actual reality.

James and Field’s “Frankenstein and the Spark of Being” analyzes the fact whether the novel can be regarded as an example of science fiction or not. In the analyzed abstract, the authors express at least two evidently subjective notions as supportive evidence for their point of view. The first subjective statement is Shelley’s age: “It is hardly to be expected that one so young would impose on the story a rigorously personal interpretation of the scientific and social theories” (James, Field 1994). The statement is obviously subjective, delivering an idea that a young person cannot provide a proper evaluation of science, which cannot be supported by objective evidence.

The second example of subjectivity is the gender remark: “since the author of the novel was female...there is a strong tendency to look to her novel for a feminist critique of science” (James, Field 1994). Once again, the authors try to evaluate the work of fiction from a gender perspective, thus providing one of the most widespread examples of subjectivity both in fiction and non-fiction. Thus, the objectivity of the article in undermined by at least
two factors – the remarks towards Shelley’s age and gender. The following factors prove that even authors that try to be objective in their statements, still cannot but deliver their subjective thoughts and opinions.

Being a teacher presupposes delivering only objective messages. However, in actual communication it is hardly possible and often teachers’ “beliefs about students, learning, and their main responsibilities as educators will strongly influence the goals and actions of their decisions” (Shepard 1995). For me, studying to be a language arts teacher, motivation is of prior importance. One cannot force to understand or evaluate arts and literature, so the cornerstone of my subjectivity is my unwillingness to make students learn something by force. However, this can lead to undesirable consequences, since for some students pressure is the best kind of motivation that could afterwards lead to a sincere interest in one or another subject.

Regarding other widespread examples of subjectivity in the classroom, that in my personal opinion have to be by all means avoided, one should mention multicultural issues. I remember many high school teachers whose evaluation of the students was predetermined by their race and culture. Considering this, it is crucial to “to increase student teachers’ understanding of the cultures of their pupils” (Li 2007). One cannot neglect the fact that “In teacher education, the teacher/student, expert/novice binaries are laden with meaning, meaning constructed by those who are situated within the unstable relationships between power, knowledge, experience, and subjectivity” (Jackson 2001). Therefore, it is the primary role of any practicing or studying teacher to evaluate one’s subjective notions and their possible effects on the audience.

To sum it up, I believe that the best way to reducing one’s one subjectivity is personal growth and education. It is crucial to evaluate every message from different perspectives, and make sure that one’s students are exposed to various aspects of one and the same concept.
Regarding my personal subjectivity, I believe the adherence to the curriculum is the only activity that should be obligatory. Creativity and genuine interest, on the other hand, can be motivated by the means of extra credits and additional activities that are optional, which would be the best way to preserve balance between duty and creativity.
References

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The amazing plasticity of the Frankenstein story is no doubt partly to be explained by its author’s youth. At the time she wrote the novel, Mary Shelley (1797-1851) was only nineteen. It is hardly to be expected that one so young would impose on the story a rigorously personal interpretation of the scientific and social theories which it retails. Moreover, a marked degree of distancing is provided by the story’s being told by means of letters, and in the form of three narratives one inside the other – the outermost narrator, Walton, being a sea captain who picks up Frankenstein as a passenger, and passes on Frankenstein’s account of his adventures, which includes the Being’s account of his own. This distancing increases the malleability of the story by admitting a multiplicity of viewpoints and allowing doubts about the character and veracity of each narrator. The result is that Frankenstein provides an outstandingly good example of the phenomenon much noted by modern critics whereby meaning is ascribed by the reader rather than by the author. The most obvious adaptation has been the use of the loaded term ‘Monster’ where the original refers to Frankenstein’s creation by the neutral term ‘Being’. One way and another, Mary Shelley ensured that, working from our own experience and historical position, we can read into her text meanings that belong to us. Indeed, to judge by much of the critical literature on the book, it is ferociously difficult to avoid doing so. Naturally enough, most critical attention has been concentrated on literary issues, including the anachronistic question as to whether Frankenstein should be regarded as an example of science fiction (the answer tends to be yes). Moreover, since the author of the novel was female, and indeed the daughter of a famous feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), there is a strong tendency to look to her novel for a feminist critique of science