



Classroom Lessons Should Not Be Based on Social Media Trends

By Educator Barnes – January 22, 2021

Amanda Gorman, the 22-year-old National Youth Poet Laureate, read her poem "[The Hill We Climb](#)" on Wednesday at President Joe Biden's Inauguration. Her poem provided hope for what we, as Americans, can aspire to in order to move the nation forward in a positive direction. Some students might have watched the poem recited live if their school watched the Inauguration. Other students may watch and/or read it later due to its popularity. At the

foundation, there is nothing wrong with using a current piece of work in the classroom; however, we need to take a closer look at the why and the execution of these lessons.

When I was a teacher, I would include current events into my lessons when I could. At other times, I wouldn't because I needed more time. I needed time to process what had happened and how I would incorporate it even at a later time. It is not always easy to insert a poem, essay, news article, or video clip into a lesson plan. It might not fit into the curriculum map, unit plan, or lesson. That doesn't mean adjustments cannot be made, but teachers must be careful when doing this.

Teachers should pause and consider the why behind incorporating something new. If the answer is only because it is popular, that should not merit throwing out the lesson for the day. Can the lesson be tied to standards? If the answer is no at the moment, then it could be incorporated at a different time.

I wish I were surprised about the flood of lesson plans that appeared online on how to use Gorman's poem. Yes, teachers need resources, but resources need to meet the needs of the students in that teacher's class. Also, teachers may not have the skills yet to facilitate the conversation that may arise from Gorman's poem or any other insertion into the curriculum based on what is trending online.

Social justice and culturally responsive practices are more than a hashtag; it is more than a trend. It is an everyday event. It is a lifestyle. It is a lifestyle a teacher won't abandon even if there is opposition and even if it is uncomfortable.

Furthermore, the teachers who constantly create these instant lessons need to assess the why behind their actions. Is it just for teacher clout online? Is it just to gain more followers and receive 15 seconds of social media fame?

As a former English teacher, I loved Gorman's poem. It was inspirational, uplifting, and hopeful. However, my hope is that if any teacher decides, whether now or later, to use this poem that they would consider the best use for the poem and plan a lesson that engages students in academic standards and skills.