

Last name, First name

Sheely

English 10

Best & Worst Essay

April 27, 2015

Reflecting on Live Like You Were Dying

Every year, during the Poetry Unit, I have taught the lyrics to the songs “100 Years to Live” and “Live Like You Were Dying.” This year was unique for me due to some health issues making my connection to these songs more personal. These songs, and some personal reflections, were the best part of my class this year.

In class, I’ve always broken down the 100 years we have to live in chunks of 20 years and described what goes on in life during each chunk. In these songs, a man describes his life over the course of 100 years, and in the other song, another man in his 40s discovers that he won’t live to see 100. He describes how that knowledge leads him to changing his behavior and his outlook on his relationships.

This year I was diagnosed with cancer and had to have surgery once in February, and again in May. Going through the last few months have been definitely eye-opening for me and has made me think about the long-term plans I have. This year it was difficult in class to teach these lessons without thinking about my own experiences. I am hopeful for a good prognosis after my surgery this week, but I also have to prepare for the worst.

This reflection on my life also led me to decide to pass out a “report card” for my students to fill out on my teaching. For the most part I wasn’t surprised by the results (I’ve always known that my demeanor does not accurately reflect my mood); I know I need to hand

out gold stars more often. The only thing that surprised me was that two students indicated that they didn't think I liked them. It made me realize that what I thought of as "teasing" was actually hurting their feelings and causing undue stress for them. Since the last thing I ever want to do is cause harm to another person, I immediately changed my actions and demeanor when dealing with these students (the report cards were anonymous but it wasn't hard to know who wrote that). I hope that this change has helped foster a more positive atmosphere in my class.

As we near the end of the year (which I hope to be back for) I am left with this lasting impression of the 2014-2015 school year. This is the year that I had to deal with a serious health issue, and while dealing and reflecting on that, I've grown as a teacher. I hope to carry the suggestions from my "report card" and make more changes for next year.