Student Activity: Integrating Ways of Knowing, Areas of Knowledge,

and the Shared-Personal Knowledge Relationship

*Directions:*

*Complete the following chart to illustrate how particular Ways of Knowing are used in studying material in the Area of Knowledge of your choice, and to investigate how shared and personal knowledge contributed to your understanding of that material.*

*Procedure:*

1. *Choose an Area of Knowledge you would like to investigate in terms of the role of Shared and Personal Knowledge and in terms of Ways of Knowing.*
2. *Choose a stimulus, problem, sample, or extract from that Area of Knowledge to analyze, and put that in the top box of the chart. Note that the stimulus can be anything which is an example of the material of the chosen Area of Knowledge—a math problem, a political cartoon, a painting, an historical photograph, a paragraph from a novel, and so on.*
3. *Once you have chosen your stimulus, then analyze it with the intent of discovering what it means. What answers or knowledge does it contain? As you analyze, fill in the chart, which requires you to note, in the first column, which Ways of Knowing you are using in order to do so, and, in the second column, whether and how you are relying on shared and personal knowledge in order to construct, develop, and discover meaning.*

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| **Area of Knowledge: [The Arts]** | |
| **“This Is My Letter To The World” Emily Dickinson**  This is my letter to the world, Her message is committed  That never wrote to me,-- To hands I cannot see;  The simple news that Nature told, For love of her, sweet countrymen,  With tender majesty. Judge tenderly of me! | |
| **Pertinent Way(s) of Knowing** | **Shared Knowledge & Personal Knowledge** |
| **Language** is going to play a role in analyzing a poem. It is used in communicating ideas. Dickinson used language as her medium to communicate her art. Students have to have a working knowledge of the language she uses to analyze the art. | The class’ shared knowledge of the English language is going to be key to understanding the literal meaning of the poem. For example, they have to know the definitions of the words. There is also going to be personal knowledge, individual students bring to the table in the class discussion, because some of them may not understand some of the figurative language being used by the poet. Understanding the literal meanings of the words can be accomplished by looking up their definitions. The figurative meanings of words and phrases are more complicated. There is no book of what metaphors mean. They have to apply their cultural experiences, textual evidence, and allusions to analyze the figurative language. |
| **Memory** is going to be used, particularly in analyzing the structure of the poem. They have to be able to retain knowledge about poetry as an art form to analyze it: slant rhyme, meter, exact rhyme, rhyme scheme, etc. They have memorized the definitions and examples of these terms, but have to apply it to the Dickinson poem. They have to remember how they have been taught to analyze a poem’s structure. In English, we ask students about their “prior knowledge” before jumping into a new piece of literature to see what they remember from what they have already been taught about the subject. | Many of them will have shared knowledge about some of the mechanics of poetry: rhyme, meter, etc., from their past English courses. Some of them will need to be reminded. There will be few students who have a personal knowledge of one of these concepts that is not shared by someone else in the room. |
| **Imagination** is going to be used by students in analyzing the poem because they have to problem-solve to figure out what the poem means. Beyond just picking the poem apart for its mechanics, students have to figure out what the speaker of the poem is saying: What does the poem mean? This is much harder with poetry than any other type of writing, because poems are inherently cryptic, especially Dickinson’s. They have to create the images that she is describing in their mind’s eye to help them visualize what is being communicated. | Fewer students will have shared knowledge on some of the allusions the poet is making than understood the vocabulary and mechanics of poetry. Some students are very literal and struggle with figurative language and vague references. The class will have to help them see the textual evidence (exchange of knowledge) for the imagery used by the poet. |
| **Reason** is used in this activity because students have to make deductions to come to conclusions about what the poem means. Students have to infer meanings the poet implied; Students are using logic/reason. Some of this reasoning is influenced by the logical norms in their culture. | The cultural aspect of reasoning is mostly shared knowledge among the students. They are mostly coming from the same culture. However, some of their reasoning will be personal knowledge more than shared knowledge. Some students will struggle with figuring out who “Nature” is in the poem. They have to be able to find the subject of the previous sentence to figure out the antecedent of “Her” is “Nature”. But logic tells the student that she cannot be talking about nature in the sense of trees, grass and animals. “Hands she cannot see” (those of future readers) cannot hold those things in their hands. The speaker logically must mean something else. The nature of her poetry, her art. This is one of the more difficult aspects of analyzing the poem and most poems. When students ask, “Why didn’t she just say that?” I respond, “Because that’s not art” |

(You should choose at least four Ways of Knowing. If you wish to consider more, then you can add rows to the chart by putting your cursor in the final box of the chart and hitting tab.)