

Performing/Experiencing the Text: The Impact of Critical/Reflective Readers Theater on the College-level Instruction of American Literature

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of Critical Reflective Readers Theater upon the college-level instruction of American literature in Taiwan. The examination will be centered upon the effectiveness of a program (Readers Theater focusing on Critical/Reflective thinking on the College-level American Literature Instruction, or CRRT) adopted in an American Literature course at National Kaohsiung Normal University. Starting from February 2009, the six-month program aims to investigate into the impact of Critical/Reflective Readers Theater on students' learning attitudes, learning styles and effects. By collecting the instructor and students' responses to the program, the paper broadly discusses the applicability of Readers Theater focusing on students critical/reflective learning, addressing its implications and delineating its constructive possibilities and problematics in pedagogy.

The paper consists of four parts: (1) Background and Motivation; (2) Literature Review and theoretical framework; (3) Methodology: the overview of CRRT program, including subjects, instruments; procedure, data collection; and (4) Research Findings and Suggestions.

The results shown in the surveys indicate that in a CRRT classroom the learners feel more motivated and are able to acquire a framework of the text after each group's performance. Students participating in oral reading activities are able to formulate independent thinking and fulfill a mission with their own knowledge base grounded a comparatively cross-cultural awareness. Yet, a detailed close reading of the texts and teacher's guided tutoring are still needed in the classroom for a better understanding of the materials.

In prospect, non-native English educators need to adopt an eclectic approach in the teaching of American Literature, that is, a combination of traditional tutoring and

student-centered oral performances, and stress the importance for training of critical thinking and literary analysis.

Keywords: American Literature, literature instruction, Readers Theater, college-level English instruction in Taiwan, constructivist learning, critical/reflective thinking

I. Background and Motivation:

Though in Taiwan English and American literature are required courses for university students majoring in English, and are considered to be an essential part of language training and cultivation, few students have shown interests in literary classics, many of whom even feel reluctant to take these courses. The reasons for the lack of motivation might vary; however, a general belief has it that many students, non English native speakers, find literary classics too difficult to understand, too complicated, and inaccessible because it is hard for them to relate these texts to their personal experiences. It is generally agreed that literary classics provide good exemplars of cultural, linguistic and educational paradigms; hence how to make classical literary works more accessible and more up-to date with modern society have become an important issue to be addressed. Instructors of literature thus need to identify effective teaching strategies to motivate students, make reading texts accessible and meaningful, and help students develop language skills, as well as abilities of literary analysis.

Besides literacy, one of the main functions of college instruction is to help the students to be prepared to be active members in a society. Hence, students are required to develop abilities to think critically and reflectively in order to reflect on various current issues and concerns that modern citizens will encounter. Upon graduation, they are expected to assume various social responsibilities and make wise judgments in a similar fashion. Umberto Eco lucidly pinpoints that “A democratic civilization will save itself only if it makes the language of the image into a stimulus for critical reflection, not an invitation to hypnosis.” As literary works are charged with linguistic signs that yield multiple possible signification and often resist unifying and reductive interpretations, literature provide a fertilizing ground for nourishing independent and critical thinking. The instruction of literature aptly paves the foundation for the training of critical and reflective thinking. As such, the research has collected students’ reflective and critical writing assignments and hopes to investigate the effect before and after they participate in the project.

Also, the researcher designs the curriculum based on constructivist philosophy. In constructivism, an innovative curriculum can provide students the opportunities to inquire, explore, experiment, collaborate, and experienced the joy of discovery (Brook and Brooks, 1993), which corresponds to the goal of literary instruction stressing generating readers' own opinions through experiencing. In other words, the course highlights students' active learning, and the researcher believes that the curriculum is valid in the sense that it requires students not only to read and adapt texts, but also to think of questions for brainstorming discussions, debates and answers. An innovative teaching/learning curriculum emphasizing the importance of student-centered curriculum is required as it allows students to participate in the production of teaching materials, to show more autonomy and independence in learning, to exchange their learning experiences, and to develop cooperative learning strategies, in order to extend and enhance their learning effects.

Hence, the researcher adopts a Readers Theater method focusing on critical/reflective learning in an American literature classroom in Taiwan, namely Readers Theater focusing on Critical/Reflective thinking on the College-level American Literature Instruction, or CRRT, to supplement the traditional tutoring, hoping to examine its effectiveness on the teaching of American Literature in a TEFL context.

The CRRT program is designed in accordance with the following principles:

1. **Balanced Knowledge Management:** The program emphasizes three aspects of knowledge management in a classroom-- input, activities and output. Seeing the acquisition of knowledge as an organic and dynamic process rather than the storage of pieces of information.
2. **Canonicity and Creativity:** Literary classics are texts that stand the testing of time and play an indelible role in language and culture education. To make classics more accessible to modern young readers, one needs to fine innovative and creative methods in the classroom.
3. **Autonomous Learning:** The curriculum emphasizes a student-centered learning style, requiring students to adapt the original teaching materials, to write their own scripts and show their understanding of the text in reading performances. They are also required to play the role as an instructor, to design their lesson plans, to emulate teaching contexts and reflect upon their "teaching".
4. **Cooperative Learning:** The program is undertaken in groups. Students need to learn how to cooperate with their group mates to consolidate a consensus regarding how their performance and group portfolio will be formed. They are given the opportunities to read the texts, write the scripts, and exchange ideas collaboratively to express their interpretation of the texts.

5. Cognitive Learning: Students will be given the opportunity to subsume the materials into meaningful information as they are encouraged to relate personal experiences to the materials by thinking of topics for discussions and questions to check other students' comprehension.
6. Critical/Reflective Learning: After each presentation, students are required to reflect upon their performances, keeping records of the activities involved in the process of presentation productions. By so doing, students can acquire a meaning learning style by sharing with other students their learning experiences.

By collecting the instructor's and students' responses to the program and comparing students' learning attitudes before and after the program, the research specifically aims to evaluate Readers Theater's effectiveness and limitations, proposing possible alternatives for educators in their future endeavors to improve the teaching methodologies in literature instruction.

Specifically, the research addresses the following four questions:

1. Are there significant differences in students' attitudes in learning American literature?
2. Are there significant differences in students' motivations in learning American literature?
3. To what extent are language abilities integrated into Readers Theater activity?
4. How effective are students' critical and reflective writings to develop their thinking and/or facilitate the learning process?

II. Literature Review

A. Readers Theater

Readers Theater, as the name suggests, is a minimal theater in support of literature and reading. Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White (1973) define Readers Theater as "a medium in which two or more oral interpreters through their oral reading cause an audience to experience literature" (8). Different from conventional theaters, Readers Theater is characterized by its economic use of dramatic components in literary reading. For instance, the stage decorations are either nonexistent or minimal. Generally, the characters will not wear costumes or are sometimes dressed in black (formal or informal wear) in order not to distract the audience.

Readers Theater stresses the performers' oral reading activity. Students use existing scripts, or create their own scripts by adapting texts through collaborative writing activities. Instead of memorizing the lines as performers in conventional theaters do on stage, students make the scripts visible, read their lines, using their

voices, facial expressions and hand gestures to interpret characters in scripts. A reader might portray more than one character or act as a narrator. Reading provides the sense of immediacy and presence; the purposes of reading are to involve the audience into experiencing the scripts as the performers are.

An underlying principle that lies in Readers Theater is that literacy can be experienced and viewed as a performing art. In phenomenological terms, one can find meanings in the process of an experience and the performing of the experience. Oral reading entails complicated cognitive and analytical acts. While students are orally performing a literary work, they are encouraged to subsume, analyze and judge the materials while reading the texts, which demands more than decoding and comprehending skills. The oral performance requires an oral interpretative activity as performers are actually experiencing the text. Hence, oral performances allow the readers to use language to perform their knowledge. Hence, it is similar to a way of knowing and has its validity in educational practice.

B. Critical/Reflective Thinking and Writing

John Dewey defines reflective thought as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Shermis, 1999). Based on Dewey's conception, Clark (1999) considers that "reflection is thinking for an extended period by linking recent experiences to earlier ones in order to promote a more complex and interrelated mental schema" (1). Reflective and critical thinking thus often refers to a mental capability for analyzing, judging, acquiring ideas, and making decisions or modifying behaviors after thorough consideration. In this sense, reflection involves a mental process that is conducive to a personal evaluation of a previously known concept. Various previous research (Bloom, 1956; Ennis, 1962; Eisner, 1965; Costa, Hanson, Silver, & Strong, 1985; Minick, 1985, Villalobos, 2000) has developed several models and definitions of critical thinking.

Critical and reflective writing is an extended pedagogical activity based on critical and reflective thinking. Critical and reflective writing have other names such as "responses," "journals" or "reaction papers." Generally defined, critical and reflective writing include students writing responses as a means to express their thoughts and opinions about the reading, which should include "critical, informed, thoughtful, and intelligent responses to the claims" (Pols, 2001. p.1). Understood from the above, critical and reflective writing refers to the activity of writing focusing on reflecting on its effect of learning. According to Hillocks (1995), reflective writing and learning are closely interrelated in the sense that they both share the process of reflection: "writing cannot be disconnected from its sources, the processes of observation, interpretation, imagination, and inquiry" (xvii). For Hillocks, reflective

writings are particularly helpful in the process of learning. Writing and reflecting are connected to learning to the extent that writing and reflecting facilitates learning: "writing facilitates learning by helping writers explore, clarify, and think deeply about the ideas and concepts they encounter in reading" (Harris and Perzynski, 2001, p.2).

C. Constructivism in Language Teaching

In constructivism, learning requires self-regulation and building up of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction, which differs from a stimulus-response phenomenon (Glaserfeld 1995). According to Saunders (1992), learning is made meaningful through activities such as "thinking out loud, developing alternative explanations, interpreting data and participating in conflict" (140). Also learning is regarded as a journey rather than a destination and its emphasis is on the process instead of the result. Hence, in a constructivist classroom, the learner is no longer a passive or powerless recipient; rather, he is regarded as an individual who plays an active role in constructing new knowledge or information (Gagnon and Collay, 1996). The teacher is a "facilitator" rather than a dictator as the teacher's role aims to facilitate the learning rather than merely to provide sources of information (Thanasoulas, 2001).

Learning continues if students are given the opportunities to learn how to perform intellectual tasks such as solving problems and thinking through difficult questions (Brooks and Brooks, 1993). Hence, an innovative curriculum is important in the sense that it can provide students the chances to inquire, explore, experiment, collaborate, and experienced the joy of discovery (Brooks and Brooks, 1993). With the emphasis on active learning, a constructivist curriculum is particularly valid if it helps students to solve problems, to be able to formulate questions, then probe, discuss, debate and answer the questions by themselves (Felder and Brent, 2003). Hence, educators should include the assessment of students' initiatives and personal investments from students' journals, reports and artistic representations. As can be expected, students are most likely to retain and transfer the new knowledge acquired in the classroom to their real life experience.

III. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

A. Subjects

The CRRT Program for this research was based on an existing semester-long (16 weeks) curriculum design. In the class, there were 41 subjects, senior undergraduates majoring in English at National Kaohsiung Normal University and were required to take a one-year American literature in their fourth year toward their graduation. The class meets 2 hours each week and lasts for 18 weeks (but 16 weeks in the second

semester). It should also be noted that as the university primarily was and still is a secondary school teaching training institution, a high percentage of students (80 to 90 %) will become English teachers at secondary schools in Taiwan.

At the point when the research started, the students took the American Literature (I) in the previous semester (18-week long) which was primarily a tutoring-based survey course. In the first semester, students had read texts including Native American poetry, early settlers' historical documents, Anglo-American narratives, and some poems and short stories, in a chronological sense. The reading materials were all chosen from *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (6th Edition), and represented a wide range of genres, including short stories, non-fiction, essays, and poems. For the sake of continuity, the second-semester course was developed to cover more recent texts written by established writers, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson. Minority writers such as Ralph Ellison and Maxine Hong Kingston were included to show how their works represented ethnic experiences different from the main-stream cultures. Plays and dramas were not included as in this research students were expected to write a script adapted from the original, and hence no dramatic form had been considered. Prior to each class meeting, all students were expected to read through the assigned reading in this one semester-based (16-week) CRRT program.

B. Procedures

Students were divided into 10 groups and respectively responsible for the following texts:

Groups	Writers	Texts
1	Nathaniel Hawthorne	"Young Goodman Brown" (pp. 610-18)
2	Edgar Allan Poe	"To Helen" (p. 697) "The Raven" (pp. 697-700) "Annabel Lee" (pp. 703-704)
3	Edgar Allan Poe	"The Fall of the House of Usher" (pp. 714-727)
4	Harriet Beecher Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life among the Lowly</i> Chapter VII (pp. 771-783)
5	Henry David Thoreau	"Resistance to Civil Government" (pp. 837-53) "Walden" "Where I lived, and What I Lived for" (pp. 895-905) "Conclusion" (pp. 931-39)
6	Walt Whitman	Preface to <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855) (pp. 985- 1003) <i>Song of Myself</i> #1-#26
7	Herman Melville	"Bartleby, the Scrivener" (pp. 1081-1111)
8	Emily Dickinson	Selected Poems #130, #241, #258 #303, #328, #341, #465, #501, #632, #712, #986, #1078, #1624 (Choose any three poems)
9	Ralph Ellison	Invisible Man (pp. 2373-2384)

10	Maxine Hong Kingston	"No Name Woman" (pp. 2556-2566)
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In the first class, students were given the instructions of class policies, requirements, and their group and individual responsibilities, as shown below. For each week, students were expected to (1) discuss with their group mates to write an adapted script with lines of dialogue, and determine the ways in which how they present their script; (2) follow an in-class videotaped presenting sequence, i.e. pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading questions and activities; and (3) be subject to peer evaluation; and (4) produce an after-class group portfolio containing their written reflections of adopting RT activities, and their sharing of reading and performing experiences, production notes, and references.

Each week's class meeting lasted for two hours. After students' presentations which were required to finish within the first hour, the instructor provided supplementary notes and/or read closely chosen passages to help students better understand the main ideas of the text. After five-week presentations, the instructor had a mid-term interview with all the students to know their responses to the group presentations and to check their comprehension of the reading texts. In the sixteenth week, all groups were given 15 minutes each to do final presentations and had their portfolio on display.

The procedures conducted in the research are shown as below (Fig. 1).

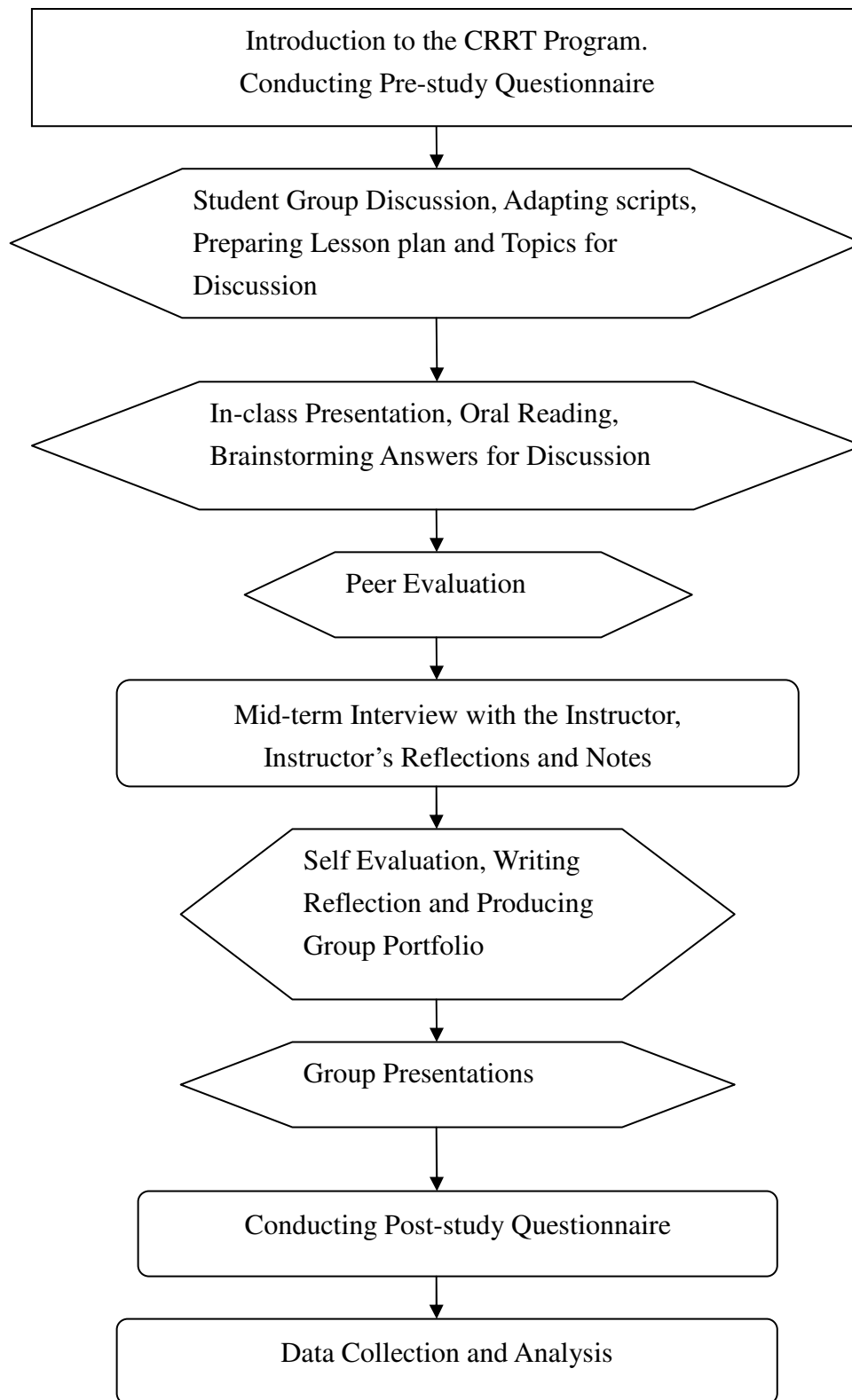


Fig. 1 Study Procedures

C. Instruments

To achieve the purposes of the study, the following instruments were adopted for data collection. The functions of each instrument will be explained as below.

- (1) A Pre-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students' Responses to the Learning Experiences of American Literature;
- (2) A Post-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students' Responses to RT Learning Experiences of American Literature;
- (3) A Peer-evaluation Form
- (4) A Self-evaluation Form
- (5) Students generating adapted scripts and group lesson plans
- (6) Students' reflections of their own performances

A Pre-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students' Responses to the Learning Experiences of American Literature

The pre-study questionnaire was designed and prepared by the researcher before the CRRT program. The purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate students' attitudes and responses to learning American literature before the research was conducted. The content included four parts. The first part was to collect students' attitude toward learning American literature in the previous year(s). The second was to know students' perception of the correlation between the enhancement of four language skills and American literature. In the third part, questions involved students' attitude toward the correlation between cooperative learning and learning of American literature. The fourth part involved the questions concerning students' attitude toward reading literary classics. In total, there were 20 questions based upon five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" (Appendix II).

A Post-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students' Responses to RT Learning Experiences of American Literature

The pre-study questionnaire was designed and prepared by the researcher for the students after the CRRT program. The purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate students' attitudes and responses to learning American literature after the CRRT program was conducted. Different from four parts in the Pre-study questionnaire, the content for the post-study questionnaire included five parts. The

first part was to collect students' attitude toward learning American literature in the previous year(s). The second was to know students' perception of the correlation between the enhancement of four language skills and American literature. In the third part, questions involved students' attitude toward the correlation between cooperative learning and learning of American literature. The fourth part involved the questions concerning students' attitude toward reading literary classics. The last part contained questions to investigate into students' attitudes toward Readers Theaters Activities. The five parts contained 25 questions to be followed by 9 open-ended questions which were designed to collect the students' perception and attitudes toward RT, autonomous learning, the correlation between language abilities and RT, their preference, and their opinions toward learning (Appendix III).

A Peer-evaluation Form

A Peer-evaluation Form was designed for students to evaluate each group's presentation. Four grading criteria were proposed, namely (a) the Script Use, including Cue Pick-up, Flow, Pacing, Handling; (b) Staging (Accessibility, Movements, Relationships); (c) Narration (Mood, Timing, Involvement); and (d) Vocal/Physical (Body language, Characterization, Volume). Other than grading, students were encouraged to write down comments for each presentation. There were also five open-ended questions to be answered by the students to collect their opinions about the performance, their comprehension, and their preference for the presentations.

A Self-evaluation Form

After each presentation, performers in the presenting group were provided a Self-evaluation Form designed by the researcher. Seven questions were raised to learn of the performers' attitudes toward the roles they performed and the literary works they were assigned. Performers' comprehension of the texts/roles, the difficulties they encountered and their attitudes and preference for the RT and tutoring methods were also collected.

Students generating adapted scripts and group lesson plans

As students were requested to adapt from the original texts and produced their own scripts, the researcher collected the scripts to see how students represented the classics in a dramatic approach. The researcher deliberately excluded the genre of drama and chose narratives and poems instead to see how the students transformed the originals. As could be expected, the production of adaptations should require the understanding of the texts in the first place, and textual interpretations and sometimes

the research on supplementary references. Before the script was finally made, a full set of mental work should be involved.

The lesson plan should include pre-reading questions, while-reading script performing activities, and post-reading questions to check other students' comprehension of their reading and topic for further discussion. A lesson plan was required by the researcher as students were regarded as an active agent in the learning process rather than a passive recipient of information. When students assumed the role as a teacher and prepared the lesson plan, they were given more responsibility in sharing their learning process with their peers. In other words, they played the role of an instructor who intended to facilitate the learning.

Students' reflections of their own performances

After each presentation, all performers were required to present a group portfolio containing the digitalized files and photos/video clips. Each student should prepare a statement indicating his/her responsibilities in the group, sharing of his/her reading and performing experiences, and recording production notes, and references. Individual member should provide the reflections for the understanding, guiding of the text, for the performance, for audience responses and etc. The purpose of the data was to demonstrate how the RT helped the students develop independent thinking. As students were required to reflect upon their learning process, they were able to formulate critical and reflective thinking on the topics and on the learning.

D. Quantitative and qualitative Analysis

The data were collected and analyzed both in quantitative and qualitative analyses. The students' pre-study and post-study responses were analyzed according to the five-point scale and compared in a quantitative way.

Also, students' responses in the post-study questionnaire, students' answers in the interviews, their reflections and scripts in the portfolios were analyzed by the researcher in a qualitative way. By so doing, the researcher could evaluate how the students constructed the new knowledge throughout the program.

IV. Research Findings and Suggestions

Below are the findings of the quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis:

I. Quantitative Analysis of the data collected in Pre-study and Post-study Questionnaires

According to the results collected in the final week of the program, there is a significant difference in students' attitudes between the Pre-study (Table 1) and the Post-study questionnaires (Table 2). As the pre-study questionnaire shows, nearly 80.49 % of students think that learning American literature is important, and 82.93 % consider literature helpful for their development of critical thinking abilities. 82.93% of students indicate that they enjoy reading American literature. However, when asked whether they think learning American literature is interesting, the percentage goes lower to 70.73%. In the Post-study questionnaire, nearly 92.68% of students consider American literature important; with 95.35% thinking American literature can be helpful for critical thinking; 87.80% of students enjoy reading American literature. As to the question whether they think American literature learning is interesting, the percentage increases from 70.73% before the program to 82.92% after the program. The difference is likely due to the impact of Readers Theater and the critical thinking activities undertaken in the CRRT Program. In other words, students in the CRRT Program are more motivated to learn and consider American literature more important, and agree that CRRT program can facilitate their critical thinking abilities.

In terms of the correlation between the language skills and American literature, the Post-study Questionnaire indicates that the disagreements over the enhancement of "oral/aural" skills have significantly decreased. To illustrate, if we compare the two questionnaires in terms of the correlation between four language skills and American literature learning, all students strongly agree that, before or after the program, American literature helps enhance their "reading" skills, as most students agree or strongly agree that "writing" skills can be likewise improved. Differences have shown in listening and speaking skills. In the Pre-study Questionnaire, 85.36 % of students (41.46% strongly agree and 18% agree) hold positive attitudes toward the effect of American literature, whereas 12.19 % of students disagree that listening can be improved. The statistics on speaking abilities in the Pre-study Questionnaire have shown similar distribution, with 80.48% (31.70% strongly agree and 48.78% agree) are positive toward the learning effect of speaking; 17.07% have shown suspicion on it. However, in the Post-study questionnaire, significant differences have been shown. Only 2.44% of students still hold reservation on the effect of listening skills; and

students who disagree on the speaking effect have dropped drastically from 17.07% to zero, indicating that students have reached an agreement as how American literature learning helps enhance the improvement of oral abilities.

A comparison between the Pre-study Questionnaire and the Post-study Questionnaire shows that there is no significant difference in students' opinion on whether the CRRT program can enhance the cooperative learning. Most students, before or after the program, agree that American literature course helps them improve their cooperation and interaction with other students. The reason is partly because that the course emphasizes team spirit and students' participation in group work both in the first and second semesters. However, a greater significance lies in the item of having interaction with the instructor; that is, more students agree that, in a CRRT program, they enjoy interacting with the instructor the more.

The final part of the Post-study Questionnaire contains a series of questions to collect students' perception of the CRRT program and the results are significantly favorable. When asked whether they like American literature course because of the practice of Readers Theater, 90% of students are positive. 87.5 % of students indicate that they like adapting scripts from the originals. A high percentage of 95% in Item 3 suggests that most students consider the CRRT program beneficial in cooperative learning. 90% of students suggest that they like to interact with the instructor under the CRRT program, which coincides with the data collected in the Part III Item 4, which means that the atmosphere of the classroom, especially the willingness to interact with the instructor will be greatly manifested in the CRRT program. As to the final question, the most crucial one, when students are asked which they prefer, the Readers Theater or conventional tutoring, as high as 92.5% of students choose the Readers Theater.

Table 1. A Pre-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students' Responses to the Learning Experiences of American Literature

Subjects taking the questionnaire: 41

Valid: 40

Invalid: 1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Part I : Attitude in Learning American Literature					
1. I think learning American Literature is important.	4	27	8	1	0

2. I think learning American Literature is interesting.	3	26	9	2	0
3. I think learning American Literature is helpful in the development of critical thinking.	4	30	5	1	0
4. Generally speaking, I enjoy learning American literature.	5	29	6	0	0

Part II: Enhancement of Four Skills

5. I think learning American literature helps improve my listening ability.	4	13	18	5	0
6. I think learning American literature helps improve my speaking ability.	4	9	20	7	0
7. I think learning American literature helps improve my reading ability.	14	26	0	0	0
8. I think learning American literature helps improve my writing ability.	10	24	6	0	0

Part III : Attitude in Reading American Literature

9. I usually actively read American literary works.	3	14	16	7	0
10. I enjoy reading American novels.	5	26	8	1	0
11. I enjoy reading American poetry.	2	11	20	5	2
12. I do not feel nervous when reading American literary works.	4	17	9	10	0
13. I think it is easy to read American literary works.	3	8	10	18	1
14. I think reading American literary works is important.	5	30	5	0	0
15. Generally speaking, I think reading American literary works helps improve my English reading comprehension ability.	10	29	1	0	0

Part IV : Cooperative Learning Experiences

16. American literature courses enhance the cooperation among students.	8	31	1	0	0
17. Students are encouraged to solve the problems together in American literature	10	30	0	0	0

courses.					
18. I like to interact with my classmates in American literature courses.	10	30	0	0	0
19. I like to interact with teacher in American literature courses	10	18	12	0	0
20. Generally speaking, I enjoy the cooperative learning in American literature courses.	9	27	4	0	0

Table 2. A Post-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students' Responses to RT Learning Experiences of American Literature

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Part I : Attitude in Learning American Literature					
1. I think learning American Literature is important.	12	26	2	0	0
2. I think learning American Literature is interesting.	7	27	5	1	0
3. I think learning American Literature is helpful in the development of critical thinking.	15	24	1	0	0
4. Generally speaking, I enjoy learning American literature.	7	29	4	0	0
Part II: Enhancement of Four Skills					
5. I think learning American literature helps improve my listening ability.	5	16	17	2	0
6. I think learning American literature helps improve my speaking ability.	2	25	11	2	0
7. I think learning American literature helps improve my reading ability.	22	18	0	0	0
8. I think learning American literature helps improve my writing ability.	10	24	6	0	0
Part III : Attitude in Reading American Literature					
9. I will actively read American literary works.	4	23	10	3	0
10. I enjoy reading American novels.	7	26	6	1	0
11. I enjoy reading American poetry.	3	24	12	1	0
12. I do not feel nervous when reading American literary works.	5	24	9	2	0
13. I think it is easy to read American literary works.	1	9	15	15	0
14. I think reading American literary works is important.	11	23	5	1	0
15. Generally speaking, I think reading	14	24	2	0	0

American literary works helps improve my English reading comprehension ability.

Part IV : Cooperative Learning Experiences

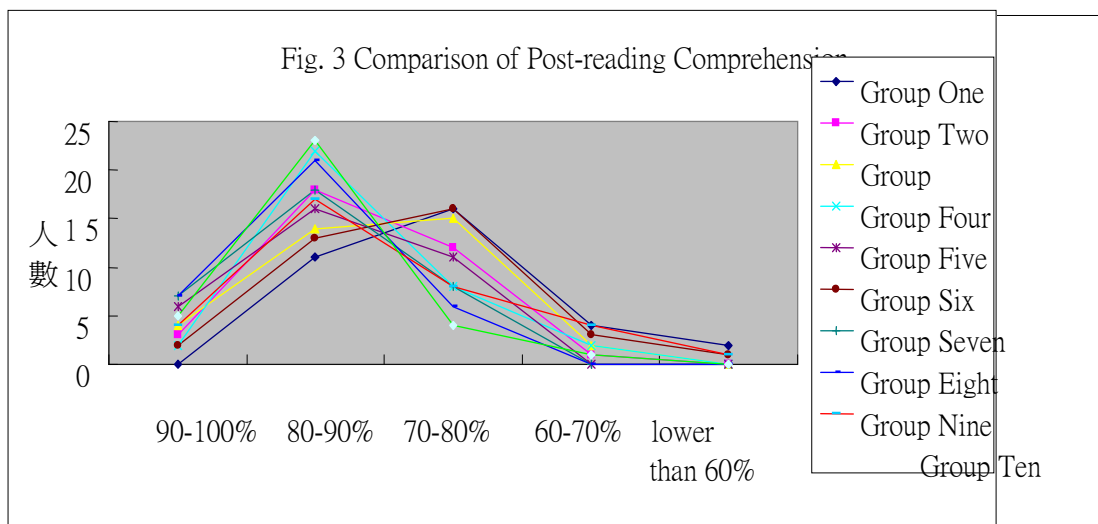
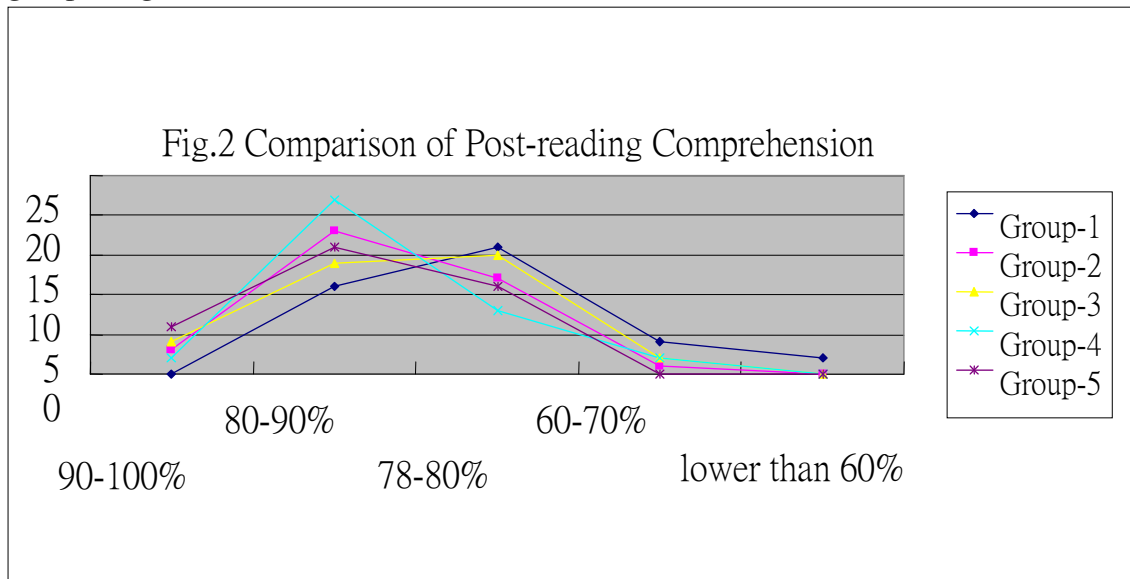
16. American literature courses enhance the cooperation among students.	21	17	2	0	0
17. Students are encouraged to solve the problems together in American literature courses.	20	19	1	0	0
18. I like to interact with my classmates in American literature courses.	20	18	2	0	0
19. I like to interact with teacher in American literature courses	14	19	7	0	0
20. Generally speaking, I enjoy the cooperative learning in American literature courses.	20	18	2	0	0

Part V: Readers Theater Activity

21. I like American literature courses more because of Readers Theater activity.	14	22	2	2	0
22. I am more interested in adapting scripts because of Readers Theater activity.	13	22	4	1	0
23. Readers Theater activity encourages students to cooperate with each other.	21	17	2	0	0
24. Readers Theater activity encourages the interactions between students and teachers.	16	19	4	1	0
25. Generally speaking, I think Reader Theater activity is helpful in learning American literature.	17	19	3	1	0
26. Generally speaking, compared to traditional tutoring, I like Readers Theater activity more.	19	18	1	2	0

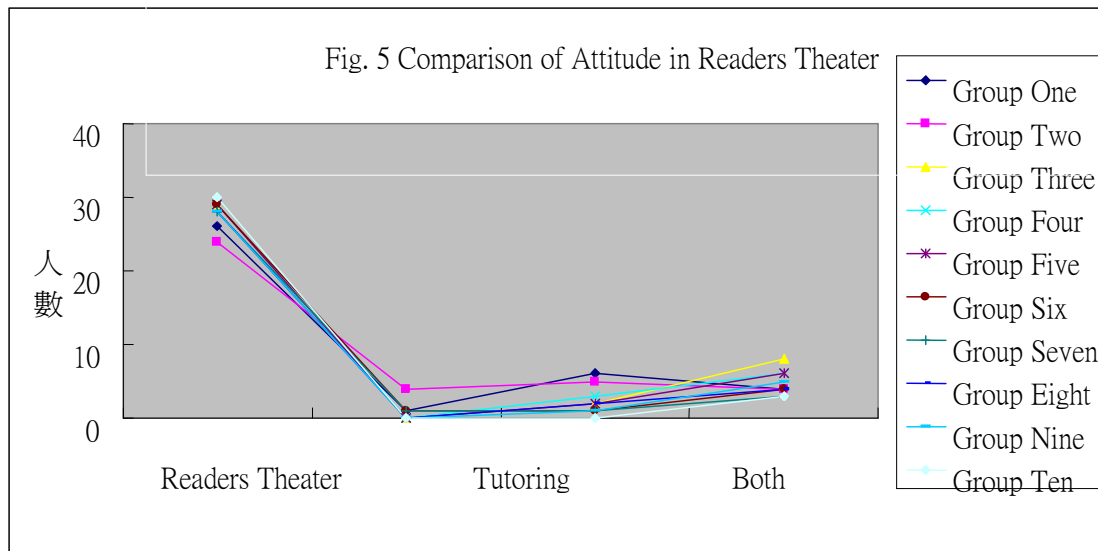
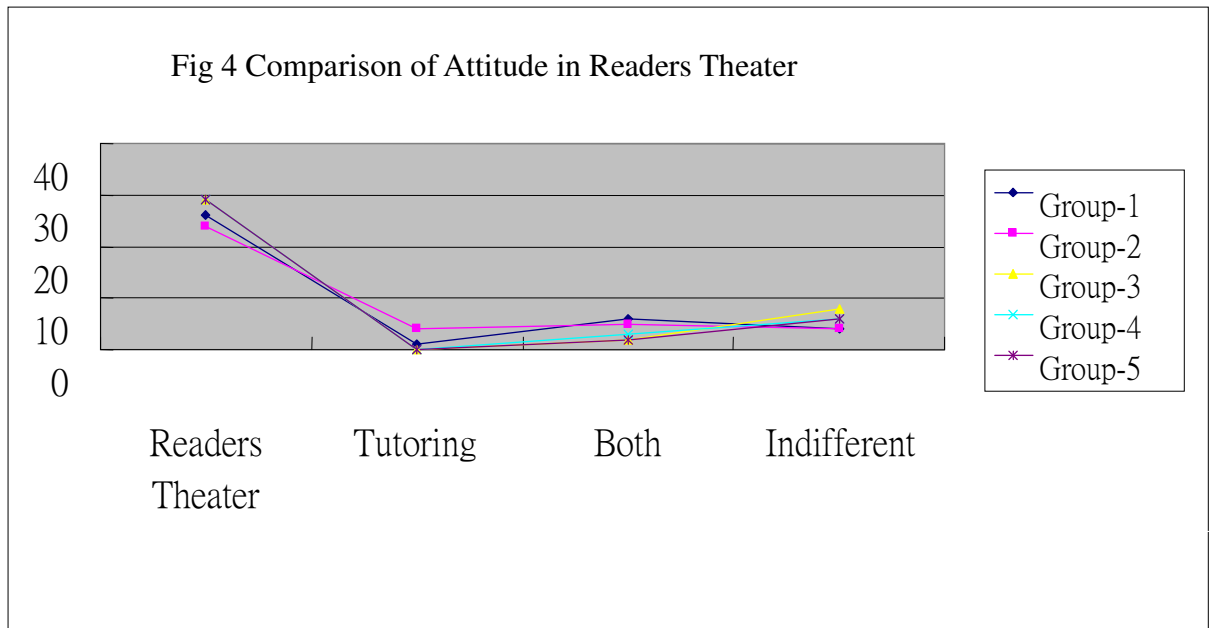
II. Data in the peer-evaluation of student groups' oral performances.

Immediately after each group's presentation, a peer evaluation was undertaken. According to the data collected in the mid-term comparison (Fig. 2), each group was given different ratings according to the effect of performances. From the statistics shown in the five groups, when students are asked to evaluate their comprehension of each group's oral presentation, most people think they understand 70-90% of the performances. The figures generally agree with the data collected from the total ten groups (Fig. 3)



To compare the peer evaluation of five groups (Fig. 4) and ten groups (Fig. 5) in terms of students attitude toward teaching methods, one finds that a sliding preference falls on Readers Theater when students as asked to choose one method between the Readers Theater and the conventional tutoring. However, after the

mid-term week, more and more students indicate that they favor both methods and think both methods have advantages and disadvantages.



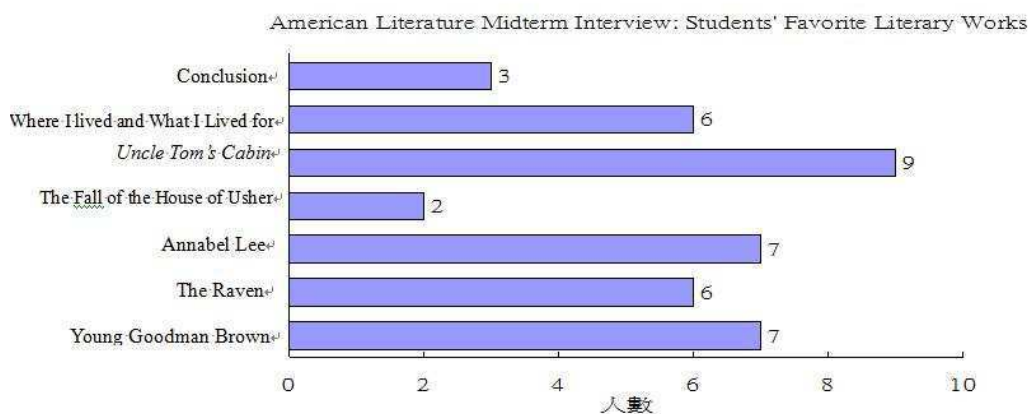
III. Qualitative Analysis

A. Interview

The research contains various kinds of qualitative analysis. First, the instructor

had an interview with all the students to achieve two purposes: (a) to check the comprehension of the students in the reading assignments; (b) to know their responses to the CRRT program. From the interview, students were asked to choose a passage from any given text and to discuss and explain the importance for the passage. Figure 6 shows the selection of students' favorite literary works. As is shown, the genres to be chosen, ranged from the most favorite to the least, are novel (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*), short story ("The Young Goodman Brown), essay ("Nature"), and then to poetry ("Annabel Lee" and "The Raven"). *The Fall of the House of the Ushers*, though a novel, is favored by few students. Generally, the statistics shows that there is no significant difference in terms of selection of favorite genres. The choice is probably based on their likes and dislikes in the language, plotting, and content of each text, or whether they find each group's performance appealing or not.

Fig. 6 Students' Favorite Literary Works (Data collected in the mid-term interview)



B. Instructor's notes and Students' Reflections

The instructor also found that the effect of performance varied from group to group. The main factor affecting each group's performance was the script and the way the students chose to perform the script. Those who had little adaptation, which was, choosing conveniently from certain passages of the original, usually led to confusing responses from the audience. Those who adapted the texts by using easier language or more conversational/dialogic forms were more understood, and thus obtained higher rating. This is also supported by students' answers to the performance in which two student wrote down their feelings:

It's difficult to let the audience to understand our lines, because the text uses many difficult vocabulary words. (Appendix VII Sample #3)

After observing other groups' presentation, we find that it is difficult to understand the whole script only through the voice of the reader theater. Most of the time, we understand the whole scrip by comprehension part., and we think it loses the value of Reader Theater. Therefore, the first goal of our group performance is trying to use easier words to present. (Student B, reflection)

Another student indicated that the CRRT program is helpful particularly because that the questions helped them to think and feel engaged in the classroom:

I like the part of Q & A. When the audience gave their opinions, they wore a big, and warm smile and gave us a positive response.

(Appendix VII, Sample #1)

As the instructor discouraged the use of costume and props, most groups chose minimum or no stage decorations; however, they used powerpoint files instead as the backdrop and also as the supplements to explain the texts. In the media to present the script, one found that almost all the groups used multimedia, sound effect and visual aids such as pictures, or animation, or video to enhance other students' understanding. It should be noted that the use of multimedia indeed greatly enhanced the comprehension of the performances.

From students' reflection, a student summarized the advantages of Readers Theater and explained the reason why she favored the Readers Theater:

While in class, I also liked the way of Readers Theater. I could understand most of the works through other groups' performances. Some of the groups mentioned the main point of the literature works, and paraphrase the scripts into easy understand ones which made me realize the works more. Moreover, they would prepare some questions to check our comprehension which gave us the chance to discuss with our group members and to think deeply about the questions.

To sum up, Readers Theater is a good method for us to learn literature. The performer has to read the work completely, pick up the key point of the work to play, cooperate with his/her group members, and come up with the questions to check audiences' comprehension of the work. I think it is really a good way to understand a work clearly. Readers Theater also gives us the chance to practice our performing ability, to handle the whole class, and to interact with the audiences. Those are the experiences that we didn't have in other classes. I really appreciated Professor Lee giving us the opportunity to practice Readers Theater in class. (Student C, Reflection)

A student in his reflection indicated how they reached agreement in their team discussion in order to make the script more accessible and comprehensible:

Originally I thought that it was very easy and interesting to present Emily Dickinson's poems by Readers Theater but, much to my surprise, it turned out to be very challenging and difficult because it required a lot of brainstorming and imagination to express the main themes in Emily's short poems. Thanks to every member's wild imagination and efforts, we successfully make up the stories for three poems. Despite some quarrels concerning the presenting approaches, we finally figured out a better way to present Emily's poems by Readers Theaters with some acting. We hoped that the audience would understand the contents clearly.

Besides, the difference of our presentation is that for fear that our classmates should feel bored and fall asleep, we endeavored to make our stories as interesting and attractive as possible. We also found as many pictures as possible so our classmates could understand the background of the poem easily. During the presentation, we felt very excited and we were happy to see our classmates smile all the time and enjoy our performances. Moreover, in the end of our presentation, we also prepared a short video about the Emily Dickinson. (Student D, Reflection)

Another student expressed her opinion on how to make the Readers Theater more effective in her reflections:

However, from my experience of presenting and observing other's performance, I do have some suggestions. In every group's presentation, I see that each one has made hard-working efforts to perform, and indeed like I said before, the preparation for this semester's presentation is much more time consuming. First, I like to recommend that each group give handouts of their performance. It could be the lines they're presenting or a short summary or the theme. In an all English presentation, it is difficult for the audience to comprehend because of presenter's pronunciation problem, voice volume, or the difficulty of the vocabulary. It starts to get boring when the audience have no idea what the presenters are talking about on stage. Second, since most students don't have much variation in their intonation, I don't recommend pure reader's theater, for the presentations I enjoyed the most were not pure reader's theater, but

those that involve drama and a lot of sound effects in the ppt. Third, it would help the audience to understand the text more by leading to read some of the text after performance. I would like to conclude that this semester I had lots of fun in learning American Literature, and I also would like to thank our teacher, Professor Lee, for putting so much effort in designing our presentation and mid-term examination. Thank you for opening the door for me and leading me to have interest in American Literature. (Student E, Reflection)

Among the most favorable responses, a student recorded her doubt and confusion at the beginning of the program:

At the beginning of the course, listening teacher how to proceed this semester, I thought it was a mission impossible. But later, I knew that I was wrong. (Student F, Reflection)

Afterwards, she expressed her sense of satisfaction and fulfillment after the program:

The process may be a little tough, but the fruit was abundant. We spent a whole day discussing how to present. Finally we decided to use classroom environment by using Q&A and sharing ways to proceed. Although we had different opinion in the process discussion, we could find a good way to suit our characters and text. (Student F, Reflection)

I was very glad that we overcame all the difficulties we met in the course. Thanks to my teacher assigned this challenging presentation that we could work together and find we could do things better than we thought at first.

IV. Suggestions, Implications and Concluding Remarks

The results shown in both quantitative and qualitative indicate that in a CRRT classroom, the learners unquestionably feel more motivated and are able to acquire a framework of the text after each group's performance. Students participating in oral reading activities are able to formulate critical and reflective thinking and fulfill a mission with their own knowledge base grounded a comparatively cross-cultural awareness. A CRRT program helps, as is expected, enhance cooperative learning and team spirit. Yet, a closer examination will find that the CRRT program does not suffice in a classroom of literature. The reasons are manifold. First, students in Taiwan, non-native speakers, lack the training of oral performing skills which make their performance sometimes inaccessible. Secondly, audience likewise lack the experiences of exposing themselves in an all-English speaking environment, as most students indicated that they felt lost if the presenting groups failed to provide further clues to understanding the text or made a poor oral performance. Thirdly, most

students admitted that they relied on visual aids or multimedia effect that the presenting group provided for a better understanding of the performance, instead of merely on the listening to the performance. Hence, a detailed close reading and teacher's guided tutoring are still needed for a better understanding of the texts. The instructor also found that after the instructor's analysis and tutoring, students felt that they benefited from the points overlooked by the presenting groups.

In prospect, non-native English educators need to adopt an eclectic approach in the teaching of American Literature, that is, a combination of traditional tutoring and student-centered oral performances, and stress the importance for training of critical thinking and analysis.

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Appendix I

EN404 Syllabus for American Literature (2009)

國立高雄師範大學九十七學年度教學綱要

科目代號：EN 404

科目名稱：(中文)美國文學

必修 選修

教師：李翠玉

(英文) American Literary Works

每學期開課學分數：上學期 二 學分 下學期 二 學分

總學分數：四 學分 每週上課時數：二 小時

先修科目： 備註：

所需教學設備：

任課班級	英四	
辦公地點	研發處推廣合作組 by appointment	
連繫電話	校內	
	email	jadelee@nkn.edu.tw

一、教學目標(Course Objective)：

This course focuses on an introduction to major American

literary works. Throughout the course, students are expected to

-- develop cultural literacy through orally performing the texts

-- develop proficiency in four language skills in English;

-- appreciate literary works by major American writers

-- obtain an understanding of American culture, values and history from the Colonial Period to the Present

-- express their views and interpretation in literary analysis.

二、教材內容：(若是整學年課程，包括上、下學期) (Course Content)

Literature circle, Readers Theater, Explication de Texte; Reading, Writing and Oral Presentations

三、實施方法 (Teaching Methodology)

1. The class will include students' creative writing, discussion, workshop, students' presentations/reports and/or exams.
2. Students are required to read assigned materials, adapt the texts into readable/performable versions, do oral reports and engage peer students into participating actively in class workshop and discussion.

四、評量方式(Grading Policy)：

Group Presentation	35%
Class attendance and participation	15%
Peer evaluation	10%
Mid-term exam/work	15%
Final exam/work	15%

Attending Webchat Discussion and Related Academic Lectures 10 %

五、主要讀本及參考書目(若不敷使用請自行黏貼) Textbooks and References

(1) 主要讀本： 作者 書名 出版地點：出版社 出版年

Baym, Nina, et al. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Shorter 6th edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998.

(2) 參考書目(References) :

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 6th ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993.

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Holman, C. H. and W. Harmon. *A Handbook to Literature*. 5th ed. New York: Macmillan, 1986.

Hugh, Peter B. *An Outline of American Literature*. London and New York: Longman, 1986.

Lauter, Paul et al. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 2 vols. 3rd Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Salzman, Jack, et al, eds. *The Cambridge Handbook of American Literature*. Rpt. Taipei: Bookman Books, 1988.

六、教學進度：

(英四)美國文學

週別	主題	內容	備註
1	Introduction to course objectives & policies		
2	Introducing the authors Group Discussions		All ten groups
3	Nathaniel Hawthorne	“Young Goodman Brown” (pp. 610-18)	1
4	Edgar Allan Poe	“To Helen” (p. 697) “The Raven” (pp. 697-700) “Annabel Lee” (pp. 703-704)	2
5	Edgar Allan Poe	“The Fall of the House of Usher” (pp. 714-727)	3
6	Harriet Beecher Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or Life among the Lowly</i> Chapter VII (pp. 771-783)	4
7	Henry David Thoreau	“Resistance to Civil Government” (pp. 837-53) “Walden” “Where I lived, and What I Lived for” (pp. 895-905) “Conclusion” (pp. 931-39)	5
8	Review (meeting with instructor)		
9	Mid-term Exam Week		
10	Walt Whitman	Preface to <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855) (pp. 985-1003) <i>Song of Myself</i> #1-#26	6
11	Herman Melville	“Bartleby, the Scrivener” (pp. 1081-1111)	7
12	Emily Dickinson	Selected Poems #130, #241, #258 #303, #328, #341, #465, #501, #632, #712, #986, #1078, #1624	8 Choose any three poems
13	Ralph Ellison	<i>Invisible Man</i> (pp. 2373-2384)	9
14	Maxine Hong Kingston	“No Name Woman” (pp. 2556-2566)	10
15	Review (meeting with instructor)		
16	Final Exam Week		

* All students are expected to read through the assigned reading and attend the class **prepared**.

* Students will be divided into 10 groups. Each member of the group will be responsible for orally presenting the assigned authors/texts along with preparing a written handout.

One copy of in-class handout containing the following materials should be submitted to the instructor in class. The handout, along with the group portfolio containing the following materials should be posted on the NKNU on-line course platform by the following week:

I. In-class Handout in a lesson plan format

1. Pre-reading questions
2. Script (no more than 30 minutes)
3. After-reading activities
 - A. Comprehension Check
 - B. Audience Feedback, evaluation & Comments
 - C. Questions or Topics for Discussions to engage the audience

II. Group Portfolio

1. Edited Video Clipping of oral performances, pictures, or other visual aids in digitalized forms;
2. A statement indicating various responsibilities of individual member, each member's sharing of reading and performing experiences, production notes, and references;
3. Individual member's reflections (for the understanding, guiding of the text, for the performance, for audience responses and etc.)

Readers Theater on College-level American Literature Program (RTCAL)

Group and Individual Responsibilities

Instructions:

Each member of the group will be responsible for orally presenting the assigned authors/texts along with preparing a written handout.

One copy of in-class handout containing the following materials should be submitted to the instructor in class. The handout, along with the group portfolio containing the following materials should be posted on the NKNU on-line course platform by the following week:

I. In-class Handout in a lesson plan format

- 1. Pre-reading questions**
- 2. Script (no more than 30 minutes)**
- 3. After-reading activities**
 - A. Comprehension Check**
 - B. Audience Feedback, evaluation & Comments**
 - C. Questions or Topics for Discussions to engage the audience**

II. Group Portfolio

- 1. Edited Video Clipping of oral performances, pictures, or other visual aids in digitalized forms;**
- 2. A statement indicating various responsibilities of individual member, each member's sharing of reading and performing experiences, production notes, and references;**
- 3. Individual member's reflections (for the understanding, guiding of the text, for the performance, for audience responses and etc.)**

Appendix II

A Pre-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students' Responses to the Learning Experiences of American Literature

國立高雄師範大學學生對美國文學學習經驗的看法之前測問卷

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Part I : Attitude in Learning American Literature					
1. I think learning American Literature is important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I think learning American Literature is interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I think learning American Literature is helpful in the development of critical thinking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Generally speaking, I enjoy learning American literature.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part II: Enhancement of Four Skills					
5. I think learning American literature helps improve my listening ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I think learning American literature helps improve my speaking ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I think learning American literature helps improve my reading ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I think learning American literature helps improve my writing ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part III : Attitude in Reading American Literature					
9. I usually actively read American literary works.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I enjoy reading American novels.					
11. I enjoy reading American poetry.					
12. I do not feel nervous when reading American literary works.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. I think it is easy to read American literary works.
14. I think reading American literary works is important.
15. Generally speaking, I think reading American literary works helps improve my English reading comprehension ability.

Part IV : Cooperative Learning Experiences

16. American literature courses enhance the cooperation among students.
17. Students are encouraged to solve the problems together in American literature courses.
18. I like to interact with my classmates in American literature courses.
19. I like to interact with teacher in American literature courses
20. Generally speaking, I enjoy the cooperative learning in American literature courses.

Appendix III

**A Post-study Questionnaire on National Kaohsiung Normal University Students'
Responses to RT Learning Experiences of American Literature**

Class: _____ Student Number: _____

Name: _____

☆ Based on your experiences, please check the appropriate box to indicate your response.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Part I : Attitude in Learning American Literature					
1. I think learning American Literature is important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I think learning American Literature is interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I think learning American Literature is helpful in the development of critical thinking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Generally speaking, I enjoy learning American literature.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part II: Enhancement of Four Skills					
5. I think learning American literature helps improve my listening ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I think learning American literature helps improve my speaking ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I think learning American literature helps improve my reading ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I think learning American literature helps improve my writing ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part III : Attitudes in Reading American Literature					
9. I will actively read American literary works.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I enjoy reading American novels.					
11. I enjoy reading American poetry.					

12. I do not feel nervous when reading American literary works.
13. I think it is easy to read American literary works.
14. I think reading American literary works is important.
15. Generally speaking, I think reading American literary works helps improve my English reading comprehension ability.

Part IV : Cooperative Learning Experiences

16. American literature courses enhance the cooperation among students.
17. Students are encouraged to solve the problems together in American literature courses.
18. I like to interact with my classmates in American literature courses.
19. I like to interact with teacher in American literature courses
20. Generally speaking, I enjoy the cooperative learning in American literature courses.

Part V: Readers Theater Activity

21. I like American literature courses more because of Readers Theater activity.
22. I am more interested in adapting scripts because of Readers Theater activity.
23. Readers Theater activity encourages students to cooperate with each other.
24. Readers Theater activity encourages the interactions between students and teachers.
25. Generally speaking, I think Reader Theater activity is helpful in learning American literature.
26. Generally speaking, compared to traditional tutoring, I like Readers Theater activity more.

☆ Please answer the following questions

1. After Readers Theater activity, I am satisfied with my performance.

Yes No Why/Why not?

2. I want to know more about writers and their works in American literature through Readers Theater activity.

Yes No Why/Why not?

3. Which language ability do you want to improve through Readers Theater activity?

Listening Speaking Reading Writing Translation

Communicative skills

Why? _____

4. I think the major difference between traditional tutoring and Readers Theater activity lies in

5. After Readers Theater Activity, my ability of autonomous learning is improved. I know how to learn English and read English classics by myself.

Yes No Why/Why not?

6. After Readers Theater Activity, my ability of Cooperative learning is improved.

Yes No Why/Why not?

7. Among all the Readers Theater Activity, which do you enjoy most?

Adapting the script The Rehearsal process Performance Feedback
Recording

Why? _____

8. If possible, I would like to apply Readers Theater in American literature learning and teaching again.

Yes No

Why/Why not?

9. I'd like to recommend Readers Theater to other learners.

Yes No

Why/Why not?

Peer-Evaluation Form

Name: _____ Student number: _____

Piece Performed: _____

Author: _____

	grade	comment
1. Script Use 3% (Cue Pick-up, Flow, Pacing, Handling)		
2. Staging 3% (Accessibility, Movements, Relationships)		
3. Narration 2% (Mood, Timing, Involvement)		
4. Vocal/Physical 2% (Body language, Characterization, Volume)		

1. Are you satisfied with the performance? Why?

After the performance, how much do you know about the literary work?

90-100% 80-90% 70-80% 60-70% lower than 60%

Why?

Which part of the performance do you like most? Why?

What should be improved in this performance? Why?

Which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater? Why?

Self-Evaluation Form

Name: _____ Student number: _____ Date: _____

1. The literary work: _____ The character: _____

2. Do you like this work? Why?

3. Please use two to three sentences to describe this character.

4. Are you satisfied with your performance? Why?

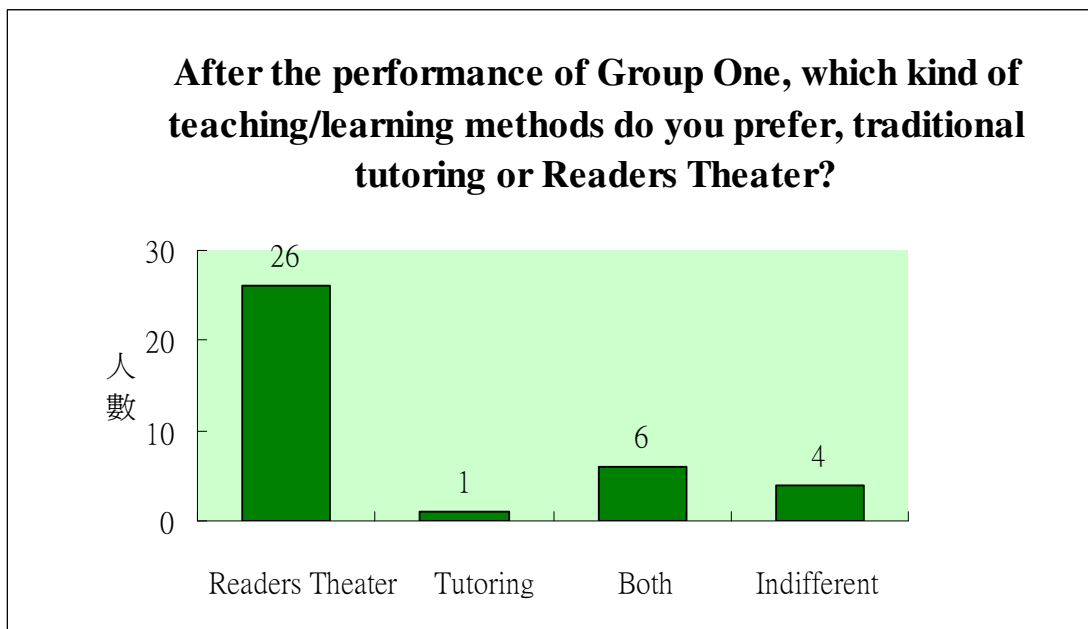
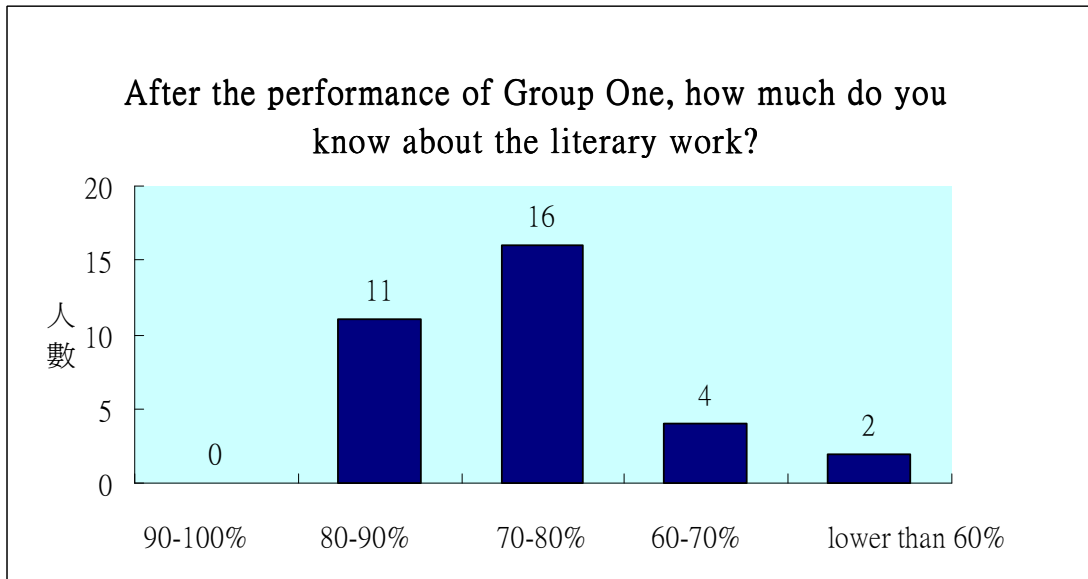
5. What do you learn from this Readers Theater activity?

6. What are your difficulties in this Readers Theater activity?

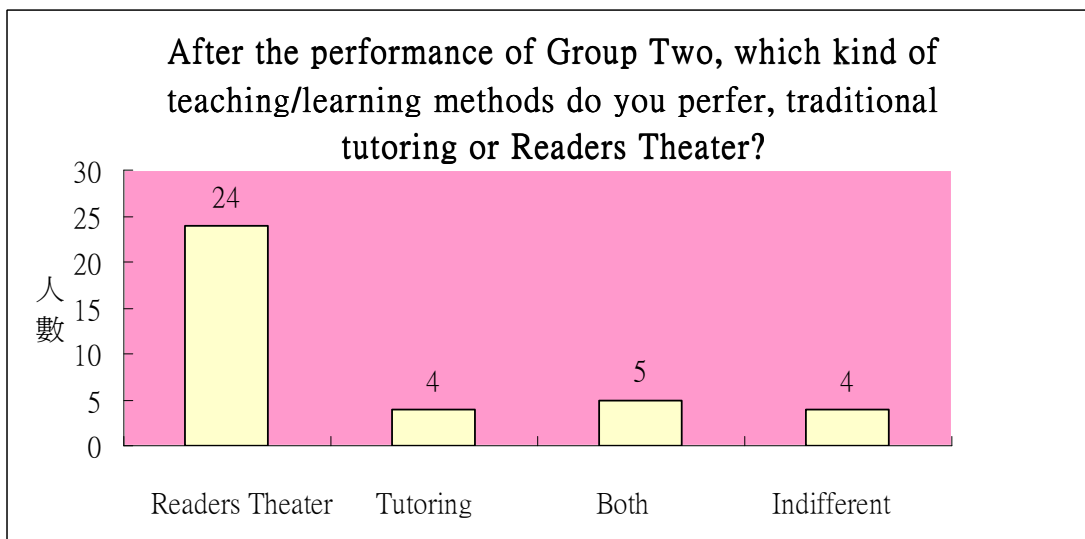
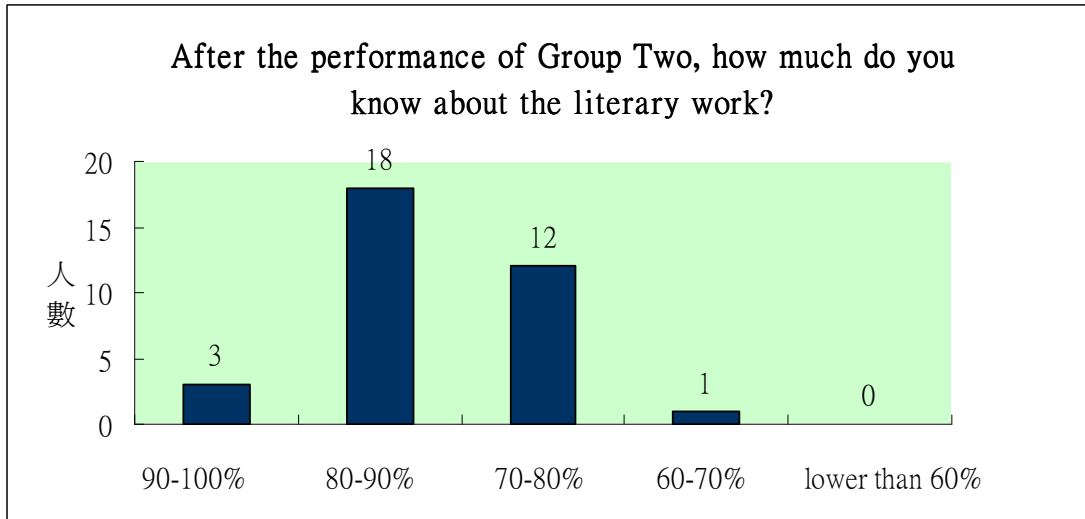
7. Which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater? Why?

Appendix VI
Attitude in Readers Theater

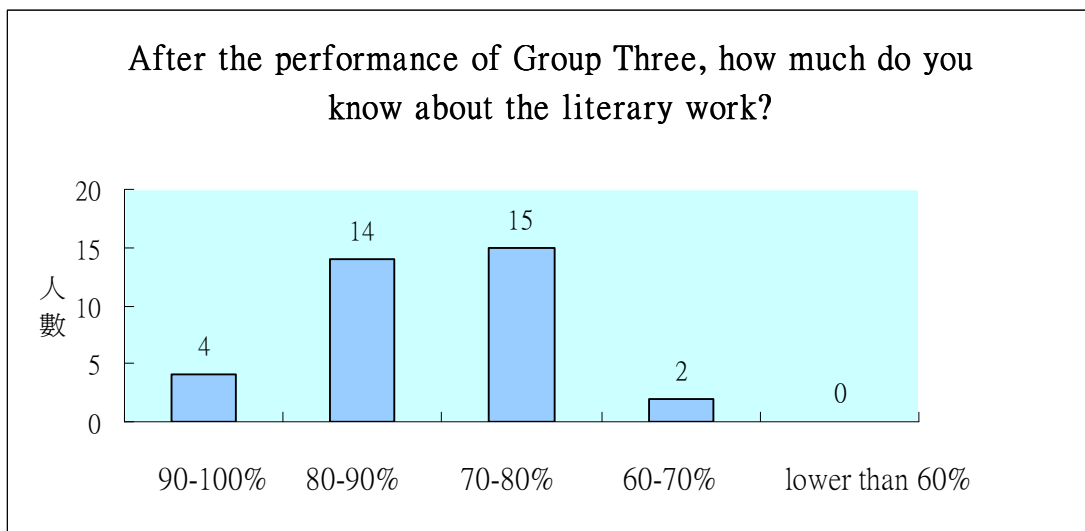
#1 Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown."



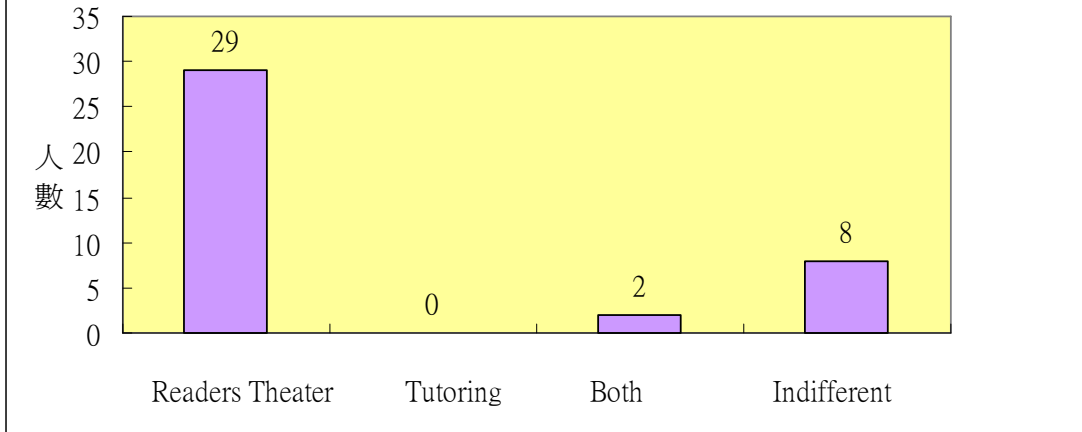
2 Edgard Allan Poe's "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee"



Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of House of Usher"

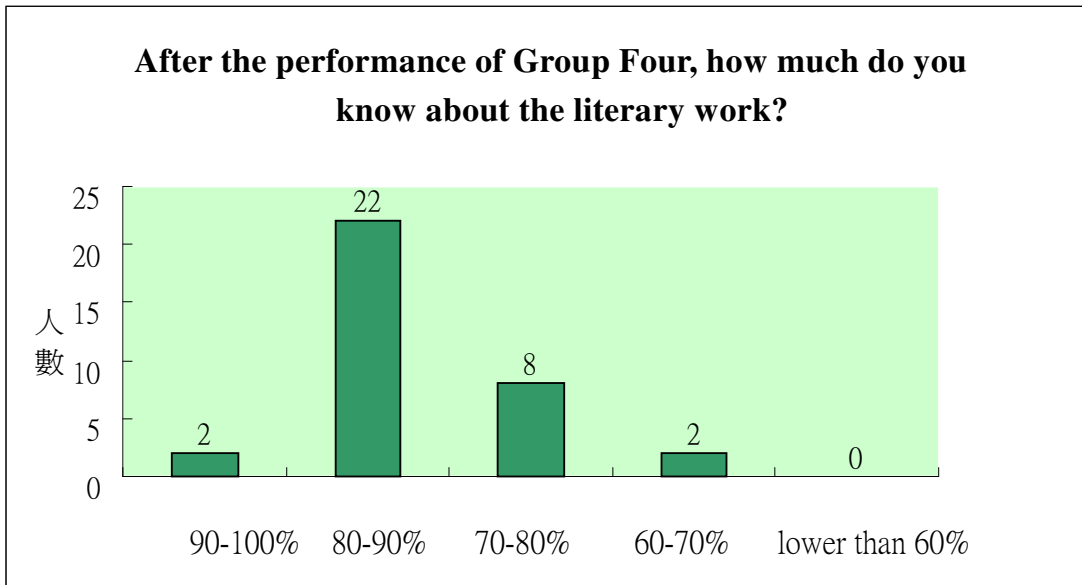


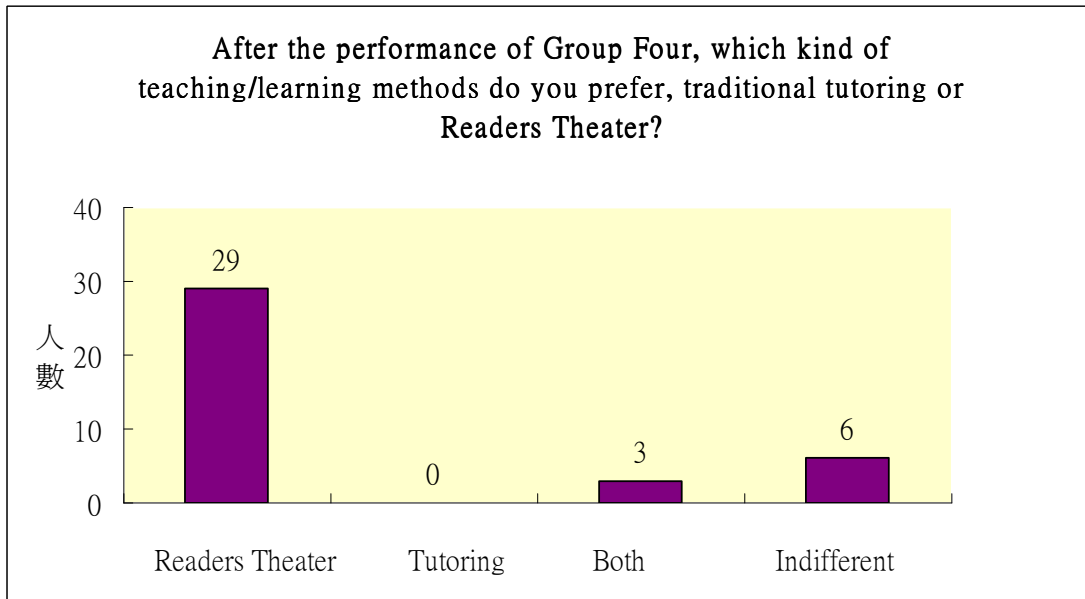
After the performance of Group Three, which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater?



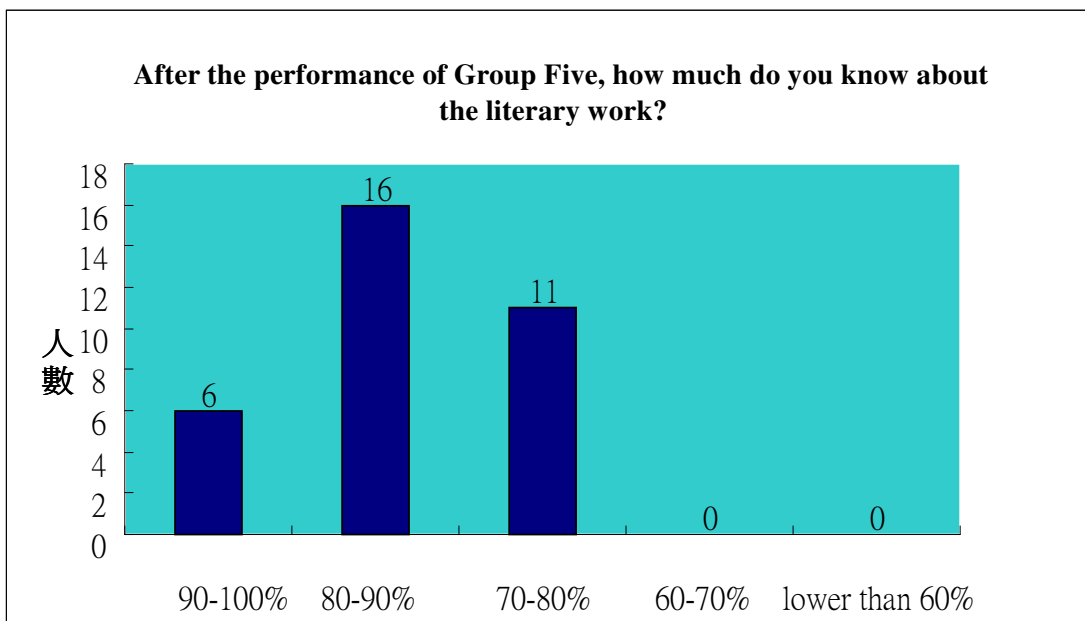
#4 Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

After the performance of Group Four, how much do you know about the literary work?

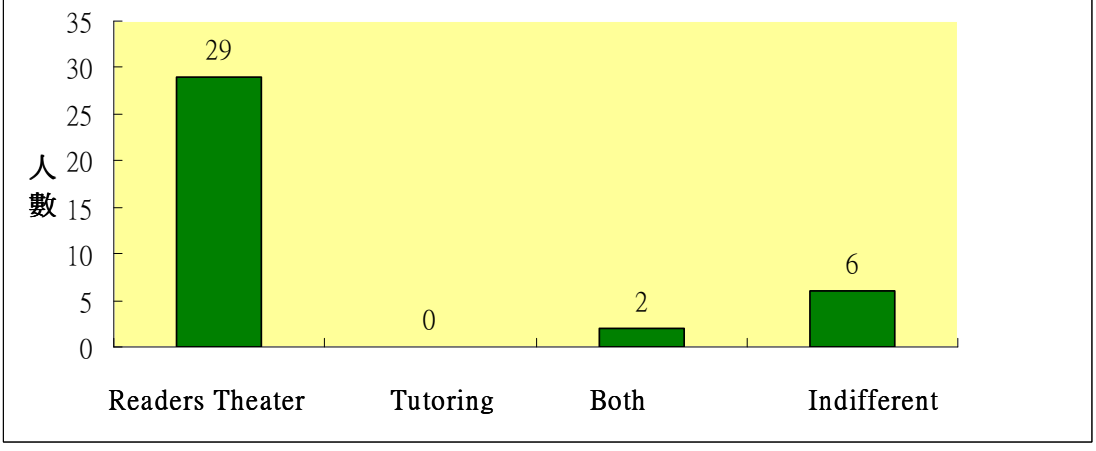




#5 Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (excerpts)



After the performance of Group Five, which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater?



Appendix VII

Peer-Evaluation Forms filled in by the students (Sample #1)

附件七

Peer Evaluation

Name: 王南强 Student number: 49412060
 Piece Performed: "The Raven"; "Annabel Lee"
 Author: Edgar Allen Poe

	grade	comment
1. Script Use 3% (Cue Pick-up, Flow, Pacing, Handling)	2	They did not bad on translating poems into writings.
2. Staging 3% (Accessibility, Movements, Relationships)	2	The much interaction they have, the more vivid their performance is.
3. Narration 2% (Mood, Timing, Involvement)	2	Good.
4. Vocal/Physical 2% (Body language, Character Volume)	1	I hardly feel the atmosphere they tried to make. "The Raven"'s atmosphere is not gloomy enough. I think the narrator may be quite insane in the end. If their voices were rich, the performance would be much better.

1. Are you satisfied with the performance? Why?
 Yes. I like the part which they interacted with us. When we expressed our opinions, they would give us response.

1. After the performance, how much do you know about the literary work?
 90-100% 80-90% 70-80% 60-70% lower than 60%
 Why? It's impressing their "animated cartoon". They explained and expressed their understanding in detail.

2. Which part of the performance do you like most? Why?
 I like the part of Q & A. When the audience gave their opinions, they were a big, and warm smile and gave us a positive response.

3. What should be improved in this performance? Why?
 Put their comprehension questions on the ppt and give us much time thinking about the poem or questions.

4. Which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater? Why?

Peer-Evaluation Forms filled in by the students (Sample #2)

附件七

Peer Evaluation

Name: 李郁潔 Student number: 49412090
 Piece Performed: Uncle Tom's Cabin ch VII
 Author: Harriet Beecher Stowe

	grade	comment
1. Script Use 3% (Cue Pick-up, Flow, Pacing, Handling)	3	They perform fluently.
2. Staging 3% (Accessibility, Movements, Relationships)	3	They have movements and they use the name card to demonstrate their relationships.
3. Narration 2% (Mood, Timing, Involvement)	2	They are good at using the intonation and performing their characters.
4. Vocal/Physical 2% (Body language, Characterization, Volume)	2	The sound of the microphone can be lower.

1. Are you satisfied with the performance? Why?

Yes, they perform with good intonation and movement.
Besides, they use sound effect and picture to create a good background.
Also, they invite classmates to present part of their reading.

2. After the performance, how much do you know about the literary work?

90-100% 80-90% 70-80% 60-70% lower than 60%

Why? Although they have picture, some part of the dialogue I still missed.

3. Which part of the performance do you like most? Why?

I like showing most.
It's fun to see other classmates to perform the characters.

4. What should be improved in this performance? Why?

The sound of the microphone can be lower.

5. Which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater? Why?

I like Readers Theater. It's more active.

Appendix VIII

Self-Evaluation Forms filled in by the students (sample #1)

附件八

Self Evaluation

Name: 張嘉節 Student number: 49412084 Date: 3/24

1. The literary work: The fall of the house The character: Roderick Usher

2. Do you like this work? Why? of Usher

Yes, I do. This story is very creative and mysterious. The characters are really special and unique.

3. Please use two to three sentences to describe this character.

This character suffered from mental disease, so he was very sensitive. He was almost driven to be crazy and mad, and did those terrible things eventually.

4. Are you satisfied with your performance? Why?

Yes, I am. The audience appear interested. But I think maybe we can try to make some sounds ourselves on the stop to make the performance runs more fluently.

5. What do you learn from this Readers Theater activity?

I learn how to make a script into a play, and how to make a performance more vivid and interesting.

6. What are your difficulties in this Readers Theater activity?

It is difficult to let the audience understand our lines, because the text uses many difficult vocabulary words.

7. Which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater? Why?

Reader Theater. Though it is more complicated and difficult to prepare well, it is easier to attract students' attention, and lead them to discuss actively.

Self-Evaluation Forms filled in by the students (sample #1)

附件八

Self Evaluation

Name: 吴昭蓉 Student number: 49912045 Date: 3/21

1. The literary work: Uncle Tom's Cabin The character: Phineas, Andy, Symmes

2. Do you like this work? Why?

Yes, this novel shows how hard the slavery suffer, which makes me realize the details of slavery.

3. Please use two to three sentences to describe this character.

Phineas: She's kind white woman. Although she is a "white" woman, she saves Eliza and Harry.

Andy: He is a slave, who always act as an innocent boy, and does what his master told him.

Symmes: He's as kind white man as Phineas. Both Phineas and Symmes save Eliza and Harry. It shows that they are abolitionist who is pity for slavery.

4. Are you satisfied with your performance? Why?

Yes, we prepared this performance for a month. And we practice again and again to make our performance perfect. We let our mood engage in the circumstances of the context.

5. What do you learn from this Readers Theater activity?

We need to revise the play, search the pictures and sound effect which are related to the content. We also learned how to perform better with intonation.

This activity makes me realize how important group cooperation is.

6. What are your difficulties in this Readers Theater activity?

It's difficult to change the text into script. And it's hard to pronounce the intonation involving the characters' mood. It takes a lot of time to find the related pictures.

7. Which kind of teaching/learning methods do you prefer, traditional tutoring or Readers Theater? Why?

Readers Theater.

I like the cooperation with group members. And Readers Theater gives us the chance to make a performance. By producing our performance perfect, it makes understand the novel clearly.

Appendix VIII Group Portfolio (excerpt)

Group 5

Arrangement of Peer Evaluation:

Advantages:

1. Background music (act 1)
2. Mood involvement(act 1)
3. Punch line (act 1)
4. Drama
5. Being able to show the theme in daily lives (act 1)
6. Close to daily lives (act 1)
7. Fun
8. Interesting dialogue
9. Actors and actresses
10. Lines à deeply thought
11. PowerPoint
12. Present the main theme well
13. Good connection between poems and presentation
14. Examples of real life
15. Presentation is easy to understand
16. Interesting script
17. A lot of interesting pictures
18. Pre-reading questions are related to our lives
19. Impressive short video clip

Disadvantages:

I think it may be more perfect if all the members acted on the stage.

1. They can explain more.
2. They should focus on more vocal performance.
3. I think they should read the poem after the show so we can understand it more deeply.
4. They should emphasize on their vocal part more.
5. Their voice could be louder.
6. Pre-reading questions. They can be improved to let us know more about what will happen.
7. The story can be longer because they're interesting.
8. Maybe the narration. Narration can be much more attractive or interesting.

9. I have some suggestion about comprehension check. They can put the numbers of poems after the question they want us to discuss.
10. Ricky's pronunciation.
11. They can also lead us to read the poem.
12. Use some sentences from the poems.
13. Some actors in the presentation did not pronoun the correct line clearly.
14. Some of them should improve their pronunciation, and speak much more clearly.
15. They can practice more in reading. In their performance, they still perform a little like drama.
16. They should give more explanation to the theme of the poetry.
17. Their performance is a little simple. Their shows are short and don't read the poem to us.
18. Maybe they can lead the audience to read together.
19. They can put more pictures in ppt.
20. Some of the symbols they perform are not so clear.
21. The third show is hard to be understood. They should give more explanation.
22. A little confused about characters
23. Need more body languages

Self-Evaluation of Work Performance:

(1) Comprehension:

1. They can explain more.
2. I think they should read the poem after the show so we can understand it more deeply.
3. Pre-reading questions. They can be improved to let us know more about what will happen.
4. I have some suggestion about comprehension check. They can put the numbers of poems after the question they want us to discuss.
5. They should give more explanation to the theme of the poetry.
6. Some of the symbols they perform are not so clear.
7. The third show is hard to be understood. They should give more explanation.
8. A little confused about characters

(2) Vocal and Physical Performance:

1. They should focus on more vocal performance.
2. They should emphasize on their vocal part more.

3. Their voice could be louder.
4. Maybe the narration. Narration can be much more attractive or interesting.
5. Need more body languages

(3) Text

1. They can also lead us to read the poem.
2. Use some sentences from the poems.
3. They can practice more in reading. In their performance, they still perform a little like drama.

(4) Others

1. The story can be longer because they're interesting.
2. They can put more pictures in ppt.

The above are the main suggestions our classmates gave us. It can be categorized into four parts, including: (1) Comprehension (2) Vocal and Physical Performance (3) Text (4) Others. The most difficult task for each group is to let the audience comprehend the text, and this was also our main goal. As a result, we tried to make the text more vivid and turned it into a drama-like performance in order to make it more interesting than just reading poems. However, like what other groups suggested, there could be more links in the pre-reading questions and comprehension questions to the theme we're presenting. We didn't make it clear enough to the audience the relevance in between. Especially, I think it would be better to provide the lines we were performing, so later on we could lead to read what the theme is, and the each symbols. Some classmates also suggested us to read the text. I think this part is a little neglected in our performance; we focused too much on the acting part and could have read the textbook more. Some classmates think that we have too much drama in our performance, but we think it would be more interesting to add some drama in than pure reader's theater. Last but not least, the vocal performance is indeed a big challenge. We have not had drama training, or vocal training, so it is hard for us to successfully express the emotions by our voice, and this again is the reason why our group recommends that drama can be included as well.