

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text:  **The Joy of Writing** by Wislawa Szymborska

Ideas, Values: Creativity, Labor, Art, Movement, Seen and Unseen

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Share the quote:

"The pen is mightier than the sword" by English author Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 1839.

Discuss what you think this statement means and how it might be represented in the present day.

1st Read:

Read aloud the text while family and/or friends listen.

Vocabulary:

Check to see if there are any words that need to be talked about before the discussion begins. Listeners or readers can use context clues to help figure out possible definitions or use a dictionary or device to get a formal definition. Make sure to include the following words: *doe,* *xerox, muzzle, boughs, subordinate, sloping, eternities, bind, and bidding.*

2nd Read:

Have another participant in the discussion to read the text aloud. Then talk about what the writer or narrator feels and thinks as the text moves along.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
  + What single word best describes the text?

(Don’t share why until everyone has had a chance to answer.)

* + What about the text made you choose that answer? (anyone can share)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
  + Why might the author have chosen a nature scene to describe “The Joy of Writing?” (Anyone can share)
  + What might be the author’s intent with ending the poem the way she did? “Revenge of a mortal hand” (reference the text to share how you know.)
  + Look back at stanza 2 “Lying in wait, set to pounce on the blank page,

are letters up to no good, clutches of clauses so subordinate they'll never let her get away.” How can the author have her own words work against her?

* How are joy and power connected? Should they be connected and what might be a downside to this? Why do you think this?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
  + If you were to write a poem about the “joy of writing” what would the central idea be, and where would it take place?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Review and discuss key ideas that you heard, said, and thought during the family seminar. Chat about the connection between time/timelessness, art (words, images, objects and movements), and the internet (cloud storage).

Writing:

Pick a medium to craft something in which you can preserve its existence. Think about how it will be preserved and share with your family why you picked this medium and who you would share it with.

Do you think the audience will change with time? Why?

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

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\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1996/szymborska/facts/>

The Joy of Writing

By Wislawa Szymborska

Why does this written doe bound through these written woods?  
For a drink of written water from a spring  
whose surface will xerox her soft muzzle?  
Why does she lift her head; does she hear something?  
Perched on four slim legs borrowed from the truth,  
she pricks up her ears beneath my fingertips.  
Silence – this word also rustles across the page  
and parts the boughs  
that have sprouted from the word “woods.”

Lying in wait, set to pounce on the blank page,  
are letters up to no good,  
clutches of clauses so subordinate  
they’ll never let her get away.

Each drop of ink contains a fair supply  
of hunters, equipped with squinting eyes behind their sights,  
prepared to swarm the sloping pen at any moment,  
surround the doe, and slowly aim their guns.

They forget that what’s here isn’t life.  
Other laws, black on white, obtain.  
The twinkling of an eye will take as long as I say,  
and will, if I wish, divide into tiny eternities,  
full of bullets stopped in mid-flight.  
Not a thing will ever happen unless I say so.  
Without my blessing, not a leaf will fall,  
not a blade of grass will bend beneath that little hoof’s full stop.

Is there then a world  
where I rule absolutely on fate?  
A time I bind with chains of signs?  
An existence become endless at my bidding?

The joy of writing.  
The power of preserving.  
Revenge of a mortal hand.