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Unit 2 Writing Assignment

In Unit 2, the introduction shows a lot about teacher inquiry in the eyes of Vivian Paley. Her most prominent and important feature of teacher inquiry from her works seems to be the idea of fantasy in the classroom; relating it back to reality for both the teacher and students to grow. This element is displayed throughout many of her works and further explains how this way of questioning benefits future learning and teaching in and out of the classroom; outlined in Paley's book, *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*, "Talking to Myself in a Daily Journal: Reflections of a Kindergarten Teacher," as well as "The Importance of Fantasy Play."

In Paley's book, *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*, she sets up the classroom so that students are free to engage in the story as much as they want. Paley allows for questioning beyond the basics, giving the students freedom to use the text the way they want. For example, in the story, they are drawing mice and create a story to go along with it. Paley's flexibility with inquiry welcomes imagination that gets everyone in the classroom thinking; both students and teachers can openly wonder, observe, and ponder different ideas beyond your typical classroom. This type of inquiry permits inference, as to what the reasoning or moral of the story is; answering "what and why" questions about events that happen in the stories.

Setting up a classroom with this feature of inquiry pushes students to think in depth about the book; specifically seen when the class read *Tico and the Golden Wings*. If the classroom was set up different, students might have a tunnel vision idea of what to take away from the book. Paley encourages them to go beyond what is seen and question everything; even if that means putting yourself as a character in a book to understand that maybe the take away of that book had a much deeper meaning about who people are and what they consider characteristics of friendship to be. Additionally, the mirror scene in *Mr. McMouse* had students think beyond the book, out of the classroom, even at home, to identify the significance of this part. It is possible that the representation was far too ambiguous for anyone's certainty; however, Paley's inquiry structure encourages the readers and herself in the classroom to figure out the "take away" of that scene in the story. Allowing these whimsical fantasy books and take on reality into the classroom, the readers can take the books as is or push themselves to take a step back and think critically about the characters, providing different perspectives from a plethora of interpretations from teacher to student, to those outside of the classroom too.

Another example of fantasy and reality of teacher inquiry is shown in Paley's "Talking to Myself in a Daily Journal: Reflections of a Kindergarten Teacher," because she thinks of the classroom as a story; teachers are authors and students are characters in the book. This type of thinking branches off her fantasy inquiry. The element of fantasy is that a classroom is not a story but the way Paley perceives her classroom shows the real life element in a story-like fashion. Teachers contribute to students' lives, just like an author contributes characteristics to their characters. When teachers have this mentality in the classroom, everyone benefits, because when the students have the freedom to write that they want, teachers can get a sense of who they are as people. In addition, their writing may be able to show the psychology behind what they write and why, as well as what they recall, and the correlation it may have to their lives. This reinforces the idea of fantasy and reality through this teacher inquiry.

Finally, in Paley's "The Importance of Fantasy Play," she uses the same type of inquiry to explain that imagination helps in the classroom. The idea of fantasy helps everyone in the

classroom build their own characters in their stories, and build on themselves in real life. Paley exemplifies this in her childhood; showing that she enjoyed the elements of fantasy and chose to bring those elements into her classroom. In doing so, she could further inquire and investigate her own self, while also helping her students use what she enjoyed as a child and applying that to her advantage as a teacher. Fantasy play is a way the class can be story tellers; being interpreters and delving into these stories show what we learn on a much deeper level and does not exclude anyone; especially those with language barriers; This is another reason why this feature is most important in Paley's teacher inquiry.