**Kindling with Rumi**

In recent years, the courses I teach have been gradually focusing more on Rumi’s poems, many of which have to do with finding identity. Sophomores from all backgrounds are grateful for what this poem teaches about emotions. See next page for teacher instructions on the Kindling activity.

**The Guest House**  
This being human is a guest house.   
Every morning a new arrival.   
  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,   
some momentary awareness comes   
as an unexpected visitor.   
  
Welcome and entertain them all!   
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,   
who violently sweep your house   
empty of its furniture,   
still, treat each guest honorably.   
He may be clearing you out   
for some new delight.   
  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,   
meet them at the door laughing,   
and invite them in.   
  
Be grateful for whoever comes,   
because each has been sent   
as a guide from beyond.

~ Rumi ~

(*The Essential Rumi*, versions by Coleman Barks)

**Kindling:** *a practice to ignite understanding**in classroom conversations with student-identified passages*

(especially suited for poetry)

**Teacher Instructions for Kindling**

(from Harvey Silver)

1. Teacher reads poem aloud to class, so they hear it before they see it on paper or onscreen.
2. Hand out paper copies of poem, and project poem on screen. Teacher reads again, this time asking students to ***underline*** lines they find interesting, and ***circle*** lines they find confusing.
3. Have students share in pairs what they have underlined and circled.
4. With a paper copy projected on the screen, ask students around the room to share lines they’ve selected. (I usually start by asking if they’d like to start with interesting or confusing lines. We tend to lead with confusion.)
5. As students share lines they have selected, I circle (or underline) onscreen. Now we have a collection of lines identified by students to discuss as a class.
6. Now comes the kindling part. As a class, we work down through the poem from top to bottom. I ask who has circled (or underlined) a given passage, a hand goes up, and I ask questions to probe what specifically was confusing about the passage, inviting other students to join in the conversation. Once we’ve worked together to illuminate a given passage (with me sometimes introducing or pointing out literary devices or other technical or contextual points students don’t bring up), we move on the next circled passage. Often, once we come to end, working through the confusion has been interesting enough that we forget to go back through their most interesting lines.