

Assessment for

If you've been reading some of the Assessment for Learning (AfL) articles in the last few issues of **info@ncca** you will remember how this approach to teaching and learning emphasises the importance of giving clear, focused feedback to learners.

This feedback relates to the learning intention and the criteria for success, both of which the teacher will have shared with the students. So, when you are responding to homework or work done in class, what do you want to emphasise in feedback? You want to let the learner know **three things**:

- what aspects of the work have been successful
- what aspects might need to be improved upon
- how to go about making the improvements.

The NCCA has been working with groups of teachers to develop models of this kind of feedback – what it looks like in everyday, ordinary post-primary

junior cycle classrooms. The materials have been developed for uploading to our website, but here's a sneak preview of one or two.

An example in History for 3rd Years

The syllabus area is *Understanding the Modern World* and the topic is *Social Change in the 20th Century*.

The learning Intention is described by the teacher as: *'Students will develop a deeper understanding of life in Nazi Germany from an in-depth study of women's roles in that society.'*

The criteria for success are: *Students will be able to:*

- *identify clearly the role of women in Nazi society*
- *discuss the changes that have taken place in the lifestyle of women as a result of Hitler's rule.*

The task the teacher gave to her class was:

- *Describe in detail, in diary form, the lifestyle of a woman in Nazi Germany.*

The teacher described the conditions under which the students did the task as:

'Having completed a class discussion on Nazi women based on primary and secondary sources, the students are given the task as homework, to be completed by the next class session.'

Student A

A Woman in Nazi Germany

Dear Diary,

As I went to pay a small repayment of my marriage loans today I was told that I have very old-fashioned views because of my outfits. I wear peasant dresses, flat shoes and generally my hair would be in a bun or in plaits.

I wanted to apply for politics but us women aren't allowed to have senior positions.

My daughters went to their everyday organisations today. This is a place where they are only taught two things: to take care of their bodies so they can have a many children as the state needs and to be loyal to National Socialism. I have been told that I will be removed from my job as a lawyer. This will be a huge money loss to my family.

Unfortunately not all women like my sister Margaret can get married, as there is a large lack of men. She will also lose out on the huge marriage loans. These are given to contracting parties who can borrow these sums from the government and are to be repaid slowly or to be cancelled entirely upon the birth of enough children.

We are always hearing Hitler and the Nazis complaining about people not having space, yet he tells us to have more kids.

It's very unfair; us women are deprived of all rights except that of childbirth and hard labour. We aren't permitted to participate in political life; in fact Hitler's plans eventually include the deprivation of the vote.

Here are the ten important rules to be observed when considering a husband:

- *Remember you are a German.*
- *Remain pure in mind and spirit!*
- *Keep your body pure!*
- *If hereditarily fit, do not remain single!*
- *Marry only for love.*
- *Being a German, only choose a spouse of similar or related blood!*
- *When choosing your spouse, inquire into his forebears!*
- *Health is essential to outward beauty as well.*
- *Seek a companion in marriage, not a playmate.*
- *Hope for as many children as possible! Your duty is to produce at least four offspring in order to ensure the future of the national stock.*

learning

Offering supportive feedback

On these pages you will see two examples of work produced by Students A and B in response to the task. The first one, from Student A, is a more complete and generally more successful response. So, for the purposes of this article we will concentrate on how to respond to the, not so successful, work presented by Student B.

Before continuing to read the advice actually given by the teacher to Student B, it might be a good idea to look back at the criteria for success and imagine (even if you are not a teacher of junior cycle history!) what you might want to say to this student to help her improve her work.

Feedback for student

You have done quite well here, especially in listing the kinds of detail that would have been familiar to people in their ordinary lives.

To improve, you should keep a clear focus on the changes that took place in their lives.

What do we know, for example, about their lifestyles in these areas:

- work
- personal appearance
- education

In line with AfL practice the teacher hasn't offered a mark or grade for the piece of work. The first impulse is to draw attention to what worked – the detail from ordinary life. When the teacher wants to indicate how the student might improve she goes back to one of the criteria for success (indicating the changes in their lives) and prompts the learner to consider three areas for improvement. Notice that the prompts are in the form of questions for the student to consider. Simple enough, but effective! Is that how you would have approached it?

Now, here is the teacher's reflection on the standard of this piece of work, expressed as advice to a colleague, another teacher of history.

Commentary for teachers

- Student has identified the role of women in Nazi Germany through her discussion of the awarding of medals for numerous childbirths, etc.
- A limited description is given of changes in the lifestyle of women. Accurate reference is made to 'her' son being a member of 'Hitler Youth' and the fact that it was considered wrong for a woman to be smoking in public.
- More detail might be explored, especially in relation to women's right to work outside the home.
- Overall, a moderate grasp of the task. Both of the criteria have been met and explored in some detail. Little evidence of independent learning and research, yet good detail is provided.

If this teacher were going to award a mark for this work, this is where the mark would have 'come from'. The criteria for success, as shared with the student, would then have become assessment criteria for the teacher and the student.

Update on the AfL exemplars

Thus far, we have gathered materials in the areas of English, history, home economics, geography, science, physical education, art, CSPE, materials technology (wood), and technical graphics. We are currently putting together examples in other junior cycle subject areas including Gaeilge, mathematics, modern languages, classics, business, music, and religious education, all of which will be available on our website. For further information, email: newsletter@ncca.ie

Student B

Diary entry for a woman in Nazi Germany

Dear Diary,

Today was a remarkable day, with everything that happened. I received a gold medal for having eight children to account for in my family. This is my third medal to receive now for this reason. Today was also the day we paid off the final debt of the loan. Since having Olga recently, Heinrich and I only had to pay a total of 550 marks, thanks to Hitler.

He is a great and generous man, whom we are lucky to have as our leader. My young Ernst is now a member of 'Hitler Youth', since turning fourteen.

Also note, Helga Himmler is a disgrace to Germany, I saw her in the centre of the public eye, smoking!! I hope it does not ruin people's image of me, being a past friend! 'Heil Hitler'

“ When the teacher wants to indicate how the student might improve she goes back to one of the criteria for success ”

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