

Creative Assignments for Creative Reading

The book of Revelation is one of the most creative books of the New Testament. It has inspired many artists, whether painters, sculptors, musicians, writers, or filmmakers. The book stimulates the imagination because it was written with such a purpose. As I have written in a previous book, the author of Revelation follows the patterns of first-century plays that appealed to all five senses in order to create a cathartic experience. For the first-century persecuted Christians, the cataclysms poured out unto God's enemies give them somewhat a response to the cry, "Oh Lord, how long before will you avenge our blood (Rev. 6)" For modern readers, it allows them to find relief from despair or anxiety. The dualistic worldview of the author springs out of sensory contrasts: the throne room is lit with dazzling and warm colors (Rev. 4) while the horsemen bring darkness and death (Rev. 6); the mourning and cries of Babylon the great (Rev. 18) contrast with the melodious songs of the heavenly hosts (Rev. 5); the softness and warmth of heaven contrasts with the coldness of the armor of the mounted troops (Rev. 9); the simplicity and beauty of Jesus' garment (Rev. 1) contrast with the provocative and complicated array of the great prostitute (Rev. 17); the smell of sulfur follows God's enemies while incense accompanies the prayers of the saints. A simple exegetical approach to this innovative book misses the fundamental imaginative purpose. Instead of experiencing the book as a message of hope and relief, the reader may find it only dark and daunting. As an educator, I decided to let the imagination of my students flourish. In that spirit, I have introduced several assignments that allow them to use their own talents and live a cathartic experience through drama, music creation, movie making, and more. Those exercises give a rich texture to the class and forces all to remain truthful to the creative aspect of the book. This paper proposes to present concrete examples of students' creations that were pedagogically enriching.