1. “Both men believe, then, real liberation is achieved through popular participation. Participation in turn is realized through an educational practice that itself is both liberatory and participatory, that simultaneously creates a new society and involves the people themselves in the creation of their own knowledge.” (xxx, Introduction)

This passage gives the reader an introduction to the beliefs of Horton and Freire in regards to the process of education as liberation. The introduction is helpful in that it provides an outside perspective that synthesizes ideas.

“Look, I am convinced that a progressive educator cannot speak exclusively with the people. He or she has also to speak, from time to time, to the people. It has to do with the directiveness of education, and directiveness does not mean necessarily authoritarianism or manipulation. Education has the directivity because education has objectives, you see. Education is not neutral, and because of that it has directiveness.” (Friere, 64)

This quote is important because it speaks about the non-neutrality of education. The educator has a perspective that exists and cannot be denied.

“I can start where I am, but they’ve got to start where they are. But then if you don’t have some vision of what ought to be or what they can become, then you have no way of contributing anything to the process. Your theory determines what you want to do in terms of helping people grow.” (Horton, 100)

This quote is interesting to me because it ties together with some of our topics in Learning Theory. Horton seems to have similar views to a constructivist, that knowledge
is gained through the process of relearning based on one’s own experience. I also appreciate how Horton discusses the theory of the teacher impacting the way they work.

“I feel I can raise questions that are much more far-reaching and much more in-depth and much more radical, much more revolutionary, this way than I could if I was talking to them and trying to explain things to them.” (Horton, 153)

This quote is interesting to me because Horton is asserting that ideas are “more radical” if students are given the space to come to them on their own.

“I think that it’s really impossible to teach how to think more critically by just making a speech about critical thought. It’s absolutely indispensable to give a witness, an example, of thinking critically to the students.” (Friere, 173)

This quote goes into the methodology that Friere believes that teachers must use in order to foster critical consciousness. This echoes Horton’s belief that students’ learning is valuable if it is intrinsically motivated.

2. Themes of this book include political education, ties between political action and popular education, history of critical pedagogy, importance of dialogue, liberatory vs. oppressive educational practices.

3. This book is an interesting format in that it is not only co-authored, but each author’s contributions are separated and their perspectives are both made very clear. Both Horton and Friere are able to describe their background and share their philosophies, and find ways in which they intersect. The two men are both interested in the political nature of education, and believe that for schooling to be truly effective it must give students tools
that are relevant to their lives. They each believe that teachers have the responsibility to show vulnerability towards their students and allow students to learn on their own, rather than having teacher directed methods.

4. a. These authors would say that the responsibility of the teacher is to understand the needs of their students and help the students grow independently. Both authors had intense personal connections with the communities they were serving, and believe that teachers should find ways to strengthen relationships with students. They both believed that teachers must guide students to learning rather than exclusively providing information. They believe that teachers must recognize that their position is political, and make sure their teaching methods are in line with their politics. Lastly, I would say that they both believe that teachers must recognize that any experience can be a learning experience.

b. I saw the conversations in this book providing both an experiential and theoretical basis for the ideas found in our other readings. There have been many common themes this quarter; importance of community, the political nature of teaching, the perspective of an individual teacher, how teaching methods are deeply intertwined with politics, and many more. I saw a deep connection between this text and Maxine Greene, even if the approaches were vastly different. Both texts focused on the transformative power of education and how the teacher must reflect on their own beliefs to be able to teach effectively. I saw connections also with the Delpit text: both would argue that a teacher needs to be intimately aware of the needs of the community they are serving and change their methods to best serve students. hooks was evoked in the idea that no teacher can leave their politics “outside the classroom,” and that personal beliefs will always shape
the way a person teaches.

5. This book was a great read for me because it not only made me more familiar with the theories of the two authors, it also provided an historical context for critical pedagogy that I found fascinating. I enjoyed how they compared their experiences teaching in different corners of the world that still had some similar needs that needed to be met.

I feel like I learned that teachers can be more effective if they ask open questions and allow students to think for themselves. I have always believed this, but I appreciated that this book articulated this idea in a more complete way. I think this reading helped me understand the idea of critical consciousness more thoroughly than any other text we have read. The examples the authors provided of students working to gain critical thinking skills gave me templates to work from. I hope that as we discuss this reading, we can find more connections to other authors and also draw connections with readings from Learning Theories.