

Succeeding in the Face of Disaster

Themed Literature Unit



Julian Barnes
Sixth Grade
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Thematic Framework

For my themed literature unit, I spent a great deal of time in thought. I considered: what theme will appeal to my students? How can I create a unit that furthers learning and is enjoyable? What books will support my theme in a multicultural way? Through speaking with Professor Schlick Noe, my cooperating teacher, classmates and in spending time in personal introspection I have decided on a theme that I know will be a positive learning experience for my students. In writing the unit, I wanted to make sure that it would be something I will use not only this year but in my future. I am excited to share this unit with my students. At its conclusion, they will be able to answer my central questions, listed below.

Central Questions

- What does it mean to succeed in the face of disaster?
- What does it take to succeed in the face of disaster?

Rationale

When thinking through my rationale, I had to answer the question, “Is this unit worth teaching, and why is it?” My emphatic answer is “Yes, it is worth teaching!” The rest of the section will explain why. The theme I have selected and the books to be used in literature circles will enhance my students’ conceptual understanding in two ways. First, I will spend a lesson introducing the theme by reading *Angels in the Dust*. This book will serve as an effective unit kickoff text because of its content and will begin the deepening of my students’ conceptual understanding. Secondly, the books I have selected for literature circles represent many different settings and situations and contain diverse characters. Still, they are linked in the theme of succeeding in the face of disaster. Thus, no matter which text each student reads, they will gain insight into my two central questions.

A large part of the unit will be conducted outside of class time. Students will need to read the lion’s share of their literature circle books, and complete several written assignments independently. This high level of self-driven responsibility is consistent with my cooperating teacher’s belief that sixth graders need to be pushed towards independent learning. Schlick Noe and Johnson write that, “Literature circles offer an ideal context in which to build students’ independence and sense of responsibility” (1999, p. 8). Also, because the class will be engrossed in my Egypt Storypath unit during this time, this format has been partly born out of necessity (lack of class time). My hope is that the texts I have selected for the literature circles are exciting and engaging to my students. If they are (and I assume they will be), that should engender a fondness for reading that will propel the students towards a desire to become lifelong readers.

This unit was crafted with moral and ethical considerations in mind. I firmly believe that every student has the right to learn and is able to do so (if at varied levels). As such, this unit will provide each child the avenue to take part in a positive and shaping learning experience. Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences was also important to me during the unit-writing process (Smith, 2002). I have tried to incorporate

as many of the intelligences into this unit as possible in order to cater to the varied learning styles of my students. Lastly, during the book selection process, I remained cognizant of the importance of presenting multiple perspectives (Banks, 2002).

In the learning targets that follow on pages six through eight, the reader will see a clear connection between the EALRs and GLEs my unit plan addresses and my rationale. I have selected benchmarks in reading, writing and communication to assure that multiple types of learning will occur. The points of emphasis of the unit are: vocabulary development and appropriate use, respectful discussion and debate in group work, writing to varied audiences, and reading comprehension by making personal connections. Designing a unit in accordance with EALRs and GLEs has been a valuable experience as this is what I will be doing for many years to come.

Learners

The sixth grade class that I will be taking over is comprised of 26 students. There are 13 boys and 13 girls in Room 20 ranging in age from 11 to 13 years old. Along with the variety of ages comes an assortment of ability levels. Mr. R. and Mrs. B. told me that the highest reader reads at an 11th grade level while there are two students who read at a high second grade level. We also have nine students on Individual Education Plans (IEP). Their special needs include: reading disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, linguistic disabilities, developmental delay, and anger issues.

For a middle class, suburban community school, my class is quite diverse ethnically. We have 33% minority students who are Asian, Pacific Islander, African American and Hispanic/Latino. Several students are bilingual. The languages other than English spoken are: Spanish, Korean, Tagalog and Fijian. Only two of the students are on ELL maintenance and both are considered functional English speakers. The students' socio-economic status ranges from low to medium-low income. As a barometer, the school has a 40% free and reduced lunch rate. There are also many children who come from single parent households and also one in a foster home.

One thing I will need to focus on as I go into my student teaching is my classroom management. There are a handful of students who Mr. R. refers to as "busy." They will talk during instruction, distract their neighbors, talk out, and occasionally display defiant attitudes. I believe that my straightforward approach to discipline ("Rules/Consequences") will be effective and well-received. My experience has been that students will respond well when the teacher clearly lays out the parameters and guidelines for how the classroom should function. I am fortunate to have a cooperating teacher who has a similar approach to classroom management so the transition should be fairly smooth.

I will need to do several things to foster a supportive classroom environment during student teaching. Because my students are more accustomed to an independent work environment, I need to explicitly teach group skills. However, this unit will begin after I have started my Egypt Storypath so the students will already have been introduced to cooperative learning. Also, I need to continue emphasizing the class slogan, "Respect + Responsibility = Young Adults" to build community. Respect is the focus of my fifth learning target and I will stress responsibility in terms of completing assignments thoroughly and on time.

The students have had some previous experience with the “Succeeding in the Face of Disaster” theme. During our writer’s workshop, Mr. R. and I have shared personal anecdotes which fit the theme. Also, Mr. R. has done some read alouds from the book, *Into Thin Air*, a story about a disaster on Mount Everest. I am excited for the opportunity to delve further into this theme with my students.

Assessment

I believe that effective assessment strategies are vital to the success of any unit. Accordingly, I have worked hard to create assessment instruments that are varied (to support varied learning styles) and that will help me collect the data I need to evaluate student progress and make instructional decisions. The information I gather during the pre-assessment (see pages nine and ten), will help me determine students’ level of familiarity with the theme and if I need to explain any of the concepts on the form. My post-assessment will help me determine the level of understanding the students have of the theme.

As the classroom teacher, I know the importance of observations and anecdotal note-taking. I also understand the importance of concrete grading processes. In crafting this unit, I have tried to achieve a balance between informal and formal assessments. In the next two paragraphs, I will outline my plan for both strategies.

My informal, or formative, assessments include: observations, a new vocabulary list students will keep during reading, journal writing and a self-assessment. During whole class discussions and literature circle meetings, I will listen and jot down any applicable anecdotal notes regarding effective group working, making connections and so forth. The “New Words” list requirement asks students to keep track of and define words they come across while reading that they do not understand. They will need to have at least ten words with definitions per third of the book. In addition, they will be asked to complete a written piece showing appropriate usage of at least three words. The words must be circled to make them easier to locate. After each literature circle meeting, students will be required to complete a self evaluation (see page 11).

I have constructed several formal, or summative, assessment instruments to monitor student learning: a personal connection journal prompt (see page 12), two artistic response extension project options (see pages 13-14), an in-character letter (see page 15), and making use of new vocabulary from “New Words” list in a written piece. The personal connection journal prompt asks students to use their prior knowledge to make two connections. Using Vonderlage’s in-character letter assessment as an example, I have formed my own assessment instrument (2004).

Assessment Chart

<u>Learning Target 1:</u>	<u>EALRs and GLEs:</u>	<u>Evidence of Achievement and Assessment Instrument:</u>
<p><i>Students will understand what it means and what it takes to succeed in the face of disaster. (Generalization)</i></p> <p>Generalization #1- It takes courage to face disaster and to come out of it stronger.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Personal Communication- Pre-assessment: Students will complete a pre-assessment handout to gauge their understanding of the theme. (formative)</p> <p>Personal Communication: Students will respond to a writing prompt about</p>

<p>Generalization #2- Compassion and caring for others can help us get through a disaster.</p> <p>Generalization #3- Sometimes we must face disaster alone; this requires a strong self-concept and the ability to be independent.</p> <p>Generalization #4- We often have to overcome environmental challenges to succeed.</p> <p>Generalization #5- In life, some people are mean-spirited and hateful; accepting this fact is an important step needed to rise above adversity.</p> <p>Generalization #6- Our character is often absolutely changed by going through a disaster.</p>		<p>the qualities of the characters in their book (ex. courage, independence, maturation) and be asked to make at least two personal connections. (summative)</p> <p>Performance Assessment: Students will either write a paper connecting a song to the theme or create a visual representation (ex. a “help” or protest poster) relating to the theme. The song option requires two reasons why the song fits the theme and the poster project must contain two reasons for something. The two reasons for the latter are text-specific. (summative)</p> <p>Performance Assessment: Students will write an in-character letter after they have completed the book which details a character’s growth and development as they face disaster and succeed in spite of it. The letter must contain two challenges faced and how they were overcome. (summative)</p>
<p><u>Learning Target 2:</u> <i>Students will learn new vocabulary from the text and be able to apply it in their writing. (Skill/Process)</i></p>	<p><u>EALRs and GLEs:</u></p> <p>Reading 1.3 Build vocabulary through wide reading.</p> <p>GLE 1.3.1 Understand and apply new vocabulary.</p>	<p><u>Evidence of Achievement and Assessment Instrument:</u></p> <p>Performance Assessment: Student will keep a “New Words” log in which they will write words that are new to them, and their definitions. A minimum of ten words will be required for each third of the book. (formative)</p> <p>Performance Assessment: Students will be required to show appropriate use of the words in a journal entry. At least three words must be used in the context of the students’ writing. (summative)</p>

<p><u>Learning Target 3:</u> <i>Students will be able to make connections between text and self using prior knowledge.</i> (Skill/Strategy)</p>	<p><u>EALRs and GLEs:</u></p> <p>Reading 2.1 Demonstrate evidence of reading comprehension.</p> <p>GLE 2.1.4 Apply comprehension monitoring strategies before, during, and after reading: use prior knowledge.</p>	<p><u>Evidence of Achievement and Assessment Instrument:</u></p> <p>Personal Communication: Students will participate in literature circle and whole class discussions regarding prior knowledge connections. (formative)</p> <p>Performance Assessment: Students will complete a reading response journal entry in which they make at least two text to self connections (using prior knowledge). They may also use experiences of family members or friends for the entries. (summative)</p>
<p><u>Learning Target 4:</u> <i>Students will be able to write in a variety of forms in consideration of a given audience.</i> (Skill/Process)</p>	<p><u>EALRs and GLEs:</u></p> <p>Writing 2.1 Adapts writing for a variety of audiences.</p> <p>GLE 2.1.1 Applies understanding of multiple and varied audiences to write effectively.</p>	<p><u>Evidence of Achievement and Assessment Instrument:</u></p> <p>Performance Assessment: Students will write in at least three different ways to audiences ranging from themselves to the teacher to characters in the book.</p> <p>Examples include: the “New Words” list, a personal connection journal entry, an extension project either connecting a song to the theme with a half-page rationale or a poster project, lastly an in-character letter. (formative and summative)</p>
<p><u>Learning Target 5:</u> <i>Students will work in small groups and be able to respectfully discuss and debate the text and interact successfully.</i> (Skill/Process)</p>	<p><u>EALRs and GLEs:</u></p> <p>Communication 2.2 Uses interpersonal skills and strategies in a multicultural context to work collaboratively, solve problems, and perform tasks.</p> <p>GLE 2.2.1 Uses communication skills that demonstrate respect.</p>	<p><u>Evidence of Achievement and Assessment Instrument:</u></p> <p>Performance Assessment- Self-assessment: Teacher will observe student interactions during literature circles. Students will complete a self-evaluation form after literature circle meetings to determine their level of proficiency in meeting this learning target. (formative)</p>

Positive Impact on Student Learning

My unit will have a positive impact on student learning in several ways. I have fashioned the unit in such a way that it challenges students to do their best. The books for the literature circles represent broad worldviews with diverse interpretations of the unit’s theme. Also, the literature circles format will build on the collaboration that I emphasize in my Egypt Storypath unit. Learning target five urges students to treat one another with respect, an invaluable life skill. Using the assessment instruments I have created, I will be able to gather data on student learning in a variety of ways. This will

give each student an optimal opportunity for success. I look forward to being a part of my students' growth. Please see the attached assessment instruments I have developed for more details on pages 9-15.

Themed Literature Unit Pre-Assessment

Number ___ Name _____ Date _____

Learning Targets 1, 2

1.) What does it mean to succeed in the face of disaster? What does it take?

2.) Have you ever faced disaster? What happened?

3.) *What do these words mean? Write your own definition.*

Courage- _____

Caring for Others- _____

Independence- _____

Environmental Challenge- _____

Character (not “a character” but “having character”)- _____

Student Pre-assessment Checklist

_ The student filled out the heading completely.

_ The student attempted to answer each question.

_ The student tried to explain what it means and what it takes to succeed in the face of disaster (question one).

_ The student answer yes or no to question two. If they answered yes, they explained *how* they have faced disaster in a reasonably clear way.

_ The student has definitions written for at least two out of the five words in question three.

Personal Connection Journal Prompt

Learning Targets 1, 2, 3, 4

*Now that you have completed the first third of your book, please write a journal entry in which you consider the qualities of the character(s) in your book. Please make **at least two** personal connections between what is happening in the book and your life. You may also use experiences of a family member or friend to make the connections. Remember, if you use any of the vocabulary words from your “New Words” list, you need to circle the words. You need to use at least three new words in any written assignment.*

Succeeding in the Face of Disaster: Extension Projects

As a way to wrap-up the unit you will need to complete an artistic response extension project. Please choose one of the two options and complete them in accordance with the rubric.

Option I: Song relating to the theme and rationale

Learning Targets 1, 3, 4

Throughout the unit we have listened to songs that tie in to the theme. Select a song that you believe fits the “Succeeding in the Face of Disaster” theme and write a half page justification of your thinking. Does the music suggest success in spite of disaster? Do the lyrics? Include at least two reasons why the song matches the theme. See the attached rubric below for details about the grading of this project

Option II: Poster project in response to your literature circle book

Learning Targets 1, 3, 4

Design and create a poster about your book that corresponds to the theme. Specific ideas for each book are listed below. See the attached rubric for details about the grading of this project

Monkey Island- create a poster that Clay might use to attract attention. This could be a sign for helping him find his mother, or it could be a sign he might use to explain his situation to passersby so that he can get money for Buddy, Calvin and himself. Include two reasons Clay needs help.

Witness- create a poster protesting the K.K.K. in the town. Include two reasons why the organization is harmful to Lenora and Esther.

Kensuke’s Kingdom- create a poster from Michael or Kensuke’s perspective. Include two reasons why the atomic bomb was harmful.

Chain of Fire- create a poster protesting apartheid that Naledi and/or Taolo might have carried at their anti-removal march. Include two reasons why apartheid is harmful and/or wrong.

Hatchet- create a poster that Brian might make after his rescue. The poster should outline the disaster he faced. Include two reasons why he succeeded despite it.

Rubrics for Extension Projects

Project Option One

4 Exceeds Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper contains three or more reasons why the song fits the theme • The paper is thoughtful and is presented in a professional way • The paper has two or less errors
3 Meets Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper contains two reasons why the song fits the theme • The paper shows thought and is presented in a professional way • The paper has three to four errors
2 Approaching Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper contains one reason why the song fits the theme • The paper shows some thought, but is presented in a somewhat sloppy way • The paper has four to five errors
1 Missed Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper is unclear about how the song fits the them • The paper shows little thought, and is presented in a somewhat sloppy way • The paper has more than five errors

Project Option Two

4 Exceeds Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poster shows a strong, clear link between the text and theme • The poster clearly meets the “two reasons” requirement • The poster is made with thought and care
3 Meets Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poster shows a clear link between the text and theme • The poster meets the “two reasons” requirement • The poster is made with thought and care
2 Approaching Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poster show a link between the text and theme, but is somewhat unclear • The poster addresses one of the “two reasons” required • The poster lacks either thought or care
1 Missed Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poster shows no link between the text and theme • The poster does not address the “two reasons” requirement • The poster lacks thought and care

In-Character Letter Assignment

Learning Targets 1, 2, 4

*This assignment asks you to assume the role of one of the characters in your book. You are to write a letter to another character in the book in which you outline **at least two challenges** you (the character) has faced and how you have overcome them. Remember, if you use any of the vocabulary word from your “New Words” list you need to circle the words. You need to use at least three new words in any written assignment. Below are ideas for each of the books, you are not required to use them, but it is advisable.*

Monkey Island- Write a letter as Clay to your mother or father. **Explain two challenges** you have faced and describe how you overcame them. You may want to describe what life is like on the streets and how homeless people are treated.

Witness- Write a letter as Lenora to Percelle Johnson. **Explain two challenges** you have faced and describe how you overcame them. You may want to describe how the K.K.K. has persecuted people and why you believe it is wrong.

Kensuke’s Kingdom- Write a letter as Michael to your parents. **Explain two challenges** you have faced and describe how you overcame them. You may want to detail Kensuke’s experiences with the atomic bomb and how they have affected you.

Chain of Fire- Write a letter as Naledi to the United Nations. **Explain two challenges** you have faced and describe how you overcame them. You may want to describe what is taking place in your village (forced removal) and why you believe it is wrong.

Hatchet- Write a letter as Brian to your mother or father. **Explain two challenges** you have faced and describe how you overcame them. You may want to describe the plane crash and the loneliness you feel being in the wilderness.

When you write your letter, try to capture the voice of your character. Is he/she afraid, angry? Do they believe they have been wronged or suffered an injustice? Use language that you think the character would use. Be prepared to share your letter with your literature circle.

(Adapted from Vonderlage, 2004)

Unit Outline

The duration of the “Succeeding in the Face of Disaster” unit will be five weeks. It will overlap with the Egypt Storypath unit which means there will not be a great deal of class time devoted to it. I will teach one to two lessons per week and give in-class time for reading almost daily. The literature circles will meet four times during the unit. I am also excited about the incorporation of music into the unit. I have selected several songs (see bibliography for song details) which match the unit’s theme which I will play throughout the unit. The individual lessons I will teach will address my diverse students in a number of ways. I have integrated content and will teach with equity pedagogy in mind (Banks, 2002). Also, I have spent time looking at IEPs and discussing special needs accommodations and/or modifications with my cooperating teacher. Below is an outline of the unit:

WEEK ONE (Learning Targets 1, 3, 5)

Focus Lessons:

- Introduction to Thematic Literature Unit (read aloud: *Angels in the Dust*)
- Introduce literature circle books

Activities:

- Book ballots
- Form literature circles
- Distribute books and explain reading expectations (50-80 pages per week)
- Class time for reading
- Model “New Words” list

WEEK TWO (Learning Targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Focus Lesson:

- Making personal connections
- Theme-related songs

Activities:

- Class time for reading
- Play two or three theme-related songs
- Literature circles meet
- “New Words” list check
- Personal connection journal entry

WEEK THREE (Learning Targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Focus Lessons:

- In-character letter writing

Activities:

- Class time for reading
- Play two or three theme-related songs
- Literature circles meet

- “New Words” list check

WEEK FOUR (Learning Targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Focus Lessons:

- Extension project options introduced

Activities:

- Class time for reading
- Play two or three theme-related songs
- Books concluded (or close)
- Literature circles meet
- In-character letter due/presented during literature circles

WEEK FIVE (Learning Targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Focus Lessons:

- Concept Development Lesson
- Closure

Activities:

- Extension projects due
- Play two or three theme-related songs
- Literature circles meet

(Format adapted from Vonderlage 2004)

Theme Introduction Lesson

The introductory lesson into the unit will consist of several parts: a read aloud, a discussion including an introduction to the literature circles format and finally a written pre-assessment piece. The story I have selected as a starting point for the unit is the picture book, *Angels in the Dust*, written by Margot Theis Raven and illustrated by Roger Essley. The librarian at my student-teaching site, recommended the book based on my theme (2007). After looking through it, I decided it would be a perfect fit. Mr. R. said that sixth graders “really get into [picture books]” (2007).

After the read aloud, I will tell my students that we are beginning a themed literature unit called, “Succeeding in the Face of Disaster.” I will hold a whole-class discussion about *Angels in the Dust* and ask them to think of ways the main character succeeded despite the disaster she faced. I will also ask them what it took for her to succeed. Then I will introduce the literature circles model and explain to the students the responsibilities and expectations of the unit. The next day, I will introduce the five books and conduct a “Book Ballot” to determine the groups (Schlick Noe 2007). It will be critical that I am clear about the expectations, in terms of reading and preparedness for literature circle meetings, so that my students will be on target for success.

The final step of my introductory lesson will be the written piece. I will ask students to complete my “Themed Literature Unit Pre-Assessment” form. After I have collected the pre-assessments, I will be able to have a better idea of the students’ prior knowledge and experience with the theme. In addition to this, the vocabulary portion of the pre-assessment will inform me of what the students already know about some of the concepts that are embedded in the generalizations of my first learning target.

Concept Development Lesson

At the conclusion of the unit I will conduct a mixed whole-class and small group concept development lesson. First, I will begin with a large piece of butcher paper with the theme “Succeeding in the Face of Disaster” written in a bubble in the center (in a concept map form). I will ask students, “What does it take to succeed in the face of disaster?” Each group will have a scribe who will have a similar blank concept map. In small groups, students will write in ideas for what they believe it takes to succeed in the face of disaster. For the purposes of assessment, I will ask the students to write their names next to concepts they thought of during the group process. After sufficient time for group discussion has been allowed, I will ask for ideas to complete the butcher paper concept map. Depending on where the discussion goes, I may add in some of the generalizations I have outlined in my learning targets, but that will likely not be necessary.

After we have completed the discussion and brainstorming session, I will collect each group’s concept map. I will be able to evaluate each student’s contribution to the map because their names will be written next to their ideas. I will be certain to make clear to them that they need to be active participants in the discussion because I will be assessing their learning thereafter.

Artistic Response

I have created two exciting options for extension projects (see page 13-14 for the assignments and corresponding rubrics). The first option ties into the musical portion of the unit. I have compiled a group of songs that tie into the unit’s theme and will be playing them for the students throughout the unit. The first option asks students to select a song that matches our theme and write a half-page rationale for why they believe it fits. The second choice is a more traditional visual representation. It is a poster project with specific objectives that vary by book. These extension project options match the goal of continuing reader’s response to the text (Schlick Noe and Johnson, 1999). I am interested to see my students’ creative expression through these projects.

Thematic Book and Resource List

Literature Circle Books

Fox, P. (1991). *Monkey Island*. New York: Dell Publishing.

Clay’s father has left the family and he and his mother have been living in a hotel.

Now his mother has gone missing in New York City and he is alone on the streets.

Two homeless men befriend him and take him in during the harsh winter. This book will be an option for literature circles.

Hesse, K. (2001). *Witness*. New York: Scholastic.

Trouble brews when the Ku Klux Klan moves into a small Vermont town. The book’s main characters, Lenora (an African-American girl) and Esther (a Jewish girl) must withstand racial aggression and emerge stronger. This book will be an option for literature circles.

Morpugo M. (1999). *Kensuke’s Kingdom*. New York: Scholastic.

When Michael and his dog are knocked off their sailboat in the Pacific Ocean, they

wash up on a small island. Hungry, thirsty, and half-dead, they are found by Kensuke, a kindly Japanese expatriate. The man helps them recuperate and the boy learns a great deal about the terrors of the atomic bomb and Kensuke's decision to sequester himself from society thereafter. This book will be an option for literature circles.

Naidoo, B. (1989). *Chain of Fire*. New York: HarperTrophy.

Naledi's South African village is in danger of being liquidated by the country's apartheid government. Her friend, Taolo, helps her organize an anti-removal march through the village. The two must weather persecution for speaking out against the racist policies of the government. This book will be an option for literature circles.

Paulsen, G. (1998). *Hatchet*. New York: Puffin Books.

Brian's parents have just divorced and his mother gave him a hatchet to take to his father's house in Northeast Canada. But when the pilot suffers a heart attack and the plane crashes in the wilderness, Brian is left to survive on his own. This book will be an option for literature circles.

Read Aloud Book

Raven, M. (1997). *Angels in the Dust*. United States of America: BridgeWater Paperback.

A girl's Great Grandmother recounts her life in the Oklahoma panhandle during the disastrous drought of the 1930s called the "Dust Bowl." The book recounts the struggles and challenges she faced during that time. I will use the book to kick-off the unit.

References

Banks, J. A. (2002). *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Considered the five elements of Multicultural Education particularly Equity Pedagogy and Content Integration during the unit's creation.

Barnes, J. (2007). Ancient Egypt. Social Studies Unit Plan.

Used a portion of the "Self Evaluation for Group Work" to develop the "Self-Evaluation for Literature Circles" form. Also referenced the "Learners" section, and used the same introductory letter (with minor editing).

Routman, R. (2003). *Reading Essentials*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Used for inspiration and practical matters of the unit such as: how to implement shared reading, teaching for reading comprehension and guided reading.

Routman, R. (2005). *Writing Essentials*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Used for ideas on meaningful writing, assessment strategies and conferencing.

Schlick Noe, K. L. (2007). Personal Communication.

Professor Schlick Noe provided guidance on possible books for the unit.

Schlick Noe, K. L. (2005). Planning a Themed Literature Unit. In *Themed Literature Units*. Retrieved November 10, 2007, from <http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/web/TLU/overview.html#gens>.

Used as a guide for theme-building, creating generalizations, and as a general reference for this assignment.

Schlick Noe, K. L. (2005). Steps in the Concept Development Process. In *Themed Literature Units*. Retrieved November 10, 2007, from <http://fac->

staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/web/TLU/process.html

Used to help build understanding of concept development in a themed literature unit.
Schlick Noe, K. L. and Johnson, N. (1999). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Used to help develop the structure of the literature circles in the unit and also for ideas about discussions, written responses and artistic responses.

Smith, M. K. (2002) *Howard Gardner, multiple intelligences and education*. Retrieved November 12, 2007, from <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/gardner.htm>

Used during consideration of moral/ethical obligations in the “Rationale” section.

Songs Used in Support of Theme

Croce, J. (1998). I Got A Name. On *The Definitive Collection* [cd]. Location unknown: Recall Records UK.

Croce, J. (1998). Tomorrow’s Gonna Be A Brighter Day. On *The Definitive Collection* [cd]. Location unknown: Recall Records UK.

Davis, M. (2001). Generique. On *The Essential Miles Davis* [cd]. Location unknown: Sony Records.

Fleetwood Mac. (2002). Landslide. On *Very Best of* [cd]. Location unknown: Rhino Records.

Johnson, J. (2005). Better Together. On *In Between Dreams* [cd]. Location unknown: Umvd Labels.

King’s X (1990). We Were Born to Be Loved. On *Faith Hope Love* [cd]. Houston, TX: Megaforce.

Marley, B. (2005). Slogans. On *African Unite: The Singles Connection* [cd]. Location unknown: Island Records.

Midlake. (2006). Roscoe. On *The Trials of Van Occupanther* [cd]. Location unknown: Bella Union.

Pearl Jam. (1993). Dissident. On *Vs.* [cd]. Seattle, WA: Sony Records.

Pele (2003). A Scuttled Bend in the Watery Closet. On *Elephant* [cd]. Location unknown: Polyvinyl Records.

Pele (2003). Sepit. On *Elephant* [cd]. Location unknown: Polyvinyl Records.

Reddy, H. (1998). You and Me Against The World. On *The Essential Helen Reddy* [cd]. Location unknown: Razor & Tie.

Sinatra, F. (1997). That’s Life. On *My Way: The Best of Frank Sinatra* [cd]. Location unknown: Wea International.

Smashing Pumpkins (1993). Today. On *Siamese Dream* [cd]. Chicago, IL: Virgin Records.

Whittaker, R. (2005). I Am But A Small Voice. On *Now and Then: Greatest Hits* [cd]. Location unknown: Ariola Germany.

Thematic Literature Units Used for Unit Development and/or Formatting Ideas

Fullerton, K. (2004) Standing Up for What You Believe. Retrieved November 10, 2007, from http://classes.seattleu.edu/masters_in_teaching/teed521/professor/Literacy/fullertonF04.pdf

Vonderlage, D. (2004) Reaching Out to Understand Others. Retrieved November 10, 2007, from http://classes.seattleu.edu/masters_in_teaching/teed521/professor/Literacy/

Communication with Families and Students

I have created a website that will be linked to my cooperating teacher's site. He told me that about 90% of the students have internet access and will be able to check the site. Attached on pages 26-28 are hard copies of my introductory letter and more information about the themed literature unit that will be posted on the website. Due to formatting constraints, the content may appear slightly different on the website (e.g. background color).

Community Resources/Collaboration

I will make use of several community resources during this unit. I have already collaborated with the school librarian, and will continue to do so when the unit commences. I am also hoping to have a guest speaker or two speak to the class about their personal experiences with disaster. If we cannot get someone from the community for this purpose, Mr. R. can share an anecdote or two from his life. He has worked in very dangerous conditions as both a logger and on the ski patrol. He has even been buried in an avalanche! The purpose of having a guest speaker will be to bring the theme to life for my students.

Classroom Community

This unit will support student learning and well being because it emphasizes critical reading, writing, and communication skills students will need going forward in their lives. Good reading strategies and a desire to read will be crucial to the students as they continue in their academic careers (and throughout their lives). Also, being able to communicate ideas in written form is an important academic skill. The unit allows for a democratic classroom because students will have the chance to fill out a "Book Ballot" on which they list their top three choices for books. The extension projects give the students the opportunity to work in a self-directed way to express a deeper understanding of the theme.

I have worked hard to create a unit that has respect as a cornerstone. My fifth learning target sets aim at respectful discussion and debate throughout the unit. Additionally, the literature circle format allows for smaller learning groups within the classroom. It is my sincere hope that, in addition to cultivating an atmosphere of respect, these groups will function as safe places where students can belong to a community of learners. The literature circles should be places where they can be heard and hear what their classmates have to say. On a larger scale, I have incorporated a respect for diverse perspectives in this unit. The books I have selected feature varied protagonists in many different situations ranging from apartheid-plagued South Africa (*Chain of Fire*) to the homeless culture of New York City (*Monkey Island*). I feel that it is important to expose my students to the very different realities some people face in the larger world. As an example, if a student says, "I'm starving!" I invariably will immediately refute the comment and respond by saying something like, "You're not starving. Did you eat dinner last night? Did you eat breakfast this morning? There are people in the world who do not have the access to food that we do. You may be hungry, but you are NOT starving." I say this not to discount the student's statement, but to cause them to honestly

consider the situations of others on our planet. Ultimately, I believe that it is the *understanding* of the world that will help students learn to respect those in the world as they mature.

Unit Overview/Critique

This themed literature unit is a detailed plan that will develop student reading, writing and communication skills. Also, the unit will deepen the understanding of my students in relation to the theme. The unit utilizes multiple assessment strategies which will give all of my students the opportunity to succeed. I am excited about the texts I have selected because they represent many perspectives; the books will be part of a rich learning experience.

The only concern I have about the unit is the newness of such planning. Because this is the first unit I have planned “from scratch” I do not know how it will play out in the classroom. While the unit looks comprehensive on paper, from the learning targets to the assessment instruments, I am unsure of how it will work in an actual instructional setting.

Collaboration

Different from the development of my social studies unit plan (on which I collaborated a good deal with a classmate), this unit was written largely independently. Ruben Gonzalez and I did exchange ideas about books for literature circles and also looked at each others learning targets to make sure we were on track. Also, Ruben, Josh Benson and I met to proofread and make suggestions on one another’s unit plans prior to the due date. The freedom afforded us to collaborate is a wonderful luxury. It is also a reflection of the realities of our profession. I believe the ability to collaborate effectively with colleagues will be a critical skill in my career.

Introductory Letter

January 7, 2008

Dear Families,

Hello! My name is Julian Barnes. I am a Master in Teaching student from Seattle University and will be working with Mr. R. and Mrs. B. as their student teacher from January through March. I have already spent a good amount of time in the classroom (the first three weeks of the school year and one day a week subsequently) so I have had the opportunity to meet and get to know all of the students. As I move into my role as full-time teacher, I hope to have the chance to meet you as well.

I am extremely excited about being able to work with Mr. R. and Mrs. B., who I consider master teachers. It is also wonderful for me to be able to teach in the community in which I live. As a child I attended schools in this district.

This year, we will be learning a great deal about ancient Egypt through a Storypath unit. I will also be teaching a themed literature unit called "Succeeding in the Face of Disaster", as well as math and science during my internship. I am also hoping to teach the students some simple German as I am bilingual and love to share part of my culture.

If you need to get in touch with me please call the Room 20 phone at 425-####-##### or email me at -----@seattleu.edu. For more information about me and the units I will be teaching your student this trimester, please click on my link on Mr. R.'s website. If you do not have internet access, I will be more than happy to provide you with a paper copy of the web content. I look forward to working with you and your student to achieve a high level of learning this year!

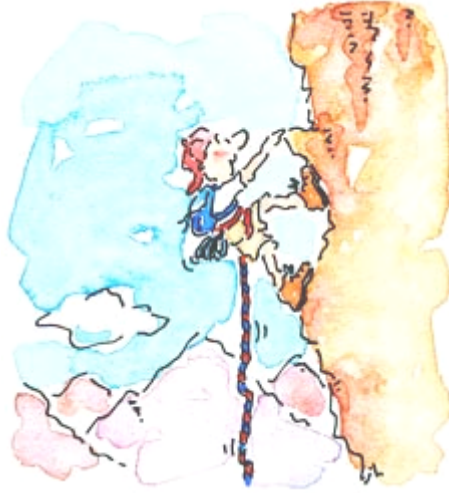
Sincerely,

Julian Barnes

Student teacher to Mr. R. and Mrs. B.

Themed Literature Unit:

Succeeding in the Face of Disaster (Web Content)



Over the next five weeks, our class will be working through an enriching themed literature unit. The unit's theme is "Succeeding in the Face of Disaster." The unit's central questions are:

- What does it mean to succeed in the face of disaster?
- What does it take to succeed in the face of disaster?

Students will be expected to work independently toward reading and writing goals. We will be exploring the theme in a literature circle format. For more information about the format follow the link below. Students will be assigned one of five books that examine the unit's theme. The book choices are:

Monkey Island by Paula Fox

Clay's father has left the family and he and his mother have been living in a hotel. Now his mother has gone missing in New York City and he is alone on the streets. Two homeless men befriend him and take him in during the harsh winter.

Witness by Karen Hesse

Trouble brews when the Ku Klux Klan moves into a small Vermont town. The book's main characters, Lenora (an African-American girl) and Esther (a Jewish girl) must withstand racial aggression and emerge stronger.

Kensuke's Kingdom by Michael Morpugo

When Michael and his dog are knocked off their sailboat in the Pacific Ocean, they wash up on a small island. Hungry, thirsty and half-dead, they are found by Kensuke, a kindly Japanese expatriate. The man helps them recuperate and the boy learns a great deal about the terrors of the atomic bomb and Kensuke's decision to sequester himself from society thereafter.

Chain of Fire by Beverley Naidoo

Naledi's South African village is in danger of being liquidated by the country's apartheid government. Her friend, Taolo, helps her organize an anti-removal march through the village. The two must weather persecution for speaking out against the racist policies of the government.

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Brian's parents have just divorced and his mother gave him a hatchet to take to his father's house in Northeast Canada. But when the pilot suffers a heart attack and the plane crashes in the wilderness, Brian is left to survive on his own.

I encourage you to ask your student what book he or she is reading. Ask them what is happening in their book. Ask them about the disaster the main character or characters is facing. This will engage them in a continual learning process that will only be a benefit to their academic careers.

Here are three web links that support the unit:

Information on the prior knowledge reading strategy:

<http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/ela/6-12/Reading/Reading%20Strategies/frameofreference.htm>

Background information on the literature lircles format:

<http://litcircles.org/Overview/overview.html>

Short stories for children:

<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/childrenindex.html>

Back to Mr. Barnes' Homepage