TO THE UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE:

As thesis advisor for Rosina Corcoran,

I have read this paper and find it satisfactory.

Thesis Advisor

Date
Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to the success of this project. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Barbara Monroe, who introduced me to critical pedagogy and was always there to talk to me when I needed to regroup. I also own a debt of gratitude to Reneé Chase and Allison Harder, the co-creators of the original unit plan. Thank you also to Kyla Ficek, who introduced me to the Eclipse program and supervised my work there. Of course, this project would have been much more difficult without the support of Erin Aleckson as my co-teacher. Finally, I would like to thank my students at Eclipse, who taught me far more than I taught them. It was a privilege to work with each one of you.
Precis

In my time here at Washington State University (WSU), I have been introduced to many different ways of thinking and teaching. One class in particular, English 323: Approaches to Teaching English, challenged my preconceptions of how and why language arts should be taught. In that class we were introduced to a revolutionary method of teaching known as “critical pedagogy.” Basically, critical pedagogy seeks to use real-life social issues to get students to rethink their understanding of society and become more active citizens. As the final project for the class I worked with two other people to create a unit plan based on critical pedagogy. Since critical pedagogy is such a radical departure from the way I was taught, I was curious about how well it would work in the classroom with real students. Ultimately, I wanted to know: Would a critical pedagogy curriculum empower students to make the world a better place? Would it really engage students, particularly the “disenfranchised” ones who were at risk of dropping out? And finally, would it help students to develop a framework for better thinking, reading, and writing skills? For my project, I decided to actually teach my unit developed in English 323 to a group of students at the alternative high school in order to discover how critical pedagogy worked in practice, not just in theory.

To prepare for my teaching experience, I read more literature on literacy and critical pedagogy. Then for the Spring semester of 2004, I taught five students a half credit English class. To meet the seventy-five required hours of class time, we met twice a week for three-hour blocks. During this time I kept a journal reflecting on what worked and did not work in the classroom. My thesis paper is essentially an analysis of my whole process in teaching the class,
starting with the pedagogy itself and my implementation of it in the unit plan, and progressing to an analysis of the effectiveness of the unit in helping students to learn and grow.

I found that the unit was effective in engaging students' interest and helping them to think in more socially aware ways. However, it was challenging to get students beyond superficial attention and get them to commit to true social responsibility. Although I do not think that I entirely succeeded in accomplishing that objective, I was encouraged by how much impact critical pedagogy seemed to have on social consciousness and student engagement. As for the question about student reading and writing skills, there was not conclusive evidence that the students become better independent readers or writers. However, I think any weakness of the unit in promoting reading or writing was mostly due to my inexperience as a teacher.

No absolute conclusions can be drawn from my research since, as is common in education, the analysis is qualitative rather than quantitative. However, as Dávila de Silva (1998) points out, "A case study is a way of learning, not a method of proving.... [C]ase studies provide rich contextualization for the particular phenomena and subjects under study" (p. 227). I hope a record of both my insights and struggles can contribute to my field by informing other teachers about the benefits and difficulties of implementation this particular pedagogy. It is only through case studies that the process of articulating theory to practice is explicated, and the more teachers are able to share about what works and does not work, the more common knowledge and possible teaching options will exist for all educators. Beyond being just a research project, though, this opportunity to design a unit, adapt it for use, and work with colleagues, mentors, and at-risk students has profoundly influenced my own approach to teaching.
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Introduction

Why a Case Study?

In the field of education, the link between theory and practice is essential but often difficult for teachers to create and maintain. Educational researchers are constantly providing new information and producing new theories about the processes of learning and teaching. Unfortunately, there is often a gap between research-based suggestions and a fully articulated picture of how those suggestions could be effectively implemented in hands-on teaching. Overwhelmed by the day-to-day demands of school, teachers often do not have time to translate vast amounts of new information into working classroom methods. For this reason, education relies heavily on case studies. Typically, a case study is a personal narrative by a teacher, describing how he or she articulated a certain theory into concrete goals, curriculum, methods, and classroom management choices. Authors generally start by describing the research basis and then reflect on their struggle to bring it to life in the classroom. Case studies are not scientific research, but they are essential because they function as the nexus of personal teaching philosophy, research-driven theory, and actual classroom implementation.

The Research Question

In my time here at Washington State University (WSU), I have been introduced to many different ways of thinking and teaching. One class in particular, English 323: Approaches to Teaching English, challenged my preconceptions of how and why language arts should be taught. I came to realize that there was a deep divide between the traditional way of teaching literacy and the new “critical” approach I was being asked to use. I found this new perspective both intellectually intriguing and difficult to integrate into my personal teaching philosophy. I wrestled with it throughout the semester and particularly in the final project for that class where I
helped create a unit plan based on this new “critical pedagogy.” At the end of the class I still had many questions. I wanted to know if this new “critical pedagogy” would work in the real world. I wanted to see if it would live up to the claims I had heard. Would it empower students to make the world a better place? Would it really engage students, particularly the “disenfranchised” ones who were at risk of dropping out? Would it help students to develop a framework for better thinking, reading, and writing skills? For my honors project, I decided to actually teach my unit to a group of students at the alternative high school in order to discover how critical pedagogy worked in practice, not just in theory.

Context of Research and Theory

What is Critical Pedagogy?

Critical pedagogy, like most educational philosophies, is not a unified, codified system. Different educators have emphasized different aspects of the theory, and the practice of critical pedagogy is still being explored, documented, and debated. However, there are three essential facets of critical pedagogy that I have found particularly relevant to my own teaching. These principles are held by all critical theorists and serve to set critical pedagogy apart from other classroom approaches (see Figure 1). As I describe each one, I will further explain how I think they are relevant in the modern American classroom.

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**Goal: Critical Pedagogy Seeks to Transform, not just Transmit, Culture**

Critical pedagogy sees education as an opportunity to transform culture, rather than a way of just passing on knowledge. The leading theorist in the field of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire illustrated this crucial distinction through an analogy. He described the traditional educational philosophy of passing on knowledge as the “banking model,” because teachers act as if they are “depositing” a certain amount of information in students (2000/1970, p. 72). After learners receive the information they retain it in the same form it came in, holding it in their memory until they need to withdraw it. Learners do not interact with information; they simply store it and spend it. According to Freire the banking model has many inherent flaws. First, it assumes that learners can meaningfully acquire data without interacting with it. While it is possible to force people to memorize information, it is useless unless they integrate it and understand it. As Stiggins (2001) explains,

> The world around me is full of wonderful things that I know but don’t understand. For instance... I know that $E=MC^2$. So if someone asked me what $E$ equals, I can say, “$MC^2$.” But I don’t understand what it means, and can’t use it to help me solve physics problems. (p. 44)

A teaching method that requires memorization, but not understanding, will certainly not lead to elucidation for the student.

It is worth mentioning that many theorists have tried to correct for this flaw in the banking model, hence the current emphasis on “critical thinking skills” and “higher order reasoning.” In mainstream education theory as a whole, there has been a decided shift
away from "giving" students information to having students synthesize, analyze, and apply information. For instance, the WSU education department ascribes to a broad pedagogical approach known as constructivism, which seeks to "emphasize the active role of the learner in building understanding and making sense of information" (Woolfolk, 2001, p. 329). These pedagogies emphasizing the importance of the learner and the importance of thinking skills are the subject of much study and discussion in contemporary education (Brandt, 1993; Confrey, 1990; Cronin, 1993; Marshall, 1992; Philips, 2000; as cited in Woolfolk, 2001, pp. 329-336).

While these approaches are related to critical pedagogy, and aspects of them are used by critical pedagogues, they do not encompass the totality of critical pedagogy. I mention them because the research related to constructivist and critical thinking methods points to the inadequacy of the "transmission" model. Additionally, as Figure 2 demonstrates, the premises for constructivist and critical thinking approaches create the basic underpinning that critical pedagogy builds upon.

In contrast to other constructivist or critical thinking pedagogies, critical pedagogy goes beyond just emphasizing higher order thinking or more student-centered approaches to learning. Critical pedagogy situates all learning socio-culturally and then positions education as a process of empowering learners to transform the culture they live in. It has been said that critical pedagogy...
pedagogy is simply "teaching that involves a critical social and political awareness of issues" (Provenzo, 2002, p. 24), but this view fails to convey the power of Freire's original vision. The first model for critical pedagogy, suggested by Freire (2000/1970) as a replacement for the faulty banking model, is one where...

...men and women develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation.

(quoted in Macedo, 2000, p. 12)

Critical pedagogy does not stop at awakening an awareness of the complexities of the world. It seeks to create a state of praxis, the perfect balance of internal growth and positive action. As Freire defined it, "Discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action, nor can it be activism, but must include serious reflection, only then will it be praxis" (p. 65). In the Freirean model, students are empowered to act for liberation and equality. This distinction is fundamentally what makes critical pedagogy a transformative approach to teaching.

How is this distinction between transmission and transformation relevant?

When Freire originally made his argument for critical pedagogy in 1970 in his book The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, based on his literacy work with the peasants of Brazil in the early 1960s, but his insight into the difference between just "passing on knowledge" and empowering students to change the world around them is just as relevant today in American culture. Freire is most famous for pointing out that a pure banking model, one where students simply absorb and regurgitate facts, does not create students who can think for themselves. But his insight did not stop there. In fact, he went on to state that the banking model is used because it is effective—
effective in that it does subjugate and oppress. Students can essentially be forced to carry information with them that is of no benefit to them, but is formulated to overwrite their primary culture. In a situation where the majority, or an elite group, is trying to homogenize the population through education, the banking method forces students outside the mainstream to become powerless puppets or alienated resisters (Freire, 2000/1970). Whether or not the American education system intentionally creates a homogenizing situation, or to what extent it does so, are complex questions outside the scope of this analysis, but it is certain that the American system of education does produce its share of alienated resisters. These students “at-risk” of not completing school often come from groups that are economically disadvantaged, or from ethnic, racial and/or and language minority groups. While it is impossible to separate the tangle of economic and social disadvantages, a range of practitioners and theorists have honed in on the “cultural incongruence” between these learners and their school environments (Cortés 1986; Igoa, 1995; Pérez, 1998; Schumann, 1978). Teachers are now being asked to make accommodations for the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students.

After all, American classrooms are quite diverse. Often no absolute consensus or common denominator exists for the students learning together in a certain classroom. In this context, it is important to consider the implications of “just teaching the facts.” What knowledge is of value? What cultural and experiential “lenses” influence a person’s interpretation of a situation? In fact knowledge is shaped by culture. The influence of culture is particularly strong in language arts and humanities content, because the information is almost exclusively defined by social values. The constant achievement gaps between minority and underprivileged students
and those of the white middle class are exactly what Freire (2000/1970) predicted as the result of the banking model.

Many people would agree that something needs to be done about societal inequities, but critical pedagogy takes action in the classroom. Critical pedagogy asks learners to examine their own assumptions and explore the premises that underlie the culture that surrounds them, and in doing so, it creates an environment that allows for real diversity and the discussion of divergent views. Teachers certainly should not abandon teaching content, but they need to recognize the multiplicity of perspectives and open the door to healthy debate. This approach should minimize the alienation of at-risk learners by decreasing the cultural bias they face in the classroom. Additionally, it will challenge students, particularly mainstream students, to think critically and to be more aware of diversity. And finally, it will create a context for actively transforming the system in which we all live.

Methods: Critical Pedagogy is Student-Centered and Dialogue-Based

The second key feature of critical pedagogy is how it seeks to implement empowerment in the classroom. As part of treating students with respect and helping them to think for themselves, Freire (2000/1970), suggested that the traditional power inequity between students and teachers needed to be rethought. In place of a teacher who dominates and distributes information, the critical pedagogy model has a teacher-facilitator. No longer is the teacher perceived as the one who holds all the information, while the students are culturally “poor.” The critical pedagogy model recognizes all participants as contributors and affirms that to create a more just and equitable society, all people must become accustomed to discussing things on an equal footing. The critical pedagogy classroom revolves around the needs of the students, not
just the goals of the teacher. The teacher is responsible for sparking discussion among students and helping them to think things through more deeply, but in order to do so the teacher must get to know the culture and the needs of the students. Not surprisingly, critical pedagogy then relies heavily on dialogue, rather than lecture, to promote learning. Dialogue reflects the collaborative and social nature of education as expressed in the critical pedagogy model.

Why is a student-centered, dialogue-based approach important?

In its emphasis on a student-centered, discussion-based classroom, critical pedagogy minimizes the idea that certain forms of “cultural capital” are innately more valuable than others. Instead of deciding that students must learn about *Hamlet*, or else they will be somehow “deficient,” a critical pedagogue is sensitive to the culture and needs of the students he or she is serving. Perhaps the students do need to be familiar with *Hamlet* in order to participate in the mainstream discourse at the colleges they want to attend in the future. In that case, *Hamlet* can be taught, but with a focus on what it says about cultural constructs such as femininity/masculinity, ethics, grief, and suicide. In the classroom discussion, students will not be empty containers receiving knowledge; they will be experts speaking from their own rich cultural experiences and seeking to explore new possibilities using *Hamlet* as a framework for discussion. Once again, critical pedagogy is flexible and responsive, which is essential in a diverse educational setting. Also, the emphasis on dialogue ideally produces a more interactive, thought-provoking, and democratic classroom.

Critical Pedagogy Builds Curriculum on Themes Relevant to the Learner

Critical pedagogy also relies on what Freire calls “generative themes” (2000/1970, p. 96), intentionally developed to be relevant to the learner. In a language arts classroom, this premise
means a departure from curriculum based on time periods or genres; no more units on “Romantic Poetry” or “The Short Story.” In order to provoke deeper student engagement, the curriculum is built on themes that interest learners, but also have profound significance for the way society works. Themes such as friendship, love, war, grief, social responsibility, and fear have the potential to both meet students where they are and then take them deeper and deeper into critical awareness.

**Why is a relevant, thematic curriculum important?**

Freire himself emphasized theory, more than particular methods; but he did stress that it was essential for curriculum to be based on real experiences that students have every day. In this way, students can see the relevance of education to their immediate circumstances. In a modern language arts classroom this means that students will not only discuss sonnets, plays, and novels; they will also analyze TV shows, advertisements, and web pages. This facet of critical pedagogy makes it a particularly good candidate for integration with technology applications in the classroom. However, critical pedagogy does not require technology in order to be implemented. Its true focus is always relevance to the learner’s immediate world so that it can engage students and then draw them into deeper exploration.

**Context of the Project**

**The Setting: Eclipse**

The alternative high school program in Pullman, known as Eclipse, was founded in 1993 to serve students whose needs are not met by the traditional high school system. Many of these students are at high risk of not completing school. Although the program is mostly based on independent work, students can also participate in small classes, called “focus classes,” taught by
students or professors from WSU. Since Eclipse is a cooperative program between the Pullman School District and WSU’s College of Education, a system of supervision by registered teachers makes it possible for undergraduates to legally teach Eclipse focus classes. For the Spring semester of 2004, I taught a half credit English class at Eclipse. To meet the seventy-five required hours of class time, we met twice a week for three-hour blocks.

The Teachers

As I stated in my proposal, undergraduates often co-teach focus classes. Co-teaching opens up more opportunities for creative collaboration, as well as reducing the planning and grading workload. For my project I teamed up with fellow undergraduate Erin Aleckson. We formed an excellent working relationship as true co-teachers. Rather than rotating days or hours, which can lead to inconsistent or confusing teaching, Erin and I planned, taught, and graded together. During the semester, we covered two unit plans. The first unit, “Ourselves Among Others,” lasted for eight weeks. This was the unit plan I originally helped develop in English 323. For those eight weeks, I was the lead teacher who took on most of the planning and classroom instruction. This primary unit plan is the subject of my unit analysis. The second unit, “Critical Consumerism,” continued for four weeks. Erin was the lead teacher for that unit. Erin and I share similar pedagogical views, which made it relatively easy for us to teach together. For both units, though, Erin allowed me final say in the material we covered.

The Students

Five students enrolled in our English class. As far as was possible, considering the small sampling, this group represented a typical cross section of “at-risk” youth at Eclipse. Some of them came from unstable families where they had been abused or neglected. Some faced
personal struggles with poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, or aggressive behavior. Others faced
difficult issues like low self-esteem, depression, and grief. There was also a significant pattern of
interrupted schooling; some students had moved so many times as children that they had failed to
truly connect, and thus failed to truly learn, in school settings. Not surprisingly, these at-risk
students are more difficult to reach than their mainstream peers. However, many of the students
who enroll in Eclipse are old enough to quit high school, so their persistent attendance indicates
a genuine motivation to succeed despite the barriers that stand in their way. Since these students
are a demanding and diverse group, they were ideal subjects for testing a pedagogy to see how it
would perform under the stress of real students’ needs. In addition to the other issues they faced,
some of the students also actively resisted the dominant paradigm of school, leading them to be
branded as disrespectful and disruptive. But from a critical pedagogy perspective this trait is not
negative. Shor (1980) says that such students,

...have fought the robotizing of their characters to a kind of stand-off. In class or on the
job they know how to sabotage any process which alienates them. They have set the
limits on their own dehumanization.... Still, they have been invaded and distorted by
machine culture.... While they limit their cooperation with the corporate order, they don’t
have a vision of alternatives.... They learn how to break the rules and get away with it,
but they don’t yet assume the responsibility of being the makers of the rules, together.

(Quoted in George, 2001, p. 97)

Youth often feel powerless and act out of this feeling of helplessness, not realizing the
formidable influence that their behavior actually has on the community (Mundell, personal
communication, Spring 2004). My goal with the unit plan was to help these strong, independent, divergent thinkers to "assume the responsibility of being the makers of the rules."

Methods & Materials

Critical pedagogy has definite goals: it seeks to empower learners to change the world, and to do so in a way that engages them and treats them with respect. Naturally though, different teachers go about reaching these goals in different ways. In fact, it is almost impossible to give an example of what a typical critical pedagogy lesson looks like. Critical pedagogy exists in its "pure" form only on macro levels, like theory or curriculum. When it comes down to individual assignments in the critical pedagogy classroom, these assignments are often driven by analysis methods derived from feminist, rhetorical, cultural, or gender studies. In its totality, critical pedagogy is rarely expressed in one assignment. Instead, the teacher, often with the help of the students, gathers materials and attempts to generate a course of study that reveals the complexity of issues and engages students in addressing these issues. At its core, critical pedagogy is a problem-posing pedagogy, and assignments should relate back to greater questions and themes being discussed in the classroom. Assignments cannot be considered individually, because they only truly reflect the pedagogy when they are taken in the context of the whole classroom and course of study.

For instance, a teacher might assign his or her students to write an analysis of an advertisement. The teacher may invite the class to use elements of rhetorical analysis when looking at the message of the ad, or the teacher might ask the students to consider what the ad is saying about the construction of gender in American culture. The teacher may have students free write, or the teacher may ask the students for a much more formal piece of writing. None of these
choices makes the assignment "critical pedagogy." What matters is how the basic tenets of critical pedagogy are being enacted through the assignment. Is the teacher using relevant themes that engage the class? Does the teacher present opportunities for both analysis and action so that praxis can be realized? Does the assignment hinge on a dialogue (written or spoken) between all the members of the class? Is the teacher keeping in mind the goal of empowering students to realize an egalitarian society? And finally, is the teacher constantly aware of the power dynamics in the classroom in such a way that he or she avoids becoming dominant?

For Monroe's English 323 class my group followed a Freirean model in selecting a theme, creating a core of interrelated questions about that theme, and then developing a body of literature and media materials for students to explore in order to delve into the core questions. Finally, we selected certain teaching methods to develop assignments and assessments (see Appendix A for the original unit plan).

As part of my research, I wanted to know how effective this unit would be with actual students. One way of gauging effectiveness is to examine how my unit plan changed as I taught it. Naturally, I anticipated some changes. In accordance with Freirean pedagogy, my unit needed to match the needs and interests of my students, so I expected to do some tailoring once my audience was narrowed down from "generic high school students" to a specific class. Also, since I wrote the unit with other people, I knew that I had to adapt it to accommodate my personal strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. However, I did not foresee how drastically and in what ways the unit would change. An overview of the core elements of the unit, and the changes that were made, will go a long way in providing insight into how effective my unit was, as well as the advantages and challenges of teaching critical pedagogy.
Core Questions

Our unit was entitled “Ourselves Among Others,” and it sought to explore the tension between the individual and society, with a special focus on the responsible role of an individual in society. We developed a list of questions that built upon each other to help students think more deeply about how society functions and their current and future roles as citizens (see Figure 3). In revising my unit after teaching it, I did elaborate on one question by adding “How much choice do others have (about where they fit into society)?” This question was implicit in the original unit, but I wanted to highlight students’ need to get out of the “me” level of thought and consider how society treats other people. However, the core questions of the unit remained unchanged while I was teaching. These questions provided focus for reading and discussion, as well as guidelines for what would be appropriate when I needed to select new materials or develop new assignments.

Reflecting on my actual classroom experience convinces me that a set of challenging, progressively interrelated questions is the heart of a critical pedagogy unit plan. A motivated teacher would need only a good set of questions to build a meaningful course of study, while no amount of excellent but unfocused material would create contexts where students think deeply about an issue. Since it is likely that the materials available, the needs of the students, and the requirements of the school and the state will fluctuate, core questions should be the focus of unit plan development.
Core Materials
The unit materials form a collage of narratives, poems, short stories, articles and other media that give students different perspectives on the questions presented to them. These materials spanned a wide range in terms of their genre, purpose, viewpoint, style, and time period. Most of the changes that I made to the curriculum were additions to or deletions from the media and literature (see Figure 4). The first hard reality of classroom teaching is that high schoolers have a wide range of interests, but these often do not include teacher favorites like Victorian literature or post-modernist masterpieces. The advantage of critical pedagogy is that it allows, even invites, accommodations for learner's interests, strengths, and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. My group attempted to include engaging and relevant materials in the original unit plan, but it is always tempting as a pre-service teacher to include something that is personally intriguing but beyond the scope or interest of most high schoolers.

That is not to say that “difficult” literature is out of reach for high schoolers, but the goal is to

Figure 4:
Core Materials Analysis: Media & Literature

Original Materials Used:
- Clips from Mr. Bean (TV show)
- “Not Waving but Drowning” by Stevie Smith (poem)
- Night by Elie Wiesel (life narrative)
- selections from To End All Wars by Ernest Gordon (life narrative)
- “Then They Came for Me...” by Martin Niemoeller (poem)
- Quotations from Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., & Edward Everett Hale.
- Gattaca (movie)

Materials Removed:
- “The Duchess and the Jeweler” by Virginia Woolf (short story)
- Clips from Titanic (movie)
- Article on Molly Brown by Erin Gartner (newspaper)
- “Games at Twilight” by Anita Desai (short story)
- Selections from Hamlet (play)
- The Merchant of Venice (play)

Materials Added:
- “The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven” by Sherman Alexie (short story)
- Selected newspaper editorials
- Master Race (documentary)
- “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” by James Thurber (short story)
- “Numb” by Linkin Park (song)
- “The Real Me” by Jaci Velasquez (song)
- “Introduction to Poetry” by Billie Collins (poem)
- “Pull the Next One Up” by Marc Smith (poem)
- “Suppose” by Maureen Micas Crisick (poem)
- Clips about choice from movies & TV (Matrix, Children of Dune, Kung Fu, Stargate)
motivate them to move deeper by getting them engaged in relevant real-life problems. "The Duchess and the Jeweler," "Games at Twilight," and the selections from *Hamlet* were simply too abstract and not aligned closely enough with the unit questions, so they were eliminated. *Titanic* and the related article on Molly Brown were vetoed because they were not interesting enough. In a mainstream classroom they might have had better success, but they would have been a turn-off to students at Eclipse, particularly at the start of the semester when they were unfamiliar with us as teachers. *Merchant of Venice* was removed because the unit was simply too long. There was not enough time to include it, and the work was so thematically similar to the book *Night* that student interest could not be sustained. Clips from *Mr. Rodgers' Neighborhood* were not available.

A number of additions were also made to the unit. First, I substituted "Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven" for the Virginia Woolf story. I think that "Lone Ranger" is well suited to the unit thematically. However, the piece did not work well at the start of the unit where I used it, because I did not yet know the students, and I had not figured out how to make more complex literature accessible to them. This would not have been a problem if I had introduced the unit when I already had a feel for the classroom. However, I was presented with a double dilemma in that I had to really engage the students the first week to keep them from dropping my class, but I also had to get to know them, make them comfortable, and find out their individual strengths and weaknesses. So, depending on circumstances, Alexie's short story may or may not be an appropriate start for this unit. The newspaper editorials and the *Master Race* documentary were added to help students contextualize the events surrounding the Holocaust. *Night* offered a first person narrative of what it was like in the camps, but I wanted students to question the
social, cultural, and historical factors that would cause an atrocity to happen. For the section of the unit about the "inside" person versus the "outside" person I gave students "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" because it presents a clear inside/outside dichotomy. I think that it would be better to have some narrative related to the issues of social responsibility in the unit, but this, too, was an on-site judgment call. My students were burned out from the intensity of the Holocaust narrative, so a lighter piece seemed appropriate. My co-teacher, Erin, also brought in two songs that discussed identity. The students enjoyed music, and this addition was an opportunity for us to let them express themselves by talking about their favorite music and contrasting the messages found in different music.

Choosing materials is one area where critical pedagogy gives teachers a decided advantage. When teachers decide to respond to students and engage them, rather than drag them along, it gives them freedom to bring more of real life into the classroom. However, in many ways, critical pedagogy is as demanding as it is flexible. Since critical pedagogy aims to bring students to a more complete awareness of who they are and where they are as social beings, it is up to the teacher to make sure that the curriculum is constantly challenging students. Because different students will be more comfortable with different viewpoints, the teacher must determine when and how students need to be intellectually stretched. This is difficult without a wide range of experience and materials to draw upon. With more life experience, and more teaching behind me, I think I could give this unit greater depth and complexity. It is also important to note that I had relative autonomy to teach what I wanted at Eclipse. Depending on administration and district directives, other teachers may find their curriculum options seriously circumscribed.
Core Methods

As part of Freire’s call to interest and engage students, I implemented several different methods in my teaching. First, as explicitly outlined by Freire (2000/1970), I made discussion the basis of classroom interaction. I did teach “mini-lessons” on topics like summary writing and figurative language, and I did take time to introduce reading materials and assignments, but otherwise I tried to remain a facilitator. This role can be extremely difficult, particularly when the students are hesitant to speak up. Personally I found it difficult not to dominate the classroom. However, there were days when the class was able to engage in what I felt was real critical dialogue. For example, on February 25, 2004, I wrote in my journal,

After we read Night, Erin put up the first quote on the board: “In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has no place” – Mahatma Gandhi, and asked what it meant. We got into what is a “matter of conscience?” Erin brought in the gay marriage controversy. What if your “conscience” is contrary to the law; are you obliged to follow it? I asked about how our country actually works. Isn’t a democracy made so that the law of the majority determines “matters of conscience?” We then went to the second quote: “One who condones evils is just as guilty as the one who perpetrates it.” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We talked about “condone.” The kids offered different opinions: it could mean “endorse” or it could mean “ignore.” If you turn a blind eye are you “just as responsible?” When the class seemed to have reached a consensus that letting something bad happen makes you partially guilty, I tied it back in with our discussion of who was responsible for the Holocaust. Had they said the German citizens or others who knew but didn’t “participate” were guilty? That complicated the question. “Muse” (student pseudonym) said that the German people were not responsible because they were lied to.
If they knew, yes, but if they didn’t know, then no. I countered with the idea that all adults are responsible to find out what is happening in their society, aren’t they? We also talked about the context of the quotes: who said them and why. What conflicts were they facing?

Some of the most successful discussions in the classroom were facilitated by both of us teachers working together. Co-teaching proved to be an excellent way to introduce more perspectives into the classroom. Since I had not been taught these materials or discussed them with others before, it was invaluable to have someone there to point out my unrecognized assumptions. Also, Erin had more patience in waiting for students to respond to her questions, and longer wait-time also produces more student participation. In addition to the spoken dialogue, there was also a written dialogue. Every class period students wrote answers to critical questions relating to their reading. This activity offered them an opportunity to share their opinions without being intimidated or swayed by the others. Even though it was a small class, I found that student response was much more original when it was written than when it was elicited orally.

I also employed methods in keeping with Gardner’s (1983) theory of multiple intelligence. According to Gardner there are seven different areas of intelligence: visual/spatial, verbal, logical/mathematical, musical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Traditionally, schools have emphasized verbal and logical/mathematical skills to the detriment of people whose strengths include relationships (interpersonal), self-awareness (intrapersonal), physical coordination (bodily/kinesthetic), and musical awareness. I hypothesized that many of the learners at Eclipse were probably “non-traditional” learners and sought ways to accommodate them by using visual, auditory, and physical channels to teach them. Ideally, this
would help them to access information in a format easier for them to process. As part of my teaching to multiple intelligences, I also had students use a technique called mind mapping (Buzan, 1996). Mind maps are essentially visual organizers that allow learners to relate information spatially. We used mind-mapping techniques to cover key aspects of literature as well as for personal reflection. I found that the two students who were artists greatly enjoyed the mapping, while two of the more logical/linear thinkers preferred traditional outlines. I also incorporated assignments that required self-reflection and physical movement. One example was the mask project, where students created a mask from paper maché. Inside they decorated the mask to represent how they thought of themselves, and outside they decorated the mask to represent how they thought others saw them. When they were done they wrote a rationale explaining their artwork. Several of the students genuinely engaged in this project. One student spent time outside of class working on her project, while another told me that it had caused her to realize things about herself that she had not thought of before.

While these nontraditional teaching modes are not required for a critical approach, they certainly mesh well with the idea that all learners need to be met where they are. Additionally, critical pedagogy endorses the exploration of the world at hand, and that world is increasingly multi-modal. Students are constantly exposed to computer and video games, the Internet, television, and music. A distinct group of critical pedagogues have endorsed visual and media literacy as essential (Eken, 2002; Charger, 2002). Students not only need to be able to read and analyze traditional texts; they need to be able to “read” the multi-media world around them. Ultimately, I found that the Freirean emphasis on relevant material and Gardner’s theory of
teaching to multiple intelligences came together well to create an environment where teachers and students discussed, analyzed, and used a variety of multi-media materials.

**Findings & Discussion**

Success in the classroom is difficult to measure because of the abundance of confounding factors. In this case, the study was probably particularly influenced by my inexperience. While I was teaching at Eclipse, I had yet to take classes in assessment, classroom management, and methods for teaching writing. As I have taken each of these, I have seen how each one would have changed my approach to certain aspects of teaching. However, by looking at student outcomes such as engagement, learning, and growth I think light can be shed on my three main questions about how critical pedagogy increases student engagement, student social awareness, and reading, writing, and thinking skills.

**Student Engagement**

Student engagement can be ascertained in a number of ways. First, student engagement can be measured informally from student feedback and student participation during in-class work. During this study there were times when students were entirely engaged. The unit plan was successful in developing opportunities for students to think, and their discussion and writing demonstrated that they were reflecting on the materials and reaching their own conclusions. Other times, though, they were bored or distracted. My experience at Eclipse gave me insight into what teachers can, and cannot, do when it comes to student engagement.

I found that a great deal of my students' engagement depended on how well I facilitated the activities to keep the classroom challenging and active. As a new teacher, my pacing of material required a great deal of adjustment throughout the semester. I found it difficult to read
student interest and ability quickly and accurately and make adjustments for it. My teaching also lacked the depth and flexibility that experience can bring. Since I had not taught the unit before, I was preparing a day at a time. Thus I was unable to move through material at will or draw upon a large store of time-tested activities or ideas. These limitations are especially felt by new teachers.

Even had I been an expert, though, I do not think it would have been possible for me to meet all my students' needs simultaneously. What interested or provoked one student irritated or bored another. My experience taught me that flexibility in assignment options and a rotation of activities are essential in keeping students engaged. To further enhance effectiveness, it is imperative to get to know the students well. Only with a thorough understanding of a student's background, learning style, and interests can a teacher anticipate what activities or assignments will work with a student. This is not to say that the curriculum should be structured to work around student's weaknesses; rather, teachers need to be aware of how assignments will both engage and stretch students. Only under those conditions can the teacher provide optimal support.

I also want to emphasize that taking a Freirean approach to teaching does not guarantee an engaged classroom. Some factors, such as the student's nutrition, sleep, and emotional support at home, are mostly or entirely out of the teacher's control. At times, my students were unable to learn because those basic needs had not been met. When that was the case, I felt that it was appropriate to address the needs of the whole person, and I found myself talking students through difficult situations, or supervising lunch, rather than teaching literature. Sadly, helping students sometimes means helping them cope, not helping them soar. Once basic needs are met, though, students make the ultimate decision whether to engage or not. The burden cannot remain
solely on the teacher. However, I do think that it is ethically imperative to structure the classroom so that students can choose to engage and this imperative requires that the teacher get to know students well, constantly monitor their engagement, and adapt to their needs. While I feel I could have done all these things better, I think I did succeed in engaging the students most of the time.

Another set of strong indicators of student engagement are attendance and completion of assignments. In my class, one student had perfect attendance, two had very good attendance (missing less than four class periods), and two had poor attendance. Of those two with “poor” attendance, one had a class schedule conflict with Pullman High School where he was also attending part time, which accounted for at least half of his tardies and contributed to his absences. However, despite his attendance problem, I found out from the staff that he did seem to make an effort to attend my class more regularly than some of his others. From a struggling student, that in itself was a compliment.

Regardless of any difficulties along the way, all the students met the 75-hour requirement and completed enough work to pass the class. This may not seem like a remarkable accomplishment, but it is not uncommon for students at Eclipse to fail to get the hours required during the semester. In addition, of the five who started the class, not one dropped out. Overall then, the class did appear to be fairly successful in engaging at-risk students.

**Student Learning & Growth**

The critical pedagogy classroom does not emphasize giving students information, so there is no standardized test that can measure how much students have learned. However, a Freirean classroom does aim to help students develop thinking skills and a social consciousness
to contextualize those skills. Critical reading, writing, and discussion skills all spring from thinking skills and the language arts classroom provides the opportunity to address these interrelated areas.

**Reading**

Based on my initial discussions with employees at Eclipse, I anticipated that my class would need help with low reading proficiency, so I prepared to use basic literacy strategies. What I found was that most of the students were proficient genre readers. They did not lack the basic literacy skills necessary to read. Instead they lacked the intellectual framework to understand literature. Often, literature has very different goals and methods than genre writing. A genre book seeks to entertain, and is driven by plot, while a literature piece is more likely to revolve around a theme or question, and spend its time elaborating on that central subject.

Part of my challenge at Eclipse was to move students into a new realm of reading strategies. Judging from class discussion and written responses, I was successful in getting students to read and understand literature. The main part of the unit was reading the Holocaust narrative *Night*. Every day the students read a chapter of the book and answered one to six questions about it, ranging from comprehension to critical analysis. After writing, we discussed the findings as a class. Throughout that time we also discussed the differences between genre writing and literature, as well as specific features of literature like foreshadowing and metaphorical language. At the end of the unit, the students really surprised me with their analysis of the final three pieces of poetry we read. I gave them the opportunity to read, and reread the poems, connect them to what we had read in *Night*, and think about their own comprehension process as readers. They came through with discussion and insight.
While the students were able to get into the literature, I am not certain that they internalized the processes we used in class. It is often difficult for students to recognize what skills they are using, and transfer these skills to situations outside of class, or even with a different teacher. Once, when I gave them a reading assignment without any context, they completely failed to decipher it. It was difficult to tell if it was simply beyond their reading level, if they were too unmotivated, or too unaware of their reading processes to develop a strategy for comprehension (for instance, reread when they realized that they had missed something). Of course, the reasoning skills used for reading can be assessed, but unfortunately at the time I was not aware of the appropriate assessment method. It will be their next English teacher who discovers whether or not I was truly effective in developing their skills, or if I simply provided enough support to get them through the literature. I suspect that for each student, the actual result lies somewhere between the two extremes.

**Thinking & Discussing**

The most difficult part of a critical pedagogy is helping students conceptualize a process of thinking. Freire talks about awakening a "consciousness of consciousness" (2000/1070, p. 79), but as many teachers know, it is difficult to zero in on what exactly constitutes critical thinking, particularly in the context of social awareness. At Eclipse we used two different frameworks to give students a process for approaching things critically. The first was Meier’s “Habits of Mind” (2002), which is basically a set of questions that students can ask to discover evidence, perspectives, connections, suppositions and significance. This framework was not very successful. Part of the difficulty was the Eclipse time schedule. Meeting for 2 three-hour blocks a week for a semester is significantly different than seeing students daily for 50 minutes for a year.
Without the constant reinforcement and application, I think it was difficult for students to learn.

The habits of mind are just that—good habits. In her book Meier made it clear that the entire school community she was working in constantly used the habits of mind. I think that such a great developmental leap needs all the support possible.

Since the habits of mind did not seem to engage the students, in the second unit we introduced rhetoric as an analytical device. This framework seemed to click with the students much better, perhaps because we analyzed many small pieces (TV ads, magazine ads) in the second unit, so the students got much more practice in using the approach. Also, the rhetorical framework (logos, pathos, ethos) was simpler and therefore somewhat easier for the students to grasp.

Once again, as with reading, it was difficult to objectively measure how well students internalized the critical thinking framework. However, during the class all of the students demonstrated the ability to look critically at a piece of work. I think they need to continue developing their thinking so that they can examine their own assumptions, not just critique the views of others. As a group, though, the students were very insightful and in some cases they did not need a facilitator as much as they just needed permission to express the critical struggle already going on inside themselves.

Writing

Of the interrelated language and thinking areas, writing was probably the one where students had the least improvement. They did write abundantly during the class. Over the course of the semester they wrote daily journal entries, as well as an article and editorial, an essay, and a rationale. Unfortunately, since I had not completed my class on approaches to teaching writing, I
was less than fully effective in this area. Furthermore, I do not think that the writing assignments were very well integrated into the original unit plan. In retrospect, we probably should have had a main piece of writing related to Night and To End All Wars, since these became the two core pieces of literature in the unit once all the modifications were made. While students got lots of practice expressing themselves in writing, which was good, we did not give them enough opportunities to develop these pieces into formal, polished products.

**Dispositions**

Creating an awareness of social responsibility is a dispositional outcome because it relates to students' perceptions and values. As part of this unit I wanted students to really think about the society they lived in and consider their role in it as responsible citizens. At the start of the unit I had students play Monopoly. However, each student was given their own set of goals and rules by which to play. This activity was meant to mimic society, where people are all participating somehow (i.e., playing the same game), but doing so with different motivations and by different standards. That day I wrote in my journal,

When we talked about the game I was surprised at how little social responsibility the game brought out in these students. “Style” said that she did not think that the players were responsible for protecting one player from another. “Hawk” was repeatedly picked on by “Hat” during the game... a scenario that I set up intentionally by giving Hat a set of rules that allowed him to “cheat.” Although the other players pitched in to take care of Hawk, no one tried to stop Hat. (January 28, 2004)
Throughout the semester my students discussed, argued, and took positions on topics related to social responsibility, and in the end they demonstrated more of an understanding than even I expected:

The final essays... all demonstrated the sort of critical engagement we have been trying to foster in this class. The students questioned the world around them, and then (which surprised even me) they all took a stand and offered an opinion on how/why things should change. (personal journal entry, April 28, 2004)

Only four of the five students completed the final essay, but even the one student who did not demonstrated the beginning stages of critical engagement in her work.

**Staff & Student Response**

The final indicator of success in this project was student and staff response to the class. The critical pedagogy was welcomed by those at Eclipse. Both students and staff invited me to return and teach there again. In her letter of recommendation for me, my Eclipse supervisor wrote,

Rosina ... excelled in creating a comfortable environment for her class. She reached out to her students and provided support that they needed. Her efforts were greatly appreciated by our staff and our students, and her English class proved to be a success....She has already proven her ability to reach a tough audience by successfully teaching English to our at-risk students.... I would not hesitate to welcome Rosina back to our program. (personal communication, April 27, 2004)
This is not so much a reflection on my teaching ability as it is a statement about how students thrive in an environment where their interests, needs, and abilities are recognized. Half the battle in student engagement is simply getting students interested, and when rightly employed critical pedagogy facilitates this willingness to come to school and participate in what is happening.

**Conclusions**

The original questions for the study were: Would critical pedagogy empower students to make the world a better place? Would it really engage students, particularly the "disenfranchised" ones who were at risk of dropping out? And, would it help students to develop a framework for better thinking, reading, and writing skills? At the very least, the students in this study participated in school and produced work that demonstrated social awareness. Any pedagogical approach based on bringing the real world into the classroom, asking students for self-reflection, or using multimedia is open to accusations of being mollycoddling "edutainment." And indeed, it is a challenge to get students beyond simple expressivism or superficial attention, and get them to think profoundly about what implications different viewpoints have. Although I do not think that I entirely succeeded in doing that this semester, I am encouraged by how much impact critical pedagogy can have on social consciousness and student engagement, even in the hands of a novice teacher.

As for the question about student reading and writing skills, there was not conclusive evidence that they become better independent readers or writers. I think any weakness of the unit in promoting reading or writing was mostly due to my inexperience as a teacher. I hope to one day have the opportunity to teach the unit again. If I get the chance, I will work to refine my process of integrating writing and metacognitive strategies for critical thinking. I will also give
students more hands-on activities by incorporating community service learning. My unit lacked total praxis because it did not give students enough opportunity to meaningfully act on the ideas of social responsibility that they were exploring.

While the findings and conclusions related to student learning are the core of my case study, it is worth mentioning that good teaching is inherently a process of dialogue that intimately involves the teacher on emotional, ethical, and intellectual levels. Any serious exploration of teaching and learning in the classroom cannot only result in the collection of data about the subject under study; it must also promote growth for all the participants. Personally, this project helped me to explore my own philosophy of teaching and to integrate a pedagogical framework with the demands of my subject area and the needs of my students. Beyond being just a research project, this experience became the culmination of my studies and helped me to forge the elusive link between practice and theory. Ultimately, the opportunity to design a unit, adapt it for use, and work with colleagues, mentors, and at-risk students has profoundly influenced my approach to teaching.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Original Unit Plan “Ourselves Among Others”
A unit by Renee, Rosina and Allison

Rationale
As seniors, students are about to make the transition from the limited social world of high school to the “independent” adult world of higher education and employment. This is an excellent time for them to examine their assumptions about the society they live in, how it affects them, and how it affects others. Using a variety of narratives, poems, plays, short stories, and other media, this unit aims to help students build their critical thinking skills by juxtaposing texts, inquiry questions, and students’ real life experiences. Since all students must relate to society in some way, this topic has immediate, hands-on application for everyone and can also be a particularly engaging topic for high-risk and minority students who may feel marginalized or abused by the system.

The unit opens with the short story “The Duchess and the Jeweler” and uses it as a jumping off point for discussion of social hierarchy and class mobility. In order to make the issues more accessible to students, a newspaper article and clips from the movie Titanic introduce the life story of Molly Brown. This allows the teacher to use students’ background knowledge from popular culture as an immediate context for exploring the social system. The next part of the unit then takes the class deeper into their investigation of the social contract by introducing the Holocaust narrative Night and raising questions about who is responsible for what happens in a society, a community, or a relationship. Night is also contrasted with excerpts from To End All Wars, the narrative of a POW who survived a Japanese prison camp. This provides a noticeably different perspective, revealing how factual stories are shaped by events as well as by the narrator’s views.

After the complex and sobering literature of the previous section, part three of the unit asks students to rethink the concept of the individual. Night and To End All Wars have probably already complicated students’ understanding of how the “inside” self relates to society and to situations, but this unit stretches that exploration by introducing both classical (Hamlet) and modern (Mr. Rogers) examples of how the individual is expected to relate to the outside world. This culminates in the short story “Games at Twilight” which asks students to rethink their assumptions about how society affects perception of self. Students can then express their insights and opinion in a mask art project and rationale.

The final stage of the unit brings together all these questions to help students decide how far they think one person can or should go in challenging the system. Two major texts, the Shakespeare play The Merchant of Venice and the modern sci-fi movie Gattaca, present opportunities for students to analyze various genres, and to more independently exercise their critical thinking skills as they explore the complex problem of discrimination. Students will polish their ideas,
and their writing, as they tie together the pieces of the unit in a final essay based on their journaling.

Focus Questions
- How much choice do you have about where and how you fit into society?
- How much responsibility does an individual have for shaping events - in the world, in the community, and in his or her family?
- Is a person’s “real self” (inside) more important than how he or she seen by others (outside)?
- What right (or capability) do you have to stand up for yourself or others?

Literature & Media
- “The Duchess and the Jeweler” by Virginia Woolf (short story / LOL)
- Molly Brown related clips from Titanic (movie)
- Article about Molly Brown by Erin Gartner, Associated Press (newspaper article)
- “Not Waving But Drowning” by Stevie Smith (poem / EOL)
- Night by Elie Wiesel (life narrative)
- selections from To End All Wars by Ernest Gordon (life narrative excerpts)
- “Then they came for me...” by Martin Niemoeller (poem)
- The Wave (nonfiction book, optional)
- Information about the Stanford Prison Experiment (optional)
- Clips from a TV prank show like Punk’d (TV, optional)
- “Games at Twilight” by Anita Desai (short story / EOI.)
- Excerpts from Hamlet by Shakespeare (play, optional)
- Clips from Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood (TV show, optional)
- Gattaca (movie)
- Merchant of Venice by Shakespeare (play)

Grade and Ability Level
12th grade English class, any ability

Time Duration
About 8 weeks

Objectives
Students will...
- analyze literature from a variety of forms and genres
- show critical engagement in their writing and discussion
- express their opinions clearly and effectively through writing
- analyze different perspectives on the relationship of individuals to society

Assessments
Formative assessment will be done informally through observation of class discussion and small group work. Classroom discussion and small group discussion will help the teacher gauge critical engagement and student mastery of topics. Formally it will be done through a minus, check, check-plus grading of journal entries where minus is incomplete (student did not attempt to write or wrote completely off topic) check is completed (student made an attempt to write and wrote mostly on topic) and check-plus means the student went above and beyond expectations in their writing. Major pieces of writing like the media analysis, the response to the hierarchy game, the art project rationale, and the final essay, will be evaluated using a combination of the critical thinking rubric and the six traits rubric.

**Part One – Social Mobility**

**Focus Question**
How much choice do you have about where and how you fit into society?

**Abstract**
This part of the unit serves to introduce students to social hierarchy and help them begin exploring what the “rules” are and how they are enforced. The issues surrounding hierarchy will then be complicated by a discussion of how class mobility relates to cultural values and money, particularly in the content of the short story, “The Duchess and the Jeweler” and the article about Molly Brown. When contrasted with current British and American societies these texts open several questions: Historically, how is British culture different from American culture (corporate or Hollywood) with its emphasis on nobility vs. money? How does this play out in modern British and American societies? Who benefits and who suffers under these systems? How much choice do these systems offer the people inside them? The media project, where students find and analyze a piece of media for its social influences, will then tighten this section’s focus on social norms and raise questions about how they function as a set of “unspoken rules.” Social norms and class mobility will then be explored more thoroughly in the social hierarchy game, which also serves as a bridge to the next section’s discussion of the social contract.

**Objectives**
*Students will...*
- define social hierarchy
- analyze beliefs about status within a cultural and historical contexts
- analyze a short story
- think critically about media’s (movies/TV shows/news articles) relationship to broader concepts
- relate concepts of social hierarchy and class mobility to current events
- write critically about the concepts introduced

**Time Duration** 1 week
Literature & Media

- “The Duchess and the Jeweler” by Virginia Woolf
- Clips from Titanic (relating to Molly Brown)
- Article about Molly Brown by Erin Gartner
- Articles/news clips relating to modern Hollywood culture (optional)
- Clips from TV prank show (optional)

Computing needs & Skills none

Activities

- Read “The Duchess and the Jeweler” in class or as assigned reading.
- Have students analyze the story and discuss the social standing of each of the characters.
- Put students in small groups and have them brainstorm what they know about the class system of Britain. What can we guess about the class system of Britain from the story? What are its advantages and disadvantages?
- Watch clips from Titanic.
- Read article on Molly Brown in small groups.
- Based on the material so far, have students contrast how American and British societies judge status.
- Have students find articles, advertisements or songs that demonstrate current American and British perceptions of money, class, and social standing.
- Have students discuss these items, then individually write an analysis of the social factors at work in their found item.
- Bring in an appropriate clip from a TV prank show like Punk’d and discuss social norms (the subconscious rules that govern personal space, help people predict and interpret behavior, set the standard for rudeness/politeness etc). (optional)
- Play day 1 of the social hierarchy game (directions are attached at the end of the unit).

Assignments

- Students will periodically write journal entries on these topics.
- Students will bring in relevant media materials relating to the topic.
- Students will write an analysis of a piece of media.

Assessments

- Journal entries will be graded on a minus, check, check-plus scale.
- Classroom discussion, small group discussion, and student interaction during the social hierarchy game will help the teacher gauge critical engagement and student mastery of topics.
- The media analysis will be evaluated using a combination of the critical thinking rubric and the six traits rubric.
Possible Journal Questions
- In what ways do people "fake" their social status to fit in with others?
- In America, how much does a person *inherent* his or her class?
- How much social mobility is there in the US? Give examples/evidence to support your argument.
- How does social class affect you in relation to your peers and to outside society?

Part Two – The Social Contract

Focus Question
How much responsibility does an individual have for shaping events - in the world, in the community, and in his or her family?

Abstract
This section offers some difficult and sensitive material. The poem “Not Waving but Drowning” opens the question of how responsive society can, or should, be to the needs of the individual. *Night*, the memoir of a concentration camp survivor, then gives a situation where the social contract can be seriously questioned. The horror of the Holocaust complicates our understanding of personal and social responsibility. By drawing students beyond the narrative and into the historical events surrounding it, the class can explore social obligation. Who is responsible for Hitler? Who is responsible for the socioeconomic factors that put him in power? For the camps? Then the situations within the novel itself bring out questions about people’s responsibilities to each other, and pose the question: How far does loyalty to community and family go in the face of death? Brief selections from *To End All Wars* (the narrative that *Bridge over the River Kwai* is based on) as well as the poem “Then they came for me...” serve only to broaden and further contextualize these questions.

Objectives
*Students will...*
- explain the concept of a social contract
- analyze how the social contract is constructed and maintained by religious, social, political, historical, and environmental factors
- recognize the social “rules” that people play by
- analyze life narratives
- analyze poetry
- analyze television
- write critically about the concepts introduced

Time Duration 3 weeks

Literature & Media
• "Not Waving but Drowning" by Stevie Smith
• Night by Elie Wiesel
• selections from To End All Wars by Ernest Gordon
• “Then they came for me...” by Martin Niemöller
• The Wave (nonfiction book, optional)
• Information about the Stanford Prison Experiment (optional)

Computing Needs & Skills none

Activities
• Have students play day 2 of the social hierarchy game.
• Have students read and discuss “Not Waving but Drowning” especially in the context of what they learned from the social hierarchy game.
• Have students read and discuss Night in literature circles.
• Bring in historical information and supplementary sources to help students contextualize the narrative in historical, cultural, and social information.
• Have students contrast To End All Wars with Night, paying special attention to the different environmental factors involved in the stories.
• Have students read and discuss “Then they came for me...”

Assignments
• Students will write a short reflection on their own experience in the hierarchy game.
• Students will periodically write journal entries on these topics.

Assessments
• Journal entries will be graded on a minus, check, check-plus scale.
• Classroom discussion, small group discussion, and student interaction during the social hierarchy game will help the teacher gauge critical engagement and student mastery of topics.
• The reflection on the social hierarchy game will be evaluated using a combination of the critical thinking rubric and the six traits rubric.

Possible Journal Questions/ Discussion Questions:

After reading "Not Waving but Drowning," have students get into small groups and brainstorm examples of when individuals should step in to help society, when society should help individuals, and when individuals shouldn't or don’t have a responsibility to help each other. Then have the groups share their comments and have this lead into a larger class discussion on the subject. Be prepared to offer some of your own examples (ex: Military/War? Draft? Welfare/Unemployment?), including some examples that may complicate the issue: (ex:
Assisted suicide? How responsible are we for others’ actions—trials where the defendant blames somebody else, suing the government or corporations, etc.)

At some point, incorporate a discussion or journal write-up on the strengths and contradictions of the U.S. social and belief system: We embrace both capitalism (individualism / every man for himself) and democracy (everyone is equal, we should all listen to each other...) How does this work? What are the effects of embracing two potentially opposing ideas?

How would you know if someone is “drowning?” Do you have a responsibility to help if you do know? Do you have a responsibility to find out if you don’t know?

Discussion on dictators: If your society is run by a dictator, do you have some responsibility for that? Do you have a responsibility for dictators in other societies? Does the society create the dictator? (example: some people say that Germany was simply waiting for a racist dictator. If Hitler hadn’t stepped up, it would have been somebody else.) What are the class’s thoughts?

Part Three – Inside/Outside

Focus Question
Is a person’s “real self” (inside) more important than how he or she seen by others (outside)?

Abstract
Western culture has long been fixated with whether “the true person inside” is more important than any situation they encounter or any criticism they face. There is a long literary history of works (The Iliad, Antigone, Hamlet) where the “absolute reality” of the protagonist’s emotional and/or intellectual inner world is tragically juxtaposed with his or her experiences. Traditionally, these works have been read as reinforcing the concept of the individual as the mediator of reality, despite the fact that these “inner realities” of the heroes are often just extreme internalized forms of social values. Nonetheless, our current culture continues to emphasize the role of the individual as absolute mediator of reality... right down to children’s shows like Mr. Rogers with its mantra that “You can be anyone you want to be.” The short story “Games at Twilight” by Anita Desai gives students another perspective by once again depicting the relationship between the individual and society, but this time questioning how much the “inner world” matters when it is not aligned with communally held values. After exploring these issues, students will then create a mask depicting their perception of their “inner” self vs. their “social” self.

Objectives
Students will...
• evaluate the portrayal of the individual in media and literature
• plan a project
• represent concepts and ideas using the arts
• write a rationale reflecting critical engagement with the art project
• peer edit and polish a piece of writing

**Time Duration** 1 week
Literature & Media
- “Games at Twilight” by Anita Desai
- Excerpts from Hamlet (optional)
- Clips from Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood (optional)

Computing Needs & Skills  none

Activities
- Have students read (and/or view clips) from Hamlet (or other appropriate film or literature) and Mr. Rogers and discuss how the individual is “supposed” to react to the outside world.
- Have students read and discuss “Games at Twilight.”

Assignments
- Have students plan and construct a mask that represents their “social” self and “individual” self. On the inside of the masks students should represent how they see themselves. The outside should represent how they think others view them.
- Have students write a rationale for the mask project.
- Have students peer edit and polish their rationales.

Assessments
- Journal entries will be graded on a minus, check, check-plus scale.
- Classroom discussion and small group discussion will help the teacher gauge critical engagement and student mastery of topics.
- Artwork will be graded on completion and relevance to the topic.
- The mask project rationale will be evaluated using a combination of the critical thinking rubric and the six traits rubric.

Part Four – Grand Finale

Focus Question
What right (or capability) do you have to stand up for yourself or others?

Abstract
Gattaca and Merchant of Venice both offer stories where discrimination, be it based on genetic, or racial/monetary/religious factors, provides the plot conflict. On the surface, Gattaca reinforces the American idea that you can be “anyone you want to be” while Merchant of Venice tragically explores the societal pressures that can come to bear on the individual. Juxtaposed, these texts raise questions about how far we should, or can, go against the system. They also raise a host of questions about the institutionalization of societal values, and the paradoxical fact that society both excludes and uses people, making them contributors to general well being while denying them acceptance. When analyzing these two pieces of performance art, students will bring into play the other questions raised in the earlier stages of the unit concerning responsibility, the nature of
the individual, and class mobility, as well as exploring discrimination and what should be
done about it.

Objectives
The student will...
  • critically analyze a play
  • critically analyze a movie
  • publish online
  • analyze discrimination
  • write a well-developed essay representing their critical analysis of the subject

Time Duration 3 weeks or longer

Literature & Media
  • Merchant of Venice (A shorter piece of literature with similar themes can be
    substituted)
  • Gattaca

Computing Needs & Skills
  • Students will scan in or upload digital pictures of their projects to form an online
    gallery of their artwork from the previous section. Each student will also be
    responsible for posting a polished version of his or her rationale with the artwork.
  • Students will need access to computers, a webpage, and a digital camera or regular
    camera and scanner. If students cannot work at a school computer lab, but
    computers are available in the classroom, have them rotate through and work on
    their page.
  • This activity promotes html/coding skills and computer proficiency.

Activities
  • Have students read or perform the play.
  • Discuss the play and watch video clips of different productions as desired.
  • Assign students to different groups and have each group analyze a different
    character in Gattaca as you watch it.
  • Have students work on web pages and final essay in class.

Assignments
  • Students will complete a final essay.
  • Students will create a web page.
  • Students will periodically write journal entries on the topics being explored.

Assessments
  • Journal entries will be graded on a minus, check, check-plus scale.
  • Classroom discussion and small group discussion will help the teacher gauge
    critical engagement and student mastery of topics.
  • Web page will be graded on inclusion of required elements (photos, captions,
polished rationale).

• Final essay will serve as summative assessment for unit. It will be assessed using the critical thinking rubric and six traits rubric.

Unit Sources:


“Not Waving but Drowning” by: Stevie Smith. Page 1077

“Games at Twilight” by: Anita Desai. Page 1110


Selected Reading One: Survival at the expense of others. Pgs. 72-77.


"The Duchess and the Jeweler" by: Virginia Woolf. Page 1048


Start with the society ladies’ tea when they make fun of Molly Brow before she shows up (right after the scene where Jack shows Rose his art). Ends with the lower class party.

53 min – 1 hour, 7 min (there are other applicable scenes that may be substituted).

Unit Appendix One: The Social Hierarchy Game

Preparation: During the day preceding the game day, the class should make four lists. Each list needs to contain perceived attitudes and characteristics attributed to the following social classes: lower, middle, upper middle, upper.

Materials: Lists of characteristics attributed to each class, tokens that represent money, name-tags, and instructions.

Time: 2 days

Day One:

As students enter the room, each one is given 1 to 10 tokens. There should be an approximately equal number of students possessing each number of tokens. The number every student has is to be kept a secret.

Depending on the number a student has, he or she will be act correspondingly. i.e.: those having 10 tokens are part of the upper class and should act accordingly. They will also display certain attitudes toward those they think have a different social status than their own. Their assigned class should be apparent throughout the discussions.

Group Discussions on Day One: The students will be arbitrarily divided into four groups to discuss whatever media or topic the teacher has introduced for the day. Each student should continue to integrate his/her "social attitude" into the discussion.

At the end of the period, all of the students must return their tokens. Hand out rules for day two.

Day Two:

As students enter the classroom they will once again be given tokens. Some students should receive the same number as before, and some should receive a different number. They should be given directions that outline the new rules for day two, and a name-tag with which to mis/identify their social standing.

It is best to go over the rules and procedures (provided in the Social Hierarchy game/Student Handout below) so that students are familiar with the rules and strategies.

Day two will work on a similar basis as day one, but the tokens will no longer represent just money. They will also represent social acceptance and ability to survive. Individuals will be asked to openly mark their status with name-tags knowing that if they are lower status they may be discriminated against, but that if they lie and are caught they will be eliminated from the game. Students will be asked to work in mixed groups (high and low status). It is up to them what "social attitude" they adopt.
Students should be working toward some goal (an analysis of a piece of media, a group discussion that answers certain questions etc.), and should be told that the activity is a competition between the groups. At the end points will be awarded for completing the task first (35 points), completing it correctly (15), having a group where every member’s social status is “correctly identified” (10) and having high class members (3 points for a middle class group member, 4 for upper-middle class, 5 for upper class). At the end students do not have to reveal their true class unless they are randomly selected by the teacher to reveal their true identity, so bluffing is an option. This presents a scenario where many different strategies are possible. Individuals may choose to be honest or deceitful in an attempt to survive in their group. Groups may choose to expose and eliminate their “undesirable” members, or may choose to disguise them in order to receive the benefit of their help with the task. The conflict of interest sets up a scenario where just about anything could happen.

At the end the teacher will tally the points for each group based on their work and on the membership of their group. To determine if anyone is “caught” pretending to be what they are not, the teacher will roll a die where 1-3 will mean no review of anyone in the group, and 4-6 means people will be investigated. If 4-6 is rolled the people in the group have two choices, they can select someone to be eliminated automatically (this will cost them no points but any that that person was contributing by their class) or they can have one of their members randomly selected to reveal their true status. If this person turns out to be anything other than what they claim then the group loses 7 points.

This game brings up several questions: In a society that discriminates, what options do people have? If you could help yourself by hurting someone else, would you do it? By eliminating people that might hurt you in the long run, are you also hurting your “society” by getting rid of contributing members? Does your perception of the game change if the consequences of being discovered change? What if elimination meant internment in a concentration camp, but being in the lowest scoring group also meant internment, how would you have played?

Before class is over, students should write a journal entry conveying their feelings, thoughts, ideas about the game and their social status.
Unit Appendix Two: Social Hierarchy Game/Student Handout:

Your goal this period is for your group to get the most points. There are many different strategies that you can use, so think about the game carefully.

Ways to earn points:
35 points for finishing your group project first and getting it right.
15 points for doing it correctly (but not being first).
10 points if everyone in your group is “correctly identified” on their name tags at the end of the game (There is some chance involved here. At the end of the game it will be decided randomly who has to reveal their true class. So people who lie about their class can hurt your group or help your group. You have to decide on your strategy).
At the end of the game you will get 3 points for every middle class player, 4 for every upper middle class player, and 5 points for every upper class player.

The game will be completed in three rounds:

Round one: Everyone receives their tokens and decides how to identify themselves on their nametags. You MUST wear a nametag, and it MUST say either lower, middle, upper middle, or upper in ink. YOU CANNOT CHANGE YOUR NAME-TAG AFTER THIS POINT.

Round two: Everyone is assigned to a group. Your group should discuss strategy and start working on the task. Any person may be voted out by a majority of the group members. So if you think it is best for your strategy to vote out people who are lying (or might be lying) or low class, you may do so. Anyone who is voted out must report to the teacher immediately, they will become part of an “outcast” group, which will also be competing.

Round three: When all the groups have finished work, points will be counted.
35 points will go to the first group who finished the task correctly.
15 points will go to each other group which correctly competed the task.

Then points will be counted up for each team’s members. For each group, the teacher will first roll the die. If it shows 1-3, no member of the group will be questioned. The group will get 10 points for being correctly identified, and 3 points for every middle class player, 4 for every upper middle class player, and 5 points for every upper class player.

If the teacher rolls 4-6 the group has two choices: It can select one member to be kicked out. Then the teacher will simply give 3 points for every middle class player, 4 for every upper middle class player, and 5 points for every upper class player. The team will only lose 10 points because not everyone was correctly identified.

The team can also choose not to kick anyone out. The teacher will then randomly select one of the students to reveal their true identity. If the student’s true identity is DIFFERENT than the identity written on their name-tag the group will LOSE 7 points (as
a penalty for trying to hide someone) and lose 10 points because they were not all correctly identified. The teacher will then give 3 points for every middle class player, 4 for every upper middle class player, and 5 points for every upper class player. If the student’s identity was correct, then the group will get 10 points for being correctly identified, and 3 points for every middle class player, 4 for every upper middle class player, and 5 points for every upper class player. The teacher will then move on to the next group.
Unit Appendix Three: Outside Unit Resources

Poem

First they came for the Communists,
    and I didn't speak up,
    because I wasn't a Communist.
Then they came for the Jews,
    and I didn't speak up,
    because I wasn't a Jew.
Then they came for the Catholics,
    and I didn't speak up,
    because I was a Protestant.
Then they came for me,
    and by that time there was no one
    left to speak up for me.

by Rev. Martin Niemoller, 1945

Six Traits Rubric

Ideas and Content ________ out of 5.

5 This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader’s attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.
A. The topic is narrow and manageable.
B. Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.
C. Reasonably accurate details are present to support the main ideas.
D. The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience; the ideas are fresh and original.
F. The reader’s questions are anticipated and answered.
F. Insight – an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant – is an indicator of high level performance, though not required.

Organization ________ out of 5.

5 The organization enhances and showcases the central idea of theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.
A. An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
B. Thoughtful transitions clearly show how ideas connect.
C. Details seem to fit where they’re placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
D. Pacing is well controlled; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
E. The title, if desired, is original and captures the central theme of the piece.
F. Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the purpose and audience.

Voice ________ out of 5.

5 The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling and engaging. The writer “aches with caring” yet is aware and respectful of the audience and the purpose of the writing.
A. The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer, sensing the person behind the words.
B. The writer takes a risk by revealing who they are and what they think.
C. The tone and voice give flavor and texture to the message and are appropriate for the purpose and audience.
D. Narrative writing seems honest, personal, and written from the heart.
E. This piece screams to be read aloud, shared, and talked about. The writing makes you think about and react to the author’s point of view.
Word Choice ______ out of 5.

5
Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.
A. Words are specific and accurate; it is easy to understand just what the writer means.
B. The language is natural and never overdone; both words and phrases and individual and effective.
C. Striking words and phrases often catch the reader’s eye – and linger in the reader’s mind (You can recall a handful as you reflect on the paper.)
D. Lively verbs energize the writing. Precise nouns and modifiers add depth and specificity. “To be” verbs are eschewed.
E. Precision is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot.

Sentence Fluency ______ out of 5.

5
The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites oral reading.
A. Sentences are constructed in a way that underscores and enhances the meaning.
B. Sentences vary in length as well as structure. Fragments, if used, add style and rhythm. Dialogue, if present, sounds natural.
C. Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings add variety and energy.
D. The use of creative and appropriate connectives between sentences and thoughts show how each relates to and builds upon the one before it.
E. The writing has cadence; the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning. The first time you read it aloud is a breeze.

Conventions ______ out of 5.

5
The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.
A. Spelling is generally correct, even the more difficult words.
B. The punctuation is accurate, even creative, and guides the reader though the text.
C. The thorough understanding and consistent application of capitalization skills are present.
D. Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
E. Paragraphing tends to be sound and reinforces the organizational structure.
F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect – and it works! The piece is very close to being ready to publish.
Appendix B: Teaching Journal

"You should keep a journal in which you describe in some detail your experience and your reflections on this experience. Your journal will become the appendix of your final paper."

1.21.04 – Eclipse Teacher Orientation (1 hour)

1.26.04 – Eclipse Class (3 hours)

**Major Activities:**

**Introduction to class/instructors**

**Mind Mapping exercise**

**Short Story Read Aloud/Discussion:** Round robin reading of short story followed by group analysis of themes & plot.

**Class Discussion:** What influences a person’s place in society? How much control does a person have over the different influences (family, money, gender, race/ethnicity, history/past experiences, education, hair/clothing style, music taste, nationality)

**Free write:** Write on one of the following –

- Have you ever been “profiled?” Was it fair?
- Which factor is MOST important in deciding a person’s place in society?

**Handouts:**

**Study Consent Form** – I explained my honors thesis study and gave out a copies of the cover letter/consent form that was approved by the human subject review board.

**Mind Mapping Handout** – I adapted information from *The Mind Map Book* by Tony Buzan to create a handout that introduced students to radiant thinking and provided directions for Mind Mapping.

**Syllabus** – I gave out a syllabus for the class.

**Short Story** – I handed out copies of Sherman Alexi’s short story “Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven” for a group read aloud.

**Questionnaire/Input Sheet** – I created and handed out a questionnaire to allow the students to give us some background information about themselves and give input about what they want to see in the class.

**Assignments:** none

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:**

The Mind Mapping exercise went over very well with all but one student (Style). However, even she was able to construct a Mind Map by the end. I think that Mind Mapping may be very useful for this class since it appears that at least one student is a strong visual learner (Hawk).

The read aloud revealed a variety of reading comfort levels. One student was very shy (Muse). One student chose to read longer than anyone else, but seemed to read quickly with little regard for punctuation of phrasing (Hawk). However, he did seem to retain the
story quite well, and was able to discuss it later. One student who hesitated at common words during the read aloud (Orange) later showed me the three books he was reading for fun: a vampire novel by Ann Rice, the prequel to *The Da Vinci Code*, and *The Book of Shadows* – an encyclopedia of satanic/magic rituals. Apparently he reads quite a bit.

All the students appear to be unfamiliar with how to read and comprehend literature, as opposed to genre writing.

I got very little eye contact from the students today.

Hawk dominates the discussions. I will have to make certain that he does not end up as the only student who every talks.

Hat was out sick.

1.28.04 Eclipse Class (3 hours)

**Major Activities:**

*Review of Last Class*

*Social Contract Theory* – enacted though Monopoly

*Class Discussion* of the social contract… how does it work? How/Why does it break down? How does Monopoly parallel society?

*Free write:* Write on one of the following

  - If your life is a game… What are you playing for? What are your goals? How will you know if you win?
  - If society is a game… what “rules” should be changed? How can people like you change the rules?

*Social Norms:* Class discussion of the “hidden rules” of society. Mr. Bean shown as a demonstration of how those “unspoken rules” can be violated. Everyone took notes and shared their observations of Mr. Bean.

*Sustained Silent Reading*

**Handouts:**

*Book Talk Rubric* – submitted to the class for input/revision. It was decided that the “plot” requirement could be covered by reading the back of the novel, so long as it was not worth as many points as the other features of the book talk.

**Assignments:** none

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:**

The students really engaged with the Monopoly game. They were excited to find out at the end what the rules were for each player. When we talked about the game I was surprised at how little social responsibility the game brought out in these students. Style said that she did not think that the players were responsible for protecting one player from another. Hawk was repeatedly picked on by Hat during the game… a scenario that I set up intentionally by giving Hat a set of rules that allowed him to “cheat.” Although the
other players pitched in to take care of Hawk, no one tried to stop Hat. I wonder if next
time I try this activity I should create some authority that can be appealed to. For instance
I could be a higher authority who could hold everyone accountable to the "real rules," but
players would have to pay $20 to appeal to me. I would not listen unless at least two
players petitioned me. This way the kids would see that standing up for others has a cost,
and that standing up for what is right cannot just be done by the person who is wronged –
it must be a social act.

The biggest surprise to everyone was that Muse won the game. Her goal had been to get
rid of all her money, and she did so.

The book talk was rocky, we were under-prepared and it was my fault. I will make sure
to do a better demo before anyone tries it for a grade.

The social norms part of the class met with mixed reviews. I think that I failed to tie it in
meaningfully with the other aspects of what we are doing with society vs. the individual.
Hawk hates comedy. Muse loves it. I guess that in the end, teaching means trying to
rotate through approaches so that everyone gets to do something they like regularly.

The silent reading time surprised me. They were able to remain silent and reading for
about 40 min. I don’t want to do that again, it was an issue of having too little planned.
However, I am still impressed with their ability to focus, especially since I was told that
Hat has ADD.

I got a lot more eye contact today.

Muse seems even more withdrawn with Hat around.

Hawk says that they have never done the MI test.

**Eclipse Class 2.2.04 Eclipse Class (3 hours)**

**Major Activities:**
*Intro To 5 Habits of Mind*
*Discussion of Audience and Purpose* (Erin)

Exercise with police log scenario: Let’s assume your bike was stolen. How would a
police log describing the event be different from an email to a friend describing the
event? How does audience and purpose change the writing that you did?

*Online Research for Article / Pre-writing*

**Handouts:**
*5 Habits of Mind* (adapted from online sources)
*Article/Editorial Assignment* (adapted from online sources)

**Assignments:** None
Observations, Reflections, and Notes:
It is difficult sometimes to keep them on task and at roughly the same spot. Some students are late (for a variety of legitimate and illegitimate reasons), some are not feeling well (Muse had her wisdom teeth out) and some are just resistant to doing the in-class work. I under-planned today, but three hours is an eternity to fill. It is difficult for the students to keep absorbing information. Some of the students are much less computer literate than others, which I guess makes sense considering that they do not use computers much at home. However, by asking them to do internet research it became clear who was able to navigate the web, and who didn’t know the first thing about search engines. I must remember this so I don’t put kids on the spot in my classroom by assuming they have tech skills they don’t.

Eclipse Class 2.4.04

Major Activities:
Mind Mapping of Night: I really wanted to ground the students in the story by having them mind map the characters, locations, key events, figurative language, important facts about the main character that came up in the first chapter.
Mini-lesson on figurative language: In order for them to mind map the “literary” qualities in Night, they needed to know a little bit about figurative language. I brought in my encyclopedia of similes and we talked about similes and figurative language. Basically, I brought out the fact that the first clue to look for “a deeper meaning” is when language stops making sense literally. I gave an example from the book when Elie compares starts to eyes in the night sky (pg 18).
Free Write: (from pgs 17-19) Are the Hungarian police really the “first oppressors?” Why or why not? [What about those “friends of yesterday” waiting to pillage the belongings of the Jews. How responsible are they?]
Reading: Chapter one of Night.

Handouts:
Figurative Language: Similes and Foreshadowing
Mind Map Directions / Questions
Vocab for chapter one of Night (did not hand out, reference only)

Assignments: None

Observations, Reflections, and Notes:
Several of the kids were already familiar with foreshadowing. I hope that I can get them interested in the art of hunting down and exploring figurative language. The Mind Mapping was interesting, but only up to a certain point. I think that I really beat it to death by doing an entire chapter. On the other hand I think some of the students really gained something by hearing the book read aloud and hearing the vocabulary.
Note: I let the article/editorial project slip away from what I wanted it to be. I wanted it to give them a reason to explore WWII and get a feel for what influenced the rise of Nazism and the concentration camps. I let it get off track and it is my own fault. Sigh.

Eclipse Class 2.9.04

Major Activities:
Work on rough drafts of article
Video “Master Race” on the Rise of Nazism
Free write: Why/how should we study the holocaust? (handout with quotations from Elie on why the Holocaust should be studied).

Handouts:
Master Race worksheet

Assignments: None

Observations, Reflections, and Notes: The kids managed to say focused on writing for a fairly sustained period, which I found encouraging (40min). Of course, their output varied greatly. They still have a long way to go, but they put in some real effort today. Hawk was out of it today.

It was also interesting to see what students said about why and how we should study the Holocaust. They were pretty adamant that students in general should be exposed to the full brutality of the story (which quite frankly leaves me squeamish and depressed) so that they realize the reality of the horror and need to keep it from happening again. One of the students, my divergent thinker, said that evil is like a virus, it will just change and catch us unprepared again. We had an interesting discussion about how the rhetoric will certainly change, but as individuals we still have some responsibility to stand up for what we believe.

Eclipse Class 2.11.04

Major Activities:
Mini-lesson on summary writing: I have been getting blank looks when I ask “What just happened in this story (chapter etc.)? Thus, I decided it was time to directly teach summary techniques. I told them to look for the key events when they read: the things that change the plot OR change a character. We did a demo summary as a class. I read a short story from I Thought My Father Was God, and as a class they pieced together a summary. Then I let them loose to practice on Night.

Reading: Chapters two and three of Night
Summaries of Night: Students wrote summaries of the two chapters they read. Most of these were pretty good. I noticed that they all used the scaffold sentence “In this chapter...” that I gave them as my personal hint on how to get started. That first sentence is sometimes the hardest.
Online workshop/responses: Students responded to each other’s free writes from last time on “Why/How should we study the Holocaust?”

Vocab (Erin): Erin introduced a vocabulary program she designed for the class.

Handouts:
Alternative options for hours (Erin)

Assignments: Vocab, rough drafts

Observations, Reflections, and Notes: Slow day. Muse has a sinus infection. Hat had to leave early. Hawk skipped. I got some interesting responses on the online free write though. They basically give a thesis, they do not really flesh out their ideas. But I did get a tentative disagreement. Getting them to state an opinion is easy sometimes, and hard other times, but they really resist talking or disagreeing with each other. Muse’s response online was the first glimmer of an argument I’ve really seen. Yeah! Critical engagement!

**2.16.04 No Class, Federal Holiday**

Eclipse Class 2.18.04
Major Activities:
Mini Lesson on Reading Literature: Basically we contrasted the conventions of genre writing and the conventions of literature and explored how literature demands that the reader be more active in discovering meaning.

Night, Chapter 4: This chapter is a bunch of “snapshots” of life in the camp. What does this collage tell us about Elie’s view of the camp and of its affect on people? Students summarized one event and responded to it.

Who Is Responsible? A handout that asks students to directly attribute responsibility for the Holocaust. How much are different groups responsible?

Continued work on article

Handouts:
Who is Responsible (for the Holocaust)? (adapted from internet resource)

Assignments: Finish article draft (1 out of 5)

Observations, Reflections, and Notes: I went about this writing assignment all the wrong way. I failed to link it to their free writing at all. I guess I wanted some outside way for them to contextualize the experience of the concentration camps. I wanted them to weigh what economic, political, social, and personal issues that produced this genocide, but they got tangled up in the task. They are struggling with the process of writing. I can’t (or won’t) get to grammar with them, since most of them are wrestling with the demands of the format (they are used to writing reports so an article is a challenge to their normal “voice”), problems with synthesizing or finding material, and lack of motivation.

My problem right now is that I am currently taking my class on rhetoric and composition for teachers – I know how I want an assignment to function within the
critical pedagogy framework, but I don’t know exactly how I want to get them through it. I am only now putting together a real understanding of how to help students actually write.

On the other hand there was some real critical engagement today for the first time. Students each summarized an event in the chapter, and then we talked about what these events show us. This book is not just a “recording” of everything that happened. The author has selected events to tell us about. What choices are being made by the characters (giving up personal property, helping others, getting food at the risk of getting shot) and how to these choices pan out? What is Elie telling us about choice?

We also got into the Stockholm syndrome (people identifying with their captors), and talked about how the camp is changing characters psychologically. At one point Elie tells us that he hates his father for being weak, rather than hating the guard who is beating his father. What does that say about the relationship between Elie and his father? What does that say about the power of the camp?

**Eclipse Class 2.23.04**

**Major Activities:**

**Reading:** Chapter 5 of *Night*

**Free Write:** Sum up one of the following events: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, or what happens to Akiba Drumer. Was there a real choice involved?

**Handouts:** “Not Waving but Drowning”

**Assignments:** As necessary work on article, other writing, and vocab outside of class.

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:** There was some more critical engagement today. Hawk was absolutely on fire. He was ready to contest any and all points I wanted to make, which was great. We got into a discussion about the nature of choice: does it exist, are we simply the sum of our experiences, and if we have just a few choices we don’t really care for, are they meaningful? Hawk argued yes because Elie always has the choice to die or to go on living. The responses from the other kids were interesting. They all focused in on Yom Kippur and the debate within the camp as to whether to fast or not. In their writing they saw just the physical necessity of eating. The characters should not fast because they would die sooner. I tried to bring out the idea of choice as identity. The Jews can still choose to assert their identity by fasting during this important religious holiday. In fact, it may be a psychological necessity that overrides physical necessity. The characters who give up on faith are often the ones who die (like Akiba Drumer). Hawk countered that Elie has given up his faith and is still surviving. Moreover, religion is only “group” identity not personal identity. I questioned whether Elie truly has “lost his faith.” After all he did not deny the existence of his God, he asserted instead that this God must be cruel. Also, for extremely religious people, like Elie was at the start of this narrative, religion is a core part of their identity. Eventually, we reached an impasse. It was hard to tell how much the other students were following our discussion. Ideally, they were engaging too.

Erin then lead a great discussion on the poem “Not Waving but Drowning” and brought in the other poem “Then They Came for Me” when it became appropriate. There
was discussion about who is talking in the poem, how it works on literal and metaphorical levels, and what it means in terms of the individual and society. Erin and I had very different readings of this piece (as we often do) and we played off this in class. I ask: Why did they leave him out there to die? Aren’t they responsible? Shouldn’t they have gotten close enough to see he was drowning? And Erin asks: How did he get there? Is he responsible for taking himself out of range? This led right into a discussion of social responsibility with “Then They Came for Me.” Muse brought up the situation in Iraq as an example of what happens when people are not socially active. Style also got into the discussion. I tried to tie it back into the Monopoly “social contract” idea. They recalled how the contract broke down, but they got lost when I tried to point out how society is a system where everyone needs to pay in for it to succeed (the rights of all are diminished when the rights of any are diminished). I’ve got to find a better way to explain that.

Eclipse Class 2.25.04

Major Activities:

Reading: Chapter 6 of Night.

Free Write: Sum up (in two to three sentences) what happened with Rabbi Eliahou and his son. Consider the reasons (both ethical/moral and practical) why Elie should stay with his father. List them. Consider the reasons (both ethical/moral and practical) why Elie should leave his father. List them. So, what do you think he should do? Support your answer with evidence from the list. What will he do, based on what you have read about him?

Discussion of Quotations: Erin and I co-led the discussion.

Handouts: none

Assignments: As necessary work on article, other writing, and vocab outside of class.

Observations, Reflections, and Notes: This was another good day of critical engagement. After we read Night, Erin put up the first quote on the board: “In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has no place” – Mahatma Gandhi, and asked what it meant. We got into what is a “matter of conscience?” Erin brought in the gay marriage controversy. What if your “conscience” is contrary to the law, are you obliged to follow it? I asked about how our country actually works. Isn’t a democracy made so that the law of the majority determines “matters of conscience?” We then went to the second quote: “One who condones evils is just as guilty as the one who perpetrates it.” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We talked about “condone.” The kids offered different opinions: it could mean “endorse” or it could mean “ignore.” If you turn a blind eye are you “just as responsible.” When the class seemed to have reached a consensus that letting something bad happen makes you partially guilty, I tied it back in with our discussion of who was responsible for the Holocaust. Had they said the German citizens or others who knew but didn’t “participate” were guilty? That complicated the question. Muse said that the German people were not responsible because they were lied to. If they knew yes, but if they didn’t know, then no. I countered with the idea that all adults are responsible to find out what is happening in their society, aren’t they? We also talked about the context of the quotes: who said them and why? What conflicts were they facing?
This whole social responsibility issue has brought out some political sentiment in the students. I have two who are old enough to vote, and one who feels strongly about how she wants to vote. I promised to get her information on how to register.

Last week a student asked me what a kike was. I brought him in a definition today. I likened it to "nigger" so that they would understand how offensive it is. I know that some of them use it in play with their friends. Personally I feel that slurs don't have any place in people's vocabulary. One of my students was very offended that I said nigger, and I was instructed to use the "n word" from now on. This of course launched the students into a discussion of other words that are so offensive they should never be said. If I was the coolest teacher ever, I would seize that as the opportunity of a life time to talk about rhetoric or cultural sensitivity or something. I squelched the whole discussion instead. I guess that has to do with honoring my personal teaching style. As an inexperienced teacher, I'm not comfortable working with some issues. I did all I could with that one, then let it go.

**Eclipse Class 3.1.04**

**Major Activities:**

**Reading:** *To End All Wars*

Discussion of the contrast in perspectives. What factors contributed to the variety of responses to suffering? How is the Japanese prison camp different from the concentration camp? Which one would you rather live in?

**Online Questions on the Bridge**

**Article Project**

**Handouts:**

Selections from *To End All Wars*

**Assignments:**

Work on the questions on the Bridge

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:** Had some good discussion about the contrasts between the social situation faced by the people in both camps. Style really put some effort into working online.

**Eclipse Class 3.4.04**

**Major Activities:**

Finish *Night*

Finish Article Project

Free write (?)

**Handouts:** none

**Assignments:** none

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:** One of the students mentioned that she wanted to read aloud so Frin grabbed a book and started reading. Even one of the kids who had "finished the book already" was reading along. It was one of those great teaching moments.
Eclipse Class 3.8.04
Major Activities:
Reading: *Secret Life of Walter Mitty*

**Mask Project**
Class discussion

**Handouts:**
Mask Project Sheet
Permission slip for *Merchants of Cool*
Extra Hours assignment: Alternate Identity

**Assignments:**

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:** We showed them our masks and explained the project. We then started actually creating the masks. We also had a discussion about what is a person’s true self: is it what is inside, or what we actually do? To get them started on that question, I had them read “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.” I did this without any explanation or description of the story, which turned out to be a mistake. I found it more interesting to try to figure out what was happening, while I think my students just found it confusing. I didn’t have the guts to make them reread it, although that is what I should have done. So we talked about it and what it meant. Using the story as a jumping off point, we discussed what a person’s real self is. Is it what you think/feel/believe inside? Or is it what you show the outside world? We had takers for both sides, but eventually compromised with something along the line of you being a combination of your “inner world” and actions.

Eclipse Class 3.10.04
Major Activities:

**Mask Project**

**Music on the Inside/Outside Theme**

**Free write:** Describe your plan for your mask.

**Handouts:** none

**Assignments:** none

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:** Except for Hat they have all really taken to the mask project. They spent the entire period working on it. While they were doing that Erin played some music that related to the inside/outside dichotomy. The kids took a while to open up, but when they did there was some good critical discussion. They talked about what the songs meant, and if the feelings expressed were authentic. Muse brought in some of her own music (anti-flag) and we talked about that. Hawk said that the values were positive but that it was impossible to really make the world a better place. Muse countered that black people aren’t slaves any more. Hawk said that racism is still a problem though, and that people will continue to believe racist stereotypes and pass them on to their kids. Hat (who never talks voluntarily) spoke up and said that although he has racists in his family he isn’t one. It was a good discussion, Erin did a great job. After that I read *The Small Assassin* by Ray Bradbury out loud to Style (and everyone else started listening in except Hat) while they worked on the project. Style really likes to be read to, which I think is cool. After class I met with Hawk to discuss his memoir project.

3.15-17.04 Spring Break
Eclipse Class 3.22.04
Major Activities:
* Masks
* Gattaca
Handouts: none
Assignments: none
Observations, Reflections, and Notes:
We started watching *Gattaca* while everyone worked on their masks. We had Muse’s best friend join us in class. She made a mask as well. She microwaved hers and it worked (note to self)! Erin was out sick. Hat had to leave class early.

Eclipse Class 3.24.04
Major Activities:
* Masks

* Mask Rationales: I introduced what I wanted specifically in the rationale and those who were ready to do so worked on rough drafts. Muse finished hers and it was quite good, although she did not exactly follow the specs for the assignment. When I told her to type it because it was going to be posted online she got really upset and said that doing that just makes her want to write crap when we ask her to share. I worked it out with her. I’m not going to post something she doesn’t want posted. On the other hand, she is shy about sharing and I think it is important for the other students to see her work because it is so good. She said she was willing to post her response work and her political ideas, but she wasn’t going to go into her personal life. We came to a good compromise I think.

We watched *Gattaca* from the beginning since people didn’t get most of it the first time. I think it was just too distracting for them to work on their masks and watch at the same time, especially since sci-fi requires a knack for picking up the premise quickly.

* Handouts: none.
* Assignments: none.

* Observations, Reflections, and Notes: Hawk called in sick. The students are really engaged in their mask projects, except for Hat. He proves the “can’t make everyone happy” theory of teaching. I think that the creativity and introspection demanded by this project do not correspond to his strengths. However, he did turn in an outside hours reading assignment based on a 550 page book. Note to self: read all assignment sheets out loud, students don’t read (or keep) them, so it is necessary to make the goals CLEAR FROM THE START.

Eclipse Class 3.29.04
Major Activities:
* Mask Rationales
* Finish Gattaca
* Discuss Gattaca
Handouts: none
Assignments: none
Observations, Reflections, and Notes: Style was out sick. We had a pretty good discussion about the movie. I asked them to write about how it related to the rest of what
we had been talking about and it seems like they got it. They could then respond to one of three other questions:

A. Why does Eugene commit suicide? Does this fit with his character?
B. Vincent changes himself to fit in with society. Do you know anyone who did/does this?
C. Do you think this sort of discrimination could happen? Why/why not? How close are we?

Muse brought up some good points about Eugene’s problems with depression and alcohol. Hawk said it was a dramatic flourish, and cleaned up the plot nicely. I brought up my issues with how this might reflect our own society’s view of the disabled. Reminiscent of Hitler? Erin brought up her view that all human life is innately valuable, and that what people can contribute to society should not determine their value. Hawk shared about a friend he lost, (I believe the friend who committed suicide), and how society does not appreciate or respect those it does not understand.

After class Hawk brought up that talking about clicks/rejection by society can be a really hot issue with kids who feel rejected by others. He warned me that in other schools it could lead to fights breaking out in class. People fear what they do not understand. How true.

I brought a few new books for Muse because she finished the two Ray Bradbury I loaned her and she enjoyed them a lot. I brought the Boondocks anthology and a collection of Philip Dick short stories. She took them home.

After class I talked to one of the other people who works at Eclipse. She said that my class seems to be going well. Muse has said she enjoys it, and it is apparently “intellectually stimulating” for her. Hawk, who has a problem with skipping classes, apparently makes my class pretty regularly. Erin also reports that Kyla thinks the mask project is really great. It has certainly engaged the kids in a meaningful way. All this evens out for the fact that the principle of the high school visited my classroom last week and said “Don’t work them too hard, although I don’t think you will.” What does that mean?

Eclipse Class 3.31.04

Major Activities:

Mask Rationales: The students finished the rationales. We met with them individually to go over corrections and improvements. They then made the changes, had them approved, and emailed the final version to me. It is challenging because fixing errors is “giving a man a fish” if you can’t explain how and why an error occurs. The students need to learn how to feed themselves for a lifetime, but I am still learning how to help them with sentence structure. I am currently taking applied grammar for teachers, but I needed it yesterday!

Poetry: unit wrap up

Handouts:

“Introduction to Poetry”
“Pull the Next One Up”
“Suppose”

Assignments:
Observations, Reflections, and Notes: Today our main activity was poetry. We wrapped up the whole "Self and Society" unit with several poems. We started out with Billy Collins' "Introduction to Poetry," and talked about how we have been taught to read poetry. These students are very advanced readers. When they put their minds to it, they can do just fine. Today, rather than go over all the traditional English/poetry stuff, I asked them to get into the poem. They have had some exposure to tone, voice, rhyme... but that doesn't really matter in my mind. They don't need to start there, they need to start with the willingness to figure out the poem. Hat in particular groaned about having to read poetry.

So what I did was have them approach poetry as the poem suggests: "walk inside the poem's room and feel the walls for the light switch." I shared my own experiences with reading and re-reading poetry. It doesn't come the first time. You have to be willing to wonder around, re-reading and re-thinking. Sometimes a poem won't mean anything to you for years until you have a certain experience... or unit a key phrase finally clicks into place. I think the problem with teaching "look for images" and "look for end rhyme" is that that is not what we as teachers do when we ENJOY poetry. I'm not against analysis, but let's teach them how to decipher the poem for meaning before we teach them how to scan it. I really emphasized the need to be an active reader... struggle with the poem!

I then gave them "Pull the Next One Up." It is not a particularly hard poem, but it does have (I think) a pretty clear analogy between mountain climbing and changing society by helping others. It does have some advanced vocabulary too. I gave them 5 minutes to read the poem silently. I think that that was a really good idea. I stumbled across it though dumb luck, but it worked really well. Poetry takes time to digest. I think that just reading a poem aloud often does not give students time to go back and piece things together. As teachers we have read the poem many times in preparation, even hundreds of times over the years... we need to remember what it is like to meet a poem for the first time. Give them time to read it at least twice!

Anyway, then we went around and shared what we thought of the poem and how we read the poem so that it would make sense. One student stopped to paraphrase the poem every stanza. Another read it through twice. One girl said that she didn't identify the analogy until halfway through the poem. It was interesting to have them all reflect on the process of reading, and see how successful poetry reading does not just mean passing your eyes from left to right until you come to the end. I have to say that I owe this appreciation for "modeling comprehension" to Beers. Her book When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do made me see the value in demonstrating (and having students demonstrate to each other) the complex process of meaning making.

Erin then gave them "Suppose" by Carl Dennis. This is a much more difficult poem, in that it is packed with historical references to different instances of genocide. It also has a more "poetic" style that breaks up the syntax and makes it harder to follow. In contrast "Pull the Next one Up" is easier because it is "slam" poetry, modeled off of the spoken vernacular. Since Hawk went first the last time, he held off until the end on this one, which was good. He is very insightful the other students need a chance to blaze their own interpretations before hearing his complex and accurate analysis. (Okay, accurate is relative in the interpretation of poetry, but he nails it in the sense that what he says demonstrates a clear understanding of all the words, and fits, often quite beautifully, with the entirety of the poem. He really does have the knack.) The students stumbled over "the
ghetto stars pinned to cloth” line just as I had. It seems from the context of the rest of the poem to be referring to the Jews, but for some reason that was never my first interpretation either. Orange gave a stab at it, and correctly identified some of the other political events in the poem. Then Hat stepped in and said that the stars were the Jews and talked about how the poem was talking about a world where all ammo would turn into chocolate (Suppose grenades side with sunlight / Bullets in boxes become / Chocolate wrapped in gold foil). He absolutely nailed it, which meant that in the space of about 5 minutes two of my students who speak the least had each given a complete interpretation of a rather difficult poem. I was amazed, especially since Hat grumbled so much about how he hated poetry and it doesn’t make sense. We talked a little bit more about the historical context of the poem, and what it says about human nature. Why does the poet say that it is necessary to “let the darkness out”?

Muse was reluctant to speak, as usual. At the start of the semester she was frustrated because she felt that I focused on the boys too much in the class discussion, which is probably true. However, when I call on her she speaks so quietly she almost whispers. Then she usually just says “the same as everyone else said.” It’s strange because they will all be sitting in there talking, but as soon as I call on her she just freezes up. I didn’t manage to coax much out of her, but I gave it my best shot. I also coaxed a little from Style. To wrap up Hawk shared his insights about the tone and meaning of the poem. He pointed out how forceful the poem becomes (“What did I say? / I said: what if Sarajevo is not burning), he brought in a historical reference I did not think of (“and in the market square / no human head is impaled on a stick” could be referring to Vlad the Impaler), and he interpreted the last stanza (Yes / There will he holes left in clothes / But not from ripped stars, / Only from wear, / To let the darkness out) to mean that humanity must come to a place where it puts all its energy into making the world better. We must fight the darkness until we wear it out.

I wrapped up the unit with a quote from Edward Everett Hale. “I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.” I gave my students a lot of tough stuff to deal with in this unit, and I wanted to finished my letting them know that as a person, this is how I have chosen to deal with the overwhelming darkness I see in the world.

I suppose could have explained “Introduction to Poetry” better. But it was the first time I had ever taught poetry.

Classroom management note: I stood next to Hat (3 inches away) while he was reading this seems to help him stay focused.

Eclipse Class 4.5.04

Major Activities:

New unit: Today we started the critical consumerism unit. Erin is taking the lead on this, which I think is a good thing. If she was doing her advanced practicum in a regular classroom she would probably be getting a chance to be in charge, so it is good for her to do that here. We had been talking a lot about what we wanted to do with this unit and she ended up finding a unit online that incorporated most of the materials we wanted to use
anyway. We are adapting this for our own needs of course... we have a very small class and very long periods, so we are breaking things up a bit differently.

"TV Poem": recording
What do you want from life? (handout from online)
History of advertising: sample ads from 50's radio
Millennials vs. Gen X / Who is your generation? (article)

Handouts:
"TV Poem"
Media Influence Quiz
Millennial Article

Assignments: As homework they were supposed to look for advertising in the world around them on the way home from school.

What do you want from life? - Questionnaire

Observations, Reflections, and Notes: I love the TV poem but some of the students found it annoying. Oh well, I though it was cool to start with some humor.

Eclipse Class 4.7.04

Major Activities:
Clips: scenes from Fight Club & Minority Report

Introduction to Rhetoric

Magazine Advertisement analysis
   Cut out 15 ads and create a collage, then identify the audience of the ad and the main rhetorical device it is using.

Handouts:
Fight Club scene transcript
Rhetorical Devices handout

Assignments: none

Observations, Reflections, and Notes: We watched the clips from Fight Club and Minority Report. Although they thought it was "cool" I couldn't really get them to say anything about what this says about our culture... I think that is probably because Fight Club is a Gen X movie and/or a rant against the upper middle class. I know people who shop at Ikea, which makes the movie's anti-consumerism much more real and funny to me. I think my students just like the movie because people beat the crap out of each other... they don't really see themselves so much as products of that particular lifestyle obsession. Hawk did say that Fight Club's message is true though, we worry more about celebrity news than we do about starving children. We also talked a little bit about sci-fi and how it represents "the shadow of the future on the now" rather than just being a vision of the future. Hat commented that he would hate to live in the invasive hyper advertising world represented by Minority Report. Overall, I didn't get much out of them about the clips though which surprised me.

We moved on to the Rhetoric lesson. Erin did a really great job. She talked about the rhetorical triangle, then she read through a sample essay (of their choice) and they identified the arguments being used. The boys seemed to pick up on the rhetoric terms right away. (Style was hesitant to say anything, and Muse was out sick). I went over the rhetorical device handout with them, then they got into the magazine project. I tried to
pick a variety of magazines, since the advertising is very different based on the target market. It was interesting to watch their projects come together. Hat chose the gaming magazine and proceeded to cut out some very offensive ads. I don’t read magazines that much so I was shocked to see the sort of images that make it into "non-pornographic" magazines. Across the board most students chose to cut up the magazines that interested them the most. Of course, Hawk went a slightly different route. He chose to cut up Seventeen and Cosmopolitan. He went through and selected different words (perfect, beautiful, hotter) and cut them all out. It was amazing to see how these publications stress these ideas. He also cut out this great picture of a really ugly army of clone/robot soldiers. So rather than just cutting out and pasting ads, he ended up expressing his views about conformity... and in the process demonstrating how ads create/enforce that conformity.

Eclipse Class 4.12.04
Major Activities:
Discussion of rhetoric in magazine ads: the kids went though and explained the ads and their market/appeals.
Primetime TV ad analysis: we watched five minutes of ads from primetime TV and analyzed them critically using rhetoric.
Tween marketing article: the class read an article on how the advertising industry is now marketing adult and teen products (R-rated movies, racy clothing) to children. The students were pretty disgusted by the idea. They clearly thought it was exploitation. They had a variety of responses though... ranging from “that’s just wrong” to “there is nothing you can do because young children will always want to be like older people.”
Merchants of Cool: we watched the Frontline documentary on advertising and media influence on youth culture.
Free write: “Ads sell ideas, not products.” – Do you agree or disagree with this?

Handouts:
Tween marketing article

Assignments: none

Observations, Reflections, and Notes: The students seemed to be pretty engaged in Merchants of Cool. Of course, some of the things represented as cool they found far, far beneath them. These are not mainstream preppies or wannabe rebels... my kids do what they want to and don’t care what other people think (as far as that is possible when one is a teen in America). They did respond though to the different trends that he mentioned in the program... little discussions broke out as the movie progressed. They didn’t have a lot to say at the end, mostly because I think that they agreed with most of the program. The thing now is to keep them from taking a totally fatalistic view of it all. I don’t just want them to accept that their “culture” may just be a giant advertising scheme. I want them to think about where their perceptions of cool come from... and then consider what they can do to create the kind of world they want to live in. That may mean that they renounce brands and become culture jammers. It may mean that they just stop to consider
(now and then) what sort of views of reality they are accepting from the movies and music they choose to consume.

Erin introduced the final paper. It is supposed to be a three page long persuasive essay. Style and Muse freaked out, which I did not expect at all. I think that they are under a lot of pressure as the year draws to a close. I know that they are really turning up the heat in the journalism class. So, as soon as we give them an assignment (which admittedly is longer than anything else they have done) they just went to pieces. I tried to be comforting. Erin told them not to whine. The boys the other hand (excluding Hat who had an excused absence) just hit the hullet. That was not what I expected at all, but I guess that a teacher must "expect the unexpected."

Today Hawk said that he thought our class was cool and that he was going to miss us at the end of the year. He was in a good mood, and I think he said it as much because he wanted to comfort us as because it was true. He has such a compassionate heart, he feels the need to balance everything out with nice comments when the other students give us trouble. Not that he doesn’t give us his fair share of trouble too. It was still sweet though. I know that I am going to miss them all.

Eclipse Class 4.14.04
Major Activities:
Handouts:
Assignments:
Observations, Reflections, and Notes:

Eclipse Class 4.19.04
Major Activities:
Work Day – everyone caught up on everything.
Handouts:
Assignments: Bridge Assignment: Who owns the world?
Observations, Reflections, and Notes: Evan brought his friend to class. I think it is great that students like to bring their friends to visit my classroom (although I suspect that they would do this no matter what a teacher was like). Hawk pulled his grade up from failing to passing by finishing a bunch of assignments he had missed. Hat also had a bunch of backlogged work that he took care of. Everyone else goofed off when we weren’t looking, goofed off when we were looking (this is Eclipse), but managed to get a little work done on the paper... maybe.

Eclipse Class 4.21.04
Major Activities: Final Paper
Handouts: Youth culture & music article
Assignments: none
Free write: Does the music industry worship youth culture?
Observations, Reflections, and Notes: Today we totally revamped the persuasive essay assignment. We decided that we were not giving them enough support or direction as they tried to write. We decided to scrap the page requirement and make it a 5 paragraph essay. I went over the basic structural pattern (intro/body/conclusion) and what each part should do. Hat had heard it all before. He was sick (and he looked like it) so he just stuck
around to get the new project requirements, then headed home. After about an hour Muse checked out too. She hasn’t been feeling well either. I will give them the benefit of the doubt, but I get the feeling that the students don’t see any value when we have “work days.” If the class isn’t interactive in some way they just disengage. Those who stuck around did far more talking then work, although a little bit of writing did get done.

Just to keep developing the teen culture/consumerism theme, I handed out an interesting article about an 80’s band that released a song under a different name in order to escape age discrimination. After reading it the students did a freewrite on music and youth culture.

I met with Orange to work on his essay. He has been plagiarizing I think. He just goes online, finds facts, pastes them in, and calls it good. It shows up though when he lifts things completely out of context. At this point in the year, I have very little time to give him the attention he needs. Writers aren’t built in a day. I wish that we had implemented this assignment halfway through the semester, then I could have walked him through this step-by-step the way he needs it. The only thing I can do now is help him brainstorm arguments and require that he turn in his sources (so I can see if he is directly lifting quotes).

**Eclipse Class 4.26.04**

**Major Activities:**
- What’s the McTruth: McDonald’s on Trial – the students debated the pro’s and con’s of the McDonald’s machine. After looking at a variety of sources (articles, pamphlets) we had a point/counter point discussion.
- McLibel Video

**Handouts:**
- What’s the McTruth?
- Various articles and pamphlets on McDonald’s
- McLibel Video Worksheet

**Assignments:** None.

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:** Today was our class examination of McDonald’s. I think that the McDonald’s corporation is a great focus point for discussing a lot of issues: consumerism, advertising, fast food/health, environmental concerns, cruelty towards animals, low wage jobs, globalization and free speech. So it was kind of a fun way to extend our consumerism talk on a lot of different fronts.

It was an interesting day. Hawk was gone at his 3D animation class, Hat failed to show at all, and Erin (co-teacher extraordinaire) needed the day off to catch up on homework after being sick, so the classroom had a different feel than usual. Muse came out of her shell, as she always does when the dominant male students are gone, although she still did not speak up that much. Style was quite engaged in the debate, which was refreshing. She had researched the topic before so I think that gave her the confidence to speak with authority. Finally, Orange had some fun playing “devil’s advocate” as the pro-McDonald’s spokesperson. I originally asked then to write out their pro/con statements. The girls worked together, but couldn’t get anything down on paper. I decided to switch
over to a verbal debate (which is what I originally wanted, but couldn’t see happening because of the personalities in the classroom) and it was pretty good.

After break Hawk showed up (better late than never I guess). He could pass my class if he tried. He could ace my class if he tried, but he sees himself as "not good at English." The truth of the matter is that all students can learn, but not all students are willing to apply themselves to get more than an C. Alas. I think he will fall short of the hours he needs to get credit for my class. Anyway, I gave the class a brief introduction to BritSpeak (solicitor, MP etc) and an overview of British libel law (the person being sued has to prove that everything they say is true, rather than the person suing having to prove it false), then we watched the documentary McLibel. It really fit in with everything we had been talking about, and for the most part the students looked interested and alert watching it. Afterward, we talked it a little and called it a day. I can’t believe that it will all be over after just one more class...

One note: at the end of class Muse said that she really enjoyed the way Erin and I have been teaching. She said our class was a lot more interesting than her other classes. She appreciated our "non-traditional" approach. Also, Kyla sat in on this class and I wasn’t embarrassed (for the first time ever) to have someone watching us as a class.

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**Eclipse Class 4.28.04**

**Major Activities:** Final Essay

**Handouts:** none.

**Assignments:** none.

**Observations, Reflections, and Notes:** Today was a combination of the last frantic push to finish the final essay, and an end of class party. Muse already finished her essay, so she had an easy day. Hat did not show at all (which was unfortunate, I’m sorry that he seemed to give up in the home stretch). Hawk appeared with a final version of his essay in hand, which made my day, if not my entire semester. It looks like he will walk away with more than a C, which makes me very proud. Orange discovered that his essay had been deleted by the computer repair guy (a story I believe I saw the rough draft, and the computer guy). However, since Orange had plagiarized part of his rough draft, I had no qualms about making him start over. He managed to whip out a final essay in one class period. I think that maybe we haven’t been challenging them enough. The final essays (except for Hat’s which was graded by someone else, and Style’s which was never finished) all demonstrated the sort of critical engagement we have been trying to foster in this class. The students questioned the world around them, and then (which surprised even me) they all took a stand and offered an opinion on how/why things should change. Even Style and Hat, from what I saw of their work, were heading that direction with their analysis. We brought in Mountain Dew, popcorn, and Ferdinand’s ice cream to celebrate our momentous achievements as a class 😊

**Postscripts:** Hawk finished the mask rationale and emailed it to me. It was quite good. I went in to work with Style on her final essay one more time. She had not made any progress and I did not get her through anything more than another set of note taking. However, she does do her best work (not to mention her only work) when she follows this strict method, and there is no way to get her to write without finishing a complete
outline of notes. The kids make us cards and door hangers, which was cool. We gave them cards and custom dog tags to celebrate their survival of yet another English class.