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Equity and Democracy: A Push Towards Social Justice in the ELA Classroom

by

Sean Formato

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Equity and Democracy: A Push Towards Social Justice in the ELA Classroom

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Abstract

Despite the fact that schools demand character education, very little in terms of resources is devoted to infusing social justice into the ELA curriculum. Since our ELA instruction has stagnated, our national discourse has become more divided than ever, and many of our core ethical values once thought to be the bedrock of America are now in dispute. It is essential that we re-imagine the ELA curriculum to contain a focus on social justice education in order to instill the values of empathy and equity in our students. If ELA classrooms incorporated the four components of social justice education, schools would begin providing students with many more opportunities to have more meaningful and complex discussions about democracy, culture and fairness, which are fundamental concerns for any person interested in civic responsibility. With this increased focus on social justice, we can actually improve the civic awareness and engagement of our students so that they become more thoughtful participants in society.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement: Schools, and specifically ELA classrooms, lack access to formal social justice education curriculum that is simultaneously culturally responsive, academically sound, and rooted in research-based social justice pedagogy.

In recent years, schools have received a mandate to include character education as part of the general curriculum, and the English Language Arts curriculum in particular. Unfortunately, guidelines for doing so are often nebulous, discretionary, or worse, politically reactionary. This leads to a significant problem in curriculum development on several fronts, since it is on one hand difficult to align something as potentially vague as character education with evolving and increasingly high-stakes state and national standards, but also nearly impossible to account for the long-term effects of curricular decisions based on political expediency. Furthermore, and probably most challenging for curriculum developers and classroom teachers, is the expectation that they maintain political neutrality while dealing with inherently politicized topics. While it is true that “there has always been public attention on teachers’ practice as it relates to current events and perceived controversial issues,” there has been, since the 2016 election, a hyper focus on political speech by teachers. (Dunn et al. 446) This expectation for neutrality, however, presents teachers and curriculum developers with a pretty serious conundrum. As a result, there is a fairly clear political conundrum: teachers and curriculum developers must either pretend

character education is apolitical or somehow do a political tap dance in which anything remotely seen as political is somehow presented in “both sides” fashion.

Teachers are already feeling the sting of this problem. For instance, “in California, a high school history teacher of 40 years was placed on administrative leave and pressured to retire after discussing the rhetorical similarities between Donald Trump and Adolf Hitler” (Dunn et al. 4460. What was clearly a high-level academic exercise in rhetorical analysis turned into a political quagmire, calling for some kind of some arbitrary standard of political neutrality in a classroom exercise that was clearly academic in nature. It is easy to see how character education could get bogged down by such issues as well.

The impact on schools is twofold. First, individual teachers are asked to weigh their own ideological leanings against the mores of the region in which they work. The question that will be asked when it comes to character education is “whose values do we teach?” To this end, teachers are put in a difficult position, since any values placed into the curriculum could be interpreted (justly or not) as their attempt to have political influence on their students. As a result, “their agency is challenged within the sociopolitical context that seeks to control curriculum and instruction” (Dunn et al. 448) Teachers are therefore asked to essentially do the impossible: teach values to students using apolitical means, and when political topics arise, somehow drain their own value systems from the instruction while simultaneously taking care to consider the political leanings of the population with which they work.

Secondly, even when teachers do develop curriculum that is culturally responsive, they are subject to attacks based on perceived political content. As one teacher put it, they must content with “some very powerful parents who are looking for teachers who may be ‘leading their kids away from family values’” (Dunn et al. 457). As a result of potential backlash, teachers are incentivized to take the path of least resistance. Some teachers, afraid of attacks from parents and the community, “consider ways to integrate equity-focused perspectives in more implicit than explicit ways” (Dunn et al. 457). Unfortunately, attempts to maintain neutrality can actually have a deleterious effect on character education. Since neutrality often involves validating opinions that are aggressive or harmful towards oppressed populations, “teachers are, in fact, enacting the opposite of neutrality—choosing to maintain the status quo and further marginalizing members of certain groups” (Dunn et al. 465). Therefore, teachers must account for the fact that they are being asked to remain neutral despite this neutrality being either impossible or even harmful towards their most vulnerable students.

Developing standardized, research-backed social justice curriculum would go a long way towards alleviating or at least dispelling criticisms about politics in the classroom, especially if that curriculum was rigorously standards-based. Unfortunately, such curricula are few and far between. Clearly, the resources currently available are inadequate. In fact, “one national survey found...that among 148,000 middle and high school students, well under half felt they had developed social competencies, such as empathy, decision-making, and conflict resolution

skills” (Darling-Hammond 137). Social justice curriculum that seeks to remedy these issues must include a wide range of skills, “because this teaching demands sophisticated skills to scaffold and differentiate instruction, to make content accessible to English learners, and to engage in productive project-based instruction” (Darling-Hammond 137). Teachers need comprehensive resources at their disposal to meet these needs.

As demands for character education intersect with increasing partisanship in schools, the demand for rigorous social justice education materials has never been higher. Schools, in demanding that teachers provide character education while simultaneously adhering to state and national education standards, must provide additional resources to teachers in order to accomplish these goals.

Significance of the Problem:

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, schools are facing a significant amount of identity-based discrimination and even violence. Furthermore, the nonstop barrage of school shootings and high-profile acts of violence has necessitated a response by schools to infuse more tolerance and equity into the curriculum. As these problems continue to increase in severity, the need for schools to take up the mantle of serious, thoughtful character and values-based education has become apparent. As it stands, an increasingly polarized and hostile political climate is contributing to significant problems between and among students in school and the community at large. Since schools are responsible for providing a safe learning environment for all students, it is

incumbent upon educators to develop effective strategies for combating hostility among students.

One of the most striking and startling facts regarding our population is that “people in the United States exhibit more ideologically consistent beliefs than at any time in the past 20 years” (Dunn et al. 445). This lack of ideological crossover unfortunately contributes to extremely polarizing political views, which in turn affects the political climate of a school. This problem is exacerbated by the core values a public school education is supposed to impart, as “research suggests...that adults who endorse conservative attitudes are more likely to value teaching children qualities like ‘faith’ and ‘obedience,’ whereas adults with liberal attitudes are more likely to prioritize teaching ‘tolerance’” (Dunn et al. 445). Typically, in an academic environment that encourages critical thinking and broadening students’ horizons, qualities like faith and obedience do little to advance student achievement or understanding of others. Since public schools are charged with making all students feel safe, secure and heard in their learning environment, any attempt at values or character-based education in schools might be seen as having an unfair liberal bias.

Furthermore, attempts to create a more tolerant school environment, however necessary, might also be seen as biased against conservative worldviews. For example, “teachers had to decide...how to respond to a lunchtime incident in which middle school students chanted ‘Build the wall!’ in the school cafeteria” (Dunn et al. 445). This creates a fairly complex problem for the school: on one hand, it can be argued that students are engaging in Tinker-protected political speech in school; on

the other hand, such speech demonstrably creates a hostile environment for undocumented students, refugees, and students of Latin or South American origin. Navigating these issues is extremely complex, and therefore requires a disciplined and systematic approach.

Even more broadly, though, these issues have been bubbling under the surface of our schools well before the 2016 election. The fact is that our schools have become and are continuing to become more racially segregated. In fact, studies show that “distributive processes increased racial imbalance and boosted whites’ isolation by limiting their exposure to blacks and Hispanics” (Fiel 838). With white students having, on average, decreased interactions with black and Hispanic students in class, it is only logical for racial divisions to increase in number and severity. It is therefore incumbent upon schools to bridge these divides wherever possible, in order for schools to fulfill their duty to be culturally responsive and inclusive. Since individual teachers, curriculum developers, and frequently even schools themselves do not set the policies causing this increase in segregation, they must do whatever possible to be culturally responsive to a wide array of students in order to offset potential racial and cultural conflicts that may arise in the school and community.

The seriousness of these issues cannot be understated. An increasingly polarized population unable to engage in respectful, thoughtful communication is simply not in the interests of our communities at large. Reforming the way students think about and discuss complex issues surrounding race, gender, and social class is essential to bridging the gaps that are continuing to grow between all Americans.

Unless schools make broad, thoughtful, rigorous attempts to teach students how to be culturally responsive, problems due to cultural differences will only increase in scope and severity.

Purpose:

Teaching literature in the modern English Language Arts classroom introduces a litany of concerns. First, choosing literature is challenging. Whereas some ELA teachers are given the flexibility to choose their own materials, others simply are not. Curriculum developers must be mindful, then, of both the academic and cultural factors that must be considered when choosing literature. Literature must conform to a rigorous set of academic standards and provide a platform for academic study while simultaneously being culturally responsive and providing opportunities for social justice education. First and foremost, serious thought and attention must be paid to selecting literature that accomplishes all of these goals. Failure to do so will dramatically limit opportunities for ELA teachers to make the changes that are necessary for student development.

Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of resources for high school ELA teachers looking to bring resources into the classroom that are academically rigorous and culturally responsive. This is partly due to the fact that teachers feel tethered to the classics of Western literature, either as a result of the materials being selected for them, or simply as a result of their own educational backgrounds and experiences. It is therefore incumbent, first and foremost, on school districts to allow teacher autonomy when selecting ELA literature and provide teachers training on how to

select and integrate culturally responsive literature. Teacher preparation programs also have a role in shaping teacher understanding of social justice education. In the Lehigh University teacher preparation program, for instance, “students learn how the study of literature can enable them to map deep structures of domination, inequality, and injustice in the societies in which they have been produced” (Moglen et al.). Once teachers are adequately empowered and prepared to incorporate social justice literature into the curriculum, then they can begin to integrate these materials into classrooms on a widescale basis.

One strategy for incorporating social justice in the ELA classroom is using YA texts that were written from a social justice perspective. The goal should be “planning ELA instruction that uses sets of strategically connected texts...[which] can be used to provide students with exposure to multiple perspectives and the background knowledge required for critical engagement with issues of equity and social justice...” (Lewis and Ewing Flynn 23). YA literature is rich with a variety of cultural perspectives and should be mined by social justice educators for quality novels. Just as ELA teachers have historically used novels and poetry to build thematic units, teachers with a social justice perspective can group texts according to the social justice issues they address. One challenge of introducing new literature is the argument that making changes to the curriculum accomplishes nothing other than celebrating diversity, and the knowledge and analytical skills gained from reading classic texts is lost when transitioning to social justice-oriented literature. The solution, therefore, is in connected text sets, which offer complex, voluminous texts

that provide students with requisite knowledge as well as critical social justice inquiries.

In addition to reading culturally responsive literature, children also respond well to social justice-based projects in the classroom. One teacher, Matthew Knieling, used the novel *Bud, Not Buddy*, set in Flint, Michigan, to discuss the Flint water crisis taking place today. The students made substantial connections between the novel and what is going on in Flint. Knieling writes, “In *Bud, not Buddy*, we learn about experiences of racism that Bud encounters. My students were quick to see the connections between Bud’s experience of racism and the role of race within the water crisis” (33). Clearly, students made significant connections between the novel and a real-life crisis going on around them. He also observes students analyzing complex issues such as intergenerational poverty both in the novel and in the actual city of Flint. As one student remarked, “in *Bud, not Buddy*, there is a lot of poverty. In Flint today they are in debt” (Knieling 33). This use of social justice literature satisfies the demand for character education. When students participate in projects centered on the novels they read, they internalize the lessons they have learned and apply them to the real world. It is clear from these activities that substantial learning can occur by using Young Adult literature in a social justice context.

In an effort to address the need for a strong, culturally responsive text that strongly aligns with the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards, I will provide a unit plan that centers on the text *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. The included lessons will be

academically rigorous for an ELA classroom, including addressing reading skills, note-taking, collaborative learning, and writing skills. Most importantly, however, each lesson addresses critical areas of social justice literacy, so they may be used to teach the components of social justice literacy as well. The unit will demonstrate democratic education, critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, and culturally responsive education. Finally, the unit culminates in a multi-genre project that is both academically challenging and teaches important lessons about equity and cultural responsiveness. On the whole, this novel is particularly useful in addressing social justice issues since it incorporates and intertwines many important topics related to social justice, including race, gender, economic injustice, disability, and sexuality.

Rationale:

Students in ELA classrooms need access to texts that are both social justice-oriented and academically focused. They need exposure to and discussion about the complex social issues of our time, in the context of literature that stimulates complex analysis of these issues. If students are to participate in our diverse, increasingly global society, it is necessary that we provide them with the tools to analyze and discuss the way in which their peers and classmates interact with the world around them. It is simply unfair to expect students to be sensitive to the differences they have among them without direct instruction shaping their discourse. Without this direct instruction, students are increasingly at risk of falling into the increasing divide that shapes much of our adult political discourse. The skills that students acquire from

direct social justice instruction, therefore, can help heal and rehabilitate our fractured national culture.

Definition of Terms:

- ELA – English Language Arts
- Social Justice Education – Education that integrates aspects of democratic education, critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, and culturally responsive education, along with elements of social, cognitive, and systems theory, focusing on fostering equity among all people
- Democratic Education – Education that emphasizes the civic functions of schooling, including self-governance, community engagement, and experiential education
- Critical Pedagogy – Education that focuses on understanding the political and cultural biases of curriculum in order to place it in a more sophisticated context
- Critical Multicultural Education – Education that adds cultural content directly into the curriculum
- Culturally Responsive Education – Educational practice in which teachers examine their own ideological frameworks when presenting culturally sensitive information
- Race – A controversial distinction according to perceived skin color
- Gender – Distinction between the two sexes viewed through a social, cultural or political lens versus a biological lens

- Character Education – A learning process that focuses on civic responsibility, in which students are asked to act based on their ethics and values
- Close Reading – A critical analysis of text that focuses on patterns in details, syntax, structure, or other literary or rhetorical components
- Segregation – The practice, intentional or otherwise, of separating students in school, usually by race or socioeconomic status
- Structural Inequality – A situation in which one group of people is given unequal status relative to other groups.
- Equality – Treating everyone the same
- Equity – Providing everyone with the resources they need to be successful; used to distinguish equal vs. equitable treatment of students.
- STEM – Acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Summary Statement:

Selecting appropriate literature is vital to the evolving ELA classroom. Choosing a text with a strong foundation in social justice principles allows the ELA teacher or curriculum developer to craft classroom instruction that not only teaches students fundamental ELA skills, but also engages them in critical discussion about social justice and the value of equity that underpins it. The novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is a very useful text that contains many opportunities for discussion about a wide variety of social justice issues, and this unit focuses on fostering a dialogue between students on these important issues. As students become

more immersed in analyzing and discussing social justice issues, they will be able to engage with an increasingly diverse and complex population in a more equitable way.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The English Language Arts classroom of today scarcely resembles those of even twenty years ago. Whereas the primary purpose of the traditional ELA classroom has been to marry the study of literature with poetry, research, and the craft of writing, the modern ELA classroom has shifted to a focus on the craft of argumentative writing, relegating literature and poetry to be used mostly as supporting texts. With such a sharp lurch towards argument and persuasion, it stands to reason that the ELA classroom has become a place where politics must be discussed. While teachers of the past might have been discouraged to eschew political discussion and keep to the text, students are now expected to perform political analyses and make judgments as a matter of course. This essential change in ELA philosophy does not come without consequences, both practical and philosophical. No longer are essential political questions relegated to hegemonic texts that dominate Social Studies classrooms. Quality ELA instruction that attempts to address complex argumentative questions must, by necessity, address intersectional political questions that arise from such analyses.

Education today has become a web of interconnected and often competing political and social ideologies. Whereas, historically, curriculum has been developed in order to address commonly agreed upon academic goals, today's schools are now

faced with the incredibly daunting task of not only educating children in the traditional academic disciplines, but also with developing students' character and moral compass. While this is, on the surface, a noble idea, when faced with competing political ideologies whose underlying moralities are seemingly unable to co-exist, curriculum development in this area suddenly becomes much more daunting. How can educators establish a baseline for character education while simultaneously balancing these competing ideologies?

Further complicating this monumental task is the fact that this character-based education must fit into the constantly evolving English Language Arts curriculum (now the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards). Gone are the days in which students were tasked with reading and responding to literature, arguably a favorable condition under which students can explore questions of morality and ethics. Now, New York State Standards steer students towards a more technical analysis of the craft of writing, asking students to analyze and respond to argumentative texts. While this shift may appear to lend itself toward character education, the natural exploration of values that occurs while reading long-form fiction is simply not the same as that of argumentative writing, which contains its own far more rigid norms and values. As a result, teachers must make conscious choices regarding the specific norms and values that will be taught in the ELA classroom, which may run contra to those children experience at home or elsewhere. If teachers and curriculum developers do not make conscious choices regarding the specific norms and values taught in the classroom, they run the risk of

igniting political conflicts in the community. Even with careful consideration of the moral and ethical issues in play, political conflicts are still possible. It is therefore essential for schools to establish strong academic curricular foundations for character education in the ELA classroom.

The New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards provide a solid curricular basis for character education in the ELA classroom. Standard 9-10R9 reads: “Choose and develop criteria in order to evaluate the quality of texts. Make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, and personal experiences.” Buried among the standards emphasizing close reading and textual analysis is standard R9, which compels ELA educators to connect readings to other cultures and personal narratives. This standard provides the pedagogical underpinning for integrating character education in the classroom. Since the language of the standard is naturally broad, it is entirely incumbent upon teachers and curriculum developers to conceive of and develop strategies for connecting these cultural perspectives and personal experiences.

More broadly, however, teaching character in the classroom under the banner of social justice education already has an established theoretical framework. Far from new, the framework of social justice education has been established for some time, as it “integrates aspects of democratic education, critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, and culturally responsive education, along with elements of social, cognitive, and systems theory” (Davis). This integration merely formalizes key concepts long in place in the ELA classroom. Democratic education, for instance,

“emphasizes the civic functions of schooling, including self-governance, community engagement, and experiential education” (Davis). This component is, by definition, responsive to both the cultural perspectives and personal experiences standard.

Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, expands the scope of social justice inquiry and focuses on understanding the political and cultural biases of curriculum in order to place it in a more sophisticated context. “Critical pedagogues challenge the political neutrality of curriculum, pedagogy, and education systems and seek to develop students’ sociopolitical consciousness through co-investigation, problem-posing, and dialogue” (Davis). The ELA classroom is the perfect opportunity to engage in critical pedagogy, since both problem-posing and dialogue are frequently represented in tasks common in ELA classrooms. Both multicultural education and culturally-responsive education seek to eliminate gaps in student knowledge of other cultures and belief systems. In the case of multicultural education, educators seek to add cultural content directly into the curriculum, while culturally-responsive education calls for teachers to examine their own ideological frameworks when presenting culturally sensitive information. (Davis) Taken in totality, social justice education seeks to fundamentally reform the way students are presented in school, considering all factors: community and teacher ideology, curricular content, student activities, and anticipated outcomes.

Racial Justice

One critical element of social justice education is examining ongoing racial disparities in the education system, both inside and outside the classroom. Structural inequalities such as segregation are still shockingly prevalent throughout much of the

country, as local control over school boards compels highly localized policy goals. One recent study found that “Democratic board members decrease racial segregation across schools: an electoral victory that places an additional Democrat on a schoolboard causes a reduction in the black dissimilarity index across schools of approximately 8 percentage points” (Macartney and Singleton 179). In fact, elsewhere throughout the South specifically, “racial segregation in Southern schools has increased substantially, in some areas coming close to the pre-*Brown [v. The Board of Education of Topeka Kansas]* levels” (Wilson 145). It cannot be denied that school re-segregation is a consequence of competition for finite resources. Many researchers classify segregation as following a “social closure” model, which “views school segregation as a mode of exclusion that emerges from group-based competition for resources and promotes educational stratification” (Fiel 830). Since these groups are competing for finite resources, politicians twist themselves into knots to justify systemically racist policies. Mired in the lingo of local control, school boards are increasingly moving toward economic (and therefore racial) segregation as a policy choice. Unfortunately, local control frequently “ignores the...race and class-based fragmentation that marks American cities and municipalities” (Wilson 194). Since our cities and municipalities are fragmented by race and class, and our schools are largely governed by local control, it logically follows that our schools continue to be inequitably divided based on race and class. The implications of this are twofold: not only do seemingly anodyne political policy disagreements lead to measurable effects on school segregation, but it is highly important that schools themselves

examine their curricular responses to these policies, including pursuing culturally-responsive education as a partial antidote to continued segregation.

One of the key components of social justice education is the pursuit of racial equity in both the school environment and the curriculum. Recent history suggests that humanities education has not been historically culturally responsive, and teachers are often hesitant to or discouraged from discussing their own racial backgrounds and experiences in the classroom. In fact, “research has shown that White teachers often do not like to talk about whiteness, leave race out of the teaching of U.S. History, and do not even take up the topic of race when they are using books with explicitly racial content” (Bolgatz 29). Pursuing culturally responsive education would demand that teachers incorporate and discuss their own backgrounds in the classroom, not only to make students more comfortable acknowledging that these issues exist and fostering honest communication around and analysis of them, but also to encourage a deeper analysis of structural societal issues surrounding race. Researchers have found that while researching middle schoolers, “although they were able to initiate conversations about race and race relations with students in small voluntary groups, it was more difficult to get them to talk about issues of power and privilege” (Bolgatz 29). Encouraging a culturally responsive classroom environment allows and encourages students to examine not only the racial and cultural origins of their curriculum, but also to analyze the systemic power imbalances inherent to these relationships. One successful model of culturally responsive teaching involved teachers who “discussed their own positions and experiences as racialized individuals, and they gave a broad

range of challenging questions and assignments to interrogate the roles of race and power in society. Their questions pushed students to question the practice of categorizing by race and to see the how racism can be institutionalized. By talking about race and racism in relation to other topics in U. S. history, the teachers gave the students opportunities to make their beliefs explicit and evaluate them” (Bolgatz 34). Such a student-centered approach to culturally responsive education is essential to a social justice framework, since it provides a safe, challenging, thought-provoking environment in which students and teachers can all speak candidly about their racial experiences and draw meaningful conclusions from them.

Unfortunately, there continue to exist significant barriers to culturally-responsive education with respect to race. One such barrier is the widespread belief in so-called color-blindness as an antidote to both individual and systemic racism and racial inequality. Among white Americans, racism has largely come to be seen as a negative individual attribute, and “it has become common for whites to defend their status as nonracists by claiming that they are color-blind” (Hardie and Tyson 85). Color blindness as a desirable attribute has significant problems, in that it allows people to easily conceal and justify racist behavior and trends on the grounds that overt racial prejudice is difficult to detect. Furthermore, this culture of color-blindness allows people to engage in fairly naked acts of racism by couching their racist behavior in non-racist language. It enables them to effectively create “discourses of plausible deniability implicitly [to] defend racist structures and blame minorities for social problems in a way that allows the speaker to claim no racist

intent” (Hardie and Tyson 85). The problems this presents in the classroom are numerous: discourses surrounding historic injustice, race, class separation, and systemic inequality become muddied when the topic of race is purposely ignored or, worse, obfuscated. If education is fundamentally about the pursuit of truth through knowledge and inquiry, ignoring race because it is uncomfortable for white people to talk about does an incredible disservice to all students. Research suggests that “by turning a blind eye to race and racial conflict, students learn that it is a taboo subject and that colorblindness is the appropriate strategy. This approach guarantees that the structures from which racial tensions arose will remain in place and that the wounds inflicted from such practices will continue to fester” (Hardie and Tyson 99). The idea behind culturally responsive education is to destigmatize conversations about race and racial inequality so that students can conduct honest, sincere inquiry into the many facets of education in which race plays a part.

Addressing Issues of Class and Gender Inequality

Fundamentally, social justice education seeks to address many of the issues that arise from societal injustice and impact both student learning and their experiences in the classroom, which may or may not directly impact learning. Simply put, social justice education is designed, through curricular and non-curricular means, to educate about, discuss, and address both localized and systemic injustices. While race-based injustices receive a lot of attention, they are by no means the only issues social justice education seeks to explore, and in fact can be seen as part of a larger exploration of the relationship between class, power, and education. The expansive

nature of this exploration is actually the heart of social justice education – all perceived power imbalances that have been baked into the structures of our society and discourse must be examined and evaluated as part of the larger conversation, which is centered on equity as the most important end goal of education, and therefore society. While focusing on the ELA classroom is important, larger attention must be paid to school culture at large and the norms it both creates and reinforces.

Interwoven with structural racial inequalities are also significant issues surrounding gender equality. For example, researchers have documented how minority students and girls are systemically discouraged from pursuing science education. In fact, “adolescents’ science engagement is shaped by individual agency as well as messages from surrounding social systems, such as family, peers, teachers, and school systems. Adolescents internalize societal representations of different groups, which shape their understanding of who individuals can be...” (Grossman and Porche). As a result, a lack of systemic power in the school system leads girls on a direct path toward disengagement from science education. Strikingly, “girls report less confidence in their math and science abilities than boys as early as Grades 5 and 6 and often make decisions to leave the STEM pipeline in early to middle adolescence, before they fully understand the implications of their choices” (Grossman and Porche). Where do such early structural imbalances come from? It is highly doubtful that most girls receive explicit instructions to exit the STEM pipeline from parents or teachers. In reality, women students receive structural, subconscious messaging that discourages them from pursuing science. They receive, from a variety

of sources, messaging that reinforces the idea that “beliefs that women in STEM careers are not ‘feminine enough’[and] tie to stereotypical expectations that women lack STEM abilities or should prioritize family over career roles” (Grossman and Porche). Regardless of the explicit messages girls receive encouraging them to pursue STEM, they are nonetheless frequently overcome by the systemic inequality to which they have been subjected over the course of their lives. As a result, a proactive, comprehensive social justice curriculum could help students root out and address these types of systemic inequalities regardless of the content area. An ELA discussion of structural inequalities faced by girls could then impact the school environment for those girls in other content areas.

Conversations about structural power imbalances are often fraught with difficulty, especially in the area of social class. Unfortunately, cultural norms make having these conversations difficult, and “research suggests students’ chances of developing a critical understanding of their situation in the marginalized and poor neighborhoods to have been, if anything, reduced in the last decades” (Öhrn 47). This, tied with the fact that “Several studies have suggested that youth in poor areas are increasingly individualized, and have less potential for political action” (Öhrn 53), suggests that the formalized framework of social justice education is one of, if not the only, opportunity many students have to encounter, think about, or discuss these complex issues. As discussion and engagement with their own political lives becomes more complex to navigate, it is only logical for the ELA classroom to

provide a safe, academically grounded environment to intellectually engage with these issues.

English Language Learners

Another vital avenue for social justice education is teaching literacy acquisition to English Language Learners. Frequently maligned by the popular media and made an easy target by opportunistic politicians, this group is uniquely disempowered by populist rhetoric but benefits significantly from integrating social justice literacy in the classroom. Precisely because this student population is harmed so severely by systemic power imbalance and simultaneously has such a narrow quiet voice in political discourse, this particular group would benefit from all components of social justice education. Despite popular attempts to demonize this group, the fact is that it represents a significant percentage of the overall student population, in 2014-15 representing “4.6 million, or 9.4% of the student body” (Crosby 39). This is simply too large a population to ignore. By empowering these students using social justice education, “immigrant students could combat the many divides they faced within the school and community, such as the digital divide, the language barrier, and the racial divide. They became the language and cultural experts for their school communities by being given the opportunity to share their funds of knowledge” (Crosby 51). Rather than confine English Language Learners to a segregated section of the school dedicated to teaching them English, it is possible and indeed necessary to engage them as enthusiastic stewards of their own education so that they learn to

take on leadership roles in their schools and communities. Furthermore, they provide crucial cultural, political, and social context to literary texts in the ELA classroom.

As concerns regarding immigration consume our popular discourse, educationally integrating immigrant populations has taken on a new urgency. The fact is that our current educational approach is failing the children of immigrants, as research shows “even when individual and familial predictors are taken into account, first- and second-generation immigrants perform significantly less well than non-immigrants” (Teltemann and Schunck 402). This is simply an unacceptable educational trajectory for immigrant students, and we must do everything in our power to not only better integrate them into the education system, but also establish the much-needed equity they require in order to thrive. By understanding and appealing to the unique qualities immigrant children and the children of immigrants bring to the table, we can improve the overall quality of our educational institutions.

Moving Towards Social Justice Education

As schools move towards teacher accountability and data-driven instruction, it might seem counterintuitive to pursue a focus on social justice education, whose goals are abstract and difficult to measure. It is critical to establish a formal pedagogical basis for this type of teaching, which naturally begins with teacher education. Most teachers have virtually nonexistent exposure to formal social justice instructional theory and methods, and “haven’t been trained to know how to do this work as individuals, let alone as educators” (Stachowiak 29). Schools should naturally expect resistance to this, since providing additional professional

development to teachers, especially in areas not directly linked to increasing standardized test scores, will likely prove unpopular. Despite this, instituting a successful social justice curriculum requires a formal approach, lest engagement with these issues be limited and cursory in scope. Only after teachers are personally prepared to engage with social justice pedagogy can he or she develop curriculum that formally promotes equity in the classroom and in the school. Fundamentally, equity is the most important element of social justice education. It is, however, a difficult concept for children to understand, since it differs substantially from equality, has been historically part of the humanities curriculum in texts such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. “Equality means that everyone is provided the same opportunities, regardless of their means; equity means that everyone is provided opportunities based on their means” (Stachowiak 30). The foundational goal of the social justice-oriented classroom is to construct curriculum from the ground up that promotes equity at every level of the educational experience.

There are also obstacles that must be overcome when transitioning to the social justice education model. The primary obstacle will be student and stakeholder discomfort with discussing social justice issues in the classroom, which can be perceived as politically charged and can challenge closely held beliefs. For many students, parents, administrators and community members, “single stories are comforting, and if we believe them, then we don’t necessarily have to contend with otherness, or different stories, or, as we apply academic definitions, counternarratives” (Wells and Batchelor 51). Nonetheless, this agitation and

discomfort caused by the subversion of norms is a key tenet of social justice education because it transfers the power to construct narratives from the historically powerful to the historically marginalized. This ability to construct narratives is an important factor in promoting equity. This is especially prevalent in the ELA classroom, in which social justice education must accompany and enhance traditional literary analysis, which it accomplishes by forcing engagement with multiple competing perspectives. Social justice education in the ELA classroom encourages a democratic and multicultural approach to literature, as “using multiple texts encourages students to gain insight through multiple perspectives and experiences, as well as make intertextual connections to other texts, themselves, and the world” (Wells and Batchelor 51). Effectively, using multiple texts in the classroom is akin to incorporating the multiple voices and perspectives necessary for creating a social justice education-based dialogue. The key, then, to successfully implementing a social justice curriculum in the ELA classroom is to assign sets of texts that incorporate competing narratives and perspectives, compelling students to interrogate, analyze, evaluate and critique the worldviews and perspectives embedded in each text. While this approach may lead to political challenges from students, the school, or even the community, it is absolutely necessary since it trains students to read and think using a critical eye, which is of course an important skill they will use when analyzing the role of traditional power structures in shaping political discourse as well as society at large.

With schools now charged with developing the character of their students, ELA teachers have a new and unique opportunity to simultaneously address new state standards on argumentation, introduce dynamic new multicultural literary texts, and promote equity among students of disparate levels of power and social class. Teachers should not take this opportunity for granted. As we face the increasing challenges of polarizing political rhetoric, rising levels of school violence, and increasingly intolerant attitudes towards immigrants and racial minorities, we have an obligation to shift our pedagogical model to one that provides all students with opportunities not only to succeed, but also to change the world for the better. Social justice education provides the framework to do that for all of our students, regardless of the positions of power they and their families occupy in society.

Chapter 3: Application

Solution to Providing Social Justice Education Resources

The most important step to take when trying to transition to the social justice education model of ELA instruction is establishing a democratic model of instruction while selecting texts that reinforce culturally responsive values. This is a fairly daunting task, as many schools are formally structured as well-intentioned autocratic monoliths. In order for teachers to begin practicing social justice education, they must be willing and able to give up a significant amount of power in the classroom. In simpler terms, students must be granted freedom, which in and of itself is a complex and loaded concept. Today, “the term freedom has taken a broader view to include

civic responsibility and social justice concerns” (Ciardiello 464). Granting students freedom includes and requires teaching them civic responsibility and social justice. The explicit teaching of civic responsibility necessarily requires actually giving students responsibility both in the curricular development and in the application of curricular goals. Especially in the ELA classroom, civic responsibility takes on new meaning as controversial topics and ideas must be engaged through civil discourse and mutual respect. In the ELA environment, “words count not only as a means of communication but also as a measure of civic efficacy, a readiness and willingness to assume citizenship responsibilities” (Ciardiello 465). Committing to this course of action in effect commits teachers to making our students better citizens outside of the classroom as well as inside of it.

Designing a democratic classroom alters the fundamental student-student and student-teacher relationships. For instance, “friendship takes on a different meaning in the context of a democratic classroom. It is no longer based on personal experiences and preferences; it now entails civic and social responsibilities in the quest of the common good” (Ciardiello 466). This re-shaping of student-student interactions will spill over into their academic work as well, as collaboration between students is not only a matter of working together to complete assignments, but also a partnership with the teacher to collectively design the most optimal, far, and constructive classroom experience. These new and complex relationships between teachers and students dictate the direction and outcome of curricular objectives, so it

is imperative that justice and empathy are core established classroom and school values.

Accepting this paradigm of partnership with students is relatively new for teachers, and therefore must be properly addressed in teacher preparation programs. First, and perhaps most obviously, teachers must recognize that they become a part of the community in which they teach, distinctly from the community in which they were raised or where they live. The fact is that not all preservice teachers return to the communities they have known and grown up with; therefore, they must be able to move and become a part of the community they will be teaching in” (de Oliveira 68). The importance of this concept cannot be overstated. Once the teacher internalizes that he or she is not simply working for the school but a stakeholder in the school community, the previous authoritarian paradigm can shift in favor of civic collaboration. In order to better understand their new community, “teachers can then work from a personal cultural framework to analyze, interpret, and critique education systems and the politics that surround them” (de Oliveira 68). This will not only allow teachers to develop a more culturally responsive curriculum, but it will also connect them to the civic needs of their students, fostering the opportunity for a democratic school environment.

Once teachers grasp their role in the process, they can go about the process of transforming their classrooms, with the fundamental goal being to shape responsible citizens, since “the creation of responsible citizens requires expanding the perceptions of students, namely providing them with the extensive knowledge necessary in order

to grasp the multiple interdependencies in society” (Snir and Eylon 589). By integrating into the communities in which they teach, teachers not only teach these interdependencies, but effectively model them. Furthermore, teaching students to grasp the multiple interdependencies in society is essentially an amalgam of the core tenets of social justice education. Once the classroom becomes democratic and community oriented, students will naturally begin to take on functioning civic responsibilities.

Social Justice and English Language Arts

The ELA classroom is the natural place for social justice education to occur. From the moment students begin studying, analyzing and discussing literature, they grapple with the moral questions that literature asks of us. Social justice education seeks to provide an ethical framework for students to address those questions in a coherent, logical, and consistent way. The English classroom, in fact, is such an important focal point for social justice education because we “reflect the world around us through our language and construct it; we use the words, symbols, and gestures we have learned over time, but we can also create new ones that have liberatory purposes, that change dominant narratives or overturn negative language use” (Boyd 44-5). Therefore, the ordinary study of literature already contains the core of the social justice framework, since grappling with rhetoric and literary technique is an essential part of such study.

One of the most critical ways in which the English classroom can reflect a social justice framework is by examining the underlying rhetorical slant of our

everyday language use. When examining our everyday language use, we discover that “most often...our language reflects values, knowledges, privileges, and prejudices that we take for granted or consider common sense” (Boyd 45). Thus, we not only study literature, but actually think about the significance and impact of our everyday language use. By making this concept an everyday part of the ELA classroom, we not only instill it with social justice values, but we also improve the academic underpinning of the way we think about language. Specifically, introducing the concept of code-switching to the ELA classroom is an essential component of modern social justice literacy. Encouraging students to think about and analyze code switching gets them asking questions like “how do we alter our word choices based on our audience— how do we “code switch” when we are speaking with a supervisor as opposed to a group of friends? What might we say in front of one that we wouldn’t the other? Most of the ways we speak are innate, and without fully considering them, they might perpetuate social injustice in ways we do not intend” (Boyd 45). There is therefore a clear link between language analysis and fostering an environment of cultural responsiveness. If it is true that language can perpetuate social injustice, it is important to think about and contextualize precisely how and when it is weaponized, both intentionally and otherwise.

Fundamentally, how we as teachers think about language is shaped by our own identities, which is why it is particularly important for teachers to be culturally responsive and examine their own linguistic biases. The fact is that “the identity of a language teacher shapes their pedagogical choices but also can be used as a form of

agency. The power of using one's identity as a pedagogical resource to confront dominant discourses has been acknowledged by feminist educators, particularly by those identifying as LGBTQIA” (Leal and Crookes 39). This is certainly a problem if it goes unexamined by a teacher but could prove to be an excellent teaching resource with the right amount of reflection and cultural responsiveness. It is certainly important to note that “many teachers, even while working for social justice, are themselves marginalized” (Leal and Crookes 47). Therefore, the teacher’s work democratizing the classroom and instilling a sense of cultural responsiveness also serves to protect the fundamental human interests of the teacher, not only the student.

Literature, rhetoric, and writing are natural platforms for the implementation of a social justice framework. When ELA teachers are properly guided and instructed and are themselves to interrogate important questions surrounding language, agency, privilege, and power, they can bring a truly transformative experience to the ELA classroom and, by extension, their students’ lives.

Mini-Unit for Ninth Grade

The following is a mini unit for ninth grade ELA students. It consists of five 45-minute lesson plans and a multi-part, multi-day project. The unit adheres strictly to the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards as well as the four key components of social justice literacy: democratic education, critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, and culturally responsive education. As a result, this mini unit presents the perfect opportunity for ELA teachers to introduce social justice pedagogy in a self-contained way.

The mini unit focuses entirely on the Young Adult novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. This novel is an absolutely invaluable resource for social justice pedagogy, since it directly addresses many core social justice concepts. Since the book is written at a very simple level (Lexile 600L), it can be read very quickly so that students can perform complex tasks using the text without grappling with vocabulary or syntax. Since the book doesn't take very long to read, students can be asked to perform high-level integrated tasks that may require a lot of time when using a more linguistically complex text. As a result, this 6-lesson unit is presented in its entirety; however, at the teacher's discretion, it may be slowed down at any point to introduce additional discussion or writing. For the purposes of this mini unit, much attention was paid to anchoring the students rigorously to the written text, so could truly internalize how rhetorical choices impact the social justice framework.

The unit assessment, therefore, seems markedly different from the lessons it contains. Whereas the lessons are rigorously anchored to the text, the culminating project asks students to synthesize multiple aspects of the text in order to draw complex conclusions within a social justice framework. The project is also multi-modal, requiring significant writing, artistic creativity, and spoken presentation. Some samples of student work that links rhetorical and literary concepts with social justice ideas are also included.

It must be noted that this unit plan was designed for a co-taught blended English Language Learner classroom, which typically contains 6-8 Spanish-speaking

ELL students in an immersive environment. This novel is suitable for this type of classroom since there is an excellent Spanish translation available. Several of the lessons have been adapted for this type of classroom environment, but with minor modification could be utilized in an inclusion or Regents-level classroom.

On day 1, students learn how little they know about Native American history and culture, an important realization before even beginning to read the text. Then, students read and analyze a poem by Alexie that provides some context for the modern Native American cultural experience. The learning objectives for this lesson are that students will cite words, phrases, lines and stanzas in a piece of poetry that develop a theme. Students will analyze both the meaning and context of those citations as they relate to a central theme of the text. Students will also analyze how the use of poetic techniques develops the theme of the text.

On day 2, students discuss their own experience with stereotypes and then begin reading the novel, where they quickly learn that the narrator struggles with several disabilities as well as the stereotypes associated with them. They also grapple with controversial and inflammatory language. Finally, they learn how to pull excerpts from the text that demonstrate the development of a theme. The learning objectives for this lesson are that students will cite key passages to support one of the seven focal points of the text. Students will analyze both the meaning and context of those passages as they relate to a central theme of the text. Students will also develop and ask questions of both the teacher and the text in order to interrogate literary, rhetorical, and cultural meaning.

On day 3, students will evaluate their learning from the previous day, as well as dig deeper into what it means to be Native American, or Indian, as the narrator identifies. Students will also grapple with the complex title from three perspectives: rhetorical, literary, and social justice. Ultimately, only when students examine the title from all three perspectives do they gain a total understanding of its meaning. The learning objectives for this lesson are that students will evaluate whether the passages they selected for homework fulfill the criteria of the assignment. Students will analyze how a character develops a complex personal identity. Students will also analyze how the title of the text addresses complex questions of cultural identity as well as literary, rhetorical, and cultural meaning.

On day 4, students will experience democratic education in action, as they collaboratively develop and write their own quiz, which will be administered the following day. They will demonstrate their close reading and analytical skills as they pull excerpts from the text that develop an assigned theme. The learning objectives for this lesson are that students will identify appropriate thematic excerpts. Students will analyze and evaluate the quality of those excerpts.

On day 5, students will take the quiz they designed. This activity is explicitly designed to foster a democratic environment in the classroom.

Beginning day 6, students will receive and start working on the multi-genre project. Depending on the size and makeup of the class as well as the time available, the teacher can devote as many or as few days as possible to this project. It contains

three components that are fully scalable and are conducive to additional teaching mini units surrounding them.

Over the course of this unit, students will receive a crash course in all four components of social justice education. They will also gain significant experience with citing and analyzing text excerpts in support of social justice-oriented themes.

Ninth Grade Mini-Unit

5 45-minute Lessons plus one Multi-Day Project

Analytical Reading of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* with a Character Education Project

Lesson 1

Grade Level: 9

Subject: English Language Arts

Unit of Instruction: Analytical Reading of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* with a Character Education Project

Lesson Title: Lesson 1/Day 1: Introduction to Multicultural Education Using Poetry

Central Focus: Students will be able to identify and reflect on their knowledge (or lack of knowledge) about Native American history and cultural experiences. Students will then read and analyze a poem that offers insight into the Native American experience.

Content Standards: NYS Next Generation ELA Learning Standards: 9-10R1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences; develop questions for deeper understanding and for further exploration. (RI&RL); 9-10R2: Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text. (RI&RL); 9-10R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood. Examine technical or key terms and how language differs across genres. (RI&RL); 9-10R6: Analyze how

authors employ point of view, perspective, and purpose to shape explicit and implicit messages (e.g., examine rhetorical strategies, literary elements and devices). (RI&RL)

Learning Objectives associated with content standards: Students will **cite** words, phrases, lines and stanzas in a piece of poetry that develop a theme. Students will **analyze** both the meaning and context of those citations as they relate to a central theme of the text. Students will also **analyze** how the use of poetic techniques develops the theme of the text.

Instructional Resources and Materials: “What Do You Know About Native Americans?” Handout, “Evolution” by Sherman Alexie, “Poetry Analysis Handout”, SMARTboard with SMART note taking software

Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks:

Teacher will:	Student will:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greet students upon entering the room and direct them into pre-formed pairs 2. Distribute “What Do You Know About Native Americans?” handout 3. Begin Warm-Up by directing students to independently complete the worksheet to the best of their ability. If there is an answer they simply don’t know, direct them to answer with their best guess. (3 minutes) 4. Quickly review the answers to the questions on the handout. Ask the whole class: “Which answers surprise you?” Cold call for responses. 5. Explain that we are beginning the unit by examining the lives of Native Americans by reading the words of a Native American author. Distribute “Evolution” by Sherman Alexie and the “Poetry Analysis Handout.” 6. Before reading the poem, read and explain the “Background Knowledge” from the Poetry Analysis Worksheet. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter the room, move desks into assigned pairs, and take out novels and notebooks. 2. Complete the handout. It is unlikely that students will get many (or any) of the answers correct. 3. Ask permission of their partner to share response. If approved, share response with the class. 4. Recognize that they have a very shallow and incomplete knowledge of Native American history. They will also identify areas where they are completely misinformed. 5. Listen carefully to the explanation of the Background Knowledge and ask questions as necessary. 6. Listen carefully to the reading of the poem and follow along. 7. Analyze the poem using the guidelines provided on the handout.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Read the poem aloud twice. 8. Direct students to complete the Poetry Analysis Worksheet questions 2-7 independently. Teacher and co-teacher will circulate around the room checking for understanding. 9. Assign 2 pairs of students to each question. Those 4 students are in charge of presenting that answer to the class (adjust numbers according to class size). 10. Ask student groups to corroborate their responses and direct each student to briefly explain a facet of their answer. 11. Direct other students in the class to check their own answers against the answers given by the presenting group. Provide feedback to ensure that all students have complete, correct answers for questions 2-7. 12. Students will discuss question 8 in pairs and answer the question. 13. Ask the whole class “What is the relationship between your knowledge of Native Americans from the Warm-Up and the effect this poem has had on your knowledge?” 14. Exit ticket: On a scrap of paper, students should complete the following sentence stem – “In order to learn more about Native American history and culture, a person should _____.” 15. Collect exit tickets. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Work collaboratively with other students to check the correctness and completeness of their assigned question and then present that information efficiently to the class. 9. Listen carefully to answers given by other students and evaluate those responses. Ask clarification questions of other students or teachers as necessary. 10. Analyze how their knowledge of a topic has been enhanced by reading and analyzing a poem. 11. Synthesize a response based on the completion of two activities and evaluate how their knowledge has grown and can continue to grow.
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Differentiation and planned universal supports: Student pairs will be pre-determined by the teacher to maximize the assistance strong readers can provide to weaker readers. All notes will be recorded digitally in the SMART notebook and posted to Google Classroom so that students with writing difficulties may access clean copies of the notes from home. Students who are absent for this lesson will

receive digital copies of the notes and handouts via Google Classroom so that they may complete the poetry analysis at a later date. Since the notes contain modeling for the assignment, these students should be able to complete the task and receive basic remediation as necessary upon their return.

Language functions students will develop and additional language demands and supports: Students will identify gaps in their personal knowledge and evaluate how well they know a particular subject matter. Students will be able to comprehend poetic language and syntax, analyze the use of poetic techniques and their meaning, and draw conclusions about a poet's intent Vocabulary: Students will revisit numerous poetic devices. They will analyze the how culture becomes appropriated and eventually eradicated. Students will use subject-specific vocabulary such as speaker, poetic devices, theme, form, stanza, and structure. Students will be able to discuss and show empathy surrounding cultural practices. Students will be able to adhere to the appropriate conventions of written and spoken English by writing short responses as directed.

Type of Student Assessments and what is being assessed:

- **Informal Assessment:** Informal assessments will be based on how students interact with each other while discussing and corroborating answers on the poetry handout as well as the quality of the answers that students produce. It will also be based on whether other students correct or enhance insufficient responses. My co-teacher and I will interact with individuals and groups as necessary to help facilitate discussion and determine if students are completing the tasks correctly. Since my co-teacher is an ELA specialist, she will assess and evaluate the needs of English Language Learners during the lesson.
- **Formal Assessment:** The formal assessment will be an evaluation of students' successful completion of the poetry handout. Since, in theory, they will have heard the correct answers in class, they are being assessed on their ability to evaluate the correctness of their responses relative to the answers they heard their classmates produce.
- **Modifications to the Assessments:** Since this class is an ELL-blended class, there are no students with IEPs present. Students who understand English at level 1A or below (internal designation) will be allowed to use translators when completing the assignment.

Evaluation Criteria: The poetry handout is worth 10 points towards the classwork grade.

Did the student have correct responses to questions 1-7?	7 pts.
Did the student provide a thoughtful, coherent response to the exit ticket question?	3 pts.

Relevant theories and/or research best practices:

This lesson draws from three components of social justice pedagogy: critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, and culturally responsive education. Having students confront their own perhaps embarrassing lack of knowledge or, worse, erroneous knowledge is a key component of critical pedagogy. The introduction of knowledge about Native American culture addresses critical multicultural education. Finally, the realization that their school did not adequately address or provide key histories and cultural education about Native Americans addresses culturally responsive education.

Lesson Timeline: Greeting/Warm-Up: 3 minutes; Warm-Up Answer Review: 2 minutes; Background Knowledge: 2 minutes; Read Aloud: 4 minutes; Poetry Analysis Worksheet: 15 minutes; Group Collaboration: 4 minutes; Group Presentations: 8 minutes; Pair-share: 3 minutes; Whole class debrief: 3 minutes; Exit ticket: 1 minute

Lesson 2

Grade Level: 9

Subject: English Language Arts

Unit of Instruction: Analytical Reading of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* with a Character Education Project

Lesson Title: Lesson 2/Day 2: Using a Reading Log as a Tool for Close Reading

Central Focus: Students will be able to identify key passages from the text and analyze both their content and style in a social justice context. Students will also begin to recognize how character development can be viewed through a culturally responsive lens.

Content Standards: NYS Next Generation ELA Learning Standards: 9-10R1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences; develop questions for deeper understanding and for further exploration. (RI&RL); 9-10R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative

meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood. Examine technical or key terms and how language differs across genres. (RI&RL)

Learning Objectives associated with content standards: Students will **cite** key passages to support one of the seven focal points of the text. Students will **analyze** both the meaning and context of those passages as they relate to a central theme of the text. Students will also **develop** and **ask** questions of both the teacher and the text in order to interrogate literary, rhetorical, and cultural meaning.

Instructional Resources and Materials: Digital and print copies (English and Spanish) of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, SMARTboard with SMART note taking software, “Keeping a Reading Log” Handout, Quiz 1

Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks:

Teacher will:	Student will:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greet students upon entering the room and direct them into pre-formed pairs 2. Quick Write → Turn and talk: Do you think people label you with a stereotype? What is unfair about the stereotype? (3 minutes) 3. Solicit students to share a partner’s writing they found thoughtful or interesting (after asking permission). 4. Direct students to open their copies of the novel to page 3. Before reading, ask students to follow along and write one characteristic of the narrator they learn from these pages. Read pages 3-5 aloud. 5. Ask the whole group for information we learn about the narrator from these pages. 6. Ask students how this information gives us insight into the narrator’s character. 7. Ask students to remain in their pairs but work individually to locate the best textual evidence 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter the room, move desks into assigned pairs, and take out novels and notebooks. 2. Record their answers and then discuss those answers with their partner. Listen carefully to their partner’s answer and decide if it is something they would be comfortable sharing and would contribute to class discussion. 3. Ask permission of their partner to share response. If approved, share response with the class. 4. Read along carefully and decide which characteristic of the narrator is discussed most prominently. Make notes from the text accordingly. 5. Listen to other student responses and decide whether to share your observations. Base this decision on whether they believe a better, more precise example than theirs has already been shared. 6. Go back to the text to look for textual evidence supporting their answer.

<p>to support their conclusion about the narrator.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Ask students to pair-share their responses and come to a consensus on which is the most accurate and precise piece of evidence. 9. Ask several small groups for their examples of textual evidence. After soliciting several examples and writing them in the SMART notebook, ask students to vote on the most precise example. This will be the class example we will all use. 10. Ask students to copy this example into their notebooks in this was not the example their pair chose. 11. Demonstrate how to contextualize and analyze the selected example using a social justice framework. Have students copy this example into their notebooks. 12. Ask students for commentary on the narrator’s use of the word “retard.” How did they react when they heard me say the word out loud? How did they react when they heard their classmates say it? Why do they think the narrator chooses to use this word, knowing that readers will react negatively to it? What does this say about the narrator’s feelings regarding his own disability? 13. Connect this discussion to the Warm-Up activity by asking how the narrator’s view of himself might have been shaded by the stereotypes he’s been subjected to. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Listen carefully to partner’s responses. 8. If they disagree with their partner, briefly debate and come to a consensus on which example best illustrates the character’s feelings about his disability. 9. Listen carefully to what other groups say when called on. If their group agrees with another group, argue in support of that answer. If their group has a unique suggestion that hasn’t yet been heard, analyze whether their example is better and decide whether to argue in favor of it. 10. Vote on the most precise example based on the arguments presented. Make sure this example is recorded in the Reading Log. 11. Listen carefully to and think about how the example is contextualized and analyzed. 12. Draw from personal knowledge to decide how they feel about the use of offensive language. Analyze why the author might have decided to use this language, and what the author is trying to reveal about the narrator. Share these thoughts with the class. 13. Re-read responses to the Warm-Up activity and decide how the narrator has been affected by stereotypes. 14. Read along with the instruction sheet. Ask questions as necessary and appropriate. 15. Silently read from the novel and take notes based on the example
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Distribute “Keeping a Reading Log” handout. Read instructions and answer any questions students might have. 15. Ask students to continue reading Chapter One (The Black-Eye-of-the-Month Club) and search for examples that fulfill requirements on the handout. Remind students that if they suspect a passage is important but aren’t sure how to record a proper textual example, they are encouraged to instead ask a question in their Reading Log. 16. Explain that they are to finish the first five chapters for homework (The Black-Eye-of-the-Month Club, Why Chicken Means So Much to Me, Revenge is My Middle Name, Because Geometry Is Not a Country Somewhere Near France, and Hope Against Hope). Their reading logs will be checked for completeness and thoughtfulness tomorrow, so they must bring their notebooks daily. 17. Allow students to continue working on their Reading Log until the class period ends. This is an excellent opportunity to circulate among students and ask questions or offer clarification. 18. Distribute Quiz 1 for Homework. It is to be completed by Day 4. 	<p>created in class as well as the instruction sheet.</p>
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Differentiation and planned universal supports: All materials will be distributed in English and Spanish for English Language Learners. Student pairs will be pre-determined by the teacher to maximize the assistance strong readers can provide to weaker readers. All notes will be recorded digitally in the SMART notebook and posted to Google Classroom so that students with writing difficulties may access clean copies of the notes from home. Students who are absent for this lesson will

receive digital copies of the notes and handouts via Google Classroom so that they may complete the Reading Log at home. Since the notes contain modeling for the assignment, these students should be able to complete the task and receive basic remediation as necessary upon their return.

Language functions students will develop and additional language demands and supports: Students will identify a complex character trait and analyze how it is developed in the text. Students will be able to identify effective text evidence, analyze its effectiveness, and argue its relative effectiveness with regard to alternate examples. Students will analyze the rhetorical effect of inflammatory language. Vocabulary: Students will revisit the literary terms characterization, narrator, and point of view. They will analyze the complex term disability. Students will use subject-specific vocabulary such as textual evidence, argument, and example. Students will be able to discuss and show empathy surrounding the use of loaded language. Students will be able to adhere to the appropriate conventions of written and spoken English by writing short responses as directed.

Type of Student Assessments and what is being assessed:

- **Informal Assessment:** Informal assessments will be based on how students interact with each other while discussing answers as well as the quality of the answers that students produce. It will also be based on the ease and fluidity with which students arrive at consensus answers as well as democratically-derived answers. My co-teacher and I will interact with groups as necessary to help facilitate discussion and determine if students are completing the tasks correctly. If students are struggling, I can provide them with choices between pre-selected examples of textual evidence so that they may weigh their relative quality rather than come up with new examples out of whole cloth. Since my co-teacher is an ELA specialist, she will assess and evaluate the needs of English Language Learners during the lesson.
- **Formal Assessment:** The formal assessment will be an evaluation of students' successful completion of one entry in their Reading Log notebook. Their notebooks will be collected the next day as well as at predetermined intervals in the future to determine the level of skill and complexity at which they are engaging the source material.
- **Modifications to the Assessments:** Since this class is an ELL-blended class, there are no students with IEPs present. Students who understand English at level 1A or below (internal designation) will be allowed to submit responses in Spanish for a grade alongside an English translation. Since these translations take time to complete, ELL students will be required to submit their Reading Log in Spanish on the assigned due date and the English translation at a later date.

Evaluation Criteria: Each night’s Reading Log entry is worth 10 points towards the student’s homework grade.

Did the student include a relevant and sophisticated textual reference that addresses one of the themes on the handout?	2 pts.
Did the student put the quote in the proper context?	3 pts.
Did the student provide thoughtful and sophisticated analysis of the quote, linking it to broader themes or larger ideas?	5 pts.

Relevant theories and/or research best practices:

This lesson draws from two components of social justice pedagogy: democratic education and multicultural education. The teacher allows students to democratically select the textual examples the class will use during the lesson, empowering students and giving them a vested intrinsic interest in the outcome of the class activities. Furthermore, having frank discussions surrounding the rhetorical effect of inflammatory language surrounding disabilities contributes to a deeper understanding of the way in which people with disabilities are affected by stereotypes.

Lesson Timeline: Greeting/Warm-Up: 3 minutes; Quick Write/Turn & Talk/Sharing: 4 minutes; Read aloud: 7 minutes; Character discussion: 4 minutes; Individual text search: 4 minutes; Pair-Share: 3 minutes; Class consensus: 4 minutes; Contextualization modeling: 3 minutes; Discussion of inflammatory language: 5 minutes; Distribution/explanation of assignment: 2 minutes; Independent work: 6 minutes

Lesson 3

Grade Level: 9

Subject: English Language Arts

Unit of Instruction: Analytical Reading of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* with a Character Education Project

Lesson Title: Lesson 2/Day 2: Interrogating Indianness Through the Use of Close Reading Passages

Central Focus: Students will be able to evaluate their close reading ability and analytical skills by applying the previous night’s homework to a new thematic question. Students will also question and analyze the concept of personal racial identity.

Content Standards: NYS Next Generation ELA Learning Standards: 9-10R2: Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text. (RI&RL); 9-10R3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (RL); 9-10W1: Write arguments to support claims that analyze substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Learning Objectives associated with content standards: Students will evaluate whether the passages they selected for homework fulfill the criteria of the assignment. Students will analyze how a character develops a complex personal identity. Students will also analyze how the title of the text addresses complex questions of cultural identity as well as literary, rhetorical, and cultural meaning.

Instructional Resources and Materials: Digital and print copies (English and Spanish) of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, SMARTboard with SMART note taking software, “What Makes Someone a Part-Time Indian?” handout, Exit Ticket handout

Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks:

Teacher will:	Student will:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greet students upon entering the room and direct them to their assigned pairs. Students will also open their reading logs and begin the Warm-Up activity. 2. Have Warm-Up activity displayed on the SMARTboard: Swap Reading Logs with your partner. Read through your partner’s Reading Log entry from last night. Place a check mark next to any passages that address the development of the narrator’s personal identity. During the next 3 steps, teacher and co-teacher circulate the room checking Reading Logs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter the room, take out their novels and Reading Log notebooks, and read the instructions on the SMARTboard. 2. Read entries in their partner’s homework notebook. If the partner does not have the homework completed, both students will collaboratively read and evaluate one student’s notebook by placing a check mark next to an excerpt both students deem to be correct. 3. Discuss overlapping answers with each other, and then seek out other students in the

<p>according to the rubric from Lesson 1.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Ask students to discuss with their partners whether they have any overlapping check marks. If they do not, or if one student does not have any check marks, ask them to collaboratively look over the end of chapter 5 and find how Junior's identity is expressed. 4. Instruct students to walk around the room and find five other students who have one passage in common with them. Have those 5 students initial the passage in their reading log. 5. Ask students if anyone in the room has 5 initials next to the same passage, descending to 4 and then 3. 6. Write the 3 most popular excerpts on the SMARTboard. Cold call on several students and ask, "How does this excerpt help develop Junior's identity or sense of self?" 7. Ask the whole class "How do you think this relates to the title?" Ask students to turn to their partners and brainstorm how what we've learned about Junior's sense of personal identity might relate to the title of the novel. 8. Distribute "What Makes Someone a 'Part-Time Indian'" handout. Direct students to complete the handout independently. 9. As students work on the handout, circulate the room to check for thoughtful answers. Students might be resistant to 	<p>class with the same answer. They will share which answers they see are most commonly represented, which will encourage consensus-forming.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Volunteer and share where appropriate if they have successfully acquired 3, 4, or 5 sets of initials. 5. Copy quotes into their notebooks and answer how these quotes help to develop Junior's sense of self. 6. Collaboratively discuss and generate thoughts connecting Junior's sense of personal identity to the title of the novel. 7. Independently complete the rhetorical, literary, and cultural analysis handout. Ask questions of partners or co-teachers if there is doubt or confusion. 8. Draw a conclusion about how the title of the novel relates to Junior's conception of personal identity. Articulate this conclusion if called upon to do so. 9. Connect the literary concept of internal conflict to Junior's complex conception of personal identity. Discuss this connection with the class. 10. Write a paragraph demonstrating understanding of the concept of having a part-time identity.
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<p>answering the cultural questions, so it is important to validate their concerns and encourage them to answer thoughtfully and honestly.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Encourage students to quietly check in with their partners if they are unsure of an answer. These questions are challenging for 9th graders. 11. As the activity progresses, the noise level in the room will increase as students begin discussing the complexity of the questions. At this point, direct students to focus again on the front of the room. 12. Ask the class, “What do we learn about Junior from the title of this book?” Cold call for several responses. 13. Ask the whole class, “How is this evidence of an internal conflict in this character?” Since this is a more technical literary question, solicit responses from volunteers. 14. As the discussion draws to a close, distribute the “Exit Ticket” for students to complete independently. 15. Distribute homework assignment – read chapters 6-15 and continue the Reading Log assignment. 	
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Differentiation and planned universal supports: Student pairs will be pre-determined by the teacher to maximize the assistance strong readers can provide to weaker readers. All notes will be recorded digitally in the SMART notebook and posted to Google Classroom so that students with writing difficulties may access clean copies of the notes from home. Students who are absent for this lesson will receive digital copies of the notes and handouts via Google Classroom so that they may complete the Reading Log at home. Since the notes contain modeling for the

assignment, these students should be able to complete the task and receive basic remediation as necessary upon their return.

Language functions students will develop and additional language demands and supports: Students will analyze how a character trait is exemplified in the text and evaluate whether their work demonstrates understanding of this concept. Students will be able to draw conclusions about effective text evidence, analyze its effectiveness, and analyze how they can draw conclusions about the text based on multiple sources of information. Students will connect the meaning of their examples to the meaning of the title. Vocabulary: Students will revisit the literary terms rhetorical analysis, narrator, point of view, and internal conflict. They will analyze the complex idea of term personal identity. Students will use subject-specific vocabulary such as textual evidence, argument, and example, cite, and context. Students will be able to discuss and show empathy with regard to differing and complex personal identities. Students will be able to adhere to the appropriate conventions of written and spoken English by writing a short paragraph.

Type of Student Assessments and what is being assessed:

- **Informal Assessment:** Informal assessments will be based on how students interact with each other while discussing answers as well as the quality of the answers that students produce. It will also be based on my observations of their ability to complete the provided handout. My co-teacher and I will interact with groups as necessary to help facilitate discussion and determine if students are completing the tasks correctly. If students are struggling, I can provide them with choices between pre-selected examples of textual evidence so that they may weigh their relative quality rather than come up with new examples out of whole cloth. Since my co-teacher is an ELA specialist, she will assess and evaluate the needs of English Language Learners during the lesson.
- **Formal Assessment:** The formal assessment will be an evaluation of students' successful completion of one entry in their Reading Log notebook (assigned the previous day). There will also be an exit ticket that is collected and graded that will be used to assess the social justice literacy component of the lesson.
- **Modifications to the Assessments:** Since this class is an ELL-blended class, there are no students with IEPs present. Students who understand English at level 1A or below (internal designation) will be allowed to submit responses in Spanish for a grade alongside an English translation. Since these translations take time to complete, ELL students will be required to submit their Reading Log in Spanish on the assigned due date and the English

translation at a later date. ELL students may also complete the exit ticket in Spanish.

Evaluation Criteria: Each night’s Reading Log entry is worth 10 points towards the student’s homework grade.

Did the student include a relevant and sophisticated textual reference that addresses one of the themes on the handout?	2 pts.
Did the student put the quote in the proper context?	3 pts.
Did the student provide thoughtful and sophisticated analysis of the quote, linking it to broader themes or larger ideas?	5 pts.

The exit ticket is worth 10 points towards the student’s classwork grade.

Did the student demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of personal identity?	7 pts.
Did the student incorporate an appropriate example from the text to support their analysis?	3 pts.

Relevant theories and/or research best practices:

This lesson draws from all four components of social justice pedagogy: democratic education, critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, and culturally responsive education. The teacher allows students to democratically select the textual examples the class will use during the lesson, empowering students and giving them a vested intrinsic interest in the outcome of the class activities. Having students analyze, personalize, discuss, and interrogate complex questions of personal identity incorporates critical pedagogy and critical multicultural education. Since the instructor will invariably incorporate critique of their own reflections on personal identity, culturally responsive education is also reflected in the lesson.

Lesson Timeline: Greeting/Warm-Up: 4 minutes; Partner discussion of check marks: 3 minutes; Scavenger hunting for check marks: 2 minutes; Whole class discussion of examples: 6 minutes; Individual completion of handout: 17 minutes; Handout debrief: 6 minutes; Exit ticket: 7 minutes

Lesson 4

Grade Level: 9

Subject: English Language Arts

Unit of Instruction: Analytical Reading of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* with a Character Education Project

Lesson Title: Lesson 4/Day 4: Interrogating Social Justice Through Self-Selected Excerpts

Central Focus: Students will collaboratively select key excerpts from that develop a central idea or theme of the novel.

Content Standards: NYS Next Generation ELA Learning Standards: 9-10R2: Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text. (RI&RL); 9-10R3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (RL)

Learning Objectives associated with content standards: Students will **identify** appropriate thematic excerpts. Students will **analyze** and **evaluate** the quality of those excerpts.

Instructional Resources and Materials: Digital and print copies (English and Spanish) of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, SMARTboard with SMART note taking software, “Quiz Questions” Handout

Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks:

Teacher will:	Student will:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Greet students upon entering the room and direct them to their assigned pairs. For the Warm-Up, students will take out Quiz 1 and discuss their answers with their seat partner.2. Direct each pair to select the quiz question that best resonates with your understanding of how Junior’s life reflects the Indian culture described in Alexie’s	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Move into pairs and evaluate how the questions from Quiz 1 relate to the poem they read on Day 1.2. Select the best excerpt and craft a brief argument explaining their reasoning.3. Identify and evaluate excerpts from the novel that best develop a theme they have been assigned. Work

<p>poem “Evolution.” Direct each pair to also write a few brief sentences to explain their reasoning.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Solicit responses from the class. 4. Explain that the students will be writing their own quiz questions for the next quiz. 5. Place students into 6 groups and assign each group a theme (labeled b-g on the Reading Log instructions handout). 6. Direct students to work collaboratively to select the four best excerpts from the book (through chapter 15) that most clearly develop and complicate the theme they have been assigned. 7. Once students select the excerpts collectively, they must complete the worksheet individually by providing context and analysis for the excerpt. 8. Teacher and co-teacher should circulate among the groups offering suggestions and guidance for selecting appropriate excerpts. 9. Do not allow students to consider themselves finished until they have at least four excerpts with context and analysis. 10. Students who consider themselves finished should continue adding excerpts until the class period ends. 11. Collect both the worksheet and Quiz 1. 12. Homework: Read chapters 16-23 and complete another entry in the Reading Log. 	<p>collaboratively with other students in doing so.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Provide context and analysis for these excerpts.
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Differentiation and planned universal supports: Student groups will be pre-determined by the teacher to maximize the assistance strong readers can provide to weaker readers. ELL students will be dispersed equally among groups to foster integration and collaboration. They will also be provided translators as needed.

Language functions students will develop and additional language demands and supports: Students will analyze how a given excerpt develops a particular theme. Students will also connect information learned during a previous lesson on poetry to how they analyze excerpts from the novel. Students will be able to independently identify and evaluate excerpts that exemplify a particular theme. Vocabulary: Students will revisit the literary terms theme and characterization. Students will use subject-specific vocabulary such as textual evidence, argument, and example, cite, and context. Students will be able to adhere to the appropriate conventions of written and spoken English by writing a short paragraph.

Type of Student Assessments and what is being assessed:

- **Informal Assessment:** Informal assessments will be based on how students interact with each other while discussing answers as well as the quality of the answers that students produce. It will also be based on my observations of their ability connect the poem “Evolution” to a given excerpt from the novel. My co-teacher and I will interact with groups as necessary to help facilitate discussion and determine if students are completing the tasks correctly. If students are struggling, I can provide them with guidance regarding choices of appropriate excerpts, or ask scaffolded questions to help them arrive at appropriate selections. Since my co-teacher is an ELA specialist, she will assess and evaluate the needs of English Language Learners during the lesson.
- **Formal Assessment:** The formal assessment will be a grade on the first quiz and an analysis of the selections for and grading of the second quiz.
- **Modifications to the Assessments:** Since this class is an ELL-blended class, there are no students with IEPs present. ELL students will be distributed among groups containing English-speaking students (bilingual where available) in order to facilitate communication.

Evaluation Criteria: Each will be graded out of 100 points towards a student’s quiz grade. Answers will be evaluated based on accuracy, clarity, and completeness.

Relevant theories and/or research best practices:

This lesson draws heavily from the concept of democratic education. Students will be establishing their own evaluation criteria and even developing their own test questions. These quizzes will actually be administered. As a result, students will be

fully engaged not only with the academic component of the unit, but also the academic structure of the unit as well.

Lesson Timeline: Greeting/Warm-Up: 5 minutes; Discussion of Warm-Up: 5 minutes; Moving students into groups and writing quiz questions: 35 minutes

Lesson 5

Grade Level: 9

Subject: English Language Arts

Unit of Instruction: Analytical Reading of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* with a Character Education Project

Lesson Title: Lesson 4/Day 4: Self-Selected Quiz

Central Focus: Students will complete a quiz of their own design.

Content Standards: NYS Next Generation ELA Learning Standards: 9-10R2: Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text. (RI&RL); 9-10R3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (RL); 9-10W1: Write arguments to support claims that analyze substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Learning Objectives associated with content standards: Students will **analyze and contextualize** appropriate thematic excerpts.

Instructional Resources and Materials: Digital and print copies (English and Spanish) of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, Quiz

Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks:

Teacher will:	Student will:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Greet students upon entering the room and direct them to individual seats.2. Direct students to complete quiz.3. If students finish the quiz early, they may begin working on the homework Reading Log entry.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Move into their individual seats.2. Complete the quiz

4. Homework: Finish the novel and complete one entry in your reading log.	
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Differentiation and planned universal supports: ELL students may use translators for the excerpts and complete the quiz in Spanish. They may use both the Spanish and English copies of the novel.

Language functions students will develop and additional language demands and supports: Students will analyze and contextualize key excerpts from the novel. Students will use subject-specific vocabulary such as textual evidence, argument, and example, cite, and context. Students will be able to adhere to the appropriate conventions of written and spoken English by writing a short paragraph.

Type of Student Assessments and what is being assessed:

- **Informal Assessment:** This activity is a formal assessment. The teacher and co-teacher can circulate around the room to assist students informally who are experiencing difficulty.
- **Formal Assessment:** The formal assessment will be a grade on the quiz.
- **Modifications to the Assessments:** Since this class is an ELL-blended class, there are no students with IEPs present. ELL students will be provided translators and translated copies of the novel.

Evaluation Criteria: Each will be graded out of 100 points towards a student’s quiz grade. Answers will be evaluated based on accuracy, clarity, and completeness.

Relevant theories and/or research best practices:

This lesson draws heavily from the concept of democratic education. Students will be answering the quiz questions developed by their classmates. As a result, they are empowered by seeing their own questions appear on a quiz but are additionally empowered by the concept that a teacher is allowing them to construct the criteria by which they are evaluated.

Lesson Timeline: Greeting/Warm-Up: 1 minute; Quiz Administration: 44 minutes

Lesson 6

The final lesson is a multi-day, multi-genre project. Its goal is to effectively connect all of the themes of the novel and synthesize projects that demonstrate an

understanding of conflict resolution when viewed through the lens of social justice education.

Step 1: Provide students with an outline for the essay component. The essay addresses standard 9-10W1: Write arguments to support claims that analyze substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. Students can work independently and at home on this component. This will be graded according to the attached rubric.

Step 2: The character letter is entirely creative and addresses standard 9-10W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Step 3: The multi-genre component is also entirely creative and is really the democratic education and culturally responsive component of the final project. Students get to personalize the experience of reading the novel and demonstrate their knowledge and experience to the class. They will create their project and presentation according to the attached rubric.

It is important to review the project assignment sheet carefully, as it is very long and complex. Copies have been provided in English and Spanish due to its complexity.

Lesson One Materials

Name _____

Date _____

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

What do you know about Native Americans?

True or False?

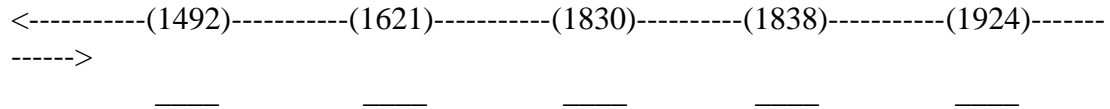
- _____ 1. All Native Americans wear headdresses and live in teepees.
- _____ 2. Native Americans did not ride horses before the Europeans arrived in the Americas.
- _____ 3. Most Native Americans died off due to disease and fighting.
- _____ 4. Many towns on Long Island are named after Native American tribes.
- _____ 5. The average life expectancy for Native Americans is approximately 30 years lower than the U.S. average.

Discussion Questions:

1. What Native American tribes have you heard of?
2. What are some Native American tribes that live on Long Island?
3. How many tribes are federally recognized today within the United States?
4. What is an “Indian reservation?”
5. What percentage of Native Americans live on reservations?
6. What are the three biggest problems facing Native Americans today?

Native American History Timeline:

Directions: Match the letter of each event below with the correct date on the timeline.



- A. Native Americans become citizens of the United States
- B. 4,000 Native Americans die from starvation and disease during their relocation from native lands to reservations on the “Trail of Tears”
- C. Indian Removal Act; Reservations were created by the United States government
- D. Christopher Columbus comes into contact with Native Americans
- E. The “first” Thanksgiving is celebrated

Lesson One Materials

Name KEY_____

Date _____

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

What do you know about Native Americans?

True or False?

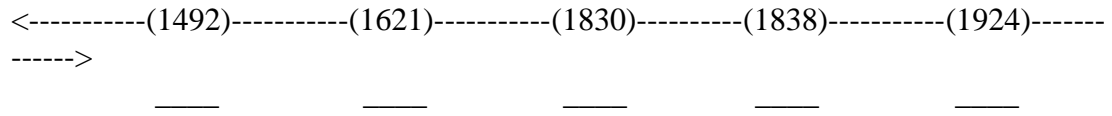
- F 1. All Native Americans wear headdresses and live in teepees.
 T 2. Native Americans did not ride horses before the Europeans arrived in the Americas.
 F 3. Most Native Americans died off due to disease and fighting.
 T 4. Most towns on Long Island are named after Native American tribes.
 T 5. The average life expectancy for Native Americans is approximately 30 years lower than the U.S. average

Discussion Questions:

1. What Native American tribes have you heard of?
...
2. What are some Native American tribes that live on Long Island?
Canarsie, Rockaway, Matinecock, Merrick, Massapequa, Nissequoge, Secatoag, Seatauket, Patchoag, Corchaug, Shinnecock, Manhasset and Montauk
3. How many tribes are federally recognized today within the United States?
562
4. What is a “reservation?”
Federally designated land that is under the management of a designated Native American tribe
5. What percentage of Native Americans live on reservations?
22%
6. What are the three biggest problems facing Native Americans today?
Poverty, health issues (tuberculosis and diabetes), and poor education system

Native American History Timeline:

Directions: Match the letter of each event below with the correct date on the timeline.



- (1924) Native Americans become citizens of the United States
- (1838) 4,000 Native Americans die from starvation and disease during their relocation from native lands to reservations on the “Trail of Tears”
- (1830) Indian Removal Act; Reservations were created by the United States government
- (1492) Christopher Columbus comes into contact with Native Americans
- (1621) The “first” Thanksgiving is celebrated

Lesson One Materials

Evolution

By Sherman Alexie

Buffalo Bill opens a pawn shop on the reservation
right across the border from the liquor store
and he stays open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

and the Indians come running in with jewelry
television sets, a VCR, a full-length beaded buckskin outfit
it took Inez Muse 12 years to finish. Buffalo Bill

takes everything the Indians have to offer, keeps it
all catalogued and filed in a storage room. The Indians
pawn their hands, saving the thumbs for last, they pawn

their skeletons, falling endlessly from the skin
and when the last Indian has pawned everything
but his heart, Buffalo Bill takes that for twenty bucks

closes up the pawn shop, paints a new sign over the old
calls his venture THE MUSEUM OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES
charges the Indians five bucks a head to enter.

Lesson One Materials

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Poetry Analysis Worksheet

Title of poem: Evolution

Author of poem: Sherman Alexie

1. Background Knowledge:

Pawn shop = a place where you go for a loan (ex: you bring in valuables in exchange for money that you *need*). If you can't pay the money back, the pawn shop keeps your valuables. The shop makes money off the interest you pay back, although many people who need the money can't pay it off. Pawn shops usually exist in very poor neighborhoods, just like liquor stores. They exist to take advantage of desperate people.

Buffalo Bill = symbolizes a white American - in the poem, the one who opens the pawn shop to take advantage of the Native Americans.

2. Who/what is the speaker of the poem? What do we learn about the speaker? Cite specific examples and lines.

3. What is the poem about? Briefly summarize the subject matter of the poem.

4. Is there anything unusual or significant about the form of the poem? How many stanzas does the poem have? Are the lines structured in an interesting way? Does the poem rhyme? Does it have a specific rhythm?

5. Identify any interesting words the poem uses. Define them. What makes these words interesting?

6. Identify and explain any themes the poem has. What ideas is the poet trying to communicate to the reader?

7. Identify and explain any poetic or literary devices the poet uses. These can include figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, understatement, overstatement), imagery, irony, alliteration, onomatopoeia, repetition, etc.

***8. What does this poet want you to know about Native American culture after reading this poem?

Lesson Two Materials

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Keeping a Reading Log

While reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, your task will be to keep a log in your marble notebook of your observations and important quotations. In order to make this log useful, it should include as many specific details as possible. Ideally, you will be making observations that are unique and personal for you. This will allow you to interact with the novel in the most meaningful way. There is never any excuse for a blank page. When in doubt, write questions about the story.

Requirements:

1. You must have a minimum of **one and a half full-pages** per assigned nightly reading.
2. For each entry, you must write:
 - The date, then “Classwork” or “Homework” and then the assigned page numbers.
 - One page of entries including page numbers, observations, questions, predictions, ideas and comments about the following:
 - a. Personality traits of main characters
 - b. Dreams and goals
 - c. Family relationships
 - d. Friendships
 - e. Racism and discrimination
 - f. Personal identity/Family history
 - g. Commentary on Gender/Sexuality
 - h. Unknown vocabulary *with definitions*
 - AND one half-page containing three to five sentences about a quote that is essential to the story. You must write the context to introduce the quote (1-2 sentences), then copy the quote exactly (1 sentence), then explain the significance of the quote to the story (1-2 sentences).
3. Missing entries should be made up immediately. All entries will be graded.
4. If you are absent, *check Google Classroom* and complete the assignment on time.

Lesson Two Materials

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Keeping a Reading Log

Mientras lee *El absolutamente cierto diario de un indio a tiempo parcial*, su tarea será la de mantener un registro en su cuaderno de sus observaciones y citas importantes. Con el fin de hacer de este registro útil, debe incluir tantos detalles específicos como sea posible. Lo ideal sería que se van a realizar las observaciones que son únicos y personales para usted. Esto le permitirá interactuar con la novela de la manera más significativa. Nunca hay ninguna excusa para una página en blanco. En caso de duda, escribir preguntas acerca de la historia.

Requisitos:

1. Debe tener un mínimo de **1.5 páginas completas** por las noches de lectura asignada.
2. Para cada entrada, se debe escribir:
 - La fecha, a continuación, "Classwork" o "Homework" y luego los números de página asignados.
 - Una página de entradas que incluyen números de página, observaciones, preguntas, predicciones, ideas y comentarios acerca de lo siguiente:
 - a. Los rasgos de personalidad de los personajes principales
 - b. Sueños y metas
 - c. Relaciones familiares
 - d. Amistades
 - e. El racismo y la discriminación
 - f. Vocabulario desconocido *con definiciones en español*
 - **y una 1/2 página** que contiene de tres a cinco oraciones sobre una cita (quotation) que es esencial para la historia. Debe escribir el contexto de introducir la cita (1-2 oraciones), y luego copiar la cita exactamente (1 oración), y luego a explicar el significado de la cita con la historia (1-2 oraciones).
3. Entradas que faltan deben hacerse inmediatamente. Serán calificados todas las entradas.
4. Si estás ausente, * verifique Google Classroom * y complete la tarea a tiempo.

Lesson Two Materials

Name _____

Date _____

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Quiz: Pages 1-24

Directions: For each quotation below, identify the speaker, the context (what is happening in the story), and an analysis of the significance of the quotation.

Write in full sentences.

1. “If you speak or write in English, or Spanish, or Chinese, or any other language, then only a certain percentage of human beings will get your meaning. But when you draw a picture, everybody can understand it” (5).

2. “I think the world is a series of broken dams and floods, and my cartoons are tiny little lifeboats.” (6)

3. “I wish I could draw a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or a fist full of twenty dollar bills, and perform some magic trick and make it real.” (7)

4. ““I’m sorry, but we don’t have any money for Oscar”” (10).

5. “What kind of job can a reservation Indian boy get?” (10)

6. “Adam and Eve covered their privates with fig leaves; the first Indians covered their privates with *their tiny hands*” (11)

7. “But I can’t blame my parents for our poverty because my mother and father are the twin suns around which I orbit and my world would EXPLODE without them.” (11)

8. "It's war paint....It just makes me look tougher" (16).

9. "Then Rowdy snuck in, shaved off their eyebrows, and cut off their braids" (22)

10. "He only talks about his dreams with me. And I only talk about my dreams with him." (23)

Lesson Three Materials

Name _____ Date _____

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

What Makes Someone a “Part-Time Indian?”

Breaking it down rhetorically:

- a. What is implied when someone tells you a story that they say is “absolutely true?”

- b. How does this relate to what we’ve discussed about the reliability of first-person narrators? Does it matter that this is a “diary?”

- c. Typically, what does it mean when we use the expression “part-time?” In what context is this expression usually used?

- d. What is unusual about the author’s use of the expression “part-time” in the context of the title of this novel?

- e. What do you think the author means by the phrase “part-time Indian?”

Literary Application:

- a. What might the author be telling us about Junior by calling him a “part-time Indian?”

- b. What might the author want the reader to think about Junior by referring to his diary as “absolutely true?”

Social Justice Application:

- a. Is it possible to actually be a part-time Indian? What does labeling someone this way imply about their life?

- b. What challenges might someone labeled a “part-time Indian” face? How are these challenges different from someone who identifies as Indian or Native American?

- c. Have you ever been considered or considered yourself a “part-timer” in this context? What was the situation? What additional challenges did you face as a result of being considered “part-time?”

Lesson Three Materials

Name _____ Date _____

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

EXIT TICKET*What Makes Someone a “Part-Time Indian?” *EXIT TICKET

In a short paragraph, explain how considering yourself “part-time” with respect to your personal identity might have an impact on the way you live and the way others treat you. Cite at least one example from the novel to support your point. (5-6 sentences)

Lesson Four Materials

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Quiz Questions

Directions: With your group, you must choose FOUR quotations between through chapter 15 of the book. For each quotation, you must write: the page number, the context, the quotation, **and** its overall significance to characterization. Focus on **identity and internal characteristics** (not physical description). For **each** quotation chosen for tomorrow's quiz, you and your group will receive 5 bonus points.

Note: *Every member of the group **must** fill out this entire sheet, or no points will be awarded.*

1. (page:)

2. (page:)

3. (page:)

4. (page:)

Lesson Six Materials

Name _____

Multi-Genre Project

Due Dates	Assignments	Points
	Essay Outline	10
	Essay Rough Draft	15
	Letter	50
	Multi-genre/Presentation	25
	Essay Final Draft	100

Your final assessment for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie will be a profile of one of the main character relationships utilizing both your creative and analytical skills. You will want to dig through the depths of the characters' psyches and present to us all the complications and contradictions of the relationship you chose. You will present the results of your analysis in three ways: an essay, a creative letter, and a third option of your choice (see below).

Each segment will be graded for:

- content—reveal a thorough understanding of the text
- completeness—make sure you pay close attention to directions
- thoughtfulness—try to move past the literal level and really *analyze* your character
- attention to detail—your final project should be polished
- creativity—strive to go beyond the ordinary
- proofreading—check for spelling and usage, etc.

Relationships:

You must choose one of the following relationships for this project:

- Rowdy and Junior
- Penelope and Junior
- Gordy and Junior
- Roger and Junior
- Junior's parents and Junior

Project Sections:

1. Relationship essay

This essay should give a thorough and insightful analysis of your chosen relationship using textual support (quotes). It should be **5 paragraphs**, written like an organized formal paper (outlined beforehand, introduction and conclusion, no 1st person, no contractions, etc.) and should deal with the following questions:

- a. **What do these characters want?** What motivates your characters and controls their actions within that relationship?
- b. **What is the central conflict in this relationship?** Based on what each character wants, how do they interact, clash, and resolve the problems in their relationship throughout the course of the novel?
- c. **What role do the characters' personal or cultural identities play in this conflict?** Think about the themes of the novel. How does this relationship contribute to the overall lesson that the author is trying to teach the reader?

2. **Character letter**

Imagine that you are the character in your chosen relationship **other than Junior**. Think of one specific incidence of conflict that that character has with Junior in the story. Write a letter to Junior explaining that character's perspective on that conflict. As a conclusion, say whether that character was satisfied with the resolution of the conflict. Your letter should be at least **1 page typed, double spaced**.

3. **Multi-genre Choice**

This portion of the project asks you to represent your character analysis using a medium of your choice. You will reveal the relationship you chose through personalities, likes, dislikes, conflict, dreams, struggles, attitudes, conversations, etc. through **one** of the following:

- A collage of color pictures
- A newspaper article
- A book review of the novel
- A poem
- A cartoon
- Original song lyrics
- A dialog or conversation between characters
- A eulogy
- Text message transcripts between characters
- A movie poster for the book

4. **Multi-genre Presentation**

You will present your multi-genre project to the class and explain how you chose to represent the relationship. Your presentation should reflect your insight into that relationship. (2 minutes per student).

Name _____

Multi-Genre Project

Due Dates	Assignments	Points
3/26/19	Essay Outline	10
4/2/19	Essay Rough Draft	15
	Letter	50
	Multi-genre/Presentation	25
4/5/19	Essay Final Draft	100

Su evaluación final para *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* por Sherman Alexie será un perfil de uno de los principales relaciones de los personajes que utilizan tanto sus capacidades creativas y analíticas. Usted tendrá que excavar a través de las profundidades de de los personajes la psique y presentar a nosotros todas las complicaciones y contradicciones de la relación que eligió. Va a presentar los resultados de su análisis de tres maneras: un ensayo, una carta creativa, y una tercera opción de su elección (ver más abajo).

Cada segmento será calificado para:

- contenido revela un profundo conocimiento del texto
- completo, asegúrese de prestar mucha atención a las instrucciones de
- reflexión-vuelva a mover más allá del nivel literal y realmente *analizar* su carácter
- atención a los detalles de su proyecto final debe ser pulida
- la creatividad se esfuerzan por ir más allá de lo ordinario
- corrección de pruebas de comprobación de ortografía y el uso, etc.

Relaciones:

se debe elegir una de las siguientes relaciones para este proyecto:

- Rowdy y Junior
- Penelope y Junior
- Gordy y Junior
- Roger y Junior
- Los padres de Junior y Junior

Las secciones del proyecto:

1. Ensayo sobre las relaciones

En este ensayo se debe dar un análisis exhaustivo y profundo de su elegido relación mediante pruebas textuales (quotations). Debería ser **5 párrafos**, escritos como un documento oficial organizada (descrito con anterioridad, introducción y la conclusión incluso gramática correcta) y deben hacer frente a las siguientes preguntas:

- a. **¿Qué quieren estos personajes?** Lo que motiva a sus personajes y controla sus acciones dentro de esa relación?
- b. **¿Cuál es el conflicto central en esta relación?** Sobre la base de lo que cada personaje quiere, ¿cómo interactúan, choque, y se resuelven los problemas en su relación a lo largo de la novela?
- c. **¿Cuál es el papel de esta relación en la historia?** Pensar en el tema (theme) de la historia. ¿De qué manera esta relación contribuye a la lección general que el autor está tratando de enseñar al lector?

2. Carta carácter

Imagínese que usted es el carácter en su relación elegido **que no sea Junior**. Pensar en una incidencia específica de conflicto que tiene ese carácter con Junior en la historia. Escribir una carta a Junior que explica la perspectiva que tiene el personaje en ese conflicto. Como conclusión, decir que sea el carácter estaba satisfecho con la resolución del conflicto. Su carta debe ser de al menos **una página (typed, double-spaced and shared on Google Docs)**.

3. Multi-genre Choice

Esta parte del proyecto le pide que representa a su análisis de los personajes utilizando un medio de su elección. Va a revelar la relación que eligió a través de personalidades, gustos, disgustos, conflictos, sueños, struggles, actitudes, conversaciones, etc. a través **uno** de los siguientes:

- Un collage de imágenes en color
- Un artículo periodístico
- Una reseña del libro de la novela
- Un poema
- Dibujos animados
- Letras de canción original
- Un diálogo o conversación entre los personajes
- Un elogio
- Transcripciones de mensajes de textos entre caracteres
- Cartel de una película para el libro

4. **Presentación Multi-genre**

Que se presentar su proyecto de multi-genre a la clase y explicar cómo se eligió para representar la relación. Su presentación debe reflejar su visión de esa relación.

(2 minutos cada estudiante).

Name: _____

Date _____
Essay Outline

Introduction: 4-5 sentences

Topic: _____

Thesis statement:

Make sure to state your three reasons in order in the introductory paragraph.
(Ex: After your thesis, say something like: "This is because _____ (reason 1),
_____ (reason 2), and _____ (reason 3).")

Body Paragraph 1:

Reason #1 (this is a topic sentence for the paragraph which introduces the first reason): _____

Explanation/facts for reason #1 (include citation from the novel):

Body Paragraph 2:

Reason #2 (this is a topic sentence for the paragraph which introduces the second reason): _____

Explanation/facts for reason #1 (include citation from the novel):

Body Paragraph 3:

Reason #3 (this is a topic sentence for the paragraph which introduces the third reason):

Explanation/facts for reason #3 (include citation from the novel):

Conclusion (3-5 sentences):

Name _____

Date _____

Absolutely True Diary Essay Correction Guidelines

CONTENT (75%)	Needs some improvement	Needs much improvement	Extra help required
Controlling idea - your controlling idea should make sense, be correct, and clearly and convincingly explain the role of fate in the play	10-8	7-5	4-0
Context for quotes - before citing each example, you must describe the key event(s) in the play the reader MUST know in order for the example (quotation) to make sense	15-12	11-8	7-0
Relevant examples - the examples you cite should be the best possible quotes from the play that support your controlling idea	20-15	14-10	9-0
Commentary - your analysis should be thorough and convincing, not only explaining your examples but explaining the link between your examples and the controlling idea	30-22	21-15	14-0

FORM (25%)	5-4	3-2	1-0
Organization - Correct order and paragraphing			
Topic/Concluding sentences			
Transitions			
Clarity of language			
Conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation)			

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Multi-Genre Project

Visual quality - _____/5

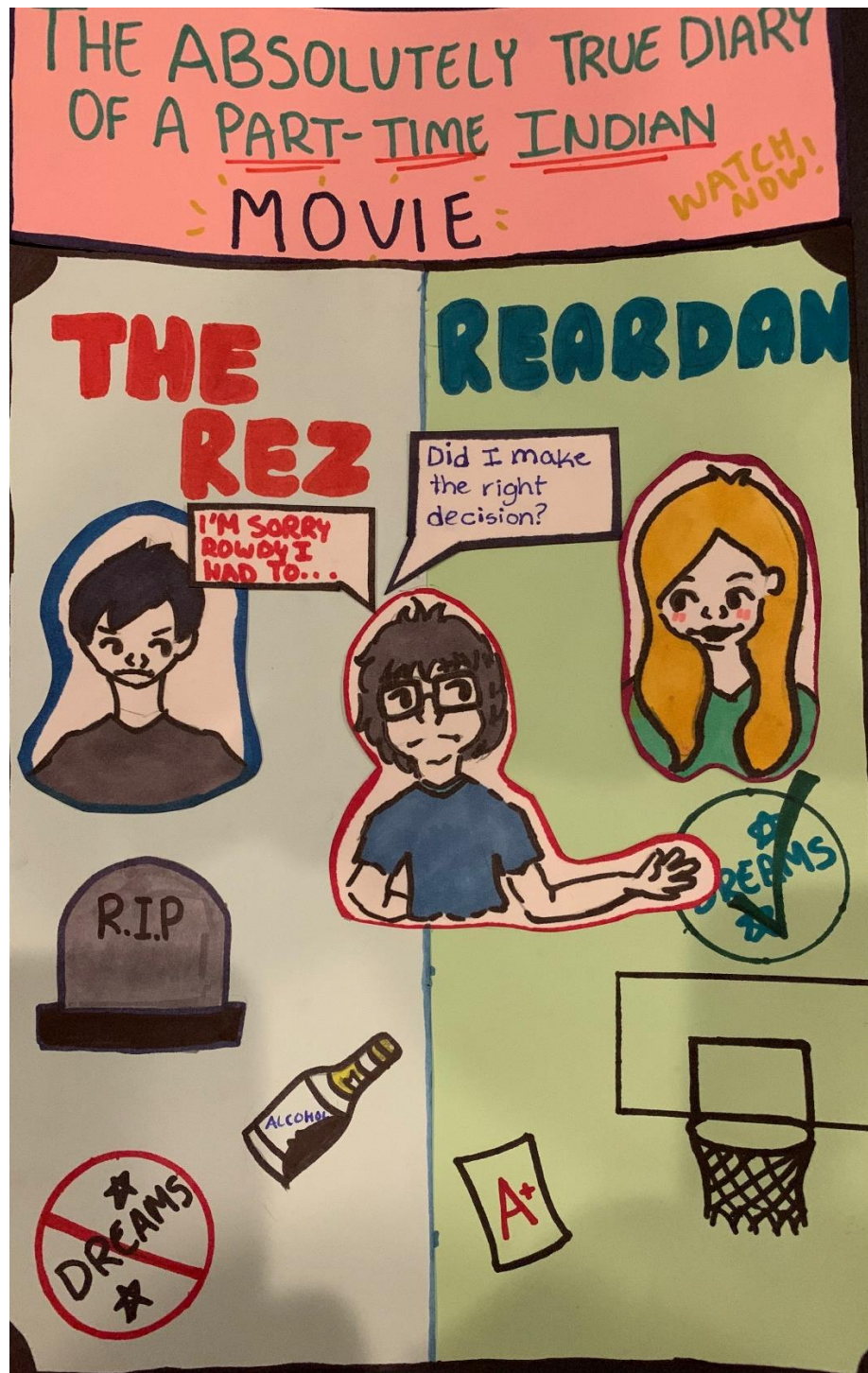
Originality/Creativity - _____/5

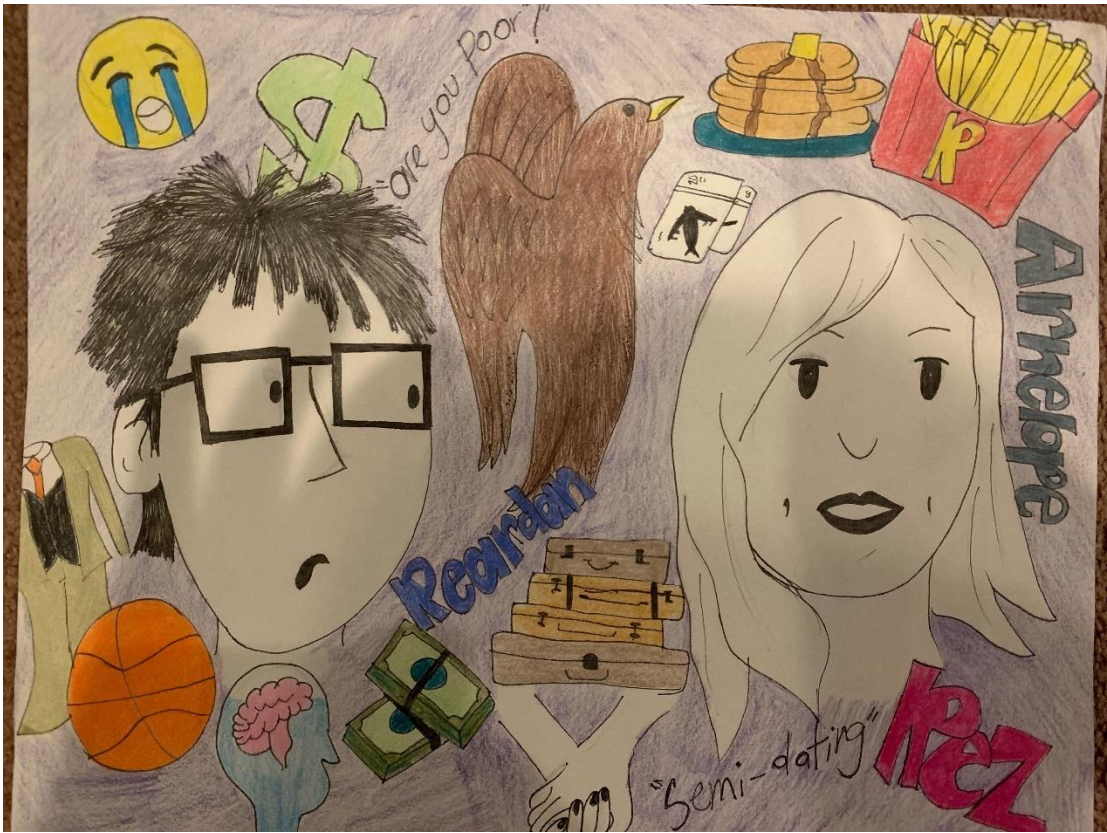
Analysis/Connection to Book - _____/5

Oral presentation/speaking - _____/5

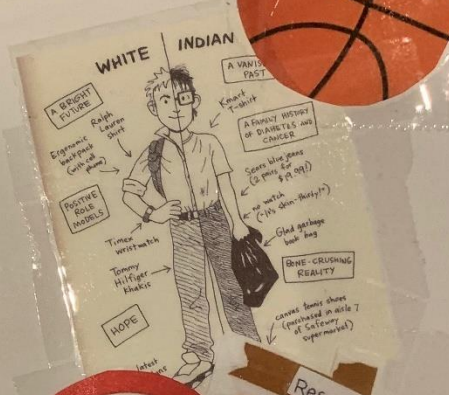
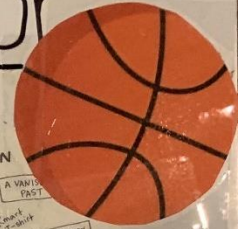
Preparedness - _____/5

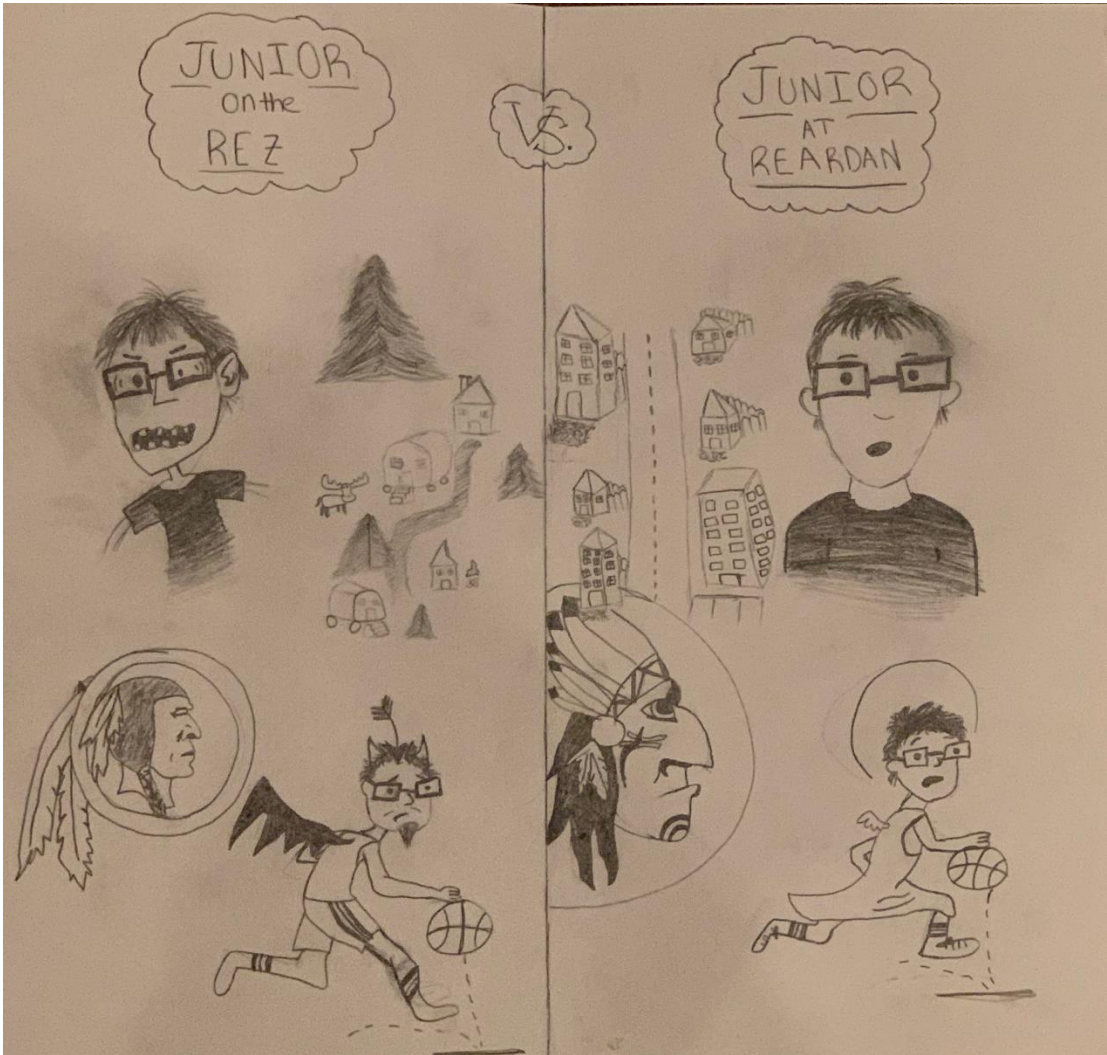
Samples of Student Work





Penelope & Junior





**ABSOLUTELY
TRUE DIARY
OF A
PART - TIME
INDIAN**

The Absolutely
True Diary
of a
Part-Time
Indian
**SHERMAN
ALEXIE**
with illustrations by
Dustin Fox

SHERMAN ALEXIE

Junior

WHITE INDIAN

RESERVE

HOPE

CULTURE OR FUTURE?

Mr. D

Gordy

Rowdy

- MY PARENTS

BABY BOSS AWAY

MY GRANDMOTHER

Dessie Biscuits

Chapter Four: Conclusions and Recommendations

We are at a critical juncture for the English classroom. For too long, English Language Arts classrooms have abdicated their responsibility to shape the values of American children. This is no tall order, given the outright hostility some factions of the American public have towards teachers and the public-school system.

Nonetheless, it is our responsibility as educators to teach our children how to grow up to be responsible, thoughtful and collaborative participants in our national discourse.

Of course, there will be some squabbles about which values will be the bedrock of our ELA education. These political battles have been fought and will continue to be fought. It is clear, however, that the best course of action for our students is to instill the values of equity and empathy as components of a well-rounded social justice-based education. We can do this by incorporating the four key components of social justice education: democratic education, critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, and culturally responsive education.

What makes social justice education so useful for instilling the values of empathy and equity? First and foremost, social justice education requires that students be given a well-rounded cultural education. Whereas some elements of the political sphere deem multiculturalism a scary word, it is actually a founding principle of Americanness. We are a people of multiple cultures, ever shifting and integrating as immigration patterns change over time. Social justice education requires that cultural perspectives be acknowledged and understood, so that every person's background and personal history is given equal weight. In the academic setting, this is hugely

important. A social justice approach requires texts authored by diverse authors in the classroom and a specific, culturally sensitive approach to examining those texts. If the American experience is not shared equitably by all, then its foundation as an equal haven for all the world is a cruel sham. Cultural sensitivity and appreciation offer shifting, rather than fixed, perspectives of the world, so we can truly understand and appreciate how our neighbors come to hold their beliefs and value systems.

Social justice education also helps to instill fundamental democratic values in the classroom, an idea that public schools have historically resisted. Whereas the traditional school approach has been hierarchical almost to the point of autocracy, the social justice approach encourages democratization of the school process itself. The idea itself is rather straightforward and its logic has been adopted in other areas of the school system. Schools encourage behavior modeling as the best way to modify student behaviors and attitudes. Simply telling people how to behave usually doesn't work but showing them the right way to do things seems to be an almost universal positive ideal. Nonetheless, schools typically function from the top down, with administrators superior to teachers, who are, of course, superior to students. The social justice approach seeks to upend that system by modeling collaborative behavior at every level. Instead of telling students what to learn, teachers ask about and help stimulate student interest, and then help students pursue those interests. The learning process becomes democratized as well, with students contributing to classroom management, lesson design, assessments, and even discipline. Once students see and participate in a fundamentally democratic process, the end result is

obvious: they internalize the values of a democratic society and simply become better, more collaborative citizens.

As a part of this democratization, teacher reflection plays a key role by shifting the paradigm of what constitutes learning and instruction. Social justice education requires that teachers be culturally responsive, meaning that they must evaluate, reflect on, and account for their own explicit and implicit biases. Thus, instruction becomes a cyclical process, wherein teachers learn about themselves and their teaching based on student feedback and personal reflection. Good social justice educators will then take this feedback and use it to respond to student concerns, continuing the path towards full democratization. The more teachers account for and reflect on their own biases, they are then more able to teach students about linguistic and cultural nuances that may have previously escaped them, which is an incredibly valuable skill for an ELA teacher to have. Furthermore, being culturally responsive means that a teacher is less likely to miss cultural or social cues from struggling students, since they become more in tune with how different people express their educational and social needs. Finally, culturally responsive educators simply treat their students more equitably, since they are constantly thinking about and coaching themselves to behave more equitably. The end result is a much tighter and more democratic bond between students and teachers.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, critical pedagogy seeks to revamp the American pedagogical infrastructure by simply revising the material that is taught in classrooms. The simple and obvious fact is that curriculum is and has been developed

from a deeply biased perspective. Most American ELA classrooms teach information from largely Euro- and Amero-centric perspective perspectives. The majority of works read in high school were written by white European or American men, and as a result greatly amplify that world perspective. While there is nothing wrong with reading *The Catcher in the Rye*, it is important to remember that exist plenty of writers other than J.D. Salinger who represent a variety of cultural, racial, and gender perspectives. Pretending that all students can relate to the experiences of a spoiled Prep School misanthrope is simply absurd. The time is ripe for educators to purge our classrooms of the monolithic perspectives that have occupied them for so long. We can introduce multiracial and multicultural perspectives that will fascinate students who have no prior experience or foreknowledge of them. We can show girls that the perspectives of women writers cannot and should not be ignored. We can show immigrants that their experiences will no longer be erased. By diversifying our curricular materials, we can better teach our children about the vast and diverse world community we are a part of.

Social justice education is not a new and scary concept in education. It is simply the formalization of what most of us already know to be desirable qualities of education: fair, open, honest questioning of hard truths that complicate the human condition. ELA fundamentally is about examining the wonders and mysteries of what it means to be human. Why wouldn't we want to capture and analyze as many unique perspectives as we can? Why wouldn't we want to give everyone an equal opportunity to have a seat at the table? Why wouldn't we want to examine ourselves

and our behaviors to ensure that we are always acting equitably? Why wouldn't we want to develop a curriculum that accurately and broadly portrays the truths about humanity, rather than warmed over half-truths many of us have become accustomed to? We owe it to our students to teach them to show the courage to admit that the world is a far bigger, more complicated, and more wonderful place than how our ELA classrooms portray it now. The alternative is more divisiveness and more cynicism, and that is something we truly cannot afford.

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