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English 112B

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Unit of Study: Adventure

Trials of Knowledge, Self, and Stamina

**Unit Plan:**

I chose to do a unit plan on *Eragon*  by Christopher Paolini because I wanted to organize a unit with the focus on Adventure centering around adolescent identity and self-discovery from the genre Adventure, Sports, Mysteries, and the Supernatural. In this book, Eragon finds a dragon and has an internal connection with her. His Uncle who has housed him has been killed by a dark force that is trying to take the dragon. He goes through a journey in which he has to determine what choices to take and to use his free will to assess the knowledge his mentors give him.

I like this text because the main character Eragon faces the crisis and common question adolescents may ask of themselves: ‘What is my purpose in my life?’ What do I do to come up with this answer? Where do I go? This book demonstrates the courage and critical thinking a teen face in conflict to use his voice and make decisions. With this book, teens can relate with the friendships that Eragon creates. It can help students identify external and internal conflict they have in their lives and how to figure out which path they should take. It’s an adventurous story that explores the theme of language and communication, friendship, love, free-will, and self-discovery.

I would teach this book to 9th or 10th graders because it measures a 710L on the Lexile Scale. The book is for middle school and up, but it does touch on the topic of death so I would recommend it for high school use. This book also exemplifies two of the Exeter Qualities strongly. The character goes beyond the typical experiences so that readers can use fictional experiences to develop in their personal lives. And there are themes that allow for emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues.

 When choosing an Adventure book, I had a thought. *Have you ever read a book with no reading value? Are there books that don’t have value? How is the reading value defined? What is the merit?* I have a few answers to these questions and some are more complicated which leads us to the focus of reading.

 When I chose the adventure book Eragon by Christopher Paolini, I chose it because of its readability and the way that a journey can lead characters to find themselves and gain purpose. Students can read it and enjoy it. It lacks boring’ness. Adventure books are after all, dominated by action and involves danger, risk, and excitement so where else to better learn it than at school in an English Literature class (resource: Characteristics of Adventure books <http://childliterature.net/childlit/adventure/>).

 I was reading an article, *No books, No problem: Teaching Without a Text*, about a chemistry teacher whose students almost never open a textbook in class. Shocking. Non-traditional to school teaching. I read about (what he thinks) the importance of amassing a variety of sources to teach students how to learn and the fact is it requires more prep time. He chose resources of the written text: journals, books, websites, movies, video clips and called forth other teachers (did you notice it’s not *all* written text). It’s clever. He tags this article #Project-Based Learning #9-12 High School under <https://www.edutopia.org/teaching-without-text>

 Now throughout this text, I have a challenge for you: Can you name all the resources I will be detailing about in my presentation?

Upon reading this, it occurred to me, *Aha!*. That is the reason Adventure books is way better. It is fast-paced and moves kids to read. It’s a book full of imagery that floats off the text. It’s a book about dragons, elves, and meeting different friends and foes. It encompasses a lot of social stuff, namely sociology. In Eragon, we see how Eragon, an orphan, interacts with his cousin, his reaction and grief when his Uncle dies, and his internal dialogue with himself as he tries to make sense of who to trust, like his mentor Brom, what questions to ask, and where to find the answers It’s fascinating learning about these through the lens of reading Eragon. An interesting tidbit, Eragon was written by a 15-year old boy. In this culture of adventure, Paolini writing showcases the journey a young boy will take to avenge the death of a family member and learn from several different mentors who continually pass through his life. A lot of the times, I find that students do not read because they don’t have resources, (and I’m not talking about a traditional book), they don’t have interesting resources that engage them to start reading and finish the reading. I’ve come to this conclusion after reading a few articles and experiencing literature in high school reading or lack of activity and college classes. There are classes where I find I am utterly bored of the class because of the lack of engagement. I may like the subject, but the teachers’ resources are not connecting with me.

To introduce the Unit of Study, I will read a passage from Eragon portraying Eragon’s worries. For the assignment, I will have the class write on the topic of something they worried about greatly. Explain why they were worried. Make a list of emotions, thoughts, or physical symptoms that affected them. And what helped them resolve their worry or lessen the worry. This activity will teach students to recognize what they are stressed about and what to do. It parallels to Eragon because whenever Eragon begins to worry, he begins to plan out what he should do next. Students will also have daily reading and weekly quizzes to ensure that they are keeping up with the story line.

In the blog entry in *Beyond How We Were Taught: Using “Book Love” to teach YA Literature Methods* of *Dr. Bickmore’s YA Wednesday* Blog I read about students reading stamina and the fact is, students’ reading stamina are not where we (educators) would like them to be (<http://www.yawednesday.com/blog/beyond-how-we-were-taught-using-book-love-to-teach-ya-literature-methods>). They are low. So throughout the year for the Unit of Study, students will have progress. Without knowing, students will improve their stamina through the tools and projects used in and outside the classroom. In the blog entry, the teacher Gretchen Rumohr-Voskuill, a guest contributor introduces the idea of developing Reader identity. It will hopefully help students to reclaim or gain the stamina required for reading longer texts. For example, she uses the idea of having journals that are labeled with different major and minor themes of the text (book the class is reading on; in my case, Eragon). The themes in Eragon include: Language and Communication, Friendship, Duties and Obligations, Believing in Yourself, Self, and Knowledge (of external world and internal world). With these journals, students will write a sentence, a paragraph—write something onto these journals—about these themes whether it be a quote or something they observed about the reading. By doing so, teachers can encourage and teach students effective reading strategies. It will give students opportunities to stretch their mind.

Another strategy I learned in 11th grade English is a tool called the S.O.A.P.S acronym. It is a tool that I want students to think about while reading an article, book, or anything. In it, is: **S**ubject, **O**ccasion/**T**one. **A**udience. **P**urpose. And **S**peaker. Students can utilize this tool while reading. By identifying most of the acronym from the text (articles, textbook, or book), students will understanding the text better. I will have them annotate the S.O.A.P.S strategy in most of the readings to ensure students have an idea of what it is they are reading. I found a similar worksheet to the teacher gave us in high school (<http://www.myteacherpages.com/webpages/MHernandez/files/soapstone%20graphic%20organaizer%20for%20rhetorical%20analysis%2011-7-.pdf> ).

To continue using S.O.A.P.S, I will utilize the open forum of Socratic Dialogue. In the classroom, students will read an article and comment on anything that they understand, don’t understand, identifications of the S.O.A.P.S, themes, quotes, and anything else linked to the text. Open discussion forum students will meet in small groups of 3-5 students to discuss significance of events of the book, themes, and characters, what they like about the book so far, what they don’t like, and what they can relate too, what they find interesting. Another way I can do this is the Brown Bag activity in which it opens dialogue focusing on the contents of the bag, specific quotes and objects that draw significance to the theme and its characters.

An article that can be read while discussing Eragon is Malcolm X’s journey in prison is *Learning to Read* excerpt from The Autobiography of Malcolm***.*** The reason for this is because I want students to understand the importance of a self made education. Education does not solely rely on education in schools. It can come from within. (<http://accounts.smccd.edu/bellr/readerlearningtoread.htm>).

“ I became increasingly frustrated at not being able to express what I wanted to convey in letters that I wrote, especially those to Mr. Elijah Muhammad. In the street, I had been the most articulate hustler out there. I had commanded attention when I said something. But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn’t articulate, I wasn’t even functional. How would I sound writing in slang, the way 1 would *say*it, something such as, “Look, daddy, let me pull your coat about a cat, Elijah Muhammad—”

   I saw that the best thing I could do was get hold of a dictionary—to study, to learn some words. I was lucky enough to reason also that I should try to improve my penmanship. It was sad. I couldn’t even write in a straight line. It was both ideas together that moved me to request a dictionary along with some tablets and pencils from the Norfolk Prison Colony school.

            I spent two days just riffling uncertainly through the dictionary’s pages. I’d never realized so many words existed! I didn’t know *which*words I needed to learn. Finally, just to start some kind of action, I began copying.

            In my slow, painstaking, ragged handwriting, I copied into my tablet everything printed on that first page, down to the punctuation marks.

            I believe it took me a day. Then, aloud, I read back, to myself, everything I’d written on the tablet. Over and over, aloud, to myself, I read my own handwriting.

            I woke up the next morning, thinking about those words—immensely proud to realize that not only had I written so much at one time, but I’d written words that I never knew were in the world. Moreover, with a little effort, I also could remember what many of these words meant. I reviewed the words whose meanings I didn’t remember. Funny thing, from the dictionary first page right now, that “aardvark” springs to my mind. The dictionary had a picture of it, a long-tailed, long-eared, burrowing African mammal, which lives off termites caught by sticking out its tongue as an anteater does for ants.

            I was so fascinated that I went on—I copied the dictionary’s next page. And the same experience came when I studied that. With every succeeding page, I also learned of people and places and events from history. Actually the dictionary is like a miniature encyclopedia. Finally the dictionary’s A section had filled a whole tablet—and I went on into the B’s. That was the way I started copying what eventually became the entire dictionary. It went a lot faster after so much practice helped me to pick up handwriting speed. Between what I wrote in my tablet, and writing letters, during the rest of my time in prison I would guess I wrote a million words.

I found this in the book Writing about Writing a college reader by Elizabeth Wardle which was very useful. It discussed some ideas including on critiquing other students’ papers. In class, it is a tool that is quite useful to have peers edit a draft or paper and have students revisit their paper to write a final before handing it in to class. There will be short self reflections on their essays and essays of students as well.

 Along with these activities in class, I will have students journal in class. For the first journal, I will have them define Adventure in books. What kind of adventuress do students themselves partake? Is it visiting SF? Reading a book? Going to the grocery store? Growing a garden? What? I will have them answer questions in their journal quite often to relate the books to themselves in a quest to search for self in Eragon and in themselves. It will promote their knowledge of the text and develop awareness of oneself.

Other activities I will include are: the “I am poem” I will give them a template like the one we did in our Young Adult Literature class. I find that students can use this assignment to create a free verse poem about themselves. I will also ask them to make one for one of the characters from Eragon as well. I will have them share it with a classmate, then switch pairs to establish common ground with peers, and introduce their writing and speaking voice.

I am (first name)
Son/Daughter of (I've also used brother/sister of...)
Who needs , ,
Who loves , ,
Who sees , ,
Who hates , ,
Who fears , ,
Who dreams of , ,
Who has found poems of

Another small activity I will have students to do is to find a Quest Song project in which they will chooose 1-2 songs they will take with them on an adventure quest. They will have to explain the song and how it relates to the tone or theme of their adventure or they have another option of explaining the relevance of the singer’s background and journey (like when Kanye West was depressed and is dealing with said mental health journey (Trang’s Presentation). Which can lead us to topics of immigration in which characters travel to a different land. The discussion will revolve around what it means to find another place to settle to. The feeling and emotions of leaving a place once called home to move forward to a better place. I will have students research or go to a Museum to understand the meaning of immigration and the emotions that come with it in hopes they see adventure and journey in a realistic sense as well. With the topic of immigration we will have the Backpack project in which students will choose 1-3 objects that they would bring with them to a deserted island, similar to a Robinsade Crusade Adventure, a subtype of Adventure Books (<http://childliterature.net/childlit/adventure/>). This activity will show how the student thinks and is like.

Another in class activity I’d like students to partake in is Eragon’s Character Analysis Full-Scale study. In this activity, students will draw an outline of the character and fill it i Body Map Presentation – meet in groups of 3-5 students to present in class, have different characters in the book to draw an almost life-size body outline. Inside the body, write down the role of the character, their physical description, how they feel about other characters, what do they think about themselves, 5 words to describe them.

For Essays, I will have students write – Character Analysis essay relating to the characters developmental stages. Explore topics and questions such as: What is important to help students thrive during adolescence? What are the different positive influences? What are the roles of the mentors and oneself in providing an environment that enriches the strengths of adolescents of our society? (<http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/adolescent-girls.aspx>) I found these questions under the American Psychological Association talking about developmental growth ***"How Do I Evolve From Confusion and Chaos to a Capable, Strong, Compassionate Woman?" Age 15*. Others essay options can revolve around the theme of self-reliance guided by help, questions to ask oneself before knowing what to seek, how effective was the mentor Brom in helping Eragon but not telling him of his identity nor Brom’s past identity,** Elves Nature Good or Evil, Eragon’s relationship with Saphira Analysis, Characters that shaped Eragon, Eragon’s free will vs. fate, and Self preservation of characters.

Lastly, for motivational purposes for my future students, I would like to conclude the Unit of Study with Francisco Jimenez’s interview at the Steinbeck Award Ceremony. “Jiménez believes thoroughly that taking advantage of your education is a key to upward mobility. ‘I tell young people how important it is to apply themselves to get the best education possible. By working hard in their studies they’re honoring the sacrifices their parents or grandparents made when they left their homeland. It guarantees them a better life. You have choices’” (<http://el-observador.com/2016/09/23/a-migrants-life-francisco-jimenez/>).

Links:

(Characteristics of Adventure books) <http://childliterature.net/childlit/adventure/>

(Article *No books, No problem: Teaching Without a Text* ) <https://www.edutopia.org/teaching-without-text>

(Article <http://www.yawednesday.com/blog/beyond-how-we-were-taught-using-book-love-to-teach-ya-literature-methods>

(S.O/T.A.P.S tool) <http://www.myteacherpages.com/webpages/MHernandez/files/soapstone%20graphic%20organaizer%20for%20rhetorical%20analysis%2011-7-.pdf> j

(Jimenez’s Interview <http://el-observador.com/2016/09/23/a-migrants-life-francisco-jimenez/>)