

Introduction

When I got my placement I wasn't too excited about going to a 7th grade classroom. They seemed so much younger than, how was I going to connect with them. I wanted to be in a classroom where they were discussing literature, not learning how to parse verbs. To my surprise I enjoyed the classroom immensely. Mrs. L has a laid back way of teaching. She treats her students as individuals, not just students. She makes a point of knowing each of her students personally. Her students learn in her classroom. There wasn't really one student who wasn't involved. When asked a question, all students raised their hands at least one. The engagement was amazing to see. The students were friendly also. Upon walking into the classroom, the one student said, "Hi! What's your name?" I was taken back. I didn't remember being that forward and friendly and 13 or 14. I felt welcomed. My presence in the classroom wasn't going to be a nuisance.

From the first time I saw Billy in Mrs. L Selinsgrove Middle School Classroom I could tell that he wasn't your average student. His hand was up more than anyone else's. He was constantly questioning things. The first thing I remember was him questioning why a pencil couldn't be a stick in the poem they were reading. He was extremely persistent in his questioning, constantly providing examples and justifications for why he felt the way he did.

Billy is only in 7th grade and from what I observed he is going to be an asset in any classroom he enters. Not only does he push himself, but he pushes his teachers. He would ask things that would make me question things. After he asked the question about the pencil, I found myself questioning it myself. Billy makes you think.

Not connecting with these students was not a problem anymore. I underestimated them. They deal with the same things that I do on a daily basis. They deal with things that I have. Walking into the school brought back memories. Watching them interact with each other reminded me of myself and my friends. These students represented a time in my life that wasn't as hard to connect with as I thought it was. I went into Mrs. L's 7th grade Language Arts Class at Selinsgrove Middle School dreading dealing with 13 year olds, and left with a better understanding of how to connect to students. Before they are students they are individuals who are trying to grow up. I found that, like them, I'm still trying to grow up.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Hand Raised #</u>	<u>Action of Student &</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
10:00	2	While learning about helping verbs, student fidgeted in seat, and played with hands	He seems to get bored by things when they are repeated.
10:05	2	Did not volunteer to write answer on board like rest of class. Questioned work and why the answer was that answer.	He is extremely observant, and wants to have a justification for why things are the way they are.
10:10	1	Not paying attention, staring off. Writing in packet, when not supposed to. Looking down and not paying attention. Volunteered to answer a question about subject. Answered question correctly.	Bored again. He has his answers written down relatively faster than the other students. So while their other students are finishing their work, Billy begins to doodle in his book. He is quick to volunteer to answer questions. He appears to have extreme confidence in himself.
10:15	4	Head down. Raised hand to answer question, but not called on. Raised hand to ask question. Kept hand up for 2 minutes while teacher spoke to class, but not called on. Raised hand twice to answer question, not called on.	Billy is persistent. When he wants to ask a question about something he does not give up easily when ignored. Mrs. L. did a great job of staying on task.
10:20	0	Moving all over seat while Mrs. L talks to other students. Looking around.	Billy is uninterested in helping verbs. He seems to be thinking about something else and beyond other students in their education.
10:25	2	Answered two questions. Gave student behind him the answer (whispered).	Billy is now involved in the class and he is actively participating. I think he just wants to get the question, answer session over with so he is trying to answer every question.
10:30	0	Mrs. L asked the students to make notes in their margin, Billy did not. Slid around in chair and leaning against file cabinet.	Billy tries to push his limits. He takes things as far as he can until attention is turned to him.
10:35	0	Leaning on cabinet again. Billy was not paying attention. Mrs. L asked him a question directly. Knew answer right away.	When Billy doesn't have all attention on him, he tends to zone out.
End of Class	0	Last student to pack up books. Stays after to further discuss helping verbs for upcoming test.	All of the things that Billy thought of during class that he did not ask, needs to be answered before he leaves, especially when he raised his hand but was not called on.

Observation Write Up

While observing Billy I noticed that he had a passion for learning when it was at his level. Billy picks up on things a lot faster than other students. However, with his quick learning came boredom. I could tell when he was getting bored with class when he began to fidget in his seat or play with his hands. Throughout the entire class his engagement level would go up and down. When he was called on and all attention was towards him he was fully engaged, not only answering questions, but posing questions himself. When Billy felt that a task he was asked to was pointless he simply wouldn't do it. It wasn't something to be handed in, Mrs. L just asked them write notes in the margins of their paper. Billy just either looked down or around the classroom. I found myself wondering how Mrs L. would handle Billy, especially knowing an outsider was observing her class. She didn't do anything. At first, I was taken back, but then I realized that she knows Billy. Mrs. L knows that Billy is an extremely smart student. He knew what he was doing. Call attention to Billy not taking notes wouldn't help him on the upcoming test. It would only harm other students on the future upcoming test.

Billy needs constant engagement in the classroom. He needs a new task frequently. Billy does not take things at face value. He digs for deeper meanings until he finds them. For ever fact that he is told, Billy wants justification.

Crazy Title -Sound Poem

"Thundering Nightmare"

I'm Insane

The thundering nightmare

Shatters my dreams

It has no consideration

For my wanting peace

It seems.

Now most people would think

This would be a real pain

But what do I care:

I'm insane!

With a hoo

And a ha

And hee, hee, hee, hee

I'm insane! I'm insane!

I'm insane!

The thundering nightmare

Pierces my peace

It shakes me and bumps me

And really won't show

Any sign of it even beginning to cease

Now most people think

I would be under strain

From such an unearthly and horrible pain

And while I can't say that it has any gain

I really don't care

I'm insane

With a hoo

And a ha

And hee, hee, hee, hee

I'm insane! I'm insane!

I'm insane!

Student Work Write Up

While observing Billy, I noticed that verbally he had some struggles getting his point across. It seemed as though he was constantly searching for the right way to word his question. However, after reading his poem I was amazed. The students picked two words out of a hat. Billy picked a noun, nightmare, and an adjective thundering.

His poem was amazing. Billy definitely has a way with words. I felt honored that this was the piece of work he chose to share with me. He expresses himself in away that grabs the reader's attention. The poem also startled me a bit. If this is the kind of writing Billy is doing at such a young age, I could only imagine how his writing will improve as he grows. If I were asked to write a poem about thundering and nightmare, I highly doubt I would have been able to come with a poem anywhere near Billy's level.

His poem is extremely deep. I feel as though Billy gave me the privilege to connect with him on a deeper level. When he speaks Billy's emotions aren't evident, unless he feels passionately about a point he is trying to make. This poem is clearly packed with passion and emotion. Billy was writing this poem to someone; he had an intended audience and intended reaction he wanted from them. He may not be the speaker of them poem, but there is no way his voice isn't evident in the poem.

INTERVIEW WITH BILLY

- 1.) How old are you?
 - “13”
- 2.) What is your favorite subject and why?
 - “Like a real subject or just part of school.”
 - “Whatever you would like to tell me.” (me)
 - “I don’t really have a favorite subject. I like going to band because it’s fun to put pieces together and make music.”
- 3.) Are you involved in anything else at school, like a sport?
 - “I hate sports! Just band.”
- 4.) Do you like to write, Mrs. L. says that your writing is really good?
 - “I don’t really like to write.”
 - “Not even a little bit?” (me)
 - “I really only write when we have to.”
- 5.) Do you like to read?
 - “Oh my God, I love to read!”
- 6.) What is your favorite book?
 - “Do I have to pick just one?”
 - “Absolutely not” (me)
 - “Then I would pick The Lord of the Rings, including The Hobbit. It’s a series and I love them!”
- 7.) Do you like to watch TV?
 - “Umm...”
 - “How about movies, what’s your favorite movie?” (me)
 - “Definitely The Blues Brothers!”
 - “Good choice!” (me)
 - “Have you seen it?”
 - “Yes, many times.” (me)
 - “Isn’t it just great?”
 - “Absolutely!” (me)
- 8.) What do you want to be when you grow up?
 - “I have no idea.”
 - “Well, what do you like? What are your interests?” (me)
 - “I don’t really know what I want to be, but I know that I won’t do the same thing my whole life.”
 - “So, you’re going to have multiple jobs throughout your life? (me)

- “Yes, definitely, I don’t see myself doing the same thing for my entire life. I know I want to go to college. I just don’t know for what yet. My mother teaches at Susquehanna so I believe that I can go for free. I am definitely going to take advantage of it because many don’t get the opportunity to go to college.”

9.) Who is someone you admire?

- “My best friend Joey.”
- “What do you admire about him?” (me)
- “He does things that I would love to be able to do. He’s great with robotics. Like, I love robotics, but he can actually build them. I can’t.”

10.) If you could change one thing about your school what would it be?

- “No PSSA’s!”
- “I agree! Why don’t you like the PSSA’s?”
- “There’s no point to them. It’s not that they’re hard; they just involve you too much. They are a waste of time.”

11.) Given the chance to teach Mrs. L’s class for a day, what would you do?

- “I have no idea.”
- “You said that you enjoy band and music, so do you think that you would incorporate music into the day’s lesson somehow?” (me)
- “Mrs. L does that sometimes and I like it, but I don’t know what I would do. I really have no interest in language arts.”

Billy Interview Write Up

Initially I was nervous about interviewing Billy. The questions that I devised seemed to be below him. I also, didn't know how willing he was going to be to answer my questions. When I spoke to Mrs. L before the interview, she said that Billy felt honored that I had chosen him for the interview. This made me excited to interview him. I wanted to get to know him better, and try and figure out why he acted as he did in class.

From the interview with Billy, I found that although he may be good at Language Arts, he has no interest in it. Just because something comes easy to him, doesn't mean that it interests him. I wanted to find out what his interests were. When I asked him if he liked to write, he didn't seem too enthralled. That made me nervous about how he felt about reading. To my surprise, Billy loves to read! Picking a favorite book for him seemed like a grueling task. I asked him to narrow it down to three. His favorites are series book; Tolkien being his favorite author.

Asking Billy the dreaded question about what he wanted to be when he grew up not only through him for a loop, but his response did to me. "I have no idea," was his original response. Normal, but I wanted to hear more. I was shocked when he told me that he didn't want to do the same thing his whole life. I never thought about it like that. We're taught that our profession is our profession. We go to college for 4 years, attempt to get a job and then stay in that same profession for pretty much the remainder of our lives. Billy's life is not going to be like that, and I truly believe that.

Interview Main Teacher

- 1.) How many years have you been teaching?
 - “For 15 years at Language Arts at Selinsgrove Area Middle School.”
- 2.) Have you always taught the same class?
 - “No, I was Guidance Counselor for 4 years.”
- 3.) Did you always want to be a teacher?
 - “Yes, as long as I could remember.”
- 4.) What was your first impression of Billy ?
 - “He was going to be a challenge and that he was very unique.”
- 5.) What are some of Billy’s strengths?
 - “He is extremely bright and creative. He has a great deal of difficulty communicating verbally, but his writing is extremely fluid, and I enjoy reading it. His writing is appreciated.”
- 6.) Do you incorporate technology in your classroom?
 - “Yes, as much as possible. We have 4 computers in the classroom, and the students are allowed to use them for any project. I use them to make posters around the room. I would love to do much more.”
- 7.) What kind of techniques do you suggest to maintain classroom management?
 - “I have not certain technique. Respect them and earn their respect. It’s not text book, but it’s the truth. Don’t try and control them or they will resist. Classroom management classes teach you about controlling students and that’s not it at all. If the student is being disruptive or doing something that is causing me to become distracted from teaching the class, I send them an “eye message.” You need to explain to them how their behavior affects others. They will listen to you. Don’t expect them to listen just because. Put yourself in their shoes. You don’t always need to win. You need to realize that every kid has a reason for what they do.”
- 8.) Do you ever use textbooks, or do you always create packets for your students?
 - “I base my packets off of textbooks, other books, and basically everywhere. I change the packets every year.”
- 9.) What are the advantages of using packets over a textbook?

- “Kids hate textbooks because teachers depend on them too much. They are repetitive and boring, ‘read the page, do the activity...read the page, do the activity.’ Textbooks lock teachers in.”

10.) If you could change one thing about schools, what would it be?

- “No more teaching to the test! Just because a kid can pass the PSSA’s doesn’t mean anything. Creativity is lost in standardized tests and creativity is vital.”

11.) Do you have any advice for future teachers?

- “If you don’t love it, don’t do it! Search your soul as to why you want to do it. It’s not going to be easy. It’s not about you, make the kids your priority!”

Mrs. L Interview Write Up

The way Mrs. L. ran her class and how laid back she was amazed me. She expects a great deal from her students, but doesn't force herself upon them to listen. I was dying to know how she practiced classroom management. Her response was genuine and real. It wasn't something I was going to get from a textbook, it was from experience. It was from getting to know your students and having them know you. For Mrs. L. there's no gap between her and her students. She realizes that students are humans; they're not robots who are programmed to spit out every preposition when asked. Everyone has their good and bad days, especially Billy. She has come to know him extremely well and knows how to pick her battles with him. If he's not disrupting the class and it's evident that he understands what is going on she leaves him be.

Mrs. L's classroom is extremely personalized. She has posters around the room that she made herself. For every unit that she teaches she develops a new packet. She does not use textbooks because they trap teachers. Since Mrs. L changes her packets every year and never uses a textbook, her lessons have the opportunity to be extremely personalized to the students in her classroom.

For the future, Mrs. L wants to eliminate teaching to the test. This is something I completely agree with. I feel as though too much emphasis is placed on the PSSA's. Students get lost in the test. There's no creativity in teaching to the test. Not only are the tests standardized, but they make the students standardized. They become a statistic in the newspaper.

SECOND TEACHER INTERVIEW

- 1.) How many years have you been teaching?
 - “This is my second year.”
- 2.) What class do you teach?
 - “7th grade reading.”
- 3.) Did you always want to be a teacher?
 - “Yes, as long as I could remember.”
- 4.) What was your first impression of Billy?
 - “He was different, not your typical 7th grader.”
- 5.) What are some of Billy’s strengths?
 - “He’s very observant, he sees things others don’t. He’s always thinking. He likes to argue, but in a good way. Billy is a great independent worker. He thinks outside of the box and always puts in extra effort.”
- 6.) Do you incorporate technology in your classroom?
 - “Yeah, we have the computer and projector, and I use PowerPoint.”
- 7.) Do you use a textbook?
 - “Not really.”
- 8.) If you could change one thing about schools, what would it be?
 - “I wouldn’t change much, but from my experience there should be better communication between teachers and administration.”
- 9.) Do you have any advice for future teachers?
 - “Patience! It’s a lot of work, but it’s definitely worth it.”

Other Teacher Interview Write Up

Interviewing Mrs. D was insightful. She was younger and only had been teaching for 2 years. I only had a short time to interview her because of her class schedule and mine. I wish I could have gotten more follow-ups to her interview questions; she seemed to be relatable since it was only her second year teaching. However, what I did get from her was helpful. Like Mrs. L, she finds Billy to be unlike other 7th graders. She noticed that he is extremely observant and that he constantly thinks outside of the box.

When I was in Mrs. D's classroom I could tell that her students respected her. She too, like Mrs. L gets to know her students. She's not all business, they joke around in her classroom while still getting work done. This is a balance I hope to achieve in my classroom some day. Patience seems to be what Mrs. D sees at the main quality one should have to be a teacher. One needs to have patience to work with students. The students should be the main priority for a teacher. It's not about you, but about them. I Both Mrs. D and Mrs. L said that they wanted to be a teacher as long as they could remember. This seemed interesting to me. Is your passion in life always there? I know that I didn't always want to be a teacher. I honestly still don't know. I worry that if I was truly meant to be a teacher than I should have had the urge to since I was younger.

Unit Plan: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Rationale: Billy is a highly insightful child. From the interviews with his teachers, they both seem to agree. I think he would enjoy *To Kill a Mockingbird* because of this. There are so many things that the reader gets to witness, but the characters do not. Billy would question everything about this book and constantly be looking for a deeper meaning. This would be great for him since there are so many hidden messages within the text.

Big Question: How do you form your own opinion about people without being effected by other peoples' biases and prejudices?

Lesson 1: Character Analysis

Standards:

- 1.) **R8.A.1.3.1:** Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text.
- 2.) **R8.A.1.6.2:** Explain, describe, and/or analyze examples of text that support the author's intended purpose
- 3.) **R8.A.1.5.1:** Summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole.

Objectives:

- 1.) After discussing characters with each other, students will be able to distinguish which attributes in their appointed character are the most their significant.
- 2.) Throughout the process of completing the character analysis chart, students will gain a better understanding of each character. Students will have to delve deeper into the character and find their stance on life.
- 3.) After completing the character analysis chart, students will be able recognize quotes by each character.

Materials Needed: *To Kill a Mockingbird* (text) and character chart

Lesson Outline:

- I. Introduction
 - a. Students will answer writing prompt presented to them on the board, "What are the qualities that you admire in others?" Students will then be asked to volunteer to share their writings with the class.
- II. Work on Character Analysis (30 minutes)
 - a. Tell the students that they are allowed to work in groups. They are to find the people that have the same character as them.
 - b. Students will begin to work on character analysis.

- c. On the White board I will write the characters I have given to the students.
Under their names I write specific parts in the play that they should focus on.
 - III. Summary (10 minutes)
 - a. I will ask students if they fully understand their project at hand. Answer questions
 - b. I will then tell students that they are to keep the chart and make modifications as the novel progresses.
 - IV. Closure
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Lesson 2 : Mock Trial

Standards:

- 1.) **R8.A.1.3.1:** Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text.
- 2.) **R8.A.1.3.2:** Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.
- 3.) **R8.A.1.6.2:** Explain, describe, and/or analyze examples of text that support the author's intended purpose

Objectives:

- 1.) Students will reflect back on their character analysis charts in order to create a defense for their character in the mock trial.
- 2.) Students will participate in a mock trial in order to gain a better understanding of the characters and the trial itself.
- 3.) Students will work in groups in order to enhance collaborative learning. They will use insights from other students to better understand the characters.
- 4.) Students will use textual evidence in order to prove their case. They will become more familiar with the text.

Materials Needed: *To Kill a Mockingbird* (text), Character Charts

Lesson Outline:

- V. Introduction
 - a. As students walk into classroom they will be handed papers denoting whether they are lawyers for the defense or the prosecution. A brief clip from the movie trial will be played for students
- VI. Compiling evidence (15 minutes)

- a. Tell the students that they are allowed to work in groups. They are to find the people that are the same lawyers
 - b. Students will begin to use their character charts and the text itself in order to compile evidence.
- VII. Trial (20 minutes)
- a. Each group will pick a representative from their side to present the evidence they compiled.
 - b. I will act as the judge and decide who I feel presented the better case
- VIII. Summary (5 minutes)
- a. Ask students if they have any questions about the novel thus far.
- IX. Closure
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Lesson 3: Poem

Standards:

- 1.) **R8.A.1.3.2:** Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.
- 2.) **R8.A.1.5.1:** Summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole.
- 3.) **1.4.8.A:** Write poems, short stories, and plays

Objectives:

- 1.) Students will use their poems to better understand their favorite character. They will compile certain attributes and adjectives that describe the character of their choosing.
- 2.) Students will show how their character affected the trial and how the trial affected the character.
- 3.) Students' poems will help them construct their final paper. They will also use their character analysis charts they have been documenting the entire novel

Materials Needed: *To Kill a Mockingbird* (text), Character Chart, Computers

- X. Introduction
- a. Students will take their seats as they walk into the classroom. They will be told about today's assignment. It is to pick your favorite character and construct a poem about them. They are to use their charts and the text itself. The character should be represented by different kinds of adjectives. One quote from the

book is to be used. Pictures and Clipart are also to be used to accompany their e poem. Students are to begin brainstorming.

XI. Poem Construction (30 minutes)

- a. Tell students to find a computer in the classroom.
- b. They are to construct their poem using Microsoft Word. Students are allowed to use either Clipart or pictures fort their poem also.
- c. Students are allowed to use the internet to do more research on their selected character

XII. Summary (5 minutes)

- a. Tell students that if they are not finished their poem, they have 3 days to hand it in. It is to be done at home or if there is down time in the classroom.
- b. Ask students if they have any further questions about their assignment.

Final Assessment:

Essay: 2-3 pages

- How did Scout ignore the biases of the town in order to form her own opinion of other characters in the novel? How would you have reacted if you were in Scout's place?

To Kill a Mockingbird Unit Plan Write Up

When devising a unit plan around Billy, I tried to play to his strengths. Billy is a student who sees things that others don't pick up on. His character chart would be filled with lots of useful information that other may have missed. Billy would also have the chance to share the attributes he found with fellow students. Since arguing and trying to find the truth in things is something Billy finds fulfilling I felt that a mock trial would play to his strengths. For the mock trial he would have to research his defendant and prove their case. Since Billy tends to see things that other students don't pick up on this would be perfect for him. He would fight for his side whether it is wrong or right. His passion would definitely come out in this lesson type.

He said that he doesn't really enjoy writing, but he does it when he has to. After reading his poem, I felt that one of the lesson plans should revolve around writing a poem. He would be able to delve deeper into his preferred character and express the attributes that he finds most distinguished in them. I would love to read a poem that he had written about Atticus Finch.

To Kill a Mockingbird is perfect for Billy. Although, it doesn't deal with science fiction or a mystical world like Tolkien's work, I feel that Billy would appreciate it. He seems to attract intelligence. Atticus Finch is one of the most admirable fiction characters ever. Billy would connect with him definitely. He would also connect with Scout. Like him she sees things that others don't.