Case Study:

Instructional Design for a Real Student

Bloomsburg High School

12th Grade British and World Literature

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**Introduction**

*Where I went, who I observed, what I learned*

I received my placement at Bloomsburg High School in a 12th grade British and World Literature classroom. After negotiating with my cooperating teaching, we decided that rather than observing a student, I would jump right into getting the opportunity to work with them one on one. Upon further discussion, my cooperating teacher pointed me in the direction of her 12th grade student Maggie, who while very bright, struggles with test taking and study skills. After privately getting the chance to meet with Maggie, help her on a few selected assignments, and review her test and “Accelerated Reader” scores, I concluded that she would be a perfect fit as my student of focus.

Within the first few minutes of talking with Maggie I was impressed by her vocabulary, sense of maturity and willingness to improve. She expressed interest in going to college, excited that she had already been accepted by both of her top choices. We talked about her love of soccer, something we both have in common, as I played for my High School team as well. We discussed how team sports are a huge commitment and therefore can be distracting to school work, but with decent time management can be easily feasible.

After having a chance to look over Maggie’s past papers, quizzes and test scores with her, I was honest with her immediately, letting her know that I felt the person sitting in front of me couldn’t possibly be the same person receiving these less than satisfactory results. Having already been previously informed about her struggles with test taking and study skills by my cooperating teaching, I asked if these could be possible reasons as to why her grades were lower than anticipated. I was happy that Maggie was not shy or embarrassed at all to discuss this with me. She dove right into the conversation admitting she definitely had difficulty when it came time to study and even more difficulty when it came time to take the test.

Throughout the past couple of months, I have had the pleasure of helping Maggie through various homework assignments, tough texts, and reading quizzes. Overall, I think she responded extremely well to me. Understanding at times that she was a typical high school senior simply eager to graduate and ready for summer, worked to my advantage. I assured her that I was once in her shoes, but now more than ever, is preparation for college and future education at its utmost importance. I was able to communicate with her on the level of someone who can relate to her, which I found to be most effective in getting her to become and stay engaged in our conversations and tutoring sessions. In just a short amount of time, Maggie has been able to teach me numerous things about being a future teacher. How to approach curriculum in a way that interests students, how to be an effective communicator, and how to be a friend but an even better educator, are just a few.

**Artifact 1: Interview with student**

1. **Tell me about your life outside of the classroom. What are some things you enjoy doing?**

* I love staying active. Playing soccer and basketball are my two favorite sports and I enjoy playing them most with my friends. I also really love to travel. Most recently I have been to Europe.

1. **What educational recourses (if any) are available for you at home?**

* I have a computer that I use a lot for school work and research. My parents and step siblings also help me whenever I need it which is always pretty helpful.

1. **What do you feel you contribute most greatly to in the classroom? What would you improve on? What is your biggest struggle?**

* I think I pay attention very well and can maintain my focus. However, I can be a little shy when it comes to participating. Sometimes even though I end up knowing the answer, I don’t always have the confidence in it enough to raise my hand. My biggest struggles are studying effectively and test taking.

1. **What (if any) educational practices do you participate in outside of school?**

* Not many. I have a math tutor, but am mostly involved in extra-curricula’s like soccer and ski club.

1. **How do you like school? Do you like your current English class? Do you enjoy English in general?**

* I don’t mind school but personally I think it is a little un-fun and boring. I like our English class for the most part but don’t like when I am forced to read things I don’t like to read. Like I said, I do, but not when I’m forced to read things that don’t interest me.

1. **Are there any books you would be interested in reading that you haven’t had the chance to so far? Why those books?**

* I’d like to read more of the Lauren Conrad series. I’d also like to read *The Vow* and *Charlie St. Cloud.* Mostly because I am interested in them and I also enjoyed the movies.

1. **What type of literature do you think should be taught to young adults and why?**

* Definitely literature that is related and attention keeping. Even though I know it is important to read timeless works by Shakespeare and prestigious authors, it is also important at that time in kids’ lives to read things that interest them, things they can relate to and learn something from.

**Artifact 1: Analysis / Interview with student**

This interview with Maggie was very insightful and worth-while. To be able to teach her effectively, I realized I had to know a little bit about her; what she liked and what she didn’t, what her strengths are, along with her weaknesses, etc. I quickly realized she had a lot in common with me when I was her age. She simply is a student that may not always seem interested, but once you get her engaged and attentive, she’s hooked. During this interview is where I had the chance to explore Maggie’s struggles with studying and test taking skills more in depth. We discussed that things like watching television and text messaging while trying to study, prove to be most ineffective. We also talked about how note taking, creating note cards, and placing book markers that high light important passages and quotes can be rather helpful. As for test taking, I emphasized the importance of not rushing through questions and panicking. I reassured her that better study habits and calm demeanor would help her significantly in the completion of a test. I was also pleased with her response to my last interview question concerning what type of literature should be taught to young adults. Surprisingly, she mentioned that same attributes our class has discussed. Hearing factors like a text being relatable, controversial and interesting coming straight from a young adult herself made for a much more heavy impact.

**Artifact 2: Sample of students work / Analysis**

I was able to obtain two samples of Maggie’s work. One being a paper she had written on the novel *Like the Sun*, by R.K Narayan, and another being a test from her Accelerated Reader list. Both of which, showed her struggles with study skills and test taking skills. When I discussed the major mistakes of the paper with Maggie, being mostly its lack of conclusive content and supportive details, she explained that she couldn’t remember things from the texts to include. This sparked a long conversation about the importance of note taking while reading, and book marking important passages. She also complained of not remembering where to find things within the text. I explained to her that even a small post-it note at the end of each chapter with a short summary on it, would help her to easily locate topics and quotations. As far as her mistakes concerning the test, it was easy to see not only that she simply rushed through it, but also that it was obvious she didn’t prepare well. When I asked her if she completed reading the book that the test was on, she honestly replied no, knowing that was her biggest downfall. She explained that she only has a certain amount of time to read a chosen text before the test is assigned on it. However, I firmly clarified that, that is no excuse and better time management would be effective in correcting that problem. At this point in our conversation, was when I realized something I enjoyed most about Maggie, her acceptance and appliance of constructive criticism. She was always willing to take my criticism, good or bad, and improve upon it. From this I learned that students deserve good criticism and praise for the things they excel in, as much as they deserve properly implemented constructive criticism.

**Artifact 3: Interview with teacher**

1. **What is your overall impression of Maggie as a student? (The good, the bad, the ugly)**

* Maggie has a lot of potential; however there are gaps in her critical thinking, as well in depth or reflective thinking.

1. **What do you think Maggie struggles most with and why?**

* Rushing and skimming through things.

1. **What is Maggie’s biggest strength as a student/ biggest weakness?**

* She takes feedback very well / overlooks a lot and sometimes lacks effort.

1. **What help/assistance do you think would be most beneficial to help Maggie improve?**

* Note taking, connecting prior knowledge, and the construction of vocab cards or graphic organizers.

1. **What is the hardest part about being a high school English teacher?**

* TIME!

1. **What is the greatest/most rewarding aspect of being a high school English teacher?**

* Seeing that you can make a difference in students’ lives.

1. **How do you choose the books you read as a class?**

* Based off their themes, the students’ interests, and the books reliability.

1. **You seem to have a lot of books, papers, etc…in your classroom, but manage to stay extremely organized, how do you do it?**

* I am a generally very organized person, which you will find helps a lot, however it simply takes time. You will eventually develop a system that works for you.

1. **What is the best piece of advice you could offer me as I approach student teaching and begin my job search?**

* Be professional but be yourself and maintain your identity. Also, appreciate the good times and the little things, and always stay engaging.

**Artifact 3: Interview with teacher / Analysis**

Unfortunately, I didn’t get much time to observe my cooperating teacher actual teaching; however, based off the moments I got to witness, she seems like one of the best. You can’t help but notice her love for what she does. Her enthusiasm is something I can only hope to have half of one day. She is extremely attentive to all of her students and it pleasantly shocked me to see how much she knew about each of them individually. It was obvious she takes the time to get to know her students past their role in her classroom. She was exceptionally helpful in her assistance of choosing my focus student Maggie. She already had a mini case study written up that included some information about Maggie, her struggles, and past cumulative test scores and work. She explained why Maggie would be an excellent student to observe, work with and why. Throughout the process of this interview I learned more about that. I could tell that my cooperating teacher liked Maggie, and in fact believes she has great potential, but needs some help getting there. The answers she provided me with concerning what she feels Maggie needs most help with and also those things that she feels Maggie excels in, helped me alter my approach when working with Maggie one on one. At first I was a little apprehensive about having access to Maggie’s test scores and things of that nature. However, I realized it was necessary in seeing the areas Maggie needed improvement in so I could help her in the most beneficial and effective manner. Near the end of the interview I also included some personal questions I had about my role as a future teacher of English myself. My cooperating teacher smiled right away. I imagine it was because she too, asked these same questions to someone when she was once in my position. She offered nothing but great advice, constructive criticism, some heads-ups, and to make sure I always appreciate the opportunity I have to change my students’ lives - or at least their perceptions of English class!

**Artifact 4: Interview with community person (Soccer Coach) / Analysis**

**1.) What (if anything) do you know about Maggie academically? (Her struggles/strengths)**

* I know that she is moving on to the next chapter in her life, (College) and she is receiving financial aid for her academics. As to her GPA, I do not know.

**2.) What are Maggie’s biggest struggles/strengths on the soccer field and as a teammate?**

* For Maggie, her biggest adversary on the soccer field was her mental preparation. Most high school players, especially female athletes, have yet to realize how much an impact the mental aspect of sports plays such a vital role in performance. As far as her strengths, Maggie contributed tremendously; her ability to recognize what was happening and her reaction to what she saw or anticipated helped our team succeed during my two years as Head Coach. She displayed very good ball handling abilities and was very versatile. I could play her in any position on the pitch.

**3.) Does Maggie need to maintain a certain GPA to stay on the team?**

* Bloomsburg High School's policy on extracurricular activities was not failing any class. As far as her college, I do not know what their requirements are.

**4.) Does Maggie easily accept criticism and direction?**

* Every player I have ever coached has an issue with criticism if its not handled in the proper format and Maggie was no exception. Maggie held herself to a high standard and that sometimes had an impact on her mentally when she was criticized. With that being said, Maggie was very coach-able. She listened, learned, and carried that onto the field.

**5.) Does she pick up/ learn things easily?**

* Maggie was a multi-sport athlete and she excelled in Soccer and Basketball. I didn't know her during her pre-high school days, but I don't think Maggie was born as a gifted athlete. She worked hard and obviously took to learning what she was taught. When I gave her a task, she either executed it, or sought additional information so she could meet the expectations outlined.

6**.) How does Maggie work within a "team" setting?**

* Maggie, as with most players wants to win. Maggie played her role on my team, she understood what her role was, and she made a sacrifice for me her junior year. I asked her to move into the back four and she didn't even hesitate. I knew that she didn't want to be back, but ultimately she knew it was what was best for the team and she excelled. Most players refuse to give a coach 100 percent when they are put in a position they don't want to play. Not Maggie! So, I have to say Maggie is a team player.

**7.) Maggie has told me she hopes to play soccer in college. What advice would you give her to** help her balance that commitment with college level schoolwork?

* It’s a challenge that all college level athletes face. My advice is, if sports take precedence over academics, she needs to take a look into the mirror, and ask herself what her priorities are. Pardon the cliché, but as the commercial says, "There are over 400,000 collegiate athletes, and just about all of them will be going pro in something other than sports". So again, I say prioritize your life.

**Artifact 4: Interview with community person (Soccer Coach) / Analysis**

Having the opportunity to talk with Maggie’s soccer coach allowed me to gain a different insight on Maggie from a completely different perspective of someone who knew her, but not directly from an academic, “inside” the classroom, point of view. I was very happy to hear how great of a teammate Maggie was, her contributions to the team, and how her coach was honored to have her be a part of his team. I was able to draw a parallel between Maggie’s focus with her schoolwork, as well as on her soccer team. It was obvious that in both aspects, Maggie has an exceptional way of taking and applying criticism in a mature and responsible manner. Keeping in mind the struggles I was already aware of concerning Maggie’s academics, I made sure to discuss with her coach my concerns, that the both of us shared, should she go on to play soccer in college. Undoubtedly, playing any sport in college is a huge time commitment and sometimes your schoolwork and grades are easily swept under the rug. However, I think he said it best upon the conclusion of our discussion when he stated, "There are over 400,000 collegiate athletes, and just about all of them will be going pro in something other than sports".

**Part II: Designing Instruction**

**THE BIG QUESTION:** What literature should be taught to young adults and why?

**Rationale:**

Keeping in mind the “BIG QUESTION” as always, I have chosen to compose a short sequence of lesson plans on the text “Charlie St. Cloud,” by Ben Sherwood. The plot of the story surrounds itself with a young man named Charlie Tahan and his little brother Sam Tahan. Driving late one night, they are involved in a deadly car accident that kills Sam and leaves Charlie forever changed. In the aftermath of the accident, Charlie is wracked with guilt, convinced that if he had been more careful behind the wheel, Sam would still be alive. Charlie begins to form a unique connection to the afterlife, claiming to see visions of his deceased brother Sam as if he were actually standing before him. When Charlie’s former high-school classmate Tess returns to town, the two old acquaintances begin to blossom a meaningful romance. But before Charlie can move on with his life, he will have to first let go of his past, and bid his beloved brother Sam one final farewell.

This text grapples with numerous popular themes, all in one way or another, relatable to a vast variety of young adults. Guilt, grief, romance, tragedy and decision-making are all topics that the characters within “Charlie St. Cloud” face, and eventually cope with in an exceptional manner that I believe would benefit many adolescents. Not only is it an extremely relatable text, but it is an attention grabber, always leaving you wanting more and never knowing what the next page has to offer.

I have chosen to particularly address this text with Maggie because it contains all the facets of her description of a book she would be interested in reading, and one that she thinks will also be beneficial to many young adults. She explained that even though not everyone has experienced the death of a loved one, we have all encountered an instance from our past that holds us back, ties us down, or changes our lives. This text, based on a true story, takes you on the journey of a young man who faces the hardest obstacle in his life, grows from it, and progresses on, happily-ever-after.

**(BIG) Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to categorize different instances within the text “Charlie St. Cloud,” that illustrate the themes of Death and Life, Past and Present, and Holding on and Letting go.
2. Upon investigation, students will be able to list the possible controversial topics or situations found within the text, and rebut them with at least three alternative resolutions.
3. Students will be able to validate what makes this text relatable to a diverse audience of young adults listing at least three different conclusions drawn from the novel.

**Assessments:**

1. In groups of 4-5, students will create a collaborative 3 circle Venn diagram on a large piece of poster paper. One circle will include instances from the text that illustrate Life and Death, followed by another circle that illustrates Past and Present, and lastly a circle that illustrates examples of Holding on and Letting go, also found within the text. The overlapping circles should be filled in appropriately with any examples students think intersect to another theme. I encourage the use of different colors and creativity to bring your poster to life. Venn diagrams will be presented briefly upon conclusion of class and will be used as a reference in future assessments.
2. Individually, students will compose a short essay that includes any controversial topics or situations they find within the text. Included in the essay should be an explanation of why they found certain instances or situations controversial and a rebuttal that offers an alternative resolution to these examples. Essay should be formatted in MLA format and be between 2-3 pages in length.
3. In a final class assessment, students will be divided in half and will hold a “mock” school board meeting concerning the acceptance of “Charlie St. Cloud” into school curriculum. One half of the class will act as the faculty, arguing in favor of this text being introduced into curriculum. The second half of the class will act as the school board, presenting all possible negative reasons and apprehensions surrounding this text being implemented into the classroom. Both the “faculty” and “school board” are expected to use their past assessments to present concrete evidence and examples from the text to aid in their arguments. They must also be sure to tackle the “BIG QUESTION” and explain, using examples, why this literature should be taught to young adults.

**NOTE: (The following three lessons are to take place upon completion of reading of the text, *Charlie St. Cloud*)**

**Lesson Plan 1: Textual themes - breaking them down (50 minutes)**

**Unit Goals:**

1.) Students will be able to categorize different instances within the text “Charlie St. Cloud,” that illustrate the themes of Death and Life, Past and Present, and Holding on and Letting go.

2.) Upon investigation, students will be able to list the possible controversial topics or situations found within the text, and rebut them with at least three alternative resolutions.

3.) Students will be able to validate what makes this text relatable to a diverse audience of young adults listing at least three different conclusions drawn from the novel.

**Lesson Objective: Students will be able to categorize different instances within the text “Charlie St. Cloud,” that illustrate the themes of Death and Life, Past and Present, and Holding on and Letting go.**

**Motivational Device (5min):** Ask if anyone in the class is willing to share an experience that changed their life, or if anyone has experienced something that left a lasting impression on them. How did they cope with it, accept it, overcome it…etc.? Can you relate it to the experience in *Charlie St. Cloud?*

**Rationale:** Today’s lesson will introduce our class discussion of the text Charlie St. Cloud. Students will begin “breaking down” the novel into relatable, young adult themes. They will gather ideas and evidence from the text that supports their chosen topics and upon completion of the lesson, present the class with a completed 3-circle Venn diagram representing each theme.

**Materials:** The text Charlie St. Cloud, Poster paper, Markers

**Activity (30min):** In groups of 4-5, students will create a collaborative 3 circle Venn diagram on a large piece of poster paper. One circle will include instances from the text that illustrate Life and Death, followed by another circle that illustrates Past and Present, and lastly a circle that illustrates examples of Holding on and Letting go, also found within the text. The overlapping circles should be filled in appropriately with any examples students think intersect to another theme. I encourage the use of different colors and creativity to bring your poster to life.

**Assessment (15min):** Each group will briefly present their Venn diagram upon conclusion of class explaining the examples they chose from the text as evidence that support the three provided themes. Students will explain how these themes relate to being a young adult.

**Lesson Plan 2: Controversial versus Beneficial (50 Minutes)**

**Unit Goals:**

1.) Students will be able to categorize different instances within the text “Charlie St. Cloud,” that illustrate the themes of Death and Life, Past and Present, and Holding on and Letting go.

2.) Upon investigation, students will be able to list the possible controversial topics or situations found within the text, and rebut them with at least three alternative resolutions.

3.) Students will be able to validate what makes this text relatable to a diverse audience of young adults listing at least three different conclusions drawn from the novel.

**Lesson Objective: Upon investigation, students will be able to list the possible controversial topics or situations found within the text, and rebut them with at least three alternative resolutions.**

**Motivational Device (10min):** Brainstorm in groups of 2-3 students what you think could make a text controversial. (Provocative? Scandalous? Debatable?) Discuss.

**Rationale:** Today’s lesson will introduce the topic of textual controversy. It is important that students realize that the very things that make a text beneficial to young adults are the same factors that can be viewed as controversial. We will discuss why it is important to tackle controversial topics in an appropriate, well-informed, knowledgeable classroom setting.

**Materials:** The text Charlie St. Cloud, Power Point Presentation, Computer, Projector

**Activity (10min)** (Lecture): A short power point presentation on the controversial young adult novel *Sold,* by Patricia McCormick. Instead of focusing so much on the actual content of the novel, I simply want to get across to students why this text can be viewed as controversial however, still beneficial, constructive and profitable. This will act as a model example of what I want students to include in their essay upon completion of class.

**Assessment (30min):** Individually, students will compose a short essay that includes any controversial topics or situations they find within the text. Included in the essay should be an explanation of why they found certain instances or situations controversial and a rebuttal that offers an alternative resolution to these examples. The essay should also offer a justification as to why this text, taking into consideration its possible controversy, would be beneficial to young adults. Essay should be formatted in MLA format and be between 2-3 pages in length. Any uncompleted work will be finished for homework.

**Lesson Plan 3: Mock School Board Meeting (50 Minutes)**

**Unit Goals:**

1.) Students will be able to categorize different instances within the text “Charlie St. Cloud,” that illustrate the themes of Death and Life, Past and Present, and Holding on and Letting go.

2.) Upon investigation, students will be able to list the possible controversial topics or situations found within the text, and rebut them with at least three alternative resolutions.

3.) Students will be able to validate what makes this text relatable to a diverse audience of young adults listing at least three different conclusions drawn from the novel.

**Lesson Objective: Students will be able to validate what makes this text relatable to a diverse audience of young adults listing at least three different conclusions drawn from the novel.**

**Motivational Device (10min):** Use this time to explain activity/assessment. Break class in half, faculty and school board members.

**Rationale:** Today’s lesson will turn the classroom into a mock school board meeting concerning the acceptance of “Charlie St. Cloud” into school curriculum. Students will need to implement concrete examples and assemble exceptional explanations to best make an argument for their designated oppositions.

**Materials:** The text Charlie St. Cloud, Venn diagrams, Individual Essays

**Activity / Assessment (40min):** In a final class assessment, students will be divided in half and will hold a “mock” school board meeting concerning the acceptance of “Charlie St. Cloud” into school curriculum. One half of the class will act as the faculty, arguing in favor of this text being introduced into curriculum. The second half of the class will act as the school board, presenting all possible negative reasons and apprehensions surrounding this text being implemented into the classroom. Both the “faculty” and “school board” are expected to use their past assessments to present concrete evidence and examples from the text to aid in their arguments. They must also be sure to tackle the “BIG QUESTION” and explain, using examples, why this literature should be taught to young adults.