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Engish 112B

Dr. Warner

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Unit of Study

Identity and Self-Discover in *It’s Kind of a Funny Story*

**Unit Plan:**

I chose to do a unit plan on *It’s Kind of a Funny Story* by Ned Vizzini 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, Craig narrates his struggling process to find where he belongs in the community. He goes through a bout of depression that lands him in the psych ward where he has to look into himself to find out what he needs. That is his turning point. He must fight to strengthen his internal voice and learn not to let depression cripple his life.

I like this text because the main character Craig 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 a teen face in conflict to search for his voice and own up to it. With this book, teens can relate with the pressures that Craig has on his plate between managing his stressors and depression, his academics, his emotions, his friendships, how he views himself and other distractions. It can help students identify external and internal conflict they have in their lives and know that this happens to others like them. It’s a convincing story that explores the theme of conflict, friendship, love, and recovery.

I would teach this book to 9th or 10th graders because it measures a 700L on the Lexile Scale. The book is for middle school and up, but it does touch on the topic of death and recreational drugs, 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.

**Introduction:**

Read a passage from Chapter 2 of *It’s Kind of a Funny Story* to engage students. The passage portrays Craig’s fears and his current state of emotions. He is distraught and he is talking to a psychologist.

(See attached)

Assignment: 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.

**Readings/Journals/Small Assignments:**

* Students will be assigned to read certain pages everyday
* There will be weekly quizzes to ensure students know what they’ve been reading and are keeping up
* They will have free-write journal entries paired with their readings along with identifying the S.O.A.P.S. (**Speaker, Occasion/Tone, Audience, Purpose, Subject**) of the readings
* 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

**Activities Inside the Classroom**

* 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

<http://bowvalleycollege.ca/Documents/Learning%20Resource%20Services/Library%20Learning%20Commons/E-Resources/Study%20guides/writing%20char_ana_ques.pdf>

* Short “I am” poem – 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   
Resident of (I've seen people list here everything from their address to "the small blue green planet third from the sun")  
(last name)

* Handout Article – Read and define and discuss disabilities that present challenges in education and learning. And also, the response to love from *The Impact of Fiction on Perceptions of Disability* from *The Alan Review* Vol. 39 Fall 2011 (56-66). Craig doesn’t have a condition, but is severely depressed. How can manage it to have a fulfilling life like those who are disabled.
* Brown Bag – choose a few significant quotes, item, imagery that capture the novel, theme, and characters to discuss in the classroom circle and explain why the quote was chosen
* Parallel Movie – parallels similar conflict with a character who is older illustrates how universal the theme is
  + Watch *Patch Adams* movie, critique the similarities and differences of the main character in the movie and in the book and the struggles they go through
  + Do another Brown Bag with the movie and relate it to the book

**Activities Outside the Classroom:**

* Identity Poem – reflects who the students are, their identity and voice.
  + “I am” poem template, write a personal poem about themselves

I AM Poem  
FIRST STANZA  
I am (two special characteristics you have)  
I wonder (something you are actually curious about)  
I hear (an imaginary sound)  
I see (an imaginary sight)  
I want (an actual desire)  
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)  
SECOND STANZA  
I pretend (something you actually pretend to do)  
I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)  
I touch (an imaginary touch)  
I worry (something that really bothers you)  
I cry (something that makes you very sad)  
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)  
THIRD STANZA  
I understand (something you know is true)  
I say (something you believe in)  
I dream (something you actually dream about)  
I try (something you really make an effort about)  
I hope (something you actually hope for)  
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

* 1) Music Medley – represents the characters’ thoughts and emotions at different times of the book, represent the themes of the book: conflict, friendship, love
  + Song Playlist, choose songs and have an explanation of how it relates to the story, character, emotion, or theme. Include song lists in sequence to the story of when to listen to them.
  + Example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9qW6HEBo_c>
* 2) Artifact ShoeBox – choose objects that reflect the characters’ thoughts and emotions at different times of the book, represent the themes of the book: conflict, friendship, love. Include a list of helpful behaviors and unhelpful behaviors, healthy and unhealthy tools, and a short explanation of why each object was chosen.
* Essay – 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 educator, parent, psychologist, 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*.**

**Other books to pair with *It’s Kind of a Funny Story:***

1. The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon
   * A boy autistic in nature who is overly stimulated by his surroundings investigates the mystery of his neighbor’s dead dog creates a space for him to communicate himself through his investigations.
2. All the Bright Places by Jennifer Niven
   * A boy with an undiagnosed mental illness, bipolar disorder, finds friendship within a girl when he tries to help her overcome her grief about her sister who died in a car crash.
3. Everything, Everything by Nicola Yoon
   * A girl who is convinced that she has a disease and is allergic to the outside world closes herself in her sanitized apartment with her mom. She braves the disease and explores the outside world by trying new things.

**References:**

<http://bowvalleycollege.ca/Documents/Learning%20Resource%20Services/Library%20Learning%20Commons/E-Resources/Study%20guides/writing%20char_ana_ques.pdf>

*The Impact of Fiction on Perceptions of Disability* from *The Alan Review* Vol. 39 Fall 2011 (56-66)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9qW6HEBo_c>

<https://www.amazon.com/Curious-Incident-Dog-Night-Time/dp/1400032717>

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18460392-all-the-bright-places>

(<http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/adolescent-girls.aspx>