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The Sacrifices of Winning

Overall: Why Sports?

 Sports are a part of today’s American culture where all age ranges watch, from small children all the way to the elderly. The purpose of sports on the surface level is about winning and losing. Children learn as young athletes about to how to win and lose. On a deeper level, athletes learn about the moral and ethical lessons from playing a sport. Sports affect a child’s characteristics at an early age, which is carried over as a teenager and onwards to adulthood. I learned about the positivity of sports from learning the work ethic to develop into a better basketball player. I also learned about the negatives of sports from the overbearing pressure from adult figures wanting to win. Now as I look back at my youth, I know what to teach to other young adults about sports. Young adults should read young adult sports literature because the literature teaches about dealing with real-world situations. Especially, young adult readers learn about the work ethic needed to achieve a goal.

 The sports literature for young adults exemplifies the Exeter qualities used to describe good young adult literature. Exeter University produced a list of criteria that makes a good young adult book. One of the major qualities that mark a good young adult book is a character that reflects experiences of the teen readers. The young adult sports literature focuses on student-athlete teenagers. The well-known high school sports rules and regulation organization, National Federation of State High School Sports Associations conducted a survey during the 2013-2014 school year and found that 7.8 million high school students participate in a high school sport. A teenage student-athlete protagonist is relatable for high school student athletes seeing a similar story or experiences within a plot. A non-student athlete may find it difficult to relate to young adult sports literature. But any student who reads young adult sports literature also can find the Exeter quality of themes that inform truthfully about the world and how to face challenging issues. A person must constantly practice and dedicate the time to achieve a high level of success. For high school student-athletes that want to compete at the collegiate level, it is about practicing in the off-season and doing more work than the average athlete. The hard-work mentality applies to any situation for a person wanting to achieve a high goal.

Introduction to the Unit: Personal Anecdote of Two Basketball Players

 In order to introduce the unit, I will tell of two person anecdotes about two high school basketball players who devoted their time and effort for basketball. The personal anecdotes discuss teenagers that put an extraneous effort in order to become successful. I will then ask the students about reoccurring themes or ideas that helped the basketball players to succeed. There will be numerous keywords and short phrases on the board that develops the idea that success comes from hard-work, sacrifice, and determination. They will write a paragraph to two paragraphs on a goal they have or had in the past and how did or will achieve that goal. I will ask if any students want to share their goals or how to achieve a goal. The student-athletes will share some common beliefs or characteristics with the basketball players. They have an opportunity to reflect on their playing career and how to become a better player. The non-athletes learn about the characteristics of a successful basketball player. The sport transcends a small group of people because the themes are readily available to be applied to any goal.

Launching the Unit: Steph Curry – Success is Not an Accident

 After giving a preface about the sacrifices and determination to help out the team, I will proceed to use a video about Steph Curry when he was in high school. The anecdote follows a basketball trainer Alan Stein retelling the story about Curry at a prominent high school basketball camp. Curry was not the biggest or most athletic at the basketball camp. He needed to separate himself from everyone there. He did so through his work ethic. He was the first one in the gym putting up game situation shots while the rest of the high schoolers were still in their sandals. After the camp was over, he would have to make ten free throws. No coach told him that he had to show early or leave late. Instead, Curry took it upon himself to put the extra work in order to earn himself an opportunity for a college scholarship. Curry is a prominent name, especially within the Bay Area. Students will learn more about a prominent athletic figure and see the same qualities discussed previously. The non-athletes will be engaged because of Stein’s details about Curry being an outsider in comparison to the rest of the athletes. It is universal that a good work ethic will help a person to achieve his goals.

Centerpiece Work:

*Ball Don’t Lie* by Matt de la Peña: The story describes a high school boy named Sticky who grew up as a foster kid being passed around to different families in the city of Los Angeles. He finds his self-belonging in Lincoln Recreation gym instead of being on the streets with the drug dealers and homeless. Basketball becomes his obsession and the Lincoln Rec his home. Even though he is a young white teenager, his family becomes the older and experienced black males at Lincoln Rec. Sticky makes the junior varsity team and is moved up to play varsity in order to help with the playoff run. Sticky constantly deals the turmoil of balancing his mental illness, family, pressures of school, relationships, and basketball. He learns that in life there are wins and losses. But it is about having the determination to reach the set goals.

Extending the Unit:

 The students will read about how Sticky finds his home in the Lincoln Rec with essential strangers. He creates his own family where no one sees race or discrimination. This will lead to a lesson about the qualities of a good home. First, I need to distinguish the difference between a home and a place of living through notes about a home being a mindset. I will use the philosophy about a home being a place that accomplishes in making available the important moral values which the world ignores or the distracted characters have trouble remembering about. For Sticky, his home is Lincoln Rec that teaches him about how to win and to handle losing. I will have a quick write about the good qualities of a home. Next, I will have a class discussion about the good qualities that Sticky finds in the Lincoln Rec. It is important to realize how students will have similar characteristics because everyone seeks a good home. As a homework assignment, I will have students write 1-2 page paper about the qualities of a home found in de La Pena’s book.

Final Assignment:

 The final assignment will encompass two parts that focuses on the themes of the good qualities that helps someone achieve a difficult goal or the impact of a good home. The first part of the assignment is meant to be more of an open topic because I want to see the students critically think and relate it to the text. The students are required to use the book, *Ball Don’t Lie* and another outside source whether it be another novel, poem, or article. The outside source does not have to be sports-related. The open topic encourages any outside source because the themes are applied to any person’s situation. I will look for a student to write 5-6 pages. The second part of the assignment is to present their topic.

 Students need to learn how to effectively communicate a topic. The students will be required to present their findings about either theme in a short 3-4 minute presentation. The students are required to have some visual aids that can be a Powerpoint, Prezi, or Google Slides. I do not want the students repeating word for word their essay. The presentation will have students present their thesis and their subtopics. The students will elaborate about their thesis and will be graded on how effective were they able to communicate their research.

I will give a list of other sports novels that discuss the themes of home and work ethic.

Other Sports Novels:

*Friday Night Lights: A Town, A Team, A Dream* by H.G. Bissinger: The book follows the 1988 Odessa Panthers High School Football team season as they try to win the Texas High School football championship. The townspeople are dedicated fans of the high school football team where it trumps over education, politics, and the workforce. Bissinger looks at when winning a high school football game consumes lives.

*Running Loose* by Chris Crutcher: Louie Banks is a starter on the football team with a supportive girlfriend and is ready for the season to start. Before the first game, a situation rises that made Louie quit. Then his life begins to spiral down and forces Louie to assess on how he wants to finish the school year.

*The Last Shot* by Darcy Frey: The story follows the Coney Island, New York inner city high school basketball Abraham Lincoln high school in the 1991 season. Frey explores four student-athletes as try to use their basketball talent as a way out of the inner city. The student-athletes deal with inadequate education, family, and the exploitation of teenagers. The odds are against them and will any of them will succeed?

*The Miracle of St. Anthony: A Season with Coach Bob Hurley and Basketball’s Most Improbable Dynasty* by Adrian Wojnarowski: The award-winning sports journalist Wojnarowski follows one of the best high school basketball programs in the United States. At the helm is Coach Bob Hurley Sr. a Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame Coach that coaches at a school that does not have their own basketball gym. His basketball players are from the inner city and from a poor socio-economic background. Most of these players travel a substantial amount on the train to get the mean streets of Jersey City in order to be a part of the successful basketball program. Coach Hurley teaches his young men not just winning but how to give a full effort and love for their teammates. But will Coach Hurley have his players buy into his philosophy?

*Whale Talk* by Chris Crutcher: A high school that rewards students that are athletes and chastises the rest of their students. T.J. Jones is one of those students who is frowned down upon because he chooses not to participate in sport. T.J. decides to take a stand against the status quo and forms the high school’s first swim team. He recruits the misfits of the high school as they try to earn their own lettermen jackets. Along the way, the team learns more about each other as they fight to become a successful team.

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