Summer 8-5-2019

Teaching English Language Arts: Implementing a Project-Based Learning Approach

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Final MA Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green

State University in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English

August 5th, 2019

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Table of Contents

Analytical Narrative

"You either learn your way towards writing your own script in life, or you unwittingly become an actor in someone else's script." John Taylor Gatto

Learning came to life at Riverwalk Academy, a project-based learning school in Rock Hill, SC. This is where I fell in love of English Language Arts and Project Based Learning (PBL). The results in the student-centered classroom excited me, inspiring me to take my own education to another level. Having an undergraduate degree in elementary education gave me a large scope of knowledge with no focus, so that's what led me to Bowling Green State University's MA English program with a specialization in teaching.

What is project-based learning? It is a pedagogy that uses real-world, relevant experiences to situate students in active learning environments. Experiences are shaped by learning standards and most importantly, student interest. According to Edutopia contributor, Heather Wolpert-Gawron, PBL "… couches lessons in a tale -- a tale about a problem that must be solved or an activity that must be developed. The learning happens along the way towards the presentation of the solution" (2015). The narrative always begins with a driving question, which is the vehicle for all instruction. A good driving question must be open-ended, cannot be "Googleable", and most importantly stems from student curiosity. Students then engage in sustained, in-depth inquiry that explores answers to the question through live interviews, field trips, presentations, print & digital sources, etc.

Then, teachers guide students through the research process, providing them with the skills necessary to carry out effective analysis and research. Thereafter, students offer their solution to the question in a manner of their choice to an authentic audience; it could take the form of a play,

podcast, campaign, book, video, 3D representation, living museum, fundraising for a cause, etc. Students can work collaboratively to set their ideas in motion in preparation for their Presentation of Learning (POL). During their POL, students have the opportunity to showcase their work to their targeted audience. In the end, students take ownership of their learning, shape their own understanding, and find value and meaning in their projects.

The beauty of PBL is that it is not a one-size-fits all pedagogy; it is student-centered, fitting all learning styles and levels, all while meeting state standards. By giving students voice and choice in how they present their findings, learning is differentiated and tailored to fit the skills and talents of each student. Wolpert-Gowron continues, "PBL knows that students are not standardized, they don't learn in a standardized way, and that our clientele can't be assessed in a standardized manner if we are looking to foster innovation" (2015). For example, if the objective is to make inferences based on textual evidence, students can show me that they have mastered this skill through a variety of ways —a poem, a drawing, a skit, a billboard, digital design, or any other way of their choosing.   PBL creates meaningful learning opportunities that meet learning outcomes and that are accessible to all students reviving curiosity and authentic learning in the classroom.

I first recognized the power of PBL, during the 15 years I homeschooled my children; I realized that my kids learn best through real-life experiences. They had a natural curiosity and a passion to discover the world around them. At one point, I felt pressure from other homeschooling moms to implement premade curricula and textbooks to make sure they were learning the same things as their peers; however, with that change, I noticed that their drive to learn diminished tremendously. When I gave them something to do from a textbook or workbook, they went through the motions and completed their work, but they didn't want to

reflect or dig deeper into the pre-determined topics set by the publishers of their curriculum; they just wanted to get it over with. It was more a task to be done for completion, rather than truly coming from their own curiosity. I noticed this difference because when I challenged them to learn about something of their choice and show me proof of their learning in their own way, their passion and creativity was reignited. After those 15 years, I decided to go back to school and become a classroom teacher. From my experiences with my children and PBL, I already knew what type of teacher I wanted to be: the type that encourages critical thinking and problem solving, the type that puts learning in the hands of students, the type that instills a lifelong love of learning.

Because of my own love of learning, I found that while I loved to teach all subjects – English was my passion. It is this passion that brought me back to school and to the creation of this portfolio.   In choosing my projects to include, I wanted to showcase the pieces that were the most challenging and thus the most rewarding, that showed just how far I had come on my journey, and finally that showed that I could not only grasp the foundations of English, but apply them to a PBL learning pedagogy to become a more effective teacher.   The uniting thread throughout the fabric of this portfolio is the application of the content to project-based learning. Through this process, I wanted to remain true to my goal: teaching middle school students to read and compose by creating meaningful PBL projects that aligned with their interests and tapped into their natural curiosity. In other words, I wanted to find out how to be a more effective English teacher. This goal, in many ways, became my own PBL project.

My first project in this portfolio is a critical essay for ENG 6090: Teaching Literature with Dr. Kimberly Coates establishing the importance of literature titled "Literature and Social Cognition: Why Read Fiction?" I decided to open with this essay to establish a framework for

the importance of English as a field before diving into project-based learning, since

understanding why we engage in particular subjects—including English and literature—is a

starting point for discovery in PBL, too. The goal of this assignment was to explain why

literature is important to study to a doubtful student. This was certainly critical for me to grasp,

since many of the students that walk into my class have all but given up on reading with the

barrage of games and media. Why read when we can play Fortnite or binge-watch Netflix?

Before researching, my answer was superficial at best – I did not have the evidence to support

what I hoped to articulate.

Through assigned readings of Terry Eagleton, Martha Nussbaum, David Richter and

others—as well as class discussions, reflection, and independent research—I was able to develop

a deeper understanding of the impact of literature on humanity, thus allowing me to approach the

essay using examples from Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* to address a college-level

audience. Through my research, I found the words and the evidence to convince any skeptic of

literature.

Following Dr. Coates's feedback, my significant revisions came in the form of clarifying

and elaborating on my ideas. I made sure to explain my points specifically, leaving no room for

the reader to wonder what I meant. Dr. Heather Jordan made me see that while I was using

Pride and Prejudice as an example, I was not following through with the commentary to guide

readers through the thought process needed to understand the underlying theory of social

cognition. After specific references, I elaborated and clarified ideas further to connect the text to

my reasoning. Lastly, I focused on my conclusion by removing unnecessary statements and

refining the language to clarify my intended meaning.

From there, I wanted to showcase an in-depth literary analysis of a text and illustrate how such an analysis could lead to a meaningful project. "The Uncanny in *Coraline:* A Literary Analysis" is a **substantive research** project that was developed in ENG 6070: Introduction to Literary Theory with Dr. Erin Labbie. This was my most challenging class; reading through theory was like uphill hiking with no end in sight. Weary and on the verge of giving up, I started climbing my way through the literature by constantly re-reading assigned texts, reading what others said, watching YouTube, and attempting to apply theory to works I knew. After building a foundation, I found a level path allowing me to see my way to the end of the course and an advanced understanding of theory. While all the theories enabled me to read a text on an increasingly sophisticated level, the literary theories that most intrigued me were that of Freud's uncanny and Marxism.

Having recently read *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, I began to see a direct correlation between both theories and thus my project was born. Studying these critical lenses was relevant and meaningful to my teaching context, as I was able to analyze texts on several levels and help my students do the same. This project focuses on the analysis of *Coraline* using the uncanny and Marxism to investigate consumerism and concludes with an aligning PBL project. I followed Dr. Labbie's suggestions which included mostly revisions to sentence structure and clarity. Given the challenge of the course and its early placement in my program, I struggled to synthesize and pull everything together. Working through the revisions with my peers, I was able to progress through these issues and overcome my challenges. Additionally, I decided to add illustrations from the text to allow readers to gain a better sense of the novel and its plot. I also wanted to pull in how I this analysis could be contextualized into a PBL projects, so added a section that outlines ways to design a project using *Coraline*. With these revisions, the piece was

still disconnected and lacked cohesion throughout making it difficult to fully understand my intended meaning. Dr. Heather Jordan worked with me extensively and encouraged me to pull the ideas together through rearranging sections and adding further commentary to thread each part together into a unified project.

This third project, "Leadership - Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar:* A PBL Teaching Unit" was developed in ENG 6090: Teaching Literature with Dr. Coates – now that I had the theoretical down, it was time to apply what I learned in a teaching context. Having very little background in Shakespeare and major insecurities, I challenged myself to develop lesson plans for *Julius Caesar* for my honors 8th grade class. My goal was to create a lesson plan that excited my students to love, or at least appreciate, the works of Shakespeare. I didn't want them to have the same apprehensions that I had growing up. With that, I wanted to be the first to introduce my students to Shakespeare to shape their perceptions early, hopefully allowing their future experiences with Shakespeare in high school to be met with enthusiasm, instead of anxiety.

I wanted to do this by bringing the language, the time period, and the drama to life for my students.   Using student-centered, active reading strategies, I was able to create a lesson that pulled my students into ancient Rome to truly understand and appreciate the text. They memorized and performed portions of the play, wrote a modern-day script, and dramatized their creations allowing them to internalize the text.   At the same time, students were directed to focus on the role of leadership in the play, which would be the catalyst for their continued research.

Most of my revisions with this plan came together in the form of adding supplementary materials and rubrics for the assignments. I wanted to make sure other teachers would be able to read this project and implement a similar lesson design as I had done. Additionally, the material

supports the learning objectives and clarifies the expectations of the corresponding lessons. I

was careful in aligning course objectives and outcomes with the learning activities and

assessments; this process was insightful for me in my own planning as I had to keep asking

myself – Will this help students reach a course objective? Why am I teaching or assigning this?

My planning now is much more meaningful and purposeful, allowing me to restructure and

revise my previous units to be more effective. The last of my revisions came from Dr. Jordan's

suggestions to clarify the rationale for my readers by explaining the PBL process and how the

unit falls into place within that process.

My final project was created in ENG 6800: Multimodal Composition with Dr. Ethan

Jordan. This unit, "Our Vision of Leadership – Multimodal Composition" focuses on the

presentation component of PBL in which students decided to create a video essay that illustrates

their vision of leadership. While I never shied away from using multimodal approaches in my

classes, I never fully grasped how to assess and effectively instruct students in its

implementation. Basic vocabulary and contextual knowledge were a major deficiency – how do

I teach or describe visual composition when I don't even know?

After arming us with a contextual framework, Dr. Jordan put us in the shoes of our students,

as we had to create our own video essay. Paradoxically, while I was great at assigning

multimodal projects, I had never actually created one. Actively participating in the process was

transformational in the way I understand and teach the process of composition. I realized that I

was too heavily focused on the final product instead of the actual process of creation and that my

assessments were ineffective because of this.

Dr. Jordan guided me through revisions using written and audio comments. His biggest

concern was not having enough time to complete the project, so I made sure to add flexibility

into the scheduling – as well as rearranging some of the lessons in a more efficient order. In making this project fit into the portfolio, Dr. Heather Jordan helped me realized that my rationale was confusing and difficult to follow outside the context of the course. With her feedback, I rewrote the rationale focusing on a broader audience. I clarified the context for the lesson and how I the project was shaped by student choice.

Now that I'm compiling this portfolio at the end of my BGSU MA journey, I can see the many ways that I learned how to be a more effective English teacher. In short, I offer this portfolio as my culminating Presentation of Learning (POL) to my peers, professors, and academia in hopes that by sharing my story of discovery, I may foster a sense of discovery in others. In summary, the key lessons I have learned are that to become a more effective English teacher, one must understand the importance and power of English studies in academia, develop an understanding of the theoretical framework for literature and composition is also important, apply these principles to teaching contexts using research-based practices and student-centered pedagogies, and carefully plan and develop lessons that are based on clear, measurable learning goals, all while making sure learning activities and assessments tightly align. Implementing these driving principles, students & teachers alike can become lifelong learners who write their own scripts.

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Project #1 - Literature & Social Cognition: Why Read Fiction

Literature allows us to communicate with the past, present, and future through written accounts that share feelings, thoughts, and experiences in a variety of contexts. Through this communication, we are transformed by the ideas of those accounts that become a part of who we are. As readers, we are exposed to a multitude of experiences and situations that could never be encountered in our own lifetimes. This social simulation develops our social cognition or the cognitive processes that shape our awareness of public situations and how we interact and react to those settings. They essentially help us learn and grow. Terry Eagleton suggests literature encompasses "…the most fundamental questions of human existence – what is meant to be a person, to engage in significant relationships with others, to live from the vital center of the most essential values" (55). Literature allows us to live vicariously through others to understand their perspectives, their emotions, their hopes, their dreams. Ideally, we can understand and empathize with the characters we embody and understand that differences among people add to the richness of the human condition, not detract. In this way, our knowledge of the world increases as we understand and accept alternative points of view.

Good literature transports us to another world, awakens the imagination, and evokes powerful emotions in a way real life cannot. It is through these vicarious and cathartic interactions that we begin to see ourselves. Martha Nussbaum, author and philologist from Harvard University suggests, "the ability to imagine what it is like to live the life of another person who might, given changes in circumstance, be oneself or one of one's loved ones" invites us to "wonder about" ourselves (359). When we read about a character who is different from ourselves (perhaps because they are living in a different cultural or historical context), we have the opportunity to consider what we may have done in a similar context or situation. For

example, in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet, a young, witty, and intelligent young lady, has to choose between the financial security of herself and her family and her own personal happiness when Mr. Collins—a foolish man of some wealth and class standing— proposes marriage. A reader who has never had to marry in order to secure their own class standing, or that of their family, is now given the opportunity to consider what they might do in a similar situation. Would they consider the proposal to be that of a welcome offer, much like Charlotte Lucas ultimately does, or would they prefer to go against conventional wisdom and wait until they themselves had found romantic love, which was a luxury not readily afforded to ladies of Austen's time? Or, would they choose to align with Lizzie, adamantly refusing to let themselves fall into a life of misery with this hapless suitor? A reader can place themselves into the narrative and wonder if they would respond to the proposal as Elizabeth Bennet does when she declares, "You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so" (Austen 19:12). Reading this response also allows readers to feel what Lizzie must also be feeling; her emotionally charged refusal of Mr. Collins's arrogant proposal infuses the reader with the feelings of anger and resentment. Readers themselves are not blatantly refusing a potential suitor against their mother's wishes; however, they do feel the emotions through the powerful language that Ms. Bennet chooses here.

Again, this example demonstrates a paradox that may as yet be unfamiliar to readers: that of using marriage for social mobility or even security (the Bennet sisters could be ruined so easily, as we have demonstrated for us through Lydia later in the novel). Clearly, Elizabeth values herself and her happiness—she is not willing to settle simply for money, which flouts the conventions of the time—which said women should marry not for love, but for money and social mobility. How would we—or how have we—reacted in similar circumstances? When we

wonder or question how we would react, we begin to reveal who we are or who we want to be. David Richter, professor and director of graduate studies in the English Department at Queens College and professor of English at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York states, "It is naïve to think books don't play a part in forming our values: we are social beings, and our books (like our friends) are part of the interactive environment that makes us who and what we are" (248). Similarly, Terry Eagleton believes "to read literature was thus to regain vital touch with the roots of one's own being" (59). As we read, we uncover and evoke that which is hidden within us, making us more aware of our emotions, thoughts, and biases. Clearly, it is through this roleplay of events that we can imagine and wonder. Through this process, we unravel the inner-workings of ourselves, thereby increasing our social cognition.

Not only do we uncover who we are as we read fiction, but we identify hidden preconceived notions and prejudices that may have not been unearthed otherwise. Facing difficult situations and decisions head on, we realize that our interpretations maybe stereotypical and not as objective as we might have first considered. According to Nussbaum, literature "… summons powerful emotions, it disconcerts and puzzles. It inspires distrust of conventional pieties and exacts frequent painful confrontation with one's own thoughts and intentions" (Nussbaum 359). Would we have forgone our chance with THE Mr. Darcy because we would have been too scared to refuse such an offer from Mr. Collins, for example? Nussbaum continues, "Literary works that promote identification and emotional reaction cut through those self-protective stratagems, requiring us to see and to respond to many things that may be difficult to confront – and they make this process palatable by giving us pleasure in the very act of confrontation" (Nussbaum 359). Do we realize that we are too reliant upon what others might think of us when we consider how we may have not refused Mr. Collins? Do we confront our own fears when we

read this novel? Or, do we have the satisfaction of realizing that we would have refused his offer as well, trusting that being happy with oneself was far more important to the financial security of a loveless marriage? Literature allows us to confront our misconceptions, clarify our misgivings, and transform our thinking, and we feel satisfaction in knowing that we confronted—and perhaps even conquered—one of our own demons or fears.

Again, in *Pride & Prejudice*, we can relate to Elizabeth when she is deceived by Wickham's charm and beauty and lets her own prejudice blind her judgement of Darcy: "Till this moment I never knew myself" (Austen 36:10). Through her words, we can sense her pain and anger at herself – thrusting us into the same emotional frenzy. Living through the experience with Elizabeth helps us confront our own reservations about people of a certain class, race, religion, sexual preference, etc. If we cannot learn to see past these "barriers," we could deny ourselves the acquaintance of unique individuals that have the ability to touch and inspire our lives. Vera Nunning, a professor of English philology at Heidelberg University proposes that "reading fiction stimulates readers to adopt the perspectives of characters and narrators is of crucial importance for social cognition, because this process involves the 'imagine other' perspective which reduces stereotyping and has been shown to lead to prosocial action" (54). As we read, we take on the perspective of multiple characters, permitting us to assess and reassess our own morals and values. Considering various viewpoints moves us from a state of narrowmindedness to a state of open-mindedness where we can consider a wider scope of perceptions. While we may not agree with all points-of-view, we can appreciate and understand the opinions and beliefs of others.

Reading fiction can take us on a journey of self-discovery and self-improvement that allows us to empathize and appreciate others. Richter shares his own experience: "If in my life I have

developed any ability to understand those who are Other to me – Other in race or gender or class

or sexual preference – then a good deal of my training in empathy has come from the practice

that fiction and poetry have given me in taking on other selves, other lives (Richter 251).

Nunning furthers Richter's position stating, "Such abilities of social cognition are necessary for

understanding other human beings, their emotions, intentions, thoughts, and actions. These

interpersonal skills are extremely important because they make communication in large, complex

societies possible. We have to be able to gauge what others think and feel in given situations,

otherwise we would not be able to communicate with them" (Nunning 44). This skill set is what

makes us human – the ability to "read" others, communicate, understand, reflect, and empathize.

When we read fictional works, we are able to simulate the thoughts and feelings of the

characters. Reading *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, we enter the minds of at least ten different

characters providing us with a profound insight into the human psyche. From Darcy's perceived

pride, to Lydia's impetuousness, to Elizabeth's prejudice – we can analyze the motivations and

decisions of each character leading us to reflect on our ourselves and on others leading to

improved social ability. Though the historical and cultural contexts may differ, these characters

are modelled after real people that we can encounter in our own lives. If we can understand

reasons for underlying behaviors and attitudes, we can better cope and respect those around us.

As instructors, it is important that students understand the importance of reading literature and

how it can directly benefit them. So, when our students ask - "Why read literature? The answer,

in a nutshell, was that it made you a better person" (Eagleton 58). Literature is based on real

lives, real settings, and real situations—regardless of fictionality added. The more we read, the

more we experience and learn. The more we understand and accept, the better we become.

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Grappling with Consumerism by Tapping into Freud's Uncanny:

Using Coraline for a PBL Approach

1. Introduction

With the ever-increasing barrage of games and media, finding the perfect novels to pair with my units is critical to capturing the interest of my class. Just as importantly, I want to provide them with lessons that develop social & personal awareness that ultimately helps them grow as people. So, I have three main criteria that I target when deciding on a novel to springboard my project-based learning (PBL) units. First, the novel should engross all of my students and pull them into the plot. Second, the characters and themes should directly relate to their lives. And third, the novel should leave them with more questions than answers; in other words, the text should allow students to develop driving questions to further research and develop their understanding of themselves and the world around them though PBL. One such book is *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, which can be used in the classroom to help students grapple with the ever-widening attraction and influence of consumerism. Not only does it influence their identities and communities, but it has far-reaching implications that can be felt globally.

Usually with the first read, *Coraline* does not seem like the type of novel that has the potential to be transformational, but if we apply literary theory to the text, the underlying meaning surfaces and builds the basis of a powerful project. The first theory we need to explore is Freud's uncanny, which is loosely defined as a type of frightening that affects the human psyche that can be developed in literature through doppelgangers, severed limbs, loss of eyesight, and wish fulfillment. In the novel, much of this fear stems from Coraline's

dissatisfaction with her life and her unrealistic desires. From here, we can begin to explore elements of consumerism and its effects on identity and relationships through a Marxist lens, which examines the cultural industry of materialism. By applying the theories of the uncanny and Marxism to the reading of *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, consumerism can be examined in the ELA classroom to establish engaging PBL projects that promote personal and social growth in middle school students.

2. What is the Uncanny?

Literature has a long history with the gothic, with the dark and the uncertain. Freud certainly sought to further understand the inner workings and motivations of the human mind through analyzing literature from a perspective of aesthetics—not the beautiful, but the grotesque. Through the union of aesthetics and psychoanalysis, Freud defined the uncanny as something familiar that becomes frightening. He theorizes that this fright is brought upon by repressed fears and anxieties that manifest in the uncanny. Freud developed his theory of the uncanny by studying the etymology of the German word *heimlich.* Heimlich has multiple meanings including homely, familiar, and friendly --- while, ironically, at the same time -- it can mean concealed, kept from sight, and withheld from others. On closer examination, Freud concludes that "…among its different shades of meaning the word 'heimlich' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, 'unheimlich'. What is heimlich thus comes to be unheimlich… on one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" (Freud 827). According to Freud, whether we look at the historical origins of the word 'uncanny' or collect all of the elements that create the 'uncanny' – the outcome is the same definition, "…the uncanny is that class of frightening which leads back to what is old and long familiar" (825). David Rudd, Emeritus Professor of Children's Literature at the University of

Bolton, suggests that "Gaiman has given us a quite overt fictional representation of the Freudian uncanny – not merely by invoking the motifs that Freud enumerates in his essay, but by animating the very etymology of the German term, *das Unheimliche*: *heimlich* or homely" (161). Clearly, the enchantment of *Coraline* lies within arousing and revealing hidden fears that create a cathartic experience for young adult readers.

3. Why *Coraline*?

Coraline embodies the uncanny: "It is undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror…" (Freud 825). It is this element that entices young adult readers to the text. This could be because *Coraline* deals with the desires of every adolescent–wish fulfilment, round-the-clock entertainment, "perfect" parents, and more.   But Gaiman makes the reader realize the dark-side of these wants and desires by tapping into their inner-fears through the uncanny, making the reader realize, as Coraline did: "I don't want whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted, just like that, and it didn't mean anything? What then?" (65). Coraline has also reached acclaim with an adult audience as well; Dr. Chloe G. Buckley, a senior lecturer in English and film at Manchester Metropolitan University states, "The critical essays so far published argue, in part, for Coraline's importance in a literary canon of children's fiction, reading through psychoanalysis and the uncanny as a 'monumental' work – that is one that is self-evident and self-enclosed" (58).

In the story, Coraline is the eleven-year-old protagonist who must choose between the "real" world where she is bored, unfulfilled, and largely ignored by the grown-ups in her life. Whiling exploring her new apartment, she finds a door to the "other" world where all of her needs and desires are fulfilled, and she is the center of attention. Things are not quite what they seem in the other world as there is one stark difference, her parents and neighbors have shiny

black button eyes. This other world comes at a cost that Coraline is not willing to make, and she must gain the courage and independence to escape the realm with her family.

4. **Psychoanalysis of the Uncanny in *Coraline***

In the story, the reader first experiences the *unheimlich* when Coraline enters an alternate world through a door in her own house.   Previously, bricks had sealed off the passageway, but interestingly enough when Coraline comes back to investigate further she finds the corridor open -- the bricks have ominously vanished. Despite the warnings of Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, tea leaf readings, the crazy man upstairs's message from the mice, and her own feeling that she is doing something wrong, she still goes through the door. These authority figures have lost their credibility in the eyes of Coraline, and she lets her curiosity get the best of her without considering the consequences.   These eerie warnings only increase the feelings of uncanniness as "Coraline walked down the corridor uneasily. There was something very familiar about it… She knew where she was: she was in her own home. She hadn't left. She shook her head, confused" (Gaiman 18). This blurring of reality has an "uncanny effect" on the reader (Freud 14). This other part of the house she has discovered is much more interesting than her "real" home – her room is painted pink and green, she has a toy box filled with animated toys, and she meets a talking cat. It is everything that she desires but is seemingly missing from her life. Through the "over accentuation of psychical reality in comparison to physical reality" (Freud 14), a child's imagination can make the imaginary seem real.   Gaiman makes it ambiguous whether this other realm is real or merely a figment of her imagination. Not only is her environment questionable, but her parents and neighbors as well, leaving the reader wondering about their existence.

The uncanny develops further as the reader meets her "other" mother (Beldam) and other father who strongly resemble her own parents—doppelgangers—but unlike her "real" parents, these parents are more attractive, ready and eager to cook her favorite meals, play games with her, and fulfill her every wish as described. This is evident in the passage that follows:

Figure 1 The Other Mother from Neil Gaiman, *Coraline* (Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 15.

"Every meal will be a thing of joy," whispered the voice from under the old man's hat.

"Nothing will pass your lips that does not entirely delight you."

"And could I have Day-Glo green gloves to wear, and yellow Wellington boots in the shape of frogs?" asked Coraline.

"Frogs, ducks, rhinos, octopuses—whatever you desire. The world will be built new for you every morning. If you stay here, you can have whatever you want." (Gaiman 65)

But, there is certainly something uncanny here. The doppelgangers on the other side are not quite what they seem. There is one stark, startling, and uncanny difference: Coraline's other parents—and her other neighbors—have black and shiny, button-like eyes. For Coraline to be a permanent part of this alternate world "forever and always" (Gaiman 29), she must give up her own eyes for button eyes:

On a china plate on the kitchen table was a spool of black cotton, and a long silver needle, and, beside them, two large black buttons.

"I don't think so," said Coraline.

"Oh, but we want you to," said her other mother. "We want you to stay. And it's

just a little thing.

"It won't hurt," said her other father. (Gaiman 27)

Coraline backs up slowly, shocked and frightened, not willing to give up her eyes. There is "no doubt the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached … to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes" (Freud 6). As the story goes, "They were looking at her with their black button eyes. Or at least she thought they were looking at her. She couldn't be sure" (Gaiman 29). Readers are left feeling the uncanny most distinctly.

Not only that, but the uncanny is also established by taking ordinary objects like buttons and turning them into something dreadfully frightening. Coraline makes several eerie references to the button eyes of the doppelgangers, "...there was something hungry in the old man's button eyes that made Coraline feel uncomfortable" (Gaiman 21). "It was hard to read expressions into those black button eyes, but Coraline thought that her other mother looked hungry, too" (Gaiman 53). Through these descriptions, it is clear that Coraline sees the button eyes like a mask; she is unable to "read" their emotions, making them not quite human. For her, eyes act like windows to the soul signifying that state of being alive, real. The palpable fear that Gaiman creates when her other parents offer her the button eyes is utterly *unheimlich.* According to Freud, a repressed fear that is common to most children is the fear of damaging or losing one's eyes…often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated" (7). Castration can be thought of symbolically, rather than literally, as the loss of power or the loss of one's self. The "other" mother is the castrating force in the story that seeks to absorb Coraline's humanity by taking her eyes. The "other" mother feels threatened by Coraline's eyes which symbolize Coraline's identity and individuality, because they may "reveal that which the other mother wants to remain hidden" (Rudd 164) to maintain her power.

Not only are there doubles of her parents, but of her neighbors as well. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are returned to their youth to perpetually perform for an audience of chocolate eating dogs. The crazy man upstairs invites Coraline to watch him feed his circus rats. It seems as if the entire realm is created to entertain Coraline. Doubles are a common element in *Coraline* and suggest that "such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which holds sway to the mind of the child" (Freud 9). The doubling acts as insurance for the ego, the key to immortality - when in actuality is "becomes the ghastly harbinger of death" (Freud 9). To further this idea, wish giving is a common element in children's stories, which also arouses the uncanny. The wisher always wishes for their desires, which can include immortality, but consequently - wish giving seems to always go awry for the wisher leading to disaster. This idea of wish giving coincides with the "other" mother's statement, "You can stay here for ever and always" (Gaiman 27). She is offering Coraline immortality and wish fulfillment, but in reality, will slowly drain away her life, as Coraline's soul becomes the sustaining force for the "other mother" until it is completely depleted, leading to Coraline's inevitable mortality.

Another psychoanalytical interpretation of the reading could argue that the "other mother" could be a manifestation of Coraline's own desires and dissatisfaction —the "other mother" and the fantasy world can then be interpreted to be Coraline herself. Coraline's fantasy is then about realizing that *she* is the one being overly demanding of her parents and neighbors, everyone being sucked into her own orbit in her desire to be the center of attention (Rudd 167). Thus, we can read the idea of a double as a way to overcome the self-centeredness of childhood to develop into a mature, and thoughtful being capable of empathy by "burying her possessive side and coming to see the world afresh" (Rudd 167). Regardless of the interpretation, the double

instills the uncanny leaving its psychological imprints on the reader by allowing the reader to consider what his or her evil twin might look like. Everyone is familiar with themselves, but no one wants their worst fears about themselves to be exposed—a self that is unfamiliar— thus we can see the unheimlich at work on the psyche.

After her first encounter with her "other" parents, Coraline realizes that this different world is dangerous and returns to her real home. Upon her return, her parents are nowhere to be found. She spends two days alone depending on herself. During this time, she realizes how much she misses and loves her family. She understands that her parent's love is unconditional, while at the same time she understands that her "other" mother loves her too: "It was true: the other mother loved her. But she loved Coraline as a miser loves money, or a dragon loves its gold. In the other mother's button eyes, Coraline knew that she was a possession, nothing more. A tolerated pet, whose behavior was no longer amusing" (Gaiman 58). With the help of the nameless cat, she realizes the Beldam has taken them into the other world, the other world in which her eyesight, and thus her humanity, are at stake. It could be interpreted that "Coraline has brought her unconscious fears and desires into consciousness, where they almost destroy her" (Rudd 167). Nonetheless, Coraline gathers all of her courage to go back into the other realm to face her fears and save her parents. On her journey back, she tells the black cat the story of the time her father saved her from a swarm of wasps and took the stings as she fled. Then, how he had the courage to go back and face the wasps to get his glasses. She uses the anecdote to parallel her own situation helping her to face her fears: "I'm going back for them because they are my parents. And if they noticed I was gone, I'm sure they would do the same for me" (36). The uncanny fear associated with loss of eyesight is not limited only to sight in *Coraline* but includes the loss of power, identity, and family.

By the end of the story, Coraline overcomes her fears and successfully outwits the Beldam,

rescues her parents, the trapped ghost children (who were previous victims of the Beldam), and

Figure 2 The Beldam's Severed Hand from Neil Gaiman, *Coraline* (Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 79.

herself as well. Her new concept of self can be seen when she "performs

childhood, using it as a masquerade" (Rudd 167), by creating a tea party

for her dolls over the deep, old well to fool the Beldam's severed hand—

another element of the uncanny— that followed them from the other

realm to fall in.   She gains power and individuality as she depends on

herself, and only herself, to escape the clutches of her "other mother",

highlighting the theme that teenagers desire to create an identity all one's own, for being a self

apart from their parents' version. In the story, fear is a driving force behind her transformation.

According to Sam Leith, English author, journalist and literary editor of The Spectator, "a dose

of fear is good for children, it helps them grow" (22). This is undoubtedly true for Coraline,

through her uncanny experiences with the Beldam she develops her own identity and self-

confidence. Her parents and home have not changed, but she has. Even the crazy man upstairs,

Mr. Bobo realizes the change.

Figure 3 Coraline and her Parents from Neil Gaiman, *Coraline* (Harper Perennial, 2006), p. *74.*

Mr. Bobo was waiting for her in the driveway. He clapped her on

the shoulder.

"The mice tell me that all is good," he said. "They say that you are

our savior, Caroline."

"It's Coraline, Mister Bobo," said Coraline. "Not Caroline.

Coraline."

"Coraline," said Mr. Bobo, repeating her name to himself

with wonderment and respect.

"Very good, Coraline." (Gaiman 85)

She now sees the world in a new light, fresh and full of promise. "Normally, on the night before

the first day of term, Coraline was apprehensive and nervous. But, she realized, there was

nothing left about school that could scare her anymore" (Gaiman 86). She was able to escape the

grasp of the Beldam's world, but unfortunately today, many children are sucked into a similar

world of consumerism unknowingly.

5. Marxist Interpretation of the Uncanny

Now that we've established that Coraline is an example of the uncanny, we can better

understand the text using a Marxist frame. We can see in today's world, mass culture and

consumerism have become like the Coraline's other realm that attempts to away free will,

individuality, and the perception of reality. The culture industry tries to control what we think,

what we buy, what we watch, and even what we believe—trapping the unwary in a web of

deceit.   In the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno suggest, "The stronger the

positions of the cultural industry become, the more summarily it can deal with consumers' needs,

producing them, controlling them, disciplining them, and even withdrawing amusement: no

limits are set to cultural progress of this kind" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1119). These needs are

produced by an unending stream of images that persuade people to buy that which they don't

need. There is always something newer, something better.   It is an unending cycle – yet it never

brings about true happiness or satisfaction. "In consumer society, natural needs or desires have

been buried under, if not totally eliminated by, desires stimulated by cultural discourses, which

tell us what we want" (Baudrillard 1554).   Influential "beautiful" people (i.e., models, athletes,

journalists, actors, etc.) are used to further the capitalistic agenda, people who have been masked

and molded to fit into an ideal look of perfection. Horkheimer and Adorno further describe such

a person as "…the film star with whom one is meant to fall in love with is from the outset a copy of himself (Horkheimer & Adorno 1118). These people whom we look to for information and entertainment are not themselves but have been molded by the industry to be ideal images that consumers admire and longingly wish to become and imitate.

In Baudrillard's essay "The Precession of Simulacra" he describes how the sign has taken over the things that are signified, leaving reality behind. Consumers are "caught up in the 'precession of simulacra' that kills everything real and replaces it with fabricated models" (Baudrillard 1555). People are trying to live lives that have already been dictated by movies and TV, thus eliminating any real opportunity to authentically experience anything for themselves. As a result of being inundated with these simulated images and messages, consumers lose their imaginations and their ability to think for themselves. Thus, the consumer becomes sheep-like, following the crowd and losing their own identity in the process.

In *Coraline,* the ideals of Baudrillard, Horkheimer, and Adorno are allegorically illustrated through Gaiman's interpretation of the uncanny. When she enters the alternate world, Coraline notices things are more interesting. The food is better, the entertainment is better, the decorations are better, and even the toys are better – or so they seem. These images that surround her are a means of advertisement, enticing her to become a permanent member of this world. Although this looks like the perfect world for Coraline, it is an illusionary world or "bad copy" created by her other mother to lure Coraline into her trap.

Here, her other mother can be viewed metaphorically as the culture industry, and Coraline is the unwary consumer. Her "other" father acts like the "film actor," his charismatic personality is much more appealing than that of her real father, further reeling her into the trap. Beldam is working hard to lure her into this illusionary world of unending wants and desires.

Figure 4 The Beldam in her true form from Neil Gaiman, *Coraline* (Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 57.

She creates an illusion of reality, a hyperreality, that looks better than Coraline's present life. The "other" mother can be seen as the embodiment of the "precession of the simulacra that kills everything real and replaces it with fabricated models" (Horkheimer & Adorno 1119) This is ubiquitous in the advertising industry. For example, an ad for a popular soft drink will use thin and beautiful people having fun while drinking the product. Thus, creating the illusion the product itself brings about happiness and beauty. The consumer will be inundated with these images until he or she believes the images as true. While in reality, it is an outright fabrication, if a consumer drinks the soft drink regularly, he or she will most likely become unhealthy, overweight, and miserable. The industry loves to portray false claims that are far from reality. "The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises" (Horkheimer & Adorno 1117). This plays out in the story as Coraline is swept away by her "other" mother's attention, love, and desire to fulfill all of her wants and desires. She soon realizes that there are strings attached to the lure of the industry. To be a part, she must give up her eyes for button eyes. Here, this can be seen as giving up one's identity and power. Coraline boldly states, "I don't want whatever I want…What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted? Just like that, and it didn't mean anything" (Gaiman 65). Coraline is not willing to give up her sight, individuality, and entire being to the "culture industry" where

"...the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned. Pseudo individuality is rife" (Adorno & Horkheimer 1124). When Coraline turns against her "other" mother, she is thrown into a mirror where she is trapped and meets the other ghost children who fell before her. Once she began to question authority, she was no longer accepted by her "other" mother.

Interestingly, the Beldam is portrayed as a spider at the end of the story in Henry Selick's animated version of *Coraline*, which aligns perfectly to how the culture industry lures consumers into sticky, inescapable web of wants and desires – inevitably losing

Figure 5 Coraline caught in the Beldam's web from Henry Selick, *Coraline (2009).*

themselves and their grasp of reality when caught. At the end of the story, she triumphs over the Beldam and finds joy and satisfaction in her life. She realizes the cost of attaining happiness through materialism is meaningless. Through the uncanny, Gaiman creates an allegorical tale that walks the reader through the problem of the culture industry and warns readers about the danger of blindly following their desires. Although most teens will not read into this with a Marxist lens without coaching, the theme is evident: be happy with what you have and with who are. It is a powerful, universal message that is especially important in today's media-driven society.

6. The Effects on the Adolescent Psyche

The way Gaiman reveals messages of consumerism and identity using the uncanny have critics divided over the appropriateness of *Coraline* for young readers. Some argue that it is too

frightening (Gooding 390), while others praised *Coraline* for its uncanniness that reaches children's cores, providing therapeutic relief to the challenges of childhood: "Though Rudd and Gooding acknowledge and explore the complexities inherent in psychoanalytic theory, the readings of the novel [Coraline] that they advance both return to an insistence that children's literature can and ought to provide a vital function in a child's psychic development" (Buckley 60). Coates, another prominent critic, suggests that books like *Coraline* "may help children cope with those traumas in an indirect fashion" that are inescapable (77). For example, in *Coraline,* she must learn to cope with moving, which can be difficult, leaving behind that which is familiar and going to the unfamiliar. Coraline tries to cope by keeping herself busy exploring and conversing with her neighbors. Gaiman also places Coraline in situations in which she is often "overlooked and ignored" (Buckley 70) which almost all children can feel when caught up with adults thus, allowing them to make a connection with Coraline and with their own lives. In the story, the neighbors keep mispronouncing Coraline's name as Caroline, despite her efforts to correct them. When she goes shopping with her mom for school clothes, she asks for Day-Glo green gloves, but she gets an oversized hoodie. Lastly, Coraline's mother asks her questions but does not bother to listen to the answers. Since the grown-ups seem so oblivious to her presence, she doesn't consider their warnings about imminent danger, she questions their authority, and continues her quest for the "interesting." This is a prominent theme in children's literature as it directly aligns with childhood experiences in which the child disobeys an authority figure only to suffer the consequences of their actions. Rudd states that *Coraline* connects with the young reader who needs to be "recognized in [her] own right rather than be ignored on the one hand or stifled on the other" (160). Buckley confirms this notion, stating, "Coates analysis of *Coraline* reads the novel as a response to a demand made by children themselves: it feeds their appetite for

images evoking childhood as it is actually experienced" (70). Readers live vicariously through Coraline's adventure and can question their own decisions and reactions if they were placed in similar circumstances. It becomes a safe social laboratory, where one can question oneself and, in the process, reveal hidden emotions, misconceptions, and biases.

7. *Coraline* **through PBL**

The following section outlines the instructions for how to implement PBL with *Coraline*. By analyzing the text using these theories, educators can leverage the ideas in *Coraline* and take students far beyond what is in the text alone using a holistic approach to develop an entire unit. There are many different ways to approach the unit thematically, but the theories of Freud and Marx are demonstrated in Coraline so well, that teaching this text to students allows for further theoretical discoveries.

In order to make connections to the text more digestible for students, and to make sure they are fully engaged, teachers will probably want to begin with an entry event – an activity that engages students in the theme using a real-world approach. For *Coraline*, teachers should consider providing students with a completely free class, allowing them to choose to do whatever they want. For example, students can choose to watch a class movie, catch up on work, eat, socialize, use their cell-phones (if allowed by school policy), etc. Then, with about fifteen minutes remaining before the end of the period, engage students in a discussion about desires and wishes. Prompt students with questions like: What if school or life was like this every day? What would happen? How would it affect your personality? Your identity? Your community? Be sure to play devil's advocate if students are having trouble seeing the negative implications.

Then, over the course of approximately a week, engage students with nonfiction texts that highlight the idea of consumerism and its effects to build background knowledge. Use a variety

of articles that approach the topic from multiple perspectives to give students a broad understanding of the implications of consumerism. Commonlit.org and Newsela.org are useful resources to locate informational texts at multiple reading levels. Close reading, reflective journal entries, roleplaying, and most importantly discussion are effective learning activities to engage students in the material and to develop reading comprehension skills.

Before beginning the novel, introduce students to the idea that novels can be read from many different points-of-view and that these are called critical lenses or literary theories. Ask students, how might different people relate to a text like a poor person, a woman, someone from another culture, or with a disability? Would they have the same understanding or interpretation of the story? Once students show a general understanding, introduce the two specific theories of the uncanny and Marxist critical lenses.

I recommend starting with the picture book "The Green Ribbon" by Alvin Schwartz for discussions on the uncanny and "Cinderella" translated by Marcia Brown for a brief Marx discussion. By using picture books, students can gain a basic understanding that will develop as they move through various texts. Moving on from picture books, short stories and poetry can further their understanding. Additional works that align may include "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde (short story) and "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein (poetry). During the readings, include mini-lessons that align with the targeted standards, but at the same time, are tied in with discussions and assignments that focus on the various facets of consumerism through the various literary lens discussed.

This can be accomplished effectively through character analysis and evaluation, which is the focus of Common Core's "Key Ideas & Details" standards for literature. Role playing and "What would you do?" scenarios help students internalize the characters and the decisions that

they face, pulling the readers into the text and allowing them to make larger and more lasting connections. To make connections to theory, choose specific passages that clearly illustrate an element of the uncanny and Marxism, and have students perform a close read with a partner or small group. After the close reading, have students come together as a whole group to discuss their findings. Jigsaw this approach by giving every group a different passage to analyze and present in order to emphasize the analysis of explicit and implicit statements (Common Core Standard RL.1).

Once students have further explored the consumerism through the uncanny and Marxism through at least one literary text, it is time to choose one angle to further develop through sustained inquiry. As individuals or groups, students develop a driving question that aligns with a major concept of the story to guide their projects. For example:

- How does consumerism affect the environment/ people/ me?

- How can I unplug to lessen the influence of consumerism?

- Does consumerism define who I am?

- How can I counter the effects of consumerism?

- How can I help others who have negatively affected by consumerism?

During this inquiry, all of the Common Core standards for informational texts can be addressed, although it is advisable to focus on a core set for each project to ensure mastery. Additionally, Common Core's Writing standards for research should also be explored during this time by developing mini-lessons about the basics of research. Using a data bases like EBSCO and DISCUS, key word searches, quotations, primary/secondary researching, basic MLA formatting & citation, etc. should be peppered throughout this phase of PBL. Throughout this process,

students need to consider ways to effectively present their projects and to whom they will be presenting or sharing their information.

  Finally, students will transform their research into a presentation or action. While students have the choice to present in a way of their own choosing, they should be directed to choose the most effective formats for the chosen audience. The possibilities for presentation format are endless, but some ideas include video, blog, website, infographic, animation, picture book, letters, editorials, speeches, skits/plays, etc. While these methods certainly spread awareness, action can be made by creating fundraising campaigns, volunteering, participating in a demonstration, creating contests, etc.   Regardless of the method, students see first-hand the power they have to instill change in themselves and the world around them. While at the same time, they develop 21st century skills including creativity, critical thinking, media & technology literacy, and many more. When students focus on topics that interest them and are allowed flexibility in how and to whom they present their learning—students become intrinsically motivated as the learning is not be reduced simply to an assignment for a grade. The learning is owned by the students with a purpose beyond themselves and the teacher.

8. Final Thoughts

  Literature is critical to the growth and development of young adult readers, especially in the classroom. It explores hidden emotions and desires that can only come about when connecting to others in similar circumstances, whether fictional or nonfictional. Using *Coraline* helps students grow as individuals as Gaiman focuses on those experiences that tend to be universal to all young adult readers in a way that appeals to his audience by using mechanisms of the uncanny. According to Rudd, "Uncanny is particularly helpful in explaining both the text's

appeal, and its creepy uneasiness. Namely, our fears about existence and identity as separate beings: our worry that we will either not be noticed (being invisible and isolated), or we are completely consumed by the attention of another" (Rudd 159). Students can connect with *Coraline* on many levels, as it follows the growth and development of the title character from being an egocentric child seeking to be the center of attention into a self-confident and self-reliant eleven-year-old girl who has learned to appreciate what she has.

Through her terrifying ordeal, Coraline has overcome her dark side by realizing the importance of the nonmaterial –friendship, family, and courage. Nick Midgely, associate professor at UCL and a child psychotherapist, supports this analysis by stating, the uncanny"...makes clear the way in which confronting the terrifying and the horrific is an important aspect of emotional development" (131).   This development occurs when readers compare themselves against Coraline – wondering whether they share the same feelings or whether they would respond in a similar fashion. This wondering as they read helps students grow personally and socially. Gaiman's use of the uncanny to highlight consumerism reveals the hidden fears and anxiety that tend to lurk within adolescences to help them cope with the horror that can be found in themselves and others.

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Project #3 - Leadership in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A PBL Teaching Unit

1. Rationale

I have developed this unit using a mix of student-centered and teacher-centered approaches—for Honor's level middle school students or incoming high school freshman—with little to no experience with Shakespearean works. My goal with project-based learning (PBL) is always to make sure that the core of the unit is relevant to the lives and interests of my students by giving them voice and choice through authentic learning experiences. Realizing that leadership is a critical issue at the high school level and knowing that—at this developmental stage—following the crowd culture is an overpowering temptation that can have harmful consequences, I use the themes of leadership and individuality to frame our discussion of Shakespeare, as students will see both in the tragedy of *Julius Caesar*.

Each of my PBL projects for my English Language Arts classes is composed of four stages that extend the entire quarter. First, students engage in introductory activities that spark curiosity and develop background knowledge through nonfiction media. This usually lasts five to seven class periods and engages students in a real-world way to the material.   The second stage can last for several weeks where students explore literary works to develop a driving question for further sustained inquiry. The third stage encompasses the research of nonfiction media to answer the driving questions. The fourth stage also lasts for two to three weeks where students develop presentations that illustrates their discovery to an authentic audience.

This project includes the first two stages of a PBL unit answering the student-created driving question: How do we envision leadership? During the first stage, students will participate in several activities for this unit that include an interactive anticipation guide, historical documentary, and discussion. Then, students will briefly explore the historical figure

of Julius Caesar and Shakespearian English to develop the background knowledge needed to understand the context of the play and its language. During the second stage, students will read and analyze Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. During this time, students will explore the theme of leadership throughout the play by focusing on rhetorical strategies and nuances of the language.

In class, instructional strategies include many student-centered activities to develop critical thinking including discussion, cooperative activities, mini-lessons, close reading, and performance. Flip Grid, an online social platform enabling video discussion, will be regularly used as homework to allow students to share their ideas and insights based on readings. For my students' major assessment, I wanted to give them voice and choice, so they brainstormed how they would like to show me their mastery of their objectives. They came up with music video, parody, iMovie trailer, and modern-day re-enactment, but ultimately decide to write their own modern-day script and perform their creation. Their chosen activity helped them to focus on the events in the text, the language, and characterization to develop their scripts. My goal with these learning activities is to allow students to take hold of their own learning through collaborative and interactive learning experiences.

II. Supplemental Materials

Supplementary material is included to aid in the delivery of the unit including assessment guides, graphic organizers, vocabulary lists, close reading passages, and rubrics for each assessment.

Academic Level: High School – English I

Timeline: 4 weeks

Objectives: This unit will cover:

- Historical and social context of Julius Caesar

- Close reading strategies to translate Shakespearean English into modern-day language

- Elements and writing style of Shakespearean tragedies

- In-depth characterization and thematic analysis of leadership in *Julius Caesar*

Essential Questions:

1. How does leadership fail or succeed in the play?

2. What constitutes a weak leader versus a strong leader?

3. Are power and ambition corrupting forces?

Texts/ Media: Newsela "Primary Sources: The Assassination of Julius Caesar", *Julius* Caesar by William Shakespeare, Commonlit "The Life of Julius Caesar", TedED "Shakespeare Insults", TedED "Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter", TedED "The Assassination of Julius Caesar", Netflix "The Roman Empire – Julius Caesar: Master of Rome", Prestwick House "10 Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare", "What Types of Plays Did Shakespeare Write?"

Graded Assessments:

- Top Ten List – Choose a character from the play and create a top ten list for either being the best leader or worst leader. 20%

- Memorization and Analysis of significant excerpt (15-20 lines) from the play (Individual) – 20%

- Culminating Group Project – Modern-Day Version of the Play 40%

- Participation/ Homework – 20%

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Contextualize the historical setting and social norms of *Julius Caesar*

- Translate Shakespearean language into modern English

- Analyze characters & themes to identify key elements of a leadership

- Analyze the literary & rhetorical devices for aesthetic & persuasive value

Curriculum Map

Lesson	Daily Class Activities	Homework
#1	**Entry Event -- What makes an effective leader?** • **Brainstorm:** Poll Everywhere • **Discuss:** Anticipation Guide • **Watch:** "Roman Empire – Julius: Master of Rome" Netflix • **Reflect – Journal Entry**: What qualities made Julius Caesar an effective leader? Ineffective? What is your vision of an exceptional leader?	
#2	**Informational Texts – Who was Julius Caesar?** • **Read:** "Primary Sources: The Assassination of Julius Caesar" and "The Life of Julius Caesar" • **Watch:** "The Assassination of Julius Caesar" • **Complete:** Graphic Organizer & Discuss	
#3	**Informational Texts – How did Shakespeare Write?** • **Research & Present:** Who was Shakespeare? (Small Group) • **Read:** "What Types of Plays Did Shakespeare Write?" • **Watch:** TedED "Shakespeare Insults" & TedED "Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter" • **Listen**: Mini-Lecture - Iambic Pentameter in *Julius Caesar* • **Practice**: Choose 3-5 lines spoken by Caesar and notate stressed/unstressed syllables and iambs. Recite. (Partners)	
#4	**Informational Texts – How Can I Understand Shakespeare?** • **Jigsaw & Present:** "10 Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare" (Small Group) Assign: *Julius Caesar* Monologue Memorization	1. Listen & Follow along to Act I 2. Annotate text 3. Flip Grid Reaction

#5	*Julius Caesar* – **Act I** • **Read Aloud:** Excerpts from Act I • **Mini-Lecture & Guided Close Reading:** Literary Devices • **Guided Practice:** Identify 3-5 literary devices from Act I. Rephrase in your own words & analyze. (Partner) • **Discussion:** Why do you think Shakespeare uses puns at the beginning of Act I? How does comedy fit into a tragedy? Which is more enjoyable, listening to the play or reading the play? Why do you think so? Which examples of figurative language stand out most to you? Why? How does it affect you as a reader?	1. Listen & Follow along to Act II 2. Annotate Text 3. Flip Grid Reaction
#6	*Julius Caesar* – **Acts I - II** • **Read Aloud:** Excerpts from Act II • **Mini-Lecture & Guided Close Reading:** Rhetorical Devices • **Guided Practice:** Identify 3-5 rhetorical devices from Act II. Rephrase in your own words and analyze. (Partner) • **Discussion:** Which characters seem to have the strongest sense of rhetoric? How does this reveal his/her character and level of influence? Which example stood out the most to you? Why? How does iambic pentameter have a rhetorical effect?	1. Listen & Follow along to Act III 2. Annotate Text 3. Flip Grid Reaction
#7	*Julius Caesar* – **Acts I - III** • **Read Aloud:** Excerpts from Act III • **Mini-Lecture & Guided Close Reading:** Characterization • **Complete:** Characterization graphic organizers for Caesar, Brutus, Antony, and Cassius. **Discuss & Reflect**: How would you describe Brutus? Caesar? Cassius? What are their major flaws? Which would make the best leader? The worst? Did power corrupt all of these men? How do loyalty and betrayal fit into their character traits? How were the women characterized? Why?	1. Listen & Follow along to Act IV & V 2. Annotate text 3. Flip Grid Reaction
#8	*Julius Caesar* – **Acts I-V** • **Read Aloud:** Excerpts from Act IV • **Mini-Lecture & Guided Close Reading:** Theme Analysis • **Discussion:** What can we learn about leadership from the characters in the play? How can we apply these lessons to our lives? How do they connect to the world/ leaders around us?	1. Listen & Follow along to Act IV & V 2. Annotate text 3. Flip Grid Response
#12-13	**Top Ten Lists – Best Leader/ Worst Leader** • **Engage:** Davis Letterman's Top 10 Lists • **Model**: Real-world model -- "Weighed Down by Too Much Cash?" By Rick Reilly. Teacher-created model: "How to be the worst teacher" • **Assessment**: Review list requirements • **Think-Pair-Share:** Brainstorm ideas for lists with a partner • **Compose:** In-class writing **Assign:** Top Ten Letter	1. (Optional) Flip Grid Trouble Shooting Discussion for Letters

#14	**Top Ten Lists – Best Leader/ Worst Leader** • **Mini-Lecture –** Recursive Nature of Writing • **Compose –** In-class writing • **Peer & Teacher Conferences:** Revise and edit letters	1. (Optional) Flip Grid Trouble Shooting Discussion for Letters
#15 - 16	**Culminating Group Project – Modern-Day Version** • **Compose –** Students will create scripts for their assigned act.	
#17	**Culminating Group Project – Modern-Day Version** • **Rehearse –** Students will practice their presentations	
#18-19	**Presentations** • **Reenactments** • **Monologue Recitations**	
#20	**Reflections** • **Leadership** • **Learning Experiences**	

IV. Student Assessment Guides

I. Top Ten List

Description: Everyone loves top ten lists! They are effective in quickly providing information in a humorous and persuasive manner.   Your job is to create a list, "How to be the best leader" or a "How to be the worst leader" based on the play, *Julius Caesar* and the models we reviewed in class.

Directions: Your top ten list should be one to two pages, double-spaced. It should also include a brief introduction, your ten reasons (that are supported), and a brief conclusion. Choose one character and decide on ten reasons why that character would make the best leader or the worst leader based on cited textual evidence. For each reason, you need to cite the passage that supports your claim. Lastly, to spice up your assignment, include three rhetorical devices and three literary devices to include in your list. Remember – Your goal is to inform and persuade an audience of peers – so make sure you are speaking directly to them using a language and style that would appeal to students. Don't be afraid to have fun with it – but not too silly as to lose your ethos, or credibility as a writer.

Grading: This assignment will be worth 25% of your unit grade. You will be graded on your ideas, organization, word choice & style, content/ requirements, and the effectiveness of your rhetoric (achieving your goal and targeting your audience). Please refer to the rubric for details.

Due Dates: TBA

II. Memorization & Analysis

Description: What better way to really appreciate Shakespeare than to memorize a short excerpt. Ok, you can stop groaning now! Seriously, when we memorize lines of a text, we can intimately experience the language and make a connection with the words that can't be done in any other way. Plus, Shakespeare's work is meant to be performed. Even better, you begin to internalize the language so that Shakespeare begins to make sense without all that close reading, so just humor me. You will all get a chance to use your dramatic flair to present your memorization to the class.

Directions: Your job is to choose a significant passage of about 15-20 lines from a major character and commit it to memory. Choose an excerpt that is especially meaningful or powerful to you. Prepare your own modern-day translation for the passage and short analysis of the meaning.

Grading: This assignment will be worth 25% of your unit grade. You will be graded on your overall performance including your level of memorization and prosody. Your oral analysis will be graded based on the level of reflection ranging from superficial to in-depth. Please refer to the rubric for further details.

Due Dates: TBD

III. Culminating Group Project

Description: Many of the works of Shakespeare have been recreated for a modern audience. For example, *10 Things I Hate About You* is the modern-day version of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew.* For our final project with *Julius Caesar*, you get to be the stars and create your own modern-day tragedy based on the play. Each group will be assigned one of the five acts to rewrite and dramatize. You do not need to reenact the entire act; choose your favorite scene.

Directions: In groups of five, you will be assigned a scene to rewrite. Your job is to create a present-day representation of the play. It should align closely with the actual play but in modern English. You have to work cooperatively with your group and make sure everyone is carrying their fair weight of the project. I will be observing closely to see that you are listening to each other, providing constructive feedback, and revising and editing your work within your group. You will be given three class periods to write and rehearse your play before your final presentations. Additionally, I expect your script to emulate at least five writing strategies that Shakespeare utilizes in this play.

Grading: This assignment will be worth 25% of your unit grade. You will be graded on the alignment of your rendition to the actual play, script with emulations, your effort, cooperative participation, and performance. For more details, please see the rubric.

Due Dates: TBA

V. Reflection

This assignment was challenging, but enlightening. I always have a general outline of my unit before teaching, but nothing this detailed. My daily lessons are never planned out further than a week ahead, making it a challenge to create unity and to adhere to overall instructional goals. From the beginning of this assignment, I found myself researching how to write effective objectives and outcomes, as I wasn't sure what the difference was or how to word them in a clear, effective way.   Then having to lay out the outcomes, objectives, and daily activities in this unit plan made me constantly go back and forth, making sure everything aligned. I needed to make sure my daily activities and assessments aligned with my objectives. I double checked that all my activities led to the course outcomes. I questioned if my unit correlated with state standards. This process forced me to be more mindful of my planning and instructional choices and to realize some of the limitations of my current approach.

I hope my readers see that I try to use technology and a variety of teaching strategies that are mostly student-centered to engage my students and make learning as relevant as possible. My classes rely heavily on collaboration, discussion, and critical thinking to allow students to create and develop their own understanding. My favorite strategy (and my students as well) is using Flip Grid for homework; it works like an education social media site that allows students to record video messages, taking discussion to another level. I think an inherent weakness in this unit plan is my uncertainty with the level of the content and the amount of time allotted to complete activities. My experience is at the middle school level with daily 90-minute periods, so since I wanted to make this applicable to a wider audience I aligned this unit within a typical high school schedule which proved to be challenging. I referred to state standards in order to

make sure my lessons were grade-level appropriate, but I am still self-conscious in my decisions. In planning this unit, analyzing other unit plans as examples was the most helpful. I took away bits and pieces from each example and compiled my own version. While I still I have much room for improvement, this assignment was a huge leap in the right direction.

Appendix A

Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.7 Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4](#) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5](#) Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6](#) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7](#) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8](#) Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9](#) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Appendix B – Anticipation Guide

Julius Caesar Anticipation Guide

Below are some true-false statements that deal with the play *Julius Caesar*. Think about each statement and circle either true or false depending on your thoughts and feelings on the statement. Then, you need to write down a justification for why you chose true or false. Lastly, we will discuss your answers. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers!

T   F   It is sometimes acceptable to betray your friends.

T   F   Suicide is never justifiable.

T   F   If a political leader does something wrong, it is acceptable to get rid of him by any means necessary.

T   F   Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

T   F   No cause, political or otherwise, is worth dying for.

T   F   It is completely unacceptable to convince a close friend to do something dangerous.

T   F   The more success and power you have, the more people dislike you.

T   F   It is better to listen to the advice of your peers than that of your family/spouse.

T   F   In certain situations, it may be necessary for a political leader to bend or break the rules for the good of the country.

T   F   There is such a thing as fate.

T   F   Patriotism is bravery; rebellion against government is cowardly.

T   F   Personal morals and principles are more important than friendship.

T   F   Life without personal liberty is not worth living.

Appendix C – Graphic Organizer

Name:_____

Period:___

WAS BRUTUS JUSTIFIED IN KILLING CAESAR?

DIRECTIONS: DURING THE TED ED VIDEO, WRITE DOWN EVIDENCE THAT BRUTUS WAS JUSTIFIED IN KILLING JULIUS CAESAR AND WRITE DOWN EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS NOT.

EVIDENCE THAT BRUTUS WAS JUSTIFIED

EVIDENCE THAT BRUTUS WAS NOT JUSTIFIED

CAESAR

BRUTUS

WAS BRUTUS JUSTIFIED IN KILLING CAESAR? WHY OR WHY NOT? ANSWER IN ONE PARAGRAPH PROVIDING EVIDENCE FROM THE VIDEO.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix D: Literary Terms - [Quizlet](#)

Metaphor	"So well as I by reflection, I, your glass, Will modestly discover to yourself" (I.ii.68-69)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Symbol	"Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf" (I.ii.212)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Foreshadowing	"They shouted thrice. What was the last cry for? Why for that too. Was the crown offered him thrice? Ay, marry was't! and he put it by thrice..." (I.ii.225-228)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Verbal Irony	"I am glad That my weak words have struck but this much show Of fire from Brutus" (I.ii.175-178)	☆ 🔊 ✏️

Paradox	"Brutus, with himself at war" (I.ii.45)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Dramatic Irony	Cassius soliloque about how to trick Brutus with false letters (I.ii.301-315)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Allusion	"Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world Like a Colossus,..." (I.ii.135-136)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Alliteration	"Shake of their sterile curse" (I.ii.9)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Personification	"When could they say (till now) that talked of Rome That her wide walls encompassed but one man?" (I.ii.154-155)	☆ 🔊 ✏️

Iambic Pentameter	Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears! (III.ii.70)	☆ 🔊 ✏️
Foil	A character who is in most ways opposite to the main character (protagonist) or one who is nearly the same as the protagonist. The purpose of the foil character is to emphasize the traits of the main character by contrast only (Cassius to Brutus and Brutus to Mark Antony)	☆ 🔊 ✏️

CASSIUS

I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,

As well as I do know your outward favour.

Well, honour is the subject of my story.

I cannot tell what you and other men

Think of this life; but, for my single self,

I had as lief not be as live to be

In awe of such a thing as I myself.

I was born free as Caesar; so were you:

We both have fed as well, and we can both

Endure the winter's cold as well as he:

For once, upon a raw and gusty day,

The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,

Caesar said to me 'Darest thou, Cassius, now

Leap in with me into this angry flood,

And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,

Accoutred as I was, I plunged in

And bade him follow; so indeed he did.

The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it

With lusty sinews, throwing it aside

And stemming it with hearts of controversy;

But ere we could arrive the point proposed,

Caesar cried 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'

I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,

Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder

The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber

Did I the tired Caesar. And this man

Is now become a god, and Cassius is

A wretched creature and must bend his body,

If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.

He had a fever when he was in Spain,

And when the fit was on him, I did mark

How he did shake: 'tis true, this god did shake;

His coward lips did from their colour fly,

And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world

Did lose his lustre: I did hear him groan:

Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans

Mark him and write his speeches in their books,

Alas, it cried 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'

As a sick girl. Ye gods, it doth amaze me

A man of such a feeble temper should

So get the start of the majestic world

And bear the palm alone. (Julius Caesar 1.2.92-133)

Appendix F: Rhetorical Devices PPT Slides

JULIUS CAESAR, ACT III
RHETORICAL DEVICES

PARALLELISM

The use of components in a sentence that are grammatically the same; or similar in their construction, sound, meaning, or meter.

Example: "Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I offended." Act III, scene ii

ANTISTROPHE

A rhetorical device that involves the repetition of the same words at the end of consecutive phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs.

Example: repetition of the phrase "Brutus is an honourable man." Act III, scene ii

APPEALS: LOGICAL/LOGOS

A statement, sentence, or argument used to convince or persuade the targeted audience by employing reason or logic.

Example: Brutus's speech

APPEALS: ETHICAL/ETHOS

Ethos represents credibility, or an ethical appeal, which involves persuasion by the character involved.

Brutus's speech, "believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe…"

APPEALS: EMOTIONAL/PATHOS

Definition: A quality of an experience in life, or a work of art, that stirs up emotions of pity, sympathy, and sorrow.

Antony, "Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it; It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you. You are not wood, you are not stones, but men; And, being men, hearing the will of Caesar, It will inflame you, it will make you mad. 'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs; For, if you should, O, what would come of it!"

ANTITHESIS

Definition: A rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect.

Example: "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more." Act III, scene ii

VERBAL IRONY

Definition: When a speaker speaks something contradictory to what he intends to say. It is an intentional product of the speaker, and is contradictory to his/her emotions and actions.

Example: "For Brutus is an honourable man; So are they all, all honourable men" Antony's entire speech in Act III, scene ii

APOSIOPESIS

Definition: When the speaker becomes silent or breaks off unexpectedly due to overwhelming emotion.

Example: My heart is there in the coffin with Caesar/ And I must pause till it come back to me…

RHETORICAL QUESTION

Definition: A rhetorical question is asked just for effect, or to lay emphasis on some point being discussed, when no real answer is expected. A rhetorical question may have an obvious answer, but the questioner asks it to lay emphasis to the point.

Example: "Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?" Act III, scene ii

Appendix G – Characterization Graphic Organizer

Julius Caesar Characterization
Graphic Organizer

Directions: Analyze each of the main characters in Julius Caesar using the acronym STEAL. Be sure to cite all stated information using act, scene, and line(s). For example, Act I, Scene 2, Lines 45-48 would be written (1:2:45-48).

Character: _____

		Stated/ Explicit Information	Inferred/ Implicit Conclusions
S	**ays** What is the character saying through dialogue?		
T	**houghts** What is the character thinking?		
E	**ffect on others** How do others react to the character? How does the character influence others?		
A	**ctions** What does the character do? What decisions does the character make?		
L	**ooks** How is the character described? What is the character's demeanor?		

Appendix H: Rubric for Top Ten List

Concerns Missing Expectations	Criteria/ Learning Objectives	Advanced Above Expectations
	Content: • Evidence of character analysis beyond what is explicitly stated • Ten reasons that accurately depict the character as a leader or non-leader	
	Writing Elements & Style: • Clear organization, thoughtful ranking of reasons, and engaging introduction and conclusion • Accurate use of three literary devices • Effective word choice & tone	
	Rhetorical Strategies: • Audience, purpose, and exigence are addressed effectively • Attention to rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, and/or pathos) • Accurate use of three rhetorical devices	
	Citations: • Accurate & relevant citations for each reason	

Appendix I: Rubric for Poetry Memorization

Concerns Missing Expectations Comments:	Criteria/ Learning Objectives	Advanced Above Expectations Comments:
	Performance: • Memorization is fluent without any mistakes • Recitation reflects the intended tone & level of drama • Prosody is even and aligns with iambic pentameter	
	Translation: • Lines are translated accurately into modern English • Translation is original and not copied from another source •	
	Analysis: • In-depth understanding of passage that goes beyond what is explicitly stated	

Appendix J: Rubric for Culminating Group Project

Concerns Missing Expectations	Criteria/ Learning Objectives	Advanced Above Expectations
	Cooperation: • Each member works equally and respectively toward the collective goal • Members are observed discussing, listening, rethinking, revising, and sharing ideas cooperatively to develop all aspects of the project • Members put forth all of their effort to create an effective presentation	
	Time Management: • Each member uses the allotted time effectively • Careful scheduling is apparent and work in completed on time	
	Script: • Closely aligned with the Shakespearean script • Effective emulation of five Shakespearean Writing Strategies • Script is dramatic, engaging, and relevant • Script addresses audience & purpose	
	Performance: • Performance is well rehearsed and entertaining	

Multimodal Composition: Exploring Video Essays through PBL

I. Rationale

"Give pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, learning naturally results" – John Dewey

 Teaching in a small private school, my class sizes were small but contained a wide-range of ability levels. I was allotted a great deal of flexibility in how I taught; I was not required to follow a specific curriculum or textbook—nor was I required to give tests, midterms, or quizzes—as long as I based lessons on Common Core State Standards. Thus, all of my assessments were performance-based, or I should say project-based. I found that projects made my students deeply engage in the material and the human experience that came with it. It was here I discovered that the best assessment is that which brings about even more learning.

John Dewey's student-centered philosophy is the driving force behind my instructional strategies and is how I fell in love with Project-Based Learning (PBL). My goal with PBL is to develop projects that are relevant to students' lives, offer real-world applications, and intrinsically motivate students to learn. In PBL, students are given voice and choice, authentic audiences, and a purpose that goes beyond just a grade.

In the English Language Arts (ELA) classroom, each of my projects begin with an introduction to a topic woven in nonfiction texts, followed by a core novel & other literary works that illustrate the topic within the context of human experience. From their findings, students develop a driving question that guides their in-depth research into a culminating project for an authentic audience. These four stages are critical to a successful project as they allow students to examine a given topic from multiple perspectives.

This unit is the last stage of a larger nine-week long PBL project answering the question: How do we envision leadership? During the first stage, students are introduced to Shakespeare and Julius Caesar as historical figures using nonfiction articles, texts, and documentaries. Shakespeare is examined to contextualize the play for students to increase reading comprehension, while Julius Caesar is the main focus for exploring leadership. During the second stage, students read the play, *Julius Caesar*, analyzing the text for examples and nonexamples of leadership. Additionally, students explore several poems and short stories that explore similar themes. During the third stage, students research leadership from an angle of their choice including character traits, effective leaders of past and present, stories and real-life examples, how to become a leader, etc. The final stage – which I am outlining in this section of the portfolio – develops the culminating project which synthesizes all of their knowledge into one final project for presentation.

Having covered all of the major Common Core writing types: narrative, argumentative, and informational in the previous three quarters, I wanted to engage students in a culminating project that would allow them to choose a writing type, or combination of writing types that best suited the goals of their project. Providing students with voice and choice in the direction of their learning, they decided that the best way for them to accomplish their purpose and reach their targeted audience would be through creating videos in small groups.

Video essays - compositions using video to advance their argument or idea - could take the form of a narrative, a story that illustrates their vision of leadership. It could be an informational video about how to be a great leader or a persuasive piece that describes qualities of a leader and encourages the audience to attain those qualities. These are just a few examples; students were free to approach the project from any angle they chose as long as they answer the

question in a meaningful way. Following their decision, I created this curriculum plan to outline the steps needed for students to create effective video essays to illustrate their vision of leadership. Their final pieces would be uploaded to our school's YouTube channel (with parental consent) to reach our school and a potentially global audience.

Their choice of video essay fit perfectly into my learning objectives as it is versatile, allowing students to make the rhetorical decision to focus on one writing form or a combination of forms to best achieve their purpose. Not only that, but their choice mirrors the ever-increasing influence of video in their lives. Being able to understand the elements required to create a video—visual rhetoric, design & composition, and the affordances of media—are critical for them to analyze and evaluate what they are watching instead of being passive viewers.

II. Organization

This unit is organized in an incremental fashion to develop students' level of confidence working with multimodalities and to establish a base vocabulary. Each class will begin with a review of the previous day's lesson and highlight the best Flip Grid homework videos. Flip Grid[1] will be our go-to discussion platform for homework assignments where students will create a video response based on a prompt and reply to at least two other classmates. This way, the concepts are reinforced at home and the discussion can continue, breaking down the walls of the classroom.

After the review, I will introduce students to the new material through mini-lessons, readings, modeling, or video. Thereafter, students will apply the skills learned in class though discussion, cooperative group activities, or analysis. Starting at session nine, lessons will become much shorter as to provide students class time to plan and produce their video essays,

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[1] Flip Grid is a free social learning platform for educators that allows the discussion to continue after class through video posts and replies.

applying the skills they develop from each lesson. Additionally, little homework will be assigned to allow students to work on elements of their productions at home. The last three class sessions will be devoted solely to postproduction and distribution of compositions.

III. Supplemental Materials

In the appendices, I have included materials to assist in implementing this unit plan that directly align with the resources indicated. In the curriculum map, lessons that include supplementary materials are explained and noted with the corresponding appendix. These additions include graphic organizers, images, and readings to develop the basic knowledge students need to create video essays. Assignment directions, assessment sheets, proposal forms, logs, and conference sheets are used to guide the process of video making. These materials have been used and tested in my classroom and have been successful with my students.

IV. Curriculum Map

Unit Title: Presentation - How do you envision leadership?

Length: 3 Weeks (adjustable based on class progression)

Grade Level: Honors English I/II

Resources: *Writer/ Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* by Kristin Arola et.al.

Objectives:

By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Analyze video essays by identifying production choices and their effects.

- Identify and effectively work within the five modes of communication.

- Plan their productions using storyboards, asset charts, and timelines to conceptualize their project.

- Utilize a variety of camera shots and angles to meet their rhetorical needs.

- Develop a working vocabulary and an understanding of visual rhetoric & design.

- Navigate through the functions and features of iMovie.

- Incorporate the affordances of sound, video, and image to production.

- Apply peer feedback to projects to improve overall presentations.

- Align design choices with their audience and purpose.

- Collect sources and assets ethically with regards to citations, licenses, & permissions.

Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5

  Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or

  trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific

  purpose and audience.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6

  Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or

  shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other

  information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7

  Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including

  a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when

  appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of

  the subject under investigation.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8

  Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using

advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the

research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of

ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

- ▪ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9

    Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and

    research.

Assessments:

- Homework – 25% (Flip Grid responses)

- Production Process – 50% (Proposal, Storyboard, Asset Chart, Timeline, Daily Progress

    Log, Peer Conference Sheet, Revision Sheet)

- Final Product – 25%

Curriculum Map

Session	Topics & Activities	Online Resources	Homework
#1	**Rhetorical Situation** Minilesson: Rhetorical Situation with PPT. Application: Use handout and graphic organizer to analyze a commercial for rhetorical strategies (Appendix A).	Rhetorical Situation PPT – Purdue University Writing Lab Android Rock, Paper, Scissors Commercial	Watch Ted ED Rhetoric. Create a Flip Grid (FG) video that convinces teachers not to give homework. Use one of the appeals we learned about today without stating it. Have your classmates guess your appeal – respond to at least 2 videos.
#2	**5 Modes of Communication** Discussion: "The Modes: How do they Work" (Arola, et al.) Application: Jigsaw Activity -- Divide class into 5 groups and assign each group a mode to communicate a given message. Present & Reflect.	Five Modes of Communication	FG Reflection – Which mode of communication do you prefer? Why? Respond to two other classmates.
#3	**Design Choices** Minilesson: Principles of Design Slide Show Application: In small groups, students will analyze an assigned image using the graphic organizer (Appendix B). Present & Reflect.	Principles of Design Slides	FG Analysis – Share an image from an ad and analyze using at least 3 principles.

#4	**Affordances of Image** Watch: "Visual Rhetoric" Application: In groups, students will identify and analyze appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos using images from session #3. Reflect & discuss.	Visual Rhetoric Perdue OWL Ethos, Pathos, Logos -- Images	Watch the Ethos, Pathos, Logos video. On FG, share an image that elicits an appeal to ethos, logos, or pathos. Explain your choice. Respond to two videos.
#5	**Affordances of Sound** Watch: "The Magic of Making Sound" Read: "Sound in Film" (Appendix C). Application: Engage whole class in analysis & discussion of Six Minutes podcast trailer.	The Magic of Making Sound Six Minutes Podcast Trailer Amy Walker Accents	Watch the Amy Walker video. Reflect in FG, how do you interpret accents? Do we stereotype people based on the way they speak? Why? Choose 3 of your favorite and reflect. Remember, be respectful!
#6-7	**Affordances of Video** Minilesson: Mise en Scene. Watch: Crash Course video. Application: In groups, students will analyze Stranger Things Clip for affordances of video using the graphic organizer (Appendix D).	Crash Course: Mise en Scene Basic Camera Shots Camera Shots Instructional Camera Angles Instructional	Using FG, reflect on today's lesson. Shoot your video using one of the camera shots or angles we discussed today.
#8	**Video Analysis** Application: Jigsaw Activity → Based on affordances of video, sound, and image, each group will analyze and evaluate one video essay about leadership. Students should use rhetorical analysis sheet (online) and discuss. Introduce: Review expectations of video essay assignment sheet & rubric (Appendix E).	Rhetoric Analysis Sheet Video #1 Video #2 Video #3	Reading – Collaborating Effectively (Arola, et al. 82-86). Leave a FG message – what is the most important aspect of working with a group? Respond to 2 other videos.
#9	**Brainstorming & Proposal -** Introduce: Review process documents – proposal and daily progress logs, as well as cooperative learning expectations. Collaboration: Groups will brainstorm ideas and complete proposal (Appendix F). **Graded** Completed Proposal & Daily Progress Logs		Reading – Storyboards (Arola, et al. 96-99).
#10	**iMovie Tutorial** Model: Model iMovie features and functions on Smartboard for students using premade video. Application: Jigsaw Activity – Students will work in pairs to create a 30 sec. how-to video based on their assigned feature.		

#11	**Storyboarding** Discussion: Why is it important to take your time during the planning period? Is your plan written in stone? Collaboration – Pre-Production Phase: During conceptualization planning, students will create a storyboard that illustrates their ideas. **Graded** Completed Storyboard	Story Board That (Digital) Storyboard Templates (Paper)	Reading – Asset Charts & Timelines (Arola, et al. 103-105)
#12	**Asset Chart & Timeline** Discussion: Why should you use asset charts and timelines? What should each include? Why? Collaboration – Pre-Production Phase: In groups, students will create their asset charts and timelines based on their reading. (Arola et al.) **Graded** Completed Asset chart & timeline		
#13	**Recursive Nature of Composition** Discussion: When is ideal to work on revisions? Throughout the process? At the end? Why? What are ways you can revise as you work? Review: Review expectations of revision log document (Appendix G). Collaboration – Production Phase: Students will work on their video essays, as the instructor guides as needed.		
#14	**Production** Collaboration – Production Phase: Students will work on their video essays, as the instructor guides as needed.		Reading - Ethics of Collecting Sources & Assets (Arola et al. 63-69)
#15 -16	**Ethics & Citations** Discussion: Attribution and Creative Commons Collaboration – Production Phase: Students will work on their video essays, as the instructor guides as needed.		Reading – Drafting & Revising Your Project (Arola et al. 109-118)
#17	**Peer Feedback & Revision** Collaboration – Peer Conferences: Students will team up with another group to peer conference and assist with ideas for revision using evaluation sheets (Appendix H). Collaboration – Post Production Phase: Students will work on their revisions using provided forms. **Graded:** Peer Evaluation Sheets & Revision Logs		
#18	**Publish/ Distribute**		

APPENDIX A

SESSION #1 RHETORICAL SITUATION

APPENDIX B

SESSION #3-4 – PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN
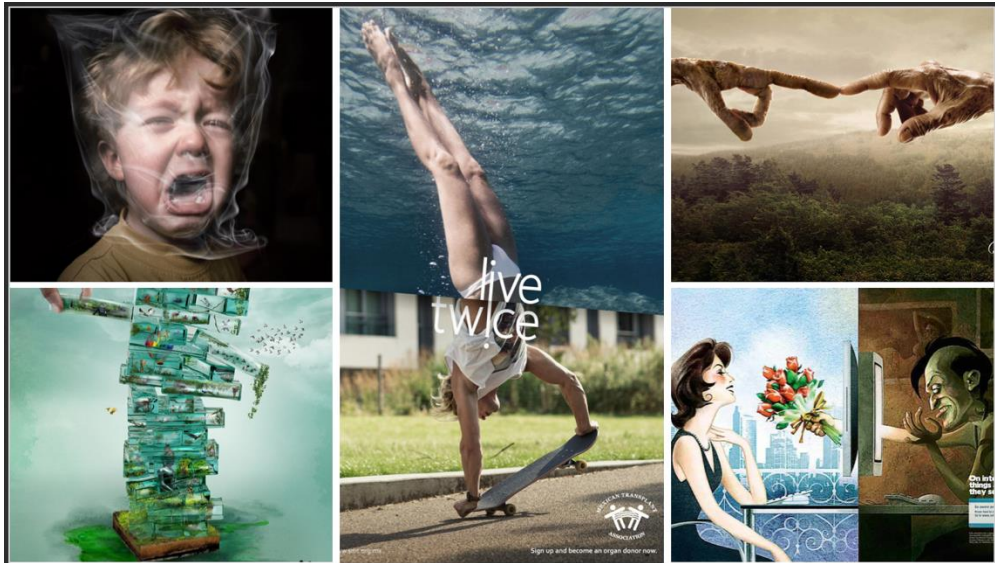
APPENDIX C

SESSION #5 AFFORDANCES OF SOUND

iN Point
the online production resource at Pacific Cinémathèque

THE LANGUAGE OF FILM

Sound in Filmmaking

"Sound" refers to everything we hear in a movie — words, sound effects, and music. Sound is used in film to heighten a mood, provide us with information about the location of a scene, advance the plot, and tell us about the characters in the story.

There are two categories of sound in film: **Diegetic** and **Non-Diegetic**. Diegetic Sound refers to all those audio elements that come from sources inside the world we see on the screen, including dialogue, doors slamming, footsteps, etc. Non-Diegetic Sound refers to all those audio elements that come from outside of the fictional world we see on screen, including the musical score and sound effects like the screeches in the shower scene in *Psycho*.

How do Sound Effects help to Shape a Film?

Sound effects can be used to add mood or atmosphere to a film by creating a soundscape that accents or adds another layer of meaning to the images on the screen. Pitch, tempo, and volume may be altered to indicate how the filmmaker expects the audience to respond to a given noise. For instance, high-pitched sounds, including screams or squealing tires, help to create a sense of anxiety, while low-pitched sounds, including the sounds of waves or the swinging of a door, can be used to create a sense of calm or mystery.

Perhaps the most interesting use of sound in a movie is the very absence of it: silence. At key points in a film, directors may use silence in much the same way that they would use a freeze frame. Both tend to arrest the audience's attention to highlight some action or change in story direction. Silence can be used to build up a scene's intensity or to foreshadow impending doom.

In recent years, special sound effects have been added to movies in order to heighten the film experience. Many of these sound effects, including explosions, phaser blasts, wind, and animal sounds are drawn from computer sound effects libraries and are added to a film after the movie has been shot. Besides creating louder and more dramatic movies, these effects have tended to draw more attention to movie sound. With advancements in surround sound, sound effects have developed a more "directional" element, appearing to come from a specific place or direction. This directional quality of sound (alongside elements such as echoes) enhances a three-dimensional sense of space in the movie.

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THE LANGUAGE OF FILM
SOUND IN FILMMAKING
PAGE: 2

How Does Music Help to Shape a Film?

If we step back and think about it, music is one of the most peculiar conventions in movies. No one questions that music should be a part of movies because we've all grown used to the idea that, in a movie, when two people kiss, we should hear music in the background. Or when the platoon attacks the beach, a symphony should provide the inspiration behind their assault. Of course, no one has a soundtrack accompanying their real lives. But in movies we not only accept this convention, we demand it.

Music can be used for a number of effects in a movie. The most obvious way music scores are used is to guide the emotional response of the audience. They provide clues, or, in most cases, huge signposts, that tell audiences how the filmmaker wants them to react to a given scene.

Some directors play against our expectations and use music in ways we might not expect. Stanley Kubrick shocked audiences when he used "Singin' in the Rain" as the backdrop to a horrible rape scene in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971).

Music can also provide an overture for a movie when it's used as the backdrop to the opening credits. The brassy theme music composed by John Williams for Star Wars is one famous and often-parodied example.

In some instances, directors use music to foreshadow upcoming events. In horror movies, for example, the score is often used to build up tension and suspense just before the monster attacks one of its victims.

Finally, music can be used to shape the ethnic or cultural context of a film.

How Does the Spoken Word Help to Shape a Film?

In addition to giving voice to the characters in a movie, two of the more interesting ways the spoken word can shape a movie are through voice-overs and by providing subtext to a scene.

Voice-overs are typically used in documentary films, although they occasionally turn up in fiction films such as the original *Blade Runner* (1982), to provide background to a story or to help move a story from one set of events to another.

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THE LANGUAGE OF FILM
SOUND IN FILMMAKING
PAGE: 3

Used well, voice-overs can be unobtrusive. Used poorly, voice-overs can often seem like "the voice of god", bringing forth wisdom audiences are supposed to accept unquestioningly. For this reason, some filmmakers refuse to use voice-overs in their films to let audiences have more freedom in determining what the meaning of the film is.

We all know from our own personal conversations that there is often a subtext to the words we hear. Subtext means there is an implicit meaning standing behind the language we actually hear. In film, actors use this element of language to shape a scene without actually saying what they mean.

Similarly, some actors are known for their distinctive voices which have helped define the characters they play. Marilyn Monroe is remembered for her high-pitched breathy voice, which gave a slightly ditzy feel to many of her chracters, while John Malkovich has a distant, aloof, and direct manner of speech which helps to give a sinister edge to many of his best on-screen performances.

Excerpted and adapted from *Visual Storytelling and the Grammar of Filmmaking, Part II* Study Guide
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Sound Analysis of 6-minute Podcast

Type of Sound	Description	Effect
Music		
Sound Effects		
Ambient Sounds		
Silence		
Tone of Spoken Voice		
Volume of Sound		
Emphasis & Accent		

APPENDIX D

SESSION #6-7 AFFORDANCES OF VIDEO

Analysing mise-en-scène in film

Mise-en-scène is a media term which means 'put in the frame'. Everything that you see and hear has been carefully selected to create meaning. An important part of media studies is exploring how this meaning has been created.

Watch the film clip and use the thinking points below to help you analyse the scene.

Aspect	Thinking point	Description	Comment
Setting	Where/when is it set? Is it filmed on set or location? Does the setting tell us anything about the genre?		
Props	What props have been included? Do they tell you anything about the setting or genre? Connotative meaning?		
Lighting	Natural or artificial? Where is it coming from? Intensity? Shadows? What atmosphere is created?		
Casting	Who is playing each role? Is there any significance to these choices?		
Costume and make-up	What are the characters wearing? Does this tell us anything about the characters, relationships between them, the setting? Is one colour more prevalent than others? What effect does this have?		
Movement	What does body language and movement tell us about characters' emotions? What kind of atmosphere is created?		
Diegetic sound	Describe voices of characters, sounds made by objects within the frame. What do they add to the meaning of the scene?		
Framing and composition	What has been included in the frame? How are objects positioned within the frame/in relation to each other? Are we seeing things from one person's viewpoint?		

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Camera Shot & Angle Analysis: Stranger Things

Shot Description	Shot Type	Shot Angle	Effect

APPENDIX E

SESSION #8 VIDEO ANALYSIS

FINAL CULMINATING PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

VIDEO ESSAY: HOW DO YOU ENVISION LEADERSHIP?

DIRECTIONS

Compose a video text answering the question – How do you envision leadership? Your presentation should provide an insightful representation of leadership based on the texts you have read and the research you have conducted that aligns tightly with your purpose and audience.

In your video, combine still images, video, music, written words, and/or sound to compose a video essay. You can choose to focus on one of the following ideas:

- Explain how to be a leader
- Qualities of leaders
- Effective leaders – past & present
- Real life stories or personal experiences
- Leadership in literature

Your literacy video text should have the following characteristics:

- Edit, combine, or modify existing elements like music, images, audio, and video into your own creation, adding significant meaning to the topic
- Effective use of sound, image, and/ or video affordances
- Clear evidence of purposeful choices and editing using the capabilities of iMovie
- Information or experiences that are valuable to our discussion of leadership
- A title screen for your video
- Focus or combination of literary forms: narrative, argumentative, informational
- A credit screen that includes full citations for video clips, images, & music downloaded
- It should be about 3-5 minutes in length

The project should employ the affordances of the media you are using in effective rhetorical ways. It should be characterized by careful design that helps convey meaning. The project should be both instructive and creative.

The project should do more than simply portray qualities of leadership, it should help viewers reflect on and gain insight into the world of leadership.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Project Title _____

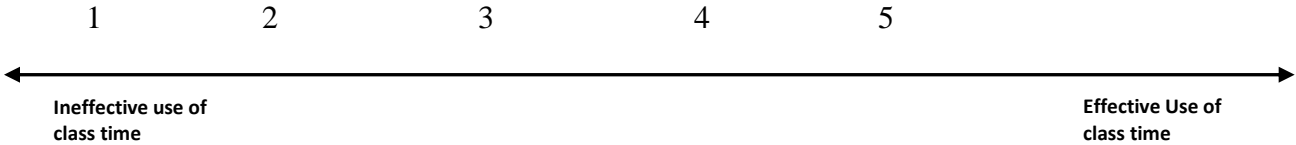# Leadership Video Essay – Assessment Sheet

1   2   3   4   5

Little Evidence of Careful Planning/ Composing   **Significant Evidence of Careful Planning/ Composing**

Comments:

---

1   2   3   4   5

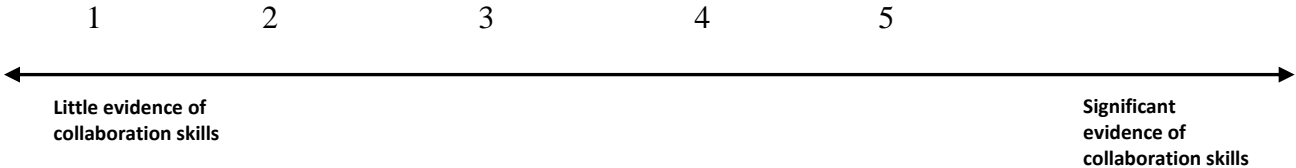**Ineffective attention to audience & purpose**   **Highly effective attention to audience and purpose**

Comments:

---

1   2   3   4   5

Ineffective use of affordances of audio   **Highly effective use of affordances of audio**

Comments:

---

1   2   3   4   5

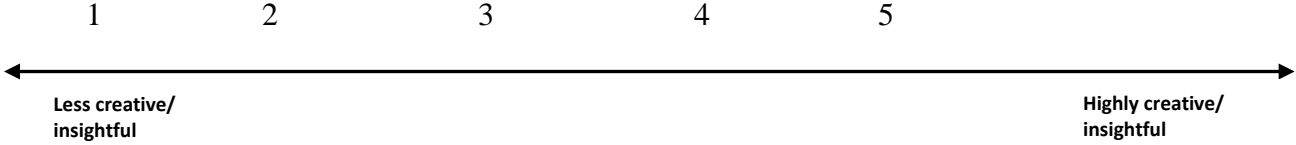**Ineffective use of affordances of video/ image**   **Highly effective use of affordances of video/ image**

Comments:

1   2   3   4   5

Ineffective use of class time ←—————————————————————→ **Effective Use of class time**

Comments:

1   2   3   4   5

Little evidence of collaboration skills ←—————————————————————→ **Significant evidence of collaboration skills**

Comments:

1   2   3   4   5

Less creative/ insightful ←—————————————————————→ **Highly creative/ insightful**

Comments:

1   2   3   4   5

Lack of reflective focus on leadership ←—————————————————————→ **Excellent reflective focus on leadership**

Comments:

1	2	3	4	5

Less than careful approach to ethical sourcing

Very careful approach to ethical sourcing
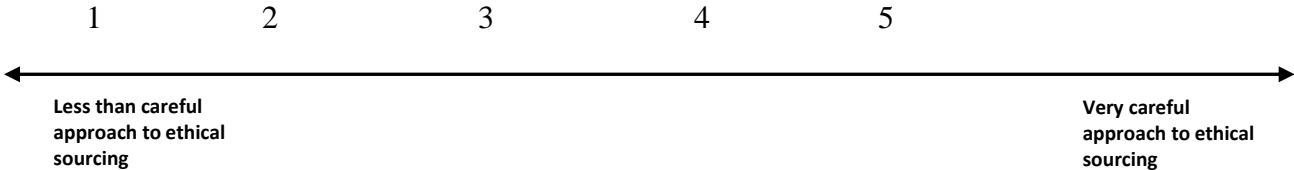
Comments:

APPENDIX F
SESSION #9 BRAINSTORMING

Leadership Video Essay Proposal

Group Members: _____

Introduction/ Summary: Provide an overview of what your project is about, how you will approach it, what genre you will use, and how that approach fits the rhetorical situation?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Project Plan: Explain how you plan on designing the project to support your argument; be sure to describe which technologies you will use, how you will gain access or to create media assets, and how you will integrate your research.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Justification: Discuss why your proposal design is appropriate and effective for making your argument.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Roles & Responsibilities: Identify which group members are responsible for which project activities.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Group: _____ Date: _____ Project Title _____

Daily Progress Log

Today, we accomplished:

Tomorrow we will work on:

The problems we encountered today were:

We overcame these challenges by:

At home we need to:

Additional Notes/ Comments:

APPENDIX G

SESSION #12 - RECURSIVE NATURE OF COMPOSITION

Group: _____ Date: _____ Project Title _____

Revision Log

Directions: Consider areas of your project that are not achieving their desired goals or areas that seem unpolished. Consider revising audio selections, transitions, camera angles, filters, framing, color schemes, voice overs, camera work, elements of mise-en-scène, etc. Each choice for revision should be made thoughtfully and rhetorically, improving your overall message to your targeted audience.

Segment	Revision What You Do?	Reason How Does it Improve Your Essay?	Timeline [note minutes, seconds, duration]
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			

APPENDIX H

SESSION #14 – PEER CONFERENCES

Group: _____ Date: _____ Project Title _____

Peer Review Form

Peer Review for _____

Strengths/ What I Liked:

Suggestions for Improvement:

Other Comments or Ideas: