Multimodal Literacy in the English/Language Arts Classroom:

Meeting Standards and Remaining Relevant in the 21st Century

by

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Abstract

Teachers have long been experimenting with the incorporation of technology, media literacy, and multimodal literacy in the English/Language Arts classroom. However, the recent adoption of Common Core standards and the increased emphasis on standardized, high-stakes testing makes it seemingly more difficult than ever to make curriculum relevant and engaging. Rather than give up, teachers should instead push harder than ever to incorporate multimodal literacy in their classrooms. Studies have repeatedly documented the benefits in both student engagement and achievement of incorporating technology and multimodal literacy in the classroom. This paper provides a sampling of some of that research as well as a unit plan specifically designed to demonstrate how multimodal literacy can be incorporated into the English/Language Arts curriculum as long as there are computers available to the students—and without requiring a high level of technological expertise from the teacher or the students.

Keywords: multimodal literacy, media literacy, new literacies, technology, English/Language Arts education, lesson plans

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

The rampant increase in the availability and presence of technology in both schools and private life has led to a number of challenges for English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers wishing to keep their curriculum engaging and relevant to students. Though access to technology, especially the Internet, is not quite ubiquitous, it is approaching a level of commonality that is difficult to ignore. What were once (and still are, to some) considered unnecessary and complicated gadgets, meant only for a select few, are becoming the norm, especially for adolescents. It is not uncommon for middle and high school students to have smartphones that give them constant access to the Internet and social media in additional to the means to instantly communicate through text and chat. And, as most teachers have likely experienced, it is quite common for students to actively utilize this technology at any available moment.

The corollary to this increase in the prevalence of technology is that the manner in which many people, regardless of age, communicate and consume information and media has changed drastically over the past two decades with the rise of the Internet and smartphones. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, video games, and even Instagram and Vine have transformed the way in which we tell stories—not just fiction, but our own personal stories. Additionally, the importance of these alternate forms of media has grown drastically. Literal, real-world revolutions have been based, in part, on the use of social media to disseminate information and organize protests. It is difficult to argue that digital media is a passing fad, or that it has no impact or relevance on the world around us.

What is arguably most important for classroom practice about this increase in available and user-friendly technology, though, is that students independently *want* to use it. No one

forces them to update their Facebook status or send out a tweet. Rather than be a chore, these are forms of self-expression that students actively engage in. By tapping into this intrinsic engagement and utilizing it in the classroom, teachers can create a learning experience for students that adapt existing skills to more traditional academic skills. Rather than force students to engage only in a traditional form of literacy that is often unappealing due to its unfamiliarity and perceived irrelevance, teachers can use multimodal and digital literacies to keep students engaged in learning.

The traditional view of literacy as the reading and writing of the printed word and, in its slightly more expanded form (i.e. in the old New York State ELA standards), speaking and listening, is no longer capable of preparing students for the digital world in which we live. This outdated view was acceptable when the main tools for instructional design were textbooks and novels and when presentations involved little more than posters and glue (or, for the more technologically advanced classrooms, PowerPoint). However, the increasing availability of technology in schools makes true multimodal literacy instruction a viable and necessary option for engaging and educating students. In order for ELA instruction to remain relevant and capable of preparing students for the world outside the classroom, the definition of literacy must expand to include not just the printed word but also non-traditional literacies such as film, images, sounds, games, social media, or any other form of communication not traditionally addressed in the English classroom. Moreover, teachers must begin to include these non-traditional texts in their curriculum with as much weight and importance as traditional texts. It is not enough to merely pay lip service in the form of a throwaway activity, or to squander the potential of technology and alternate forms of media by using them to deliver the same lessons in digital form.

<u>Significance of the Problem</u>

The vast majority of adolescents use the Internet and social media. According to Pew Research, 93% of American teens have access to a computer at home, while 78% have a cell phone, and nearly all of them use a mobile device to access the Internet at least occasionally (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013). More than three quarters of online teens use Facebook, and almost one quarter use Twitter, which is actually significantly more than the percentage of adults that use the service (Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, Gasser, Duggan, Smith, & Beaton, 2013).

Traditional print media is definitively no longer the default leisure activity for teens, or even a particularly common one. The US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) found that people aged 15 to 19 spent, on average, less than 10 minutes per day reading, with almost an hour a day spent on the computer for leisure and about two hours daily watching television (Table 11). Lenhart et al. (2008) discovered that 97% of adolescents play video games, and "on any given day, 50% of teen gamers report playing games" (p. 8). Far from being a pastime relegated to children and teens, the Electronic Software Association (2014) reports that the average of a gamer is 31 years old, with an almost 50/50 split between male and female gamers (p. 3).

Study after study has shown that teens, and even adults, prefer to spend their leisure time enjoying other forms of media. There is no denying that the face of media has changed, and ignoring this change will only hurt the relevancy and effectiveness of ELA classrooms. It can be quite easy and somewhat tempting to dismiss these new forms of literacy as a gimmick that will do little but diminish the rigor of ELA curriculum, leaving students lacking the essential literacy

skills that they will need to function in college and the workplace. In truth, when improperly or half-hearted implemented, this can often be the case.

When digital literacy is integrated into the curriculum haphazardly as an attempt to make a 'fun' project for the students and little more, it does become somewhat of a wasted effort. An example of this is the ever-popular "create a Facebook page for a character" project that, while well-intentioned, can easily fall short of meeting a standard of academic rigor if not carefully designed and implemented as part of a larger multimodal classroom experience. Another example is the many educational games that are available online for teachers to use to teach their students[1]. None of these examples are inherently without merit; they can be useful and effective methods of teaching and evaluating. They do not, however, incorporate digital literacy as an essential part of the curriculum. They merely pay lip service to students' outside experiences rather than treat them as relevant and important to the classroom experience. However, when made a core element of the curriculum with all the rigor and expectations of traditional literacy elements, multimodal literacy contains benefits to both students and teachers alike. Teachers have new and more engaging methods to use and students are able to use their background knowledge and skills to more effective learn the curriculum.

Purpose

This paper will demonstrate the viability of incorporating multiple forms of literacy, both and old and new into the ELA classroom while still adhering to Common Core standards. Through the use of video games, short stories, animation, and song, students will explore the theme of loss and grief. As one of the more common themes in media and literature, as well as one that essentially everyone faces in their own lives, this can have an immediate and relevant

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[1] see http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/ for many examples

impact on students. In additional, the students will have the opportunity to create multimodal works themselves that reflect these themes. The use of multiple forms of text will allow students to discover various outlets and methods that artists, designers, and writers have used to express this emotion and, through this exploration, perhaps find their own ways to handle grief.

Rationale

The use of technology in the classroom is nothing particularly new. Even before the advent of smartphones and computers, teachers used filmstrips and slide projectors to augment their instruction. What has changed, however, is the level of access to and amount of control over the technology found in the classroom that students, and not just teachers, now have. Any student with a smartphone has the ability to create media that, even less than a decade ago would have been prohibitively difficult and/or expensive. A reasonably new smartphone can be used to film an HD movie or, using apps like Instagram, create artistic photos that only a decade ago would have required a level of technical skill (either in the darkroom or through Photoshop) that most did not possess.

There is a significant opportunity for ELA teachers to utilize these new tools to teach the age old concepts of the discipline: critical thinking and analysis, communication, and literacy. Rather than ignore the changes in how people consume media, ELA teachers need to embrace this and teach the same skills they always have, just in relation to these new texts. This requires teachers to give up some control of the classroom. Students are equally if not more versed in these new technologies, and the teacher can no longer claim the dominant position of master instructing students. However, this creates a more collaborative learning environment in which even the teacher can be taught and gives students the opportunity to use their existing skills and

knowledge in the classroom. New technology has opened up a new paradigm in the classroom, one which should be celebrated rather than feared.

Selfe and Selfe (2008) described a set of rationale for the inclusion of multimodal literacies in the classroom. First, they noted that people "learn about, act in, and understand the world using multiple channels of communication" (p. 84). The use of multimodal literacy, therefore, more accurately reflects the natural way in which people experience their environment. The written and spoken word, while still overwhelmingly present, is almost always supplemented with visuals and audio in media, especially that which is consumed by adolescents. Second, they recognized that literacies shift constantly, and no one, teachers included, experience literacy solely in the traditional, academic manner. Third, multimodal literacy and the skills associated with it are part of many workplaces and growing industries, the most obvious of which being the IT field. Finally, the authors noted that this is not a localized shift in literacy, but rather is happening around the world, making it essential that students have these skills in order to function in an increasingly shrinking world (p. 84-86). The inclusion of multimodal literacy is essential in order to adequately prepare students with the literacy skills they need in modern society.

Hansford and Adlington (2008) also discussed the important differences between traditional and multimodal literacies due to the availability of technology. Technology gives students an agency in the selection and creation of various texts that was not previously available to them. Additionally, adolescents are no longer merely passive in their literacy experiences. Hansford and Adlington noted that rather than be forced to rely on teacher or parental guidance, a "net-savvy adolescent is quite able to produce texts and publish online as easily as any adult" (p. 55). This agency in the selection of received texts, as well as the ability and desire to create

texts in varying forms is a significant difference from the traditional model of literacy. It creates a new space for adolescents where they feel capable and engaged in literacy outside of and often with little input from parents and teachers. Unfortunately, in-school literacy experiences are often quite the opposite of this. Agency is taken away from students and placed in the hands of the teacher. It is the teacher's expectations and guidelines for literacy that matter rather than the student's. In contrast to this, Hansford and Adlington stated that "the point of literacy education is to engender powerful communication dexterity in children that they may draw upon regardless of context, which can only occur as a result of embracing a wide range of texts and masteries as legitimate" (p. 58).

Additionally, Tierney, Bond, and Bresler (2006) noted that technology-based multimodal literacy tends to be significantly more collaborative in nature than traditional literacy. When writing is posted online, it is generally open to comments and critique by peers (or in the case of many blogs literally anyone with Internet access). This immediate and generally uncensored feedback from a large group differs even from peer review that is typical in classrooms due to its informal and occasionally overtly negative style. By ignoring the presence of non-traditional literacies that technology has made so common, teachers are poorly serving the needs of their students.

Definition of Terms

- **Digital literacy:** the ability to effectively utilize technology including social media, smartphones, computers, the Internet, etc.

- **Media:** any form of mass communication, especially involving entertainment, information, or advertisement

- **Media literacy:** the ability to critically analyze media for its overt and implied messages

- **Multimodal literacy:** the ability to create, understand, interpret, and analyze any combination of various forms of traditional and non-traditional literacies that make up a text

- **Multimodal media production (MMP):** the use of more than one form of media to create a finished product

- **Text:** any form of communication of an idea, emotion, information, story, or concept that can or could be understood by at least one other person (allowing for language barriers)—it can be printed, visual, verbal, aural, or interactive

- **Third space:** the combination of a student's home, school, and personal experiences and knowledge

- **Traditional literacy:** the ability to read, write, speak and understand standard English

- **Non-traditional or new literacy:** the ability to communicate through and understand a medium other than standard written or spoken English (e.g. film, photography, animations, social media, interactive media, etc.)

Summary

Traditional literacies, while still important, no longer make up the majority of literacy experiences outside of the classroom. It is necessary for the ELA curriculum to adapt to reflect this change in literacy; otherwise, students will not have the skills necessary to communicate in an increasingly technology-oriented world. This does not mean an abandonment of reading and writing traditional text, but rather an integration of those basic literacy skills into multimodal texts. For this to be effective, multimodal literacy instruction must be as rigorous as traditional literacy, and for that to be possible, multimodal literacy must be valued as strongly as traditional

literacy. Though there are challenges that must be overcome, the integration of multimodal

literacy instruction will keep ELA curriculum relevant and engaging to students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

What is Multimodal Literacy?

Turner (2011) proposed a useful criterion for a definition of multimodal literacy[2] as "inclusive of multiple modes of communication, dependent on social context, and inextricably linked with issues of ideology and power" (p. 614). Literacy includes more than traditional academic reading and writing, and instead encompasses a range of formal and informal communication through different means based on appropriateness for the situation. This definition of literacy includes students' reading and writing skills and interests in their personal lives, which is a theme that runs throughout modern media literacy research.

One of the difficulties in defining multimodal literacy properly is that it is essentially an attempt to incorporate various other disciplines and concepts under one heading. In the digital age, the word media refers to much more than traditional print, film, television and radio. It can be used to discuss social media, websites, Internet forums, blogs, pop-up advertisements, e-mail, and a variety of other new forms of communication that have become increasingly commonplace over the past two decades. Even the concept of literacy changes based context, and the skills that it requires are different for each form of media. Traditional literacy (i.e. reading and writing) has already been augmented to include speaking, listening, and viewing. How to apply these concepts and skills of literacy to media is equally disputed.

Adding to the difficulty is the lack of standardization of terms for these new literacies. Much of what I have termed multimodal literacy is also referred to as media literacy, digital literacy, new literacy, or multiliteracies. Because of this wide variance in terms for what often

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[2] The author termed it multiliteracies.

amounts to the same concept, I will use the terminology as defined above, substituting the authors' terms where necessary to create a coherent discussion.

The final caveat to the discussion of multimodal literacy is that, as an amalgamation of various concepts and disciplines, it is impossible to discuss it without also discussing its components, such as media literacy and digital literacy. As such, where these terms appear, it indicates that the author was discussing a concept other than multimodal literacy, but one that is related to its study.

Historical Context

The first stirrings of multimodal literacy in the field of education began with media literacy. Originally, it applied only to media like radio, television, and film. However, this was still a departure from the emphasis on traditional literacy of the time. One of the early discussions of this sort of media literacy in the literature is from Curtis (1978), who called for its inclusion in high school curriculum. He justified this with the limited research available at the time that indicated that mass media had potentially negative effects on its consumers. He did note, however, the absence of substantive research on the effects of media literacy education on students. Due to the relative newness of the field, there lacked a systematic approach to media literacy, including a clear definition and purpose, as well as available training and materials for educators. Despite this, Curtis was able to provide a list of eight characteristics of effective media teachers, though they tend to follow the criteria of an effective teacher of any discipline. However, Curtis did highlight them as being especially important for media teachers given the inherent difficulties of pioneering a new and relatively unsupported field.

Davies (1989) discussed the difficulty in pinning down the purpose of English education, noting that many English teachers who seem to have a clear personal sense of what the study of

English entails often refuse to define it so as to not trivialize it. In response to this, he discussed distinct categories of English education. Included in this list is media studies, which Davies stated could "be seen as posing a threat to dominant beliefs about the aims of English" (p. 407). Davies discussed how media studies involve engagement in cultural and critical analyses, and involve media from students' everyday lives, including television, radio, and newspapers. This is a theme that has continued in media literacy education through to today.

The belief that media studies are a valid part of English education was met with some skepticism, however. In a direct response to Davies (1989), Stokes (1991) stated that, in the wrong situation, media studies would be "very tenuously related to English in a curriculum sense" (p. 67). She believed that academic rigor in media studies, and therefore its worthiness in the curriculum, could not be assumed, and only in the right circumstances could it be a valuable addition to English curriculum.

Though Curtis (1978) noted that the concept of media literacy was discussed as early as 1935, Potter (2010) stated that vast majority of articles on media literacy have been published only in the past thirty years. However, the focus of these articles has changed noticeably over that time, shifting from traditional media to digital media, and therefore necessitating a switch to multimodal rather than purely media literacy.

The Rise of the Internet and Digital Technology

The rise of the digital technology like personal computers and the Internet has undoubtedly contributed to the increased visibility of multimodal literacy, as well as its changing focus. Since the mid-1990s, Internet usage has grown drastically, rising from 14% of adults in 1995 to 87% of adults in 2014 (Fox & Rainie, 2014, p. 4). Arthur (2013) reported that hardware giant Cisco estimated that Internet-connected devices (e.g. smartphones, computers, tablets, etc.)

would outnumber people on the planet by the end of 2013. Additionally, in the past decade the use of smartphones has risen drastically, with Fox & Rainie (2014) reporting that 58% of the adult population of the United States alone own smartphones in 2014 (p. 5). As noted above, the statistics for adolescent Internet usage are even more staggering. Because of this technology, access to the Internet is now available from almost anywhere in the United States at any time.

Traditional media sources such as film, television, print, and radio are no longer the dominant forms of media consumption. YouTube (n.d.) noted that there are more than one billion unique visits to the site each month and over 100 hours of video are uploaded each minute (Viewership). Far from being all cat videos or inane content, Howard et al. (2011) noted the dramatic impact social media, including YouTube had on the Arab Spring of 2011. The authors noted that "conversations about liberty, democracy, and revolution on blogs and on Twitter often immediately preceded mass protests (Howard et al., 2011, p. 3). The average purpose for the use of social media probably falls somewhere between the inane and the profound. The massive increases in computer and Internet usage over the past thirty years have led to a drastic shift in not only the amount of information available to individuals, but also the way that media and information is disseminated and received.

Due to this change in how people consume and create information and media, there has been a strong calling to redefine literacy to include these digital practices. Multimodal literacy advocates have noted that communication, the foundation of literacy, has evolved to include text messaging, instant message, and social networking in addition to more traditional forms (Dredger, Woods, Beach, & Sagstetter, 2010; Schieble, 2010). Because of this, they proposed that the definition of literacy should include media and digital literacies. Teachers must therefore update their ELA curriculum to include these new literacies as well.

The Research

Exactly how multimodal literacy can be effectively used in English/Language Arts classrooms is the focus of the research compiled in this synthesis. Of the twelve studies used in this paper, only one used quantitative research methods (Dredger et al., 2010), while the other eleven used qualitative methods. Of those eleven, eight used case studies (Beavis & O'Mara, 2010; Boske & McCormack, 2011; Lacasa, Mendez & Martinez, 2008; Mills, 2010; Mills, 2011; Scheibe, 2009; Turner, 2011; Wissman, Costello & Hamilton, 2012), and two used interviews and observations (Hart, 2001; Schieble, 2010). One was mostly rumination on the subject matter (Alberti, 2008). The lone quantitative study used a survey format.

Part of the reason for the significantly higher prevalence of qualitative research methods in the literature is its function of producing theories. Since the field of multimodal literacy education, especially at the middle and high school level, has only been discussed in the literature for the past three decades, it is still a relatively new field in need of suggestions for best practices. Also, the sweeping changes in information and digital technology over the past decade has resulted in a situation in which there is not enough time to test theories before they become rendered obsolete by changing technology. The technology that was cutting edge in 2001 is now archaic in 2011, and multimodal literacy education has had to change just as quickly, meaning that best practices in 2001 are not necessarily the same in 2011. Because quantitative studies can take significantly more time to complete, they can be less practical with such-fast paced change.

The qualitative studies included in this synthesis each present theories for the best practices in incorporating multimodal literacy into standard curriculum. Though few discuss the effectiveness of these practices in a truly empirical way, they all provide sound arguments for the

use of the practices they describe. In this manner, they serve their appropriate function in the

cycle of research—they propose theories to be tested later by quantitative methods.

The survey used by Dredger et al. (2010) does provide the one quantitative piece of

research found for this synthesis; however, it unfortunately does not fill the ideal role of

quantitative research. It does not test the effectiveness of any particular teaching practice, but

rather explores the writing habits of adolescents, relating that to the need for more incorporation

of multimodal literacy in classrooms. Though the study does provide useful information

regarding the need for multimodal literacy, it does not give any evidence for the efficacy of its

use in the classroom. Like the qualitative studies included, it asserts the effectiveness of

multimodal literacy in the classroom, but does not provide quantifiable data to support the claim.

One common principle of these studies is the increase in student interest and engagement

in academic material. In many classrooms, there is a strong disconnect between academic skills

and knowledge and student skills and background knowledge. Dredger et al. (2010) discussed

the Third Space model that provides a method for bridging this gap. Third Space is a

combination of First Space (the student's home), Second Space (the student's school) and

Adolescent Space (the student's personal self). Where these three aspects of a student's life

intersect is Third Space. Dredger et al. proposed that accessing this Third Space allows teachers

to tap into students' life and home experiences to bring them to bear on academic pursuits. The

concept of Third Space, while not directly referenced in the other research, is ultimately one of

the main justifications for multimodal literacy education in English/Language Arts curriculum.

Another focus of these studies is teacher efficacy in multimodal literacy education. It

was noted in multiple studies (Boske & McCormack, 2011; Hart, 2001; Schieble, 2010) that

teachers' personal engagement with and knowledge of media and technology shapes the

effectiveness of their teaching. This is not a surprising conclusion when one considers that to teach any academic discipline generally requires at least a bachelor's degree in the content. Many English/Language Arts teachers have no formal training in multimodal literacy; what they know comes from their own personal experience and background with media and technology, and this can lead to difficulties in properly implementing multimodal literacy into the curriculum.

Beavis and O'Mara (2010) discussed how increased student interest played a key role in the effectiveness of using video games in English classrooms. The researchers presented two case studies—one demonstrating a teacher's use of playing video games to develop literacy and research skills, the other demonstrating the using the creation of video games to develop narrative and structural literacies comparable to traditional writing. According to Beavis and O'Mara, the use of video games "capitalizes on the students' engagement and interest" (p. 66). This is a strong example of using the Third Space, as many students have a background with video games from which they can draw knowledge and experience to use in mastering critical thinking and literacy skills.

The second case study presented by Beavis and O'Mara (2010) involved multimodal media production (MMP). In this case, the students created an entire game, including the story, script, visuals, and sounds in order to make an immersive world. Though Beavis and O'Mara acknowledged that this stretches the traditional concepts of literacy, they argued that this method of teaching concepts of composition is a step towards the future of literacy in the English classroom. Rather than relying only on the written word to teach written literacy, students are also learning concepts of visual and sound design, both of which are skills needed in an increasingly media-oriented world.

Multimodal media production is used as a way to encourage the development of traditional literacy skills through non-traditional means in two other studies as well (Mills, 2010; Turner, 2011). The argument is that the various forms of literacy encompassed in multimodal literacy are interconnected, and using students' existing literacies to develop traditional academic literacies allows students to access the wealth of background knowledge, skills, and experience that they possess in order to learn. Turner's (2011) case study described how students, in creating their own songs, were able to make self/text connects that are essential for traditional literacy. The students who participated in the MMP program had a noticeable improvement in their literary analysis skills, and the students themselves gained confidence in their literacy abilities. Mills (2010) found similar results, and noted the similarities between traditional written narratives and MMP narratives, which have the added benefit of providing students with valuable multimodal literacy skills. Both authors argued that the incorporation of MMP into curriculum increases student interest, literacy skills, and student confidence.

Video games, though sometimes considered the antithesis of learning, can also be used to enhance the learning environment. Those who play video games (or know people who play them) can attest to the level of engagement and determination involved. Using video games in the classroom with a specific purpose in mind can tap into this engagement and determination. Lacasa, Mendez and Martinez (2008) discussed how *The Sims* can be used to enhance writing and narrative skills. Students played the game under direction of the researchers, who consistently asked them to think about the narrative being created by them in the game and how it related to their real-life experiences. *The Sims*, which simulates real life (to an extent), is an excellent way for students to create characters and narratives in an engaging and authentic way. Visually and interactively creating a story rather than merely writing it allowed students who do

not necessarily feel comfortable with writing to engage in the narrative process. By incorporating writing at the end of the project, the researchers were able to ease students into the narrative process rather than force it on them from the start.

Alberti (2008) expanded upon this concept of video games in the classroom by considering them in relation to visual arts and traditional texts. As the player plays the game, it unfolds as a "work in progress" (p. 265). Alberti argued that this challenged the notion of finality presented by traditional texts by showing that all texts are, at some point, a work in progress. The uniqueness of video games is that the player has an agency in creating the work. Though the narrative in most games is determined by someone else, the player takes an active role in its telling, unlike in traditional texts where the reader is a passive recipient. This leads to an active engagement in the story brought on by a sense of participation. Alberti wrote that this can be harnessed by thinking about the use of writing in the classroom as a form of play rather than work. Doing this "not only directs our attention to the question of student motivation but does so by inviting us to reexamine our own lives as writers through the metaphors of gaming" (p. 268). By actively utilizing games as a form of writing, teachers can create a different mindset in themselves and students.

Wissman, Costello and Hamilton (2012) detailed a particular instance of this in a remedial reading class where *The Outsiders* was being taught. The students used a computer program, Comic Life, to recreate scenes from the novel in comic form. Rather than be a one-off activity with little academic rigor, however, the teacher in this study used the program to reinforce the novel's plot and character development. Before using the program at all, students had to write scripts depicting particular scenes. These required students to actively look through the text for details. Then, students spent days creating the project rather than one class period.

The researchers noted the engagement that students had in the project, despite their initial resistance to the script writing phase. The project allowed students to solidify and demonstrate their knowledge of the novel in a way that was not only engaging but academically rigorous.

Another example of effective integration of multimodal literacy into classroom practice was described by Mills (2011). In this project, students created a claymation movie as a group. The project required students to learn and implement many skills and concepts related to film studies, but also required them to create a coherent narrative with characters and plot. This storytelling aspect of the project allowed students to gain a better understanding of narrative structure and the use of dialogue. Additionally, since the task was to create an educational movie for their peers, the students had to carefully construct the movie with a specific audience in mind. The construction of a narrative with a specific audience is a skill that is often taught in English classrooms, but by integrating multimodal literacy, students also learn media production techniques. They used digital cameras to shoot the movie and computer editing software to put the images together. These skills would not have been developed using only traditional literacy methods.

The potential negative impact of media use in the classroom was discussed in studies by Boske and McCormack (2011) and Hart (2001). Though these studies dealt specifically with media literacy, the concepts discussed are still very relevant to multimodal literacy. Hart noted that often in English classrooms, media literacy is taught the same way as traditional literacy— teacher lecture, followed by closed question-and-answer sessions. There also was little focus on how mass media creates ideals and images that are accepted by society. Partly, Hart blamed this on a lack of media training and, given the time of writing, the relative newness of the field. Boske and McCormack's study of student views of the negative stereotypes of minorities in the

children's film *Happy Feet* underscores the necessity of media literacy not only for students but for teachers as well. They argued that negative stereotypes are often not considered by teachers when selecting media. This is concerning given that Hart expressed the same belief ten years prior.

However, there is some research aimed directly at increasing teacher efficacy in multimodal literacy education. Scheibe (2009) helped to develop Project Look Sharp at Ithaca College in 1996, and discussed some of the essential principles the program proposed for incorporating multimodal literacy into the classroom based on current teacher practice. A main point involves adapting existing lessons to incorporate multimodal literacy rather than redesigning the entire curriculum. Media can be used as a supplement to the core curriculum, allowing for students to learn both traditional and multimodal literacy skills simultaneously. The quality of the instruction is more important than the quantity of media presented. Schieble (2010) promoted a similar concept, encouraging English teachers to use their own multimodal literacy experiences to enhance and enrich their instruction. The teachers in Schieble's study created images and Facebook pages to represent themes, characters, and settings from the novels read in class. These instructional methods were driven by the teachers' own knowledge of Facebook and image editing software. This connects to student Third Space as well, as it also engages students' experience with these applications.

Synthesis

The research discussed in this paper presents a variety of theories on effective methods of incorporating multimodal literacy education into an English/Language Arts classroom. Though the methods differ in their purpose, focus, and scope, they do share two common themes. First, they all seek to increase student interest and engagement in the material by engaging the Third

Space, allowing students to bring their own skills and knowledge into the curriculum. Second, they focus on engaging existing digital literacy skills in order to complement traditional literacy with multimodal literacy. Both of these principles are designed to promote multimodal literacy in an increasingly media-oriented society.

As previously noted, a glaring gap in the literature is the lack of quantitative studies to determine the effectiveness of the incorporation of these various multimodal literacy practices into English/Language Arts classrooms. Hart (2001) noted that "there is no shortage of enthusiasm or accounts of practice, but little solid research that can act as a basis for curriculum development" (p. 28). Unfortunately, this statement is still true more than a decade later. There are multiple theories on how to effectively incorporate multimodal literacy into English /Language Arts classrooms, but little more than anecdotal evidence to support any of the methods. Even so, more qualitative research will continue to be needed in order to keep pace as technologies and media evolve.

Ideally, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods would be used to determine the best teaching practices for incorporating multimodal literacy into English/Language Arts classrooms. While there are strong qualitative data suggesting theories for these best practices, the ability to generalize these findings is questionable due to the limited nature of the sample size for each of the studies. Unfortunately, this means that educators wishing to incorporate these methods into their practice are no option other than trial and error based on their best judgment. Quantitative research into the effectiveness of these practices is needed to provide essential information regarding their usefulness in other settings, significantly reducing the need for guesswork by educators and allowing them to more successfully incorporate multimodal literacy into their practice.

Chapter Three: Application

Unit Plan

Unit Author	Aaron Smith
Unit Plan Title	Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Subject Area	English/Language Arts
Grade Level	11-12
Focus	The exploration of sadness, grief, and loss in various forms of art, media, and literature, with an emphasis on the techniques used to convey emotion.
Essential Questions	• How do authors/artists/creators convey emotion through their chosen medium? • What are the techniques that they use to convey these emotions? • Which techniques are effective or ineffective? • What pitfalls can cause the intended emotion to "fall flat"? • What are tropes and how are they used in texts?
Unit Summary	Students will critically analyze various texts to determine how the creators conveyed emotion through their use of tropes and devices, comparing and contrasting related pieces.
Standards – Common Core: ELA Grades 11-12	Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 Reading, Informational: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Writing: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 Language: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Procedure	Mini-Lesson: Intro to Text (if necessary) Lesson 01: Intro to Unit Lesson 02: *Up* Lesson 03: *Passage* Lesson 04: *Up* & *Passage* Lesson 05: "Birthmates" Lesson 06: "A Small Good Thing" Lesson 07: "Birthmates" & "A Small Good Thing" Lesson 08: "Jurassic Bark" Lesson 09: *Loneliness* Lesson 10: "Jurassic Bark" & *Loneliness* Lesson 11: Conclusion of Unit, Final Project and Reflection
Approximate Time Needed	4-5 weeks
Materials Needed • Texts:	• *Up* [film] • *Passage* [video game] • *Loneliness* [video game] • "Birthmates" – Gish Jen [short story]

	• "A Small, Good Thing" – Raymond Carver [short story] • "Jurassic Bark" – *Futurama* [TV episode] See individual lesson plans for specific materials.
Accommodations	Accommodations for students with disabilities can be provided as needed.
Final Assessment	Students will produce a creative work based on either a story of their own or an adaptation of another work that explores the theme of sadness, grief, and loss. They will be required to create a written companion to this piece explaining their process in creating it, their use of tropes and devices to convey emotion, and a reflection on the piece.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Mini-Lesson 00: Introduction to Text (Prerequisite for background knowledge)

Standards:
Reading, Informational: 1, 4
Writing: 2, 4, 9, 10
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4
Language: 3, 4, 5, 6

Objectives:
Students will understand the expanded definition of text and evaluate how they consume and create texts in their everyday life.

Materials:

- Scrap paper

Anticipatory Set:
Start the lesson with the OED definition of text on the board:

text /tɛkst/

noun

> **1.** a book or other written or printed work, regarded in terms of its content rather than its physical form

Students will be asked to brainstorm, first individually then with those near to them, examples of what they consider to be a text. They will write their answers on scrap paper. The teacher will then ask for responses and write them on the board. Likely, the responses will tend towards traditional texts (e.g. books, newspapers, textbooks, etc.). If students do include non-traditional texts, put them up without comment.

Purpose:
Explain to students that the purpose of the discussion is to create a new definition for text that accounts for the move beyond printed media.

Body:
Ask students to volunteer to explain why they chose particular things as examples of text.

- Why is a _____ a text?

- What characteristics does it have that make it a text?

- What would make it not a text?

The next step is to generalize those characteristics.

- What characteristics does a text have?
- What characteristics might exclude something from being a text?

The list of characteristics should look something like this:

- Communicating an idea, emotion, information, story, or concept
- Possible to be understood by at least one other person (barring a language barrier)

Guided Practice:
Keeping those characteristics in mind, what other examples of text might there be? What might be borderline but not a text? Share and add to list as needed.

Ask students to individually create their own definition for text that allows for anything with the characteristics of a text to be defined as a text. Have each student share their own definition to arrive at one for the whole class that can be used as a guiding principle.

Closure:
Ask students to think about their own experiences with non-traditional texts. Have them write a paragraph about a non-traditional text (e.g. picture, film, video game, etc.) that had an impact on them and why. Share if there is time, otherwise, this is a ticket out the door.

Assessment:
Individual student definitions for text allow the teacher to assess their understanding of the concept. Paragraphs regarding experiences will allow teacher to assess the background knowledge and experience that students have with non-traditional texts.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 01: Introduction to Unit

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 3, 4, 5, 11
Reading, Informational: 1, 4
Writing: 2, 4, 10
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6,
Language: 1

Objectives:
Students will evaluate the purpose of art/literature. Students will evaluate emotional connections to texts, including what makes them effective or not effective.

Materials:

- List of sadness tropes

- Computer with speakers for teacher

Anticipatory Set:
The teacher should begin with an anecdote regarding an emotional connection that he or she had to a text (preferably non-traditional). Try to choose one that has an obvious connection between the emotion and the text (e.g. one in which the hero dies, etc.). Be sure to emphasize the elements of the piece that specifically had an impact, paying specific attention to what worked and/or didn't work in the text.

Ask the students to share an emotional connection or reaction to a text that they had. Ask questions to probe for what specifically was affecting about the text.

Purpose:
Explain that the class will be beginning a unit on how sadness, grief, and loss are portrayed in various texts. They will be analyzing these texts for how the creator conveyed the intended emotion and whether or not particular techniques are more or less effective.

Body:
Explain that the emotional effects of texts are completely subjective, and often depend on personal experience (e.g. a person who has lost a pet will often be more affected by a story regarding this than a person who has not or a person who doesn't like animals).

Likely, many if not most of the examples provided for emotional reactions will relate to overt situations within the text. Explain to students that texts can imply emotion as well through what is not explicitly stated.
Place the flash fiction piece "For sale: baby shoes, never worn" on the board. Ask students what they think the implied story is.

That story implies the loss of a child, which is a sort of inherently sad event. Creators will often use these sorts of inherently sad things, like the loss of a friend, family member, child, or significant other to make the viewer/reader feel the same emotions as a character. The most important things a creator must do to make you sad at a character's loss is to a) make you care about the character and b) make the loss a relatable tragedy—something you can understand and would be devastated by.

Beyond using relatable loss, there are certain devices that creators use to signify sadness and loss in various works. An artistic device or theme used to convey information like this is called a trope. There are many that are used to indicate sadness in characters, as well as ones that are used as plot devices. (pass out sadness tropes sheet)
Use the Big "NO!" as an example (see http://www.noooooooooooooo.com/). This one is so overused that it is almost inherently a parody of itself. The website shows this perfectly. Even though this is meant to be a dramatic wail of anguish, it's actually very funny to listen to.
This is the problem with tropes—when they're used too frequently, or misused, they can be comical. Many comedies, especially parodies, will actually use tropes for humor because people are so familiar with and tired of them that they will laugh when they see them. This is one of the dangers of relying too heavily on them—they can have the opposite effect than intended.

Go over list of tropes with class.

Sometimes, creators choose to subvert tropes. This is when you expect a trope but get the opposite, or a character begins to exhibit one, but moves away from it. An example of this would be a happy, upbeat song playing over the top of a funeral scene, subverting the Lonely Piano Piece trope. Creators do this in order to deliberately play against your expectations for various effects. Sometimes, this can be for comedic purposes, sometimes to make the intended emotion more impactful by the juxtaposition, sometimes to keep the characters more interesting and less predictable, and sometimes just to keep you on your toes.

So, to wrap up, creators use tropes as a way of expressing an idea, emotion, or piece of information, in our case sadness, to the reader/viewer.

Guided Practice:
In groups, using the provided list of tropes, try to think of as many examples of each in some form of media that you are familiar with. This could be film, television, comics, video games, books, etc. Be prepared to briefly explain the context in case others aren't familiar with the work. Bonus points for giving examples of where tropes have been subverted. Write the trope and a brief explanation of how it is used in the work.

After 5-10 minutes, have students share their examples.

Closure:
This is not even close to a full list of sadness tropes. Has anyone thought of others that they often see in texts? If not, try to provide another example not on the list.

Explain to students that they will be viewing/reading various texts to see how they use, do not use, or subvert various tropes related to sadness and loss.

<u>Assessment:</u>
Student group work in identifying tropes will allow the teacher to determine how well the students understand what tropes are. If they are able to come up with multiple, valid examples, they likely have enough of an understanding of what tropes are. If not, the teacher will need to guide them more thoroughly in identifying tropes in the coming lessons.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 02: *Up*

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 5, 11
Writing: 2, 4, 9, 10
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language: 1, 3, 6

Objectives:
Students will identify the use of tropes to convey sadness and assess their effectiveness in the film *Up*.

Materials:

- A copy of the film *Up* and a way to play it for the class

- List of sadness tropes

- Basic Facts sheets

Anticipatory Set:
Pop Quiz! (as an informal assessment)
On scrap paper, have students define trope and list one example of a trope they have seen. Discuss answers as a class. Go over tropes if needed.

Purpose:
We're going to begin our exploration into how loss is depicted in various media. We'll start by watching the opening of the animated film Up *to examine how it uses situations and tropes to convey a sense and feeling of sadness and loss to the viewer.*

Body:
Hand out Basic Facts worksheet. Watch the first four scenes of the movie (approximately 13.5 min), up until Carl sits down on the porch. Give students time to finish Basic Facts sheet.

Guided Practice:
Have students, in groups, use the back of the Basic Facts sheet to delve deeper into the tropes. How did the movie demonstrate them? Were there any tropes they noticed that weren't on the list? Did the movie subvert any of them in any way? Were there any that you expected but didn't see? Most importantly, did they add to the emotion that the film was trying to convey or did they distract from it?
Have groups share their discussions on these questions. Try to make sure that the tropes listed below are brought up and discussed. Allow students to argue for/against tropes.

Likely, no students will be able to (successfully) argue that any tropes were truly subverted in this clip. Discuss the reason for this – the film is aimed toward younger audiences. Younger audiences are less familiar with these tropes, so there is less chance of them having the opposite

reaction than intended (i.e. laughing at Sad Times Montage). Also, when done well and applied to characters you actually care about, tropes are still effective (and Pixar is very good at that).

Closure:
This film is a good example of how creators can use tropes to convey an intended emotion in the viewer. By using many of the tropes we discussed and a relatable scenario, the creators of this film were able to make you sad.

Assessment:
Check student lists of tropes. Some potential examples would be:

- Cradle of Loneliness

- Downer Beginning

- Lonely Piano Piece

- Men Don't Cry

- Misery Builds Character

- Good Times/Sad Times Montage

- True Art is Angsty

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 03: *Passage*

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
Reading, Informational: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7
Writing: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language: 1, 2, 3, 6

Objectives:
Students will explore how player choices can influence the implied narrative in *Passage*, allowing them to create their own stories with the game elements provided. Students will analyze their own choices as a reflection, or not a reflection, of their own values. Students will examine the use of tropes, or their lack, in the game's effectiveness.

Materials:

- One computer for each student

- Copies of the game *Passage* on each computer – available at http://hcsoftware.sourceforge.net/passage/

- *Passage* worksheet

- Creator's Statement sheet

- Basic Facts worksheet for class

Anticipatory Set:
How many of you play video games? Have you ever felt an emotional connection with a character?
Discuss.

Purpose:
Today, you'll each be playing a short video game called Passage*. It is very simplistic, and doesn't have cutting edge graphics, but it is a game that, to an extent, lets you play it your way.*

Body:
Show students how to open and start the game (press Enter) and give no more instruction than "use the arrow keys to move." Avoid discussing too much about the game, as it is important that the students play it without much prior knowledge. Hand out the Basic Facts worksheet.

Tell students to complete one (and only one) playthrough, fill out the Basic Facts worksheet as best as they can, and then sit quietly until everyone is finished. Tell them to write down their "score" from the upper right of the screen when they finish. This should not take more than 10 minutes.

Once all students have completed a playthrough, ask students: *What do you think the point of the game was?* After some discussion, read *Passage* Creator's Statement with class.
Ask:
How many of you found treasure chests in your first playthrough?
How many spent the game with the partner?
Now that you've read the creator's statement, do you think that were you to play through the game again you would do it differently?

Guided Practice:

Distribute the *Passage* Worksheet and ask the students to play through the game another time, this time keeping the creator's statement in mind. Ask them to fill out the worksheet after their second playthrough.

Did any of you notice any tropes in the game? What were they?
These are the obvious, but arguments can be made for others:

- True Art is Angsty

- Downer Ending

Closure:

How many of you felt sad at the end of the game? Why or why not?
There may be a significant portion of students who were not emotionally affected by the game. This is ok. Not every work speaks to everyone.

Assessment:

Collect *Passage* Worksheets and check them for thoroughness. Check the final two questions most closely as this will influence the discussion in the next class.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 04: *Up* and *Passage* Analysis

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11
Writing: 1, 2, 4, 8, 11
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language: 1, 2, 3, 6

Objectives:
Students will analyze two works to determine the effectiveness of the devices and tropes used in each of them. Students will determine which work was more effective in delivering its intended emotional impact.

Materials:

- Students will need their Basic Facts sheets for both works

- Comparison Sheets

Anticipatory Set:
Do a brief review of the Basic Facts sheets for both works to refresh students' memories regarding them.

Purpose:
Over the last two classes, we experienced two different works that, in essence, told the same story—of two people meeting and spending their lives together until one of them passes away. However, they went about telling this story not only just in different media, but also using different techniques.
Today, we'll be comparing and contrasting the use of tropes and storytelling techniques in Up *and* Passage*. We will be examining how they are used, how they could have been used, and how these factors contributed to, or took away from, the emotional impact of the story.*

Body:
Hand out Comparison sheets.

For the first time through these sheets, we're going to do much of this as a group so you can get a feel for how to think about the questions.
The first work we'll look at is Up*. What do we think was the emotional climax of what we saw?*
The death of Ellie
How did we get to that point in the story? What was the plot that led up to that point?
Carl and Ellie meeting, falling in love, etc.
Was there any kind of comedown after that climax?
Yes, the scene of Carl alone.
What response was the creator trying to elicit?
Sadness at the loss of Ellie, relation to the feeling of a character's loss

What devices/tropes were used?
Students can use the tropes listed on Basic Facts sheet. Also important to note the effectiveness of juxtaposition of the Good Times Montage with the Sad Times Montage.
Which were most effective?
The juxtaposition allows the viewer to care about the characters, see their history, provides a counterpoint for the sadness of death. Others, depending on student response.
Which were not effective?
Up for debate.

Guided Practice:
Have the students answer the same questions for *Passage* on the next page in small groups. Make sure they know there is no need to come to a consensus as a group on the questions—they should answer them as they see fit and use the group as a sounding board. Circulate to provide assistance as needed.

Once students are finished (5-10 minutes?), go over questions as a class.

Go over the questions on the third page of the Comparison sheet with the students. Have students answer those questions individually.

Closure:
If time, share some responses to the third page. Collect sheets.

Assessment:
Teacher should collect and check the Comparison sheets to see how well students responded to the questions on the third page. This will allow the teacher to see if students are beginning to understand how tropes and devices work to convey emotion.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 05: "Birthmates"

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11
Writing: 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11
Speaking & Listening: 1, 3, 6
Language: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Objectives:
Students will identify and analyze the effectiveness of the tropes found in the story "Birthmates".
Students will determine how the tropes were used and evaluate how they may have been used differently.

Materials:

- Microcomputer Info

- Copies of "Birthmates"

- Basic Facts sheet

Anticipatory Set:
Put up Microcomputer Info on screen/Smartboard.
Why do you need to know this? It's background info for the story we're going to read today. Now that you know what microcomputers were, you won't be confused when you read about it in the story. ☺

Purpose:
Today we'll be reading a short story by Gish Jen called "Birthmates" and examining it for its use of tropes.

Body:
Hand out Basic Facts sheet. Ask students to fill out the tropes section as they read along. Read "Birthmates" as a class. When done, give the students a few minutes to fill out the rest of the worksheet.
Have students, in groups, discuss the tropes they found in the story and come up with an example (or examples) from the story that caused them to include the trope on their list. After about 5-10 minutes (as needed), have the groups report back and create a list of tropes on the board.
Suggested tropes (not necessarily all-inclusive):

- Deus Angst Machina

- Downer Ending

- Curious Qualms of Conscience

- My God, What Have I Done?

- Was Too Hard on Him/Her

- The World Mocks Your Loss

- Men Don't Cry

Guided Practice:
Individually, have students pick at least three of the tropes, and for each:

- Find the example of it in the story

- Explain what they think the intended purpose of the use of that trope was

- Explain whether or not they think it was effective given that intended purpose

- Would they have done it differently?

They can do this on the back of their Basic Facts sheet or scrap paper.

Closure:
Ask students to share their thoughts on the use of the tropes with the class. Collect this assignment to look over.

Assessment:
Student participation in groups while identifying tropes. The review of individual tropes analysis will allow the teacher to determine how well students understand the use of tropes.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 06: "A Small, Good Thing"

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11
Writing: 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11
Speaking & Listening: 1, 3, 6
Language: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Objectives:
Students will identify and analyze the effectiveness of the tropes found in the story "A Small, Good Thing". Students will determine how the tropes were used and evaluate how they may have been used differently. Students will analyze how tropes were subverted and determine the effect of this on the story.

Materials:

- Computer with speakers for teacher

- Copies of Basic Facts sheet

- Copies of "A Small, Good Thing"

Anticipatory Set:
Play the first 2:30 or so of Chopin's Funeral March (or the whole thing if you want to go into a deeper analysis—the middle section provides a drastic juxtaposition to the rest)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgw_RD_1_5I

Can anyone tell me why we just watched that? Other than because it's sad. How does it reflect what we've been talking about?
There are certain devices that even are found in music (and not just the lyrics) that reflect some of the things we've examined in works so far. You'll notice the change in dynamics and complexity of the music, from the quiet, plodding march at the start gradually growing louder into the chords in the second section, then back to the quiet march after a semi-triumphant feel. This is another example of how juxtaposition can increase emotion. Even though we won't specifically be examining any music in this unit, this is a good example of how some devices are used no matter what media the creator is working with.

Purpose:
Today we will be reading another short story, this time by author Raymond Carver, called "A Small, Good Thing" which deals with similar themes to the Gish Jen story we read last class.

Body:
Hand out Basic Facts sheet. Ask students to fill out the tropes section as they read along. Read "A Small, Good Thing" as a class. When done, give the students a few minutes to fill out the rest of the worksheet.

Then ask the class to share some of the tropes they saw in the story. There likely won't be many that can be (successfully) argued, as this story doesn't rely on them to much extent. Grumpy Bear and Bittersweet Ending are two possibilities, though. Then:

I would argue that, in this story, we see some of the tropes being subverted. One example I can think of is The World Mocks Your Loss. You see this being subverted twice, I would say, over the course of the story. First is when Ann speaks to the family in the waiting room, whose son is being operated on. Rather than that son surviving and hers not, their son dies as well. Also, when Howard and Ann are speaking to the baker, rather than him having a great family and life, he has no family and proceeds to then tell them about his feelings regarding his lack of family. This subverts the trope by giving you the exact opposite of what you would expect, and rather than drive in the sadness of the loss of the child, it allows the writer to give the reader a different perspective. At the end of the story, instead of just feeling the Weiss's loss, we can consider whether it is better for the baker to have never had children and had to endure their loss, or if it was better to have had the child.

Guided Practice:
Ask the students to, in groups, find at least one other trope that was subverted and come up with an explanation of its effect. Give them time to complete this. Have the groups share their results with the class. Another good example might be Manly Tears/Men Don't Cry.

Closure:
Ask students to consider the effect of subverting the sadness tropes that we are familiar with. Did it add anything to the story? Or was the story less effective because of it? Ask students to write a paragraph on this individually as a ticket out the door.

Assessment:
Teacher should check paragraphs as well as the group work from the guided practice to see if students understand how subversion of tropes works.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 07: "Birthmates" and "A Small, Good Thing" Analysis

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11
Writing: 1, 2, 4, 8, 11
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language: 1, 2, 3, 6

Objectives:
Students will analyze two works to determine the effectiveness of the devices and tropes used in each of them. Students will determine which work was more effective in delivering its intended emotional impact.

Materials:

- Copies of "Birthmates" and "A Small, Good Thing"

- Basic Facts sheets for both

- Comparison sheets

Anticipatory Set:
Review the facts sheets for the two stories to refresh the students' memories of them. Discuss how "Birthmates" more heavily relied on tropes to convey its emotional impact, while "A Small, Good Thing" tended to subvert those tropes to reach a different emotional impact.

Purpose:
*Once again, we will be comparing two works that have similar themes. We want to see which one was more effective (in **your** opinion) based on the techniques it used to convey its emotional impact.*

Body:
First we need to determine what we think the author of each piece was attempting to convey to us. What did they want us to feel? What did they want us to think about? What was the "takeaway" from the piece? Fill out the first four questions for each story on the Comparison sheet and we'll discuss after that.

Give students some time to complete that, then have them share their answers. For "A Small, Good Thing", the emotional climax may differ among students as there isn't necessarily a clear answer to this. As long as they can justify it, it's acceptable. This will likely also change the answers to the following questions as well.
Focus on the answers to question 4. What was the takeaway of "Birthmates"? What was the takeaway of "A Small, Good Thing"? In order to properly evaluate the effectiveness of the tropes and devices used, students will need to know what they think the author was attempting. After discuss, ask students to finish the rest of the questions for the two stories (the first two pages of the Comparison sheet) themselves.

Guided Practice:
Ask students which work they though was more effective. Group them together based on similar responses to give them a sounding board, and ask them to finish the third page as a group. Go over answers as a class.

Closure:
Think about how the subversion of tropes can lead a story in a much different path than expected. Yet, sometimes sticking to established tropes can make the impact of a piece more effective, as those who liked "Birthmates" better would argue. Think more about how you might have changed either of those stories to make it more effective. In a few classes, you'll have the opportunity to play with tropes in your own works.

Assessment:
Collect Comparison sheets as students leave to check for understanding.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 08: "Jurassic Bark"

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 5, 11
Writing: 2, 4, 9, 10
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language: 1, 3, 6

Objectives:
Students will analyze how tropes can be subverted for comedic effect. Students will analyze how the juxtaposition of happy vs. sad increases the effect of sadness. Students will analyze the expectation of subversion of tropes can be set up to create an emotional impact when they are not subverted.

Materials:

- Copy of "Jurassic Bark" (available on Netflix at time of writing, otherwise DVD)

- Basic Facts sheet

- Scrap Paper

Anticipatory Set:
Can you think of a time when you saw a trope subverted for comedic effect? If you've ever watched a parody, you can probably think of many examples.
Discuss.

Purpose:
As you recall, we saw in "A Small, Good Thing" how tropes can be subverted to give the story a different impact than it would have otherwise had. Today, we're going to watch an episode of the animated TV show Futurama *called "Jurassic Bark" which subverts tropes for comedic effect.*

Body:
Pass out Basic Facts sheet and tell students to try and watch for which tropes are subverted and which are not. Have them write this down in the tropes section on that sheet while they watch.

After watching:
So that was pretty sad at the end, huh? Why? Yes, because the dog waited for him, but why does that carry so much weight? Why, in a comedy, does a sad event carry more weight?
Look for the juxtaposition of happy vs. sad.
More importantly, steer the discussion to how the previous subversion of tropes sets up an expectation that that pattern will continue. However, it does not. There is no subversion of the final tropes at the end, making it more surprising, and therefore more potent.

Guided Practice:

Ask students to, in groups, identify the various tropes used and how they are used. Are they subverted by being played for comedy, or are they played straight?

Tropes:
My God, What Have I Done – subverted/played for comedy
I Just Want to Have Friends – subverted/played for comedy
Grumpy Bear – subverted/played for comedy
Was Too Hard on Him – subverted/played for comedy
Curious Qualms of Conscience – subverted/played for comedy
Manly Tears – subverted/played for comedy
Sad Times Montage – played straight
Solemn Ending Theme – played straight
Downer Ending – played straight

Discuss this as a class.

Closure:
If this episode made you sad, write a paragraph describing how the techniques it used were successful. If it didn't, write a paragraph describing why its techniques failed on you.
Collect as a ticket out the door.

Assessment:
Check students' tickets out the door for understanding.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 09: *Loneliness*

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
Writing: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language: 1, 2, 3, 6

Objectives:
Students will explore how player choices can influence the implied narrative in *Loneliness*, allowing them to create their own stories with the game elements provided. Students will analyze their own choices as a reflection, or not a reflection, of their own values. Students will examine the use of tropes, or their lack, in the game's effectiveness.

Materials:

- Computer w/ Internet access for each student

- Link to game: http://www.necessarygames.com/my-games/loneliness/flash

- Basic Facts sheets

Anticipatory Set:
Think to a time in your life where you've had to make new friends. Maybe you had just moved to a new school or neighborhood, or you went to a summer camp, or you joined a new club. Or even try to think back about how you got the friends you have now. Did you ever have difficulty making friends? Were there people you tried to be friends with who didn't want anything to do with you?
These can be rhetorical or discussion questions.

Purpose:
Today we're going to experience another work that deals with the concept of friendship and loneliness. It's a game fittingly called Loneliness.

Body:
Have students individually play the game.

Some of you may be wondering how exactly this tells a story, and who/what the protagonist is other than a square. We're going to watch a short clip that discusses how your choices in the game drive the narrative, and what that implies.

Extra Credits – Mechanics as Metaphor (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QwcI4iQt2Y)

In this game, you essentially create the protagonist yourself. The way in which you choose to play the game is, to an extent, what drives the plot, and what dictates the devices and tropes used in the game. Were you a Grumpy Bear? Did you Just Want to Have Friends? Did the World

Mock Your Loss? Or were you just Alone in a Crowd? Fill out the Basic Facts sheet based on your personal playthough.

Guided Practice:
We're going to do something different today and begin work on the Comparison sheet. Answer the questions on page one for Loneliness*. Feel free to consult with others around you, or to break off into groups to discuss your thoughts, if you're having difficulty coming up with satisfactory answers to some of the questions.*
Regroup and discuss the questions.

Closure:
Have students write a paragraph or two regarding their choices in the game and how that affected the emotional impact of the work as a ticket out the door.

Assessment:
Collect Comparison sheets and Basic Facts sheets to check. Check student paragraphs.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 10: "Jurassic Bark" and *Loneliness* or "A Small, Good Thing" Analysis

Standards:
Reading, Literature: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11
Writing: 1, 2, 4, 8, 11
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language: 1, 2, 3, 6

Objectives:
Students will analyze two works to determine the effectiveness of the devices and tropes used in each of them. Students will determine which work was more effective in delivering its intended emotional impact.

Materials:

- Comparison sheets

- Basic Facts sheets

- Laptops with Internet access

Anticipatory Set:
Review the facts sheets for *Loneliness* and "Jurassic Bark" with an emphasis on how each one used differing tropes for friendship.

Purpose:
Today, I'm giving you a choice. We're going to be comparing two works, either "Jurassic Bark" and Loneliness *or, if that game didn't do much for you, "Jurassic Bark" and "A Small, Good Thing".*

Body:
If you choose to compare it to Loneliness*, I want you to focus on how each work dealt with the theme of friendship and loneliness from its loss. If you choose to use "A Small, Good Thing", I want you to focus on how the subversion of sadness tropes in each leads to vastly different effects—one for comedy, one for drama. You can work alone, or in partners or a small group, but you can only work with others who chose the same pair of works.*
If you are using Loneliness*, and would like the chance to play it again, grab a laptop.*

Guided Practice:
Supervise as students work on the assignment. Make sure to ask leading questions if they seem to be stumped or having difficulty. For groups working with *Loneliness*, make sure that they focus on their own choices while they played the game, which help create the narrative and tropes. For students working with "A Small, Good Thing", make sure that they are focusing on how the subversion of tropes is used for wildly different effect in each work.

<u>Closure:</u>
Have students/groups share their results, starting with the "Jurassic Bark" and *Loneliness* pairing, then the other.

<u>Assessment:</u>
Teacher observation of group and individual work.

Grade Level: 11-12
Unit: Devices of Sadness, Grief, and Loss
Lesson 11: Conclusion of Unit, Final Project and Reflection

Standards:
Writing: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11
Speaking & Listening: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6,
Language: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Objectives:
Students will create a work that incorporates their knowledge and understanding of devices and tropes related to sadness, grief, and loss. Students will analyze their work to determine the effectiveness of their choices. Students will evaluate their creative process.

Materials:

- Final Project Assignment packet

- Extra copies of Character Sheet from Final Project Assignment

- Laptops w/ Internet connection for each student.

Anticipatory Set:
Ask students if they have any lingering questions or thoughts regarding the tropes and devices that you have been discussing in class.

Purpose:
Today we will be discussing your final project for this unit. You will be creating a work dealing with the ideas of sadness, grief, and loss using some of the devices and tropes we've been talking about in class.

Body:
Go over Assignment sheet with students. Go over the rubric with the students. Make sure that they are aware of how each category is weighted. (x2, x5, etc.)

Before diving right in, however, you will be filling out the sheets in this packet to help you create characters, decide on a setting, and create a basic plot structure. You can do these in any order you'd like. Sometimes having a setting will generate characters, or sometimes having characters will generate a conflict. Since the amount of time you have to work on this project in class will be limited, make sure you use these sheets effectively. Good planning will make the actual creation of your work much easier. Good planning at this stage will also keep you from getting stuck creating a story that is too long to finish in the time constraints that we have. I only included two character sheets in the packet, so let me know if you need more.

If you are having difficulty thinking up your own story and characters, you may adapt one of the video games that we played during this unit. Think about the story of Passage *or* Loneliness *as you created it through your play. You have characters, but how did you choose to act as those characters. Remember, by playing those games your way, you were creating a narrative and*

characters—ones that you can use to write your story if you're not feeling comfortable or confident in creating a whole new story from scratch.

Guided Practice:
Give students time to work on project. Realistically, the rest of this first period should probably be spent planning and going over the sheets in the packet. Make sure students have a solid plan before letting them jump on the laptops. Allow for at least three more full (45 min) periods to give students time to work on the project in class, though if you can spare more that would be best.

Once students have finished the main project, they must then work on the reflection.

Closure:
Collect assignments and go over them. Give students a chance to share with the class if there is time. With student permission, place assignments up on a class page so they are available for others to see.

Assessment:
Use rubric to assess final project. Use partner evaluation sheets to ensure that each student contributed to the project.

Handouts and Materials

List of tropes dealing with sadness:

(adapted from http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SadnessTropes)

Alone in a Crowd – when the character is surrounded by a moving crowd but stands still without moving or acknowledging the presence of anyone else. Often he/she is not acknowledged by the crowd other than moving around him/her

Angst – questioning one's existence, purpose, or the meaning of their life or life in general. Often becomes **Wangst** (whiney angst) in the eyes of the viewer

Bad Dreams – the character only demonstrates their sadness/pain over what has happened to them in their dreams, often reliving the moment of loss, etc. in the dream

Beard of Sorrow – when a male character grows a beard or doesn't shave due to their depression over a loss

Big "NO!" – this is pretty self-explanatory—a character yelling "NOOOOOOOOO!!!" Used either in an attempt to stop the inevitable bad thing from happening, or in reaction to bad news.

Bittersweet Ending – "happens when victory came at a harsh price, when, for whatever reason, the heroes cannot fully enjoy the reward of their actions, when some irrevocable loss has happened during the course of the events, and nothing will ever be the same again. A Bittersweet Ending is still ending on a high note, but one that is mixed with sadness and nostalgia. Often, such endings are the result of the plot making a completely happy ending impossible"

Cradle of Loneliness – when a character uses some sort of keepsake from another character they have lost in order to remind them of that person

Cry into Chest – when one character cries into another's chest (often the female character being comforted by a male character, though not always) in response to some sort of loss

Curious Qualms of Conscience – when a character feels badly about something that they have always done, or when they realize they may have done wrong when they thought they were doing right

Dark and Troubled Past – when a character has an often secretive past filled with pain from some tragic event

Despair Speech – when a character gives a monologue describing how hope is lost and/or describing the ways in which their life has gone wrong

Deus Angst Machina – when everything possible goes wrong for a character. Often this goes over the top to where it can become unbelievable if handled improperly.

Downer Beginning – when a work begins with a tragic event, either to show how things get better, or to juxtapose an initial happiness

Downer Ending – when a work ends with a tragic event

Grumpy Bear – a type of anti-hero who is often a loner and a bit cynical, but usually comes through in the end for other characters

I Just Want to Have Friends – when a character will do almost anything to make or keep friendships, even if it causes them to do terrible things

Lonely Piano Piece – when a sad piano piece plays in the background of, or in the aftermath of, a sad event

Manly Tears – part of the concept that men don't cry. These tears are dignified and only the result of a significant event, and doesn't make the character less "manly". They are used as a subversion of the men don't cry trope.

Men Don't Cry – self explanatory. When faced with loss/pain, men remain stoic and outwardly unfeeling.

Misery Builds Character – when suffering is used to build character

My God, What Have I Done? – when a character realizes that they have done something horrible, sometimes unintentionally

Personal Effects Reveal – when the belongings of a deceased character reveal something unknown about them

Sad Times Montage – a montage showing a character being sad, often juxtaposed with a Good Times Montage (the opposite)

Solemn Ending Theme – when a sad song is played over the end or end credits of a film/tv show

Sour Outside, Sad Inside – a character who seems distant, cold, and bitter to others, but this is only because of the sadness they feel on the inside

Tear Jerker – an event in a work (or a work itself) that is specifically designed to make even the most jaded person cry

True Art Is Angsty – the concept that only tragedy can convey any sort of real meaning in a work of art

Wangst (Whiney Angst) – this can be considered angst done badly. When a character is whiney about their angst to the point that the viewer/reader loses sympathy

Was Too Hard on Him/Her – when a character wonders if he/she went too far in reprimanding/punishing another character

The Woobie – a character who the reader/viewer is meant to feel sorry for, often because the world seems to be against them when they don't deserve it

The World Mocks Your Loss – when a character endures a loss of some kind and then is unintentionally reminded of it by others who have not endured that loss (i.e. a character loses a spouse then sees a bunch of happy couples)

These are a small sampling of the many, many tropes dealing with sadness in media. Go to the link at the top to see more.

Name: _____   Period: _____

BASIC FACTS

Title of work: _____

Type of work: _____

Protagonist(s):

Name	Description

Antagonist(s) if any:

Name	Description

Brief(!) Plot Summary:

Tropes Used:

Name: Period:

Passage Worksheet

On your **first** playthrough, did you:

☐   Go through with a partner?

☐   Find treasure(s)?

☐   Significantly explore north and south?

After your **second** playthrough, thoroughly answer these questions:

Did you go through the maze with a partner? Why or why not?

Did you look for treasure chests? Why or why not?

Did you try to explore as much of the maze as possible or just enough to keep moving forward?
Why?

Did getting a "high score" matter to you or did you mostly ignore it? Explain.

Given what the creator was intending these things to symbolize, do the choices you made in the game reflect the choices you would make for your life? Explain.

Did the game have any emotional impact on you? Did you feel sad? Bored? Annoyed? Explain what made you feel this way.

Did you notice any tropes that the creator used? Did they have any effect on the game's impact on you?

Passage **Creator's Statement:**

A tiny bit of background about me: I turn 30 tomorrow. A close friend from our neighborhood died last month. Yep, I've been thinking about life and death a lot lately. This game is an expression of my recent thoughts and feelings.

Passage is meant to be a memento mori game. It presents an entire life, from young adulthood through old age and death, in the span of five minutes. Of course, it's a *game*, not a painting or a film, so the choices that you make as the player are crucial. There's no "right" way to play *Passage*, just as there's no right way to interpret it. However, I had specific intentions for the various mechanics and features that I included. You've probably figured most of these out already, but I wanted to put forth a few explanations for anyone who is interested.

The "long" screen, of course, represents a lifetime. As you age in the game, your character moves closer and closer to the right edge of the screen. Upon reaching that edge, your character dies.

The early stages of life seem to be all about the future: what you're going to do when you grow up, who you're going to marry, and all the things you're going to do someday. At the beginning of the game, you can see your entire life out in front of you, albeit in rather hazy form, but you can't see anything that's behind you, because you have no past to speak of. As you approach middle age, you can still see quite a bit out in front of you, but you can also see what you've left behind---a kind of store of memories that builds up. At its midpoint, life is really about both the future (what you're going to do when you retire) and the past (telling stories about your youth). Toward the end of life, there really is no future left, so life is more about the past, and you can see a lifetime of memories behind you.

So what can you do with your life? In *Passage*, one possibility is to search for and open treasure chests. Of course, not every pursuit leads to a reward---most of them are empty. Over time, though, you can learn which pursuits are likely to be rewarding. Each treasure chest is marked with a sequence of gems on its front, and this sequence indicates whether the chest contains a reward. During your lifetime, you can learn to read these sequences and only spend your precious time opening worthwhile treasure chests.

Passage represents life's challenges with a maze. The screen geometry only allows you to view a narrow slice of this maze at any given moment. You can see quite a distance out in front of you (and, later in life, behind you), but you can't see anything to the north or south. You may see a reward up ahead but not be able to see a clear path to it. In fact, after a bit of exploration, you may discover that a seemingly-nearby reward is in fact unreachable. As you go deeper into the maze to the south, the path becomes more convoluted, though an obstacle-free route is always available to the north. However, treasure chests are more and more common as you go deeper into the maze. You can spend your time in pursuit of these hard-to-reach rewards, or you can explore and enjoy the scenery that unfolds before you to the east. As you grow older, your view of the territory in front of you shrinks, and navigating new areas in life's maze becomes more difficult.

The world in *Passage* is infinite. As you head east, you'll find an endless expanse of constantly-changing landscape, and you are rewarded for your exploration. However, even if you spent your entire lifetime exploring, you'd never have a chance to see everything that there is to see. If you spend your time plumbing the depths of the maze, however, you will only see a tiny fraction of the scenery.

You have the option of joining up with a spouse on your journey (if you missed her, she's in the far north near your original starting point). Once you team up with her, however, you must travel together, and you are not as agile as you were when you were single. Some rewards deep in the maze will no longer be reachable if you're with your spouse. You simply cannot fit through narrow paths when you are walking side-by-side. In fact, you will sometimes find yourself standing right next to a treasure chest, yet unable to open it, and the only thing standing in your way will be your spouse. On the other hand, exploring the world is more enjoyable with a companion, and you'll reap a larger reward from exploration if she's along. When she dies, though, your grief will slow you down considerably.

As I said before, there's no right way to play this game. Part of the goal, in fact, is to get you to reflect on the choices that you make while playing. The rewards in *Passage* come in the form of points added to your score, and you have two options for scoring points: treasure chests, which give 100 points for each hit, and exploration, which gives double-points if you walk with your spouse. There's a pretty tight balance between these two options---there's no optimal choice between the two.

Yes, you could spend your five minutes trying to accumulate as many points as possible, but in the end, death is still coming for you. Your score looks pretty meaningless hovering there above your little tombstone. This treatment of character death stands in stark contrast with the way death is commonly used in video games (where you die countless times during a given game and emerge victorious---and still alive---in the end). *Passage* is a game in which you die only once, at the very end, and you are powerless to stave off this inevitable loss.

...

And if you're wondering, I do have light hair and blue eyes, and my spouse does have red hair and green eyes. When I was younger, I wore a green shirt, blue pants, and black shoes. Now my favorite outfit involves white shoes, brown pants, and a black shirt. My spouse used to have a light-green dress that was her favorite. And yes, my hair line is starting to creep back. That's me and my spouse in there, distilled down to 8x8 pixels each.

And no, I haven't shown the game to her yet. I'm still waiting for the right moment. ❤

<div align="right">
Jason Rohrer
Potsdam, NY
November 2007
</div>

Name: Period:

Comparison Sheet

First work:_____

1. What was the emotional climax of the work?

2. How did the creator reach this point in terms of plot?

3. Was there any kind of emotional release following the climax?

4. What response was the creator trying to elicit from the reader/viewer?

5. What devices and tropes were used to accentuate the emotional response of the reader/viewer?

6. Which were effective?

7. Which were not effective?

Second work:_____

1. What was the emotional climax of the work?

2. How did the creator reach this point in terms of plot?

3. Was there any kind of emotional release following the climax?

4. What response was the creator trying to elicit from the reader/viewer?

5. What devices and tropes were used to accentuate the emotional response of the reader/viewer?

6. Which were effective?

7. Which were not effective?

Considering both works:

1. Which work do you think was more effective at conveying its intended emotion?

2. Why? What did the more effective work do better?

3. What did the less effective work do worse?

4. What lessons can be learned from the more effective work?

5. What changes could be made to the less effective work to give it more emotional impact?

Microcomputers!

(taken from http://www.obsoletecomputermuseum.org/brain/)

In the early 80s, these were all the rage! There were tons of different manufacturers of these things, and many of them weren't compatible with each other. They started to go out of style as IBM PCs (running Microsoft operating systems) became the standard, and anything that wasn't compatible with those (other than Macs, of course) started to disappear from the market.

Final Project Assignment

For your final project for this unit**, you will be creating your own story exploring the idea of sadness, grief, and loss using the devices and tropes we have been discussing in class. You can choose to create a comic, a script, a short story, or another form of media with my approval.** The story can be dramatic or comedic, depending on how you use these devices and tropes. Part of your job is to make sure that your intent to be sad or funny is not misinterpreted, so make sure you use the devices and tropes effectively. For the story, you can use events from your life or just anything you can imagine. **You may work with one (and only one) other student to complete this project.**

Choose a theme or message that you want the reader to walk away from your piece with. Then, pick three to five tropes from the list and use these to guide your story. You must use them in your work and subvert at least one of them. This can be done for comedic effect, or for dramatic effect. Remember, the point is to create a cohesive story, so make sure that you don't just throw together a bunch of tropes and call it a day.

There are no real hard limits or minimum requirements on how many characters you should have in your story. You can do it with as few as one, but you probably won't want more than a few main characters. The work needs to be long enough to tell the whole story. For a short story, that would be at least 5-10 pages. For comics, think of it more as a comic book than a comic strip. There should be probably 25-30 panels. Scripts should have roughly 5-10 scenes. Once again, these are not absolute numbers. You need to make it as long as it needs to be to tell an effective story.

The final component of the project will be an approximately two page reflection on your work. If you worked with a partner, you each need to do one individually. In it, you will need to:
- Describe the intended theme and effect of your work
- Describe why you chose the devices and tropes that you did and how they added to the theme.
- Describe what you hope the reader took away from your work.
- Reflect on your creative process and what you would have done differently.
- Follow the conventions of standard written English.

You will be graded based on the rubric at the end of this packet.

Some links you might find useful in this project:

Comic Creation: www.toondoo.com / www.pixton.com
Script Writing: story.adobe.com
Storyboarding: www.storyboardthat.com / generator.acmi.net.au/storyboard

Character Sheet:

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Appearance:

Biography/Background:

Role in story:

Relationship to other characters?

Character Sheet:

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Appearance:

Biography/Background:

Role in story:
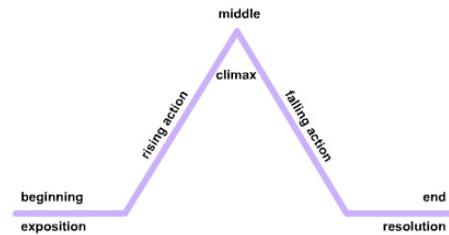
Relationship to other characters?

The Story:

Setting:

Basic Premise (how would you describe the story in one or two sentences?):

Detailed Plot:

Exposition:

(Remember, most stories follow this pattern)

Conflict:

Rising Action:

Climax:

Falling Action:

Resolution:

Tropes and Devices

Which tropes and devices will you use?

How will you use them? Which will be subverted and how?

Are they going to be used for comedic or dramatic effect? In what way?

How will you make sure they are not misinterpreted? (Drama plays like comedy or vice versa)

Name(s): **Final Project Rubric** Period:

	4 (Mastery)	**3** (Proficiency)	**2** (Needs Improvement)	**1** (Unacceptable)
Mechanics, Spelling and Grammar **(x3)**	Work (including reflection) has no more than one or two errors in spelling, mechanics or grammar	Work (including reflection) has some errors, but they do not impede understandability.	Work (including reflection) has many errors that make it confusing.	Work (including reflection) is difficult or impossible to understand due to multiple errors.
Structure and Organization **(x3)**	Strong, effective structure which creates interest at the start, skillfully takes the reader through the narrative, and ends by reinforcing the theme of the story.	Story is coherent and follows a logical flow, and though interest may sometimes be lost by the reader, it is not difficult to follow the story.	Story mostly follows a logical path, though occasionally it is difficult for the reader to figure out what is going on.	Story has non-artistic structural issues which make it difficult or impossible to understand and greatly detract from the effect of the story.
Story Elements **(x5)**	Plot is intricate, engaging, and effectively conveys the intended message. Characters are well-developed and interesting.	Plot is coherent and reasonably effective. Characters are consistent and their actions are understandable.	Plot has holes that make it confusing. Characters are underdeveloped and their actions sometimes do not make sense.	Plot is indecipherable. Characters do not behave in ways that make any sense.
Language and Style **(x4)**	Consistent use of precise language that has a major effect on the work (including reflection). Dialogue is engaging.	Some use of precise language adds to the work (including reflection). Dialogue is understandable.	Little precise language detracts from the works effectiveness (including reflection). Dialogue is weak.	Language is underdeveloped and confusing making the work (including reflection) suffer. Dialogue is incomprehensible.
Themes, Devices and Tropes **(x5)**	The story has a strong theme or message. The use of multiple devices and tropes significantly add to this theme. Subversion of tropes is used effectively to add to the comedy/drama of the story.	The theme is present but not fully supported by the story. The use of most devices and tropes adds to the theme of the story. Tropes are subverted, though not always to the intended effect.	The theme is inconsistent. Some devices and tropes are used effectively, though enough are not that it detracts from the story. Subversion of tropes is inconsistent.	The story has no discernable theme. The use of devices and tropes detracts from the story. No tropes are subverted effectively and the story does not have the intended impact.
Reflection **(x5)**	The reflection thoroughly explains the development of the piece and the author's choices in its creation.	The reflection mostly explains the author's choices, but some aspects of the story are still unclear.	The reflection does not explain most of the author's choices and many aspects of the story are left unclear.	The reflection does not seem to in any way represent the author's choices in the creation of the story.

FYI – I reserve the right to give a 0 (zero) in any category that is completely unfulfilled or missing.

TOTAL POINTS: _____ / 100

Partner Evaluation Sheet

Your Name: **Name of Partner:**

How did you and your partner divide up the work for the project?

How well would you say you and your partner worked together?

Do you feel as though you both did an equal amount of work? Why or why not?

_____

Partner Evaluation Sheet

Your Name: **Name of Partner:**

How did you and your partner divide up the work for the project?

How well would you say you and your partner worked together?

Do you feel as though you both did an equal amount of work? Why or why not?

Chapter Four: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The intent of the above unit was to demonstrate how multimodal literacy can be relatively easily adopted into the ELA curriculum without sacrificing the rigor and adherence to standards required by the Common Core. The lessons were specifically designed to remain teachable by almost any teacher who has access to laptops and the Internet in the classroom. There is nothing particularly flashy or showy about these lessons, and that was intentional. Creating lessons that require either extensive experience with technology for the teacher, or access to software that requires expensive licenses, or even just software or devices that are uncommon or difficult to learn would make the unit impractical for many teachers. Incorporating multimodal literacies and new texts into ELA curriculum cannot require a massive investment of money or time as neither of these things can be guaranteed.

Rather, these lessons were designed with every ELA teacher in mind. It is rare to find schools where the students do not have access to at least a computer lab and a projector. Nothing in these lessons requires the teacher to spend valuable class time teaching students how to use a particular program or website. Even the activities are relatively standard within the realm of ELA classrooms—most of the lessons are based around close analysis of texts. However, rather than use traditional texts and the lecture/note format, these lessons incorporate new texts as a standard part of the curriculum. They are not treated as curios or as a one-off activity, but rather valuable additions to the curriculum. This allows students to engage and develop multimodal literacies more deeply because they are being practiced consistently and tied to traditional literacy skills.

Most importantly, in this day and age, each lesson was directly tied to multiple Common Core standards. The emphasis on discussion-based learning allowed for a strong focus on the Speaking & Listening aspect of the standards. The students have multiple opportunities to practice these skills, which will lead to stronger development and higher proficiency. Additionally, these lessons elaborate on the skills described by the Reading standards, especially those for Literature. The close analysis of each work, with response and discussion, gives students the opportunity to practice their literary and critical analysis skills, delving deeply into a multitude of varying texts. Finally, there is ample opportunity for students to practice their writing skills, with prompts spread throughout the unit. This unit demonstrates that the adoption of the Common Core standards does not mean that creativity and innovation in teaching is dead. There is room for teachers to adapt and adopt new techniques and texts while still fulfilling the requirements of Common Core standards.

Connections to Research

One of the many purposes for incorporating multimodal literacy into the ELA curriculum is to engage students in the Third Space, as discussed by Dredger et al. (2010). By incorporating texts and types of media that students are familiar with, teachers can more easily bridge the gap between students' home life, their school life, and their own personal experiences. This unit was designed to be modular in that texts can be swapped in and out with relative ease. The worksheets and structure of the lesson can, for the most part, remain the same. This allows teachers to use texts of their choosing—texts that can be more relevant to their students. The theme of the unit can also be relatively easily changed to explore a different set of tropes and devices if the teacher would prefer, while still allowing for the same structure and worksheets as

before. The high adaptability of this unit allows for teachers to most effectively engage their own particular students in the Third Space.

Another obvious benefit to engaging students in the Third Space is increased student interest in the material. By using types of media that students enjoy on their own, teachers can show students that their literary lives outside of the classroom, ones that involve multiple forms of text, are as equally valuable as the traditional curriculum. Putting an animated television show or a video game side by side with a short story from a respected author and treating them with the same level of seriousness demonstrates the classroom importance of students' outside literary experiences. This allows them to not only learn new literary analysis skills for new texts, but also to use the experiences they have with new texts to better understand the traditional texts.

The use of video games in this unit reflects the work of Alberti (2008), who noted how the player of a video game is essentially a co-author, helping to create the work as he or she plays. Therefore, the analysis of the story of a video game, especially a relatively open-ended one, leads to multiple interpretations, all based on how the player chose to play the game. Creating a story in a video game helps students think about how actions are linked to character development and narrative devices and tropes, but without the burden of creating a setting and initial characters. This gives them the freedom to explore different options in storytelling without having to create an entire narrative of their own.

The unit itself is based significantly on concepts borrowed from media studies, rather than the traditional ELA curriculum. This allows for some of the benefits of media studies discussed by Hart (2001), Boske and McCormack (2011), and Scheibe (2009), including increased awareness of devices used to evoke emotion, and alternate, student-based instruction techniques. Even though the content may be based in media studies, it still requires many of the

same analytical skills that traditional ELA instruction uses. This allows the unit to remain aligned to Common Core standards, as they are primarily skill-based rather than knowledge-based. By using these skills to analyze both traditional and non-traditional texts, students are able to carry their school literacy learning into their literary experiences out of school, and vice versa.

Suggestions for Future Research

Though this unit provides a demonstration of how to incorporate multimodal and new literacies into the ELA classroom, it is far from the only way. In a school with significant access to technology, and especially with students who have significant access to and expertise with technology outside of school, a much stronger integration can be achieved. It would be possible to further integrate technology and devices such as tablets and smartphones into the lessons themselves. As more and more schools begin to purchase technology for their students, this will become more feasible in the context of creating a unit for any ELA teacher to use.

Additionally, as mentioned above, the lack of quantitative studies into the effectiveness and best practices of incorporating multimodal literacies into the classroom is sadly lacking. There needs to be much more empirical research regarding how to best incorporate multimodal literacies and technology in the classroom, so that rather than be forced to use trial and error, teachers have a solid starting point from which to work. However, the breadth of qualitative studies demonstrating the positive effects of multimodal literacy in individual classrooms or schools still is promising.

Summary

Students' literary experiences do not begin and end in the ELA classroom. Rather than disempower students by disavowing their personal literary experiences and skills, teachers need

to embrace these skills in order to most effectively meet Common Core standards. Though it is painful for many to think about supplanting the core English curriculum with television shows and video games, the beauty of incorporating these new forms of literacy is that there is still plenty of room for the classics and the traditional printed word. The skills used to analyze traditional literature are very similar to those needed to analyze new texts. By strengthening one, teachers can strengthen the other as well. Incorporating multimodal literacy fully in the ELA classroom offers teachers the opportunity to not only raise student interest and engagement, but also to use the literacy experiences and skills that students already have as a springboard into the literacy skills that they need to have to be successful in the classroom.

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