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Wuthering Heights Unit

In order to advance the student's learning I chose to assign the students a choice between Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* or Sir Arthur Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*. These books were specifically chosen because the school had enough copies of these two novels for the classes to bring home. The students voted to read *Wuthering Heights*, which then became the focus of their fall semester. *Wuthering Heights* is a novel that challenges the reading level of the students due to its sophisticated plot, flashbacks, multiple narrators, and "old school language" as the students like to say. To assess whether or not the students were reading *Wuthering Heights* I assigned the students to read four chapters a week along with quizzes every week about those chapters. To accommodate the students who could not read quickly, I offered a test covering the entire novel at the end of the semester that could supplement their quiz grades. I assigned a semester paper in order to assess the students overall understanding of the novel, which was worked on for the last three months of the semester.

Tests and papers aside, In order to help the students understand *Wuthering Heights*, I decided to borrow a strategy from Jim Knights book, *High Impact Instruction: A Framework For Great Teaching*, called cooperative learning. The author describes cooperative learning as "learning that is mediated by the learners rather than directed by the teacher" (Knight 199). I chose to construct my *Wuthering Heights* unit around

cooperative learning because it could allow students to understand the novel through their peers instead of just myself. Since the entire class was reading the novel for the first time, it made sense for me to have students learn from one another and experience the story through their own eyes. Knight claims that cooperative learning is important because the strategy “changes the way students learn from teacher-mediated to student-mediated, and simply because of this structure changes what students are doing, it can increase energy and engagement” (Knight 200). After teaching the unit to the class, I agree with Knight's claim that cooperative learning increases engagement due to how well the class performed throughout the semester.

In order to adapt cooperative learning into my unit, I split the various characters, themes, and settings into different groups of students. Every week these groups would present where their character or topic was relevant in the chapters read that week. Students would take notes and ask questions of the presenting students in order to gain more information about their given topic. This strategy allowed for students to master the information they were assigned and then teach and learn from their peers, almost like a giant classroom jigsaw.

I took steps to make sure the unit's final paper would be a true testament to a student's comprehension of the novel. The final paper was split up into different sections, which were each graded individually, forcing students to plan their time and manage their paper accordingly. These sections are seen below.

Project Proposal:

In order to get students to plan ahead, I decided it would be best for them to propose to me what they wanted to write about months before the first rough draft was due.

- Forces students to plan out their time
- Allows the teacher a chance to help students with topics
- Promotes higher order questioning due to paper topics
- Requires students to research *Wuthering Heights* and critique the book through a new perspective.

Bibliography

A great paper is only as good as the sources used to back up information. To ensure the students supported their claims with facts from both the book and other scholarly articles, I assigned a bibliography that was due two weeks after the project proposal.

- Gives students practice with researching scholarly articles
- Allows students to learn what a “good” source would be (.org or .gov) as opposed to a “bad” source (.com).
- Students had to write a paragraph summary about each article they wanted to include.

Drafts and Progress Reports

I decided to assign two different drafts to the unit so that students would have deadlines for their papers. The deadlines allow me to dictate how much of their paper they should have done at different points of the semester. The first draft had to have three

fill pages as well as three references while the second draft had to be five pages and have five references.

- Each of the drafts were edited by student peers
- I also made edits to each paper in order to give students feedback

Final Paper

The final paper was required to be 6-8 pages with 5 references.

Presentation

In order to assess the students writing process further, I had the students present about how they felt about their paper. My goal with these presentations was to have students reflect on their work and show me ways to improve the unit in the future.

Works Cited

Knight, Jim. *High-Impact instruction a framework for great teaching*. Corwin Press, 2015.