

2001

Curriculum Differentiation in Practice

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Curriculum Differentiation in Practice

Abstract

The purpose of this project is to create two curriculum differentiated reading units designed to meet the needs of fifth grade, high-ability language arts students. The units were written to compliment existing whole class units already in use, and to coincide with major district goals encouraging students to take control of their own learning by making decisions about their writing, selecting their reading materials, and assessing their progress. This paper gives a broad definition of curriculum differentiation and reviews the literature in regard to differentiation of curriculum in the field of gifted education, and provides a focus on possible strategies to use to differentiate curriculum for gifted learners. This paper offers definitions of curriculum differentiation and why it is necessary in meeting the individual needs of gifted students. Gifted students have been proven to learn differently and more quickly than other students. They have certain characteristics that affect their ability to think, to learn, to produce information; and they possess these characteristics to such a degree that the basic core curriculum is not adequate for them and must be modified. The curriculum must be adjusted to meet the learning needs of gifted students.

CURRICULUM DIFFERENTIATION IN PRACTICE

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the Division of Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By Twyla D. Wisecup

May 2001

This Project by: Twyla Wisecup

Titled: Curriculum Differentiation in Practice

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education

9/10/2001

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to create two curriculum differentiated reading units designed to meet the needs of fifth grade, high-ability language arts students. The units were written to compliment existing whole class units already in use, and to coincide with major district goals encouraging students to take control of their own learning by making decisions about their writing, selecting their reading materials, and assessing their progress.

This paper gives a broad definition of curriculum differentiation and reviews the literature in regard to differentiation of curriculum in the field of gifted education, and provides a focus on possible strategies to use to differentiate curriculum for gifted learners. This paper offers definitions of curriculum differentiation and why it is necessary in meeting the individual needs of gifted students. Gifted students have been proven to learn differently and more quickly than other students. They have certain characteristics that affect their ability to think, to learn, to produce information; and they possess these characteristics to such a degree that the basic core curriculum is not adequate for them and must be modified. The curriculum must be adjusted to meet the learning needs of gifted students.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

CHAPTER ONE

This project is the result of graduate studies in gifted education, personal observations of gifted students, and their frustrations with aspects of their education. Through my studies, I learned a great deal about curriculum differentiation and began to apply its principles to the curriculum for my students. At the same time, parents of my gifted students were requesting that their children's classroom teachers differentiate the core curriculum for their children. I have observed that the classroom teachers truly desire to meet the needs of all of their students but are limited by factors such as class size, students at various ability levels, and time constraints.

After being asked by teachers what they could do to differentiate the curriculum for their students, I decided that I would like to create reading units that the classroom teachers could actually use in their classrooms. These units would be used to meet the needs of their high ability students, and also used as examples for teachers to follow when differentiating other district curriculum. Dr. Barbara O'Donnell endorsed this graduate project.

The West Des Moines Community School District (January, 1999) reading curriculum is based on the philosophy of learning through reading and writing.

Students read trade books as their reading text and do most of their skill development through mini-lessons and writing assignments. Students make connections between personal experience and written text. Major goals of the West Des Moines School District (January, 1999) program include daily time for reading and writing, encouraging children to take control of their own learning by making decisions about their writing, selecting their reading materials, and assessing their progress. The program allows for varied groups, exploring cultural differences and providing students with strategies to create meaning in a text. It also helps develop creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. Students develop awareness that reading, writing, speaking, and listening can enhance and extend personal interests.

These units were developed for classroom teachers to use along with, or in place of, the existing units for the books currently used in the regular classroom. The policy of the West Des Moines School District (January, 1999) states teachers will place no student higher than the most advanced text designated by the district for each grade. Therefore, the purpose of this unit is to differentiate curriculum to meet the academic needs of all students, especially focusing on the high-ability students in the classroom. In order to meet the needs of high ability students in a mixed-ability classroom, three curricular elements will be differentiated. Students' assignments will be based on ability level and will vary in the three curricular elements of content, process, and product.

The next section of this paper gives a broad definition of curriculum

differentiation and reviews the literature in regards to differentiation of curriculum in the field of gifted education. This research review offers definitions of curriculum differentiation and explains why it is necessary in meeting the individual needs of gifted students, along with strategies used to differentiate curriculum for gifted learners.

Curriculum differentiation is a hotly debated topic, but is also the heart of what we do in the field of gifted education. According to Tomlinson (1999), curriculum differentiation can be defined as making modifications in the curriculum in either content or pace to accommodate the abilities of the learner. Dinnocenti (1997) lists three components that are associated with differentiation. These include the following: (a) content or what is being taught, (b) process or how it is being learned, and (c) product or tangible results produced based on students' interests and abilities. Some people take it for granted that curriculum differentiation is something we must do to meet the educational needs of our gifted students.

Gallagher (1996) comments further on this idea. In regards to philosophy, Gallagher lists four questions that we must consider:

1. Is there such a thing as giftedness?
2. If there is such an entity, can we find students who possess it, or them?
3. If we can find such children, can we provide them with quality differentiated services?
4. Is it morally right or correct that we put such programs or services into action? (p. 234)

These are all important questions that have been argued repeatedly. It is important to address them in order to be able to defend curriculum differentiation for gifted learners.

Some people argue against curriculum differentiation by claiming that there is no such thing as giftedness. According to Lipsey and Wilson (1993),

By gifted students, if we assume that we mean those who learn faster, remember more, or solve problems better than other students of their same age, then obviously they do exist. Evidence to the stability of IQ scores over time is rather substantial. If these scores are merely the result of some temporary environmental aberration, then it should be relatively easy to change them, to put them right – as some psychologists believed in the 1960s. How wrong they were! After a quarter of a century of attempting to intervene positively in the developmental patterns of young children, we can find only modest (1/2 of a standard deviation) improvement through programs of cognitive stimulation. This does not mean that environment is not important toward maximizing the abilities of the individual or toward allowing these abilities to crystallize, but it does mean that casual attempts to change established developmental cognitive patterns are not likely to amount to much. (p. 1201)

In consideration of the question, “Can we find students that possess this quality of giftedness?” Pendarvis and Howley (1996, p. 226) state, “All children have the potential to learn as quickly and as fully as now seems possible only for the

gifted.” In response to this, Gallagher (1996) points out that in sharing this attitude we would have to totally ignore 50 years of reputable work in the field of genetics.

Gallagher goes on to say:

Science, particularly social science, is not built upon certainties: it is built upon probabilities. The probabilities are that persons with high IQs will do well in school and in life, and collectively they do. We have yet to find a better single predictor of academic success: not motivation, not interest, not a pleasing personality, and certainly not teacher ratings. (p. 238)

There has been an abundance of research conducted attempting to determine what the definition of differentiated curriculum for gifted students. According to Gallagher (1996) there appears to be two basic strategies by which we design programs for gifted students. One strategy starts from the program or content itself (e.g., advanced placement courses); the other starts from the needs of the individual student (e.g., mentoring or independent study). Such individual needs may require strategies and services that are not, and should not be, available to all of the students. Just as students with learning disabilities may require services that are not necessarily appropriate for all students, so must gifted students have an individual program that reflects their individual needs. We can do very special things (i.e., stressing metacognitive processes) for some bright students that might eventually, but not at the moment, provide benefits for all.

The many ways to differentiate curriculum can be classified into eight categories (Beisser, 1997). These eight categories are: (a) varying assignments, (b)

interest explorations, (c) independent research, (d) questioning, (e) grouping, (f) mentorships, (g) literary challenges, and (h) technological literacy. A variety of strategies can apply to each category.

There are various other ways to provide varying assignments. They may encompass strategies such as curriculum compacting. According to Winebrenner and Berger (1999) compacting allows students who demonstrate previously mastered material to spend less time with the regular curriculum and more time with extension and enrichment. Individual contracts is another possible strategy where students and teachers agree on the work the student will be doing, thus allowing students to participate in the decision-making process. Tiered assignments is yet another strategy used to differentiate the curriculum for high ability students. “Tiered assignments ...permit varied levels of challenge to ensure that students explore ideas at a level that builds on their acquired knowledge and prompts continued growth” (Beisser, 1997, p. 334).

Beisser (1997) also mentions that interest explorations can be used to allow students to work individually or in small groups and to choose challenging levels of work to complete. Interest inventories can be used to make learning more relevant to the individual needs of the student.

Tomlinson (1999) suggests three strategies for helping able learners conduct independent research. This includes having students select an area of interest to guide their exploration of a broad topic. The students “Dig a Hole” into that subject matter by reading additional books, conducting interviews, sending for pertinent

information, and/or using the Internet to search for information. Students may “Make a Tunnel” by selecting a broad topic and defining content through extensive reading and searching for generalities. Students may also want to “Build a Bridge” by making cognitive connections from one discipline to another. They may make new ideas through synthesis from known ideas while refining research skills and product skills.

Beisser (1997) goes on to say that students can develop their independent research product into a wide variety of products to show what they have learned. They can perform a skit, make a poster, create a slide show using the computer, create a video tape, prepare a diorama, or any of a number of ideas to show what they have learned to an audience.

Questioning skills can be used by a teacher in the regular classroom to challenge the thinking processes of the high ability learner. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, (2000), high level questioning is a combination of advanced information with complex thinking requirements. These types of questions can develop metacognition and help students develop logic and learn to substantiate answers and opinions with reason and evidence. As Keirouz (1993, p. 37) states, “We need to teach students how to think, not just about thinking, and we need to teach them to apply their thinking in important areas of human endeavor.”

Grouping can be an effective strategy for meeting the different needs of the

gifted learners. According to Braggett, (1997):

While there are times when it is economical to teach the entire class as a group and important for students to participate collectively, there are other times when students need to be grouped in order to allow them to work with intellectual peers, thereby assisting the teacher to cope with their differences. When this occurs, there is not one lesson but really a series of inter-related lessons within the class, each group using different resources and aiming at different outcomes. Moreover, there should not be a teacher-imposed barrier on the ceiling that the most advance group can reach: it should be possible for the most able students to progress through their work with understanding and not be confined to arbitrarily imposed class levels. Highly able students should be able to compact their work, move more quickly, achieve greater variety and complexity, and attain higher levels of conceptualization. Flexible grouping is a key to best education practice and to effective classroom organization. (p. 69)

Dexter (1998) states that cluster grouping is purposeful placement of students in a classroom with a teacher who has been trained in meeting the needs of gifted students. Cluster grouping allows students to attend school with their age peers and yet still be in a classroom with their intellectual peers. Teachers can present subject matter at a level and pace which meets the needs of these students.

Beisser (1997) points out that in studies of grouping for learning, only five discussed giftedness. While it is important to develop group work skills, teachers

must not be delinquent in fostering growth in their students. Cooperative group lessons for gifted children out to be judiciously considered. Beisser offers other possibilities for group work that include flexible grouping, multiage grouping or cross-age groupings, cluster grouping, and magnet schools or teams.

Another strategy sometimes used to meet the individual needs of gifted students is pairing the students with a mentor (Beisser, 1997). These mentors are matched with the students interest areas with the purpose of helping the students to build skills and gain knowledge with an appropriate expert and role model.

Beisser (1997) lists literary challenge as a strategy to stimulate high ability students. Literary challenge is using books from various genres for intellectual stimulation. Some examples of genres are fiction, nonfiction, biographies, adventure, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, humor, sports, and animals.

Technological literacy is the final strategy for use with gifted students suggested by Beisser (1997). Students that are literate in technology have access to a broad base of knowledge. The growth of technology is phenomenal and has the potential to add a whole new dimension to the education of gifted students.

Some people argue against curriculum differentiation claiming that it is not morally right to provide differentiated services to gifted students (Gallagher, 1996). Whereas others reply that it is morally right to provide differentiated services to gifted students. Failing to differentiate curriculum for high ability learners is failure to meet the needs of gifted learners. When we differentiate the curriculum for the special education students, the intent is to meet their needs. The gifted and talented

students deserve an equal opportunity to be challenged in their education in the same way that special education students deserve appropriate challenge. One perspective that inhibits differentiation is the view that “all students are gifted.”

As stated in Winner and von Karolyi (1998):

The view that “All students are gifted” is often expressed by educators concerned with possible inequity and elitism in singling out some students for “gifted programming.”What lies behind the assertion that all students are gifted? Most likely no one seriously believes that all students are equal in ability. This statement may simply be a way of saying that all children have some area or areas of strength, and thus some area(s) in which they might be gifted. It may be a way of saying that all children can learn and achieve. It may also reflect a perception that scarce resources should be reserved for disadvantaged children and children with disabilities, not for children already blessed with high abilities. Whatever the underlying meaning, this statement serves to block special programs for gifted students. (p. 49)

Winner and von Karolyi rebuke this attitude with the following statement:

No one seems to object to the idea that some students are musically gifted and need more advanced instruction in music than is offered in school. And, of course, no one objects to athletic tryouts, and the selection of the best athletes for the elite school teams. Community support for gifted athletes and athletic activities is typically very strong. But the notion that some students are more

academically gifted than others upsets our egalitarian notions about “intelligence,” or “academic ability.” This is revealed in the arguments of those who oppose special education for gifted students. (p. 50)

Winner and von Karolyi go on to say, “With or without a ‘gifted’ label, some students are atypical. The more atypical they are, the less the standard curriculum will address their educational needs. They will not just need something more; they will need something different.” (p. 52)

In summary, Van Der Westhuizen and Rautenbach (1997) stated,

There can be little doubt that especially gifted children should be taught content that would enhance their abilities to process information.

Furthermore, the teaching-learning strategies used must be designed to promote this aim. Although knowledge and the retention thereof is of absolute importance for thinking processes to take place, too much emphasis is placed in the regular curriculum on merely teaching factual content with the purpose of memorizing. The question which comes to mind when one considers ways and means of realizing the high-level potential of gifted children, is: What teaching-learning experiences can be offered to these children so that qualitatively different learning can take place? (p. 10)

To be sure that we are giving all children the best education possible, we must look at the child as an individual and determine each child’s needs. We must then adjust the curriculum to fit each child’s need. This will ensure that each child gets the education that he/she deserves and is appropriate to his/her individual ability.

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER TWO

For the last several years, I have been a teacher of gifted and talented students in a pullout program. During this time, I have become increasingly aware of the needs of gifted students to receive a differentiated curriculum. While I enjoy working with my students in a pullout setting, I realize that it is essential that much more be done to meet these students' academic needs. After taking several graduate classes and delving into the research available, I decided to do in-depth research in the area of curriculum differentiation. It became apparent that differentiation of curriculum could be an answer to some of the dilemmas faced by educators trying to meet the educational requirements of each of the students in their classroom.

Before beginning this project, I surveyed the classroom teachers in my building. The survey (see Appendix) questioned the teachers about their knowledge of curriculum differentiation and the amount of differentiation they used in their classrooms. I discovered that many teachers thought that they were differentiating curriculum for their students, but in reality, they did not have a true understanding of the many ways to adjust curriculum for gifted learners. Teachers also felt that they could not do any more work than they already do, given their current workload and the number of students they have in their classrooms.

I talked with classroom teachers, and we agreed that it would be helpful if there were curriculum units in place for classroom teachers to use. We determined that the best place to start would be in the subject area of reading. It was decided that I would use what I have learned about curriculum differentiation for gifted students to create two reading units for our fifth grade teachers to use in place of, or in conjunction with, the units that were already in place. As a result, I chose two whole-class trade books that are currently being used to teach reading in our district, and created differentiated units that could be used to differentiate curriculum for all students in the classroom. While writing the units, I had to meet West Des Moines Community School District objectives and benchmarks (January, 1999).

The two units that I began creating were already in line with the district's fifth grade standards and benchmarks. Therefore, when I created the assignment for the high ability students, I made sure that the new units included a wide array of assignments that could be used to differentiate curriculum for all students in the classroom. The various assignments met each of the reading benchmarks for the average sixth grade student.

The first benchmark requires that students develop strategies for locating and integrating information from several sources. In both units, high ability students will be researching and assimilating information. They will meet this requirement by researching information of individual interest.

In order to meet the second and third benchmarks of interpreting, inferring, and evaluating meaning, each unit has questions built in that require students to use

and develop these skills. Students are required to answer questions in which they have to infer, interpret, and evaluate meaning in various reading material.

These units include various writing assignments that will help students to develop strong writing skills to meet the standards and benchmarks already mentioned. During their research projects, students will plan, write and revise. They will use a variety of writing styles to appeal to various audiences and will apply conventions of the English language.

In order to determine what level of assignment students will participate in, they will be assessed for the appropriate reading level using the West Des Moines, 1999 beginning of the year reading assessment and/ or quarterly reading assessments. Students that score above grade level will be given the opportunity to complete the assignments geared to the high ability students. If a teacher chooses to use these units with only high ability students, as opposed to using it with the whole class, then the teacher will use his/her profession judgement to determine which students would benefit from this curriculum differentiation.

PROJECT

CHAPTER THREE

The units that I have created needed to be approximately four weeks long and are based on two whole class books that the fifth grade teachers presently use in their classrooms. The entire class will be reading the same trade book in these units. Students should be able to complete this unit doing some work independently while also participating in the classroom discussions. All students will have assignments to complete based on their academic ability level.

The two units that are included in this project approach differentiation in different ways. The unit on Freedom Crossing is a day to day lesson plan that includes varying assignments from which to choose. The unit on The Pushcart War is based on tiered assignments. Tiered assignments allow students to choose all of their own assignments and to set a goal for the letter grade they wish to earn. Students will be given different tiered assignment sheets based on ability level. For example, students in the lowest level will receive assignment options that are different from the students in the other two levels. Each student will then decide which assignment options to complete based on individual interests.

The first unit was developed for classroom teachers to use along with or in place of the Freedom Crossing unit they currently use in the regular classroom. No student should have to spend time in a classroom learning what he or she already knows. Therefore, this unit is intended to provide challenging, differentiated curriculum to meet the academic needs of the high-ability students. Identified students' assignments will vary from the remaining students' assignments in the three curricular elements of content, process, and product. The identified students' curriculum will be faster, broader, and deeper than the general curriculum. Since this unit is differentiated for high ability learners, it has been written to meet the districts sixth grade standards and benchmarks for reading and writing.

This second unit was developed for classroom teachers to use in conjunction with or in place of The Pushcart War unit currently used in the regular classroom. It is intended to provide challenging, differentiated curriculum to meet the academic needs of all students. All students' assignments will vary, depending on the students' ability levels and readiness. The students' curriculum will be differentiated through the elements of content, process, and product. This unit also meets district standards and benchmarks.

Each of these two units makes use of several of Beisser's eight categories of curriculum differentiation. Both units vary assignments for students based on ability level and include interest explorations through independent research projects. Grouping is also utilized to maximize student learning opportunities. Higher level questions are included to ensure students reflect upon ideas at varying levels of

difficulty. These units also allow students to increase their technological skills through projects they may complete.

Unit on: Freedom Crossing, a novel by: Margaret Goff Clark

Curriculum Differentiated Unit to Compliment the Whole Class Unit Currently

Taught in the

West Des Moines School District

By: Twyla Wisecup

April, 2001

Unit Title: Freedom Crossing, by: Margaret Goff Clark

This unit is based on the universal theme of freedom.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Students will acquire critical and logical thinking skills.
- Students will reflect upon their reading through a reading response journal.
- Students will predict outcomes
- Students will read for detail.
- Students will identify facts and opinions.
- Students will complete an independent study.
- Students will develop time management skills.
- Students will develop the ability to complete self-directed work.

Additional Anticipated Outcomes for High Ability Students

- Students will develop deductive reasoning.
- Students will develop inductive reasoning.
- Students will develop research skills.
- Students will research using the Internet
- Students will develop evaluation and judging skills

Rationale: This unit was developed for classroom teachers to use along with or in place of the Freedom Crossing unit they currently use in the regular classroom. No student should have to spend time in a classroom learning what he or she already knows. Therefore, this unit is intended to provide challenging, differentiated

curriculum to meet the academic needs of the high-ability students. Identified students' assignments will vary from the remaining students' assignments in the three curricular elements of content, process, and product. Their curriculum will be faster, broader, and deeper than the general curriculum. Content includes reading and writing skills, as well as broadening content through independent research choices.

District Benchmarks and Standards

Since this unit is differentiated for high ability learners, it has been written to meet the district's sixth grade standards and benchmarks for reading and writing. They are listed below.

- Students will develop and use strategies for locating information and integrating information from multiple resources.
- Students will question, interpret and infer meaning of text to make personal connections.
- Students will independently infer and evaluate meaning from text.
- Students gather and organize information: All students will organize and analyze information for relevance and reliability for use in writing.
- Students engage in the writing process: All students will plan, write and revise while identifying personal strengths and weaknesses in writing.
- Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences: All students will demonstrate an understanding of purpose and audience in their writing.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the principles of language:

All students will understand and apply conventions of English and a variety of stylistic writing techniques.

Pre-Assessment

Before beginning this unit, students will be assessed for reading level using the districts beginning of the year reading assessment and/or quarterly reading assessment, whichever is applicable to the time frame. Students that score above grade level will be given the opportunity to complete the assignments geared to high ability students.

Directions for Use:

This unit is designed to be used as a whole-class unit. Students can be given the option to read alone, with a partner of similar ability level, or struggling students may be required to read and/or work with the reading resource collaborative teacher. The differentiation of curriculum in this unit is designed to extend the curriculum to help challenge the high ability students.

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Introduction (Lesson 1)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Technology/Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1- 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Students will reflect on what “freedom” means to them.

Students will create a web on “freedom” using technology.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Cluster groups of 4 – 6 students, by similar academic ability levels.

Process: Ask students to use the computer program, *Inspiration* to complete a web about freedom, to show what understanding they already have of the theme. Allow plenty of time for students to complete their webs. Have each group share their web with the class and display webs on the bulletin board.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom.

Product: Web about freedom

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): As each group completes their web, they will determine what symbols, if any could be added to their web to give visual impact to their ideas.

Assessment: Teacher observation of group work, sharing, and evaluation of

completed web, reflective rubric (see p.35).

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Amistad Rising (Lesson 2)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Students will write a reflection on a book about slavery.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Whole class, individual work

Process: Read aloud the picture book, Amistad to the class. Students should notice illustrations and their personal feelings. After completing the book, ask students to write a reflective journal entry on their feelings about slavery.

Some questions to consider may be:

- What did you notice about the illustrations?
- How did they make you feel?
- Explain whether the illustrations were appropriate for the story.
- What are your feelings about slavery? Please explain.
- What characteristics did you see in Joseph Cinque?
- What did you learn from this story?
- How does this book fit into our theme on freedom?

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom

Product: Reflective writing in reading journals

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): none

Assessment: Teacher evaluation of journal writing, reflective rubric (see p. 35).

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Follow the Drinking Gourd (Lesson 3)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1- 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Students will compare an expository piece to a narrative piece.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Whole class, individual work

Process: Introduce the picture book, Follow the Drinking Gourd by Jeanette Winter.

Read the story to the class. Have a class discussion over the book.

Possible questions:

- How could the stars be used to point the way north?
- What have we learned about the Underground Railroad?
- What were some code words used? What did they mean?
- How did the people feel when they were escaping?
- What would be hard about the journey? What would be hard?

Read the overhead transparency of the “note about the story” (see pg. 11).

Answer the following question in your journal. How does the narrative story compare to the expository story? You may wish to include a Venn diagram.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reflective writing.

Product: Journal entry

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Research folk songs and their hidden meanings.

Create a product to share with your classmates about what you have learned.

Assessment: Teacher evaluation of journal entries and any enrichment products completed. Reflective rubric (see p. 35), project rubric (see p. 36), project rubric 2 (see p. 37).

A Note About the Story

In the early days of slavery in the United States many slaves tried to escape their cruel bondage by fleeing north – usually to Canada – to freedom. By the 1840s a loosely organized group of free blacks, slave, and white sympathizers formed a secret network of people and places that hid escaped slaves on their dangerous journey to freedom – a network that came to be known as the Underground Railroad.

Traveling along darkened roads at night, hiding out by day, moving slowly upriver along hundreds of miles of connecting waterways, the fugitive slaves endured many hardships. Slave catchers hunted them down with dogs. Many were shot or hanged. And even after crossing into the “free” states, runaway slaves could still be captured and returned to their masters for a reward.

The most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad was Harriet Tubman, a runaway slave herself, who led hundreds of her people to freedom. Among other conductors, there was a one-legged sailor named Peg Leg Joe. Joe hired himself out to plantation owners as a handyman. Then he made friends with the slaves and taught them what seemed a harmless folk song – “Follow the Drinking Gourd.” But hidden in the lyrics of the song were directions for following the Underground Railroad. The Drinking Gourd is the Big Dipper, which points to the North Star. “When the sun comes back, and the first quail calls” meant spring, when travel might be least hazardous. As the runaway slaves followed the stars north, they would come across marks Peg-Leg Joe had made in mud or in charcoal on dead trees – a left foot and a peg foot – and they would know they were on the right trail.

The river that “ends between two hills” was the Tombigbee River. The second was the Tennessee River and the “great big river” was the Ohio River, where Peg Leg Joe would be waiting to ferry them across to the free states on the other side. From there the fugitives were guided from one hiding place to the next until – with luck – they made it to Canada or other safe places in the North.

Source: Winter, J. (1988). Follow the drinking gourd. New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc.

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Introduction (Lesson 4)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Students will read for meaning. Students will mark areas they wish to discuss with sticky notes.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Some students will read independently, some will read with a partner, and others will read along with the story on a cassette tape. Children may choose which of the above methods they would like to use to read this book. They may use different methods on different days. They must get approval from the classroom teacher.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reading for reflection.

Process: The book will be introduced to the class. We will discuss what the book might be about and how it might fit with our freedom unit. Brainstorm what might happen in the book. Read aloud chapter 1, “Midnight Visitor” (p. 1 – 10). Discuss the chapter. Discuss what might happen next. Assign chapter 2, “Dangerous Business” (p. 11 - 19). Students will use sticky notes to mark parts of the book that they are interested in discussing. We will use literature circles to discuss reading.

Product: Completing the chapters assigned and preparing for a small group discussion with questions ready to discuss.

Assessment: Classroom discussion over the first three chapters, and individual conferences with teacher.

Anchor Activity

A main method of differentiation in this unit is using anchor activities. Anchor activities are learning activities that student's chose based on their own interests and ability levels. Students will work on the activities they chose each day as they finish with the whole class work.

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students will choose one or more of the following anchor activities to work on throughout this unit when they have completed their daily assignments.

1. Answer three of the five questions in your reading journal.
 - a. How did slavery look from the point of view of northerners, southerners, and slaves?
 - b. How might it feel if you and your family were slaves? How would you feel if your master split up your family by selling your parents to two different slave masters?
 - c. What does Freedom Crossing reveal about slavery?
 - d. Read the recent article about children in slavery today. How do you think we can help to rid the world of this practice today?
 - e. Was the Underground Railroad an acceptable way to deal with slavery? Why or why not?
2. Pretend to be Martin and make 5 entries in his diary. Reflect on what it is like to be a runaway slave. Make the entries as you read the entire book and tell how Martin is feeling throughout the course of this story.

3. Choose a topic to research, for example, slavery, the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman, or other related topics. You may want to use these web sites.

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/kidsclick!>

<http://www.historychannel.com/>

5. Create a product to show the class what you have learned.
4. Create a skit based on one chapter in the book. Perform it for the class. Yes, more than one of you may work together on this.
5. Make a time line of American history. Include slavery, the Civil War, the Underground Railroad, and other important events in our history that relate to this book. Illustrate the timeline.
6. Read Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe and report on it to the class.
7. Find another book with a similar theme to read. Please have the teacher okay your choice. Read it and report on it or create a product to teach the class about the book.

Assessment: Reflective rubric (see p. 35), project rubric (see p. 36), project rubric 2 (see p. 37), and individual conferences with teacher.

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Small Group Discussion Over Reading (Lesson 5)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: The student will respond to questions with elaboration.

Students will increase their vocabulary.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Cluster groups of 4 – 6 students, by similar academic ability level.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, develop perspective and vocabulary.

Process: Students will use marked pages as springboard for group discussion. Some ideas to discuss include the following: Is it okay to eavesdrop? Why or why not? Why doesn't Laura know where to find things in the kitchen? Why won't Laura give up her room? Where do they try to hide Martin? What problems result? How does this book fit into our freedom unit?

Students will choose 6 vocabulary words and write their definition. They may choose words from the following list of words from this book or may choose 6 words from other related work they are doing. The teacher must approve words from related

work.

Words from this book are: quavery, fugitive, doggedly, seethed, accountable, rebelliously.

Product: Group discussion and vocabulary words

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson four as time allows.

Assessment: Teacher observation, student participation, and evaluation of vocabulary definitions.

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Chapters 4 - 7 (Lesson 6)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 2 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: The students will read for meaning. The students will use critical thinking skills.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Some students will read independently, some will read with a partner, and others will read along with the story on a cassette tape. Students will choose which of the above methods they would like to use to read this book. They must have their method approved by the classroom teacher. They may use different methods on different days. Most students will be required to record their notes working individually. **Teacher will assign necessary groups for parts of the lesson today.**

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, higher order thinking skills through critical thinking.

Process: Students will read *The Secret Room*, *A Surprise Visit*, *An Educated Slave*, and *The Slave Catchers Come* (chapters 4 – 7) and take notes individually. The

whole class will have a discussion of Bloom's Taxonomy. Each student will write 3 questions over the chapters using Bloom's Taxonomy. The teacher will assign to each student what levels of questions s/he is to write. The teacher will collect the completed questions to read and evaluate.

On the second day, the teacher will assign students to cluster groups and give each group various questions to answer, based on the level of the questions. Students will be required to turn in written answers to the questions. Each group will discuss their answers and then the whole class will discuss the questions and answers.

Product: Completing the reading and recording notes. The written questions and the written answers.

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson 4 if time allows.

Assessment: Teacher observation of small group and whole group discussion.

Evaluation of notes, individual conferences with teacher, teacher evaluation of written questions and written answers.

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Vocabulary and Journal Writing (Lesson 7)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Individual Work

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reading for reflection, increased vocabulary.

Process: Students will choose 6 vocabulary words and write their definition. They may choose words from the following list of words from this book or may choose 6 words from other related work they are doing. The teacher must approve words from related work.

Words from this book are wafted, pewter, hovering, hasty, filly, livestock, camphor, garments, bristled, plaguing, mystified, unruffled, murmured.

Students will choose four questions from below to answer in their reading journals.

1. Why did Mrs. Fitch pay a visit?
2. If you were to hide a runaway slave in your house, where would you hide him or

her?

3. How does Laura feel about slavery?
4. What does Laura learn about Martin?
5. Write a reflection on the book so far.
6. Research Nat Turner. Who was he and why is he important?
7. Write a persuasive letter to Laura to convince her how she should feel about slavery.

Product: Vocabulary words and reading journal

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson 4 if time allows.

Assessment: Teacher evaluation of vocabulary words and reading journals, reflective rubric (see p. 35).

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Chapters 8 –10 (Lesson 8)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 2 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Students will work in groups to predict what will happen next in the story. Students will develop their vocabulary. Students will read for meaning.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Random Groups of 4 – 6 students, and then reading groups of their preference, independent work for individual assignments.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reading for reflection, and increased vocabulary.

Process: The teacher will place students in random groups. Each group will prepare a brief skit about what they think will happen next in the story. Share the skits with the whole class. Discuss how the skits were alike and different. Discuss why.

Assign students to read *Moses Is A Woman*, *A Present for Laura*, and *A Message in Code* (chapters 8 – 10). Each student must choose one of the following assignments to complete.

1. Research and present a brief summary on Harriet Tubman

2. Create your own code and write a secret message to Laura
3. Research to find other abolitionists and present a brief summary on one of them.
4. Write a folk song, which has a secret message, and present it to the class.

All students will choose 5 vocabulary words and write their definition. They may choose words from the following list of words from this book or may choose 5 words from other related work they are doing. The teacher must approve words from related work.

Words from this book are: circumstances, beckon, Quaker, solemnly, sauntered, wharf, insolent.

Product: Skits, completed individual assignments, vocabulary words

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson 4 if time allows.

Assessment: Teacher observation of group work and skits, evaluation of individual assignments and vocabulary words, project rubric (see p. 35), project rubric 2 (see p. 37).

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Descriptive Details (Lesson 9)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: The student will observe, identify, and illustrate descriptive details.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Individual work

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, listening skills and evaluation.

Process: Have students close their eyes and listen while reading aloud pages 56 – 57. Discuss what the students saw. Discuss what authors do to help us picture the scene in our minds. Descriptive detail gives us a picture of an object, place, person, or an event. The details help us to use our senses. Have students find another passage in the book that contains descriptive detail. Students will illustrate the passage and write a caption for the illustration to explain what the picture shows. Students will explain the significance to the story.

Product: Illustration and caption

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson 4 if time allows.

Assessment: Evaluation of illustration and caption

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Writing with Dialogue (Lesson 10)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Students will write using dialogue.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Partners of student's choosing.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, understanding dialogue, and understanding that different types of writing use different writing conventions.

Process: Teacher introduces writing with dialogue using the book as an example. Students find places in the book where dialogue is used. Conventions of writing with dialogue are discussed. Students may choose a partner to work with. Students will select a character from the book that they would like to have a conversation with and write the conversation they would like to have, using dialogue. Students will share their dialogue with the class, and may perform it as a reader's theater.

Product: Students' writing with dialogue and reader's theater performance

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson 4 if time allows.

Assessment: Teacher observation and evaluation of dialogue writing.

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Chapters 11 – 12 (Lesson 11)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: The students will read for meaning. The students will respond appropriately to questions asked during class discussion.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Some students will read independently, some will read with a partner, and others will read along with the story on a cassette tape. Children may choose which of the above methods they would like to use to read this book. They may use different methods on different days. They must get approval from the classroom teacher.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reading for meaning.

Process: Students will read chapters 11 – 12 in any group they wish. While they are reading, they will use sticky notes to mark sections they would like to discuss. They will then join a small group approved by the teacher to discuss the chapters. Some questions they may like to discuss are listed below.

1. How is Laura feeling now?
2. Has Laura changed her beliefs about freedom?

3. Page 102 reads: “Pa says a man’s conscience is stronger than the law. And he says laws can be bad.” What does Pa mean? How does this quote apply to today’s society?

Product: Group discussions

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson 4 if time allows.

Assessment: Teacher observation

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Chapters 13 – 14 (Lesson 12)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: The students will read for meaning. The students will make predictions based on what has happened thus far in the book.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Some students will read independently, some will read with a partner, and others will read along with the story on a cassette tape. Children may choose which of the above methods they would like to use to read this book. They may use different methods on different days. They must get approval from the classroom teacher. Writing assignment will be individual work.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reading for meaning, and increasing vocabulary.

Process: Students will read *The Fastest Horse in Town*, and *The Rights of a Human*, (chapters 13 – 14). After completing the reading, students will write a story about what they think happens next in the book. They will use dialogue.

Students will choose 5 vocabulary words and write their definition. They may choose

words from the following list of words from this book or may choose 5 words from other related work they are doing. The teacher must approve words from related work.

Words from this book are lucifers, illuminating, lynching, awed, rapt, sentry, persistent.

Product: Completed stories and vocabulary words

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Students may work on anchor activities following lesson 4 if time allows. The anchor activities are due tomorrow.

Assessment: Teacher evaluation of the written stories and vocabulary words, reflective rubric (see p. 35).

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Chapters 15 – 17 (Lesson 13)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 1 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: The students will read for meaning. Students will volunteer contributions to class discussion.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Some students will read independently, some will read with a partner, and others will read along with the story on a cassette tape. Children may choose which of the above methods they would like to use to read this book. They may use different methods on different days. They must get approval from the classroom teacher.

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reading for reflection.

Process: Assign students to read Bert is Arrested, Flight by Night, The Promised Land (chapters 15 – 17). The whole class will discuss the book. Students may share their thoughts and feelings. Discuss that this book is historical fiction. Discuss what could have happened in history and what could not. What did you learn from this book?

Product: Class discussion, anchor activities

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment): Anchor activities are due today.

Assessment: Teacher observation, teacher evaluation of anchor activities, reflective rubric (see p. 35), project rubric (see p. 36), and project rubric 2 (see p. 37).

Unit Name: Freedom Crossing

Name of Lesson: Tying it All Together (Lesson 14)

Target Population: 5th Grade

Subject Areas: Reading/Language Arts

Time Required: 2 – 60 minute class period

Objectives of Lesson: Students will share what they have learned through the anchor activities.

Pre-assessment: District reading assessments and teacher observation

Student Grouping: Whole class

Concepts/Content: People associated with freedom, problems or struggles for freedom, words associated with freedom, how we guarantee freedom, symbols associated with freedom, definition of freedom, reading for reflection.

Process: Students will take turns presenting their anchor projects and what they have learned.

Product: Anchor projects

Anchor Activity (Or Enrichment):

Assessment: Teacher evaluation of anchor projects, reflective rubric (see p. 35), project rubric (see p. 36), project rubric 2 (see p. 37).

Assessment Tools

The following assessment tools are to be used upon completion of appropriate lessons. See individual lesson plans to determine which rubric to use.

Reflective Rubric (p. 35)

Project Rubric (p. 36)

Project Rubric 2 (p. 37)

Reflective Rubric

	Content	Organization	Purpose and Audience	Voice	Sentence Structure
4	The writer draws a specific conclusion based on the story and personal beliefs.	The ideas are logical and support conclusion. Ideas flow smoothly and are linked to each other.	Purpose is readily apparent. Writing hooks the reader and holds interest throughout.	The writer's attitude toward the subject is purposefully expressed.	Sentences are varied in length and structure. They flow smoothly from one to another.
3	The writer draws general conclusions based on the story and personal beliefs	Ideas are logical and support the conclusion. Ideas are not always linked to each other.	The writing has a firm purpose, but may occasionally digress. It is focused and interesting.	The writer's attitude toward the subject is consistent throughout.	Sentences demonstrate some variety in length and structure. The flow is not consistent.
2	The writer draws some conclusions based on the story and personal beliefs.	The writing is arranged in a logical way. Ideas make sense together.	The purpose is not always clear. There are some interesting parts but interest is not maintained.	The writer's attitude toward the subject is not clear.	There are very few errors in sentence structure, but there is little variety in length and structure.
1	The writer fails to draw conclusions based on the story or personal beliefs.	The writing seems to be organized in some way, but the logic is not clear.	Only in a few places does the writing connect its purpose and audience.	The writer fails to communicate an attitude toward the subjects.	Errors in sentence structure are frequent enough to be distracting.

PROJECT RUBRIC

	BEGINNING 1	DEVELOPING 2	ACCOMPLISHED 3	EXEMPLARY 4
TOPIC	Total unrelated	Remotely related	Somewhat relevant	Directly Relevant
ORGANIZATION	Not organized, events make no sense	Some organization, events jump around, beginning and ending unclear	Organized, events are somewhat jumpy	Good organization, logical and ordered, good sense of beginning and end
QUALITY OF INFORMATION	Unable to find specifics	Details are somewhat sketchy	Some details are non-supporting to subject	Supporting details specific to subject
GRAMMAR AND SPELLING	Very frequent grammar &/or spelling errors	More than two errors	Only one or two errors	All grammar and spelling are correct
INTEREST LEVEL	Needs descriptive words and details	Lacks varied vocabulary, lacks detail	Vocabulary is varied, supporting detail needs work	Grabs attention and keeps it with varied vocabulary and supporting detail
NEATNESS	Illegible , loss papers	Legible writing, some ill-formed letters, papers stapled together	Legible writing, neat, bound in a cover, illustrations included	Word processed, neat, bound in a cover, illustrations included
TIMELINESS	Report handed in more than one week late	Up to one week late	Up to two days late	Report handed in on time
GROUP WORK	Contributes to group only when prompted	Contributes to group with occasional prompting	Accepts and fulfills individual role within group	Consistently and actively works toward group goal

PROJECT RUBRIC #2

EXCELLENT 5	AVERAGE 3	POOR 1
Individual thought is evident, it is obvious that the student has used their imagination and creativity.	Individual thought is somewhat evident, the student has used some imagination and the project displays some creativity.	No individual thought is evident, the student has used little imagination and creativity, and it is evident that the student has not put much time or thought into the project.
The project has been done very well; the project is neat, colorful, and attractive; it is evident that the student has put forth an extra effort.	The project is done well; the project is neat and attractive; the student has meet the criteria set up for the project.	The project does not meet all the criteria that has been established; the project is not colorful or attractive to the viewer.
No spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors.	1-2 errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	3 or more errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar.
The student spent the work time on task, working quietly and productively.	The student spent the work time on task, occasionally may have been a little noisy or not utilized the time to the best of their ability.	The student has not used the work time effectively, at times the student has become disruptive to others and wasted valuable time.
Exceptional effort has been demonstrated in all that the student has done.	The student has put forth an average effort on the project.	The student has put forth a minimal effort on the project.
Excellent 25 – 21	Average 20 – 17	Poor 16 – 12

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Unit on: The Pushcart War by: Jean Merrill

Curriculum Differentiated Unit to Compliment the Whole Class Unit Currently

Taught in

The West Des Moines School District

By: Twyla Wisecup

April, 2001

Unit Title: The Pushcart War by: Jean Merrill

This unit is based on the universal theme of war.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Students will critically analyze and interpret text.
- Students will distinguish bias in sources of information.
- Students will predict outcomes
- Students will read for detail.
- Students will determine main ideas and supportive detail.
- Students will reflect upon their reading through a reading response journal.
- Students will develop research skills
- Students will use different writing styles for different audiences.
- Students will complete an independent study.
- Students will develop time management skills.
- Students will develop the ability to complete self-directed work.

Additional Anticipated Outcomes for High Ability Students

- Students will develop deductive reasoning.
- Students will develop inductive reasoning.
- Students will develop research skills.
- Students will research using the Internet
- Students will develop evaluation and judging skills
- Student will develop critical thinking skills.

Rationale

This unit was developed for classroom teachers to use along with or in place of The Pushcart War unit they currently use in the regular classroom. No student should have to spend time in a classroom learning what he or she already knows. Therefore, this unit is intended to provide challenging, differentiated curriculum to meet the academic needs of all students. All students' assignments will vary, depending on the students' ability level and readiness. Students' curriculum will be differentiated through the elements of content, process, and product.

District Benchmarks and Standards

Since this unit is differentiated for all learners, it has been written to meet the district's sixth grade standards and benchmarks for reading and writing in addition to the goals listed above. The goals for high ability learners are listed below.

- Students will develop and use strategies for locating information and integrating information from multiple resources.
- Students will question, interpret and infer meaning of text to make personal connections.
- Students will independently infer and evaluate meaning from text.
- Students gather and organize information: All students will organize and analyze information for relevance and reliability for use in writing.
- Students engage in the writing process: All students will plan, write and revise while identifying personal strengths and weaknesses in writing.
- Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences: All students will

demonstrate an understanding of purpose and audience in their writing.

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the principles of language:

All students will understand and apply conventions of English and a variety of stylistic writing techniques.

Pre-Assessment

Before beginning this unit, students will be assessed for reading level using the districts beginning of the year reading assessment and/or quarterly reading assessment, whichever is applicable to the time frame. Students that score above grade level will be given the opportunity to complete the assignments geared to the high ability students. Students that score below grade level will be given differentiated assignments to meet their individual needs and may work with the resource teacher.

Directions For Use

The whole class will read The Pushcart War. Students will receive individual contracts based on their ability level. The lowest level assignments are on the □ contract. The mid-level assignments are represented by the ∇ contract. High ability assignments are represented by the ◇ contract. The daily reading period is 60 minutes per day. Student work will be completed individually unless the teacher approves a group project.

Students may work at their own speed but must read the daily readings on the

assigned days in order to be prepared for class discussions. Students may choose which ten assignments they will do and they must complete the assignments that are marked with an asterisk. If students select to complete a student choice assignment, they must have an idea for a project that fulfills their personal educational needs and interests. The teacher must approve these projects ahead of time. Students may hand in assignments as they complete them. All assignments are due on day 25.

The questions on each menu are designed to give students opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills at each ability level.

Throughout the five-week period, teachers will conduct individual conferences with students, on a rotating basis, to monitor student work and progress.

Content

One content area for this unit is war and how wars begin. A second content area is transportation and ways that transportation effects our everyday lives. Justice is a third content area that will be addressed through this unit. The last content area is government. Students will be able to explore the processes of government.

Process

This unit includes a wide variety of processes. These processes are: reflection, journal writing, comprehension questions, higher-level thinking skills, using different writing styles, increasing vocabulary, research, developing visual spatial skills, identifying main ideas, comparing and contrasting, and learning about satire.

Products

The various products of this unit include: journals, answers to questions throughout the unit, creation of a hat for the Flower Hat Show, definitions of vocabulary words, creation of a product and a pushcart for the Pushcart Convention, research paper and project, drawings and illustrations, skits, and Venn diagrams.

The Pushcart War Overview

- κ Each student will be given a contract based on ability.
- κ The contracts are coded using symbols, by ability level, for the benefit of the teacher. The easiest level contracts are labeled with a □ The mid-level contracts are labeled with a ∇. High ability contracts are labeled with a ◇.
- κ Students may read ahead at their own rate, as long as they are able to discuss the chapters to be discussed on specified days.
- κ On each contract, the squares marked with an asterisk are required to be completed.
- κ Students must choose at least 10 others to complete.
- κ There will be some whole class time almost every day along with daily work time.
- κ Students may turn in work as they complete it, all projects are due on day 25.
- κ Most writing assignments will be done in student journals.
- κ All students will be required to do at least one brief research topic.
- κ Each student must use the Internet as one research source.
- κ Some topics and skills will be addressed specifically through daily class discussion over reading assignments. These included predictions, bias, persuasive writing, main ideas.

Assessment

The rubrics included at the end of the unit will be used where appropriate (see pgs. 19-21). Teacher observation and district quarterly assessments will also be used. A Literature Discussion Evaluation Form (see pg. 18) is included for teachers to use as an anecdotal record keeping form.

Name _____

The Pushcart War

We will spend 5 weeks on this book. The calendar below lists what chapters we will be discussing each day. Be sure that you have read the chapters ahead of time, so that you will be prepared to participate in the discussion each day.

When we are not having whole class discussions, you will be free to read the book and/or work on your contract assignments. The teacher will also be available for conferencing with students during this time. You are required to conference with the teacher at least once a week.

Day 1 Introduction & Forward	Day 2 Chapters 1-3	Day 3 Chapters 4-6	Day 4 Chapters 7-9	Day 5 Chapters 10-11
Day 6 Chapters 12	Day 7 Chapters 13	Day 8 Chapters 14-15	Day 9 Chapters 16-18	Day 10 Chapters 19-21
Day 11 Work Day	Day 12 Chapters 22	Day 13 Chapters 23	Day 14 Chapters 24	Day 15 Chapters 25
Day 16 Work Day	Day 17 Work Day *Frank the Flower Hat Day	Day 18 Chapters 26-27	Day 19 Chapters 28-29	Day 20 Chapters 30-31
Day 21 Chapters 32-33	Day 22 Chapters 34-35	Day 23 Chapters 36-37	Day 24 Work Day All assignments due tomorrow.	Day 25 Pushcart Convention

Name _____

The Pushcart War

We will spend 5 weeks on this book. When we are not having whole class discussions, you will be free to read the book and/or work on your contract assignments. The teacher will also be available for conferencing with students during this time. You are required to conference with the teacher at least once a week.

You will also need to use this calendar to help you complete your contract work in a timely manner. **PLAN AHEAD! USE THIS CALENDAR TO PLAN YOUR WORK SCHEDULE!**

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
Day 16	Day 17 * Frank the Flower Hat Day	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20
Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24 All assignments due tomorrow.	Day 25 Pushcart Convention

THE PUSHCART WAR CONTRACT

Name _____

<input type="checkbox"/> * Browse through the book. In your journal, write down any questions you may have.	<input type="checkbox"/> * Keep a student journal to help you keep track of all of the characters and to record reflective responses to your reading.	<input type="checkbox"/> * Read with a partner or along with a cassette tape. If you plan to read with a partner, have the teacher okay your choice.
<input type="checkbox"/> Answer the six questions on the next page.	<input type="checkbox"/> In your journal, tell about a time that you had a disagreement with someone. How did you solve it?	<input type="checkbox"/> What was the secret weapon developed by the peddlers? List reasons you think it worked?
<input type="checkbox"/> Write two paragraphs telling about Lema's plan and about Maxie's plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> * Prepare a hat for Frank the Flower Hat Show we will hold on Day 17.	<input type="checkbox"/> The author used satire in this book. What is the definition of satire? Find an example of satire in the book.
<input type="checkbox"/> Think of a different title for the book. Write and tell why you would use that title.	<input type="checkbox"/> * Choose ten vocabulary words from the book. Look them up write their definition.	<input type="checkbox"/> What is Maxie's philosophy on war? Does his philosophy effect his behavior?
<input type="checkbox"/> * Prepare a pushcart and products to sell at our Pushcart Convention on Day 25.	<input type="checkbox"/> Does "The Eyes and Ears" show bias in their stories? Give examples.	<input type="checkbox"/> * Research a topic related to war, transportation, justice, or government. Have the teacher okay it. Create a project to show what you have learned. Include references.

<input type="checkbox"/> Select a letter of the alphabet making a list of as many things as you can that are moved by trucks.	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe what makes the characters in this book interesting. How are they unique?	<input type="checkbox"/> Draw a map of the city and show where the pea tacks have been successful.
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose three chapters to answer this question. What is the main idea of each chapter? Give supporting detail.	<input type="checkbox"/> Did the ending surprise you? Why or why not? How did it make you feel?	<input type="checkbox"/> Choose your favorite chapter in the book and develop a skit about it. You may work with partners.
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.

Questions

1. Why do the people in the story believe that Frank the Flower is a hero?
2. What events lead up to The Pushcart War?
3. What are the demands that the truck drivers drew up and sent to Mayor Cudd?
4. What led up to the decision to call a truce?
5. What made it a crime for a larger vehicle to take advantage of a smaller vehicle?
6. What one important lesson did Mack learn from The Pushcart War?

Assessment

The rubrics included at the end of the unit will be used where appropriate. Teacher observation and district quarterly assessments will also be used.











Some assignments adapted from: Friedman, A. (1987). Lift literature is for thinking.

Littleton, MA: Sundance Publishers & Distributors.

THE PUSHCART WAR CONTRACT

Name _____

▽ *	▽ *	▽ *
Browse through the book. In your journal, write down any questions you may have.	Keep a student journal to help you keep track of all of the characters and to record reflective responses to your reading.	Read with or without a partner. If you plan to read with a partner, have the teacher okay your choice.
▽	▽	▽
Answer the five questions on the next page.	List 5 examples of ways that you can relate this book to your personal life.	In the story the peddlers had a secret weapon. Create your own secret weapon, that could be used in a non-violent way. Describe it in detail.
▽	▽ *	▽
Compare and contrast Lema's Maxie's plans. Use a Venn diagram. Compare strengths and weaknesses. Is one plan better than the other?	Prepare a hat for Frank the Flower Hat Show we will hold on Day 17.	The author uses satire in this book. List three weaknesses, problems, or faults that you think she is mocking.
▽	▽	▽
List 5 parts of the book that you can relate to personally. Describe, in detail, how you relate to these incidents in detail.	Choose ten vocabulary words from the book. Write them correctly in a new sentence.	Create a motto for Frank the Flower Fan Club. Design a poster with the motto on it.
▽ *	▽	▽
Prepare a pushcart and products to sale at our Pushcart Convention on Day 25.	Every war has two sides, choose a side to support. write a Letter to the Editor persuading the readers to support your side.	Maxie has a philosophy of war, which is really a philosophy of life. What is Maxie's philosophy?

 <p>Write a new ending to the book. Include conversations like the book has. Which ending do you like better? Why?</p>	 <p>Make a poster showing an important part of the book. explain why this is an important part of the story.</p>	 <p>Maxie states that “a pushcart is perfectly designed.” Write a poem, jingle, or ad to promote the goods you will be selling.</p>
 <p>Choose three chapters. What is the main idea of each chapter? Give supporting detail.</p>	 <p>Does “The Eyes and Ears” show bias in their stories? Give examples.</p>	  <p>Research a topic related to war, transportation, justice, or government. Have the teacher okay it. Create a project to show what you have learned. Include references.</p>
 <p>Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.</p>	 <p>Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.</p>	 <p>Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.</p>

Questions

1. Do you think Frank the Flower is a hero? Why or Why not?
2. How could The Pushcart War have been avoided?
3. What are the demands that the truck drivers drew up and sent to Mayor Cudd?
4. Develop a plan of your own to solve The Pushcart War.
5. What one important lesson did Mack learn from The Pushcart War?

Assessment






















The rubrics included at the end of the unit will be used where appropriate. Teacher observation and district quarterly assessments will also be used.













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THE PUSHCART WAR CONTRACT

Name _____

  <p>Browse through the book. In your journal, write down any questions you may have.</p>	  <p>Keep a student journal to help you keep track of all of the characters and to record Reflective responses to your reading.</p>	  <p>Read with or without a partner. If you plan to read with a partner, have the teacher okay your choice.</p>
 <p>Answer the questions on the bottom of the next page.</p>	 <p>Choose an appropriate book Related to the theme of wars. Have the teacher okay your Choice. Report to the class.</p>	 <p>In the story the peddlers had a secret weapon. Create your own secret weapon, that could be used in a non-violent way. Describe it in detail.</p>
 <p>Compare and contrast Lema's and Maxie's plans. Is one better than the other one? Why?</p>	  <p>Prepare a hat for Frank the Flower Hat Show we will hold on Day 17.</p>	 <p>The author uses satire in this book. Did she do a good job? give examples to back up your opinion.</p>
 <p>Find an example of satire from a recent publication. Share it with the class. Tell what weakness is being pointed out.</p>	  <p>Choose ten vocabulary words from the book. Write them correctly in a new sentence.</p>	 <p>Maxie has a philosophy of war which is really his philosophy of life. Explain your philosophy of life.</p>
  <p>Prepare a pushcart and products to sell at our Pushcart Convention on Day 25.</p>	 <p>Choose a topic of interest Related to the book. Research it and create a product to share with the class to show what you have learned. Have your idea okayed by the teacher.</p>	 <p>Every war has two sides, choose a side to support. write a Letter to the Editor persuading the readers to support your side.</p>

 Make an illustration of one important part of the book. Explain why it is important.	 Design a costume for one Character. Explain why this character would wear this. What does his/her dress Reveal about his/her personality.	 What role did “The Eyes and Ears” play in the war? What role does the media play today?
 Do you think The Pushcart War could have been avoided? Why or why not? Do you have any ideas how?	 Discuss Bloom’s Taxonomy with the teacher. Write six questions over the book using Bloom’s higher levels of Thinking.	 Write a new ending to the book. Include conversations like the book has. Which ending do you like better? Why?
 Research a topic related to government, freedom, transportation, or causes or results of wars. Include references.	 Relate the book to the world Today. Write a 2–3 page paper explaining the relationship.	 Create your own city with an ideal government in place. Describe in detail.
 Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.	 Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.	 Student Choice. If you have an idea for a project have your teacher approve it.

Questions

1. What qualities does it take to make a hero? Why?
2. Who are two people that you think are heroes? What qualities do they possess that leads you to believe they are heroes?
3. What causes most wars? How can most wars be avoided?
4. Develop a plan of your own to solve The Pushcart War.
5. Pretend you have been buying something from a pushcart everyday. Now, because of a new law it is illegal to sell anything from a pushcart. Write a Letter to the Editor telling why you think the law should be changed.

Assessment

The rubrics included at the end of the unit will be used where appropriate. Teacher observation and district quarterly assessments will also be used.

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Literature Discussion Evaluation Form

Helpful Contributions

Unhelpful Contributions

Student	Shares ideas	Asks questions	Encourages /responds to others	Listens well	Keeps discussion on track	Interrupts others	Does not contribute to discussion	Does not listen	Distracts others	Is not prepared
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
7.										

Reflective Rubric

	Content	Organization	Purpose and Audience	Voice	Sentence Structure
4	The writer draws a specific conclusion based on the story and personal beliefs.	The ideas are logical and support conclusion. Ideas flow smoothly and are linked to each other.	Purpose is readily apparent. Writing hooks the reader and holds interest throughout.	The writer's attitude toward the subject is purposefully expressed.	Sentences are varied in length and structure. They flow smoothly from one to another.
3	The writer draws general conclusions based on the story and personal beliefs	Ideas are logical and support the conclusion. Ideas are not always linked to each other.	The writing has a firm purpose, but may occasionally digress. It is focused and interesting.	The writer's attitude toward the subject is consistent throughout.	Sentences demonstrate some variety in length and structure. The flow is not consistent.
2	The writer draws some conclusions based on the story and personal beliefs.	The writing is arranged in a logical way. Ideas make sense together.	The purpose is not always clear. There are some interesting parts but interest is not maintained.	The writer's attitude toward the subject is not clear.	There are very few errors in sentence structure, but there is little variety in length and structure.
1	The writer fails to draw conclusions based on the story or personal beliefs.	The writing seems to be organized in some way, but the logic is not clear.	Only in a few places does the writing connect its purpose and audience.	The writer fails to communicate an attitude toward the subjects.	Errors in sentence structure are frequent enough to be distracting.

PROJECT RUBRIC

	BEGINNING 1	DEVELOPING 2	ACCOMPLISHED 3	EXEMPLARY 4
TOPIC	Total unrelated	Remotely related	Somewhat relevant	Directly Relevant
ORGANIZATION	Not organized, events make no sense	Some organization, events jump around, beginning and ending unclear	Organized, events are somewhat jumpy	Good organization, logical and ordered, good sense of beginning and end
QUALITY OF INFORMATION	Unable to find specifics	Details are somewhat sketchy	Some details are non-supporting to subject	Supporting details specific to subject
GRAMMAR AND SPELLING	Very frequent grammar &/or spelling errors	More than two errors	Only one or two errors	All grammar and spelling are correct
INTEREST LEVEL	Needs descriptive words and details	Lacks varied vocabulary, lacks detail	Vocabulary is varied, supporting detail needs work	Grabs attention and keeps it with varied vocabulary and supporting details
NEATNESS	Illegible, loose papers	Legible writing, some ill-formed letters, papers stapled together	Legible writing, neat, bound in a cover, illustrations included	Word processed, neat, bound in a cover, illustrations included
TIMELINESS	Report handed in more than one week late	Up to one week late	Up to two days late	Report handed in on time
GROUP WORK	Contributes to group only when prompted	Contributes to group with occasional prompting	Accepts and fulfills individual role within group	Consistently and actively works toward group goal

PROJECT RUBRIC #2

EXCELLENT 5	AVERAGE 3	POOR 1
Individual thought is evident, it is obvious that the student has used their imagination and creativity.	Individual thought is somewhat evident, the student has used some imagination and the project displays some creativity.	No individual thought is evident, the student has used little imagination and creativity, and it is evident that the student has not put much time or thought into the project.
The project has been done very well; the project is neat, colorful, and attractive; it is evident that the student has put forth an extra effort.	The project is done well; the project is neat and attractive; the student has meet the criteria set up for the project.	The project does not meet all the criteria that has been established; the project is not colorful or attractive to the viewer.
No spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors.	1-2 errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	3 or more errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar.
The student spent the work time on task, working quietly and productively.	The student spent the work time on task, occasionally may have been a little noisy or not utilized the time to the best of their ability.	The student has not used the work time effectively, at times the student has become disruptive to others and wasted valuable time.
Exceptional effort has been demonstrated in all that the student has done.	The student has put forth an average effort on the project.	The student has put forth a minimal effort on the project.
Excellent 25 – 21	Average 20 – 17	Poor 16 - 12

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Conclusions

After completing the research on curriculum differentiation for the gifted learner, I have become more convinced than before that curriculum differentiation is an excellent way to meet the needs of individual learners. Classroom teachers have a large number of students with a wide range of ability levels. They are charged with meeting the educational needs of each of their students within a limited time frame.

Gifted students have been proven to learn differently and more quickly than other students. They are able to think, learn, and produce information beyond the basic core curriculum. For all of these reasons, the curriculum needs to be modified to challenge the gifted learners.

I created these units based on two whole class books that fifth grade teachers in my school district currently use to teach reading. The units are written to meet the goals, objective, standards, and benchmarks of the district. I created units that the teachers could use with students of varying ability levels. The teachers felt that it is important to have differentiated whole class units available to use with their students.

The fifth grade teachers in my building that have identified gifted students in their classroom have looked at the units and are interested in piloting them in their classroom next school year. If the pilot is successful, I will help the classroom teachers create similar units for other areas of their curriculum. I hope that

classroom teachers will feel successful with these units and that success will create interest from other classroom teachers. In this way, we can increase curriculum differentiation throughout the district.

Creating differentiated units is a very time consuming job, but very worthwhile since the units meet the individual needs of students. I would like to see school districts provide differentiated units for their classroom teachers to use. It would be ideal if teachers could have release time to create units to coincide with the district curriculum, or another option would be to pay trained teachers to write curriculum in the summer.

Curriculum can be differentiated for gifted learners through content, process, or product. Some examples of ways to differentiate curriculum include varied assignments, tiered assignments, independent research, higher level questioning, cluster grouping, mentors, literary and technological challenges, and subject or grade acceleration. A goal of mine is to spend more time collaborating with the classroom teachers in my buildings and helping them to design other differentiated curriculum units. I would like to help them incorporate the above mentioned ways of differentiation into their everyday curriculum.

In the future, I would like to see curriculum differentiation for gifted learners become a priority in our school district. To strive for this ideal, I plan to encourage staff development within our district. The other Extended Learning Program (gifted program) teachers and I plan to collaborate to create staff development for the district's classroom teachers. This may be classes that we teach ourselves, or

consultants that we hire to present within our schools.

Appendix

Teacher Assessment Survey on Classroom Differentiation

Directions: Please circle the number that mostly closely represents your opinion about each statement.

5 = I strongly agree

4 = I agree

3 = I disagree

2 = I strongly disagree

1 = I have no experience; this item does not apply to me.

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I have had adequate training to compact curriculum for high ability students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I have had adequate training to differentiate learning tasks for highly capable students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I routinely adjust learning tasks for high ability students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I have adequate planning time to allow me to prepare curriculum differentiation for my students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I have a positive attitude about the advantages of curriculum differentiation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I have access to sufficient extension materials and options for students to use in place of the regular work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please list examples of curriculum differentiation that you have had success with in your classroom.

Please list areas in which you need assistance in curriculum differentiation for high ability students.

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