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CI 403
Professor Willis
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Reaching Holden: Texting and Email Activity

Time and Setting

The lesson is a fifty-minute lesson in a Sophomore English Honors class. The class consists of twenty-five students, with thirteen females and twelve males. There are thirteen white students, five African-American students, four Asian students, two Hispanic students and one Native American student in the classroom.

Theory into Practice Background

Catcher in the Rye is a classic many teachers enjoyed and wish to teach to their students. Sometimes, this ‘classic’ status can appear daunting to students and the approach to such a novel is key in order for students to receive it well. Stephen Tchudi and Diana Mitchell, in *Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts*, discuss the importance of teachers not treating classics any different from other novels taught in the class. Additionally, they note, “if activities planned for a classic are ones students can get into, they will generally have a good experience with the book. It seems that students lose interest in classics when they are told to read such books on their own and write academic essays on literary traits” (192). My goal for this lesson was to create one that was relevant to their lives that connect a sixty-year-old novel with the twenty-first century.

Communication technology, like Facebook and text messaging, play a dominant role in students’ lives and teachers should find a way to make this practice conducive to learning. In this lesson, students will examine their own habits of communication and compare them to those of Holden, who has a constant desire to talk to people, but either chickens out or blames the faults of his era’s technology on not doing so. The class will begin with the students reflecting on their own communication practices through a Quick Write. Through discussion, the students will think about the differences in technology from Holden’s era to their own, from telephones to smartphones, to letters, to e-mails. A supplemental sheet with pictures and statistics about the United States Postal service and telephones, the primary means of communication in the fifties, would be provided to give students a visual of the era. The students will examine Holden and think about what he would have done, and what he would have said, had he lived in 2010 and could reach anyone at any time. Would he be so alone if these other forms of technology were in existence? In the “Reaching Holden Activity”, students are to create a text-message conversation between Holden and another character, as well as compose an e-mail Holden would write to another character. By having students put themselves in his shoes, they will analyze the protagonist in such a way that will help develop their understanding of such a complex character, yet make it culturally relevant where it will maintain their interest in the novel.

Objectives

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

- Compare and contrast various means of communication from today and in the 1950’s and their effects on their daily lives

- Apply modern technology, like email and text messaging, to Holden Caulfield
- Compose an email and text messaging conversation in the perspective of Holden

Materials

- Copy of J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*
- "Reaching Holden Activity" sheet
- "Then and Now" discussion sheet

Preparation

Prior to class, copies of the worksheets are needed for all classes. Additionally, the Quick Write question should be written on the board so students can begin responding as soon as they come in.

Procedure

- As students walk in, ask them to get out a pen and paper to respond to the Quick Write (this would be an activity they do often). Allow **ten minutes** for the students to respond.
 - Question is, "How often do you use your cell phone or social network sites? Who do you talk to, and what about? Why do you use them?"
- Pass out "Then and Now" sheet, begin discussion about forms of communication (**approximately twenty minutes**)
 - Ask students about responses to Quick Write, their own practices
 - See "Discussion Ideas" for leading questions
- Pass out "Reaching Holden Activity" sheet
 - Explain directions, answer questions, discuss ideas (**five minutes**)
- Give students remainder of time to begin working on assignment (**ten minutes**)
- In last **five minutes**, have students "tweet" in which students summarize what they have learned this lesson in under thirty words. They will turn these in as they leave class.

Discussion Ideas

Leading discussion questions that can be used include:

- Could you handle staying in touch with friends and family through land lines and mail?
- What is the longest time you went without either technology (email and cell phones)? Could you live without them?
- Why do you text? Who do you text and what about?
- Is this access to communication, the ability to reach someone so easily, a great thing? Or is it an invasion of privacy?
- Do you think Holden would email or text friends, his siblings, etc? What about call via cell if he had one?

Bilingual/ESL and Englishes Accommodations (ELL Spanish-Speaking student)

While the assignment is writing intensive, the first two steps of the assignment give all students the opportunity to write without the worry of proper grammar. They are suppose to think about how Holden would communicate in a world where communication is fast and directly to the person, so they have the chance to interpret this however they wish. My student who is an English Language Learner could even use Spanish if they wish, as long as they can give me the best translation they can (which can help them with their

English skills). I would also make myself readily available for them if they need additional help with the more formal section, Step Three. Students who use AAE would have the opportunity to use AAE in Steps One and Two as well, since the audience for those two Steps are either friends or family. However, it would be made clear that Step Three's audience is not a friend or relative, but a written assignment addressed to me, so they need to use standard written English. The assignment gives students flexibility in what written language they use, as well as a lesson in addressing their appropriate audiences.

Special Education Accommodations (Student with Asperger's Syndrome)

From observing students with Asperger's, I have noticed they like to talk and share what they know. Sometimes, it can be over-powering where other students cannot get a word in. In a situation like this, especially in a lesson so discussion-based, I would tell the student I appreciate his thoughts and participation, but ask to let their peers get the chance to speak as well. While the students are working on the Activity, I would check to make sure they were familiar with the formatting of text messages since this is normally a social means of communication, which a student with Asperger's may have difficulty with. If necessary, I would bring out my own phone and show them an example of what they may look like.

Assessment

The Quick Write at the beginning of the lesson is meant to allow students to reflect on their own communication practices, and indirectly prepares them for the discussion to follow. This would be graded merely for participation. Additionally, the Tweet is meant for students to reflect on the day's activities and to help me check for their understanding of the principles of the lesson. The Reaching Holden Activity is the principle form of assessment and opportunity to evaluate the students for this lesson, which would be due the day of the quiz so they have two nights to work on it. The Activity would help me see if they effectively used text messaging and e-mail to reflect Holden, his personality and what he would develop in terms of communicating through these technologies.

Extension Ideas

The lesson gives students a brief insight into the significance of technology as a means of communication. This idea can be elaborated on in which students research the history of various technologies (the telephone, text messaging, social networks etc) and how this affects us, as well as how it could have affected Holden if he had access to them. Another idea could be having the students send the emails to one of their classmates, in which the other student would respond in the role of the recipient. However, an issue with this would be the fact that we only learn about the other characters through Holden's words, which can be biased to say the least.

Source of Activity

I have been intrigued with the use of non-traditional forms of technology, like text messaging, in the classroom ever since I took English 482, so I credit Professor Patrick Berry for sparking my interest. Additionally, the ideas for the Quick Write and Tweet activities were based on models provided by Professor Willis.

Resources and References

“History of AT&T”. AT&T, 11 Nov. 2010. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

Mitchell, Diana and Stephen Tchudi. *Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts*. New York: Longman, 1999.

“Postal History”. The United States Postal Service, 2010. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

Illinois State English Language Arts Goals

- **State Goal 3.B:** Compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences.

- The assignment calls for the students to use three different means of communication; the text message, the e-mail, and a formal rationale. Each have a specific audience the students need to consider when writing each piece, whether it be myself or a friend or parent of Holden’s in his perspective. The assignment will help students differentiate the many forms and discourses of language and writing.

- **Core Technology Standard #3:** Application of Technology in Instruction

- Communication technology is discussed throughout the lesson, and the closing activity has students “tweet” to me, but without the use of computers. However, this is compensated by students being required to actually e-mail Step Two to me, making the assignment more realistic and technologically relevant.

Reflection

I created the discussion sheet with the pictures to save time and prevent technological complications for the sake of the Unit Project. If I were to actually use this, I would create a Prezi or PowerPoint presentation to supply the information and show more pictures so students can really understand the time and setting of the novel. Additionally, I would give a chance to an idea I mentioned in the Extension Ideas section. That would be, on the following day, give students other students’ emails anonymously and respond to them with the mindset of the recipient. This could help students understand characters that play a minuscule role in the main plot.

Reaching Holden Activity

In the fifties, people did not have the internet and cell phones to stay in touch with friends and family. In chapters nine and ten, Holden wishes to call many people after arriving in New York, but he ends up not talking to anyone other than a call girl. If Holden lived in 2010, where reaching someone is a lot easier, how would this be different?

There are three steps in this assignment:

Step One: Text messaging conversation (8 points)

You will create a brief text messaging conversation between Holden and a friend or sibling. There is no limit how long the conversation can be, but there needs to be at least five text messages each. Each text has to be less than twenty words, and you are free to use 'textspeak' if you wish, but you need to translate it for me so I understand it!

Step Two: Email (8 points)

Also, you will write an email Holden would send to a sibling, friend, or even parent NOT used in the text message conversation. The email must be at least 200 words and send it to me through your school email, but address it to whoever you chose.

What would Holden text/email? How would he text/email? How would the recipient respond? Be sure to make references to the plot and other characters Holden would like to talk about! What would he like to share?

Step Three: Explanation (10 points)

After writing the conversation and email, you will give me a rationale on why you picked the recipient, why you had Holden share certain things (or not), why you had him write the way he did (formal, textspeak etc.) and anything else you wish to explain to me. This can be a small paragraph (200 words) as well.

Some people you can use are Phoebe (Holden's little sister), D.B. (Holden's older brother), Jane Gallagher (a family friend), Stradlater (kid from school), and Sally Hayes (a girl he has dated)

Steps One and Three should be turned in together.

This is due on Wednesday the 9th, (the day of Quiz Two)!

Then and Now: The Telephone and Postal Service

The Postal Service

In 1950...

Mail handled: 45,063,737,000 pieces

Number of Post Offices: 41,464

In 2009...

Mail handled: 177,057,800,000 pieces

Number of Post Offices: 27,161



All pictures and statistics above were cited from the United States Postal Service website

The Telephone

Number of land lines in 2007: 163 million

Number of cellular phone in 2007: 255 million



All pictures and statistics above were cited from the AT&T website

**Reaching Holden Activity Grading Scale
26 Points Total**

An “A” Grade for this assignment (24-26 points) has

- A text message conversation of at least ten messages
- A rationale and email of at least two-hundred words each
- Multiple references to the characters and plot of the novel
- Holden addresses two different characters
- Two or fewer grammar mistakes in Step Three (given the nature of Steps One and Two, grammar and mechanics will not be assessed in those sections)

A “B” Grade for this assignment (21-23 points) has

- A text message conversation of nine to eight messages
- A rationale and email that is evidently shorter than 200 words each
- A few references to the characters and plot of the novel
- Holden addresses two different characters
- Three to four grammar mistakes in Step Three

A “C” Grade for this assignment (18-20 points) has

- A text message conversation of less than eight messages
- A rationale and email only consisting of a few sentences
- Little to no references to the characters or plot of the novel
- Holden addresses the same characters in Steps One and Two
- Five or more grammar mistakes in Step Three

NOTE: Creativity or in-depth character analysis in Steps One or Two can bump up a grade if there is a minor infraction; for example, someone has more than two grammar mistakes but deserves an A, or if the text message conversation is only four exchanges instead of five.