

Gintare Radvila. Lesson Plan A. Tuesday, March 15

**Title:** Tea Party Activity

**Time:** (50 minutes)

**Setting:** This classroom is an Honors Sophomore English class. The students are mature and capable of handling respectful class discussions. The demographics of this particular classroom are: 13 female, 12 male. 13 Whites, 5 African Americans, 4 Asian Americans, 2 Latinos (1 ELL Spanish), 1 Native American. One of the students has Asperger's Syndrome. The school is a high school (grades 9-12) in an urban setting.

**Theory into Practice Background:**

The “tea party activity” comes from *Reading, Writing and Rising Up*, by Linda Christensen. She describes it as an activity that will “entice reluctant readers to read” (Christensen 115). She suggests using an enticing passage from the novel or writing a small narrative from a character’s point of view. Christensen writes, “I want to create intrigue and questions as well as to familiarize students with the characters before they begin reading. I write the role in first person, so students can more easily get into the character’s head” (115). Jim Burke similarly suggests that students should be required to respond to texts in writing (Burke 103). Burke states, “...students improve their reading ability by looking closely at specific portions of the text to improve their interpretive or analytical skills (104). During the tea party, students are asked to take a closer look at the relationships between the characters—forcing characters that do not come into contact in the book to interact. What would these characters discuss if they met? Would they get along? Questions like this ask students to think critically about the characters, which ultimately will improve the students’ interpretive skills.

The students will have read up to p. 113 in the text for this particular lesson. At the very end of this reading assignment, the readers discover that Penelope is bulimic. Junior describes her disorder in comparison to his father’s addiction to alcohol. I like the idea of having Penelope and Junior’s father talk during the tea party. It will be interesting to see this particular interaction. Also, Christensen writes that some of her “more devious students find ways to cut their work short” (115). However, she provides further work for students to complete at their desks (on their own) once they have interacted with the appropriate characters. This allows the students to further develop their thoughts about the characters—forming the conversations into questions and predictions.

Christensen envisions each of her students receiving a note card containing a description of a character in the book. There will be five characters chosen, as to make it possible for the students to interact with each character. The students will be handed a packet, which has been adapted from *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up*. The students must first fill in their worksheet from their character, then, once everyone has completed this, they must circle around the room to find the other necessary characters. Upon returning to their seats, they will need to complete the remainder of their worksheet. The timing of this

activity will most likely vary according to the students' willingness to participate and interact well with one another. Therefore, there should be a variety of activities planned for students who finish quicker than others. Also, it should be noted that the students are NOT allowed to simply copy the cards of other students. They must create a new conversation and write a description on their own.

This lesson is linked to lessons to follow as it is important for the students to begin to think about the characters in more analytic and critical ways. As the students move through the novel, they learn more about the characters. Learning about Penelope's eating disorder shows Junior (and the readers) that the White characters in the book have problems, too. Also, in the days to follow, the students will be completing an "apple worksheet," where they are asked to show how others see the characters and what they are actually feeling inside. This tea party activity forces the students to begin to question perception.

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to examine the relationships between the chosen characters in the book, finding connections and differences between them during the tea party activity.
2. The students will be able to construct four strong analytical questions regarding the characters or plot in the text after completion of the tea party activity.
3. Students will formulate their own opinions about the text as they interact with one another, find connections between characters, and predict future outcomes.

### **Materials:**

- Tea Party Activity Worksheet Handout (for students)
- Color-coded note cards (5 colors, 5 characters, with descriptions of characters on each).
  - 1. Junior: "Hi. My name is Junior, and I am a part-time Indian. I left the reservation, and I think I'm happy where I am now. However, sometimes, I question whether all of this was worth the battle I have to put up. I mean, Rowdy and I aren't really friends anymore. He used to be my best friend. I'm beginning to realize that Indians aren't the only ones with problems."
  - 2. Rowdy: "Hey. I'm Rowdy. My best friend used to be Junior, but he doesn't like Indians anymore. He wants to be White—at least I think he does. He left me on this reservation; he left our tribe. For what? White people. He makes me angry. I punched him before he left for the White school; I gave him a nice black-eye right before his first day there. Why did he leave? Also, yesterday, he came to my house with a stupid picture of us. I couldn't get myself to tear it up. I don't know why."
  - 3. Penelope: "Hi. I'm Penelope. I go to Reardan High School, and I think most people like me. I met Junior on his first day of school, when he couldn't remember his own name. Haha. I guess Junior and I are becoming a little close, though. He found me in the girl's bathroom the

other day; he found out that I'm bulimic. I think it kind of shows that we all have our struggles, don't you think?

- 4. Junior's dad: "Hello. I'm Junior's father. I'm only an alcoholic when I get drunk. I swear. I think I'm a good father (as good as I can be with our financial situation). I want to be there for Junior, but it's hard, you know? Do you think Junior understands when I can't pick him up from school?"
- 5. Gordy: "Hello there! I'm Gordy. Somehow, Junior and I became friends at Reardan. Not exactly sure how, but it might be because we both like to read a lot. I think Junior is smarter than he thinks he is. I'm just your normal high school kid. I'm not really popular or anything, and I don't really think too much about Junior being from the reservation. Heck, I think it's kind of interesting.
- Directions for Tea Party Activity projected on screen.
  - After you finish meeting all of the required character, quietly sit at your desk and complete the remainder of the packet individually.
  - Do NOT simply copy a character's card into your packet.
    - **Summarize by listening to your partner.**
    - **Talk to one another as if you ARE the characters on your card.**
- Copies of Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
- Quick-write written on board
- Daily schedule written on board
- Rubric/checklist for activity

### **Preparation:**

In preparation for this lesson, the note-cards must be created with either quotes or first person perspectives of the chosen characters for the tea party. The directions must be projected on the screen as the students partake in the activity as a constant reminder of expectations. Also, the quick-write should be posted on the board as the students walk in. Therefore, they will know that they should immediately begin writing when they walk in. If necessary, the students should be reminded to be respectful when discussing additions to alcohol and eating disorders. Lastly, the teacher should determine if any particular students should take on the role of certain characters. For example, if there is a struggling reader, it might be better for him/her to have a main character that is more developed in the text over a minor character.

### **Procedure:**

9:00-9:05 (5 minutes): Quick-write will be written on board. Students will immediately pull out their journals to begin responding to it.

Quick-write: How do you think Junior felt when he found out Penelope was bulimic? What would you have said to her if you were Junior?

9:05-9:10 (5 minutes): Discussion of quick-write.

9:10-9:13 (3 minutes): Pass out note-cards, tea party activity packet, and rubric. Explain the activity to the students, along with the rules of the activity.

9:13-9:17: (4 minutes): Students fill in their own character's description into their packet individually. (#2 and #3 in the packet).

9:17-9:48: (31 minutes): Students may circulate, speaking to one another in order to complete #4 on the worksheet. They must complete each character's analysis and description. If the students finish this early, they may sit down at their desks and work on finishing the packet individually.

9:48-9:50: (2 minutes): Quick wrap up. If the students did not finish the packet in class, they must take it home to complete it for homework. (Additional HW: Read p. 114-132).

### **Discussion Ideas:**

- Why does Junior react the way he does to Penelope's eating disorder?
- Junior's sister seems very happy off of the reservation. What does this suggest about Junior's experiences off of the reservation. Do you think this is foreshadowing that he, too, can be happy? Why?
- Why does Junior decide to walk over to Rowdy's house to give him the cartoon he drew? Why does Rowdy respect Junior's cartoon?
- Junior writes, "And I couldn't make fun of her for that dream. It was my dream, too. And Indian boys weren't supposed to dream like that. And white girls from small towns weren't supposed to dream big, either. We were supposed to be happy with our limitations. But there was no way Penelope and I were going to sit still. Nope, we both wanted to fly" (Alexie 112). Why can't Junior make fun of Penelope for her dream? What does he mean by saying that they both wanted to fly?

### **Bilingual/ESL and Englishes Accommodations**

For our ESL student, I would make sure to ask him which character he would prefer to be before class started. If I thought that one specific character would be particularly good for him to be, then I would not ask. In this particular lesson, it may be beneficial to have this student not take the role of Junior's father or Gordy. Since these characters have smaller roles in the text, it may be more difficult for the student to have a complete grasp on them. Faltis and Coulter suggest a good literacy practice of encouraging ELL students to actively participate in class. General practices for this student participation are: "student choice, voice, responsibility, and contribution; small group work; individual projects; process learning" (Faltis 79). This activity would be a good literacy practice for this particular student because they can create their own perception of the character they are assigned to and may lead conversations according to their own analysis. Also, if this student does not make it through all of the characters during the class period, I could chat with him after class to help find a time where we could finish. There is also an element of individual work to this activity when the students are asked to finish the packet

individually for homework. This allows the student to take home the packet to check for errors or sentences that do not make sense. Lastly, if necessary, I could suggest that he simply take notes as the characters speak and turn it into descriptive paragraphs at home or during a study hall.

For students who speak African American English, I do not see any problem with the students speaking to one another as they please during the activity. If any of the students are struggling to communicate with one another (whether they are the AAE speakers or not), I think that it is beneficial to *learn* to communicate with one another. This activity will enhance the listening and speaking skills of both the ELL learner and the AAE speakers (along with everyone else in the class). Since this is a more formal assignment, I would ask that the descriptive paragraphs be turned in “business” form. I can offer the students blank sheets of paper to scribble notes down during the activity to later turn into paragraphs if the task is too daunting to do simultaneously.

### **Special Education Accommodations:**

This activity would be very beneficial to the student with Asperger’s Syndrome since it will help work on his social and communicative skills. Also, it is beneficial that the student does not need to take on his or her own feelings about the characters as much as take on the role of the character. Therefore, it would help the student foster a new analysis of his/her character. Also, I would color-code the cards according to which character the student was. This way, the student with Asperger’s would find it easier to locate characters that he has not spoken to yet. As always, I would need to keep a close eye on this student to make sure that he was not struggling too much to communicate with his classmates. I would circulate the room to make sure that he was moving along from character to character well, and I would help him find any character that he may be missing. I would also attempt to keep him away from students that would not be as patient with him. However, pairing students that might not get along well might be a great learning activity for both partners seeing as students may not always get to choose the people they work with in life.

### **Assessment:**

This particular activity would be a form of assessment in itself. The students would turn in their packets the following day, and I would be able to see the sort of conversations they had with one another. Also, because the students are asked to create questions and predictions throughout the packet, I would be able to see if there were any specific questions that numerous students were asking. Therefore, I could address these questions the next day in class. The students would be given a small rubric/checklist and description for how this activity will be graded before they complete the activity. They are allowed to take this checklist/rubric home with them to make sure they completed the activity and met all set expectations before turning it in the next day.

### **Extension Ideas:**

Since the previous chapter bring up Penelope's eating disorder in comparison to Junior's father's addiction to alcohol, it might be beneficial to have the students research a specific addiction or eating disorder. They may create small presentation about the addiction or disorder as they bring the issues of this text to a more personal level. The students may even write a short vignette from Penelope's perspective on her eating disorder. This may help the students create a more critical analysis of why high school girls develop such disorders while giving a closer look at Penelope as a character in the text.

### **Source of Activity:**

I would like to thank Linda Christensen for the Tea Party Activity and her ideas that could potentially expand the activity. I would also like to thank her for providing a blank example of the tea party activity in *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up* that I was able to use as a template for my own activity.

### **Resources and References:**

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: a Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. 3rd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008. Print.

Christensen, Linda. *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2000. Print.

Faltis, Christian, and Cathy Coulter. *Teaching English Learners and Immigrant Students in Secondary Schools*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall, 2008. Print

### **Illinois State English and Language Arts Goals:**

**4.B.4d** Use verbal and nonverbal strategies to maintain communication and to resolve individual and group conflict.

This standard was accomplished as the students are asked to pair up with one another to complete the tea party activity. If the students are unable to understand one another, they must resolve their issues and work together to create a coherent conversation. They will need to use verbal and nonverbal strategies to help their partner understand their character.

**4.A.4b** Apply listening skills in practical settings (e.g., classroom note taking, interpersonal conflict situations, giving and receiving directions, evaluating persuasive messages).

This standard was accomplished as the students are required to listen to one another to complete the 'tea party' activity. The students must use conversational listening and speaking skills in the classroom as they take on the role of a character in an attempt to discover meaningful connections.

**1.C.4a** Use questions and predictions to guide reading.

This standard was accomplished as the students were required to produce a number of questions about their characters and the plot in order to partake in the tea party activity. Also, this was accomplished when the students wrote predictions for what was going to happen next in the book. These predictions will further guide their reading as they move into the next reading assignment for homework.

*Tea Party Activity* Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Adapted from *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up*)

1. Read your role

2. Write the key points about your character in the space below.

3. Write 2 questions and 2 thoughts you have about your character after reading the description.

Question 1:

Question 2:

Thought 1:

Thought 2:



4. Write a paragraph about each of the other four characters you meet at the tea party. (You may use this space for notes and may construct your paragraphs on a separate sheet of paper.)

*1st Character name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Description:*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Character name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Description:*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Character name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Description:*

4<sup>th</sup> Character name: \_\_\_\_\_

Description:

5. In the space below, draw a diagram, graph, tree, picture, or some kind of visual representation that shows the connections between the characters. Feel free to add other words into your creation.

6. Write an explanation of your “visualization.”

7. Write four questions that you have about the characters or the book.

1.

2.

3.

4.

8. Write three predictions about the book or the characters.

1.

2.

3.

**RUBRIC/CHECKLIST**  
(rubistar.com)

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1/0
<b>Character description paragraphs</b>	Paragraphs are related to the assigned topic and give clear insight into the development and relationship with the characters.	Paragraphs are related to the assigned topic. The meaning is unclear at one point, but still gives adequate insight.	Paragraphs are related to the assigned topic, but the reader does not give much insight into the character.	No attempt has been made.
<b>Spelling and Punctuation</b>	There are no spelling or punctuation errors.	There is one spelling or punctuation error.	There are 2-3 spelling and punctuation errors.	There are more than 3 spelling and punctuation errors.
<b>Requirements</b>	All of the written requirements were met.	Almost all (about 90%) the requirements were met.	Most (about 75%) of the requirements were met, but several were not.	Many requirements were not met.
<b>Accuracy of Facts</b>	All facts presented are accurate.	Almost all facts presented are accurate.	Most facts presented are accurate (at least 70%).	There are several factual errors.

**TOTAL:** \_\_\_\_\_ x 4 = \_\_\_\_\_