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November 11, 2011

ECI 541

SRE Project

**I. Introduction**

**A. Contextualize SRE Plan**

**1. Context** - This is for a 7th grade social studies class. It could be used in any size classroom with any/all student ability levels. The class that this lesson was conducted in had 24 students, and class periods run 44 minutes. It is a heterogeneous group, and a pretty even mix of 14 boys and 10 girls. Two boys and one girl are Hispanic, one boy and one girl are African-American, and the rest of the students are white (non-Hispanic).

We have been studying WWII and how it has affected the world since, specifically the effects it has had on Asia. The SRE will be in reference to the use of nuclear weapons by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, and our current fears of countries like Iran, Pakistan, India, and North Korea having access to nuclear weapons,

**2. Text** - We will be using excerpts from *Hiroshima* by John Hersey; I will be reading aloud to the students following one character, Miss Toshiko Sasaki, and her experience during and after the bombing. This text was chosen because it provides students with a first-hand description of what happens when nuclear weapons are used, and by following one character, students will be more able to identify with and make connections to the text and concepts it explores. *Hiroshima* has never been banned, but it was discouraged in Japan by the occupying US forces after its publication on the one-year anniversary of the bombings. *Hiroshima* is rated at Lexile level 1190, which is appropriate for general 7th grade students.

**B. Philosophical/Theoretical Rationale**

If you do a Google search on "teen reluctant reader," you get 254,000 results in .17 seconds, all of them tips, ideas, and methods for engaging reluctant adolescents in reading. The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), was created specifically to address the specific needs of adolescent readers ages 12-18 because “teens are reading less and fewer of them possess critical literacy skills.”1 Many students find reading boring, arduous, and labor-intensive; students in 7th grade are no exception. This has been shown on various interest-inventories and surveys of adolescent readers, and most middle or high school teachers will agree anecdotally that many teenagers are not willing readers, especially of assigned, rather than chosen, texts.

My goal, therefore, is to use different strategies to engage students in the text and help them make connections to it. The more engaged they are from the start, and connected they are while reading, the more likely the students are to comprehend the text at a high level, and they are then more willing to engage with text in the future. Giving students multiple strategies to employ during reading will also increase their engagement because if students are more confident in their abilities to work with and learn from texts, they will be less reluctant readers.

By reading aloud to my students without them having a copy of the text, they will need to listen actively, not passively as they often do when I am reading and they follow along. Students often feel disconnected from concepts in social studies class, so by providing them with a real story that they can connect to and experience with the character of Miss Sasaki, they will be more engaged with the reading and therefore have a more rich literacy experience. The before, during, and after reading activities I have planned will also help foster those text-to-self and text-to-world connections, and therefore student responses in the RAFT assessment will be more critical, analytical, and evaluative.

**II. Lesson Plan**

**A. Objectives:** NC SCOS Standards:

7.01 - Identify historical events such as invasions, conquests, and migrations and evaluate their relationship to current issues.

7.02 - Examine the causes of key historical events in selected areas of Africa, Asia, and Australia and analyze the short-and-long range effects on political, economic, and social institutions.

Students will be able to:

* identify the effects of using nuclear weapons on people
* explain whether they agree or disagree with the use of nuclear weapons
* evaluate the use of nuclear weapons in the past, present, and future

**B. Materials/Equipment**

* *Hiroshima* by John Hersey (teacher)
* paper (students)
* writing utensil (students)
* RAFT graphic organizer (students, from teacher)

**C. BDA Phases**

* Before reading, the teacher will lead a brief discussion of what we have already learned about the use of nuclear bombs by the USA on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, begun with the question, why did the USA use nuclear weapons against Japan to end WWII in the Pacific? This will review previous lessons and readings on WWII in the Pacific and the Manhattan Project, and the teacher will guide students' responses and comments to review what nuclear weapons are, the decision to use them against Japan, and why it was felt at the time that they were necessary. The teacher will introduce the vocabulary words *hemorrhage, petechial,* and *infection*, asking if any students know what the words mean. The teacher will add to or supply the definitions, and will then use these words to lead a brainstorming session, recorded on chart paper, of the students' predictions about what they may hear in the reading. Their ideas and questions will then be referred to as the topics or answers come up in the reading. This will take approximately one class period.
* During reading, the teacher will pause at predetermined points to clarify complex concepts or tertiary vocabulary as needed. The teacher will also pause, as aforementioned, to discuss the topics or questions brought up during the brainstorming. As the novel follows six individuals and we are going to be focusing solely on Miss Sasaki, the teacher will advance through the 152-page novel quickly. After each section of Miss Sasaki's story, the teacher will pause and ask the class for any reactions, thoughts, feelings, or new ideas and questions that they may have about the reading. Students often express sorrow that the USA dropped the bombs and hurt innocent people, and they marvel at the long-term effects that the radiation caused and how difficult it was for the Japanese people to cope with and help those affected by the bombings in the aftermath of the war. This will take approximately one class period.
* After reading, students will immediately write a response to the question, *how do you feel about the use of nuclear weapons after hearing Miss Sasaki's story?* These responses will be shared with a partner, then discussed in small groups of four, and then the class will come together to discuss the students' thoughts and feelings. As this is a controversial and sensitive topic, and one that can be difficult for some students to grasp, the teacher will ensure that all students have an opportunity to share and respond to each other. This will take approximately one class period.

**D. Assessment**

After reading, students will complete a RAFT writing assignment as the assessment for this part of the unit. Students will complete a graphic organizer (<http://www.readingquest.org/pdf/raft.pdf>) to plan their RAFT paper, write a rough draft, share their draft with a partner for feedback on their clarity, organization, and mechanics, and will then write a final draft. The assignment for the RAFT is below. This will take approximately two class periods.

* **Role** - You are an intern at the Department of Defense during a future war against Iran, which has developed nuclear weapons also. **Audience** - You are writing a letter to your boss, the Secretary of Defense. **Format** - 200-300 words in a formal letter. **Topic** - Should the Secretary of Defense recommend that the President use nuclear weapons to defeat Iran?

**III. Reflection**

This activity, which ended up taking a full week, or five class periods, was a success. The students were engaged, attentive, and thoughtful during all phases of the activity, and all students participated in some way in the introduction, before-reading brainstorming, and during-reading discussions and reflections. All of the responses to the after-reading reflection question showed evidence of some level of comprehension, critical thinking, and text connections. The RAFT assignments, however, were fantastic. Many students really got into the assignment, and they imagined whole scenarios that could have caused WWIII to occur that they then used in their writing. The vast majority of students wrote that the Secretary of Defense should recommend that the President *not* use nuclear weapons to defeat Iran. The most common reasons were the possibility of Iran using their nuclear weapons against the USA was too great, or it would be unfair to the innocent civilians of Iran to have to go through what the Japanese people did considering we knew what the effects would be, which we did not during WWII. This was exactly what I was hoping the students would realize, though I was not looking for a specific opinion, only that they were analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating nuclear weapons and their effects critically. I am now able to use this to segue into a discussion of the Cold War.

In the future, I will probably expand this lesson to include some primary sources, maybe President Truman's press release directly after the bombings explaining atomic bombs and what happened to the American public, but I am not sure what that will do to the time and how it will affect the overall unit. However, I will definitely use this lesson again, as it was a success as a reading, writing, and critical thinking activity.

**References**

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa/yalsafactsheet>, Young Adult Library Services Association homepage.