

Is That a Boy or a Girl? Exploring Gender Identity as a Facet of Civil Rights

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Rationale

“I didn’t want to be different. I longed to be everything grownups wanted, so they would love me. I followed all their rules, tried my best to please. But there was something about me that made them knit their eyebrows and frown. No one ever offered a name for what was wrong with me. That’s what made me afraid it was really bad. I only came to recognize its melody through this constant refrain: ‘Is that a boy or a girl?’”

-Leslie Feinberg *Stone Butch Blues*

Have you ever woken up in the morning and felt like you were in the wrong body? This is a reality that many teenagers face every day. Estimates from the National Center for Transgender Equality reveal that one-quarter to one percent of the United States population identifies as transgender (National Center for Transgender Equality). In her book *Transparent: Love, Family, and Living the T with Transgender Teenagers*, Cris Beam gives an overview of the term:

Transgender is an umbrella term used to catch anybody who looks or acts outside the bounds of traditional gender norms.

Transgender, for example, can be the femmy boy (gay or straight)

who likes to wear makeup and sometimes even skirts.

Transgender can be the genetically female girl who goes by the name BJ and binds her breasts into a flattened mass beneath her T-shirt. And transgender can be the person who looks singularly male or female on the outside but internally feels like an amalgam of both, a person who falters in front of public restroom doors, momentarily not sure which to choose. (15-6)

From Chaz Bono's very public transition to the infamous whistleblower Chelsea Manning, from the transgender teen Cassidy Campbell named homecoming queen in California, to *Orange is the New Black* star Laverne Cox, the transgender community has been receiving a great deal of media attention recently but very few kids have a positive environment to discuss these very pertinent talking points.

This unit will illustrate a modern-day civil rights movement, focusing on the "T" in the LGBT continuum of identities, and the ways in which the fight for transgender equality is just another facet of that movement—a humbling reminder that many marginalized groups are still fighting for basic human rights, even today. Students will focus on the novel, *I Am J*, by award winning author Cris Beam, that explores the many struggles that a young person endures as he (J prefers male pronouns) begins a journey to become his true self. During this unit, students will be challenged to gain a better

understanding of a population that they may have little familiarity with, and have the potential to become more socially aware citizens.

Civic Awareness/Social Justice

There is a very real civil rights movement occurring at this very moment in time. Many people believe that the world is becoming an easier place to navigate for the LGBT community, but the transgender community is still fighting for very basic human rights. Since the transgender community is often relegated or clustered into the same acronym as the gay and lesbian community, the general public oftentimes overlooks transgender issues. Generating awareness for teenagers is crucial and has the potential to broaden their understanding of civil rights not as a figment of the past, but as a living, breathing, ongoing, and evolving movement that is impacting their generation. One might even assert that it is “the” civil rights issue of the Millennials’ generation.

Current Prejudice Against Transgender People

Recent statistics validate the numerous struggles that transgender individuals are faced with on a daily basis. Currently there are seventeen states that prohibit housing and employment discrimination based on gender identity, and fifteen states have laws that address hate or bias crimes based on gender identity (Human Rights Campaign).

Additionally, transgender people in the United States are refused the right to serve their country in the military (National Center for Transgender Equality). In conjunction with the main text *I Am J*, these facts will introduce students to the idea of cisgender (when biological sex corresponds with gender identity) privilege and the gravity of the fight for equal rights.

Although opponents of transgender rights argue that there are only two biological sexes, and thereby two corresponding genders, for many transgender people they come to experience from an early age that their biological sex does not align with their emotional and/or psychological gender. Beam shares her insight: “All transpeople I know, and most in the literature, felt ‘different’ from the moment they became conscious. Many knew by age two or three that they were supposed to have a different body or be called a different name” (*Transparent* 39). In this text this experience is seen through J who, as a child, thought that he was a boy all along, and believed the world “seemed confused and backward” for calling him otherwise (*I Am J* 45). This idea is one that is hard to understand for those who have never struggled with their gender identity, but it is crucial in teaching cisgender privilege. Students participating in this unit will be encouraged to look at the transgender community in a new light, while traveling through the many realities that trans people experience throughout their lives.

LGBT Inclusion

Currently there are only sixteen states with laws that explicitly address bullying/harassment based on gender identity (Human Right Campaign). Twenty-six states prohibit bullying in school but fail to define categories, and are often not LGBT inclusive (Human Rights Campaign). Cris Beam states that “three quarters of high-school-aged transgender kids have been harassed or assaulted for being trans, and about 90 percent feel unsafe in school, when they go” (*Transparent* 98). These staggering statistics alone demonstrate that there is an urgent need for educators to implement an approach to provide non-LGBT and LGBT students alike with more education that leads to greater understanding of the transgender community.

School should be viewed as a second home to teenagers, a safe space to learn and cultivate meaningful relationships with peers – not a breeding ground for cruelty. Even after winning homecoming queen, Cassidy Lynn Campbell, a sixteen-year-old transgender girl from Huntington Beach, California, has had to endure a tremendous amount of bullying. Such a moment warrants nothing less than a joyous celebration, but her historic achievement sparked a rush of hateful comments from bullies of all ages, causing Cassidy to feel “sad,” “deteriorated,” and “tired of the world” (“Cassidy Lynn Campbell, Transgender Homecoming Queen, Says She's Been Targeted By Bullies In Tearful Video”).

Reading literature involving transgender characters is not only a way to supply transgender teens with an enormous amount of hope, but also a way to bridge the gap between students who identify as trans or gender non-conforming, and those who simply fear and reject what they do not understand. To create a less hostile school environment, students must be challenged to develop empathy, to place themselves in someone else's shoes and come away with a new perspective. In her book *Reading & Writing & Teens*, Cathy Fleischer points out that reading “introduces students to worlds outside their own experience: meeting unfamiliar characters, places, and situations is a way to understand both the universality of the human experience and the unique qualities of certain contexts and cultures, a way to broaden teens’ outlooks on the world” (Fleischer 43).

Subsequently, in her book *Tough Talk, Tough Texts: Teaching English to Change the World*, Cindy O’Donnell-Allen explains Keith Oatley’s reasons for cultivating empathy within the confines of our classrooms:

In literature we feel the pain of the downtrodden, the anguish of defeat, or the joy of victory – but in a safe space. In this space, we can, as it were, practice empathy. We can refine our human capacities of emotional understanding. We can hone our ability to feel with other people who, in ordinary life, might seem too foreign – or too threatening, to elicit our sympathies. Perhaps,

then, when we return to our real lives, we can understand why people act the way they do, and react with caution, even compassion toward them. (O'Donnell-Allen 31)

Why YA?

There are a lot of critics who dispute the merit of Young Adult literature, and perceive the genre to be “low-brow” or inferior to well-known canonical texts. YA literature has a tremendous amount to offer teenagers by providing realistic portrayals of every day life, and dealing with heavy subject matter that may not be as accessible in more advanced literature. Heavy subject matter is yet another point of controversy, but Cathy Fleischer makes a sound argument for teaching honest representations in books:

When the subject matter of a YA book is far from a teen's lived experience, reading can help him to develop empathy. As one YA librarian pointed out, the negatives that parents worry about are the realities that some teens are living. Our kids develop perspective on their lives by reading about the lives of others, even if those lives are violent, disturbing, and dark. (Fleischer 49)

Sherman Alexie, another author who has delved into the world of Young Adult literature, has had to address this very topic when advocating for his novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Lauren Dake writes about Alexie's response to his book being banned from a high school English classroom:

Everything in the book is what every kid in that school is dealing with on a daily basis, whether it's masturbation or racism or sexism or the complications of being human. To pretend that kids aren't dealing with this on an hour-by-hour basis is a form of denial. The world is an incredibly complicated place, and our literature must match that, especially literature for our kids.

(Dake)

In order to create a more compassionate and empathetic environment in our schools, we must expand our students' worldviews and introduce them to ideas so that they may grow their knowledge as well as their capacity to experience empathy. Cathy Fleischer puts it simply when she says that "the best books challenge readers to see the world in a new way" (53). Our own worlds can seem so small; it is only when we broaden our horizons that we begin to open our minds and hearts to see past our own limited experiences.

I Am J has also been named a Kirkus Best Book, a Library Guild Selection of 2011, and is the first book with a transgender character to be placed on the state of California's recommended reading list for public schools (Cris Beam). It was also a finalist for the 2012 Lambda Literary Award in Transgender Fiction ("24th Annual Lambda Literary Award Finalists and Winners"). In addition to opening students up to a new world, *I Am J* is full of immense literary value. Although J is a character who tells stories through

photography, he is also a character who remembers his life experiences in vivid detail. Those particular narratives will serve as examples of personal narratives, and will lead us into our various writing endeavors throughout the unit.

All in all, this conceptual unit will be an invaluable learning experience for student and teacher alike. The toughest journeys are the ones that teach us and stretch us the most, and I am looking forward to taking that journey with my students, no matter how taxing it may be.

Works Cited

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Goals and Rubrics

Overall, my hope is that my students will:

- Gain an understanding of a marginalized population and the way that transgender rights fits into the larger theme of social justice
- Discuss ideas such as privilege, social justice, and gender identity
- Experience thoughtful discussions about the texts and issues that arise from the texts with their discussion groups
- Approach discussion with an open mind and respect for peers
- Further develop narrative writing skills as a way to personally interact with subject matter
- Reflect on the texts and subject matter daily in student journals
- Participate in a research project that will require students to interact with the history and real-life examples of the struggles and/or triumphs experienced by the transgender community

My students will be assessed in four specific areas throughout the course of the unit:

“Diversity Circles” Discussion Groups

Students will be placed in one discussion group for the entirety of the unit to create an intimate, “safe space” so that they can really dig deep into the text while feeling comfortable with their peers. Within their “diversity circles,” students will be asked to bring in pressing questions about the text, to construct meaning of the text together, and to share and workshop some of their daily journal writings (students will be given the opportunity to expand on an entry they connected with the most for the personal narrative project). Participating in group work will benefit all students, especially those who are more productive in social environments.

Goals for “Diversity Circles” Discussion Groups include:

- Create a respectful, safe environment for discussion
- Work collaboratively with group members to discuss student questions
- Engage thoughtfully with each other to construct meaning and work through difficult topics as a team
- Encourage students to develop trusting relationships with their group members by sharing ways in which the text relates to personal experience and by sharing ideas developed through journal writing

- Periodically work together to complete in-class assignments such as the body biography, etc.

Students will receive an A if they:

- Actively participate in discussions
- Bring in relevant and thoughtful questions that demonstrate that they read text thoroughly
- Work exceptionally with others and listen quietly while others are speaking
- Are tactful and respectful to other students' contributions

Students will receive a B if they:

- Participate in a majority of the discussion
- Bring in relevant questions that demonstrate they read the text
- Work well with others and listen while others are speaking
- Are tactful and respectful to other students' contributions

Students will receive a C if they:

- Participate minimally in discussion
- Bring in somewhat relevant questions
- Are somewhat respectful in working with others

Student will receive a D if they:

- Rarely participate in discussion
- Bring in questions that are irrelevant to the topic at hand

Student will receive an F if they:

- Do not participate in discussion
- Do not bring in questions that demonstrate they read the text
- Do not work well with others

Journals

During each class period, students will have the opportunity to respond to and reflect on their reading assignments, as well as relate the topics that arise from the readings to their own lives. Time for quiet, daily introspection will allow those students who work best on their own an opportunity to think through readings and topics in an environment that is conducive to their learning style.

Goals for Journals include:

- Participate in daily writing to help develop general writing skills
- Engage students in critical thinking by allowing them to explore topics related to the texts
- Encourage students to explore new perspectives by relating texts to personal experiences and thinking through ideas/beliefs
- Demonstrate a better understanding of transgender community at the end of activity

Student will receive an A if they:

- Turn journal in on time every week
- Meet and/or exceed the minimum word count of 300 words
- Stay relevant to the topic at hand, showing the ability to thoughtfully reflect on the text and/or relate text to personal experience
- Demonstrate that their thoughts are original (student is not just summarizing text, etc.)
- Complete every journal assignment each week

Student will receive a B if they:

- Turn in journal on time every week
- Meet the minimum word count of 300 words
- Stay relevant to the topic at hand, showing the ability to thoughtfully reflect on the text and/or relate text to personal experience
- Demonstrate that their thoughts are original (student is not just summarizing text, etc.)
- Complete most journal assignments each week

Student will receive a C if they:

- Turn in journal on time every week
- Meet the minimum word count of 300 words
- Stay relevant to the topic at hand
- Fail to demonstrate that their thoughts are original (end up summarizing the text, etc.)
- Complete most journal assignments each week

Student will receive a D if they:

- Turn in journal on time every week
- Meet the minimum word count of 300 words
- Do not stay relevant to the topic at hand
- Fail to demonstrate that their thoughts are original

- Complete half of journal assignments each week

Student will receive an F if they:

- Do not turn in journal on time every week
- Do not meet the minimum word count of 300 words
- Do not stay relevant to the topic at hand
- Fail to demonstrate that their thoughts are original
- Complete less than half of journal assignments each week

Personal Narrative

Towards the end of the unit, students will be asked to choose a journal entry topic that they would like to expand on, and turn into a personal narrative. Students will be asked to explore personal experiences in their journals such as times they felt left out, discriminated against, different because they weren't subscribing to stereotypical gender norms, or just different in general.

Goals for Personal Narrative include:

- Construct meaning out of the text by applying it to personal experience
- Expand on ideas in journal entry to create a full-fledged narrative
- Incorporate specific details and figurative language into narrative
- Describe feelings and emotions in narrative
- Follow formatting requirements

Student will receive an A if they:

- Turn narrative in on time
- Meet and/or exceed length requirement
- Elaborates on a journal entry that is relevant to the assignment
- Incorporate specific details and descriptive/figurative language often
- Describe feelings and emotions in great detail
- Format narrative as instructed

Student will receive a B if they:

- Turn narrative in on time
- Meet length requirement
- Elaborate on a journal entry that is relevant to the assignment
- Incorporate details and descriptive language
- Describe feelings and emotions
- Format narrative as instructed

Student will receive a C if they:

- Turn narrative in on time
- Meet length requirement
- Elaborate on a journal entry that is somewhat relevant to assignment
- Incorporate minimal details and descriptive language
- Describe a minimal amount of feelings and emotions
- Format narrative as instructed

Student will receive a D if they:

- Turn narrative in on time
- Almost meet length requirement
- Elaborate on a journal entry that is irrelevant to assignment
- Do not incorporate details and descriptive language
- Do not describe feelings and emotions
- Format narrative as instructed

Student will receive an F if they:

- Do not turn narrative in on time
- Fail to meet length requirement
- Elaborate on a journal entry that is irrelevant to assignment
- Do not incorporate details and descriptive language
- Do not describe feelings and emotions
- Does not format narrative as instructed

Article of the Week Project

Every week, students will be given a news article that relates to the overall theme of the unit. Articles will be distributed on Mondays, students will choose from a few reflection questions to answer about the article, and the final product will be due on Fridays. This assignment will give students an opportunity to see real-life examples of the issues we read about in our main text, *I Am J*.

Goals for Article of the Week project include:

- Demonstrate students' ability to read and reflect on informational texts
- Learn something new about this facet of social justice in order to broaden knowledge and share with the class
- Recognize and connect the articles we read in class to real-life examples by looking at the larger picture

Students will receive an A if they:

- Turn all 5 assignments in on time
- Meet and/or exceed the minimum page requirement
- Relate content to our texts and/or class discussion
- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the article
- Provide a thoughtful reflection on the article

Students will receive a B if they:

- Turn all 5 assignments in on time
- Meet the minimum page requirement
- Relate content to our texts and/or class discussion
- Demonstrate an understanding of the article
- Provide a thoughtful reflection on the article

Students will receive a C if they:

- Turn in all 5 assignments on time
- Meet the minimum page requirement
- Do not relate content to our texts and/or class discussions
- Demonstrate a vague understanding of the article
- Provide a thoughtful reflection on the article

Students will receive a D if they:

- Turn in 3-4 of the articles on time
- Meet the minimum page requirement
- Do not relate content to our texts and/or class discussions
- Do not demonstrate an understanding of the article
- Provide a somewhat thoughtful reflection on the article

Students will receive an F if they:

- Only turn in 1-2 articles in on time
- Do not meet the minimum page requirement
- Do not relate content to our texts and/or class discussions
- Do not demonstrate an understanding of the article
- Do not provide a thoughtful reflection on the article

*All parents will receive a letter and “Parent Resource Guide” at the beginning of the unit.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you well. I wanted to let you all know that for the next six weeks, our ninth grade English class will be reading a book entitled *I Am J* that focuses on the struggles of a transgender teenager navigating through high school. The main character in the novel, J, was born a biological female but identifies as a boy and the narrator uses male pronouns when referring to J. Throughout the unit we will be discussing and challenging gender norms and stereotypes, while addressing the many civil rights issues that transgender and gender non-conforming individuals face in their every day lives.

Despite common belief, I would like to emphasize that this is not an issue concerning sexuality, but gender. A majority of transgender or gender non-conforming individuals are still fighting for basic human rights, and according to award-winning author of *I Am J*, Cris Beam, “three quarters of high-school-aged transgender kids have been harassed or assaulted for being trans, and about 90 percent feel unsafe in school, when they go.” In order to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, we must empower our students with diversity education.

I have included a “Parent Resource Guide” that references a tremendous amount of educational resources. If you have any further questions, please contact me directly and I would be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you might have about the unit.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Molinaro

Parent Resource Guide

“Top 11 Tips for Caregivers of Gender Non-Conforming Children & Youth”

http://www.transyouthequality.org/documents/Top_11_Tips.pdf

“Top 10 Parent Questions and Concerns Regarding Speaking About Gender Variations with Children”

https://www.genderspectrum.org/images/stories/Top_10_Questions_Parents_Will_Ask.pdf

“Transgender 101”

<http://www.glaad.org/transgender/trans101>

Transparent: Love, Family, and Living the T with Transgender Teenagers by Cris Beam

National Center for Transgender Equality

<http://transequality.org/>

Trans Youth Equality Foundation

<http://www.transyouthequality.org/>

This American Life: Somewhere Out There (Act Two)

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/374/Somewhere-Out-There>

GLSEN Resources

<http://glsen.org/students/tsr/resources>

Bullied: What Every Parent, Teacher, and Kid Needs to Know About Ending the Cycle of Fear by Carrie Goldman

“Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth Recommendations for Schools”

<http://www.transgenderlaw.org/resources/tlcschools.htm>

“We Are the Youth: Chronicling the Stories of LGBT Youth in America”

<http://wearetheyouth.org/>

Week 1

Day 1 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

5 minutes: Students will be put in their “Diversity Circles” discussion groups for the unit. Groups will consist of 3-4 students depending on class size, and group leadership roles will rotate with each new meeting (leader, secretary, etc.). After each group activity throughout the unit, groups will be asked to turn in a sheet of paper demonstrating that they completed what was asked of them.

20 minutes: “Gender Box” activity will be introduced. They will be asked to explore stereotypes normally associated with the words “man” and “woman.” Each group will be given the worksheet below:

Throughout our lives, society tells us how we should dress, how we should act, and how we should feel depending on whether we are a man or a woman. Today in our discussion groups, we will explore popular gender norms and the ways that they affect us on a daily basis.

1. In the box below, list words and ideas that are typically associated with “man” and “woman.” Think of as many norms as you can for each: activities, toys, games, emotions, colors, behaviors, expression, clothing, jewelry, careers, and so on.

MAN	WOMAN

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5-7 minutes: A representative from each group will come up to the board and share some of their ideas with the whole class by writing them on the board.

15 minutes: Students will return to their seats and I will pass out their journals. Based on the discussion, students will be asked to explore the following questions in a journal entry:

1. Do you think every man or woman should be confined to the characteristics of their corresponding boxes? Why or why not?
2. Describe a time when you “stepped out” of your prescribed box. Was it a positive or negative experience? How did your peers and/or family react?

*Credit goes to sj Miller for recommending the Gender Box activity and keshetonline.org for a model template.

Day 2 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

20 minutes: Show documentary entitled *Transgender Basics*, an educational film on gender nonconforming and transgender people.

*The film can be found here: <http://www.gaycenter.org/transgenderbasics>

15 minutes: After the film, students will get into their discussion groups to answer a few questions about the film:

1. What did you learn from this documentary? Have you ever heard of the word transgender before?
2. How can you relate your discussions on the Gender Box activity to what you saw in the documentary?

7 minutes: Share group discussions with whole class.

5 minutes: Pass out list of terms (found below) and copies of *I Am J*. Introduce novel and assign first chapter for homework. Students will also be asked to read the list of terms.

Homework:

- Read chapter 1 of *I Am J*
- Read list of terms

List of Useful Terms

Gender: A socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures. Gender is often used synonymously with sex, but this is inaccurate because sex refers to physical/biological characteristics and gender refers to social and emotional attributes.

Biological/Anatomical Sex: The physical structure of one's reproductive organs that is used to assign sex at birth.

Gender Identity: One's innermost concept of self as male or female or both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the sex assigned at birth. Individuals become conscious of this between the ages 18 months and 3 years. Most people develop a gender identity that matches their biological sex. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their biological or assigned sex. Some of these individuals choose to socially, hormonally and/or surgically change their physical appearance to more fully match their gender identity.

Gender Expression: Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and other forms of presentation. Gender expression also works the other way as people assign gender to others based on their appearance, mannerisms, and other gendered characteristics. Sometimes, transgender people seek to match their physical expression with their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex. Gender expression should not be viewed as an indication of sexual orientation.

Gender Role: This is the set of roles, activities, expectations and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Our culture recognizes two basic gender roles: Masculine (having the qualities attributed to males) and feminine (having the qualities attributed to females). People who step out of their socially assigned gender roles are sometimes referred to as transgender. Other cultures have three or more gender roles.

Sexual Orientation: Term that refers to being romantically or sexually attracted to people of a specific gender. Our sexual orientation and our gender identity are separate, distinct parts of our overall identity. Although a child may not yet be aware of their sexual orientation, they usually have a strong sense of their gender identity.

Genderqueer: This term represents a blurring of the lines around gender identity and sexual orientation. Genderqueer individuals typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and sexual orientation. This term is typically assigned an adult identifier and not used in reference to pre-adolescent children.

Gender Normative/Cisgender: Refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity and expression (Cis-from Latin meaning "on the same side [as]" or "on this side [of]").

Gender nonconforming/Gender variant: Refers to individuals whose behaviors and/or interests fall outside what is considered typical for their assigned sex at birth. Someone who identifies as "gender nonconforming" is not necessarily transgender. While their expression of gender may fall outside of those considered typical for their assigned birth gender, they may identify as that gender nonetheless. Some distinguish between these two terms by how an individual is perceived. That is, a "gender nonconforming" individual may have their atypical expression experienced by others either neutrally or even positively. "Gender variant" might be used to identify an individual whose gender expression is viewed negatively by others.

Transition: The process by which a transgender individual strives to have physical presentation more closely align with identity. Transition can occur in three ways:

social transition through non-permanent changes in clothing, hairstyle, name and/or pronouns; medical transition through the use of medicines such as hormone "blockers" or cross hormones to promote gender-based body changes; and/or surgical transition in which an individual's body is modified through the addition or removal of gender-related physical traits.

Transsexuals: Individuals who do not identify with their birth-assigned genders and physically alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally. This physical transition is a complicated, multi-step process that may take years and may include, but is not limited to, sex reassignment surgery.

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.



Day 3 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

15 minutes: At the beginning of class, we'll have a whole class discussion about the first chapter of *I Am J*. The focus will be on the characters that have been introduced so far and their characteristics. I will record everything on the board by creating a character map.

10 minutes: Students will have an opportunity to write in their journals before getting into their discussion groups. They will be asked to describe how the characters in the first chapter fit in or outside of their prescribed "gender boxes" based on our introductory activity.

15 minutes: After writing in their journals, students will have a chance to get into their discussion groups and discuss what they explored in their entries. This will also be a time for them to discuss their thoughts on the first chapter.

5 minutes: Each group will be asked to share their thoughts with the whole class.

2 minutes: Assign chapter 2 of *I Am J* & wrap up.

Homework:

- Read chapter 2 of *I Am J*

Day 4 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

20 minutes: We find out about a great deal of J's struggles in life in chapter 2. There will be a couple of quotes on the board that describe the discrimination that J faced for his appearance. Students will write in their journals one of the following two topics:

1. A way I feel discriminated against
2. A way I feel different from others

The following quotes will be written on the board:

“J had been getting into serious fights since the fifth grade, when people had started harassing him more intensely for his clothes, for the way he looked” (34).

“I don’t think it’s human” (48).

20 minutes: Introduce the personal narrative assignment. Explain that one of their journal entries will be expanded upon and turned into a personal narrative. There will be a class blog and students will have the option to have their narratives published if they are comfortable with sharing their pieces. For the remainder of the class, I will read an example of a personal narrative aloud for everyone to hear. I will use the narrative on page 19 of *Narrative Writing: Learning a New Model for Teaching* by George Hillocks entitled “Casey.” Students will be given a copy of this narrative and will get together with their discussion groups to pick out the features that make this piece of writing a personal narrative.

5 minutes: Each group will share the features that they decided on and we will compile a list as a class for future reference.

2 minutes: Assign chapter 3 of *I Am J* for homework & wrap up.

Homework:

- Read chapter 3 of *I Am J*

Day 5 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

30 minutes: We will participate in a silent Chalk Talk activity. The prompt will be very open-ended. Students will be asked to come up to the board as they feel comfortable and write down what they have learned in the first week of the unit, their thoughts on the unit so far, and/or their first impressions of *I Am J*. Students will be encouraged to respond to other student responses by connecting thoughts with a line on the board.

12 minutes: Students will have the option to turn in a book review for extra credit on any book read outside of class that is listed on my supplemental reading list. I will make sure that the books on the list are in my classroom library, or at the school/local library. The book reviews will be posted on the

class blog. I will use this time to hand out the list of supplemental books, show students some examples of the book review genre, and introduce students to the class blog.

***The class website can be found at: English901.weebly.com**

5 minutes: Assign homework & wrap up.

Homework:

- Pay attention to gender roles when you are watching television or participating in your daily life over the weekend. Bring in a list or paragraph (your preference) describing your observations to class on Monday.

Extra Credit Book Review

Each of you will have the option to read a book (from the extra credit book list) and write a book review for extra credit. If you wish, your book review will be published on the class blog!

Here's a sample book review from NPR Books:

Eleanor & Park by Rainbow Rowell

OK, we all love John Hughes (don't try to deny it), but even die-hard Ducky fans like me have to admit that Hughes movies are populated with cardboard cutouts, traced in nuance-free black and white. Rainbow Rowell's latest novel takes some familiar elements and pops them into glorious 3-D. Eleanor and Park meet on the school bus – she's a defiantly weird poor girl (a redhead, no less!) from a broken family, he's a solidly middle-class son of a veteran and his Korean wife (no here). They bond over *X-Men* comics and punk mix tapes – exotic tastes in Omaha in 1986. But the course of true love does not run smoothly: Eleanor must hide her budding relationship from her abusive stepfather, while Park's more conventional parents don't know how to relate to his awkward misfit of a girlfriend. Rowell nails the voices of her teen protagonists – her writing swings from profane to profound, but it's always real and always raw. The buzz this year is all about the rise of "realistic" YA fiction; if that means more books as good as *Eleanor & Park*, I'll gladly set aside the dystopias for a while.

Here are some tips from Purdue OWL:

These tips and more can be found at
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/704/01/>

Writing a Book Review

Book reviews typically evaluate recently-written works. They offer a brief description of the text's key points and often provide a short appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the work.

Readers sometimes confuse book reviews with book reports, but the two are not identical. Book reports commonly describe what happens in a work; their focus is primarily on giving an account of the major plot, characters, and/or

main idea of the work. Most often, book reports are a K-12 assignment and range from 250 to 500 words. If you are looking to write a book report, please see the OWL resource, *Writing a Book Report*.

By contrast, book reviews are most often a college assignment, but they also appear in many professional works: magazines, newspapers, and academic journals. They typically range from 500-750 words, but may be longer or shorter. A book review gives readers a sneak peek at what a book is like, whether or not the reviewer enjoyed it, and details on purchasing the book.

Before You Read

Before you begin to read, consider the elements you will need to be included in your review. The following items may help:

- **Author:** Who is the author? What else has s/he written? Has this author won any awards? What is the author's typical style?
- **Genre:** What type of book is this: fiction, nonfiction, romance, poetry, youth fiction, etc.? Who is the intended audience for this work? What is the purpose of the work?
- **Title:** Where does the title fit in? How is it applied in the work? Does it adequately encapsulate the message of the text? Is it interesting? Uninteresting?
- **Preface/Introduction/Table of Contents:** Does the author provide any revealing information about the text in the preface/introduction? Does a "guest author" provide the introduction? What judgments or preconceptions do the author and/or "guest author" provide? How is the book arranged: sections, chapters?
- **Book Jacket/Cover/Printing:** Book jackets are like mini-reviews. Does the book jacket provide any interesting details or spark your interest in some way? Are there pictures, maps, or graphs? Do the binding, page cut, or typescript contribute or take away from the work?

As You Read

As you read, determine how you will structure the summary portion or background structure of your review. Be ready to take notes on the book's key points, characters, and/or themes.

- **Characters:** Are there characters in the work? Who are the principal characters? How do they affect the story? Do you empathize with them?

- **Themes/Motifs/Style:** What themes or motifs stand out? How do they contribute to the work? Are they effective or not? How would you describe this author's particular style? Is it accessible to all readers or just some?
- **Argument:** How is the work's argument set up? What support does the author give for her/findings? Does the work fulfill its purpose/support its argument?
- **Key Ideas:** What is the main idea of the work? What makes it good, different, or groundbreaking?
- **Quotes:** What quotes stand out? How can you demonstrate the author's talent or the feel of the book through a quote?

When You Are Ready to Write

Begin with a short summary or background of the work, but do not give too much away. Many reviews limit themselves only to the first couple of chapters or lead the reader up to the rising action of the work. Reviewers of nonfiction texts will provide the basic idea of the book's argument without too much detailed.

The final portion of your review will detail your opinion of the work. When you are ready to begin your review, consider the following:

- **Establish a Background, Remember your Audience:** Remember that your audience has not read the work; with this in mind, be sure to introduce characters and principals carefully and deliberately. What kind of summary can you provide of the main points or main characters that will help your readers gauge their interest? Does the author's text adequately reach the intended audience? Will some readers be lost or find the text too easy?
- **Minor principals/characters:** Deal only with the most pressing issues in the book. You will not be able to cover every character or idea. What principals/characters did you agree or disagree with? What other things might the author have researched or considered?
- **Organize:** The purpose of the review is to critically evaluate the text, not just inform the readers about it. Leave plenty room for your evaluation by ensuring that your summary is brief. Determine what kind of balance to strike between your summary information and your evaluation. If you are writing your review for a class, ask your instructor. Often the ratio is half and half.

- **Your Evaluation:** Choose one or a few points to discuss about the book. What worked well for you? How does this work compare with others by the same author or other books in the same genre? What major themes, motifs, or terms does the book introduce, and how effective are they? Did the book appeal to you on an emotional or logical way?
- **Publisher/Price:** Most book reviews include the publisher and price of the book at the end of the article. Some reviews also include the year published and ISBN.

Revising

When making the final touches to your review, carefully verify the following:

- Double-check the spelling of the author name(s), character names, special terms, and publisher.
- Try to read from the vantage point of your audience. Is there too much/enough summary? Does your argument about the text make sense?
- Should you include direct quotes from the reading? Do they help support your arguments? Double-check your quotes for accuracy.

Extra Credit Book List

Luna by Julie Anne Peters

Almost Perfect by Brian Katcher

Parrotfish by Ellen Wittlinger

Beauty Queens by Libba Bray

Being Emily by Rachel Gold

Jumpstart the World by Catherine Ryan Hyde

Happy Families by Tanita S. Davis

London Reign by A.C. Britt

Beautiful Music for Ugly Children by Kirstin Cronn-Mills

Nina Here nor There by Nick Krieger

The Sweet In-Between by Sheri Reynolds

The Tragedy of Miss Geneva Flowers by Joe Babcock

Far from Xanadu by Julie Anne Peters

Brooklyn, Burning by Steve Brezenoff

Short stories from *How Beautiful the Ordinary*

Every Day by David Levithan

Week 2

Day 6 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

10 minutes: Students will be asked to get into their discussion groups to talk about their observations of gender over the weekend. Some driving questions include:

- What sort of observations did you make about gender and gender roles over the weekend?
- Were your observations similar or different than your group members? Discuss.
- Did you observe anything that surprised you?

5 minutes: Group representatives will share their findings with the entire class.

20 minutes: We'll spend some time on a mini-lecture/class discussion on the topics listed below. This will be a time to expand on some of the ideas in the text and cultivate a better understanding of some of the issues J is dealing with.

Discuss the certainty that J feels about his gender identity.

“If gender was an assignment, then someone had mis-assigned him. J had assignments in school; assignments changed all the time. The old fantasy returned, minus God: perhaps J could go back to the hospital where he'd been born and just get ‘reassigned’” (53-4)

“He was going to be more than just a hovering brain without a body. He was going to be what he knew he was at three, at five. He knew he couldn't stay home sick forever. He was going to make himself a boy” (54).

What does it mean to be a boy?

Introduce the term “cisgender.”

Discuss the notion of “passing.”

“J looked down the block. Was that lady with a dog staring at him? J tightened his jaw, juttled out his chin a bit, as though he was about to nod upward in a kind of tough hello, and squinted a little, too. The lady, only about twenty yards

away, squatted to swipe up her dog's mess. The dog, though, did a double take. *I'm crazy, J thought. Now I'm thinking animals can see through me*" (63).

"His mind was a blaze of colors and bursting; he had passed, he had flirted, he had passed, he had spoken to strangers, he had passed, he had bound his breasts, he had passed, he had passed, he had passed! He, J yes he, that glorious pronoun, he had been J on a new corner, in a new Starbucks, with a new name and a new body but the selfsame soul, talking actually talking to other people who believed he was a boy" (75).

How would it feel to walk down the street in fear *every single day*?

5 minutes: Assign Article of the Week #1.

"About a Girl: Coy Mathis' Fight to Change Gender"

<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/news/about-a-girl-coy-mathis-fight-to-change-change-gender-20131028>

The Article of the Week assignment was inspired by Kelly Gallagher's *Readicide*.

7 minutes: The remainder of class time will be spent on journal reflection. We'll focus on the family and students will be asked to consider the following questions:

- Have you ever been afraid to discuss something important to you with your parents and/or relatives? How did that make you feel? Explain.
- Have you ever felt that your family would not accept part of your identity? Explain.

Homework:

- Read chapter 4 of *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #1 due on Friday

Article of the Week

At the beginning of each week, you will be given an "Article of the Week" assignment that will be due on Friday.

Read the article carefully and choose one of the following assignments. Responses should be a minimum of 1 page, double-spaced, with a 12 point font.

- Choose your three favorite quotes or passages from this week's article and write a reflection for each.
- Write down five things you learned by reading this week's article. Which of these five things is the most important to know? Explain.

Day 7 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

15 minutes: Continue working on journal from the previous day.

32 minutes: Begin history lesson.

History lesson will come from *Transgender History* by Susan Stryker, we'll go over the GLAAD Transgender Visibility Timeline, and 24 Americans Who Changed The Way We Think About Transgender Rights.

<http://www.glaad.org/files/visibilitytimeline.png>

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/thomaspageemcbee/25-important-trans-and-gender-nonconforming-ameri-9bfl>

Homework:

- Read chapter 5 of *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #1 due on Friday

Day 8 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

37 minutes: Explore the World Gender Map as a class. Students will take turns reading each description. We will discuss the different customs and unpack any questions that students might have. This activity will help to convey that there is more to gender than a strict binary, and there are many different ways to express gender.

<https://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=210679661112179870040.0004a2e0a49561ae0ff35&ll=23.885838,156.09375&z=2&output=embed>

10 minutes: Students will be given time to reflect on what they've learned in their journals.

Homework:

- Read chapter 6 of *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #1 due on Friday

Day 9 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

15 minutes: Watch *The Peculiar Kind: Season 2 Episode 3 (LGBT Homeless Youth Special)*

http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/11/web_series.html

15 minutes: Students will discuss LGBT homelessness in their discussion groups with the following questions as a guide:

- How did you react to this video?
- Why are so many transgender and other LGBTQ teenagers and adults homeless?
- Why did J feel that he needed to leave his parents' house?
- How do you think it would feel to be a homeless transgender teen?
- What can we do as a society to prevent this issue in the future?

17 minutes: We will continue the discussion as a class. Groups will be asked to share what they discussed with the whole class.

I will share some statistics with students

<http://transequality.org/Issues/homelessness.html>

<http://fortytonone.org/get-informed/learn-about-the-issue/overview/>

Homework:

- Read chapter 7 of *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #1 due on Friday

LGBT HOMELESSNESS: An Overview

(from Forty to None Project website)

People do not choose to be homeless – particularly young people.

The choice is made for them or is an alternative to abuse and neglect. And yet, youth homelessness is a national crisis. Each year, between 500,000 and 1.6 million youth in the U.S. are homeless or runaways.

The statistics for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender homeless youth are even more shocking, as this group represents 20-40% of *all* homeless young people. Considering that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth represent an estimated 3-5% of the total youth population, these numbers are disproportionately high. And while even a single homeless youth on the streets is one too many, the disparity of gay and transgender youth that are homeless is unfathomable.

REASONS

Family conflict is the most common cause of all youth homelessness. For gay and transgender youth, the conflict tends to be over their sexual orientation or gender identity, and the results aren't pretty: Half of all teens get a negative reaction from their parents when they come out to them. More than 1 in 4 are thrown out of their homes.

Imagine confiding in the people you trust most in the world only to be rejected and tossed out on the street with no place to go.

Gay and transgender youth also face significant challenges at school, in foster care, and within the juvenile justice system that are contributing factors to their becoming homeless. When seeking support to overcome the obstacles in their way, they may find a lack of welcoming and inclusive resources to provide them help.

EXPERIENCE

Once they have left their homes, gay and transgender youth are even more vulnerable. They are at a greater risk for victimization, unsafe sexual practices and mental health issues than straight homeless young people. Nearly 60% have been sexually victimized on the street, compared to 33% of straight homeless youth. Gay and transgender homeless youth, in fact, are more than 7 times more likely to experience acts of sexual violence than straight homeless youth.

Imagine ending up on the streets with no food, shelter or support, and being taken advantage of right when you are in need of help and kindness.

When trying to seek refuge from the challenges they are facing on the streets, not all of the facilities, like shelters and drop-in centers, they come in contact with can guarantee a safe environment free of discrimination and violence.

SOLUTIONS

So how can we bring an end to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth from experiencing homelessness?

First, we must deal with family rejection and foster greater acceptance in the home in order to prevent these young people from becoming homeless. We then have to take it one step further by educating society and engaging them to be a part of the solution by doing what they can to help these young people.

Imagine a future where everyone is accepted for who they are and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Once young people are on the streets, we must do everything we can to make sure that the services available to them are culturally competent and welcoming to youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We also have to make sure that all levels of government are doing what they can to help fund these vital services and ensure that gay and transgender youth are being protected when seeking support.

See more at: <http://fortytonone.org/get-informed/learn-about-the-issue/overview/#sthash.of0kO1gg.dpuf>

Day 10 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

*Article of the Week #1 is due

15 minutes: Discuss Article of the Week #1 as a whole class.

10 minutes: Students will reflect on the prompt below in their journals:

- What I do when I feel sad, hurt, angry, left out, or unsuccessful.

22 minutes: Students will be given time to read *I Am J* in class.

Homework:

- Read chapter 8 of *I Am J*

Week 3

Day 11 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

5 minutes: Assign Article of the Week #2

“Sharing the Stories of LGBT Youth: Michelle, 20, from the Bronx, NY”

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diana-scholl/lgbt-youth_b_1380839.html

42 minutes: Students will work in their discussion groups to create a found poem for 1 or 2 chapters (depending on how many groups the class will be split into) of *I Am J*. I wanted to participate in an activity that would sum up the first 8 chapters of the novel, so the students will be able to present what they believe the most important aspects of the novel are so far.

To explain a found poem, I will use this handout from *Read Write Think*:

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson49/RWT028-4.pdf

Homework:

- Read chapter 9 of *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #2 due on Friday

Day 12 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

15 minutes: Students will be given a few minutes to finish their found poems and then each group will present their poem(s) to the class.

17 minutes: We will have a whole class discussion about the idea of “privilege.” I will first ask the class to tell me what they believe privilege to be, and write their answers on the board as we talk through the issue. I will share a definition of privilege with them:

Any unearned benefit or advantage one receives in society by nature of their identity. Examples of aspects of identity that can afford privilege: Race, Religion, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, Class/Wealth, Ability, or Citizenship Status (from EverydayFeminism.com)

We will also read through an article from EverydayFeminism.com entitled “30+ Examples of Cisgender Privilege.” We will wrap up our discussion and end the class with some time for reflection.

(I will also reference this article: “How to Talk to Someone About Privilege Who Doesn’t Know What That Is” <http://everydayfeminism.com/2012/12/how-to-talk-to-someone-about-privilege/>)

15 minutes: Students will relate what they’ve learned about privilege to *I Am J*. They will be asked to consider the following questions in their journals:

- Have you ever thought about the word “privilege” before? Explain.
- What privileges do you have that J does not have? Does J have any privileges that you do not have? Find a quote or two in the text to support your ideas.

Homework:

- Read chapter 10 of *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #2 due on Friday

Day 13 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

30 minutes: We will devote a good portion of the class to journaling. Students will choose one of the following topics:

- Describe J. What makes him a dynamic character? Is he the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- J's mother tells him, "You can learn to love the life you're handed." Do you agree with her assessment? Why or why not?
- J uses his photography to help make Melissa better understand him. Consider the photograph he states to share with her; how is this image symbolic of who he is?
- Compare the parent/child relationships in the story: J and his mother, J and his father, and Melissa and her mother. To what extent are the relationships of these characters shaped by the world around them? To what extent do their relationships shape that world?
- After a relaxed portrait session with his parents, J thinks, "I want to remember them like this." To what extent do you think J understands how the bond between him and his parents will be changed?
- Blue tells J, "You've probably never wanted to be anything different than what you are." Give that readers fully understand the irony of her statement, why might Blue have such an opinion of J?
- Consider Melissa's dancing, Blue's painting, and J's photography. What role does art play in the lives of each of these characters? In what way does it allow them to express their vision of their world?
- Using the phrase, "This is a story about..." supply five words to describe *I Am J*. Explain your choices.

Students will be asked to provide textual evidence to support their ideas.

These questions are originally from the *I Am J* Educator's Guide from lbschoolandlibrary.com.

17 minutes: Students will share their thoughts with their discussion groups.

Homework:

- Read chapter 11 of *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #2 due on Friday

Day 14 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

45 minutes: Show the documentary *I Am Jazz: A Family in Transition*
<http://www.transkidspurplerainbow.org/featured/i-am-jazz-a-family-in-transition/>

Homework:

- Finish *I Am J* (chapters 12 & 13)
- Article of the Week #2 due on Friday

Day 15 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

*Article of the Week #2 is due

10 minutes: Discuss Article of the Week #2 as a whole class.

37 minutes: In their discussion groups, students will create a body biography for the character J. They will be given poster board and art supplies to make a life-sized body biography. Students will also be given time to finish their projects in class on Monday, and will present their creations to the class. An assignment sheet for the body biography is attached.

The body biography activity comes from *Teaching English by Design: How to Create and Carry Out Instructional Units* by Peter Smagorinsky.

Body Biography

In your discussion groups, you will be creating a body biography for the character J. A body biography is a visual and written portrait illustrating several aspects of the character's life within the novel.

The body biography should:

- Review significant events, choices, and changes involving the character
- Communicate the full essence of the character by emphasizing the traits that make him who he is
- Promote discussion of the character

The body biography should include:

- A review of significant happenings in the novel
- Visual symbols
- Original text
- The characters three most important lines from the play

Week 4

Day 16 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

*Assign Article of the Week #3

“The Growing Battle Over Transgender Student Rights in California”

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-growing-battle-over-transgender-student-rights-in-california-20131101>

27 minutes: Students will be given most of class time to finish their body biographies.

15 minutes: Each group will present their body biographies to the class.

5 minutes: Remind students to think about which journal entry they’d like to expand on for their personal narrative. Ask students to bring in a few thoughtful questions each concerning *I Am J* or any issues discussed throughout *I Am J*. Questions should be written on index cards or smaller pieces of paper. On Tuesday, they will be participating in a fishbowl.

Homework:

- Bring in questions on *I Am J*
- Article of the Week #3 due on Friday

Day 17 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

5 minutes: Explain the fishbowl activity to the class. During a fishbowl, a small group of students are in the center of the room discussing the topic at hand. When a student on the outside of the fishbowl wants to contribute, that student must tap the shoulder of one of the fishbowl discussants to replace that student in the center.

42 minutes: Students will participate in a fishbowl. I will use the questions that students brought in (and will use questions from the *I Am J* Educator’s Guide mentioned in Day 13 if students fail to bring in appropriate questions) to start discussion, and transition questions as needed.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #3 due on Friday

Day 18 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

Seashell activity:

15 minutes: In groups, students will be writing about a seashell as specifically as possible so that another student would read what they've written and be able to identify the correct seashell. Before they split into groups, as a class we will get a feel for describing a seashell together. I will write these descriptions on the board, and record them for use on Thursday.

20-25 minutes: Each group will receive two shells in a bag. Students will inspect the shells and choose which one they'd like to write about. Students will then talk about the shell, and they will be asked to pay attention to what it looks like, its shapes, colors, textures, and special features. At the end of the activity, I will collect the work and ask other groups to choose which shell was described in each piece.

7-10 minutes: Once the pieces have been redistributed, each group will choose which shell they think is described in the piece. They will be asked to underline which details led them to their choices.

This activity is from *Narrative Writing: Learning a New Model for Teaching* by George Hillocks, Jr.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #3 due on Friday

Day 19 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

10-15 minute: Students will be asked to expand on the first draft of their seashell pieces. First, we'll work together as a class to expand upon the descriptions of the seashell we all described at the beginning of class on Wednesday. We'll talk about figurative language such as similes and

metaphors. Together we will figure out a way to describe the shell with more detail, and this will model what they will be asked to do in their groups. Some guiding questions to use:

- What might we say in the first sentence to get the reader’s attention?
- What is one word that describes how you felt about the shell?
- What did you think when you heard all the things the shell looked like?
- What detail do we want to put next?

20 minutes: Students will continue their drafts from the previous day with their groups. This activity will give them more practice with detail as they begin to think about their own personal narratives.

15 minutes: Students will remain in discussion groups and discuss possible personal narrative topics (expansions of their journals).

Homework:

- Article of the Week #3 due on Friday

Day 20 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

*Article of the Week #3 is due

10 minutes: Discuss Article of the Week #3 as a whole class.

35-37 minutes: Students will have time to work on their personal narratives in class.

Week 5

Day 21 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

*Assign Article of the Week #4

“Transgender People Still Lack Legal Protections in the Workplace”

<http://www.care2.com/causes/for-transgender-workers-the-american-dream-remains-elusive.html>

20 minutes: Writing about people.

Choose one of the portraits for inspiration. Imagine that you went to visit one of the “muxes” of Mexico for tea. Write a letter to one of your friends describing the looks and personality of the person you visited. Describe the setting and your thoughts/feelings as well. Be specific, so that your friend will be able to vividly picture your entire experience.

http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/09/stunning_portraits_of_mexicos_third_gender.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

25 minutes: Start teacher conferences. I am planning a class of 25 students (but will have to alter my plans depending on size) and each student will get 5 minutes to discuss their personal narratives with me. Students who are not conferencing will be asked to either work on their Article of the Week or continue working on the detail of their personal narrative drafts.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #4 due on Friday

Day 22 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

22 minutes: We will have a lesson on incorporating dialogue into our personal narratives. The lesson will come from page 47 of *The Dynamics of Writing Instruction: A Structured Process Approach for Middle and High School* by Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn, and McCann. I will also pass out the list of Scenarios for Writing Dialogue from *Narrative Writing: Learning a New Model for Teaching* by George Hillocks, Jr. and ask students to get in their groups to create a dialogue for one of the scenarios. We will continue this activity on Wednesday.

25 minutes: Continue teacher conferences. Students who are not participating in conferences will remain in their groups to work on the dialogue activity.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #4 due on Friday

Day 23 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

22 minutes: We will continue the dialogue activity. Students will receive a few minutes to finish up their dialogues, then we will have one group to volunteer to read their dialogue, and as a class we will discuss the placement of punctuation and paragraph formatting regarding quotations.

25 minutes: Continue teacher conferences. Students who are not conferencing will be asked to use their knowledge of dialogue and incorporate it into their personal narrative drafts. They may also work on their Article of the Week assignment.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #4 due on Friday

Day 24 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

22 minutes: We will have a lesson on participial phrases and sentence combining.

25 minutes: Continue teacher conferences.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #4 due on Friday

Day 25 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

*Article of the Week is due

10 minutes: Discuss Article of the Week #4 as a whole class.

37 minutes: Students will have time to work on their personal narratives in class while we finish teacher conferences.

Week 6

Day 26 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

Incorporating the senses: smell

47 minutes: Materials for this activity include vials filled with substances such as ammonia, cinnamon, cloves, vanilla, automobile oil, perfume, talcum powder, etc. Students will be in their groups and each group will have one full set of vials. Students will be asked to describe the odors in terms of color, shape, weight, temperature, sound, or other sensory perceptions. Students will be asked to think of what each smell reminds them of. Students will discuss their thoughts with their groups, and then each individual student will write a sentence or two about each odor, using as much detail as possible. Students will share their responses with their groups, and at the end of class volunteers will have an opportunity to share their responses with the whole class. Any extra time will be used for students to start their Article of the Week assignment, or continue working on their personal narrative drafts.

*Assign Article of the Week #5

“Transgender Women in Women’s Restrooms: A Purely Imagined Harm”

<http://www.transadvocate.com/transgender-women-in-womens-restrooms-a-purely-imagined-harm.htm>

Homework:

- Article of the Week #5 due on Friday

Day 27 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

7 minutes: I will go over instructions for peer review and arrange students in pairs. Ideally there will be four students in each discussion group, so they will be able to switch partners without any trouble at the halfway point.

20 minutes: Peer review

Students will:

- Partner up
- Take turns completing the steps below
- One partner will read their narrative aloud while the other listens carefully
- The partner will tell the writer what they liked most about their narrative
- The partner will share what the writer could include to make the narrative more engaging, or if there is any element missing.
- The partner will read over the narrative silently and correct any spelling, punctuation, or formatting errors

This activity was inspired by the peer response activity found in *The Dynamics of Writing Instruction: A Structured Process Approach for Middle and High School* by Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn, and McCann.

20 minutes: Students will switch partners and repeat the above process.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #5 due on Friday

Day 28 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

47 minutes: We will visit the computer lab so that all students will have access to a computer to type up their personal narratives.

Homework:

- Article of the Week #5 due on Friday

Day 29 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

47 minutes: The entire class will be devoted to a guest speaker (in person or via Skype).

Homework:

- Article of the Week #5 due on Friday

Day 30 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance & announcements

*Article of the Week #5 is due

10 minutes: Discuss Article of the Week #5 as a whole class.

*Personal Narrative is due

*Extra credit book review is due

37 minutes: Students will participate in a fishbowl discussion to wrap up our unit. The following question will guide the fishbowl:

- Will we as a society ever be able to live in a world without a strict gender binary? Explain.

END OF UNIT