

BRAIN-TARGETED TEACHING LEARNING UNIT

Name: Brent Pasko

Dates (Allocated Time): 5-7 class sessions

Unit Topic:/Title: Code of Chivalry

Grade Level: 10

Content Standard(s): Analyze particular points of view or cultural experiences reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature (RL-2). Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized in each treatment (RL-3). Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance concepts that develop a theme or themes (RL-7).

Learning Unit Overview: Although there are 30 students on my roster, I see only 24 or 25 of them most days. This is especially troubling since, as an English 10 class, we are obliged to spend time preparing for the Maryland High School Assessment (HSA). If the students in my this class are diverse in any way, it is economically. Each student is African-American, and each is either 15 or 16 year old, but there are students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches sitting next to students who live in half-million dollar houses. I chose this particular class because my relationship with them, and their relationship with each other, is stronger than in any of my other classes. And by working with the class that has the best chance for success, I hope to create a model that will help me replicate the results with more challenging classes. Together, we will study the Code of Chivalry as it is expressed in two major Arthurian Legends texts, “The Crowning of Arthur” and “Sir Launcelot du Lake.” Both texts are written in Middle English and are packed with sophisticated but accessible ideas. The Code, which is the focus of the unit, is the very embodiment of traits such as: courage, courtesy, determination, honesty, humility, justice, loyalty, and patience.

Brain Target #1

Emotional Connection: Students will encounter, at the outset, sentences like this one: “Whoso pulleth oute this swerd of this stone and anvyld is rightwys kynge borne of all Brytayne.” To avoid an emotional shut-down due to unfamiliar language, we will define together, and in plain English, the vocabulary that is likely to cause frustration. We will also begin the first class session with a video clip (of a contemporary Hollywood movie) that will provide an initial positive emotional experience and help demystify the texts.

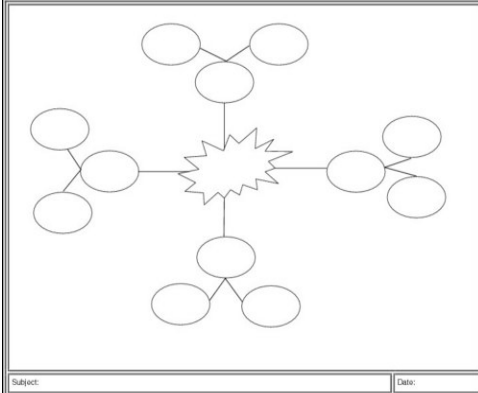


Brain Target #2

Physical Environment: During the second class session, students will work individually to draft a Code of Chivalry for the 21st Century. These codes will be written on decorated poster board and hung around the room. Already, one student has written: “Thou shalt not put others down to make thyself feel better.” We will also listen to Medieval music (via www.ancientfm.com) during the work. Even these subtle differences will create an exciting, ever-changing climate that will engage my students visually and aurally.

Brain Target #3

Concept Map / Advanced Organizer:



Learning Goals: The posted objective, as mandated by the Prince George’s County Public Schools Curriculum Guide, and in accordance with the Content Standards on the first page of this BTT unit, will read: Students will analyze how complex characters develop, interact, and change over the course of a text in order to participate actively and appropriately in discussions about the meaning behind the concepts that these characters represent.

Introductory “Big Picture” Activity/Assessment of Prior Knowledge: Just prior to reading the first of the two texts, “The Crowning of Arthur,” students will receive a blank concept map to use as a note-taking tool. As we read, we will flesh-out the concept map together (me, on the board; students, on their handouts), finding relationships among characters, themes, and concepts. Making sense of chivalric concepts is demanding and this concept map will not only provide a visual display but also help alleviate any “fear of the unknown.”

Brain Target #4

Activities for Teaching Mastery of Declarative/Procedural Knowledge: Not all literature is easily performed, which is good since the benefit of enactment comes from its unusualness. A scene in the middle of our first text, the famous sword-in-the-stone scene, is perfect for movement. A cardboard sword will be pulled from a stack of books, which will serve as our “stone.” The discussions following the enactment will actively promote retention as well as help them find meaning in the concepts of destiny, determination, and choice.



Brain Target #5

Activities for Extension and Application of Knowledge: Before reading the second text we will return to the students' drafts of Code of Chivalry for the 21st Century. They will move into collaborative groups and work to create a modern Code that will extend and enhance their understanding of the ancient one. This task should engage students in other BTT areas: language (through debate and compromise), memory (targets procedural knowledge by empowering choice), and emotion (the tenets are all quite personal).



Brain Target #6

Evaluating Learning: Learning will be evaluated using a multiple choice, criterion-referenced post test, which will be created using previous warm-ups, quizzes, and discussions. To balance a more traditional test, I will also include one informal oral assessment so that I have the opportunity to evaluate a richer level of understanding. I will also use their Code of Chivalry for the 21st Century (a poster produced in groups) and their coat-of-arms (created individually) to assess understanding.

