ETEC 530 Final Assignment: Lesson Plan

Constructing Dialogue for Renaissance Figures
in a Grade 8 Class

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PART A: Statement on the Lesson

Overview

General Design

The following lesson plan has been adapted in order to fulfil the requirements outlined. The initial framework for this lesson existed within a larger unit on the Renaissance in Social Studies 8. As a result, the lesson is over the 80 minute maximum outlined; however, the scheduled lesson is planned for 80 minutes, with a remaining half block to be used in the next class to complete the dialogue and self-assessment activity.

This lesson was designed for a grade 8 cohort with laptops, iPads, or tablets. As such, it is important that the students have access to a laptop with Internet access (or a computer lab) in order to complete the research portion of this assignments. It would be feasible to complete this assignment with one computer between two partners.

Knowledge and Belief

Social Studies exists within a complex learning context with respect to constructivism. Since knowledge is formed through the personal construction of prior and lived experiences, and since most topics in Social Studies are based on historical fact (which is something that is constantly in flux as we modify whose outlook we stress and what sort of historical 'facts' are in vogue at the time) and less on things that students can learn through experiencing themselves. As a result of this constructivist distance, many students are left wondering what the point of learning about past events is, leading to disengagement and apathy.

However, there are many opportunities for students to make personal connections and build interest and engagement with learning tasks within Social Studies. For instance, So (2002) states that although "knowledge is personally constructed, the constructed knowledge is socially mediated as a result of experiences and interactions with others in that social

construct" (n.p.). It is important, therefore, to recognize the social environment of the learning activity, and to engage students with their peers, in order to build more engagement with the construction of socially mediated knowledge. Moreover, the majority of the topics in Social Studies have ubiquitous themes and challenges that are relevant to our students' lived experiences. The approach to build more engaging lessons for Social Studies, therefore, is to address those themes and to have students move past solely memorizing specific dates and people and move towards recognizing issues of thematic historical importance, and applying those themes to their own lived experiences, together.

As previously written, another issue that exists within the study of Social Studies is that fact and belief are often constructs (Fosnot, 2013), and the selection of learning outcomes in Social Studies tends to be the work and selection of a select few within a specific framework (whether that be the ministry or the objectives of the specific teachers). For example, Harding (1993) argues that "it is a delusion – and a historically identifiable one – to think that human thought could completely erase the fingerprints that reveal its production process" (57). It is imperative, therefore, to allow students to explore many facets of understanding any time period within Social Studies by studying empirical evidence (primary sources and secondary), and by allowing them opportunities to form their own opinions of the past based on using the same methods that historians and researchers use. For instance, in many activities I design, I like to include relevant primary sources for the students to look at and to also provide the subjective analysis that different people take on these past events. Looking for bias and prejudice has often been some of the most fruitful discussions that I've had in the classroom setting. This also helps to engender a more critical eye for my students when they consider their own realities. While this lesson is not designed with any primary sources, it is designed so that the students think about the way we nurture genius both in the past and in the present, and what sort of values are reflected in this celebration.

Learning is Situated

In order for constructivist learning to be effective, it is important for the learning task to be as authentic as is possible. Of course, as Petraglia (1998) argues, it is extraordinarily difficult to make a learning environment 'authentic', and "any sense of authentication be neither predetermined nor preordained" (58). Since we cannot actually view and interview the individuals that the students will choose for their projects, and since the task is being completed in a school classroom and not a production studio, there is, of course, some situational authenticity lost. However, when learning tasks are authentic in context and approach, the constructed knowledge has more application in the future and the individual learning the material is more likely to be engaged and be able to apply the knowledge in future scenarios. Since the focus of this lesson is in comparing someone from the past and someone from the future, the learning task is situated in how the students approach the task and the type of media that they engage with. Collaboration is key in this task, as is the use of various, relatable contemporary examples.

Lesson Structure

Eliciting Prior Learning

A major tenant of constructivism is the ability to relate past experiences and knowledge constructs to the new learning experience. By creating these pathways, the information seems more tenable to the individual, and they are consequently more likely to reframe this new information to existing frameworks. If information is presented in a decontextualized environment, without eliciting this prior knowledge, it is significantly more difficult for the individual to keep the new information.

The lesson design, consequently, is made so that there is constant connection being made between prior knowledge and the targeted knowledge. By asking students to think

about the traits that are important for a genius or for fostering genius, for instance, we are relying on the student to discuss and reflect on the experience that they already have with these traits in order to apply it to new learning. In the same way, in order for this lesson to be successful, the learners need to be prompted to recall as much as they can on the humanist period and apply that to our own 21st century experience, thereby creating connections that remain relevant for the future.

Creating Cognitive Dissonance

In order for constructivist learning to be even more effective, cognitive dissonance (or disequilibration) needs to take place (Fosnot). Learning new constructs is difficult, and often requires the individual to reframe and reshape their current constructs. Without challenging the individual to think about how and why they formed the opinions and knowledge structures that they have, the learning activity won't be as successful and won't be as long-lasting.

As a result, in this learning activity, the learners will be challenged into thinking about how the terms 'genius' and 'Renaissance man' compare, and what sort of traits are implicitly supported through our society's structure and values. This dissonance will be created through formal and informal questioning, relating to the reading and as directed by the teacher. Through the process of creating a dialogue, the students will be able to reflect their new knowledge and the new constructs that they gained for the teacher to then assess.

Collaborative Practice

Knowledge is constructed through both an individual and a collaborate practice. Without engaging with one's environment, there is no way for individuals to have a full experience of constructivist principles, and it is unlikely that they would be able to have a full learning dynamic. A large part of this lesson, consequently, is completed in pairs, with each member working together to try to create a dialogue that would be thematic and fulfilling the criteria that is outlined. By discussing principles with their peers, students will be able to

experiment with their new knowledge constructs and test the importance of their own ideas.

With this collaboration, students will be challenged to further think of how historical and contemporary figures would engage with each other; demonstrating their own developing intrapersonal skills that they are themselves participating in.

Reflective Practice

To create a full learning experience, students need to be able to reflect on their learning. For the learning to be a complete process, this reflection is necessary. As such, the lesson has been structured so that students have to continually be providing formative examples and justifications for the choices that they make; by the end, they also have to complete a final self-assessment. By having the students reflect on their own learning process, including failures and successes, as well as their experience working with their partner, they will have to reflect on their own metacognitive practice. Furthermore, by providing an open-ended question, "What is the most important thing that you learned while completing this project," the student will be able to address any aspect of the learning process that they found significant, which is often more telling and more qualitatively valuable as a form of assessment than something more direct.

Feedback

Timely and effective feedback is imperative to help guide a students' learning process and ensure that they are constructing knowledge that is reflective of contemporary belief and findings. Since the major assessment piece for this assignment is constructed by the end of the lesson, including the completion of the self-assessment rubric – the teacher would then select the appropriate score based on completeness of project, notes and self-assessment rubric -- the majority of the feedback must be informal. Through the built-in class and group discussions, the teacher would be able to guide the students in reviewing important character traits, historical points, and projections about how society supports genius. The teacher can

also informally check on the involvement and understanding of all participants. When the students have time to work on their research, and again later when they are constructing their dialogue, the teacher would be able to check in with each set of partners and assess comprehension on a more individual level.

Inquiry Projects

Since constructivist teaching is centred on the student experiencing and developing their own learning frameworks, it is important for students to be able to develop critical researching skills. By so doing, the students will be able to access and assess the viability of certain websites, and begin to develop the skills necessary to create a proper bibliography. Since the teacher will be guiding the students during their research, it is expected that they will be able to lead those students who need extra guidance through their research process. In this way, the students will be able to access information and construct knowledge, all while pursuing their own interests and constructs – all with the guidance of the teacher.

Literature Study

The motivation for providing a semi-structured, feedback-based, collaborative inquiry project comes from the research of Hunter (2015). He argues that the objective of teaching needs to correspond with the new demands of the changing world. Education, in sum, should move beyond route memorization and teach for skills, approaches, and cognitive mindsets: "The faster and more flexible information retrieval that has characterized the information age allows us to think differently about what it means to be learned. We can think of it as having the skills necessary to identify good questions; to locate useful information; to analyse that information according to the practices of some discipline, trade or profession; to devise and test answers to their questions, and to effectively communicate their conclusions." (NP). The object of this lesson, consequently, is to prepare students for the future by practicing their information-retrieval skills, and, more importantly, their critical communication skills, analyzing

their new information.

All teachers are aware of the challenges of doing online research, and how time-consuming it can be to guide students towards using proven research techniques. Alferi, Brooks, and Aldrich (2011) provide guidance for this task: it is important that both inquiry and discovery-based instruction should have guided tasks with appropriate scaffolding, that students are given opportunities to explain their ideas and receive timely feedback, and that the teacher provides worked examples of how to succeed (NP). When there is too little structure for a learning task, the learner's "cognitive workspace" can become "overwhelmed" (3) and the construction of knowledge becomes negligible. Consequently, it is imperative that the informal formative assessments that are built into this task remain, as well as the explanation of the assignment and the model illustrated through the 'Epic Rap Battle.'

Lastly, the general structure of this lesson comes from a constructivist framework outlined and summarized by Sunal (N.D.). The myriad constructivist learning models summarized follow a similar format: students are able to initially explore and create their own theoretical frameworks before being guided to one by the teacher, and then being asked to apply their new knowledge to future scenarios, sometimes by completing a novel presentation task at the end. The framework developed by Barnes (1976), for instance, has four key stages: focus, explore, reorganize, and public stage. The lesson follows this format, in that students have to 'focus' on the topic of 'genius,' 'explore' what it means to be a 'Renaissance Man' in the past and in the present, 'reorganize' these different characteristics to come up with a framework that fits a historical and contemporary exemplar, and finally design a dialogue between their exemplars for the 'public stage.'

Part B: Lesson Plan and Assessments

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2" align="center">Topic: Renaissance Wo/man
Subject: Social Studies 8
Time: 80 minute block +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Big Idea: What makes a genius? How does our society support individuals? Ideas? Talents? How does this, in turn, reflect back on the values of our society?

Curricular Competencies: Exploration of the Renaissance period through comparison of values and personalities, using contemporary comparisons. Discussion of relevant themes and terminology through the creation of a collaborative inquiry project. Developing research and 21st century skills, as well as metacognition and reflective practice. Assessment culminates with a synthesis of information in the creation of personalized dialogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies Needed</td>
<td>Projector; student laptops; video links: "Great Minds – Leonardo da Vinci (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMf8hFBJyIA) and "Sir Isaac Newton vs Bill Nye. Epic Rap Battles" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yis7GzlXNM); "What makes a Renaissance Man" article (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/11301756/What-makes-a-Renaissance-man.html) with questions; assignment outline; list of potential Renaissance Men and Women; Self-assessment rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction
30 minutes</td>
<td>Discuss: Brainstorm qualities that make a 'genius' – What do people need to be good at to be considered a genius and can it just be one quality? (have students think in small pods and share results on board)
Next: Think of examples of people (at least 3) that could be considered a genius today. What qualities do they have in common?

Watch: "Great Minds" video (9:20). What characteristics did da Vinci have that match with our own list? Check off comparisons on the board as a class.

Introduce: 'Renaissance Man' as terminology within the context of our historical period. Prompt students to recall what 'humanism' means, and draw a connection. What traits are promoted through humanism? How does the system of 'patronage' support these geniuses and their qualities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity
40 minutes</td>
<td>Read: "Renaissance Man" article and discuss questions at the end. How does our society support geniuses? What qualities do we promote? Do you agree with the article? Why or why not?

Discuss: Is it possible to have a Renaissance man today? Who should qualify? What should they be good at?</td>
</tr>
</table>

	Introduce: Activity with "epic rap battle" (2:48) and go through note outline and partner expectations – distribute assignment outline. **Project:** List of Renaissance figures on the overhead to provide students with a starting point for their own exploration and research. Review the qualities and expectations of a good website for information. **Work:** Partner work on researching two chosen individuals, and filling out note charts for conversation.
Conclusion 10 minutes	**Discuss:** What makes an interesting conversation? What elements should be included for our own project? Share as a class, writing ideas down, then have students assess the progress of their own conversations. **Explain:** Next class, time will be given to allow for work on conversations and self-assessment; however, research must be finished in order to continue; bonus marks to any who perform their conversations next day.
Evaluation next class	**Assessment:** Self-assessment and peer assessment completed next class with the completion of the conversations.

Name:_____   Block: _____

Renaissance Wo/Man: Past and Present

We will compare one Renaissance man of the past with a Renaissance man (or woman!) of the present. You will need to fill in the notes below and on the opposite side in order to complete your project. This sheet with **complete notes** and **bibliography MUST** be handed in with your project.

Your final project will be a **written dialogue** between these two characters (past and present Renaissance wo/man). They must be discussing aspects of their lives/inventions/art/athletics. It should total to be at least **one page typed** or **two pages printed**.

Please work with a **partner** to complete your research and dialogue.

For **BONUS MARKS**, you can film you and your partner acting out your script (including costumes) to play for the class – or you can present to the class IRL.

Name of Renaissance man **(Past)** that you chose: _____

Information that you found by doing an Internet search (who, what, when, where, why):

_____

_____

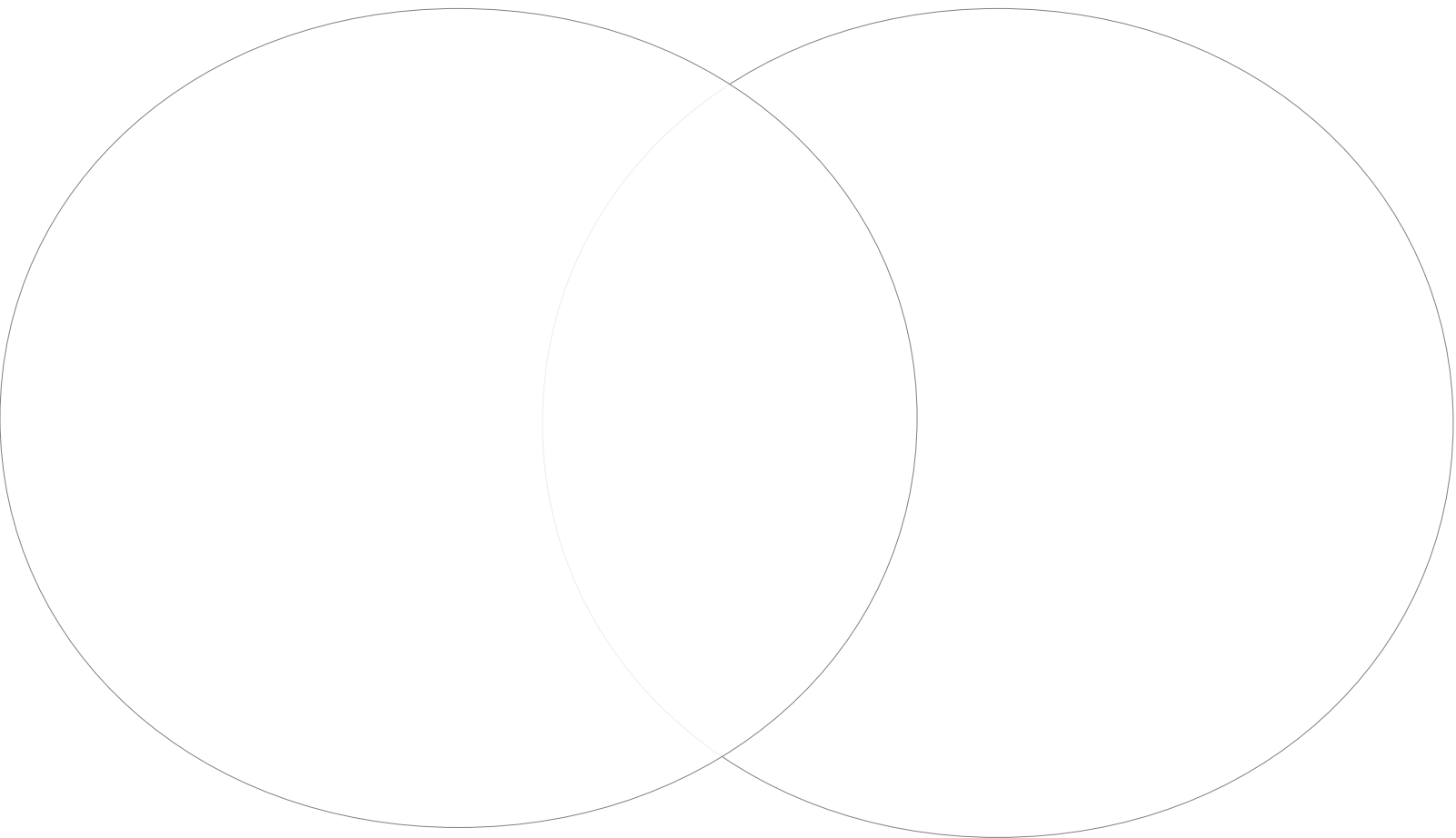_____

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Name of Renaissance wo/man **(Present)** that you chose: _____

Information that you found by doing an Internet search (who, what, when, where, why):

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Bibliography (list all sources where you found information – more than just Wikipedia):

R W/M Past: RW/M Present:

PLEASE ATTACH ANY EXTRA NOTES YOU HAVE TO YOUR FINAL PROJECT!

YOU MUST HAND IN THIS PAGE WITH YOUR CONVERSTAION TO RECEIVE FULL MARKS!

Name: _____ Block: _____

Renaissance Wo/Man Project

Please circle the criteria that you think you deserve for your final project:

Criterion B: Investigating – do you have resources listed? Did you hand in your research templates? How detailed are your notes?			
(0)	**Beginning (1-2)**	**Developing (3-4)**	**Accomplished (5-6)**
I have not achieved a standard described by any of the descriptors to the right.	*I am able to:* **collect** and **record limited** or **sometimes irrelevant** information	*I am able to:* **use** a method(s) to collect and record **some relevant** information	*I am able to:* use methods to collect and record **appropriate relevant** information

Criterion C: Communicating – did you follow directions? Does the dialogue make sense? Is it well-crafted?			
(0)	**Beginning (1-2)**	**Developing (3-4)**	**Accomplished (5-6)**
I have not achieved a standard described by any of the descriptors to the right.	*I am able to:* communicate information and ideas in a style that is **not always** clear organize information and ideas in a **limited** way	*I am able to:* communicate information and ideas in a way that is **somewhat** clear **somewhat** organize information and ideas	*I am able to:* communicate information and ideas in a style that is **mostly** appropriate to the audience and purpose **mostly** structure information and ideas according to the task instructions

Criterion D: Thinking Critically – do you connect ideas of the Renaissance and the Renaissance Man? Does it show deeper consideration of implications to the world?			
(0)	**Beginning (1-2)**	**Developing (3-4)**	**Accomplished (5-6)**
I have not achieved a standard described by any of the descriptors to the right.	*I am able to:* **begin to analyse** concepts, issues, models, visual representation and/or theories in a **limited** way **identify** different perspectives.	*I am able to:* complete a **simple analysis** of concepts, issues, models, visual representation and/or theories **recognize** different perspectives and **suggests some** of their implications.	*I am able to:* complete a **substantial** analysis of concepts, issues, models, visual representation and/or theories **clearly recognize** different perspectives and **describe most** of their implications.

Please explain why you deserve this mark. What was your experience like? What are you proud of? What area do you think should have more work?

_____

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_____

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_____

Please circle the emoticon that best describes your experience working with your partner:

:(:[:/   :\   :]   :)

What is the most important thing that you learned when completing this project? Write below.

References

Alfieri, L., Brooks, P. J., Aldrich, N. J., & Tenenbaum, H. R. (2011). Does discovery-based instruction enhance learning? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(1),1.

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Petraglia, J. (1998). The Real World on a Short Leash: The (Mis)Application of Constructivism to the Design of Educational Technology. *Educational Technology Research and Development,* 46(3), 53-65. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/stable/30221064

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